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HELP WITH RECRUITMENT NEEDED

The SFRA's membership has hovered around 300 for some years. Peter Brigg, the new vice president, intends to increase the number of members by various means. One strategy is sending recruiting materials to people likely to be interested, most of whom have never been contacted by the SFRA. **That's where you could be extremely helpful.** What he would welcome from you is the book title, year of publication, and name and academic or other affiliation of authors, editors, and contributors to books about any type of fantastic literature/film/illustration or utopian studies that you have reviewed **since January 1998.** Check past issues of the SFRA Review to identify titles. Send information to pbrigg@uoguelph.ca or to #1 20 Budgell Terrace, Toronto, Ontario M6S 1B4. Most edited collections of essays include contributor notes, which normally show academic affiliation. A photocopy of such notes would suffice, along with the book's title and year, or you can copy and e-mail the information. If you see a name that you know to be a current member, delete it, but Peter will check this and gather the needed additional information for letter mailing recruitment material. Many thanks.

Neil Barron

CORRECTION

Karen McGuire's review of Berthold Schoene-Harwood's *Mary Shelley: Frankenstein* was indeed in issue #251. The table of contents did not reflect this. The review is on page 15.

Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard

LATEST HEINLEIN JOURNAL

The January 2001 semi-annual issue (# 8) reached me in mid-February. Jane Davitt exam-

THE ANNOTATED SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE

Stefan Dziemianowicz

Lovecraft, H.P. *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature*, ed. by S.T. Joshi. Hippocampus Press, Box 641, New York, NY 10156, September 2000. 172 p. \$15 + \$3.50 postage, trade paper. 0-9673215-0-6.

Lovecraft's canonical essay remains a landmark of weird fiction criticism nearly three quarters of a century since it first saw print in the pages of an amateur press journal. Though not every critic has agreed with its assessments and Lovecraft has been taken to task for omissions and imbalance in his analysis, the essay has shaped reading lists and bibliographies of essential horror fiction for decades. Lovecraft was one of the first critical writers to view horror in a context not limited solely to the Gothic tradition, and his essay contains some of the earliest appraisals of Blackwood, Machen, de la Mare, and other writers who set a standard of literary excellence even as horror was curdling into a genre in the pages of the pulp magazines Lovecraft contributed to.

Before the appearance of this new edition of the essay—the first offering from a new specialty press—there were already two editions long in print: the Dover paperback struck from the Abramson edition of 1945 (106 p., \$6.95, introduced by E.F. Bleiler) and the version included in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, the third volume in Arkham House's standard edition of Lovecraft, which Lovecraft authority Joshi indexed for the current corrected eighth printing of 1986. What does this new edition offer that these editions don't? For one thing, a comprehensive bibliography of all the texts cited by Lovecraft, including citations for further critical study. But even better are Joshi's annotations and his informative introduction on the history of the essay's composition. (Lovecraft's essay occupies fifty-two pages of fairly small type in this edition. Joshi's contributions dwarf that: preface and introduction (13 pages), notes (36 pages), bibliography of authors and works cited by Lovecraft (52 pages), and index (10 pages)).

Though Lovecraft is generally revered as one of the horror writers of the twentieth century most knowledgeable about the field in which he wrote, at the time he was assigned the essay, he was actually unfamiliar with several writers and works now regarded as seminal to horror literature. As Joshi notes, Lovecraft had read the Gothics piecemeal and cribbed extensively from Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1921) for his commentary in the early sections of the survey. An omnivorous reader in a variety of areas, Lovecraft still completely overlooked the fiction of trend-setting ghost story master M. R. Jamee until he began researching the essay. The essay went through several revisions between its first publication in 1927 and Lovecraft's death in 1937, and he took his work on it seriously enough to continue adding writers whose work he picked up on the interim. He professed his admiration for the fiction of William Hope Hodgson in paragraphs added in 1934, and it's arguable that they helped spark the revival of interest in Hodgson's work.

Even more interesting are the correspondences Joshi finds between the works Lovecraft read to write the essay and Lovecraft's own fiction. It was in this essay that Lovecraft first began to identify what he called "a sense of the cosmic" in the work of weird fiction writers he respected. Joshi defines cosmicism as "the suggestions of vast gulfs of space and time and the consequent triviality of the human race," and it's hardly surprising that Lovecraft's fiction began increasingly to show this quality after the essay was written, in stories like "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Dunwich Horror," "The Shadow Out of Time" and most of the other tales of "cosmic horror" on which his reputation rests today. Joshi has read the same texts Lovecraft read in preparation to write the essay, and he identifies interest-

ing echoes in Lovecraft's writings of both well-known and obscure works. In Lovecraft's case, this was more than simple mimicry. His research of the essay almost certainly helped him to articulate his own aesthetic for supernatural horror, and one suspects his immersion in the work of other writers who made their mark showed him not just what to do, but what not to do, as he created his own body of memorable and weird fiction.

[Admirers of Lovecraft sometimes quote the first sentence of this essay as a dogma: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." This statement has been investigated by psychologists, so I asked Alan Elms, who teaches psychology at UC Davis, what his colleagues have concluded. He replied:

As for the 'oldest and strongest emotion of mankind,' Freud voted for pleasure ("Lust" in German, which can also be translated as "desire"). He saw fear as important too, with fear of castration being most important to mankind (for womankind, of course, it has already happened). Even fear of death, Freud said, is a disguised version of castration anxiety. Karen Horney, Freud's first feminist disciple and critic, more nearly resembled Lovecraft in proposing that the earliest (and for most people the most powerful) element in personality development is basic anxiety—the child's fear of being helpless and alone in a dangerous world. Psychologists have long conducted empirical studies to demonstrate either the presence of certain specific innate fear responses (fear of falling, etc.) or the early learning of fear responses (John E. Watson's "Little Albert" study is the most famous of these.) But developmental psychologists today, I think, would generally agree that such positive emotional reactions as pleasure at seeing a familiar face are demonstrably as "old and strong" as fear. Back to Freud. —Neil Barron]

NONFICTION REVIEW

ON THE FRINGE FOR THIRTY YEARS: A HISTORY OF HORROR IN THE BRITISH SMALL PRESS

Stefan Dziemianowicz

Sutton, David. *On the Fringe for Thirty Years: A History of Horror in the British Small Press*. Shadow Publishing, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, England B14 7TE, October 2000. 39 p., stapled. £4/\$15 (air mailed), payable to author. 0-9539032-0-6.

Devotees of horror know that the current dominance of the field by the small press is the culmination of several decades of incessant specialty publishing activity. Although the British small press has been as industrious as its American counterpart, most readers on this side of the pond are probably familiar with only a handful of representative publishers and publications before the mid-1980's, when horror's fan subculture became solidly entrenched.

David Sutton is eminently qualified to give readers the big picture on the UK's small press. He edited *Shadow*, the first British small press 'zine of note devoted exclusively to the appreciation of horror fiction, and later teamed with Stephen Jones to edit the award-winning *Fantasy Tales*. He currently co-edits the *Dark Terrors* continuation of the *Pan Book of Horror Stories* series, and his career arc mirrors the evolutionary path followed by the horror small press in general.

Though this chapbook substantially beefs up the pithy history of the small press, Sutton first wrote for the American small press magazine *The Scream Factory* in 1996; it is not quite the album of intimate snapshots one might have wished for. Rather, it's more a large group picture, which means some detail has been sacrificed for the sake of inclusiveness. A publisher as well as an editor, Sutton spends as much (if not more) time talking about the physical design and composition of the scores of magazines he mentions as he does their content or literary objective. Unleavened by the sort of anecdotes and personality profiles

ines the differences between Heinlein's *Red Planet* in the 1949 Scribner's edition and the revised 1990 Ballantine edition. Editor Patterson studies "Requim," first published in 1940. Robert James investigates "The Age of Reasoning: Starship Troopers and the History of the Franchise in America." The text of a radio play based on Ray Bradbury's "The Man Who Traveled in Elephants," by Brad Linaweaver, presented at the 1998 Dragon Con, is printed, along with an introduction by the producer and brief comments by Bradbury. Letters and a cumulative index to issue 1 (July 1997) – 8 conclude this 52-page, 8½ x 11 inch issue. \$7.50/issue, \$15/year (\$10/\$20 outside the US) to Bill Patterson, 602 West Bennett Avenue, Glendora, CA 91741, queries to BPRAL22169@aol.com.

Neil Barron

SHOULD YOU JOIN THE POD PEOPLE?

POD in this context means "Print on Demand," a rapidly evolving publishing technology that has become widespread in the past few years. The texts of the books are stored electronically, with copies generated by laser and/or ink jet printers, with paper covers glued to the pages in a standard perfect binding format. Hardcover bindings are possible, of course, but used mostly for the library market, which has a buckram syndrome—"real books are hardcover only. For short print runs, from a few dozen to a few hundred copies, POD unit costs are less than conventional printing—one hundred copies might cost \$150 for setup, plus \$500 for the books, or \$6.50 each, with a retail of two to three times that. In the fantastic fiction field, the book summary for calendar 2000 in the February 2001 *Locus* says that they saw 87 POD trade paperbacks, mostly reprints, but admitted that there were many

more they didn't see.

