

#258

May-June 2002

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The *SFRAReview* (ISSN 1068-395X) is published six times a year by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) and distributed to SFRA members. Individual issues are not for sale; however, starting with issue #256, all issues will be published to SFRA's website no less than two months after paper publication. For information about the SFRA and its benefits, see the description at the back of this issue. For a membership application, contact SFRA Treasurer Dave Mead or get one from the SFRA website: <www.sfra.org>.

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Correction

Kenneth Andrews mistakes "Bollywood" for a typo on p. 17 of issue 257. This is the popular name for the Bombay film industry, which annually churns out far more movies than Hollywood, virtually all of them musicals. For Bollywood at its best, try the current hit, "Lagaan." Paul Brians, Department of English Washington State University Pullman, WA 99164-5020 brians@wsu.edu <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians>

University of Calgary Library

The following is a copy of a press release issued by the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, announcing a new collection of interest to scholars of science fiction:

It came from the attic...and garage...and...Gift from local family makes U of C Library a world centre for science fiction research

The library at the University of Calgary now has one of the strongest resources anywhere for the study of science fiction. Library officials announced today they have received a gift of 30,000-40,000 science fiction books and magazines from the family of a local collector who died in 2001.

Although librarians have yet to unpack all the material, it's clear from the collector's indexes that the collection spans Jules Verne in the 19th century through to cyberpunk in the 21st. Early indications are that it is strong in the pulp magazines of the 1920s, '30s, '40s and '50s, as well as in monographs of early 20th century science fiction. "There isn't a thing here that isn't of interest," says Dr. Janis Svilpis, a U of C English professor who teaches a course in science fiction and has written about pulp magazines. "What we have here is a complete account of our changing attitudes toward science. This makes Calgary a major source of material on early science fiction."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: SFRA 2002

Michael M. Levy

Well, I'm finally home after doing a week of traveling beyond the conference. I can now say that I've managed to fall down in two of the finest examples of Roman Hill Forts on Hadrian's Wall. Also got to hear evensong at both Salisbury Cathedral and York Minister, a heavenly experience. Walked the city wall at York, did museums, historical sites, etc. Saw Avesbury in the south too, which is even stranger than Stonehenge in some ways.

I hope everyone who attended the conference in New Lanark had as good a time as I had. There were many, very fine papers and our guest writers, Ken MacLeod, Pat Cadigan, and Paul McAuley, were wonderful. There were also two fine addresses by Andy Sawyer and Pilgrim Award winner Mike Ashley. Ashley's separate Pilgrim Award acceptance speech, which centered on the strange things that have happened to him while he's researched his many books, was hysterically funny. It will appear in the Review at a later date if I can transcribe the tape. Judith Berman's Pioneer Award acceptance speech, a follow up to her thought provoking essay, "Science Fiction Without the Future," will appear in a future issue of *The New York Review of Science Fiction*. Joan Gordon's gracious and funny Clareson Award speech should also appear in the Review. The venue, New Lanark, was beautiful, but wet, in typical Scottish fashion. The food ranged from excellent to a bit odd, and I noticed a number of Americans gamely nibbling on haggis and blackpudding at breakfast. The only real sadness was that the airlines totally loused up Joan Slonczewski's flight and she wasn't able to be with us. Farah Mendlesohn and Andrew Butler did a wonderful job of setting up and running the conference and I would like to once again thank them for all of their work.

Now we have to look forward to next year. There's an election coming up with two good candidates for each position. More on that elsewhere. There's Peter Brigg's conference in Guelph, Ontario next year, with Geoff Ryman, author of such superb novels as *The Child Garden* and *Was*, as guest of honor. Although final decisions have not yet been made we're considering bids for 2004-2006 conferences in College Station Texas, Chicago, Illinois, Las Vegas, Nevada, and, would you believe, Lublin, Poland.

Now all I have to do is get back to all of the writing projects I've been putting off. That and cut the lawn, which grew a foot while we were off in the UK!

NONFICTION REVIEW

HOBBITS, ELVES, AND WIZARD: EXPLORING THE WONDERS AND WORLDS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S THE LORD OF THE RINGS

Lya M. Vullen

Stanton, Michael N. *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizard: Exploring the Wonders and Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press, 2001. 192 pages, plus bibliography and index, hardcover, \$19.95. ISBN 0-312-23826-6.

It would seem easy to dismiss this book as part of the hype surrounding the release of a major motion picture. That would be a mistake, as Michael Stanton, the author of *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizards*, has provided an informative and comprehensive commentary on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, something that is too often missing from the myriad of popular, fan-oriented books published about the father of modern epic fantasy literature. The book contains few radically new interpretations of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, but it is a good compilation of many widely held opinions into a compact, inexpensive, easy to

read, yet erudite volume. It is very suitable for the general reader, or as a supplementary text to a high school or college course on Tolkien.

Stanton draws on thirty years of teaching British Literature and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* at the University of Vermont. The book is organized to cover most of the basic questions a reader or student might have about Tolkien's heroic fantasy. After two introductory chapters providing basic biographical information about the author, chapters 3-9 follow the novel's progress from cover to cover of all three volumes and six books. The following chapters 10-16 are organized into broad topic areas of interest to any reader of Tolkien, covering the races, languages, and symbols that inhabit Tolkien's world. Unlike the popular encyclopedia format, Stanton takes greater effort to explain and place these elements within the larger narrative context of the novel.

The author dismisses popular attempts to draw crude analogies between *The Lord of the Rings* and historical events or religious creeds: Gandalf reincarnated is not Christ, and Sauron is not Hitler. Stanton has a valid point and he bases his opinion on Tolkien's own distaste for analogies, but this may seem inadvertently dismissive of the fact that any book reflects to some degree the time during which it was created. For example, Sauron may not be analogous to Hitler, but certainly the fact that Tolkien lived and wrote in an age of great orators (Hitler, Churchill, Roosevelt) influenced his creation. Middle Earth is a world where language is of prime importance, as Stanton emphasizes in his own discussions of language and poetry (chapters 15 and 16). And Tolkien created characters like Saruman, Aragorn, and even hobbits that are able to sway opinion and move armies with the well-spoken word.

In chapter 13, Stanton deals thoughtfully and kindly with the contentious issue of the lack of important female characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. He places Tolkien back into the social context of late-Victorian, rural England where he grew up, rather than the charged atmosphere of the politically correct 21st century.

Stanton does include small snippets of background material from Tolkien's incomplete posthumous works: *The Silmarillion*, and *The History of Middle Earth* series (edited by the author's son Christopher Tolkien) among others. These inclusions (mostly in the later chapters) give insight to the depth of Tolkien's vision of Middle Earth. Stanton's ability to condense all this pseudo-history into brief, relevant chunks is laudable, as the sheer bulk of this material makes it difficult to streamline.

The book has two minor flaws. Stanton excuses himself from a larger discussion of mythology in *Lord of the Rings*, though he does spend a good deal of time discussing Tolkien's respect for "peasant" knowledge and folklore. Stanton may merely be conceding his own (and the book's) limitations, and the void left may indicate the need for another well-researched book written by a scholar of Indo-European mythology. In keeping with this philosophy, Stanton does not name very many stories that may have provided mythic or literary inspiration for Tolkien's creation. Exceptions would be several references to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and a few brief mentions of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*.

The second potential drawback to the book is the lack of many direct quotations from the source material, *The Lord of the Rings*. According to the author, this fact resulted from accommodations made because of copyright concerns. Most of the references to *The Lord of the Rings* as well as to Tolkien's *Letters* and other publications are adequately cited, in contrast to many other books on the subject written for a popular general readership. But the scarcity of substantial quotations does require that a reader have a copy of *Lord of the Rings* on hand while reading Stanton's book. For teachers looking for supplementary text materials for a Tolkien class, this may help tempted students avoid the "Cliff Note syndrome" - that is reading the commentary but not the assigned work of literature.

The bibliography shows that Stanton's intent was to write a scholarly viable book, without dismissing the wide popular appeal of Tolkien's novel,

William Robert (Bob) Gibson, the collector, had a life-long love affair with books and reading. During his 92 years he amassed a collection that filled the family attic, garage and a separate storage shed. Shortly after his death, his son, Andrew, a U of C alumnus, approached the university about donating the collection.

"This really is a priceless gift - an embarrassment of riches," says Blane Hogue, the library's Director of Development. Librarians haven't been able to conduct a detailed appraisal yet and therefore can't place a monetary value on the collection. Some of the items now unpacked are worth hundreds of dollars, and some of the magazine sets are worth thousands.

"Our next challenge," Hogue says, "is to find the necessary funding to clean, preserve, catalogue and house the Gibson Collection." Librarians estimate it will take roughly \$20 per item to complete those tasks; the library hopes to raise about \$500,000 - from public and private sources - to maintain the collection.

Ultimately, the Gibson Collection will be made available to students, scholars and members of the public through the Special Collections Reading Room at the U of C's MacKimmie Library. Depending on funding, it could be ready for use in about a year. None of the materials will circulate, however, since they are far too fragile.

The Gibson collection immediately becomes one of the strongest resources anywhere for the study of science fiction. In North America, the Merrill Collection at the Toronto Public Library has about 57,000 items, and the Eaton Collection at the University of California - Riverside has in excess of 65,000 items. Other universities with much smaller collections are still considered important resources for research, however. For example,

Michigan State University has about 12,000 science fiction items and ranks itself in the top 20 research collections of its kind.

It's anticipated that the presence of the Gibson Collection at the U of C will attract donations of other science fiction materials to the library. For example, the Merrill Collection began in the 1970s with only a few thousand items. Library officials also hope that having the Gibson Collection here will attract the literary papers of important science fiction writers.

Dr. Susan Stratton, one of the first English professors at the University of Calgary to teach courses in science fiction, says research in the genre can reveal important insights about the prevailing cultural, social and political attitudes of the day.

"Researchers now are likely to view literature as the product of the culture that produced it, rather than as the product of the individual great mind," Stratton says. "Speculative fiction is the literature of the age of science and technology. It's the literature that imagines change in an era of increasingly rapid social change."

For additional information on the Gibson Collection see www.fp.ucalgary.ca/unicomm/news/gibson

Libertarian Futurist Society Awards

At its annual Worldcon award ceremony held on August 30 in San Jose, the Libertarian Futurist Society presented its annual Prometheus Award for Best Novel to Donald Kingsbury's *Psychohistorical Crisis* (Tor) and the award for Best Classic Fiction (the "Hall of Fame" award) to Patrick McGoochan's TV series "The Prisoner".

This is Donald Kingsbury's first Prometheus Award, though not his first nomination for an award from the Libertarian Futurist Soci-

or those Tolkien publications intended strictly for a popular audience. A few of the more useful of these are included in the bibliography, such as David Day's *Tolkien's Ring* (London: HarperCollins, 1994). Stanton's bibliography also provides a good starting list of primary and secondary resources for student research. It is clear from reading *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizards*, that Stanton holds his own opinions about Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. But wisely he does not knit the fabric of opinion so tightly as to preclude the reader from forming his/or her own judgement about the nature of Tolkien's inspiration and the meaning of his work.

NONFICTION REVIEW

EDGING INTO THE FUTURE: SCIENCE FICTION AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Bruce L. Rockwood

Hollinger, Veronica, and Joan Gordon (eds). *Edging into the Future: Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. viii + 279 pages. \$22.50, ISBN 0-8122-1804-3 (Paper); \$59.95, ISBN 0-8122-3657-2 (Cloth).

This diverse collection of essays by well regarded scholars and writers of SF reads like a conference one would have enjoyed attending and participating in. Every essay includes explications of texts one has read, seen or heard, juxtaposed with works less familiar but with which the reader will want to become familiar after reading the critique. Their average length (15 to 20 pages) is long enough to sketch out the thesis and apply it to two or three narratives with some documentation, while leaving the reader with a sense that in most instances a book length treatment would be necessary to properly support the argument. The unifying theme is that contemporary science fiction explores cultural, personal and political challenges that are already upon us, as well as the technological changes that make them possible.

