

#265
July-Sept. 2003

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SUBMISSIONS

The *SFRAReview* encourages all submissions, including essays, review essays that cover several related texts, and interviews. If you would like to review non-fiction or fiction, please contact the respective editor.

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News Items:

The 2003 Hugo Award Winners: Best Novel: *Hominids* by Robert J. Sawyer; Best Novella: *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman; Best Novelette: "Slow Life" by Michael Swanwick; Best Short Story: "Falling Onto Mars" by Geoffrey A. Landis; Best Related Book: *Better to Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merrill* by Judith Merrill and Emily Pohl-Weary; Best Short Form Dramatic Presentation: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, "Conversations With Dead People"; Best Long Form Dramatic Presentation: *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*; Best Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois; Best Professional Artist: Bob Eggleton; Best Semiprozine: *Locus*; John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Wen Spencer

2003 Prix Aurora Awards: Best Long-Form Work in English: *Permanence* by Karl Schroeder; Best Long-Form Work in French: *Le Revenant de Fomalhaut* by Jean-Louis Trudel; Best Short-Form Work in English: "Ineluctable" by Robert J. Sawyer; Best Short-Form Work in French: "La Guerre sans temps" by Sylvie Bérard. The Aurora Award is presented annually to recognize the best Canadian SF and fantasy work.

The **Mythopoeic Society 2003 Awards:** **Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature:** *Ombria in Shadow* by Patricia A. McKillip; **Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature:** *Summerland* by Michael Chabon; **Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies:** *Beowulf and the Critics* by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Michael D.C. Drout; **Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in General Myth and Fantasy Studies:** *Fairytale in the Ancient World* by Graham Anderson

SFRA BUSINESS

Message from the Editor

Christine Mains

Well, the Review isn't yet back on schedule, but it's getting closer; Issue 265, which you hold in your hands, covers July/Aug/Sept and is reaching you in October. Your editorial team will continue to work on this problem, but what would really help would be for SFRA members who are assigned reviews to pretty please, with sugar on top, get the things written and back to Ed and Phil within 4-6 weeks. Those of us who've chosen an academic life are all way too busy and it's easy for such tasks to slip lower in the to-do pile (um, I think I've been guilty of that myself a time or two) but we really can't go to press with only a couple of reviews in hand. With me nagging them, Phil and Ed will be nagging all of you.

As I've said before, we'd really like to resurrect some features from past years, including "Approaches to Teaching." I've seen some discussion of the teaching of SF on the listserv, so I know that at least a few SFRA members would appreciate advice and resources and that many of you are willing to fill that need, at least in the more informal environment of the listserv. I would love to hear from anyone who has advice to give or questions to ask; in the past, the Review has requested submissions for teaching approaches to a particular text, and I'd be happy to hear suggestions for texts that we could focus on. Just drop me a line at <cemains@shaw.ca> any time. If you're not sure what we're looking for, check out Issue 262, and then go way back to Issues 250 and 243.

Oh, and one other thing: Mike Levy isn't the only one allowed to interview authors, you know. And he can't be the only SFRA member who speaks to authors. Can he?

SFRA BUSINESS

Message from the President

Peter Brigg

Your President lives in Canada, almost as far north as Mike Levy. But I must lack Mike's powerful antibodies (was he ever sick as President?) because I write to you from inside a deadly, first of autumn head cold. This causes some things to retreat from consciousness and focuses the mind on the Kleenex box. Hopefully I'll be well by the time you read this, so please hold the mustard plasters for your own use this winter. If you live where there is no cold weather I have only this advice - stay there.

Thus I'm not up to much in the way of broad thinking as I hurry to meet another Chrissie Mains deadline (deadline- a line drawn around the outside of a military prison, going beyond which led to being shot). But I would like to tell you of some evolving initiatives and ask for some comment on some things coming up.

We have sorted out adding *Femspec* and *JFA* to the list of journals that you can buy at a discount at the same time that you pay your SFRA fees. When you are mailed your renewal forms they will be included and I'll fix the subscription form on the website once I stop sneezing. Please remember to see if you can convince just one more person to join SFRA so that we can continue to grow the membership.

I am working with Lyra McMullen on a new Association logo, which will then make its way through Executive approval to membership approval at SFRA 2004. Cory Panshin's rocket ship has flown valiantly but visions of the future have changed over thirty years, and, with renewed thanks to Cory, we shall let

it land for the last time. Any suggestions for the logo would be welcomed.

I am still setting up awards committees for next year and would still welcome volunteers. The tasks offer real insight into the field, a crash course in reading or considering colleagues deserving of recognition.

And, in the further future (which is our territory, after all), I have been approached by Brisbane, Australia, and by Pawel Freluk of Lublin, Poland, about the 2006 SFRA conference. I have asked both to develop briefs that your Executive can consider. We have Skokie in 2004 and Las Vegas in 2005. I will not be leading the Executive that makes the 2006 decision final, but I would like to know if there is sentiment in favour of going abroad again. SFRA is 80% American (plus some Canadians) but my personal yen for new places makes me happy to dream of Brisbane or Lublin Am I representing much of the membership or should I shut down this initiative? The listserv would be the place for discussion on this.

Save your pennies for membership renewal, read some great new books (Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is a finalist for the Booker Prize), and do some scholarship this fall. And avoid head colds.

SFRA BUSINESS

Minutes: SFRA General Meeting

Warren Rochelle

SFRA General Meeting

29 June 2003, University of Guelph,
Guelph, Ontario

The General Meeting of the SFRA was called to order at 12:50 p.m., EST, on June 29, 2003. Board members in attendance were Peter Brigg (President), Michael Levy (Immediate Past President), Warren Rochelle (Secretary and Recorder), David Mead (Treasurer), and Christine Mains (Editor, *SFRA Review*).

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Officer's Reports.

Past President, Mike Levy:

Peter thanked Mike for his sage advice. Mike made a request that those interested in holding office in the SFRA let this interest be known.

President, Peter Brigg:

Peter said his report would be in the items on the agenda.

Treasurer, David Mead:

Dave described SFRA finances as healthy and solvent. There are bills due from the journals and technically we will have a deficit in the calendar year when these are paid, but as the money comes in spurts, the deficit will be made up. There are 285 current members; 270 of those are paid, some of the others are legacies. There were 278 members last year. David urged those present to recruit others to join and he mentioned the idea to revise the information in a SFRA informational pamphlet, which could be distributed at regional MLA's.

Vice President, Jan Bogstad:

Peter summarized Jan's written report. Jan has been considering vari-

World Fantasy Awards Nominations: Winners will be announced Sunday, November 2, 2003 at the World Fantasy Convention 2003 in Washington, DC. A Life Achievement Award, whose nominees are not released in advance, will also be announced at the convention. Novel: *The Facts of Life*, Graham Joyce; *Fitcher's Brides*, Gregory Frost; *Ombria in Shadow*, Patricia A. McKillip; *The Portrait of Mrs. Charbuque*, Jeffrey Ford; *The Scar*, China Miéville. Novella: Coraline, Neil Gaiman; "The Least Trumps", Elizabeth Hand; "The Library", Zoran Zivkovic; Seven Wild Sisters, Charles de Lint; A Year in the Linear City, Paul Di Filippo. Short Story: "Creation", Jeffrey Ford; "The Essayist in the Wilderness", William Browning Spencer; "Little Dead Girl Singing", Stephen Gallagher; "October in the Chair", Neil Gaiman; "The Weight of Words", Jeffrey Ford. Anthology: *The American Fantasy Tradition*, Brian M. Thomsen, ed.; *Conjunctions 39: The New Wave Fabulists*, Peter Straub, ed.; *The Green Man: Tales from the Mythic Forest*, Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, eds.; *Leviathan 3*, Jeff VanderMeer & Forrest Aguirre, eds.; *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Fifteenth Annual Collection*, Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, eds. Collection: *City of Saints and Madmen*, Jeff VanderMeer; *The Fantasy Writer's Assistant and Other Stories*, Jeffrey Ford; *Figures in Rain*, Chet Williamson; *The Ogre's Wife*, Richard Parks; *Waifs and Strays*, Charles de Lint; *Water: Tales of Elemental Spirits*, Robin McKinley & Peter Dickinson.