Wildside Press in New Jersey has done the most by far, mostly undistinguished fantastic fiction. In theory, POD would be ideal if a hundred teachers of fantastic literature could agree on out-of-print books they'd like to see in print. Assuming they could negotiate rights relatively cheaply, they'd (collectively?) negotiate a contract with a POD printer to supply each instructor, say, twenty-five copies of x titles, billed at cost. The instructors would resell the books as course texts for a few more bucks than copy, enough to recover their out-of-pocket costs. The students would pay less, in most cases, than for standard in-print trade paperbacks, and the instructor wouldn't be faced with the infuriating and common situation of all books he/she wanted to teach being out of print. For additional details, see the article by Roger McBride Allen, "D-Books [his term for POD books] for the Working Writer" in the April 2001 *Science Fiction Chronicle* (\$4.95, probably plus postage, from DNA Publications, Box 2988, Radford, VA 24143-2988; yearly subscriptions are \$45 for US, more elsewhere; www.dnapublications.com/sfc).
Neil Barron

UMGAWA

In apish, that's "Listen up!" Bruce Watson has an enjoyable article in the March 2001 *Smithsonian Magazine*, "Tarzan the Eternal." The essay is not limited to Tarzan books but is a balanced account of Burroughs generally. Most of the black-and-white photos from the huge Edgar Rice Burroughs' collection at the University of Louisville library. He says some dictionaries now list Tarzan as "a strong, agile person of heroic proportions and bearing." Can Xena or Sheena be far behind?
Neil Barron

GETTING IT PUB-

that enliven the histories of SF fandom, like Sam Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm* or Harry Warner's *All Our Yesterdays*, Sutton's chronicle reads in spots like an annotated bibliography, albeit in accessible narrative form.

The British and American horror small presses were very similar, but the 1960's American magazines were oriented toward pre-World War II films (notably Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland*), while British fan writers focused on the infamous Hammer horror films showing at their local cinemas. Sutton's *Shadow*, with its informed and intelligent appraisals of classic, pulp, and contemporary horror fiction, led in the change of emphasis from film to fiction and provided one of the few outlets for non-film horror criticism. He describes his magazine here and in more detail in a recommended companion, *Voices from Shadow* (1994, 64 p., £4.50/\$15 postpaid). The small press shifted again in the 1980's from writing about to publishing fiction, and in the '90's from publishing fiction in magazines to bringing it out in hardcover and trade paperback books.

Sutton gives considerable credit to the British Fantasy Society, founded in 1970, as the glue that gave cohesion to the whole British small press scene, and his reminiscences make a fine companion piece to *Silver Rhapsody* (1996), the anecdotal history of the BFS. He profiles all the prominent magazines and their offshoot specialty book publishers as well as scads of obscure magazines we might never have known about. Most interesting is the abandon with which he names names: Clive Barker, Kim Newman, Brian Lumley, Steve Jones, Ramsey Campbell, Mike Ashley, and Richard Dalby, to name but a few, all of whom were (and to some degree are) regular contributors to small press publications, and account in no small part for the British small press's superior quality. Sutton's short but detailed account makes the British horror small press seem live one big house party where attendees flit from room to room, sustaining festivities that are still going on.

NONFICTION REVIEW

VICTORIAN GOTHIC: LITERACY AND CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY & GOTHIC RADICALISM: LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Solveig C. Robinson

Robbins, Ruth & Julian Wolfreys, eds. *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*. February 2001. xx + 260 p. \$69.95. 0-312-231695 (North America), 0-333-74935-9 (outside North America).

Smith, Andrew. *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century*. August 1990. ix + 188 p. \$59.95. 0-313-23042-7; 0-333-76035-2.

Both: Palgrave, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

Two recent Palgrave publications attest to the pervasive influence of Gothic throughout the nineteenth century. *Victorian Gothic*, an anthology of critical essays, shows Gothic's infiltration of many aspects of Victorian consciousness. *Gothic Radicalism* focuses more particularly on the interrelationship between Gothic notions of subjectivity and the tradition of idealist thought in the nineteenth century.

Edited by a British and an American academic, *Victorian Gothic* features twelve original essays of varying lengths and quality by Anglo-American academics. The anthology reveals how Gothic's influence persists even after it's supposedly "dead": "Escaping from the tomb and the castle, the Gothic in the Victorian period becomes arguably more potentially terrifying because of its

ability to manifest itself anywhere.” Gothic endures not only in Victorian literature, but also in the emerging art of photography, in the revival of hypnotism as a medical treatment, and in the new science of archaeology.

In general, the best essays are those that move beyond the borders of literature. “The ‘Anxious Dream’ “ by Marion Wynne-Davies is a fascinating exploration of the influence of the Gothic on Julia Margaret Cameron’s photography. Roger Luckhurst’s “Trance-Gothic, 1882-97” traces how the re-emergence of discredited mesmerism as the more scientific hypnotism correlates with cycles of Gothic influence in literature; and Richard Pearson’s “Archeology and Gothic Desire” rereads H. Rider Haggard’s fiction in the light of Victorian Egyptology. Honorable mentions must go to editor Wolfrey’s reassessment of the role of the “comic-gothic” in Dickens, and to R.J.C. Watt’s article on “Hopkins and the Gothic Body.” Wolfrey’s essay, in particular, helps to clarify Gothic’s enduring appeal: having (temporarily) set aside their fear of Catholics and foreigners, the Victorians “need[ed] to scare themselves, to cut a caper at home [...] There are no bogeymen abroad, so why not pretend to be a little spooky in one’s own back yard?”

Gothic Radicalism reveals just how much can be done with homegrown Gothic. Smith, a lecturer in English at the University of Glamorgan in Wales, focuses on the nineteenth century Gothic canon—*Frankenstein*, Poe’s stories, *Dracula*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—in order to critique previous psychoanalytic interpretations of the literature. Smith’s argument is that Victorian Gothic continues but transmutes eighteenth century and Romantic notions of the sublime, as articulated by Burke and Kant, thereby preparing the way for Freud. In essence, he claims that Burke’s, Kant’s, and Freud’s metaphysics share problems that can be illuminated by the Gothic of their times, if one begins from the position that “the unconscious is an internalized version of the sublime.”

In seven chapters, Smith lays out what he admits is “only one particular Gothic history,” taking care to place his own arguments in the context of those of other theorists and to position himself more as a complement to their analyses than as a challenger. Perhaps his most interesting (and surprisingly accessible) chapter is the one in which he reads Stoker’s *Dracula* through the lens of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*.

Victorian Gothic offers a wider range of perspectives and takes in a greater variety of texts than does *Gothic Radicalism*. However, it’s riddled with proofreading errors (particularly evident in the preface) and includes a serious attribution error in the illustrations (Figure 5.1 is supposed to be a well-known painting by William Morris, but reproduced instead is an obscure stained glass window design of a similar subject.). The publisher, if not the editors, should have caught these mistakes. *Gothic Radicalism* is more polished and offers readings of more canonical works, but its dense prose may alienate readers not already thoroughly conversant in the highly specialized debates in which the author engages. Undergraduate libraries seeking more generalist studies of the Gothic may be better served by David Punter’s recent *A Companion in the Gothic* (Oxford 2000) or by Glennis Byron and David Punter’s *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography* (St. Martins, 1999). However, libraries and individuals who already have Gothic collections may find either of these new works of interest.

[Guest reviewer Robinson is assistant professor of Victorian studies at Mary Washington College.—Ed.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

IN SEARCH OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

A. Langley Searles

McNally, Raymond T. & Radu Florescu. *In Search of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Renaissance Books, 5858 Wilshire Boulevard, #200, Los Angeles, CA 90036, December 2000. 181 p. \$24.95. 1-58063-157-6.

LISHED

Getting it Published is the title of a book by William Germano, vice president and publishing director at Routledge. Sub-titled *A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious about Serious Books*, this 193-page book (University of Chicago, \$15 trade paper, May 2001, 0-226-28844-7), discusses writing and presenting one’s manuscript for both would-be academic authors and those who’ve been through the mill and want to make it easier for themselves the next time around.

Neil Barron (based on brief description in PW)

SCIENCE FICTION: A REVIEW OF SPECULATIVE LITERATURE

The latest issue of editor Van Ikin’s journal (v. 15, no. 2, #42, 2000) reached me in mid-April. The cover photograph is of Tess Williams, whose original short story, “Sea As Mirror” is reprinted, along with an article by her, an interview of her by the editor and Helen Merrick, and a review of her novel based on the story. Bruce Shaw discussed Peter Goldsworthy’s 1995 Australian novel, *Wish: A Biologically Engineered Love Story*. Richard Harland investigates the fantasies of American writer Paula Volsky. Reviews and a poem complete this attractively printed 64-page issue. A\$9 for this issue, A\$16 for two issues (Australia), A\$20 (US), payable to Van Ikin, English Department, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley WA 6009, Australia; or payable to J.V. Post, 3225 North Marengo Avenue, Altadena, CA 91001.

Neil Barron

PILGRIMS AND PIONEERS SLATED JUST RELEASED

Hall, Hal W. & Daryl F. Mallett, eds. *Pilgrims and Pionners: The History and Speeches of the Science Fiction Research Association Award Winners*.

Jacob’s Ladder Books, c/o

Angel Enterprises, 717 Mill Avenue, PMB 87, Tempe, AZ 85281, 2001. 292 p. 0-913960-4 hardcover; 0-913960-29-2 trade paper. For price and availability, inquire of SFRA Treasurer Dave Mead, Arts & Humanities, Texas A & M, 6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78412, dave.mead@iris.tamucc.edu.

Just as academics founded organizations devoted to the study of SF, so they began to bestow awards for scholarly distinction. The SFRA was the first to offer such awards, beginning in 1970 with the Pilgrim, for sustained contribution to the study of SF, continuing with the Pioneer in 1990 for the best article, and most recently with the Clareson award since 1996 for outstanding service to fantastic literature—teaching and scholarship, organizing meeting, speaking, etc.