Part One of the book is a set of three essays exploring the "implosion" of genre boundaries among SF, fantasy and horror, in literature, rock, video, film and the new media. Starting with the paperbacks of the 1940s, Gary K. Wolfe explores the evolution of science fiction as a genre, and how it has influenced ("Acolonized") other genres (fantasy, historical fiction, the suspense thriller and horror) and been reciprocally influenced in turn. His discussion of the appropriation of SF themes by authors of "paranoid pursuit" thrillers--Robert Ludlum, Robin Cook, Michael Crichton and Peter Benchley (18-19)--and, going in the opposite direction, the work of SF writers such as Gregory Benford (*Timescape, Artifact*) (19-20) was persuasive. David Brin's *Kiln People* (2002) is a recent example of this counter appropriation of non-SF motifs by SF writers. "Rationalized fantasy" and the "conflating" of "genre protocols" are examined through the works of Sheri S. Tepper (22-23). Wolfe concludes with a restatement of the positive side of his thesis--that fantasy and SF are "evaporating" in the sense that they have become part of our common creative and intellectual environment--balanced by a warning that there is a down-side, as some authors become too self-referential, too restricted to the boundaries (and limitations) of a particular genre, leading to a "genre implosion," atrophy, and a narrow, "self-contained readership" (27-29). He sees the best of contemporary science fiction, fantasy and horror as creatively transcending genre, which perhaps simply acknowledges that in any field some writers will be better than others.

Lance Olsen's autobiographical collage "Omniphage" follows with an exploration of the relation of rock 'n' roll to "avant-pop science fiction," asserting at the outset: "I want to begin by going out on a limb and suggesting, only half facetiously, that the first rock album you buy as a kid often functions at some deep-structure as an act of speculative autobiography" (31). Olsen muses on

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, *Neuromancer*, and Donald Barthelme's insight that "modern and postmodern writers have had to reinvent writing because of the discovery of film" (35-36), and makes the same claim for the impact of rock-n-roll on post-modern fiction. The essay as a whole illustrates the application of the argument it makes, and is more illuminating about the nature of post-modern thinking than of its impact on SF, concluding with the argument that the distinction between "theory and fiction" has collapsed in SF as in everything else, "enriching our experience of writing . . . and, of course, living . . ." with "that old rock-n-roll spirit" (55-56).

Brooks Landon's essay, "Synthesians, Virtual Humans, and Hypermedia," explores the creative implications of new technology in film and digital media, including the process of "Schwarzeneggerization" coined in Mark Leyner's *Et Tu, Babe* (58). Building on his 1992 book *The Aesthetics of Ambivalence*, Landon explores the differences between SF film-making and writing, the privileging of spectacle over narrative in SF film, and the increasingly "science fictional" nature of the "post-sf film" in the light of new technologies which have become widespread since 1992. His is one of three essays in the volume--the others are Rob Latham, "Mutant Youth" and Roger Luckhurst, "Going Postal"--which build on the work of Vivian Sobchack in understanding contemporary science fiction. His essay says very little about the films he mentions themselves, and is more about the impact of the way films are made today, the creation of synthetic digital characters, and the spill over of the technology of film into our everyday lives.

Part Two of the collection--"Imploded Subjects and Reinscripted Bodies"--includes Jenny Wolmark's essay exploring "Narratives of the Posthuman" through the films *GATTACA* and *The Matrix*, and Kathleen Ann Goonan's SF novel, *Queen City Jazz*. The narrative summary and explication of the works is fascinating, though Wolmark's use of opaque critical terminology leaves the reader asking for clarification, as in: "A queered feminist reading of *The Matrix* reveals the presence of yet more indeterminate and unruly bodies that challenge exclusionary definitions of the human. . ." (83).

Brian Attebery's "But Aren't Those Just . . . You Know, Metaphors?" explores how "writers investigate the way understanding and communication are grounded in physical being" (92) through James Morrow's *Taming Jehorah* and its sequels, and Gwyneth Jones' Aleutian trilogy, making use of the critical insight into the importance of metaphor in the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. His explication of Morrow's novels is fascinating, and could be applied to a reading of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2001). His analysis of Jones's *White Queen*, exploring the contrasting visions of the two peoples, one "predisposed to see sameness" while the people of Earth "are predisposed to see difference" (101), raises concerns similar to Wendy Pearson's subsequent essay, "ASex/uality and the Figure of the Hermaphrodite in Science Fiction," which explores the connections among Melissa Scott's *Shadow Man*, Stephen Leigh's *Dark Water's Embrace*, and Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Joe Haldeman suggests two competing ways to bridge the disconnections in *The Forever War* and *Forever Peace*, and it would be interesting to see how both critics apply their insights to those texts.

In addition to two other essays in Part II, the volume includes five essays in Part Three, "Reimagined Apocalypses and Exploded Communities," including Gwyneth Jones' discussion of how she and other SF writers handle the problem of the end of the universe, and Brian Stableford's reflections on his own "Histories of the Future." Most of the essays contain useful notes grouped by chapter at the end of the volume, which contains a comprehensive bibliography, excellent index, and well-argued introductory essay by the editors. The book is an essential reference tool in any library collection of science fiction and post-modern criticism, and could be used as a text in a class that addressed these works and themes.

ety, as his *Courtship Rite* was nominated for the Hall of Fame award in 1998, 1999, and 2000.

Kingsbury's novel takes place in the universe of Isaac Asimov's Foundation trilogy, quite some time after the events of Asimov's series. It is an implicitly libertarian critique of Asimov's books, especially their determinism and political centralization. The story is a clever, complex, suspenseful and insightful dramatization of the limits of centralized knowledge.

The other finalists (incidentally, all from Tor Books this year) in the voting for the 2002 Prometheus Award were:

- * *Falling Stars*, by Michael Flynn
- * *Enemy Glory*, by Karen Michalson
- * *The American Zone*, by L. Neil Smith
- * *Hosts*, by F. Paul Wilson

Ten novels were nominated by LFS members for this year's Prometheus. The other nominees were *Dune: House Corrino*, by Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson (Bantam Spectra), *Martian Knightlife*, by James Hogan (Baen Books), *The Tranquility Wars* by Gentry Lee (Bantam Spectra), *Cosmonaut Keep*, by Ken MacLeod (TOR Books), and *The Free Lunch*, by Spider Robinson (TOR Books).

"The Prisoner" is the first winner of the Hall of Fame that wasn't a novel, a short story, or a collection. McGoohan's series follows "Number 6", an ex-spy imprisoned in the Village as he tries to find out who is holding him. The series explored many themes surrounding individual rebellion in surveillance societies, and is widely considered one of TV's best ever.

The other finalists for the Classic award were:

- * Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (novel),
- * Robert A. Heinlein, "Requiem" (short story),
- * Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (novel), and

* J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (trilogy of novels). The Prometheus awards for Best Novel, Best Classic Fiction (Hall of Fame) and (occasional) Special awards honor outstanding science fiction/fantasy that explores the possibilities of a free future, champions human rights (including personal and economic liberty), dramatizes the perennial conflict between individuals and coercive governments, or critiques the tragic consequences of abuse of power—especially by the State.

The Prometheus Award, sponsored by the Libertarian Futurist Society (lfs.org), was established in 1979, making it one of the most enduring awards after the Nebula and Hugo awards, and one of the oldest fan-based awards currently in sf. Presented annually since 1982 at the World Science Fiction Convention, the Prometheus Awards include a gold coin and plaque for the winners.

The Hall of Fame, established in 1983, focuses on older classic fiction, including novels, novellas, short stories, poems and plays. Past Hall of Fame award winners range from Robert Heinlein and Ayn Rand to Ray Bradbury and Ursula LeGuin. Publishers who wish to submit 2003 novels for consideration should contact Michael Grossberg (614-236-5040, mikegrossb@aol.com, 3164 Plymouth Place, Columbus OH 43213), Chair of the LFS Prometheus Awards Best Novel Finalist judging committee.

Founded in 1982, the Libertarian Futurist Society sponsors the annual Prometheus Award and Prometheus Hall of Fame; publishes reviews, news and columns in the quarterly "Prometheus"; arranges annual awards ceremonies at the worldcon, debates libertarian futurist issues (such as private space exploration); and provides fun and fellowship for libertarian-SF fans.

THE BIOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA

Pawel Frelik

Glassy, Mark C.. *The Biology of Science Fiction Cinema*. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, North Carolina, & London, 2001. \$39.95, hardback, 304 pages. ISBN 0-7864-0998-3.

Did you laugh out loud when Curtis, a pathologist in *Blade*, said "Look at the polys, they're binucleated"? (169) Once you've read *The Biology of Science Fiction Cinema* you will understand the humor in this particular quotation. But then again, you will also learn that "[w]ith the loss of enough blood, you will die" (195).

Mark Glassy is a scientist with a background in biochemistry and molecular immunology and a specialty in human antibodies. Science fiction, he admits, is his hobby – this volume is where the trajectories of his profession and his pastime cross. *The Biology of Science Fiction Cinema* sets out "to offer the reader a powerful tool for understanding some interesting facts and concepts by being able to distinguish 'reel' science from real science" (2). Full of real science the book certainly is, and as for understanding . . . well, more about it a bit later.

The main part of the volume, preceded with a lengthy overview of relevant scientific principles, is divided into sections, each devoted to a separate field. Thus, we have cell biology, molecular biology, pharmacology, endocrinology, surgery, hematology, microbiology, virology, biochemistry, entomology, life cycles and synthetic skin, but also such dubious headlines as reanimated brides (how about grooms?), CULFology (Creating Unusual Life Forms-ology), or shrinkology. Each section is prefaced with a short introduction, followed by detailed analyses of individual motion pictures. The number in each section varies – the majority have a fair handful, but there are also a few (mostly those weird ones) that have only two or three. The volume is rounded out with an index and an appendix discussing the accuracy of laboratory tests in the movies, again organized chronologically by title.

Altogether 76 movies (the back cover cites 79 while the press release clocks in at 71) are discussed, including a number of B-class and horror(ish) pictures, giving us to understand that a fairly broad definition of "science fiction" was used. Each entry contains a short synopsis with screenplay information; the main part is subdivided according to the following angles: "Biological Science Principles Involved", "What Is Right with the Biological Science Presented", "What Is Wrong with the Biological Science Presented", "What Biological Science Is Necessary to Actually Achieve the Results in the Film", and "Could It Actually Happen." It is in those that the author shows his indisputable knowledge of the field. A number of times Glassy's explanations are really helpful; however, some of them are so painstakingly detailed that at times one feels the need for some scientific background to understand the explanation.

Naturally, no such work can be fully exhaustive, but assuming that the work aspires to scholarly status a few questions arise. Why are *Alien* and *Aliens* discussed, but not *Alien3* and *Alien Resurrection*? The latter particularly begs for inclusion by reason of its alien/human splice. The "Entomology" section seems kind of empty without *Starship Troopers*. Neither *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* nor *The Andromeda Strain* are in evidence, either. And why aren't the appended lab test notes part of the movie write-ups? Were they a late fix-up? Last but not least, the absence of directors and other factual information leaves a vague aftertaste of fan-ish sloppiness.

All in all, it is clear that *The Biology of Science Fiction Cinema* is a work of love and as such deserves respect for the sheer amount of labor involved. As a work of reference, however, it does not quite cut it. Very much a niche product targeted specifically at those interested in the feasibility of science in SF movies, its potential usefulness is considerably impaired by the arbitrariness of

film selections. On the other front, general SF readers—or, rather, viewers—may find it a bit too tedious and not infrequently too arcane in its explanations.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**FIGHTING THE FORCES: WHAT'S AT STAKE IN
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER**

Christine Meins

Wilcox, Rhonda V. and David Lavery (eds). *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002. xxix + 290 p. \$24.95, trade paper, 0-7425-1681-4.