Robert A. Heinlein's first novel, believed to have been written in late 1938/early 1939, **For Us, the Living**, was recently located and will be published by Scribner's. No publication date has yet been announced.

Worldcon 2006 will be held August 23-27, 2006, in Los Angeles, at the Anaheim Convention Center, across the street from Disneyland, and site of the 1996 Worldcon. Guests of Honor will be author Connie Willis, artist James Gurney, fan Howard DeVore, and special guest Frankie Thomas, the original star of Tom Corbett, Space Cadet.

Worldcon 2005 will be held in Glasgow, Scotland, August 4-8. The **2005 NASFiC** (North American Science Fiction Convention) will be held in Seattle. NASFiC is held in the US when Worldcon is hosted outside the US. NASFiC guests include Fred Saberhagen, Liz Danforth, Toni Weiskopf, and Kevin Standlee. For more details see <<http://www.seattle2005.org/index.shtml>>.

The **2004 Worldcon**, Noreascon Four, will be held in Boston, September 2-6.

The **Official Frederik Pohl** website is looking for contributions, including brief scholarly essays suitable for a wide audience, book reviews, brief synopses of works by Pohl, appreciations, reminiscences, .gif or .jpg (picture) files, suggested links to other sites / permission to link to your website, and study guides. Send suggestions, articles and permissions to Rich Ehrlich at the following email: <erlichrd@muohio.edu>.

The **Science Fiction Foundation** seeks entries for its annual graduate essay prize. £250 will be awarded for the best unpublished essay in science fiction criticism. The winning entry will be published in the journal *Foundation*. The judges of the competition are Andrew M. Butler (Canterbury

ous strategies to recruit new members, including: contacting non-renewing members, such as in a summer reminder-to-renew letter, which she expects to go out in July; amassing lists of language and literature students and faculty at US and Canadian universities: asking each member to recruit one new member; and contacting non-members who publish in the related journals. Jan also reported on the success of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's providing physical production of the *Review*. This has gone very well and costs have been cut.

Secretary, Warren Rochelle:

Minutes of the January conference call were sent to the Board and to the *Review*, where they were published. A follow-up renewal letter was sent in March to approximately 140 names, at the cost of \$67, which was initially covered by Mary Washington College's ELS department. There was a decent response to the follow-up letter.

Editor, *SFRA Review*, Christine Mains:

Christine described the last year as a transitional one. The *Review* is, unfortunately, still behind schedule and Christine suggested having another double issue would be a good way to catch up, as well as going from 6 issues to 4. She is making an effort to get more copy from members. One way she is making this effort is reviving some past features, such as "Approaches to . . ." Other ideas noted were new ideas in pedagogy, interviews, and an article or feature on international SF.

Old Business and Announcements:

Conferences: Chicago/Skokie, Illinois, June 3-6, 2004

Bev Friend and Betty Hull, conference organizers, were asked to discuss the arrangements for the 2004 conference. They noted that the high expenses of downtown Chicago made it too costly. Other attractions for the Skokie choice included a well-known bookfair and Wiscon. Peter noted that SFRA was willing to subsidize SFRA student members and Prospective Members by covering one half of their registration. The theme of the 2004 Conference is "Taking SF seriously, not solemnly: Humor in SF." Witty papers are invited. *Las Vegas, June 23-26, 2005*: Dave Mead and Peter Lowentrout, conference organizers, have made arrangements with the Imperial Palace hotel. The conference will cost \$125. The theme will be American mountains/the West: Imagery in SF. Panels on gaming and gambling are encouraged. Peter noted another conference proposal has been received for Lublin, Poland. He is asking for more details.

There was discussion of the Board's proposal to change the *Review* from 6 issues to 4. To do so requires a change in the by-laws. By-law changes need at least 1 month's advance notice. This meeting is considered to be the announcement (it will also appear in SFRAR) and the proposal will be on the agenda in 2004. The Executive, acting under Article 8, section 2(a) of the Bylaws, instructed that until the vote in 2004 settles the matter SFRAR shall appear four times per year.

Peter announced that both *JFA* and *Femspec* will be added to the membership options.

Peter gave a report on the status of the new logo. The project is in process and various ideas are being explored. There was also discussion of a revision

of a flyer, possibly to be distributed at regional MLA's.

Peter reported the Board's decision to honor long-time members, beginning with recognition at the conference banquet.

Peter reviewed the various committees and asked for suggestions for new volunteers to serve. Dave reiterated the call for volunteers and asked for names to be sent to Peter. *Pilgrim Committee*: John Clute is the new chair and Veronica Hollinger is already on the committee. The third member should be a senior member. Nominations will be invited and an appointment made from the nominees. *Mary Kay Bray Award*: Presently, Mike Levy, the chair, Margaret McBride, and Jeff Prickman are on the committee. Jeff and Mike are willing to serve again; Jeff is willing to be the chair. It is likely the membership of this committee will remain the same. *The Clareson Jury* was previously chaired by Carolyn Wendell, with Mack Hassler and Wendy Bousfield as the other members. Carolyn will not be serving again. Mack could possibly be the chair and Wendy possibly will serve again. Joe Sanders will be asked to serve. *Pioneer Award Committee* was Philip Snyder, chair, Paul Kincaid, and Pavel Frelik. It was uncertain if Phil would continue. Volunteers will be solicited. Hal Hall's name was mentioned for this committee. *Graduate Paper Award*: This committee is in place: Joan Gordon, chair, Mike Levy, and Wendy Pearson.

New Business:

Bayta Weinbaum thanked SFRA for its support of *Femspec*.

Peter was applauded for his hard work on the 2003 conference.

A suggestion was made for a thank-you letter to Geoffrey Ryman. Peter is to write the letter.

A December 5-11 conference in Moscow was announced.

A reminder was made for those interested in serving on awards committees to contact Peter.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:45 p.m.

SFRA BUSINESS

Clareson Award Introduction

Carolyn Wendell

Editor's Note: Joe Sanders' acceptance speech appeared in Issue 263-4, but Carolyn was on holidays at the time (summer, go figure) so was unable to get her introduction sent to the Review before that issue went to press. But we want to print it anyway, so read the following, then pull out the last issue and re-read Joe's acceptance speech; after all, time travel should be business as usual for SF scholars, right?

The Clareson Award is given for "outstanding service activities—promotion of SF teaching and study, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, leadership in SF/fantasy organizations...and so forth. Scholarly achievements (books, essays) will be considered as secondary for the purposes of selection."

Joe Sanders is eligible in every category except mentoring—and I have to believe that that's missing only because I don't know about it, not because he hasn't also mentored young people, probably many times as he taught SF at Lakeland College, outside of Cleveland, for more than 30 years. While I never

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Christ Church University College): editor of *Vector*; Elizabeth Hand: author and reviewer for *The Magazine of F&SF*; Gary K. Wolfe (Roosevelt University, Chicago) reviewer for *Locus*. The deadline for submissions is 31st May 2004. Entrants must be registered for a higher degree. The judges reserve the right to withhold the award. Two electronic copies should be submitted, one anonymous, of 5000-8000 words. Submissions should be sent as a Word document to Dr Farah Mendlesohn, Editor of *Foundation*, <farah@fjm3.demon.co.uk> All submissions will be considered for publication in *Foundation*.