This volume assembles the presentation and acceptance speeches for most winners, supplemented by biographical profiles and selected bibliographies (the last prepared by Fiona Kelleghan (mostly) and Rob Reginald). As veteran members know, this book has had a very long gestation. I'd forgotten that, along with a \$5,000 grant from the 1986 AtlantaWorldCon that I distributed to the contributors to my 1990 fantasy and horror guides, I helped line up funds for this project. It has been at least a dozen years, during which the evolving manuscript bounced between Hall and Mallett, with the Pioneer and Clareson awards added to the lengthening Pilgrim list (The coverage is through the 1999 awards.). Supplemental material includes a short history by Art Lewis of the Pilgrim's first decade and a seven-page aperçu by Mallett on his links to various Pilgrim winners. The print is a bit small; the occasional

On October 1, 1788, at the age of forty-seven, William Deacon Brodie and one of his henchmen were publicly hanged after being convicted of robbing the General Excise Office of Scotland. During a sensational trial, Brodie was revealed to have lead a double life. He had been a successful cabinet-maker and house furnisher in Edinburgh but, in later years, willingly turned to crime to support high living and gambling losses. What particularly piqued public interest was that he clearly preferred the precarious underground life that included supporting two mistresses to a stable but duller existence and an honest tradesman. As a young man, he had wanted to gain fame and fortune by heroic adventure in the British army or navy, and this frustrated yearning for a life of perilous adventure never left him. Over the years, Brodie's escapes became an embroidered legend that transcended history. Books about his trial were published, and places in Edinburgh named after him. Reports even circulated that he had somehow cheated the hangman and had been seen living prosperously in Paris, New York, and elsewhere.

Two generations later, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) learned all about this from his nurse, Allison Cunningham. He was a sickly child, and she would try to alleviate his pain by telling him stories; one of these was suggested by the cabinet (which Brodie's firm had made) facing his bed. It was a story Stevenson never forgot. He recapitulated it in an essay shortly afterward, and later in life often talked about it to his family and friends. He even wrote a play titled "William Brodie, or the Double Life."

The theme became seminal in Stevenson's thinking, because he gradually came to live a double life himself. He was brought up a Calvinist but was a freethinker by nature. His father expected him to follow family tradition and become an engineer, while his own inclinations were towards a literary career. "He was fascinated with the companionship of vagabonds, sailors, and smugglers," write McNally and Florescu, and "turned off by the monotonous lives of the establishment" to which he had to conform while living at home.

The theme of doubles occurs regularly in Stevenson's fiction. He used the judge at Brodie's trial as a model for a character in *The Weir at Hermiston*; the two estranged brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae* harbor exactly opposite personalities; and ambivalence is strongly suggested in "The Suicide Club," one of the stories in his *New Arabian Nights*. The purest and most intimate expression, of course, comes in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, whose first draft he dashed off in three days in September 1885. After receiving a favorable review in America, sales of the book rocketed. They not only made Stevenson rich but placed him among the few professional writers of his day who could live comfortably on royalties alone.

The evidence linking Jekyll with Brodie is cumulative rather than singular; no oral or written words by parties involved precisely connect the two. But the plentitude of suggestive incidents and the length of time over which they occurred make it a compelling hypothesis, and there is no data to gainsay it. That authors cite additional instances of what I've mentioned here, and I agree with their conclusion. Along the way, pertinent events in the Stevenson household are summarized, and a helpful appendix furnishes chronologies of Stevenson's life, his works, and parallel world events (the last of which, however, is so puzzlingly eclectic it often seems irrelevant).

The concluding chapter describes adaptations of *Jekyll* to the various media, and an added filmography and videography bring these up to date. At last count, thirty-five movies of *Jekyll* have been made; the casts, directors, etc. of all are carefully cited. Another appendix offers a travel guide, with an annotated map, for those interested in visiting the relevant sites in Edinburgh.

As is so often true of collaborations, the level of writing can best be described as serviceable; but if it never rises to the heights of elegance, neither does it even descend into reader's block.

Should literary genealogy interest you—and I think most people would find this example of it pleasant—your might seek out its predecessors, the

authors' *In Search of Dracula* and *In Search of Frankenstein*, which trace the roots of two other fantasy classics.

[Stevenson's novella is elucidated in many works, including Harry M. Geduld, ed., *The Definitive Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Companion* (1983), William Veeder & Gordon Hersch, eds., *Dr. Jekyll After One Hundred Years* (1988), and Leonard Wolf's annotated edition, *The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1995). – Ed.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

**MARY SHELLEY'S FICTIONS: FROM
FRANKENSTEIN TO FAULKNER**

Amelia A. Rutledge

Eberle-Sinatra, Michael, ed. *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Faulkner*. Palgrave, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, November 2000. xxvi + 250 p. \$59.95. 0-333-77106-0.

The fourteen essays here, grouped in four thematic sections, were presented at 1997 conferences in Britain, Canada, and the US on the bicentennial of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's death and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's birth. There is much high-quality work here to engage the reader.

Nora Crook's introduction surveys the history of Shelley scholarship. Her essay acknowledges criticism of the 1831 text of *Frankenstein*, but she reconsiders the commonplace of increased "fatalism" in Victor's career. Three essays focus on stylistics, including "temporal ambiguity" in *The Last Man*, especially in Shelley's peculiar choice of the "narrative anterior" moment; and an examination of Shelley's styles as sentimental and "styptic" in *Lodore*.

Four essays explore gender relationships in *Matilda*, *Valperga*, *Frankenstein*, *The Last Man*, and Shelley's short fiction. Two essays in the "contemporary scene" segment deal with time as apocalypse and as past history in *The Last Man* and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*. The other two essays explore differing aspects of *Lodore*. The final three essays share a focus on rehabilitation of "family" in *Frankenstein* and *Faulkner*.

A useful collection of academic pieces investigating Shelley's significant fiction at all lengths, whose references and notes provide a survey of contemporary Shelley scholarship. For university libraries, faculty, and graduate students.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**WOMEN, SCIENCE AND FICTION: THE
FRANKENSTEIN INHERITANCE**

Amelia A. Rutledge

Shaw, Debra Benita. *Women, Science and Fiction: The Frankenstein Inheritance*. Palgrave, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, February 2001. ix + 231 p. \$59.95. 0-312-23605-0 (US), 0-333-74158-7 (UK)

In a revision of the author's University of East Anglia doctoral thesis, Shaw studies "how specific scientific theories, current at the time of writing, have motivated women to imagine new female identities and social orders which present a re-evaluation of the place of science in women's lives." She reads intertextually without falling into a "naive reflectionism" that would disparage the writers' engagement with their subjects. Shelley's *Frankenstein* is not the subject of extended analysis; instead, Shaw discusses Gilman's *Herland*, *Swastika Night* by Katherine Burdekin (writing as "Murray Constantine"), C.L. Moore's "No Woman Born," Margaret Sinclair's "Short in the Chest," "Your Haploid Heart" by Tiptree, two lesbian separatist utopias, Sally Gearhart's *The Wanderground*, and Caroline

footnotes are positively microscopic.

This summary is not a review but primarily an announcement of the book's availability. Review copies were sent to the SF news and academic magazines, plus Library Journal, and to libraries with significant SF collections. Copies were exhibited and sold at the Schenectady conference. Because the appeal of this compilation is likely to be somewhat limited, the print run was small. Dave Mead will know if copies remain and their price (roughly \$20 for the paperback). Do not write Mallet, the publisher.

Neil Barron

CALLS FOR PAPERS

WHAT: Gender Roles and 1970s Popular Culture – Call for Contributors to a New Anthology on Gender, Women, and Popular Culture.

TOPIC: This anthology will include essays that explore the complex relationships between United States women and popular culture in the 70's. How were women's roles influenced and shaped by popular culture in this period? How did popular culture depict the Women's Movement? How did popular culture offer liberation for women? How did popular culture depict women from different races, classes, and ethnic backgrounds? The range of materials that could be addressed is vast: toys, television shows, movies, marital guides, magazines, to name just a few. Essays that adopt an interdisciplinary approach to their material are welcome, as are essays that discuss race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. Essays should be lively, vibrant, and engaging; they should be of broad interest to scholars in many academic disciplines from the humanities, including history,

women's studies, English, American studies, Chicana Studies, Asian-American studies, and African-American studies.

CONTACT: Dr. Sherrie A. Inness, Department of English, 1601 Peck Boulevard, Miami University, Hamilton, Ohio 45011

(inness@muohio.edu). Early submissions are encouraged.

SEND: Articles should be 8,000 to 10,000 words (this includes notes and references); accompanying photographs are welcome. Please send completed article and curriculum vita.

DEADLINE: September 1, 2001.

WHAT: Annual Central New York Conference on Language and Literature

WHO: Cortland College of the State University of New York

WHERE: Cortland, New York

WHEN: October 28-30, 2001

TOPICS: "Film and Literature: Imagining the Body." Do we imagine the corporeal differently in written texts and film? Is there a common, foundational idea of "the body" that underpins representations, regardless of medium? Or might we use differences in textual mediation to reconsider our theories of the body? This year's panel on film and literature seeks papers that comparatively analyze representations of the body in a (broad) consideration of these and other questions. Paper topics may include the portrayal of particular kinds of bodies (marked by race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, athletic pursuits, addictions of one kind or another); evocations of bodily affect (How, for example, might we compare written and filmed pornography? Written and filmed violence?); intimations of bodilessness (the spiritual, the supernatural); the imagined/implied bodies of the au-

Forbes' "London Fields;" ending with a discussion of Merge Piercy's *Body of Glass* (*He, She, and It* in the US).

According to Shaw, Gilman, who parodies the hypermasculine literary figure "Newbold Man" in the character Terry Nicholson, cannot quite escape the strictures of conventional narrative, but her resistance to the standard narrative of "The Adventures of Him in Pursuit of Her" actively engages the "gynaecocentric" theory of Frank Lester Ward, enthusiastically adopted by Gilman.

When Shaw discusses *Swastika Night*, she must alter her strategy since, as she notes, there is no evidence that Burdekin read the works of Melanie Klein or Karen Horney, but the novel "offers an objective analysis of gender stereotyping which resonates suggestively" with their own theories. The Nazi society in *Swastika Night* is doomed by its own ideological fissures, forced to expend great effort in repressing its own acts of repression. This chapter, dealing with a novel worth more notice, is one of the most valuable.

Shaw accurately describes women's struggles to engage critically with SF's dominant constructions of femininity, but her assertion that SF fandom of the 1940's and 1950's constituted an intelligentsia that demanded a high standard of writing is dubious at best, or more applicable to the UK than to the US. More interesting is her focus on the complex influences of nascent behaviorism, the canonization of the American school of Freudian psychology, and the gender anxieties underlying the pressures, post-World War II, embodied in the first Kinsey report, and in a 1947 study by Marynia Farham and Ferdinand Lundberg, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, that proclaimed a "deep illness."