Scholarly-minded fans of the popular television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* have two recent anthologies of critical essays to choose from, but the choice between Wilcox and Lavery's book and Roz Kaveney's *Reading the Vampire Slayer* is not difficult. While both books are written in language accessible to the general reader, the twenty essays collected in *Fighting the Forces*, and others available on its companion website www.slayage.tv, demonstrate a higher level of critical rigor and quality of writing.

After a foreword by Camille Bacon-Smith and an introduction listing the defining factors of quality television that defends the show as worthy of serious critical examination, the essays are organized into three sections, according to the forces that shape works of popular culture: social and cultural forces such as gender, race, religion, class, and the generation gap; literary influences of the past, including *Frankenstein*, vampire myths, and fairy tales; and the impact of the present interactive fan environment enabled by the Internet. The editors argue that quality television both yields to and resists these forces, in the process becoming a means of illustrating and resolving the problems faced by viewers in the real world.

Some of the richest readings are those both supportive and critical of the show's treatment of issues of gender and race. Elyce Rae Helford, concerned about television's suppression of female anger, notes that expressions of anger by each of the three female slayers reveal a weakness in the show's treatment of race and class. Lynne Edwards' essay examines the stereotype of the tragic mulatta as illustrated by the few black female supporting characters, concluding that the show, while it does rely too heavily on negative stereotypes, does so in order to illustrate the continuing marginalization of black women in society.

Much has been made of the show's reversal of the typical horror movie motif, with the young blonde female victim becoming hunter rather than prey. Catherine Siemann compares Buffy to another blonde California girl, Gidget, claiming that the differences between the worlds of the two blonde teenagers have much to do with the change in cultural mindset between mid-century and fin de siècle, in "Darkness Falls on the Endless Summer."

One reason that the show is so popular is its witty use of dialogue and frequent literary and cultural references. Arguing that words are weapons that Buffy and her companions wield to powerful effect, Overbey and Preston-Matto explore each character's special relationship to language in "Staking in Tongues." Other essays focus on queer readings of character relationships, conflicts between mothers and daughters, the role that magic and religion play in the developing storylines, the Liebestod motif and its transformation in serial television, a Jungian and Freudian interpretation of Buffy's dream sequences, and the phenomenon of fan fiction, particularly in terms of what it reveals about the interactive relationship between producers and consumers. The diversity of critical voices is a strength, guaranteeing something of interest for all scholars of popular culture, no matter what their specific approach.

The topical index is useful, the episode guide less so, and I would have preferred a listing of works cited at the end of individual essays along

Feminist Press Publications

On October 15th Feminist Press will be publishing *Judas Rose* and *Earthsong*, the second and third books in the *Native Tongue* trilogy, both with "scholarly afterwords." A homepage for the three books (and for the Láadan Grammar) has been posted at Suzette Haden Elgin's SFWA website — <http://www.sfw.org/members/elgin> — with excerpts, FAQ, and discussion questions. She would be grateful for comments and criticisms, additions to the FAQ, suggestions for things to have add, and any other input you might have time to provide.

Southeastern Science Fiction Achievement Award

To those for whom this is a first contact, the Southeastern Science Fiction Achievement Award (the SESFA) is designed to recognize achievement in science fiction, fantasy or horror (SF/F/H), to persons born or living in the Southeastern United States. We're keeping it simple to start with, offering SESFA Awards for Best Novel of 2001, Best Short Fiction of 2001 and Hall of Fame. The affordable Membership dues of only \$7 help fund the prize money and presentation plaques. For details visit: <http://www.scifidimensions.com/sesfa/sesfa.htm>

RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

- Behr, Kate E. *The Representation of Men in the English Gothic Novel, 1762-1820*. Edward Mellen Press, Mar 03
- Brooker, Will. *Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans*. Continuum, 2002
- Colbert, David. *The Magical Worlds of the Lord of the Rings: The Amazing Myths, Legends*

- and *Facts Behind the Masterpiece*. Berkley, Oct 02
- Diana Tixier Herald & Bonnie Kunzel, *Strictly Science Fiction: A Guide to Reading Interest*, Eggleton, Bob & John Grant. *Dragonhenge*. Paper Tiger, Oct 02
- Fleiger, Verlyn. *Shattered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*. 2d ed. Kent State UP, Aug 02
- Gilmore, David D. *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*. U of PA Press, Oct 2002.
- Hale, Phil. *Goat: The Many Moods of Phil Hale*. Donald Grant, Apr 02
- Horner, Avril, ed.. *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange, 1760-1960*. Manchester UP, 2002
- Jael. *Perceptualistics*. Text by John Grant. Sterling/Paper Tiger, Apr 02
- Lightman, Alex. *The Future Engine: How Science Fiction Impacts Business and Technology and How to Profit from Its Prophets*. John Wiley, Jun 02
- McKillop, A.B. *The Spinster and the Prophet: H.G. Wells, Florence Deeks, and the Case of the Plagiarized Text*. Four Walls Eight Windows, Aug 02.
- Merril, Judith & Emily Pohl-Weary. *Better to Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merrill*. Between the Lines, Apr 02
- Muir, John Kenneth. *Horror Films of the 1970s*. McFarland, Sep 02
- Murray, Paul. *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker*. Jonathan Cape, UK, Jul 02
- Neal, C.W. *The Gospel According to Harry Potter: Spiritual Themes in the Stories of*

with the end notes rather than the single bibliography. *Fighting the Forces* is also available in a hardcover version, but the paperback price makes it worth owning for both scholars of popular culture and general readers who simply enjoy the show.

NONFICTION REVIEW
FEMICIDAL PLOTS
 Filiz Turhan

Meyers, Helene. *Femicidal Plots*. State University of New York Press, 90 State Street, Suite 700, Albany, NY 12207, 2001. xii + 211 p. 0-7914-5152-6.

Femicidal Fears focuses on close readings of contemporary gothic novels that stage the violent deaths of their female protagonists. Helene Meyers's professed goal is both to illuminate the texts, and to "bring the nuances of feminist thought to life." Meyers is a gifted explicator of the complex theories of second-wave feminism and she successfully links these theoretical texts to literary texts. Specifically, Meyers is interested in showing how the "femicidal plots" of contemporary gothic novels "explore the difficulties of, and the necessity for, taking gender oppression seriously without positioning women as pure victims." Among the writers discussed are Joyce Carol Oates, Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter.

Although the focus of the book is on contemporary gothic, the second chapter sketches out how women's fears are "warranted and derived from normalized cultural arrangements" as depicted in three giants of the genre: Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. Meyers's selection of texts provides concrete evidence for the claim that in many earlier gothic novels "real men only kill women who deserve to die." This stance is questioned and challenged by contemporary gothic writers.

In succeeding chapters Meyers charts the ways in which contemporary writers have contributed to the ongoing analysis of violence against women. Each chapter discusses one or two novels' depiction of a particular facet of this gothic experience and its connections to feminist theory. For instance, chapter three, "Love Kills," explores Edna O'Brien's *Casualties of Peace* and Beryl Bainbridge's *Bottle Factory Outing*. According to Meyers, these novels frustrate the gothic plot by confirming female fear of sexual violence. They destroy the illusion of heterosexual love and nuclear family that Meyers establishes as a given in chapter two. Meyers's concluding critical question, "But do such plots leave us only in a postmodernism state of victimization?" is answered in chapter four's reading of the "Sadomasochistic Couple" in Angela Carter's *Honeybuzzard* and Muriel Spark's *Driver's Seat*. Together they "Short-circuit scripts of male vice and female virtue" because they show how culture creates these roles, and hence how they can be changed. It is perhaps reassuring that Meyers identifies in chapter five novels which not only "help women work through paranoia" but also help to "mobilize the agency women have" to resist such patterns of violence.

Much of the book works to explore and acknowledge the very real danger of sexual violence women are subject to, while still avoiding the misconception that such passive, pure victimization is a biologically determined and thus unchangeable fact. If this position seems a given, it would be useful to acknowledge another recent study of the gothic which takes a very different position. Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism* looks to 18-19th century gothic novels and claims that the gothic heroine "masquerades" as a victim against the mere "semblance" of male violence.

Although Meyers's close readings are always engaging, her connections between literary texts and feminist theory become somewhat muddled in later chapters. Nevertheless, *Femicidal Plots* is a valuable contribution to the growing scholarship on Gothic literature and particularly useful as an introduction to noteworthy contemporary gothic fiction.

THE CONTESTED CASTLE: GOTHIC NOVELS AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE DOMESTIC IDEAL

FlizTurhan

Ellis, Kate Ferguson. *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of the Domestic Ideal*. University of Illinois Press, 1325 South Oak Street, Champaign, IL 61820-6903, 1989. xviii + 226.

Kate Ferguson Ellis's *The Contested Castle* was originally published in 1989 and has been reissued by University of Illinois Press in 2001. It would be hard to overstate the value, influence and continued relevance of Ellis's contribution to the ever-growing scholarly material on the Gothic. Particular strengths of the book include its powerful central thesis and its close readings of an array of novels. Ellis convincingly demonstrates how the gothic novel recast the myth of the fall "so as to express a new set of gender relations and a new bourgeois ideal of true womanhood" through close readings of novels ranging from *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

Ellis astutely describes the gothic castle that is at the heart of the gothic novel: it is simultaneously and paradoxically posited as both a safe refuge from the money-oriented public world and also a crumbling prison for victimized heroines. Ellis's focus on the gothic castle as a typologizing view of home means that her definition of the genre is necessarily more narrow than other giants of the critical landscape, such as David Punter's *Literature of Terror* (1980). However, this is no disadvantage given the sheer quantity of material that may come under the "gothic" heading.

The analytical approach is openly feminist (she welcomes and highlights the ways in which the gothic exposes where "the real power in a patriarchal society" lies) and Marxist (she adheres to Jameson's famous description of literature as "barely diluted ideology"). Happily, readers will find that the primary work of Part I is to establish the historical and literary context of the gothic novel rather than a theoretical paradigm.

Fundamental to Ellis's thesis is the claim that gothic writers used both Miltonic material and Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* to develop parallel strands known as "female and male" gothic. The former envisions a strong female whose work throughout the novel is to expose male power and to reestablish the home as a safe refuge; the latter narrates a similar experience from the perspective of the male exile. According to Ellis the gothic critiques the ideology of separate spheres precisely because the male exile is not rendered more powerful than the female prisoner.

Part I lays out the social and literary conditions that made the gothic such a popular and subversive form. Indeed, Ellis claims that the experience of violence and oppression which predominates in the conventional gothic plot worked to instruct women in the unsavory ways of the world in a time when innocence through ignorance was becoming the defining characteristic of the "new" eighteenth-century middle-class woman. A palpable contradiction therefore obtains between the middle class demands of a pure "female ideal" and the expectations of a powerful new (female) reading public whose demands for scintillating action meant dollar signs for the woman writer and the male publisher alike.