CfPs:

WHAT: Taking Science Fiction Seriously—but not solemnly

WHO: SFRA2004

WHEN: June 3-6, 2004

WHERE: Skokie, IL.

TOPICS: Guest of Honor: Connie Willis. The focus of this year's SFRA is on humor in Science Fiction. We also welcome proposals for individual papers and for academic sessions and panels on any aspect of the fantastic.

CONTACT: Beverly Friend, Oakton Community College, Faculty Support Office, #B206, 7701 Lincoln Ave, Skokie, IL 60076. Or send email: <friend@oakton.edu>

SUBMISSIONS: Proposals should include an abstract no longer than 200 words.. Paper presenters should plan to speak for 20 minutes or less to allow ample time for questions and discussion. The presentation may be a (self-coherent) excerpt of a longer paper. To be listed in the conference program, participants must preregister for the conference by May 1, 2004. Review the information needed and complete the forms on the SFRA

website. Conference registration forms will be sent to all current SFRA members. Electronic correspondence is welcome.

DEADLINE: April 10, 2004.

INFORMATION: <www.sfra.org>

WHAT: Cultural Critique

TOPICS: Cultural Critique's commitment to cultural and intellectual debate and discussion is now bolstered by the regular inclusion of book reviews of both new and not so new books. Generally, books reviewed will have appeared within the past three years, though reviews of older books that are emerging or reemerging in intellectual debates are also welcome. As an academic publication, Cultural Critique sees itself as having a responsibility to devote space to authors whose work may not be reviewed otherwise. Short critical reviews (200 to 1,000 words) of two to four academic book publications will appear in forthcoming issues with an eye toward a longer review section in the future. For Cultural Critique's special issues, book reviews should share the journal's thematic focus. Cultural Critique's book review editors solicit writers, books, and ideas for future contributions to this section of the journal.

CONTACT: Lindsey Simms and Jakki Spicer <cultcrit@umn.edu> Cultural Critique, 9 Pleasant Street SE, 350 Folwell Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

WHAT: Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth

WHO: Southwest/Texas Popular & American Culture Associations 25th Annual Conference

WHEN: April 7-10, 2004

WHERE: San Antonio, TX

TOPICS: Proposals are now being accepted for presentations in an area

attended any of his classes, I did discover one of his teaching methods when I was secretary of SFRA. I had exchanged directories with SFWA, and Joe called me a number of times to ask for addresses and phone numbers of various writers. I obliged and assumed he was working on a scholarly article about each author he'd asked about. Finally I asked: when Joe taught living and available authors, he'd contact them and make arrangements for a telephone conference call to be made to his classroom on a speaker phone, so the students could actually talk to the writer! I was floored by the brilliance of this simple but surely so effective method.

He's edited a book on SF fandom, he's written a ton and a half of reviews, he's published articles about writers as diverse as Robert Heinlein, Michael Bishop, and Joan Vinge. (Joe is a regular contributor to David Hartwell's *NYRSF*.)

SFRA's 2000 conference in Cleveland was organized by Joe, who was able to combine it with a Writer's Conference so that we were able to hear twice as many writers as usual. I personally will always be grateful to Joe for this last because I was able to hear one of my personal idols, Mary Doria Russell—her reading from *The Sparrow* was the only reading I have ever attended where I heard several in the audience of mainly English teachers moved to tears.

Joe loves science fiction in all its forms and, apparently, on all its levels. He has given scholarly papers and written scholarly articles, but I happily recall the panel that was presented under Muriel Becker's leadership for several years—the secret vices of SF. Joe was always on that panel, reporting on comic books: one of our members has particularly fond memories of Joe's presentation on the Sandman and commented that Joe “really knows his graphic novels.”

And he always seems to be up on SF TV programs and movies.

He was president of SFRA a few years back and he has been very active in IAFA.

Probably the character trait of Joe that is best known is that he is always there. He serves on panels and committees, he holds office, he organizes conferences....there is little he has not done in this field we all love. One of the committee members called Joe a “steady, loyal, hard-working presence.”

Let me mention one last qualifying feature of Joe Sanders. It's not mentioned in the official description but it is, for me, perhaps the most important activity, in SF or out of it. Maybe it's because I am caregiver for three family members, or because we live in a world increasingly war-torn, disease- and violence filled, and generally dangerous, but I think a priority activity is loving and taking care of one another. This award is named for Tom Clareson, who loved SF and left behind his wife Alice when he died several years ago. It was through Alice's efforts that this award was established and she has been nearly as faithful in her support of SFRA as Tom was. Joe and his wife have been a second family to Alice in the last several years, spending time with her and traveling with her, and I think it's fitting that Joe is receiving the award named “Clareson.”

A few years back, at the SFRA conference in Arizona, I had a passionate, opinionated and heartfelt conversation with Joe Sanders after dinner one evening. He was sure that a certain science fiction-y TV series had ended; I was convinced that the final show had been only for the season and it would return in the fall. My husband had tagged along to that conference and stood there watching the two of us with some disbelief, as blood pressure (mine) and temper (mine again) seemed to rise. Some time later, well after the conference, I mentioned Joe to my husband who couldn't recall him until I reminded him of the postprandial exchange. “Oh, yes,” he said, “the Millennium man.” And so Joe has been known in our house ever since. The Millennium Man. Joe “Millennium Man”, come receive your well-deserved award.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**Edgar Rice Burroughs and Tarzan:
A Biography**

Bruce A. Beatie

Fenton, Robert W. *Edgar Rice Burroughs and Tarzan. A Biography*. Foreword by George T. McWhorter. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003. x + 212 pages. \$35.00 ISBN 0-7864-1393-X.

Robert W. Fenton, who died in 1968, a year after the initial publication of this book, was a journalist and editor who published only this one book, stimulated by his purchase, in 1955, of Burroughs' house/office in Tarzana, California. As the verso of the title page notes, "This is a republication of *The Big Swingers* published in 1967 by Prentice-Hall. This new edition includes new photographs as well as a new foreword by George T. McWhorter." (iv) The basic text seems unchanged: all the chapter titles are the same, and a random comparison turned up no changes. Erling B. Holtsmark called Fenton's original book "a somewhat superficial account of Burroughs's life and works" (*Edgar Rice Burroughs*, Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1986 [TUSAS 499], 111); Richard Lupoff, in the "Introduction to the Centennial Edition" of his *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1975; orig. 1965—two years before Fenton's original publication), noted that Fenton made "an interesting attempt to create a dual biography of ERB and his most famous creation, Tarzan ... [but] the book is rather unsatisfying on both accounts." I see no reason to alter or add to either evaluation.

Lupoff is a far more skilled (and widely-published) writer than Fenton, and even in 1965 knew the field of fantasy and science fiction far better. Holtsmark's book, though briefer than those of both Lupoff and Fenton, is balanced and informative. Irwin Porges' massive biography (*Edgar Rice Burroughs, The Man Who Created Tarzan*, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975—massive not only in its 820 pages but in its folio format) must stand as the basis of all critical study of Burroughs and his work, though John Taliaferro's *Tarzan Forever: The Life of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Creator of Tarzan* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1999), less than half the size of Porges' (but twice as long as Fenton's), "provides an honest assessment of Burroughs's limits as a writer [and] respects the implications of his career for US popular fiction." (*Choice* 37, No. 3, November 1999, 542) I haven't seen William J. Boerst's recent brief biography aimed at a juvenile audience (*Edgar Rice Burroughs: Creator of Tarzan*, New York, NY: Morgan Reynolds, 2001).