The book's more useful discussions are based on less familiar works; the discussions of Moore and Piercy in terms of Donna Haraway's cyborg theory add little to SF criticism. Shaw's reading of Sinclair's story suggests a comic variation of Turing tests: investment in machine authority—the male-gendered machine, in this case a psychiatrist—makes even a malfunction seem normative. The Tiptree chapter recuperates a somewhat neglected story as an example of a feminist critique of science's claims of objectivity.

Shaw reads by Gearhart and Forbes' separatist feminist utopias with sensitivity, but her allegiances are clear. She is not in favor of the kind of gendered separatism, shading toward essentialism, that she finds in Gearhart's *The Wanderground*. Shaw regards Forbes' "perpetual negotiation" as a more flexible approach to utopian goals. In one way, Shaw's choice of tests is problematic: both are grounded in lesbian politics, but Gearhart's novel contains too many elements of the fantastic, as opposed to the sociologically and scientifically grounded "London Fields," to provide many workable contrasts.

My cavils are minor, however. This book, overpriced as such publications currently seem to be, is a worthy addition to SF criticism and is accessible to both students and to scholars.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**SCRAPS OF THE UNTAINTED SKY:
SCIENCE FICTION, UTOPIA, DYSTOPIA.**

Joan Gordon

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Westview Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, CO 80310-2877, December 2000. xix + 386 p. \$30, trade paper. 0-8133-9768-5.

Tom Moylan is already an important contributor to utopian scholarship with his *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (1986) and numerous articles. *Scraps from the Untainted Sky* should also prove valuable, though it doesn't so much break new ground as go over old ground with a new perspective.

The title refers to the vision at the end of Forester's "The Machine Stops," when the mechanistic dystopia explodes and its dying citizens see the briefest glimpse of a purer, eutopian world. And in that vision is the understanding of Moylan's central term, "critical dystopia," a phrase that describes a work that depicts a worse world while suggesting the possibility of eutopian change. Also crucial is the importance of distinguishing between dystopia and anti-utopia, the latter a term he reserves, as Lyman Tower Sargent does, for works that criticize eutopian possibility. This is an important distinction for Moylan as he emphasizes political and ethical action in utopian thinking.

Scraps of the Untainted Sky meticulously covers the major theoretical works in utopian scholarship, using them as building blocks to construct paradigms for eutopia, dystopia, and anti-utopia, and applies to these theoretical texts Moylan's own Marxist political and ethical analysis of the opposition politics of the 1960's and 1970's and the more conservative retreats of the 1980's and 1990's. Finally, he uses the aggregated theoretical and political framework to analyze several recent dystopian novels.

The book's first section offers readings of stories from the 1970's: "When It Changed" by Russ and "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" by Tiptree. It then surveys major theoretical works in SF and utopian studies of or about that same period by Fredric Jameson, Darko Suvin, Lyman Tower Sargent, and others. Part Two provides a close reading of Forester's famous dystopian story and surveys the theoretical work in dystopian literature, with particular attention paid to Irving Howe, Peter Fitting, Kingsley Amis, and the necessarily inevitable Jameson and Suvin. It establishes the range of utopian and anti-utopian positions possible in dystopian writing and defines and discusses "critical dystopias," including Pohl and Kornbluth's early *The Space Merchants*, Dick's "Faith of Our Fathers," and Zoline's "Heat Death of the Universe." Part Three examines three major critical dystopias: Robinson's *Gold Coast*, Butler's Parable series, and Piercy's *He, She, and It*.

Moylan's clarifying emphasis on the need for differentiating between dystopia and anti-utopia, his introduction of the term "critical dystopia," and his exploration of examples of the type are important contributions to the ongoing critical conversation in utopian studies. His discussion of the protocols of reading SF and utopian literature is especially fine. Further, his meticulous survey of the major theoretical works of SF and utopian scholarship provides an excellent ground for any reader wishing to be introduced to this rich field of study, either teacher or student. I do have a reservation, however. The book is extremely descriptive, overloaded with plot summary and reiteration of theoretical argument, which can be tedious for a reader already familiar with the texts. For less knowledgeable readers, it is so extensive as to sometimes take over the originals. In spite of this problem and, I fear, because of it in some cases, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* will become a very useful source in utopian and SF studies.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**LEARNING FROM OTHER WORLDS:
ESTRANGEMENT, COGNITION AND THE
POLITICS OF SCIENCE FICTION AND
UTOPIA**

Jimmy McCroy

Parrinder, Patrick, ed. *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*. Liverpool University Press, 4 Cambridge Street, Liverpool, L69 7ZU, England, December 2000. vii + 312 p. £35. 0-85323-574-0, £16.95, trade paper, 0-85323-5848. Duke University Press, 905 West Main Street, Durham, NC 27701, Summer 2001. \$54.95, 0-8223-2773-, \$18.95 trade paper, 0-8223-2776-7.

dience (and evocations of audience affect). They are interested in a variety of approaches (comparative studies of adaptations; close readings of texts; general outlines of theories; pedagogical practices and utility.

CONTACT: Submissions should go to Mike Reynolds, 1483 Huron Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108 or mike.reynolds@oberlin.edu.

SEND: 1-2 page abstracts (for 20-minute papers).

DEADLINE: July 3, 2001.

WHAT: "Classical Myths in Recent Literature and Film"

WHO: Southwest Texas American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association Conference.

WHERE: Albuquerque, New Mexico.

WHEN: February 13-17, 2001.

TOPICS: Papers on any aspect of classical mythology in modern literature and film are eligible for consideration. Possible topics include (but are not limited to): film versions of ancient myths, modern adaptations of classical material in film or literature, the classical heroic figure in modern film or literature, historical fiction in modern film, classical myth in children's literature or film.

CONTACT: Kirsten Day, Foreign Languages Department, 425 Kimpel Hall, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701 or via e-mail to . Please include e-mail address with surface mail abstracts so that we can confirm receipt of your submission.

SEND: Abstracts.

DEADLINE: October 15, 2001.

WHAT: Ghost Works

TOPIC: In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida claims that 'everyone reads, acts, writes with his or her ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other' (139). What

does it mean to read, act or write with ghosts if not to suggest that reading, writing, interpretation, 'being,' are inexorably linked to haunting? This special issue of *West Coast LINE*, scheduled for Spring 2002, is concerned with 'ghost writing' but seeks submissions from visual artists as well as scholars, poets and fiction writers whose works take up the issue of haunting, spectrality, revenance and the uncanny in millennial culture, popular or otherwise. Submissions to this issue might consider that talking with ghosts does not only mean being in conversation with them. It also means to use them instrumentally and, in turn, whether one knows it or not, to be used by them.

CONTACT: Jodey Castricano, Department of English, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C5 or jodeyc@istar.ca or jcastric@wlu.ca

SEND: Final submissions.

DEADLINE: July 31, 2001.

WHAT: *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology and the Arts*

TOPIC: *Janus Head* is actively seeking contributions for its tenth issue to be published in March 2002. The topic of this issue is "Magical Realism," to be guest edited by Bainard Cowan, Professor of Literature, Louisiana State University. What specifically is this movement, "Magical Realism?" From the works of such authors as Garcia Marquez, Allende, Morrison, Italo Calvino, Pelevin, Chamoiseau, and Rushdie, and films such as *Breaking the Waves*, *Comedie Infantile*, *Ugetsu*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, there is a motion away from the common linear perspective of reality towards a world view that undercuts the traditional empirical, rational tenets and embraces not only holistic patterns

This festschrift is a diverse collection of insightful elaborations and literary/cultural analyses dedicated to the scholar and theorist Darko Suvin. In dialogue with Suvin's previous writings on SF and utopia, particularly his exploration of "cognitive estrangement" (the notion that imagining alternative realities allows for a re-evaluation of one's own socio-political climate), the essays function in several ways.

First, they gesture toward a contemporary reassessment of SF as a potentially progressive genre capable of interrogating dominant cultural ideologies. They also allow for critical (re)evaluations of a myriad of popular literary and cultural texts, including the utopian writings of More and Marx, Robinson's popular Mars trilogy, and the recent journalistic free-for-all following the birth of a sheep named Dolly. Furthermore, because of the multiple visions and theoretical approaches, *Learning*, like a successful academic conference, is by turns cohesive and expansive. Culminating with an inspiring afterward by Suvin, in which the link between fiction and social intervention is made increasingly evident, this book provides an important opportunity to evaluate the political impact of SF and utopia.

Among the best essays are Carl Freedman's "Science Fiction and Utopia," Peter Fitting's "Estranged Invaders: *The War of the Worlds*," and Marleen Barr's "We're at the start of a new ball game and that's why we're all real nervous: Or, Cloning—Technological Cognition Reflects Estrangement from Women." Freeman's essay skillfully explores the paradoxes inherent in SF imaginings and cognitive estrangement (one can only possess a "perfect knowledge" of utopia by living within a utopia). He also deftly illustrates the extent to which a "deep theoretical affinity" exists between SF and "scientific socialism." Fitting and Barr's essays represent very different but equally effective applications of "cognitive estrangement." Fitting reads Wells' invasion as a Darwinian critique of colonialist practices that, despite the obvious racism, provides a far more detailed consideration of alien dynamics than do many of its imitators, such as Frederick Brown's "Arena" (1944). Social critique also informs Barr's ruminations upon media representations of emerging reproductive technologies. Although far less in debt to Suvin, she takes estrangement as a primary concern, revealing how "new cloning cognition yields old misogyny."

Scholars working with Suvin's theories of literature and culture will be hard pressed to find a more timely and comprehensive collection. Whether this will satisfy the intellectual curiosity of readers searching for extensive deliberations on SF's oppositional potential in a culture informed by post-Fordist economic structures is open to question. Suvin's eclectic "Afterward: With Sober, Estranged Eyes" lays important groundwork for future projects of that nature. As he eloquently states, progressive utopian discourse, including SF, must enact "a politics that can recuperate (make sense of) paradise and—alas especially—hell."