Parts II and III focus on "insider" and "outsider" narratives respectively. Both terms are meant to "emphasize the narrative point of view in relation to an idealized, imaginary, recovered Eden." With attention paid to novels by Sophia Lee, Mary Wollstonecraft and Ann Radcliffe, Ellis illustrates how "female virtue coupled with initiative is capable of prevailing over its enemies." According to Ellis, the "outsider" plot, exemplified by Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, extends this theme by writing from the perspective of the outsider who "seeks revenge" for his experience of domestic exile.

the World's Favorite Seeker. John Knox Press, Aug 02

Palumbo, Donald. *Chaos Theory, Asimov's Foundations and Robots, and Herbert's Dune: the Fractal Aesthetic of Epic Science Fiction*. Greenwood, Nov 02

Pitcher, Edward W.R. *Recalling Fiction, Cultural Context, Early Gothic and Utopian Romances: Cooper, Poe, Crane, Cather, Lawrence, Fitzgerald and West*. Edward Mellen Press, Nov 02

Rogers, Katherine M. L. *Frank Baum: Creator of Oz*. St Martin's, Jul 02

Secrest, Rose. *Gloricemus: a Study of the Fiction of Walter M. Miller, Jr.* University Press of America, Jun 2002

Sterling, Bruce. *Tomorrow Now: Envisioning the Next Fifty Years*. Random House, Dec 02

Vallejo, Boris & Julie Bell. *Twin Visions*. Paper Tiger, Jun 02

Wegner, Phillip E. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spacial Histories of Modernity*. UC Press, Apr 02

Westfahl, Gary & George Slusser, eds. *No Cure for the Future: Disease and Medicine in Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Greenwood, Nov 02

Wiest, Jerry. *Ray Bradbury: An Illustrated Life*. Morrow, Oct 02

Wood, Aylish. *Technospace in Contemporary Film: Beyond Science Fiction*. Manchester UP/Palgrave, Jul 02

Part IV presents *Frankenstein* as a novel that encompasses the subversive impulse of the Radcliffian tradition and the “pervasive pessimism of the Lewisite tradition.” Ellis shows how Shelley’s three concentric narratives comment on the separation of the inner/feminine from the outer/masculine worlds. This not only contributes greatly to the central thesis of the book, it also works as a highly successful teaching approach to the novel.

The book’s epilogue focuses on *Wuthering Heights* as a late articulation of the Walpolean gothic complete with its revisionary telling of the *Paradise Lost* plot.

The Contested Castle is a must read for anyone interested in the social and literary contexts of eighteenth and nineteenth-century gothic novels.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**BRITISH HORROR CINEMA &
HORROR: THE FILM READER**

by McRoy

Chibnall, Steve, and Julian Petley (eds.). *British Horror Cinema*. Routledge. 256 pages. \$80.00, hardcover, ISBN 0415230039.

Jancovich, Mark (ed.). *Horror: The Film Reader*. Routledge. 208 pages. \$75.00, hardcover, ISBN 0415235618

Horror films were among the earliest motion pictures produced, and as cinema enters its second century, Routledge has released a pair of carefully edited anthologies dedicated to the analysis of the horror genre and, consequently, several of its most important works. *British Horror Cinema*, edited by Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley, and *Horror: The Film Reader*, edited by Mark Jancovich, differ in both their content and, to a lesser extent, their intended audiences. Nevertheless, they function as unique and valuable contributions to contemporary film studies. In addition to providing important insight into the history of horror cinema and its ever-shifting relationship with viewers throughout the years, these texts also contain essays that position horror films as aesthetic and political artifacts that reveal quite a bit about the dominant cultural ideologies of the societies that consumed (and continue to consume) them.

As Chibnall and Petley note in their introduction to *British Horror Cinema*, the collection’s focus is “not simply with British horror films but British horror cinema...not simply with films as texts but with the institutions and discourses within which those texts are produced, circulated, regulated and consumed” (3). As such, the fourteen original essays in this anthology engage issues ranging from government censorship to the gendering of film spectatorship. Coincidentally, among the volume’s more interesting pieces are Mark Kermode’s “The British Censors and Horror Cinema” and Brigid Cherry’s “Screaming for Release: Femininity and Horror Film Fandom in Britain.” In the former, Kermode’s historical approach raises compelling questions about the politics of censorship as a social practice, and in the latter, Cherry adds a vital and ground-breaking perspective to current debates within feminist film studies, particularly those concerned with the roles of women as not only active viewers of horror films, but as lively participants in fan cultures. Scholars writing on horror cinema, British or otherwise, will also benefit from the ample “Filmography of British Horror Films of the Sound Era” compiled by L.S. Smith. Arranged chronologically, the catalog contains an almost exhaustive list of works from a genre whose conventions are as multiple as its boundaries are contestable. Indeed, the filmography’s sheer size and breadth is bound to provide both critics and fans with an invaluable resource, whether one’s goal is research-oriented or merely hunting down the name of a film whose title has long since escaped from memory.

While *British Horror Cinema* is part of Routledge’s *British Popular Cinema* series, *Horror: The Film Reader* is a new addition to the *In Focus* collection of film readers. Comprising fourteen frequently anthologized essays, including landmark works of horror film criticism by Noel Carroll, Linda Williams, Barbara Creed, and Carol Clover, Jancovich gears his collection towards a much wider, if slightly less informed audience. Likewise, whereas *British Horror Cinema* not only limits its focus to horror films produced within and around the British studio system, but also presupposes a certain familiarity with film theory and several of its central concepts, Jancovich’s text is directed towards a wider audience. Thus, professors searching for a compact, affordable, and relatively comprehensive textbook of readings for an undergraduate film course on horror cinema need look no further. Longer essays are excerpted in ways that maintain their coherence and critical trajectory, and Jancovich begins each of the book’s four main sections with an accessible introduction that not only elucidates the central points advanced within each of the section’s essays, but also articulates important conceptual connections and divergences. This approach is particularly valuable for audiences unfamiliar with major trends in film criticism, including genre theory and recent investigations into the social construction of gender and sexuality. More advanced students and film scholars, however, may find the collection too narrow and, in some cases, dated. If so, then recent publications like Ken Gelder’s *The Horror*

Reader (Routledge 2000), which contains many of the same essays as Jancovich's collection (and then some), or Alan Silver and James Ursini's *Horror Film Reader* (Limelight Editions 2000), with its combination of classic essays from the 1950s and recent scholarship, may provide a more thorough overview of horror criticism.

NONFICTION REVIEW

FAN CULTURES

Beverly Friend

Hills, Matt. *Fan Cultures*. Routledge. 224 pages. \$22.95, Paperback, ISBN: 0415240255.

"Autoethnography must constantly seek to unsettle the moral dualisms which are thrown up by the narcissism of 'common sense' and its narrative closures. This requires the constant use of self reflective questioning." (Page 81)

Typical of the language of "Fan Cultures," the above passage is a mere glimmer into the ways in which Matt Hills annihilates a potentially fascinating subject by using pedantic, sesquipedalian language. Not a page of this book is free from opaque phrasing, odd, invented words, and a plethora of words set in single quotation marks.

Take another example:

"Cultural studies 'ethnography' has rarely pursued this insight, failing to consider processes of auto-legitimization within fan culture, and instead depicting these processes as fan 'knowledgeability'. This emphasis on the fan's knowledge and on the display of knowledge, acts, in part, as an alibi for the ethnographic process: given the fan's articulate nature and immersion in the text concerned, the move to ethnography seems strangely unquestionable, is if it is somehow grounded in the fan's (supposedly) pre-existent form of audience knowledge and interpretive skill." (Page 66.)

Or, later in the book — in an attempt (I think) at summarization:

"I have also examined the specific 'between-ness' of cult fandoms which focus on specific sets of texts and icons while preserving a sense of cult status as fan-led (chapter 6), and which dispute the text-reader model that has been dominant in film, tv and cultural studies by performing cult fandom through modes of geographical pilgrimage (chapter 7), embodiment (chapter 8) and through the performed 'textualisation' of the cult audience (this chapter). My guiding metaphor and guiding narrative has, paradoxically, been *one of doubleness*, of seeking to keep open the 'actual' or 'empirical' contradictions of fan cult(ure)s rather than closing down these many and varied contradictions by prematurely mapping 'philosophical' logic onto the practical reasons of fandom." (Page 182. Spelling, and punctuation and italics are Hill's)

Hill is, himself, a fan of doubleness, obsessed with paired ideas.

The book falls neatly into two sections. The first, "Approaching fan cultures," deals with the doubles of consumerism and 'resistance,' community and hierarchy, 'knowledge' and 'justification,' and 'fantasy' and 'reality.' The second half of the text, "Theorizing cult media," links cult and culture, the 'textual' and the 'extratextual,' the 'textual' and the 'spatial,' and the 'self' and the 'other.' (I am mystified as to which words get set in quotation marks and which do not.)

He comments on his own work, "If this book does amount to anything like a prescriptive approach to fandom, then its own structuring moral dualism could perhaps be described as pitting 'decisionism' against 'suspensionism.'" (Page 182.)

I cannot bring myself to care.

Of the 237 doubtless erudite, but painfully complex pages, 21 are devoted to notes, 24 to bibliography, and the book concludes with a 6-page index.

An examination of science fiction fandom centers on over 30 page references to *Star Trek* (including a definition of slash writers who romantically link Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock) and four page references to Star Wars.

Recommended ONLY for this willing to wade through the verbiage in the hopes of gleanings some new insights into fandom (or masochists).

NONFICTION REVIEW

ADVENTURES IN THE DREAM TRADE

Philip Snyder

Gaiman, Neil. *Adventures in the Dream Trade*. Framingham, MA: NESFA Press, 2002. Hardcover, \$26.00, 88 pp. ISBN 1-886778-37-X. Reviewed in uncorrected bound galleys.

The creator of Sandman has been both prolific and versatile in the last year or so. With his first children's book (*Coraline*) now out in hardcover, his most recent novel (*American Gods*) out again in paperback, and a swelling stream of

short stories, novels, comics TV scripts, and screenplays to his credit, Neil Gaiman has grown into a one-man media industry. Even his ephemera is pretty interesting, as evidenced by *Adventures in the Dream Trade*, a non-fiction potpourri assembled for Boskone 2001, and now available from NESFA Press.

More than half of the book is given over to Gaiman's web log from February to September 2001, a nearly daily online journal of his promotional tour for the hardcover release of *American Gods*. As Gaiman himself describes it in a headnote, the weblog is a "mixture of stuff and nonsense," blending together elements of "author's journal, diary, bulletin board, advertising hoarding, backstage tour, stream of consciousness and Pooterish wittering." It's a magical mystery tour of the U.K., the U.S., and Canada, as Gaiman gives readings, signs books, catches planes, and eats way too much sushi. It's a tour, too, of Gaiman's head, as he shares his thinking about fans, about fame, about the peculiar nature of writing and the vagaries of publishing. And while there are some inevitable longeurs and idle repetitions, they are surprisingly few and far between. Even the kludgier bits tend to be papered over by Gaiman's personality. Though we certainly enjoy the trip for its "behind the scenes" look at writing and publishing, what most captivates us is the voice, as our guide on this journey proves to be one of the most amiable, entertaining, and gracious hosts imaginable.

The other really significant section of *Adventures in the Dream Trade* is a substantial collection of reprinted introductions and essays that Gaiman has written for and about other writers. Among the two dozen items gathered here are a number of pieces of special interest to students of science fiction, the standouts being introductions to a reissue of Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* and to the Roger Zelazny tribute volume, *Lord of the Fantastic*, along with two separate essays on Harlan Ellison. Students of classic fantasy, meanwhile, will find much to enjoy in Gaiman's articulate tributes to Fritz Leiber, C. S. Lewis, Lord Dunsany, H. P. Lovecraft, and others. For connoisseurs of comics, there are nifty appreciations of Dave Sim's long-running *Cerebus*, interesting perspectives on Eddie Campbell's *Bacchus* and Kurt Busiek's remarkable *Astro City*, along with what Gaiman calls "the 'only piece of full-length criticism [he's] ever attempted,'" an insightful consideration of Frank Miller's groundbreaking *Dark Knight*. Those who know Gaiman only as a writer will be edified and entertained by this introduction to Gaiman the reader.

Fleshing out the remainder of the book are about 35 pages worth of "poetry" (i.e., some very light verse), song lyrics (written mostly for the inestimable Flash Girls, a.k.a. fantasy writer Emma Bull and Gaiman assistant Lorraine Garland), plus several hard-to-classify items, most of them hovering somewhere between the essay and the vignette, and here bunched together under the somewhat misleading heading, "Fiction." The book's short introduction, written with a certain goofy charm of its own, is by John M. Ford. Most of these last bits are pretty negligible, and carry the distinct feel of filler. But the essays and introductions more than carry their weight, and the American Gods Web Log is worth the price of admission all by itself.