Since Fenton's text seems to be unchanged (unlike Lupoff's, which was revised and expanded for both subsequent editions, only the "new photographs" and the McWhorter foreword remain as aspects of this book meriting discussion. The 1967 edition has 54 photographs: 18 between pages 70-71 (mostly of various film Tarzans), 15 between pages 112-113 (all of film Tarzans) and 21 between pages 204-205 (photos documenting Burroughs' personal life). The new edition has 65 photos, all reproduced with much improved quality: 27 between pages 102-103 (personal photos) and 38 between pages 166-167 (the film Tarzans); only eight of the photos in the "Tarzan" section are duplicates or near-duplicates of those in the original book—and so indeed most of the photographs are new and better-chosen, though one may question the relevance of the photos (facing page 103) of Fenton himself, one "in Tarzan regalia," and one with himself and an

designed to explore Joseph Campbell and his ideas about the Power of Myth in literature, film, and popular culture. Presentations are not only welcome for studies and applications of Joseph Campbell's work, but also are encouraged for derivatives of or precursors to his work. Ideas include but are not limited to the Heroic Journey, Comparative Religion, Contemporary Myths, Jung's Collective Unconscious, and Archetypal Psychology.

SUBMISSIONS: 100-200 word abstract plus bibliography and cv to Leslie Goss Erickson, Western Iowa Tech Community College, 31833 Henke Rd., Elk Point, SD 57025. Email <ericksl@witcc.com>

DEADLINE: 15 November 2003

WHAT: Video Games

WHO: PCA/ACA - National Conference

WHEN: April 7-10 2004

WHERE: San Antonio, Texas

TOPICS: The Video Games area of the Popular Culture Association invites papers/panels on video games and video game studies for the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference. All topics related to video games and video game studies will be considered. Possible paper or panel topics may include, but are not limited to, the following: Current trends in Video Games/Video Game Studies; Video Games and Rhetoric; Video Games and Culture; Video Games and Film; International Video Game Studies; Teaching Video Games.

SUBMISSIONS: 100 word abstract/proposal to Nathan Garrelts, Developmental English, New Mexico State University at Alamogordo, Alamogordo, New Mexico 88310. email: <garrelts@nmsua.nmsu.edu>
INFORMATION: <<http://www.h-net.org/~pcaaca/>>.

DEADLINE: November 15, 2003

WHAT: FutureVisions 6.0: A Symposium on SF and Social Change

WHEN: February 6-7, 2004

WHERE: Mount Royal College, Calgary, AB Canada

TOPICS: The status of the relationship between SF and social change has been an open question. Some proponents argue that SF literatures offer one of the best vehicles for imagining both alternative — sometimes utopian — cultures, while others suggest that SF has become a conservative genre with little to offer in the way of social critique. Has SF lost its cutting edge, if, indeed, it ever had one? FutureVisions 6.0 will bring writers, readers, fans and critics together to interrogate the possible connections between SF and social change. How do writers position their work with respect to social change? What are the politics of SF, especially when articulated with an information society and/or late capitalism? What role do SF readers play in producing social change? Possible topics include but are not limited to Tropes of Violence; The “Cutting-edge” and SF; SF Film and Race; The Virus; Feminist Utopian Futures; Social Satire and SF; Steam Punk; Extrapolation vs. Critique of Technology; Gender/Sexuality in SF Futures; We encourage proposals from a variety of critical perspectives including but not limited to feminist, post-colonial, neo-Marxist, queer and cultural studies. Invited guests include Candace Jane Dorsey, Timothy J. Anderson and Robert Sawyer (2003 Hugo Award Winner for best Novel). SUBMISSIONS: 250 word abstract to Dr. Randy Schroeder, c/o Department of English, Mount Royal College 4835 Richard Road S.W. Calgary, AB T3E 6K6 <rschroeder@mtroyal.ca> DEADLINE: December 1, 2003

unnamed chimp admiring his 1967 book. Porges’ biography, however, has 101 photographs in the first 250 pages alone, including many that also appear in one or the other edition of Fenton’s book; not only do they include a far greater variety of materials (manuscript pages, notes, Burroughs’ own drawings), but because they are printed throughout the book in close proximity to the text to which they are related, they are more useful and interesting.

McWhorter’s foreword, a bare two pages, consists mainly of a brief overview of the history of the “Tarzan phenomenon,” and includes references to the post-Fenton publications mentioned above (but not to Lupoff). He praises Fenton’s book as “an excellent source of information and entertainment for a new generation of readers.” (1) But since McWhorter is “Curator of the Burroughs Memorial Collection and Editor of the *Burroughs Bulletin*” (3, note), he is hardly an unbiased judge. In any case, his foreword cannot compare in substance to the 15-page preface by Henry Heins to Lupoff’s biography.

Since Taliaferro’s biography was reissued in 2002 as a trade paperback and the 1976 reprint of Lupoff’s book by Mirage Press is, according to *Books in Print*, still available, it’s not clear to me what purpose is served by the reissue of Fenton’s outdated and problematical book, save as a memorial to Fenton. It is a sad commentary on our special field that Fenton’s book, issued by mainline publishers (Prentice-Hall in 1967, McFarland now), is owned (according to the WorldCat database) by 518 libraries in both editions, while Lupoff’s book is owned by only 295—“genre” writers don’t get no respect.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Chaos Theory, Asimov’s Foundations and Robots, and Herbert’s Dune: The Fractal Esthetic of Epic Science Fiction

Gordon J. Aubrecht, II

Palumbo, Donald E. *Chaos Theory, Asimov’s Foundations and Robots, and Herbert’s Dune: The Fractal Esthetic of Epic Science Fiction*. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT. 248 pp. \$67.95. Hardcover. ISBN 0313311897

Palumbo has chosen the works of Asimov and Herbert as his subject at least partly because their popularity transcends their authors’ limited literary abilities. Indeed, Asimov was proud of his “transparent” prose. Neither Asimov nor Herbert is a literary stylist, but these series are perennial favorites.

Palumbo’s thesis is clearly stated in his Introduction, that “the architectures, plots, themes, and motifs of Asimov’s metaseriess and Herbert’s Dune series all exhibit the fractal’s definitive characteristic of self-similarity . . . each series echoes its core concept—chaos theory . . .—in both its form and content . . .”

Self-similarity can be illustrated with a piece of A1 paper. Cut it exactly in half midway across the long axis, and you will get a piece of paper having the same shape (but a smaller size, of course). This process, and the self-similarity, can be repeated until the paper is too small to cut any longer.

A story by itself can be self-similar, and Palumbo argues that some of these stories making up the series are, but he illustrates many more instances of similarities (identities) in plots between the stories in the different books. Homeomorphisms (and even some isomorphisms) abound in the Foundation metaseriess. Palumbo’s Ch. 5 illustrates this in exhaustive detail. One interesting example he cites among many others is the parallel between Gladia overcoming xenophobia and Baley conquering agoraphobia in *Naked Sun* and Daneel and

Giskard's overcoming their limitations in developing the Zeroth Law in *Foundation and Earth*.

Because deterministic chaos developed during the sixties and seventies, Palumbo expresses wonderment at Asimov's ability to have prefigured this later development in his 1940s Foundation novels because all the pieces ultimately fit together so seamlessly. Clearly, Asimov wrote many parts of the metaseries before chaos theory had developed. Palumbo's amazement seems rational.