NONFICTION REVIEW

**REWRITING THE WOMEN OF CAMELOT:
ARTHURIAN POPULAR FICTION AND
FEMINISM**

Karen McGuire

Howey, Ann F. *Rewriting the Women of Camelot: Arthurian Popular Fiction and Feminism*. Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881, February 2001. xix + 137 p. \$59.95. 0-313-31604-X.

This analysis of women characters in recent and popular Arthurian fiction is effective and engaging. With emphasis on characters in the works of Marion Zimmer Bradley, Gillian Bradshaw, Fay Sampson, and Mary Stewart, Howey examines the images of royal women and magical woman, women as protagonists, and narrative techniques with emphasis on feminist interpretation. Us-

ing abundant examples, Howey demonstrates the ways these writing strategies “undermine traditional symbols of power, [...] redefine the heroic, and [...] problematize binary oppositions.”

With careful precision, she defines both popular fiction and feminism as these terms are used throughout the text and provides a medieval context for Arthurian mythology in the opening chapters. However, these sections are the least effective, for they cover familiar ground and could have been condensed, allowing for Howey to include more writers’ works. For example, Persia Woolley’s Guinevere Trilogy (She mentions *Child of the Northern Spring*, 1987, first in the series in passing.) would have been a worthy addition to the analysis and is conspicuous in its absence.

Howey’s analysis of various novels and short stories (One chapter is devoted to several short stories published between 1985 and 1996.) are clearly supported and maintain a focus on Arthurian popular fiction as a vehicle for revisioning the old myth while also examining the feminist themes that Bradley, Bradshaw, and Sampson consistently address and Stewart occasionally considers. Howey’s best analysis is devoted to Bradley’s best-selling *The Mists of Avalon*, which she commends for its emphasis on the communities of women; oddly, though, she refers to Raven “as Viviane’s servant” and thereby misses Raven’s function and significance.

Rewriting the Women of Camelot would be a useful addition to anyone interested in women characters of that myth. However, the appendices are redundant, since a list of character names is unnecessary, but the eight-page bibliography is helpful and points the reader to other Arthurian texts and analyses of tradition and recent versions of the myth.

[Usefully supplementing Howey is Raymond H. Thompson’s *The Return from Avalon: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in Modern Fiction* (1985) and, for instructors, *Approaches to Teaching the Arthurian Tradition* by Maureen Fries and Jeanie Watson (1992). –Ed.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History

Darren Harris-Fain

Goulart, Ron. *Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History*. Collectors Press, Box 230986, Portland, OR 97281, May 2000. 204 p. \$49.95. 1-888054-38-7. Orders to 800-423-1848.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the ratio in Goulart is seriously skewed, for the publisher claims 400+ color illustrations. Goulart admits this: “While we offer an informative text outlining the birth and development of the modern comic book [...] *Comic Book Culture* is basically a picture book.”

Such a book isn’t entirely useless for scholars of SF and fantasy. A substantial portion of American comic books has always been part of these genres, and little scholarship has been devoted to questions of genre in a field that’s typically received even less respect than prose fantasy or SF. Goulart’s book could serve as an introduction to American comic books for the uninitiated, and he does discuss comics that employ the fantastic.

The book’s scope is limited to American comic books, from the origins of the comic book in America to the late 1940’s. Thus, despite its title, *Comic Book Culture* deals primarily with the 1930’s and 1940’s, the Golden Age of the American comic books. The sparse text also limits the scope. Goulart’s attempt to provide a lot of information unfortunately results in a breezy pace in which chapters often read like laundry lists of names and dates, with much information packed into very short chapters. Goulart says of artist Alex Schomburg that “the writer who could fit the whole story of a typical Schomburg cover into that

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of reality, but the chaotic and unexpected manifestations of human experience as well. In this vein, questions of faith, salvation, and devotion arise, as well as the identity and formation of the individual within the community through meaning and experience.

Magical realism also responds to or correlates with the explosion of technology and the birth of cyberworlds, cultural interface and the seeds of planetary culture, quantum effects and black hole cosmology, and textualization and language theory. Themes and motifs of magical realism include the otherworldly power of things in the world, storytelling, the sacred, tradition and the breaking of tradition, generation, transformation, metaphor and lyrical language, the alien and other. We are considering essays, poetry and fiction, commentaries and explorations in film, art, and reviews, but are also seeking multimedia projects, translations, transcriptions, interviews and non-traditional contributions. The editors suggest that potential contributors review past issues of the journal and the criteria stated below in order to obtain a sense of the journal’s spirit, style, and interest.

CONTACT: Any questions should be directed to:

editors@janushead.org.

CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS: Submissions should be no longer than 9800-12000 words (may be shorter). Works should, of course, be typed and double-spaced. However, there is no format requirement (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.) due to the HTML conversion of word processing documents. In terms of content, the work should speak to the *Janus Head* attitude of “respect

and openness to the various manifestations of truth in human experience and the fostering of understanding through meditative thinking, narrative structure, and poetic imagination." Special consideration is given to any work which: a) emphasizes a qualitative, rather than quantitative approach to any research phenomena, b) successfully attempts a cross-disciplinary approach to the research topic, c) either via theory or methodological approach, speaks to the current continental philosophical crisis, and d) involves a creative and unique approach to the research topic.

CRITERIA FOR SHORT FICTION & POETRY: Submissions should be no longer than 9,800-12,000 words. Short fiction should be typed and double-spaced. Poetry should be typed in the format in which it would be printed. Special consideration is given to any fiction or poetry that speaks to the human condition in our current cultural and historical milieu. We advise you to browse through works of past contributors on our website before you decide to submit your own work. Our selections of poetry tend towards those whose language is fully fleshed, but succinct, lyrically poignant, and skillfully rendered.

Persons interested in submitting essays and/or short works of fiction should send a SASE, along with a hard diskette (PC format is preferred, but not necessary) to: *Janus Head*, PO Box 7914, Pittsburgh, PA 15216-0914. We do not accept essay submissions via e-mail. Poetry, if 300 words or less, may be sent via e-mail to:

poetry@janushead.org.

Authors should include their e-

limited space was indeed a master of compression," and one might say the same of Goulart's efforts in his constrained format. Such compression makes it difficult to keep names, publishers, and titles straight, which is compounded by the fact that there is no index, a major deficit given the number of names.

His book makes not claims to be an extended history or a work of serious scholarship, although he's certainly well informed, as his earlier books on comics indicate. Readers desiring a more developed treatment of American comic books and their relationship with SF and fantasy should consult the surveys of the secondary literature, such as that by Peter M. Coogan in *Anatomy of Wonder* (1995) and by Doug Highsmith in *Fantasy and Horror* (1999), both edited by Neil Barron.

Comic Book Culture could still be useful to scholars in spite of its limitations. For instance, while many histories of American comics begin with the 1930's, Goulart traces the prototypes of comic books back decades earlier, and the text gives a good idea of what comic books were like prior to 1950. He's also good at establishing relationships between comic books and other contemporary forms of entertainment, such as newspapers, pulp magazines, radio, and films. In addition, a few chapters depart from the chronological approach to focus on such topics as early and little-known superheroes, patriotic superheroes, comic book responses to World War II, and humor comics.

All chapters include sample illustrations, all in brilliant color with informative captions, but neither are keyed to the text, although this is a minor problem. Who could resist a book with captions like "Amazing-Man turns back an invasion of green Nazi gorillas"? Only someone who wouldn't be interested in a book like this in the first place.

Goulart concludes with a few paragraphs about collecting comic books, followed by a key to the price symbols that accompany each reproduced comic cover. If for nothing else, this book is valuable for presenting hundreds of pictures of covers that are worth not only a thousand words but also hundreds or thousands of dollars, far more than most scholars could afford. In that light, the book's price doesn't seem to be all that bad.

[To be reviewed in a future issue is a Johns Hopkins book, *Comic Book Nation: Transforming American Culture* by Bradford W. Wright, who provides an insightful political and cultural history of comic books -Ed.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

TRANSREALIST FICTION: WRITING IN THE SLIPSTREAM OF SCIENCE

Donald Gilzinger, Jr.

Broderick, Damien. *Transrealist Fiction: Writing in the Slipstream of Science*. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy, No. 90. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 195 pages, \$65.00. ISBN:0-313-31121-8.

Transrealist Fiction could serve as a companion to Broderick's earlier *Reading by Starlight* (Routledge, 1995) in which he attempted to construct a theory of postmodern science fiction using Samuel R. Delany as an exemplar. In this study, Broderick continues his examination of postmodernism in science fiction by proposing the evolution of a bifurcated model of science fiction: first, the *Star Wars/Star Trek* (and the like) novel tie-in branch aimed at the popular culture market and second, the literary branch, which produces more complex, serious (for want of a better word), and experimental texts. The dismissal of both branches by mainstream scholars has often been based on the perception, frequently inaccurate, that the genre is plot and setting driven with resulting poor characterization. If this take on contemporary science fiction sounds familiar, it is, having been proposed earlier by, among others, Robert Silverberg and Brian Aldiss.

However, Broderick extends the definition of pomo science fiction by offering the concept of transrealism originally posited by Rudy Rucker as “writing about your immediate perceptions in a fantastic way . . . [with] characters . . . based on actual people. . .” (1). In other words, transrealist writers employ the apparatus of science fiction and fantasy to describe their immediate reality or their peculiar perception of it, because science fiction is the most valid lens through which they can depict their personal experience. As a result, they are thereby freed to create dynamic, rounded characters. Perhaps this, too, is restating and redefining the obvious.