NONFICTION REVIEW

THE SCIENCE FICTION OF CORDWAINER SMITH

Philip Snyder

Karen L. Hellekson. *The Science Fiction of Cordwainer Smith*. Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland, 2001. Paper, \$28.50, 158 pp. ISBN 0-7864-1149-X.

The science fiction writer known as Cordwainer Smith has been blessed in the quality of his critics, if not in their quantity. Among SF writers and editors, his reputation has been championed in print by such luminaries as Ursula K. Le Guin and Gardner Dozois. Professional academics who have served him well include Carol McGuirk, most recently in her article in *Science Fiction Studies* on "The Rediscovery of Cordwainer Smith," and Alan Elms, whose critical and biographical essays on this writer have whetted the appetite for his forthcoming full-length biography. To the contributions of these, and of a small but distinguished handful of others, comes now the welcome addition of Karen Hellekson's study of the man and his fiction.

The first of the book's six chapters offers a brief biographical sketch of Paul M. A. Linebarger, introducing the precocious child who would grow up to be a scholar of Asian Studies and a writer of far-future space tales, a man whose predilection for pseudonyms and secret identities began in his boyhood. Hellekson follows this with a chapter on the non-genre fiction—including discussion of the novels *Ria*, *Carola*, and *Atomsk*, as well as some commentary on Linebarger's unpublished mainstream novels and fragments—deftly tracing their connections to his SF output. A chapter on Smith's revision process outlines another kind of connection by comparing two of his published stories with their earlier drafts. Following this comes an analysis (previously published in *Extrapolation*) of Smith's use of "true men," "hominids," and "underpeople" to explore the nature of humanity, a subject broached again in the following chapter, a discussion of Smith's

only published SF novel, *Norstrillia*. The study closes with a chapter offering an insightful and thought-provoking reading of psychological pain in “Scanners Live in Vain,” “Game of Rat and Dragon,” and “Think Blue, Count Two.”

Hellekson’s compactly informative study is made all the more useful by the addition of her thoughtful and articulate “Afterword,” by a brief but helpful bibliography, and by a 42-page “Glossary of Cordwainer Smith’s Terms.” This last item, as Hellekson explains, “is not an attempt to supplement Anthony R. Lewis’s extensive *Concordance to Cordwainer Smith* (2000),” but it nevertheless offers a surprisingly deep store of definitions, along with clear identifications of characters and places, as well as useful brief plot summaries. Another helpful supplement is her list of relevant manuscripts held by Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, an appendix of special significance because of this book’s wide-ranging and intelligent use of the diaries, notebooks, essays, poem, letters, and personal papers archived in this splendid manuscript collection.

The Science Fiction of Cordwainer Smith is not yet the truly magisterial study that its subject deserves (though with fewer than 500-600 pages, how could it be?) But for a book which began as the author’s M. A. thesis in 1991, it has certainly matured in the intervening decade into a valuable contribution to the rediscovery of Cordwainer Smith. Hellekson’s book should send new readers searching for Linebarger’s work, and will hopefully invite still more scholars to write about it.

NONFICTION REVIEW

MAPPING MARS

Neil Barron

This is the title of a September 2002 book from Picador USA by Oliver Morton (ca 368 p, 16 color photos, \$30), a well-known British science writer. He traces the efforts to map and understand the surface of Mars. The *Publishers Weekly* review says “he writes eloquently and displays a breadth of knowledge not often found in science writing,” adding “He summarizes how science fiction authors have imagined Mars....,” which I certainly hope includes the rigorous imaginings of Mr. Burroughs and Mr. Bradbury.

FICTION REVIEW

TRANSCENSION

Philip Snyder

Damien Broderick. *Transcension*. New York: Tor, 2002. 349 pages, hardcover, \$25.95. ISBN 0-765-0083036996-8.

Damien Broderick’s *Transcension* is a conceptually rich yet marvelously accessible novel that would serve admirably, I think, as a classroom introduction to many of the pleasures and possibilities of science fiction early in the 21st century. While not exactly an entry-level text—at least for those for whom the Golden Age of Science Fiction is Twelve—Broderick’s smooth confection of cryogenics, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence is one of those rare novels as generous in its rewards to new genre readers as to the cognoscenti.

The core of the story is a many-layered confrontation among three characters and their three worlds. Amanda Kolby-McAllister, math student, mallrat, violinist, and troublemaker, is a “pender”—essentially an extended adolescent—two years short of the adult status of Thirty; hers is the world of the Metro, an extrapolation of our own world that reads like a cross between the technofetishism of *Wired* magazine and the ultraviolence of *A Clockwork Orange*. Matthewmark Fisher, a genuine teenager, is a naïve but ultimately likeable resident of the Valley of the God of One’s Choice, an isolationist, technology-resistant enclave of Goddess-worshippers, New Wiccans, plain old Bible-thumping fundamentalists, and assorted hicks and hayseeds. Mohammed Abdel-Malik, though a magistrate in Metro, belongs more properly to the world of our own here-and-now; a cognitive scientist in the year 2004, he is stomped to death by young hooligans but frozen and revived in the novel’s present. His mind, meanwhile, becomes the seed for an AI named Aleph who will join all these characters, and their worlds (and much else, besides) in the transcension toward which the novel steadily moves.

Equally interesting, however, are the worlds of ideas, of literary traditions, of narrative techniques and of language which these characters inhabit. Among the more significant thought-experiments on display in *Transcension* are the bootstrapping of artificial intelligence, the aether model of Rothwarfian space, the disassembly of the solar system, Vernor Vinge’s notion of an exponential technological Singularity, and the arguments of Sun Microsystems’s Bill Joy advocating the relinquishment of Promethean technologies. (These are also briefly glossed in Broderick’s Afterword, and supplemented with references to several very helpful websites.) For those familiar with Broderick’s scholarship as well as his fiction, it will come as no surprise that his novel is also chockablock with echoes and extensions of Clarkean transcendence, Delanyesque language games, Gibsonian cyberwhiz, and several other slices of SF archaeology (all handy for using the novel as a teaching tool.) Add to

these the fully realized portraits of both the Metro and Valley societies, the cleverly designed (if sometimes irritating) Mallspeak of Amanda and her extended-adolescent pals, and the sense-of-wonder climax to the AI's unfolding secrets, and the novel fairly begs to be taught, as well as read.

With the simultaneous publication of his popular-science book, *The Spike*, along with two previous SF novels, a pair of volumes on SF and literary theory, and his credits as editor or co-editor of several anthologies, it's clear why Broderick is widely regarded as the Dean of Australian SF. But as he says in his Afterword, *Transcension* is "a frolic of a book," and that, too, is a significant part of its appeal. A fine novel, but fun: teachers, take note.

FICTION REVIEW

ECHOES OF EARTH

Pawel Frelk

Williams, Sean and Dix, Shane. *Echoes of Earth*. New York: Ace Books, 2002. 413 pages, paper, \$6.99. ISBN 0-441-00892-5.

Clearly a tested writing tandem with the *Evergence* trilogy under their belts, Williams and Dix have delivered a novel which, while no Hugo or Nebula candidate, offers a lively, mid-paced read while branching out in several interesting directions. Genre-wise, *Echoes of Earth* eludes easy categorization. In fact, it straddles several conventions – all of them fairly successfully, I think. First of all, it has a solid hard SF component – not only in its unwavering reliance on extrapolation rather than speculation. The adherence to strictly scientific coordinates is also exemplified by several appendixes concerning the novel's physics and astronomy. Then, there is some space opera here, too, with a number of grand-scale moments such as the destruction of the (post)humanity and the repeated traverses of light-year-long distances. *Echoes of Earth* is also a first-contact novel with a gripping moment of the arrival of the aliens, or rather, of their sentient albeit limited messengers. Last but not least, it is a deeply humanistic text – strangely so, since humans as we know them do not really make in it a single appearance and at the end of it there are even hardly any post-humans left.

Echoes of Earth is set in the 22nd century, when humanity undertakes the exploration of deep space using engrams – electronic simulacra, in need capable of uploading themselves into mechanical waldos, traveling at light speeds in spacecraft no bigger than boxes. The novel charts the fate of one such survey vessel and its virtual crew with Peter Alander, the team's generalist, as the protagonist. On a far-off barren planet the engrams make contact with, or, rather, are contacted by, a mysterious alien species, which leaves them prototypes of artifacts capable of catapulting the humankind several centuries ahead. For once, those who bring the gifts (incidentally, "the Gifts" is the name of the sentiences representing the absent creators of huge orbital towers and technological wonders) appear to bear no ill intent, but the same cannot be said of another, equally anonymous, species which seems to take pleasure in the destruction of budding civilizations. As Alander sets off to return to Earth with the newly acquired super-technologies, he unknowingly leads the latter home and triggers truly universal (as in "universe") events.

In its preoccupations, Williams' and Dix' text is reminiscent of several titles – a natural result of bridging several conventions. First, its rigorous science brings to mind the three master B's of hard SF – Bear, Brin, and Benford. Furthermore, it seems to be informed by the contact imagination of *Childhood's End* and the like. Finally, the concept of engram subjectivities, intrinsically imperfect yet pondering whether what they are doing is for themselves or their originals, brings *Echoes of Earth* closer to the ontological focus of cyberpunk and "terminal" narratives (as understood by Bukatman). However, I think the novel's major strength lies elsewhere, in what may not be immediately its most obvious asset – its humanistic dimension. Beside the faster-than-light travel over stellar distances and inside the arresting contact story, there is a lot of humanity and humanness here, even more unexpected as we witness them performed by subjectivities hardly comparable to us, flesh-and-bloods. Reductively, engrams are mere "blips in the chip" and virtual ghosts (apart from Alander who is "housed" in a nano-built body), but in the story they come across as fully-formed personalities which can experience joy, anger, exhaustion, anxiety, or grief. What is more, once we encounter, back in the Solar System, the new collective human-AI mergers of the Vincula and the Gezim, the engrams become even more human and natural owing to their imperfection and individuality.

While no classic of the *Childhood's End* posture, *Echoes of Earth* would still make a fair choice for an introductory SF class. No, make it a very fair one. It has enough of SF's iconic props; it neatly combines several important genre conventions; it also showcases the working of the science fiction novum and demonstrates how estrangement is turned into (re)cognition as we read on, kicking off as early as the third line of the novel: "Peter Alander looked down at his handiwork with something approaching a smile, imagining what it would be like to have his first bath in over a hundred of years." On the other hand, the novel might be a bit too mechanistic and info-dumpish for more topical courses. While it has a number of potentially engaging ideas, like the fact that an entire thousand of survey vessels are crewed by engrams of only sixty individuals which, once encoded, are free to develop independently of their "matrices" but also fellow copies, I cannot shake off the impres-

sion that the authors have not pushed them as far as they could. Another instance of such underdeveloped motifs are the Vincula and the Gezim, which emerged after the Discord – the day when artificial intelligences “Spiked” and rebelled against their creators. Both races are presented in sufficient detail to give the readers a fair idea of what they are but not enough of it to make them a more solid angle. All in all, however, *Echoes of Earth* is a very smooth and thought-provoking read with some solid classroom potential. I wouldn’t mind reading a sequel, if there is ever to be one. In fact, I’d very much like to.

FICTION REVIEW
SPACELAND
 Jeff Pickmann

Rucker, Rudy. *Spaceland*. New York: Tor, 2002. 304 pages, \$24.95 hc. ISBN 0-765-30366-3.

Although a stand-alone work, Rudy Rucker’s *Spaceland* shares many of the traits of his last non-series novel *The Hacker And The Ants* (1994). Both are set in or near Los Perros, CA and feature a first-person male computer industry protagonist in a troubled marriage. The Welsh & Tayke Realty Agency figures in both plots. And both tales are hilariously mind expanding yet empathetic—as if Rucker condensed *Ecstasy* into textual form.