I have a different view of the matter—Asimov was a scientist, and was well aware of cascading similarities. Take, for example, the Standard Model of Particles and Interactions (See the chart developed by the Contemporary Physics Education Project, *The Standard Model of Fundamental Particles and Interactions* and the website *The Particle Adventure*, accessible through the URL www.cpepweb.org). According to it, quarks are bound into nucleons (and other particles) and the nucleons and the fundamental leptons can make ordinary elemental matter, which can make compounds, and aggregate into massive structures. Likewise, proceeding in the other direction, the gravitational well is analogous to the chemical well, which in turn is analogous to the nuclear well, which in turn is analogous to the QCD binding of the quarks.

Both series studied investigate history as destiny and history as "his story"—the story of big players on the stage (that is, a chaotic system). Jared Diamond, for example, has investigated this theme in nonfiction. He has pointed out the scientific evidence for the genesis of civilization in Eurasia in his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999). It occurred for good scientific reasons: that Eurasia was broad enough to have many regions with similar climate, that it had a large area, that many ungulates developed there, that many grains and pulses arose there. These led to domestication of the many plants and animals (essentially all of them that could have been domesticated, not counting the near-duplicate species that "lost out" because of antecedent development). This led to the chance but inevitable discovery of sedentary agriculture, which led to cultural developments, which led to technological developments (the steel and guns of Diamond's title). It also led, through the close proximity of humans and domesticated animals, to the scourge of epidemic disease (the germs of Diamond's title). Thus, it was in the "destinal" view natural for Eurasia to become and remain the center of political power.

But there is a place for chaos in human affairs, as Diamond has also pointed out—Hitler was involved in an automobile accident that might have well been fatal had the truck driver gone a bit faster, or if Hitler's car had had weaker brakes, or . . . It is easy in light of the developments of the 1930s to comprehend the difference that the death of Hitler would have had for human history; such an essentially chaotic event could have played a crucial role. Of course, the Mule was just such a chaotic factor in the original Foundation trilogy, and a natural one to occur to Asimov as he wrote his original Foundation stories while living through Hitler's war. Paul Atreides is another focus for chaos, for Arrakis and for the whole known universe.

From a scientist's point of view, then, it is natural to think in terms of causality and in terms of similarity of scientific explanations at different levels. It should come as no surprise that Asimov, a chemist well aware of binding energy in its various guises, was able to use these ideas and these similarities in his plots and structure. Asimov's brilliance (from this perspective) was to realize in the 1980s after the development of a mature chaos theory how he could use his existing novels with their existing plot similarities as an instantiation of self-similarity and create the remaining novels to meet the three-within-three structure Palumbo reveals here.



WHAT: Posthuman Science Fiction and Fantasy

WHO: SF/Fantasy Area, 2004 Southwest/Texas Popular Culture/American Culture Association

WHEN: April 7-10, 2004.

WHERE: San Antonio, TX

TOPICS: representations of the Posthuman in literature and film. Post•hu•man•ous, adj. From the combination of "posthumous" and "posthuman"; 1. Occurring or continuing after the death of the human: a posthumanous writing. 2. Published after the death of the Author: a posthumanous book. 3. Born after the death of the patriarchy: a posthumanous child. 4. Any activity which presumes the fatal limitation of the rational-humanist subject: a posthumanous subject. All papers presented at the conference will be considered for a special edition of the online journal Reconstruction <www.reconstruction.ws>.

SUBMISSIONS: 250 word paper proposals, 500 word panel proposals, including full contact info for all participants, to both addresses: <dr_c_jason_smith@yahoo.com> <ximena_gallardo_c@yahoo.com>.

INFORMATION: Check the website: <www.geocities.com/pcascifi>.

DEADLINE: October 15 2003.

WHAT: Teaching: Popular Culture and the Classroom

WHO: Southwest/Texas Popular & American Culture Associations 25th Annual Conference

WHEN: April 7-10, 2004

WHERE: San Antonio, TX

TOPICS: Panels now forming on topics related to the teaching of popular culture to students in the secondary and/or college levels. How can high school teachers use popular culture effectively in a high school

classroom? As educators we realize that Homer Simpson, Britney Spears, American Idol, and the latest hit movies often influence our students tremendously, that MTV News is more watched than any of the national nightly news anchors, and that our students are keenly aware of the latest advertising and marketing trends. More and more teachers are beginning to realize that an effective way for students to critique society is to have them study popular culture and the media. Papers are needed that address some of the following questions: What messages from popular culture and the media are being sent to our students? What lessons can we learn from this? How do you use popular culture to help critique or discuss current events, cultural stereotypes, or important issues facing teens and/or society today? How do you teach students to analyze or think about popular culture? What do we learn as educators? What do the students learn? How can students better critique the world, themselves, advertisers, or teen culture? Scholars, teachers, professionals, and others interested in this topic are encouraged to participate. Graduate students are also particularly welcome with award opportunities for best graduate papers.

SUBMISSIONS: abstracts (200-500 words) or entire paper to: Erik Walker, English/Journalism, Plymouth South High School, 490 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360. e-mail (attach as a Microsoft Word document) to <ErikMWalker@aol.com>
DEADLINE: November 15, 2003

WHAT: Atomic Culture in the Nuclear Age
WHO: The Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association
WHEN: April 7-10, 2004

Palumbo thus makes his case spectacularly well for Asimov's Foundation metaserie (though less so for Herbert's Dune series, in my opinion). Palumbo's Fig. 5, p. 21, shows just how striking the self-similarity (trilogies within trilogies) is for the Foundation (and Robots) metaserie (one may compare, for example, Fig. 3, p. 18, for the Foundation metaserie, to Fig. 7, p. 144, for the Dune series, to appreciate how much *less* striking the latter is).

On the other hand, Palumbo is fascinated by Joseph Campbell's influence on Herbert—what he terms the monomyth (J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). The chapters on Dune read more like a meditation on this Campbellian influence than on the theme of self-similarity. I admit I was much less interested in these chapters overall than the preceding chapters. Further, ideas about deterministic chaos were everywhere about in the sixties and seventies, so it is less surprising that a series created during the time of development of the science would grasp the ideas explicitly, as Herbert does in the Dune novel plots.

As a scientist reading an English professor reading scientific papers, I was impressed with the depth of Palumbo's understanding. He essentially relies on just one "scientific" reference (J. Gleick, *Chaos: Making of a new Science*, New York: Penguin, 1987), but his grasp speaks well for Gleick's ability as a communicator of scientific ideas. Obviously, Palumbo stumbles here and there—for example, it is clear to me that he really has no idea what phase space actually is (p. 25, pp. 188 and 189: For one particle, phase space consists of a six-dimensional space spanned by the three orthogonal position coordinates and the three orthogonal momentum components. For N particles, the relevant phase space would have $6N$ dimensions). But he gets many important things about chaos pretty right as it applies to these Foundation and Dune books. His discussion of fractal dimensions brought back to my mind the seminal work of 't Hooft and Veltman, who analytically continued renormalization integrals by treating the number of dimensions as a variable in order to evaluate them. (See, for example, G. 't Hooft and M. Veltman, *Diagrammar*, Geneva: CERN Theory pub. 73-9, 1973, which illustrates their clever method for solving the renormalization integrals and eliminating the infinities. 't Hooft and Veltman won the Nobel prize for their work, which led theorists to the explicitly renormalizable Standard Model.)

The book was apparently lovingly proofread and so has a remarkably small number of errors: Corporellon for Comporellon in one instance, in cognito for incognito, a confusion of imminent and immanent, diffuse instead of defuse. For me, the first part of the book was a fascinating read and led me to think about how science influences its practitioners, even in "literary" ways. I had a much harder time reading the second part. Read it yourself and see what you think.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**National Dreams:
The Remaking of Fairy Tales
in Nineteenth Century England.**

Christine Mains

Schacker, Jennifer. *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth Century England*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 198 p. \$39.95, hardcover, 0-8122-3697-1.