This study’s two most substantive and closely argued chapters focus on Philip K. Dick and Rudy Rucker whom Broderick identifies as models for transrealist writers. According to Broderick, Dick continually mined his personal experience, including failed marriages, drug abuse, religious euphoria, and haunting childhood incidents, for material in both his early novels like *Eye in the Sky* (1957) and *The Broken Bubble* (c1956) and his later *Valis* (1981) and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982). Dick’s characters frequently mirror himself or the dark-haired girls who fascinated him. As Dick admits, he was “making use of what I went through and saw to feed back into my life as a writer, so that it was not wasted in that respect” (129). Most of the biographic information in this volume is gleaned from Anne Dick’s *The Search for Philip K. Dick, 1928-1982* (Mellen, 1995) and Dick’s essays collected in *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick* (Vintage, 1995).

Rucker’s chapter is deeply informed by autobiographical information provided through what appears to have been a lengthy and frank correspondence between him and Broderick. It includes a table that identifies the character representing Rucker in each of his stand-alone works and series as well as the period in his life, from the early 1960s through the late 1990s, that each text portrays. Rucker admits that many of his characters are composites of family members and other people he knows (as in the *Ware* series), but in most of his work “the main character is modeled on me” (157) as in *White Light* (1980) or *Saucer Wisdom* (1999).

However, the difficulty with claiming the centrality of complex characterization based on personal experience in any fiction is the tendency of readers to commit the biographical mistake. Broderick admits this can be the case and then elides over it. However, I believe that transrealist characterization would be difficult to read as such without intimate knowledge of the writer’s life, and most writers withhold those details from us for reasons of privacy and even modesty. Furthermore, the danger of reading too much transrealist autobiographic detail into dynamic, rounded fictional characters might force writers to include personal disclaimers in their novels, as does Nicola Griffith at the close of *Slow River*.

Transrealist Fiction is alternately absorbing and frustrating. It also contains a good number of typos and a high price tag for 176 pages of text. Still, Broderick actively extends the boundaries of science fiction critical theory. It’s a risk well worth taking, and *Transrealist Fiction* should be read by anyone interested in closely reasoned, cutting-edge criticism.

FICTION REVIEW
**DOSSIER, A COLLECTION OF SHORT
STORIES**

Michael Levy

Chapman, Stepan. *Dossier, A Collection of Short Stories*. Creative Arts Book Co., 833 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94710, 2001. 166 p. \$13.95, paper. 0-88739-280-6.

A few years back Chapman’s *The Troika* (1997) became the first small press book ever to win a major SF prize, the Philip K. Dick Award, an honor it richly deserved. Now, Chapman has brought out his first full-length short

mail address and full postal address. Please allow six to eight months for editorial decisions.

DEADLINE: The deadline for submissions is December 1st, 2001.

WHAT: Children’s Fantasy Fiction Debates for the Twenty First Century

WHO: An Interdisciplinary conference hosted by the Science Fiction Foundation and the Association for Research in Popular Fictions

WHERE: Bulmershe College, University of Reading UK

WHEN: 7th, 8th & 9th January 2002

TOPICS: Advance Call for Papers and Panel Convenors - Abstracts for 25 minute presentations should be submitted by 1st August 2001 on all areas of research concerning children’s fantasy fiction across media or popular cultural forms e.g. books, graphic novels, radio, television, film, games, story telling and toys which will make a contribution to a forum on new approaches and research perspectives for this field of study.

CONTACT: Helen Briscoe, Conference Administrator, MCCA, Liverpool John Moores University, Dean Walters Building St James Road, Liverpool L1 7BR UK. E-mail h.briscoe@livjm.ac.uk.

Fax + 44 151 231 5049.

Tel + 44 151 231 5052

SEND: Please send proposals.

DEADLINE: August 1st 2001.

WHAT: *The Superhero Reader: An Introduction to Comic Books and the Superhero Genre*

TOPIC: Original essays are invited for a collection tentatively entitled *The Superhero Reader: An Introduction to Comic Books and the Superhero Genre*. The purpose of this book is to explore the cultural sig-

nificance of superhero comic books from a variety of approaches and perspectives. Ideally, this collection will be a suitable and comprehensive introductory text book for the growing field of comic book studies. Possible topics may include but are not limited to: Origins and History, Characters, Archetypes, Psychology, Gender, Ethnicity, Sexualities, Fandom, Creators, Corporate Structure, Cinematic/Television Adaptations, Themes and Trends, Marketing, Censorship.

CONTACT: Jeffrey A. Brown, Department of Popular Culture, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0226. Tel: (419) 372-2982. Fax: (419) 372-2577.

E-mail: jabrown@bgnet.bgsu.edu

SEND: Please submit 2-page proposals or completed manuscripts (MLA style, 15 - 25 pages in length) to:

DEADLINE: The deadline for the submission of completed papers is September 4th, 2001.

WHAT: Technopias: Texts, Identities, and Technological Cultures

WHO: The University of Strathclyde

WHERE: Glasgow, Scotland

WHEN: July 10-12 2002

TOPIC: The University of Strathclyde is a world leader in science and engineering yet, like many similar institutions, it maintains a strong commitment to the humanities. In societies that seem to place increasing emphasis on the application of technology and scientific knowledge, this kind of commitment is sometimes seen as irrelevant. For humanities departments, this situation raises new questions of identity, within both university faculties and cultural discourse itself. In the light of this situation, the aims of

story collection, and it is also a definite winner. *Dossier* features seventeen of Chapman's decidedly off-center fantasies. Among the best are "Boots Practice," in which a soldier tries out an experimental military version of the classic fairytale footwear; "The Stairways of Causation," which concerns an Indian healer who goes to truly amazing lengths and heights to cure a little girl's illness; "Noc-turne," the tale of an epic battle between a hate-filled automobile engine and a monstrous seaweed creature; "The Sister City," which concerns a man who meets the spirit of a dead Japanese village in a bar and falls in love with her; and two of the strangest end-of-the-world stories you will ever come across, "When the Moths Came Down" and "Minutes of the Last Meeting." Chapman plays games with reality in an almost obsessive fashion, but his surreal, dream-like and intensely visual tales have more in common with the fiction of Franz Kafka or the paintings of Salvador Dali than they do with the work of Philip K. Dick. He's perhaps the best of a group of writers—including Steven Aylett, Michael Cisco, Jeffrey Thomas, and Jeff VanderMeer, among others—who are creating outstanding speculative fiction more or less entirely outside the normal genre venues. *Dossier* is a wonderful short story collection, and I heartily recommend it.

FICTION REVIEW

***THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY AND
HORROR: THIRTEENTH ANNUAL
COLLECTION***

Margaret McBride

Datlow, Ellen and Windling, Terri. *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Thirteenth Annual Collection*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000. 514 pages, trade, \$17.95. ISBN 0-312-26416-X or hardcover, \$29.95. ISBN 0-312-26274-4.

A quick glance through Datlow's and Windling's anthology for 1999 makes it clear why this series has been a staple in the fiction and horror fields for over a decade. Not only do these editors collect some of the best short stories and poetry from diverse sources, but they also give useful introductory articles on novels and other publishing information. Terri Windling begins with thirty-nine pages summarizing the notable fantasy publications. Ellen Datlow has thirty-seven pages of summary for horror, followed by Edward Bryant's twenty-five pages on fantasy and horror in the media, Seth Johnson's seven pages on comics, and eight pages giving information on people of note in the field who died in 1999. The last twelve pages of the book list other short stories that the editors consider notable. I regularly read *Locus*, *Asimov's*, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and other review sources to compile my "books worth reading" list; nevertheless, I found books I had never read about in the other sources. Windling says that over five hundred books were reviewed for the year. The anthology introductions are particularly useful for librarians and teachers who are asked to recommend books because they list subgenres (such as urban fantasy, mythic fiction, humorous fantasy, etc.), in addition to giving picks for the top twenty books in fantasy and top sixteen in horror. I appreciated the philosophic principles discussed before the listings, including the citation from *Interstitial Arts Manifesto* describing "art that can't be labeled or defined." The wide range of sources (literary and university journals, on-line sites, one-author collections as well as the expected fantasy magazines and anthologies) used for the selection process suggest the editors are willing to cross boundaries, as does the fact that some novels and stories are listed by both editors.

If the above doesn't convince you this anthology belongs in all public libraries and your own private collection, a glance through the table of contents should do so. You will find the names you might expect, such as Charles DeLint, Neil Gaiman, Ursula K. LeGuin, Patricia A. McKillip, Delia Sherman, Gene

Wolfe, and Jane Yolen. You will also find an N. Scott Momaday story revisioning a Kiowan folktale about the Big Dipper, a story by Juan Goytisolo translated from Spanish, a number of poems, and an essay by Douglas E. Winter urging horror writers to ignore publishers' typecasting and remember that the unexpected is the core of horror.

Readers of diverse interests will find stories they relished reading during 1999 as well as new ones to pique their interest. A teacher of almost any class dealing with speculative fiction or other literary themes could find a story in this anthology worth sharing with students. One story takes place during Britain's WWII air battles (Ian R. MacLeod "The Chop Girl"); another deals with Irish female laborers in England (Mary Sharratt "The Anatomy of a Mermaid"); yet another refers to *Alice in Wonderland* in a wonderfully surreal ship setting (Denise Lee "Sailing the Painted Ocean"). Several stories would be appropriate for readers interested in the burgeoning subgenre of retold fairy tales. Wendy Wheeler's "Skin So Green and Fine" transplants "Beauty and the Beast" to Santa Domingo with voodoo figures, while Michael Marshall Smith's "What You Make It" combines horror and fairytale in a Disneyfied retirement home—four terms you're unlikely to see combined too often. Elizabeth Birmingham's "Falling Away" could be taught in a class on Native American themes as well as a class based on speculative fiction. I am not generally much of a horror fan, but Paul J. McAuley's "Naming the Dead" with its layers of British reality and long-lived ghosts, as well as its interesting central character, made me want to read more in its milieu. I also liked Neil Gaiman's mixture of sadistic criminals and mythic religion in "Keepsakes and Treasures: A Love Story." Kelly Link's "The Girl Detective" gets my vote for the story I most want to discuss with other readers and will be irresistible to anyone who loved Nancy Drew stories. The last story I will mention for special recognition is Eleanor Arnason's "The Grammarian's Five Daughters." I don't know if the students in a writing class would appreciate its sly wit, poetic language, and use of fairy tale motifs to memorialize the parts of speech, but I think members of SFRA would. The thirteenth edition of *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* is worth buying for her story alone.