With that said, readers will find no pretense of ultimate enlightenment in *Spaceland*, just a fun and brief wild ride through two branches of the fourth dimensional All, Klupdom and Dronia. Human reality (Spaceland) exists between the two realms. Manipulative Klupper Momo convinces main character Joe Cube that he must create a company to develop a new antenna-less cellular phone technology, eventually dubbed the Mophone. To assure his assistance she augments him with enhanced strength and the ability to see through solid surfaces with a third eye growing from a pineal gland stalk. Cube can bend and fold his body to travel “vinn” and “vout” of the fourth dimension, but the price is an addiction to the substance “grolly” that maintains his augmentation, available only from Momo. However, the supposedly evil Dronners, whose garbled speech makes even Yoda seem coherent, have their own baffling explanations of Momo’s motives.

Despite all the fun and games Rucker has with the fourth dimension, the strongest parts of *Spaceland* unflinchingly depict the relationships among the married Joe and Jena and their self-interested assistants, lovers Spazz and Tulip. When Jena begins an affair with Spazz, Joe is a firsthand witness due to his ability to see through the motel room’s walls from the outside. The fact that Joe has just used his augmented “subtle vision” to win a million dollars playing blackjack in a casino (for start-up expenses) adds poignancy to the betrayed husband’s plight. Rucker does an excellent job of detailing the range of emotions Joe goes through in trying to get over Jena, including his anger at Spazz and attraction to Tulip. Joe’s violent family background is addressed in a haunting dream sequence recreating his hometown of Matthewsboro, Colorado as a Flatland, one of a number of Rucker’s admiring nods to Edwin Abbot’s *Flatland* (1880) and the other-dimensional adventures of A. Square. The illustrations accompanying the dream and other sections of the story are intriguing and effective in bringing the All into three-dimensional perspective.

Due to Rucker’s four book *Ware* series, many reviewers will automatically refer to *Spaceland* as cyberpunk, but I find cyber-yup to be a more appropriate label. As in *The Hacker And The Ants*, Rucker’s characters are fully vested in the status quo, and care a lot about their clothes, cars, careers and cash. Rather than hacking into corporate databases, these characters create them. References to mainstream yuppie brands abound, and the use of a Juarez maquiladora to manufacture the Mophones is mentioned without comment or question. Whether Rucker presents the me-first mindset as acceptable, or all a sham based on the freaky inter-dimensional goings on, is up to the reader to decide. There is no doubt that *Spaceland* is vintage Rucker, a solid novel from an author who has not lost a step from either the quantum chaos of *The Master Of Space And Time* (1984) or the ability of *The Secret Of Life* (1985) to get inside the main character’s head—sometimes literally!

FICTION REVIEW
NEBULA AWARDS SHOWCASE 2002
 Philip Snyder

Kim Stanley Robinson, ed. *Nebula Awards Showcase 2002*. New York: Roc, 2002. Trade paperback, 292 pages. \$15. ISBN 0-451-45878-8.

The New York Review of Science Fiction, praising an earlier volume of the *Nebula Awards Showcase*, observed that it “would serve well as a one-volume text for a course in contemporary science fiction.” In the case of the most recent edition, *Nebula Awards Showcase 2002*, that claim seems more compelling than ever.

To begin with, the fiction in this year's anthology is especially rich, thought-provoking, and accessible.

Greg Bear is here, with a generous five-chapter excerpt from his Nebula-winning novel, *Darwin's Radio*. Linda Nagata weighs in with the winning novella, "Goddesses"—evidence that fiction published on the Internet (in this case at scifi.com) just keeps getting better and better. Three novelettes are offered: the award-winning "Daddy's World" from Walter Jon Williams, plus Eleanor Arnason's light-hearted adventure, "Stellar Harvest," and Gardner Dozois's urgent and moving "A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows." Add Terry Bisson's sharp little shocker, "macs," and the current state of SF looks healthy and hearty indeed.

Excellent as is each of the stories individually, they are even more impressive in dialogue with one another. Both "Goddesses" and the excerpt from *Darwin's Radio*, for instance, concern themselves with the near-future integration of technologies and social developments. "Daddy's World" and "Knight of Ghosts and Shadows" both explore the idea of machine transcendence, presenting two very different but oddly complementary takes on the currently popular trope of downloading minds into computers. "Stellar Harvest" and "macs," in turn, both demonstrate what science fiction can do with contemporary social issues, with Arnason exploring gender politics and Bisson confronting the morality of the death penalty. In tone, also, these stories beg to be compared and contrasted with one another. As editor Kim Stanley Robinson observes in his Introduction, the mood ranges from "the Steinbeckian realism of Greg Bear's novel to the witty ironies of Eleanor Arnason's planetary adventure, from the bitter sting of Terry Bisson's satire to the can-do optimism of Linda Nagata's utopia; from the sharp melancholy of Walter Jon Williams's allegory to the deep melancholy of Gardner Dozois's parable," a combination of flavors that makes the anthology a natural for the classroom.

Also of potential interest to instructors is the volume's "Commentary" section, with its already academic-sounding subtitle, "Science Fiction and the World." Here Robinson has asked nine of his fellow writers to answer a sort of essay exam, as it were, inviting each of them to respond to the following question:

Now that the twenty-first century is here, and the world more and more resembles a science fiction scenario, what will happen to the science fiction genre? What will be its role? And given this situation, what do you plan to do with your own science fiction?

The responses are given extra bite by an accident of history: arranged in the order in which Robinson received them, the essays offer before-and-after snapshots of the impact of Sept. 11 on the SF community. Thus Gwyneth Jones, Andy Duncan, Damon Knight, Gene Wolfe and Kathleen Goonan all respond with fairly upbeat and forward looking assessments: Jones speculates optimistically about "a new generation of Arthur C. Clarkes, fiction-writing philosophers with a talent for practical extrapolation"; Duncan plans "to keep writing whatever I want to write, whatever interests me"; Knight and Wolfe offer cheerful comparisons of the SF worlds of yesterday and tomorrow, and Goonan closes her commentary with an unequivocal affirmation: "Now is the best of all possible times to be a science fiction writer."

Then comes Sept. 11. Ken McLeod's initially optimistic essay breaks off in mid-sentence—the phone rings, and when McLeod returns, it is to write that "I leave this piece as I wrote it, words from the old world." And so it goes for all the others: "I'm writing this on the fourteenth of September 2001," begins Paul McAuley, "just three days after the destruction of the World Trade Center on Bloody Tuesday." Nalo Hopkinson, writing a week after the event, begins her essay with a stark declaration: "The twenty-first century is here." And John Clute speaks for them all, and for us, with an essay whose opening sentence says volumes: "Writing at the end of 2001 is writing afterwards."

Additional commentary abounds, making the anthology a double-duty showcase of fiction *and* nonfiction. Robinson's introductory essay, albeit brief, is an eloquent reminder that the imagineer of Mars got his start with a Ph.D. thesis on science fiction; his introduction is serious-minded but not stuffy, critically astute, tactfully polemical, and a pleasure to read. The pleasure continues in Robinson's headnotes to each of the six pieces of fiction, which are informative, personable, and neatly insightful about story and writer alike. The authors, in turn, all have additional afterwords of their own, giving readers the pleasant feeling that they have accidentally wandered to the back section of the mainstream *Best American Short Stories*.

Rounding out the book is a generous collection of items, especially useful to instructors, that add a welcome service function to the showcase. These include capsule explanations of the Nebula Awards and their history; a brief history of the SFWA; and histories of the Grand Master and Author Emeritus Awards, along with acceptance speech excerpts from this year's winners and testimonials from their colleagues. Oh, and a complete history of Nebula winners in all categories—to say nothing of a reprint of this year's ballot, listing all finalists as well as winners.

A teachable text? Most definitely. Already I can imagine pairings and sequences for the stories, exam questions and paper topics emerging from the introductions and afterwords, outside reading assignments springing from the award lists. My advice? Place your textbook orders now.

FICTION REVIEW
HOMINIDS
 Warren G. Rochele

Sawyer, Robert A. *Hominids*. New York: Tor Books, 2002. 444 pages, paper (advance uncorrected proofs), \$25.95. ISBN 0-312-87692-0

You know, *Homo neanderthalensis* (or *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*) are a lot better at being human than your garden variety *Homo sapiens sapiens*—us. Or so it seems in Robert Sawyer's new novel, *Hominids*. Neanderthals are gentler and kinder. Violent crimes of any kind are almost unheard of. The males cry openly and treat females as equals, with respect. They don't have any sexual hangups—all of them are bisexual. Neanderthals are not only kinder to each other, they are kinder to the planet and its flora and fauna—they don't need an Endangered Species Act, and they have a low, controlled birthrate. And to perhaps sum up the difference: one does not have a job, or a career. Rather, according to the *Code of Civilization*, everyone “contribute[s] as best [they] can” (116), and in the case of Ponter Boddit, his contribution is quantum physics. In the course of an experiment, deep in a mine, with his partner (in all the senses of the word), Adikor Huld, Ponter winds up on a parallel Earth, where the Gliksins are the dominant species. Or, in other words, as we are the Gliksins, he winds up *here*.

That is the premise of this entertaining, often funny, and thoughtful novel by Robert Sawyer, the first in a trilogy. There are two primary plot lines, parallel, of course, *here* and *there*. The novel opens with *here*, recounting Ponter's experiences in our world, told from multiple points-of-view, such as that of Louise Benoit, the “statuesque postdoc from Montreal,” at the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory, Dr. Reuben Montego, “a Jamaican-Canadian in his midthirties,” the onsite doctor at the nickel mine in northern Ontario, where the observatory is housed, and Dr. Mary Vaughan, a geneticist in Toronto. Vaughan's violent rape before she is asked to check out Ponter's DNA, becomes all too symbolic of the differences between these parallel versions of humanity. The *there* sections are the story of what happens to his partner, Adikor, back in the Neanderthal world, when he is accused of murdering Ponter. The Neanderthals are not, fortunately, presented as without fault: Adikor must deal with jealousy and ignorance, as he desperately tries to prove his innocence.

There is also something of a third comedic plot line: the news reports and commentary that begin midway through the novel, as the world outside Sudbury learns of the arrival of this Neanderthal. Sawyer has great fun with all the inevitable crazies, religious and otherwise, who emerge in response, including a debate on whether or not Ponter's entry in Canada was legal, Pentagon inquiries into the military possibilities of Ponter's travel methods, and French claims for his citizenship, as “the youngest Neanderthal fossils are found in that country” (353).

Sawyer is one of Canada's leading science fiction writers, and is described by *Maclean's: Canada's Weekly Newsmagazine*, as “among the most successful Canadian authors ever” (443), and his fiction is clearly Canadian, with Canadian characters and locales, as in *Hominids*. I don't know Sawyer's fiction well enough to place this novel in the context of his overall work, but its other contexts seem fairly evident. The novel is clearly anthropological science fiction. Sawyer, who is a member of the Paleanthropology Society, has done his homework and provides a bibliography of source material for the interested reader. *Hominids* is just as clearly a novel of parallel worlds, with the two universes, ours and that of the Neanderthals “situated ‘alongside’ . . . displaced from it along a spatial fourth dimension” (Clute, Nichols, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* 907). Physically the two Earths are the same, but in all other ways, very different, yet having odd overlaps.