The folktales of different cultures are a foundation for both popular fiction and children's literature and are, as University of Guelph researcher Jennifer

Schacker writes in *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth Century England*, “[c]elebrated as imaginatively liberating, psychologically therapeutic, or as windows onto particular cultures” (1). It is this last interest that Schacker explores in her examination of the production and reception of four tale collections published in Victorian England, more specifically between the 1820s and the 1850s. She traces the strategies by which tale collectors, editors, and translators made use of the publishing industry’s desire for financial successes in an era marked by increasing literacy of the English working classes to give readers a way to think about national identity and cultural difference and at the same time establish the methods and matter of folklore studies.

In the introduction, Schacker situates her project as an extension of the work begun by fairy tale scholars such as Maria Tatar and Jack Zipes to historicize such tales and examine underlying ideological assumptions. Throughout the study, Schacker weaves together many threads: translation strategies, the cultural context in which the tales were collected, the concern of the editors to sanitize the tales to make the content suitable for a popular reading audience, the construction of national identity through an understanding of cultural differences, the history of publication practices and the development of the field of folklore studies. She combines a close reading of the texts and analysis of the accompanying illustrations for each (illustrations reproduced in the work) with biographical information about the tale collectors that provides insight into their attempts to balance the requirements of scholarly method with the need to entertain the reading public.

Edgar Taylor’s *German Popular Stories* of 1823 is a translation of the tales collected by the Brothers Grimm adapted to suit English audiences. Schacker notes that when most readers think of Grimms’ tales they actually have in mind the versions prepared by Taylor, who carefully selected only a few of the original tales, cutting the length and changing many of the more gory details. Taylor, arguing that England had lost its connection to an oral narrative tradition because of the constant influx of different peoples and languages throughout the centuries, believed that the German tales could provide valuable insight into England’s preindustrial past. Schacker argues Taylor’s aim was to provide “English readers with a vision of their own collective identity—as a readership that craved ‘variety’ and [. . .] was capable of comparative critique and historical inquiry” (31). Schacker notes that Taylor’s work provided a model for later folklore studies, including T. Crofton Croker’s *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825), which positioned the English reader, both adult and child, in a position of cultural superiority over the Irish peasant represented in Croker’s tales at a time when the “Irish question” was being hotly debated. Schacker also discusses Croker’s field-based methodology, his “claim to ‘give them as I found them’” (48), analyzing his written representations of oral performance of folktales and related connections to class representations.

Schacker’s discussion of Edward Lane’s *Arabian Nights*, published in 1839-41, focuses on the manipulation of both form and content of the original tales to suit not only the tastes of the English reading audience but also the requirements of serial publication. In this chapter, she analyses more extensively than previously the tale collector’s use of scholarly notes originally provided to make the tales informative as well as entertaining; Taylor and Croker, like Lane, had included such notes which were usually not reprinted in subsequent revisions. Schacker observes that in the case of Lane, who considered himself the product of two cultures and “fluent not only in the languages but also in the customs of both” (90), the enormous amount of detail included in the annotations to each tale, intended to help English readers to understand a culture much different than



WHERE: San Antonio, Texas, April 7–10, 2004.

TOPICS: Possible areas of consideration include, but are not limited to: Film, Television, Fiction and science fiction, Music, Comic books, Civil defense, The nuclear physicist as cultural figure, Nuclear tourism, Anti-nuclear movements.

SUBMISSIONS: proposals for panels and individual papers (include a 100 word abstract and a one-page c.v.) Scott C. Zeman, Area Chair for Atomic Culture in the Nuclear Age, Associate Professor of History, Humanities Department, New Mexico Tech, 801 Leroy Place, Socorro, New Mexico Email: <szeman@nmt.edu>

DEADLINE: November 15, 2003

WHAT: Webtexts: Computers and Composition Online – An International Journal for Teachers of Writing, Special Issue

TOPICS: Computers and Composition Online will publish a special issue on Sexualities, Technologies, and the Teaching of Writing to supplement the Fall 2004 print issue, which will explore the many varied and productive ways in which issues of sexuality are discussed, debated, constructed, and critiqued in computer-assisted writing courses. As much as possible, all webtexts should take into consideration current scholarly work in both sexuality studies and the teaching of writing with technology. The audience for Computers and Composition Online is teachers, scholars, educational administrators, and technology users with a particular interest in computer-enhanced writing instruction.

SUBMISSIONS: Please send questions or abstracts (preferably by email) to: Jacqueline Rhodes, Guest Editor, C&C Online, Department of English, CSU San Bernardino, 5500 University Park-

way, San Bernardino, CA 92407
<jrhodes@csusb.edu>

DEADLINES: 500-word abstract: November 1, 2003; Final webtext: April 30, 2004

WHAT: Session on Robert A. Heinlein
WHAT: PCA/ACA Conference

WHEN: April 7-10, 2004

WHERE: San Antonio, TX

TOPICS: Papers from a variety of critical perspectives and disciplines are welcome and should be suitable for a 15-minute reading time limit. Heinlein's short stories and novels are among the most compelling, polarizing, controversial and imaginative in the genre. His highly inventive and intricate Future History timeline and the characters who inhabit it (among them some of the most famous - and infamous - in science fiction, including Lazarus Long and Valentine Michael Smith) capture the imagination and the intellect. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) the following: the Future History timeline; the "juveniles" (Heinlein's young adult works); gender roles and sexuality; feminist and misogynist themes; engineered longevity/natural (and unnatural) selection; animal imagery and symbolism; nationalist and political themes; religion and religious themes
SUBMISSIONS: 250-word abstracts or questions via e-mail to Lisa Edmonds, <imzadi1@cox.net>.

DEADLINE: October 15, 2003

WHAT: The Slayage Conference on Buffy the Vampire Slayer

WHEN: May 28-30, 2004.

WHERE: Nashville, Tennessee

TOPICS: any aspect of BtVS or Angel from the perspective of any discipline—literature, history, communications, film and television studies, women's studies, religion, philosophy, linguistics, music, cultural studies, and

their own, as well as the realistic detail in the illustrations, serve to emphasize the fantastic nature of the oriental tale.

By the time George Webbe Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse* was published in 1857, the field of folklore studies was fairly well established. Schacker repeats Dasent's comment on the work of Jacob Grimm as part of a "battle against neo-classicism on behalf of Western European vernacular literature" (117), situating the field of folklore studies within the "master narrative of Indo-Europeanism" (119), a search for a heritage that would connect the oral traditions of Europe to written oriental texts. Schacker often quotes from Dasent's introductory essay in which he draws parallels between Norwegian, German, Hindu, and West African tales, using methods of comparative linguistics to point out slight variants in universal tale types.

In her conclusion, Schacker notes that the model of publication of nationally- and culturally-defined narratives established by these scholars functions in late-twentieth-century classrooms to introduce children to cultural diversity. Certainly representations of the Other and explorations of multiculturalism are common themes in science fiction and fantasy, genres still influenced by the folktale tradition. For that reason alone, Schacker's insights into translation strategies, publication processes, and the development of national literatures and identity are worth exploring in more detail than can be summarized in this brief review.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Prefiguring Cyberculture: An Intellectual History

Pawel Frelík

Tofts, Darren, Annemarie Jonson and Alessio Cavallaro (eds). *Prefiguring Cyberculture. An Intellectual History*. The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England, 2002. \$32.95, cloth, xiv + 322 pages. ISBN 0-262-20145-3.