FICTION REVIEW

ARCHANGEL PROTOCOL

Michael Levy

Morehouse, Lyda. *Archangel Protocol*. New York: Roc, 2001. 352 p. paperback, \$6.99. ISBN: 0-451-45827-3.

Morehouse's first novel combines traditional cyberpunk and hard-boiled detective elements with a bit of romance, a dash of parody, and some truly whacked out theology to create an entertaining science-fiction adventure. The novel reminds me to some extent of Richard Paul Russo's much praised Carlucci series, although it is less grim and horrific. Deirdre McMannus is a disgraced former cop now scratching out a life on the fringes of society as a private eye. She lives in a world where virtually everyone is LINKed, tied into a late twenty-first century equivalent of the World Wide Web, through wetware installed in their skulls. Most of the world's major nations, including the U.S., are theocracies and use of the LINK is limited to people who are members of an established church. This religious revival came about after angels began to appear on the LINK and proclaim God's message. Sometime later, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Deirdre's partner in the NYPD, for reasons unknown even to himself, goes crazy while on duty and assassinates the Pope, who is visiting New York. Deirdre, caught in the backwash from that crime, soon finds herself both excommunicated from the Catholic Church and exiled from the LINK. Now, she has been recruited by Michael Angelucci, a strangely charismatic NYPD officer who wants her to help him discredit the LINK-angels. The problem is, though, that much of the evidence implies that the LINK-angels may indeed be the real thing and that Lieu-

Technotopias are to: investigate the complex historical and contemporary interplay between the humanities and technology; address the impact of technologies upon the formation of physical and cultural identities; consider historical and contemporary representations of technology, and reflect upon the place of the arts within modern academia.

To realize the interdisciplinary nature of this conference we invite papers from all fields of literary and cultural criticism, as well as the scientific and technological disciplines, at both post-doctoral and post-graduate levels. Suggested topics include: Literatures of technology: historical contexts; Frontiers of the imagination: Science and Fiction; (Post)modern texts / (post)industrial spaces; Technologists: technology and the word; The science of Angelica: gender and technology; Culture, technology, and the body; Technologies and the self; New media, old academe; Paradigms of utility in academia.

CONTACT: Stephen Jones, Technotopias Organising Committee, Department of English Studies, University of Strathclyde, Livingstone Tower, 26 Richmond Street, Glasgow, G1 1XH. Tel: 0141 548 3529 (Tues-Thurs 10am-4pm). Fax: 0141 552 3493. Further information will shortly be available through the department's online *Journal Ecloga*:

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/ecloga>

SEND: Abstracts of 200 words for a 20 - 30 minute paper

DEADLINE: 31 December 2001

WHAT: "SF" Issue of *Reconstruction*

TOPIC: *Reconstruction* is seeking formally and intellectually innovative submissions in anticipation of the Fall 2001 debut of this new peer-

reviewed electronic culture studies journal. Published in a cellular format rather than traditional issues, each cell will be organized around specific themes with a unit editor overseeing production and forging links between existing cells to formulate ever-changing juxtapositions of new knowledge. In addition to the organic structure made possible by its electronic format, *Reconstruction* will promote work that is interactive, and will actively solicit reader response to comment on, question, and complement existing works while pushing the journal into new directions. Submissions may be created from a variety of perspectives, including, but not limited to: geography, cultural studies, folklore, architecture, history, sociology, psychology, communications, music, political science, semiotics, theology, art history, queer theory, literature, criminology, urban planning, women's studies, graphic design, etc. Both theoretical and empirical approaches are welcomed.

"SF" seeks criticism focusing on science and speculative fiction, as well as fantasy and magic realism, dedicated to broadening the scope of SF Studies. Articles focusing on SF and its relation to political ideologies; sexuality and gender construction; the wilderness/civilization divide; colonial and postcolonial studies; race, ethnicity and racism; class; techno-fetishism; and cultural theory, as well as studies of individual authors and their oeuvres, are encouraged. Moreover, articles concerning SF and its placement and popularity in various media are desired (which may or may not be limited to the following: television, cinema, music, and comic books).

Reconstruction is also considering

tenant Angelucci may not be entirely human either. *Archangel Protocol* features a variety of lovely little touches. When McMannus gets really depressed, she reaches into the bottom drawer of her desk, not for the traditional bottle of whiskey but for a bent up romance novel. She has a series of run-ins with a rather terrifying mafia type named Morningstar and eventually discovers that some of her most valuable allies are Hassidic terrorists. And then there's the rather odd sex scene in the belfry. This is an excellent first novel from a writer who's definitely worth keeping an eye on.

FICTION REVIEW

THE OCTAGONAL RAVEN

Janice M. Bogstad

Modesitt, Jr. L.E. *The Octagonal Raven*. New York: TOR Books, Feb. 2001. 432 pages, cloth, \$27.95. ISBN 0 312 87720 X

A very politically oriented mystery story, this novel requires a commitment of attention and time, both of which are richly rewarded. Like the science fiction of Pat Cadigan or Iain Banks, it engages the reader's thought processes at several levels and satisfies a taste for both problem-solving and adventure. In the far future, Daryn Alwyn is embroiled in a mystery that causes him to question the structure of his society, his own wealth and position, and his family members' morality. Daryn is a rebel. When given the opportunity to work for the family media business, UniCom, he chose first to serve as a pilot in the military, then to create his own media-oriented career, both as a consultant for family competitors and as an artist in this complex medium. The story here revolves around numerous unsuccessful attempts on his life and successful ones against his family and other members of a social elite. He gradually discovers how his social class profit from being able to afford gene-sculpting for their children and how some of his peers are now manipulating government in order to ensure the longevity of their social position. Modesitt executes his multi-level plot through the use of first-person narrative, involving the reader intimately in Daryn's dilemmas. Thus, the reader is given very little advantage over his protagonist. The fast-paced action of the novel begins in the first chapter, as Daryn is attacked at a social gathering, and becomes more and more complex as the attacks do. But all the threats to Daryn's life allow him to make elaborate attempts at researching how they were executed, satisfying a reader's desire to further understand the technology of his world.

His social investigations are no less intriguing. In trying to solve the mystery and protect himself, Daryn uncovers plots and counter plots involving his family members on both sides of a debate about access to education and to the benefits it brings. As he attempts to find his attackers, his quest forces him into parts of his social space from which he was previously insulated and requires him to confront a host of ugly truths. Daryn's quest is hampered by his own ignorance about the social stratification of his society and his confusion about why he, the least powerful and least well known of his siblings, should be under attack. He finds he can trust few people, himself included, until he can become not only more socially and politically aware but also more honest with himself. He can't understand why he is a target until he begins to understand how his family and his class manage their society, and in fact, until his sister, head of another powerful media company, is killed. Her instructions on his inheritance and information about his parents and other sibling help Daryn to unravel threats to both friends and foes in order to chart his own course through a moral minefield. While avoiding standard contemporary political positions (anarchy, capitalism, democracy, oligarchy, socialism), Modesitt explores the personal/political relationship and emphasizes each individual's complicity in rights and wrongs to create a truly mature story about adults with adult problems. He also extrapolates the sort of society that results from near-future technological and scientific advances, without neglecting the human story in the effort to explain the science.

While this book falls outside his several series works (*Recluse*, *Spellsong Cycle*, *Gravity Dreams*), it is one of his best to date.

FICTION REVIEW
THE COMING

Matthew Wolf-Meyer

Haldeman, Joe. *The Coming*. New York: Ace, 2000. 217 pages, cloth, \$21.95. ISBN 0-441-00769-4.

While falling into the corpus of science fiction novels that rely on first contact with aliens as a central organizing theme, Haldeman's *The Coming* finds its most direct precedents in Fredrick Pohl's *The Day the Martians Came* (1988) and, strangely, Mack Reynolds's *After Utopia* (1977); *The Coming*, like Pohl's novel, is not about aliens, but rather about human beings and their imminent contact, whether confrontational or not, with another species. Unlike Pohl's feeble Martians, Haldeman's aliens, who insist they are entirely harmless, prove themselves to be far superior to Earthlings, thereby raising the ire of the US government in its fear of a militaristically superior foe. While not a satire of the American government and its militaristic fetishism, *The Coming*, interestingly, is primarily a political novel, reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1969) and Haldeman's other works.

Set in 2055, Haldeman's near-future Gainesville, Florida, superficially mirrors our own times, with the notable exception of the national enforcement of anti-sodomy and anti-oral sex laws. The overt implication in the novel is that the government, largely portrayed as conservative, has reinstated historical laws to police homosexuality. This, I find, is the most interesting aspect of the novel, continuing Haldeman's evident interest in human sexuality and cultural norms begun in *The Forever War* (1974) and compounded in much of his other work. Whereas the government and society (at times) is largely indifferent to homosexuality in *The Forever War* (when not fully supportive), *The Coming* makes an interesting counterpoint, quite possibly in response to the homophobia still evident in a post-Stonewall American culture. Whereas human sexuality in *The Forever War* is given free reign, *The Coming* reveals Haldeman's libertarian leanings against the government and its policing of human sexuality, reminiscent of Michel Foucault and his condemnation of government and its control of sexuality most evident in his *The History of Sexuality, Part One* (1978). This is not to say that *The Coming* acts as polemic, but rather that Haldeman employs the continuing homophobia in American culture as an axis on which the plot of the novel turns.