In addition to anthropological science fiction and the parallel worlds subgenre, I want to suggest *Hominids* is a utopian novel as well. Sawyer does invert the generic utopian conventions: no one from our world is visiting utopia, instead, a utopian, Ponter, is inadvertently visiting and exploring ours. Even so, the utopian dialectic between *here* and the better *there* are the crux of the novel. Ponter's interactions with the humans who find him and take him provide this comparison and contrast, one which leaves *Homo sapiens sapiens* clearly the less civilized. Yet, Ponter's world, to borrow a phrase from Le Guin, is an “ambiguous utopia.” Adikor, Ponter's “man-mate,” is on trial for murder, and if he were to be convicted, not only would he be sterilized, but anyone sharing fifty per cent of his DNA would be as well, including his innocent son. Neanderthals are not angelic. I found their idea of privacy to be disquieting as well. Everyone has a Companion, an implant which records *everything* an individual sees, does, and hears. True, almost no crime is a result (poor Adikor's guilt seems compounded when it is made clear court he took Ponter to a place from which no Companion transmissions could be sent), but, is *everything* anyone does worth recording? Shouldn't we be allowed to forget a few things? And, as is frequently the case with utopian novels, Sawyer lapses into the polemic, the occasionally heavy-handed instructive dialogue, some admittedly to explain the physics, others

to make it clear our world could have been a better place, if we had been a species “biologically committed to the moral aspects” of human life (Wrangham, Peterson in Sawyer, *Hominids* 13). But such expository and sermonic passages are to be expected in utopian fiction, and should not prove distracting to the reader, particularly as the information advances the plot and adds depth to the characters.

These utopian aspects of this novel are, I think, what would make it particularly useful in a classroom, especially in a course devoted to utopian literature. The ecological ideas, the questioning of gender roles and sexuality, and so on, could prove quite fruitful. A utopian lit course with *Hominids*, *The Dispossessed*, and *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, among other titles, should have some fascinating class discussions. Clearly *Hominids* could be used in a human anthropology course as well.

I enjoyed this book, finding it funny, touching and thoughtful. I finished it wishing I knew what was going to happen in its sequel, *Humans*—just what will happen between Ponter and Mary? What will come of the interaction between *Homo sapiens sapiens* and *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* when there is regular interdimensional travel? Recommended.

FICTION REVIEW

THE GOLDEN AGE

DaveLead

Wright, John C. *The Golden Age*. New York: TOR Books, April 2002. \$24.95/\$34.95 Can. Hardcover. 336 pages. ISBN 0-312-84870-6. Reviewed in advance uncorrected proofs.

Fictions of the really distant future have an honorable lineage, from Stapledon and H.G. Wells, through Jack Vance’s tales of *The Dying Earth*, Gene Wolfe’s *Book of the New Sun*, and Walter John Williams’ *Aristoi*, to recent tales by Stephen Baxter (his “Manifold” novels and *Vacuum Diagrams*, for instance) and Mathew Hughes’ *Fools Errand* and *Fool Me Twice*. To these wonderful tales and this marvellously varied tradition we now add *The Golden Age*, an imaginative, challenging first novel by John Wright.

Part 1 of a two-volume adventure due to be completed next year, *The Golden Age* is set in the very far future, when humanity has attained immortality and seemingly unlimited mastery of his own technological and psychological being in circum-Solar space. Despite (or perhaps because of) its perfection, which has been realized by means of his Sophotechs – AI’s of almost unlimited power – humankind and its intelligent machines (all in a wondrous variety of forms and manifestations) now face a terrible choice: to fix a status quo of safe comfort or to risk fundamental change and danger by reaching out to the stars, spreading beyond their safe, controlled environment into the wilderness of interstellar space. This crisis has been precipitated by the protagonist, “Phaethon Prime Rhadamanth Humodified (augment) Uncomposed, Indepconsciousness, Base Neuroformed, Silver-Gray Manorial Schola, Era 7043 (the “Reawakening),” whose own reawakening generates the action of the story.

As you might guess from parsing its hero’s name (all of which signifies), this book is not an easy read, at least at first. Wright, like William Gibson in *Neuromancer*, expects the reader to work for his pleasure – developing, accumulating, formulating, comprehending context and culture as the circumstances of Phaethon’s drama of self-discovery unfold. Fred Pohl pointed out in *Day Million* that the future is going to be a *lot* more complex than we expect, so Wright’s readers should be prepared to be puzzled and challenged. However, for those who can watch and wait, the effort to understand will be rewarded generously.

FICTION REVIEW

CHINDI

JeffPrickmann

McDevitt, Jack. *Chindi*. New York: Ace, 2002. Hardcover, 403 pp. \$22.95. ISBN 0-441-00938-7.

Chindi features the further adventures of Priscilla “Hutch” Hutchins, the Academy of Science and Technology transport pilot from *The Engines of God* and *Deepsix*. I have not read the earlier novels, but I did not find that *Chindi* depends on knowledge of the prior works. While references to other characters, stations, and events (especially at *Deepsix*) do occur, they are not enough to detract from following the plot, once the main storyline finally starts.

McDevitt’s setting is a twenty-third century where scientists roam the stars, similar in scope if not depth to C. J. Cherryh’s Alliance—Union universe. By 2224, humanity has discovered alien life (the dull Noks and mysterious Hawks) and, more intriguingly, the remains of sophisticated civilizations. However, finding a genuinely intelligent race has proved

elusive. The search for such beings is the backbone of the story. Hutch must lead the Contact Society, a group of wealthy first contact enthusiasts, on what is initially a privately-financed feelgood Academy mission to allow the hobbyists to investigate a radio transmission near an otherwise unremarkable star.

The mission to find the signal quickly grows into a treasure hunt, as Hutch and her group of amateurs follow the signal's path through a series of satellites which record images of the worlds they hover above—one planet is inhabited, the rest no longer. McDevitt provides an intriguing set of characters for the novel, although a bit of cliché infects each (for example, there is a Carl Sagan scientist, beautiful actress, sensitive artist, and happy-go-lucky funeral home director). Nonetheless, most of the characters are memorable, especially George Hockelmann, the self-made financier behind the Contact Society, whose insistence on visiting every site along the way has fatal consequences.

The heart of *Chindi* works quite well, as the crew explores one location after another. The best scenes vividly depict wandering through strange, decrepit structures room-by-room. Far from being mere setpieces for a light-hearted adventure, each place reveals either a past tragedy or plays a part in a new one. Death is never far away in McDevitt's universe, and when people are in space or encountering alien life they are fragile, a lesson Hutch's passengers never seem to learn.

Despite the somber grownup tone that consistently dominates the novel, McDevitt creates some odd juxtapositions. Future technology, such as robot waiters, hovercars, VR, holos and the ship's AI named Bill, is integrated seamlessly and convincingly throughout. However, Hutch's relationships seem to belong to a quaint past world, where men and women fall deeply in love simply after a couple of dinner dates. The last part of *Chindi* is further undermined by the rescue of one of Hutch's suitors from an alien craft. The entire operation occupies no less than ten chapters, during which time no other significant subplots occur. The level of detail is ridiculous and unfortunate, for it pushes the novel beyond a length suitable for classroom use. Nonetheless, *Chindi* has more strengths than weaknesses, and for anyone interested in space exploration and alien archeology, McDevitt delivers.

FICTION REVIEW

BLUE KANSAS SKY

Matthew Wolf-Meyer

Bishop, Michael. *Blue Kansas Sky*. Urbana, IL: Golden Gryphon, 2000. Introduction by James Morrow. 263 p., hardcover, \$24.95. ISBN: 0965590100.

Subtitled, "Four Short Novels of Memory, Magic, Surmise, and Estrangement," *Blue Kansas Sky* collects three of Bishop's previously printed speculative novellas, behind a previously unpublished piece of magic realism, the eponymous "Blue Kansas Sky." As such, the collection acts as a wonderful introduction to Bishop's work (for those unfamiliar), and a thoughtful collection for avid readers, having collected a 1973 Nebula and Hugo award shot-listed piece ("Death and Designation Among the Asadi") as well as a Year's Best piece from 1995, "Cri de Coeur." Even for a thorough collector of Bishop's work, *Blue Kansas Sky* puts into print some essential reading.

The lead novella, "Blue Kansas Sky," is a study of pre-Vietnam rural American life, a glimpse at the funnel of lives that found themselves ending in the Vietnam conflict – the procession of young men (and women) who lived their lives free of worry (or nearly so), only to be interrupted by the war machine of the American government's foreign relations. Simply, "Blue Kansas Sky" depicts the coming of age narrative of a slightly awkward, rather intelligent, ambitious young man in a small town, following him from his youth (age 10) to the time of departure for Vietnam (unspecified). The focus is entirely on the former phase, and his abrupt absence comes only on the last page of the novella – a shock both for the reader and the characters. After a careful development of the plot and characters, the tragedy of the novella's conclusion makes the reality of the character's lives all the more real, and all the more tragic. But the development of the plot lies parallel to Bishop's critique of place, of geography, and its shaping of the individual, its control of the romantic imagination. While the environment is always evident (Bishop is sure to include the seemingly quotidian aspects of the weather and topography in every scene), it is when young Sonny catches hold of a passing tornado that the environment moves to the fore – this is magic realism after all – and Sonny has a difficult time reconciling his seeming teleportation from the roof of his family home to that of the home of his schoolboy crush: the only conclusion must be that of the tornado and his use of it – that the dangerous environment can also be a source of magic. Transcendental ideals in place, it is finally the blue sky of Vietnam that ushers Sonny home after his death there, tragic and unsettling, assuaged by the presence of an "American" landscape, a topography that exists beyond geography.

"Apartheid, Superstrings and Mordecai Thubana," is Bishop's study of the conditions of South Africa throughout the period of institutionalized racism legislated by the white colonial Afrikan government. Bishop's place as a Southern writer is of interest: He often displays a sincere interest in the ideological control strategies employed by governments for the

deprivileging (and construction) of an underclass, as well as the ethos of colonial development, but this is the most direct of his studies, laying bare the dehumanizing efforts of the Afrikan government in petty efforts of control. But these are *real* matters, not those of “speculation.” The speculative comes into play when Garrit Myburgh, a nigh middle-aged white Afrikaner, collides with an anomalous elephant while driving late one night and is shifted into a semi-corporeal form, a “shadow matter”-existence. As an “invisible man” (and the relation to Ralph Ellison’s work is obvious), Myburgh finds himself not only the subject of the dehumanizing practices of the colonial government, but also witness to the more inhuman strategies exerted by the police state upon his similarly disenfranchised new compatriots (the black travelers on a bus who can actually perceive him – and this may simply be because of their social and not metaphysical placement). The novella’s conclusion, wherein Myburgh seeks revenge for the death of his friends at the hands of the police is ambiguous, and helps to mythologize the entire narrative: If it were simply a ghost story (Myburgh considers the possibility of his death, of his being a ghost), it would be too simple. Instead, Bishop posits that *anyone* could become similarly disenfranchised, but that, given some sort of enlightenment, of realization, that this new ambiguous state contains power outside – and over – the system.

“Cri de Couer” is Bishop’s exploration of the practicalities of generation ships, and follows the life of Abel Gwiazda, who, beyond his career as a geologist, is more importantly the father of young Dean, a child conceived in space, and due to cosmic radiation, born with Down’s Syndrome. While it begins with an examination of “man’s inhumanity to man” – Dean is picked on by a bigoted adult – it quickly moves to a meditation on what it means to simply be human, freed from the strictures of Earth. And maybe even from the incessant problems of Earth-bound society: The bigotry exhibited towards Dean is eventually overcome, and even the recovery from the debilitating loss of one of the fellow generation ships speaks the promise of space. Sometimes sentimental, other times wonderfully magical, “Cri de Couer” is a beautiful explication of the potentials of science – and the potentials of humanity.