The early days of cyberculture are over. The recent spate of volumes and initiatives which do not only cover but historicize cyber, digital or whatever-else-you-choose-to-call-it studies is a testimony not only to the rapidly growing legitimacy of the field but also an attempt at what Katherine Hayles calls "recovering antecedents and evaluating, with the benefit of hindsight, their assumptions, achievements, and predictions" (xii). Take the recent special issue of *American Book Review* devoted to new media (in fact, there was another one about a year earlier). Take Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort's massive *The New Media Reader*. Take this volume - they all seem to suggest that cyberculture is no longer in its infancy and has begun its march towards credibility - academic and otherwise. This is exactly what *Prefiguring Cyberculture* does, where even the appearance of the book is telling. The volume is printed on elegant glossy paper with the format strongly reminiscent of more upmarket album publications than academic collections and treatises.

So what can one say about it? A lot - even if one sticks only to technical details. The volume is divided into four sections (there is also an excellent foreword by N. Katherine Hayles and a coda. or - should I say - Coda by Mark Dery), the title of each of which maps the domains that the editors see as belonging to cyberculture. Not that the territory itself is clearly defined. True, the titles of the four sections are transparent - "I, Robot: AI, Alife and Cyborgs," "Virtuality: Webworlds and Cyberspaces," "Visible Unrealities: Artists' Statements" and "Futurepolis: Postmillennial Speculations" - but the emergent image is hardly complete. The editors and the authors clearly realize that - both the

opening essay by Hayles and the closing one by Dery stress that what the volume represents or what we imagine cyberculture to be is already a thing of the past as the field inexorably moves on – hopefully not towards “the Spike” that Damien Broderick discusses in his essay.

There are a number of unquestionable highlights in the volume. The contributor roll-call reads almost like cyberculture’s Hall of Fame – Erik Davis, McKenzie Wark, Bruce Mazlish, Russell Blackford, Damien Broderick, Mark Dery and a number of others, predominantly Australian (as are all three editors), whose names are not always familiar to me but I am sure well-known and recognized down under. All pieces appear to be original work previously unpublished – something that does not happen too often nowadays. Yet another departure from the beaten path of volume editing is the character of the content. Section Three comprises a number of visual contributions – ten beautifully edited plates with comments/accompanying text from the artists themselves. Interestingly, or perhaps naturally, their selection also indicates the fluidity of cyberculture’s borders as some of them – e.g. Jon McCormack’s and Patricia Piccinini’s works – are not directly associated with what immediately comes to mind when hearing the prefix “cyber.”

Indeed, the same can be said about the written contributions, and this is where lies the only contentious point about the volume. What bothers me, all right, what makes me stop and think, is the fact that the majority of inspirations is – in one way or another – grounded in a relatively narrow spectrum. In *Contents* the entries for all contributions (except the artistic ones) are preceded by quasi-headers listing inspirations for individual pieces. The spectrum is very wide and a number of usual suspects make their appearance, but apart from Toffler, Wiener and Turing almost all inspirations come from either literature or philosophy; Descartes, Dick, Haraway, Gibson are all here but also, less obviously, Mary Shelley, Samuel Butler or Arthur C. Clarke. Not that they should not be here, especially as the volume contributions are uniformly highly competent and topical, but one cannot help wondering how complete the picture is. Of course, this is only “a” – as opposed to “the” – history and the adjective “intellectual” can become a very convenient filter depending on the editors’ view. Which, to my mind, could be somewhat broader as here the term seems to encompass merely the broadly understood issues of cyborgism and virtuality – among the areas conspicuously missing are cyberliteracy or gaming, both of which certainly have solid intellectual roots.

Even though, as I’ve stated above, all contributions are equally interesting with hardly any noise in the signal, there are several highlights – at least from my perspective. The first is Eric Davis’ “Synthetic Meditations: Cogito in the Matrix” in which the author in his characteristically syncretistic style sweeps our culture, making elegant but no less profound for it connections between Descartes, *Neuromancer*, Zizek and *The Matrix*. In “Cyberquake: Haraway’s Manifesto” Zoe Sofoulis demonstrates that it is possible to say something new about this germinal text – she pays more attention to Haraway’s impact and rhetoric than to the figure of the cyborg itself that seems to be barely breathing after all the heavy usage by the academics. Finally, there is Mark Dery’s “Memories of the Future: Excavating the Jet Age at the TWA Terminal” – not necessarily very strictly cyber-cultural in its argument of how the future has already become the past but certainly very appropriate as a coda to the volume which attempts to capture something in constant flux.

All in all, *Prefiguring Cyberculture. An Intellectual History* may be missing in some areas but as it stands it is still a very valuable contribution to the field suitable for both specialists and novices.

others. we invite discussion of the text, the social context, the audience, the producers, the production, and more. For a lengthy but not exhaustive list of possible topics, go to <<http://www.slayage.tv/conference/callforpapers.htm#topics>>. All proposals/essays must exhibit strong familiarity with already published scholarship—in *Fighting the Forces*, in *Reading the Vampire Slayer*, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy*, in *Slayage*, etc. Papers are limited to a maximum reading time of 20 minutes.

SUBMISSIONS: proposal/essay title, abstract of 200-250 words. Go to <<http://slayage.tv/conference/proposals.htm>>. Or submit your proposal or paper as an email attachment in .doc or .rtf to both David Lavery <lavery@slayage.tv> and Rhonda Wilcox <wilcox@slayage.tv>. INFORMATION: Check the website: <<http://www.slayage.tv/conference/>>. DEADLINE: October 31, 2003

WHAT: Book on C. J. Cherryh

TOPICS: Cherryh is approaching her 30th year in the writing profession, and Edward Carmien thought it would be a good idea for there to be a book of essays about her writing, her writing career, and her influence on the field. Working with Wildside Press, he is editing just such a book, and has already accepted articles from Burton Raffel, Brad Sinor, and others, while James Gunn has agreed to write an introduction for the volume.

INFORMATION: <<http://enigma.rider.edu/~ecarmien>> (follow the link as indicated).

DEADLINE: December/early January

WHAT: Mapping Identities: Urban Landscapes and the Discourses of Space

WHO: The Annual Colloquium at the

Catholic University of America Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

WHEN: April 3, 2004

TOPICS: This one-day colloquium will explore political and cultural shifts in approaches to questions of subject formation and urban representations. Panels may explore inter-relationships of race, ethnicity, nationalism and nationhood, sexuality, and class within the context of space and place in the urban sector(s) in literature, film, and cultural studies. Interdisciplinary approaches are welcome. The organizers of this one-day conference in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. invite proposals for papers on: Borderland(s) and Margins; Ghettoization and Gentrification; Spaces of Performance; Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization; Displacement, Diaspora and Migrant Communities; Urban Representations in Film; Space and Race; New Social Landscapes; Gender Identity and Place; Embodied Subjectivities; Securing the Homeland; Sacred Space; Utopias.

SUBMISSIONS: for 20-minute . send a one-page abstract and title page to Gizella Meneses <menses@cua.edu>

DEADLINE: January 15, 2004.

INFORMATION: <<http://arts-sciences.cua.edu/ml/faculty/shoemaker/colloquium/colloq.html>>

WHAT: Locating Pop Cultures: Negotiating Place, Interrogating Class, and Constructing Identity

WHO: Rice Graduate Symposium

WHEN: March 12-13, 2004

WHERE: Rice University, Houston, Texas

TOPICS: Popular culture continues to be a site for articulating desires,

Hitchhiker: A Biography of Douglas Adams

Ed McKnight

Simpson, M.J. *Hitchhiker: A Biography of Douglas Adams*. Hodder & Stoughton, 338 Euston Road, London, NW1 3BH, 2003. xviii + 393 pp. with index & notes. Hardcover, £18.99, ISBN 0-340-82488-3.