The relationship between husband and wife, Norman and Aurora Bell, the protagonists of the novel, is predicated on the need for Norman to appear heterosexual. When Aurora learns of the government's preparations to move against the aliens and acts against it, she and Norman are blackmailed through his past homosexual, hence illegal, activities by those sympathetic to the government and its anxieties. There is no mention of AIDS or any other factor for the governmental policing of its citizens' sexualities, so the policies forbidding such acts can only be read as the blatantly homophobic act of a conservative, puritanical government. Haldeman, in his condemnation of American politics and, more broadly, American culture, has never been more astute (although Disney World as mecca in *Forever Free* worked on similar levels and to similar ends). And yet, Haldeman's utopian impulse is intact throughout the novel. It is clearly utopian, but rather than embracing the after-effort narrative of most utopian fictions, Haldeman reveals what needs to be acted against and offers the reader the option for utopia, but only through the reader's efforts.

I mention Reynolds's *After Utopia* with some reservations: for readers familiar with the novel, Reynolds' *deus ex machina* offers a wonderful parallel to Haldeman's; for readers unfamiliar with *After Utopia*, it allows me to hint at the ending without divulging the conclusion to the novel in its entirety. *The*

proposals for additional cells, which should be organized around a general theme with far-reaching applications. Proposals for new cells should be clearly labeled, sent with cv and/or resume, and abstract for initial paper to be authored by the cell's editor.

CONTACT:

submissions@reconstruction.ws

Large files, such as Flash movies or essays with many large pictures, should be sent on a zip disk or CD-R to: Submissions, *Reconstruction*, 104 East Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43402. Since we anticipate a number of innovative submissions, we encourage contributors to contact the editors at

submissions@reconstruction.ws with any questions.

SEND: Please send textual essays as attachments in Word or HTML to:

DEADLINE: Submissions are always accepted for consideration. However, to be considered for Fall 2001, submissions must be received no later than August 1st, 2001.

WHAT: "Creator" *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*.

TOPIC: Creators do not just 'create' or 'act' — they are privileged agents, points of origin, sources of innovation and transformation. Within religious systems, creators can exist in an extra-discursive real beyond nature and culture, functioning as the origin of the word and being. They can be supernatural, existing outside nature to influence earthly events via strange powers. They can also be 'supra' natural — above nature — capable of acts that both break and establish laws to which the created

are subject. Yet, these types of creators only seem to exist through the cultural economies that allow their representation. Their roles and personas can differ with the production, combination and utilization of selected characterizations: in other words, creators are created.

Cultural history shows their continual design. The Romantics invented the author in the form of the creative artist-come-genius who is the originator of unique artistic impulses conceived in accordance with his/her own laws. Such creators seem peculiarly modern — they are revered sources of the innovation that continually pushes us beyond tradition, creating new value. And when such value is debated, we can at least, according to some existentialists and liberals, count on the ability of the authentic individual to have the power to create him or her self.

But creators cannot be confined to the spheres of religion and art. In the world of science, improving upon nature is often the preserve of the (mad?) inventor. Scientific creators are capable of epic acts that command the codes of nature in novel ways, even to the extent of mastery and the creation of new life where we have moved from Frankenstein as a scientist to Frankenstein as an ism.

The editors of “Creator” invite cultural interventions interpreting the creator theme from a wide variety of angles. We welcome theoretical, historical and contemporary perspectives. In particular, we encourage contributions that identify the politics of creators and their creations.

Coming, after all, is a detective novel. Not necessarily with respect to the nature of the aliens, their intentions (which they make quite clear), or any other trope that might be construed as linked with the motif of first contact narratives, but in that once read, the novel fails to yield the ultimate answer to Haldeman’s mystery: *The Coming* is clearly a mystery of the most wonderful sort, compelling and engrossing.

Each chapter is constructed as one of three months, culminating in January and the arrival of the aliens, and is developed through a passing-of-the-torch technique where sections are defined by the main character in them (for example, “Aurora” or “Norman”) and rely on the meeting of the two characters for the shift in narrative focus to occur. Due to Haldeman’s masterful narrative skill, *The Coming* reads cinematically, as a detective novel of sorts. In the purest, most cliché-ridden, sense of the term, *The Coming*, like all of Haldeman’s work, is a page-turner. Weaving political insight into a novel of utopian compassion, Haldeman, again, creates a fiction compelling in its realism, its urgency, and its insight. But like the best of political works, Haldeman calls for revolution but relies on us, as readers and as citizens, to enact our own future history. The burden of utopia is on us.

FICTION REVIEW

THE QUANTUM ROSE

John A. Wass

Asaro, Catherine. *The Quantum Rose*. New York: Tor Books, 2001. 398 pages, cloth, \$24.95. ISBN 0-312-89062-1

This novel, the sixth in the author’s Skolian empire saga, is quite a bit more than the standard space opera that takes up so much shelf-space in the science fiction section of most bookstores. It is more than the simple blend of romance and hard science that it seems at first glance, and the interested reader may drill down many layers to get to the ultimate truths. Perhaps a little background is in order.

The opening scene finds Kamoj Quanta Argali, the young governor of her impoverished province on the planet Balumil, swimming in a local river under the watchful eye of her bodyguard Lyode. Before the setting is even constructed as a medieval society, we are told that Lyode’s name is short for light emitting diode and that no one in that society has the faintest idea just what that means. So by page two the reader is confronted with the hypothesis that what was once a high-tech civilization has, in some way, degraded to the primitive. Quite a few surprises await. On the first two pages we meet not only the heroine but the protagonist as well, in the form of a stranger, Havylr Lionstar. This is a physically immense and apparently very wealthy individual who rents an old palace that previously belonged to Kamoj’s family.

It seems that the socialization/marriage process in this society is viewed as a business merger, not really a great stretch. To assist her poor state out of its economic plight, Kamoj has established a “merger” with Jax Ironbridge, the powerful governor of a far more prosperous neighboring province. As with all of the major male characters, Jax has his good and bad features. He is a strong, intelligent leader given to violent bursts of temper. Lionstar, on the other hand, is a quiet, brooding alcoholic whose problems are driven by deep mental angst stemming from a long stay in a small coffin (read the book). To complicate what might have been a very one-dimensional situation, Lionstar observes Kamoj during the above swim and proposes a merger by offering a dowry so large that she cannot refuse and Ironbridge cannot hope to match. Naturally, the volatile Jax is incensed at the thought of Kamoj, almost betrothed to him at birth, being snatched away at the last minute by a rich stranger. This sets the conflict that drives the story’s visible action and provides not only insight into the planet’s culture and ecology, but also sets the stage for the finer drama that plays out in

the minds of the central characters. As to plot movement, suffice it to say that the young bride finds attraction to, then love for, the stranger. Marriage follows abduction by Ironbridge, annulment of the first marriage, and a “forced” second marriage. Intrigue follows action as we learn more of Lionstar’s past, his reasons for coming to Balumil, and his eventual recovery of his bride as the lovers are reunited after the requisite chase and defeat of Ironbridge. This novel first appeared as a serialization in *Analog* from May to August 1999.

Far from being another entry in a “franchise universe” series, this novel is an attempt to put a very new spin on a very old technique. While allegories abound in print and have been around since the onset of the written word, this is the first that bases characters and plot on quantum scattering principles. As such, it is intensely puzzling (to the non-physicist) until the author does a bit of explaining in the last few pages. Even then it takes a bit of thought to pull the pieces together. It has been said of the author, that she sometimes forgets to let loose of her day job (as a molecular physicist), and this shows in most of her work.

What sets this work apart from her other novels, as well as any other entries in the space opera genre, is an intense interest in illustrating some principles of quantum mechanics through the vagaries of human behavior, brilliantly scripted as a very entertaining tale of love and action. Not quite a futuristic Casablanca (in fact containing many elements of the 1965 Charleton Heston movie *The Warlord*) with tortured hero, exotic setting, and evil protagonists, this story features a fractured hero and an antagonist with several admirable features. As such it evades easy categorization in a nice, compact sub-genre. Devoid of humor, devices such as gender reversal (as in an earlier novel, *The Last Hawk*) and mega-space battles, the book relies on pace, intelligent use of characters, tension, and above all mental pain inflicted over physical discomfort to drive the plot. There are few wasted words and every thought and action places another piece of the puzzle.

This work can easily be viewed as a very fresh look at an old idea, with an added twist. While realizing that the romance novel with flawed hero and not-quite evil antagonist is not new, and layering the plot in a science-fiction scenario quite old, the author has achieved a convincing blend. The mixture consists of irony (a technologically backward society with links to advanced science), allegory (humans and human interaction viewed as quantum theory), and romance described in a way that is both fascinating to the reader and intriguing to the scholar. The author is adept at not only style and characterization, but plotting as well. The elegance of her style is the very sparseness by which detailed backgrounds are constructed and profound emotions are expressed. The reader is given a base upon which to fill in some details but only those details the story allows within certain bounds. This type of construction lends itself to interpretation on many levels and, therefore, is suitable for the more adventurous analyst.

Suggested topics include (but are by no means limited to): religion in contemporary culture, New Age Gods within, Creationism vs. evolutionism, etc; the authority and property rights of creators, including intellectual property in an information age, the artist as star and cultural leader or prophet; the economics of creation: the aura of the creator and the construction of brand value (from fashion designers to star authors), the patenting of inventions and information (including biosciences), the new media authors and the creative (gift and commercial) economies of the Internet, freeware, the mp3 saga, code poaching, etc; distinctions between the creative artist, performance artist and artisan, creator and producer, originals and copies, authentic and artificial; reconstructions of creators (especially Gods, biographies or The Biography of God, making of documentaries); individual creators and communal creation (e.g. directors as creators of films, community art, anonymous art, festivals, carnivals, galleries); myths of self-creation and social construction (from entrepreneurs to criminals, baptism to reborn-again); and minority creators, countercultural creators, gendered creators.

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SEND: Please email enquiries, abstracts and 1-2,000 word articles in MLA style.

DEADLINE: 16 July 2001.

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

The SFRA is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, book-sellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership.

Visit the SFRA Website at <<http://www.sfra.org>>. For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the website.

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