The last novella in the collection, “Death and Designation Among the Asadi,” is a meditation on anthropology and the pursuit of understanding across difference. The Asadi are rare, perplexing aliens that inspire madness in those who attempt to come to terms with them, almost Lovecraftian in nature. Egan Chaney, the xenoanthropologist who attempts to “go native” among the Asadi, moves from a state of anthropological curiosity to a state of cross-cultural (and species) identification: However maddening the Asadi culture is (and it surely is for the reader inasmuch as it is for Chaney), it is alluring, especially to Chaney. His “heart of darkness” is however quite different: rather than descent into nativity, Chaney’s is a descent into technology. At the heart of the Asadi culture is a strange structure, a temple built by their predecessors, of very advanced technology, and the inability to understand how such an advanced race could devolve into the Asadi is what ultimately leads to Chaney’s distress. “Death and Designation” is a perfect text for exploring themes of technics and culture (from Lewis Mumford onwards to Bernard Stiegler), and more broadly, matters of postmodern anthropology.

The construction of this collection works in a very geo-conscious way – beginning in the domestic setting of Kansas, moving to a recognizable South Africa, and from there to a human colonization attempt aboard a generation ship, and finally to an alien world – as such, Bishop keeps the human, both the individual and community in focus, while shifting the background; humanity, and its problems, persist in spite of environment. With his careful studies of race and culture, a number of Bishop’s stories could easily be included in the classroom, or into the work of scholars with an eye for such matters: He is one of the many speculative fiction writers concerned with such, but Bishop’s sheer skill at characterization and magnetic prose are engaging unlike many of his peers. If there is a problem with *Blue Kansas Sky* it is simply that its low print run (only 4,000 copies) will find a hard time making themselves into many classrooms – where Bishop surely deserves more attention – and onto the desks of scholars – where, too, Bishop awaits ready incorporation into our studies.

FICTION REVIEW

SWIFT THOUGHTS

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Zebrowski, George. *Swift Thoughts*. Introduction by Gregory Benford. Urbana, IL: Golden Gryphon Press, 2002. 311 pages, cloth, \$24.95. ISBN: 1-930846-08-8.

Lecturing a glassy-eyed class, “the old sci-fi writer” proclaims that “[f]or most of human history our tales were about what was, and what is. A genuine state-change, a quantum leap, occurred when we began to story-up about what might be.” The important question, he argues, “is what should we become” (300). In this thoughtful and engaging collection of stories, George Zebrowski uses a variety of familiar SF tropes — first contact, Artificial Intelligence, cloning, alternative history, post-apocalypse — to explore the pressures that our pasts bring to bear on our futures. His narrative styles are wide-ranging; the collection includes bitter humor, horror building gradually, exposition punctuated by fantastic images, and philosophic

inquiry that supports rather than occludes engaging story telling. At the heart of most of these stories lies a passionate conviction that achieving a truly promising future depends upon an honest, if painful, confrontation with the past.

In his introduction to the collection, Gregory Benford calls George Zebrowski “our most European science fiction writer,” and identifies Stanislaw Lem as his chief literary influence (ix). Perhaps this helps explain Zebrowski’s interest in the legacies of history, rare in mainstream American culture. In a commentary following the alternative history “Lenin in Odessa,” Zebrowski laments that an early reviewer couldn’t recognize the ways in which Josef Stalin’s narrative of his efforts to help a British agent assassinate Lenin diverts from Russian history. Like “The Number of the Sand” and “Let Time Shape,” two stories connected with his 1998 novel *Brute Orbits*, “Lenin in Odessa” explores the ways changes in significant episodes might affect broader history, with rather chilling conclusions. In “The Eichmann Variations,” a finalist for the Nebula in 1984, the architect of Hitler’s “final solution” watches as Israel systematically executes ten clones an hour, building the count toward six million. A spokesman admits that Eichmann’s guilt “cannot be duplicated, but it is passed on. The new generations of Germans are not guilty, but they inherit past crimes socially, like it or not” (28).

For Zebrowski, this motif is not merely a political one; he is clearly interested in the very personal and private tensions evoked as his characters are forced to apprehend their pasts. I found “In the Distance, and Ahead in Time” to be particularly compelling. A brother and sister living in an outpost colony precariously perched amid a jungle planet are given the opportunity to leave their hardscrabble existence to voyage among the stars. The human presence on this planet is a threat to incipient intelligence, but for Alan, the brother, the invitation to join the spacefarers constitutes a denial of all the work and all the suffering that has gone into the foundation of the colony. Realizing that his sister Gemma is considering the offer to leave the colony, Alan asserts “[y]ou just don’t care about all the effort that’s gone into this place. [...] You don’t care for the hard work I’m putting in, or your own ... and you don’t care that you’re wasting the lives of our parents and grandparents” (202). If the story ultimately endorses Gemma’s decision to leave the colony as a positive assertion of responsibility and hope, it is also honest enough to be sensitive to her bittersweet memories of “the thousands of jars of preserves she had set up over the years, the countless meals she had cooked” (214) and the pain she feels leaving her brother behind.

Perhaps the most entertaining appearance of this motif comes in “Stooges,” in which Curly Howard reappears on earth, first as a single manifestation and then in destructive multitudes. What better way for aliens to make contact than by materializing a representative, plucked from television data beamed out from earth? The image of Carl Sagan and Robert Jastrow masquerading as Moe and Larry to facilitate Curly’s appearance on Carson’s *Tonight Show* is simply delightful. The inclusion of Sagan here may be a reference to a similar device in *Contact*, in which alien signals return an early television broadcast of Hitler; surely Curly Howard would be the preferable representative of early twentieth century history.

As this brief account of a small selection of the stories collected in *Swift Thoughts* indicates, Zebrowski commands an impressive range of narrative styles. His narrators include Josef Stalin and Adolf Eichmann, immortals confronting those who have chosen to die, and young men choosing their destinies. One criticism may be that Zebrowski’s protagonists are almost entirely male. Other than Gemma of “In the Distance, and Ahead in Time,” the only other prominent female character of the collection is Mira of “Augie,” who is losing her relationship with the AI she has raised from infancy. Only a few other stories feature women in significant roles of any kind.

In contrast with this limitation, one of the chief pleasures of *Swift Thoughts* is Zebrowski’s ability to manipulate point of view and exposition so that the reader is consistently engaged in the character’s journey of discovery. “Starcrossed,” for example, begins with a familiar SF trope, an interstellar probe with an organic brain, but the process by which MOB discovers identity and even love is graceful and poignant. The stories of the “History Machine” peer over the shoulder of a historian watching the final confrontations of Rome and Carthage across a myriad of realities. “The Last Science Fiction Story of the 20th Century” layers simulations within simulations in a fascinating exploration of the creative tension between getting the details right and true originality. The writer seeks “to write past the event horizon of change! To find a way that no one knew about” while preventing “one’s science fiction [from] becoming fantasy by default” (294).

In most of these stories, George Zebrowski manages that tension successfully. *Swift Thoughts* offers science fiction that is thought-provoking, elegant, and at times haunting. Zebrowski has included brief commentaries following the stories that present engaging insights into the writing process and the lives of the stories.

STORIES FOR AN ENCHANTED AFTERNOON

Kenneth Andrews

Rusch, Kristine Kathryn. *Stories for an Enchanted Afternoon*. Urbana, IL: Golden Gryphon Press, 2001. 284 pages, hardcover, \$24.95. 1-930846-02-9. [Foreword by Kevin J. Anderson]

I want to apologize to Kenneth Andrews, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and Golden Gryphon for the tardiness of this review. I lost it in my files on my computer and it is only now reaching the review.--*co-editor, Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard*

Although this volume of eleven stories is touted as “award-winning and award-nominated tales,” according to the author’s introduction only “Echea,” “Coolhunting,” and “The Gallery of His Dreams” are award winners, while “Going Native” is an award nominee [xiv]. “Echea” won the 1998 Asimov’s Readers Choice Award and the Homer award by sf readers on CompuServe; it was also a finalist for the Nebula, Sturgeon, Locus, and Hugo awards [xv]. “The Gallery of His Dreams” won the Locus Award, and was also nominated for the Nebula, Hugo, and World Fantasy awards [Anderson x]. The awards for “Coolhunting” are not identified.

“Skin Deep” is the story of the impending extinction of shape-shifting natives on a planet colonized by humans. One shape-shifter in the guise of a human comes to the aid of a young Earthling who in reality is not what she appears. Her adoptive parents must decide whether their love for her is true and deep or merely on the surface.

In “Echea” an orphan of the wars among the Moon colonies is adopted into a family on Earth. Psychologically-damaged, the child faces a future of dependency unless she is brain-wiped and retrofitted to link into Earth’s information nets. The choice is between her existing personality (those unique traits and characteristics that make her who she is) or one that will fit into her new environment.

In “Coolhunting” Steffie spends her life on the streets looking for “cool” and selling those ever-changing and transitory insights to the fashion-conscious information nets. She receives a message from her estranged family that her sister KD is dying. As a child, KD’s parents altered her to be forever an infant in body and dependent on them. KD needs Steffie to take her to the illegal purveyors of the cure that will allow her to grow up. However, Steffie is someone who sees exteriors, and not her sister’s motivations.

In “Going Native,” a journalist takes a train trip to a convention of people who believe that each time they used Earth’s teleportation system, some part of their humanity was stripped away and changed in undesirable ways. He must decide whether undesirable changes in ourselves come from exterior forces beyond our control, or from the inside.

Brooke Cross is one of those “Millennium Babies” whose parents were in a race to win local, national, and international contests for the first child to be born on January 1, 2000. “... the winning parent got a lot of money, and a lot of products, and some ... got endorsements as well” (134). Thirty years later Eldon Franke, a psychologist, wants to study the results of being branded a “winner” or a “loser” at birth. It turns out that more than biology was at work.

“Harvest” is a fantasy about Amanda and her unhappy life with her husband, Daniel. Amanda’s grandmother figures that it’s time to pass on that unhappiness to the next generation.

In “Strange Creatures,” Dan Retsler, a sheriff in the Northwest, investigates the torture killings of local animals and unwittingly unleashes the forces of nature on the perpetrators.

“Monuments to the Dead” is a fantasy about the disappearance of the four presidents carved into Mount Rushmore. The mountain is there in its natural state once more, as if the incursion of white people and the disruption to Native American cultures had never happened. Although suspicion immediately falls on the Native Americans of the Black Hills, it may be their gods who have turned the tables on white civilization.

“Spirit Guides,” another fantasy, is about Kincaid, a police investigator who has this uncanny ability to show up moments after a violent crime and who has the ability to immediately solve the puzzle of what happened and who did it. He stumbles on his true purpose in the cosmos — not to solve crimes after the fact, but to put things back the way they were.

In “Burial Detail” (yet another fantasy), a white photographer takes pictures of the remnants of the battlefields of the Civil War, while an ex-slave with the “Sight” helps bury the dead. If he comes into direct contact with the corpse, he experiences the soldier’s life and death in an instant.

At first “The Gallery of His Dreams” seems to be a fantasy about the life of Mathew B. Brady, the famous photographer of the Civil War. Brady loses his fortune and his health during the war, and he eventually loses ownership and control of his negatives and his photos. However, a strange presence (a hallucination?) periodically appears and transports him to a grand gallery where his photographs are on display. Brady’s eternal fame is assured if he will agree to the stranger’s terms,

namely to take photographs of future wars. It seems that in the far future, war obliterates not just buildings and people, but the memory that its victims had ever existed.

There's a recurring theme in many of these stories. An observer (sometimes a journalist, often a photographer) sees events that he is unable or unwilling to change. Later he has an insight into the meaning of what was on the surface. In "Coolhunting" Steffie's surreptitious recordings of passers-by are an intrusion into their lives. The journalist in "Monuments to the Dead" realizes what might it be like for one's culture to be on the verge of extinction. The ex-slave of "Burial Detail" and Mathew B. Brady in "The Gallery of His Dreams" know that photographs of the dead are not "art," but reminders of the horror of warfare.

Stories for an Enchanted Afternoon is 'easy reading,' so easy that readers may think of it as suitable on for the beach or the pool-side. Although I do not recommend spending \$24.95 for the hardback edition, a cheaper paperback version (if it is published) would be worth the price.

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