In one of my favorite *Peanuts* strips, Linus begs his sister Lucy to read him a story. In irritation she picks up a book and pretends to read: "A man was born. He lived and he died. The end." Linus's response (to the best of my recollection): "What a fascinating narrative. It makes you wish you knew the man."

I have a similar response to M.J. Simpson's intimately-detailed three-hundred-and-ninety-three page *Hitchhiker: A Biography of Douglas Adams*. I now know that Adams experienced the 1960s British childhood I've always dreamed of for myself: attending "public" school, singing in the chapel choir, and eagerly anticipating the next Beatles album. I know that Adams attended Cambridge with aspirations of joining the *Footlights*, like his idol (and eventual friend) John Cleese. I know that Adams saw *Star Wars* with sound engineer Lisa Braun, and *The Empire Strikes Back* with actress Lalla Ward (known to *Doctor Who* fans as the second actress to play Romana, she is now the wife of science writer Richard Dawkins). And I know that, when he was writing *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul*, Adams took exercise breaks of exactly eight minutes and twenty-three seconds, the length of the third movement of Mozart's *Piano Concerto in A Major*, which he played as he rode his exercise bike.

In addition to providing these—and countless other—details of his life, the book also acknowledges the man's flaws. But it does everything it can to make those flaws as endearing as possible. When discussing the terrible difficulty Adams had completing work on schedule, Simpson quotes the author's familiar quip: "I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by." In describing his relationships with the opposite sex—notably his affair with Sally Emerson while she was married to journalist Peter Stothard and his long, intermittent courtship of and occasionally happy marriage to Jane Belson—Simpson portrays Adams as neither victim nor villain, but as an ordinary, if gifted, individual in authentic human relationships.

The effect of knowing all of these facts about Adams and his life, however, is that I want to know more. This is partly due to the fact that I want there to be more. Reading *Hitchhiker* makes me wish even more intensely that Adams had lived a much, much longer life. I wish that he had lived long enough to share with the world more of the wonders that would spill out of his brain on those too-rare occasions when some stern but benevolent friend or editor locked him in a room and forced him to put words on paper.

Science-fiction fans may be disappointed to learn how little Adams actually knew about the genre. After a book signing at London's Forbidden Planet bookstore, then-manager (now author) Stan Nicholls led Adams around the store, suggesting authors he ought to read. "I certainly got the impression that Douglas hadn't actually read much SF. He seemed to be a bit lost." Two authors Adams did cite as influences were Kurt Vonnegut and Robert Sheckley, but he was not as thoroughly immersed in the genre as many of his fans have assumed. As for Isaac Asimov (an author I've admired since childhood), Adams once told Neil Gaiman "I wouldn't employ him to write junk mail."

THE COLLECTED STORIES OF GREG BEAR

Pawel Frelik

Bear, Greg. *The Collected Stories of Greg Bear*. New York: Tor Books, 2002. (Uncorrected proofs) 653 pages, hardcover, \$29.95. ISBN 0-765-30160-1.

Greg Bear has been called the hardest working SF writer and given the number and the regularity of his novels – so many of which have become classics – it would be hard to disagree. The same can be said about his shorter literary forms – in that department there are three Nebulas, two Hugos and three other awards, not to mention numerous nominations. All of them make their appearance in this collection – and many more.

But not all. The title is slightly misleading and if the term “collected” suggests the inclusion of the entire *oeuvre* then this volume should probably be called “The Selected Stories of Greg Bear.” Naturally, all the key short stories and novelettes are here but a number of others are missing. The author himself deems his juvenile “Destroyers” (1967) “a little too young to be reprinted” (370) – understandable as he was 15 at the time, but the ones whose absence I’ve noticed immediately include “Mandala” and “The Machineries of Joy” – definitely nothing to be ashamed of – and there are probably several others. I can only suspect that copyright issues are involved here, again understandable, but the title seems to promise a bit more than the volume actually delivers. One way or another, the volume brings together twenty-four pieces of fiction along with three prefaces to earlier collections and novelettes. What is new are the short introductions, written specially for this edition, to each and every piece of fiction.

It is obviously very hard to write anything truly new about a volume like this, especially one by an author whose exposure and renown have been more than broad. Also, such texts as the original novelette “Blood Music,” “Tangents,” *Heads* or *Hardthought* – all of them award winners – have been reviewed and dissected many times over. One gem, though, which has been relatively overlooked by the Bear aficionados – possibly because it was first published in Japan in 1993 and reprinted in Benford’s *Far Futures* only two years later – is “Judgment Engine.” A *really* far-future and the-end-of-the-universe story, it sparkles with imagination while the use of language proves Bear to be not just a good storyteller – something that is obvious for those who like his fiction – but also a master of intricate linguistic experiment. The same can be said about “MDIO Ecosystems Increase Knowledge of DNA Languages (C.E.),” a fictional scientific review of 23rd-century scientific discoveries. Even though it dispenses entirely with plot and action, the story can prove extremely useful for those who look for the prediction angle in SF. My last personal favorite here is “Petra” – “a theological fantasy” in Bear’s own words.

If there is one thing that this volume does aside from collecting major shorter texts by one of SF’s most talented living writers, it is certainly showcasing his talent and versatility. Naturally, if read in the sequence in which they were written the stories chart a clear and steady improvement, but what is more delightful is the range of themes, conventions, and scenarios that Bear utilizes in his short fiction. True, he’s considered to be one of the prime representatives of the ‘hard’ tradition and a number of the anthologized stories can be located in that tradition, but there are also others testifying to his wide-ranging imagination.

The only thing that could be possibly improved is that the arrangement of stories seems to be random. One possible sequence would be chronological.

Perhaps the order may be changed from the uncorrected proofs, but if not,

assuaging anxieties, and negotiating individual/group identities among a range of distinct and overlapping communities. Our title emphasizes the importance of place and also references our desire to interrogate the boundaries of popular culture study itself. In using the more abbreviated term “pop,” we intend to invoke not only the recognized term “popular,” but also terms such as “populations” and “populace,” terms which encourage the investigation of multifaceted audiences. We believe that the question “popular for whom?” remains open. In short, we intend for this conference to question and renegotiate the boundaries of popular culture study itself. We anticipate work which investigates issues of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, location, and community in connection with cultural production. We welcome interdisciplinary work investigating phenomenon from any genre or time period. Individual and panel submissions are welcome. Possible topics include, but are not limited to: consumer culture and artistic production among marginalized communities; the relationship of academic disciplines to mainstream culture; popular culture in the context of transnationalism and globalization; the impact of popular culture historically issues of pedagogy and popular culture; the intersection of the study of popular culture and issues of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, location, and community; interdisciplinary/methodological approaches to the study of popular culture.

SUBMISSIONS: Abstracts of 200 words or less for 15 minute presentations to both Lourdes Alberto <lualberto@yahoo.com> and Molly Robey <mkrobey@rice.edu>. **DEADLINE:** January 16, 2004.

WHAT: INCUBATION3

WHO: The 3rd trAce International Symposium on Writing and the Internet

WHEN: 12-14 July 2004

WHERE: The Nottingham Trent University, England

TOPICS: The purpose of Incubation3 has always been to provide ideas, stimulus and motivation; information and debate for the international new media writing community. We aim to encourage interdisciplinary creativity and cross-fertilisation, and we are especially interested in introducing the form to writers for whom it is a new idea as well as helping practitioners to share and expand their work.

The themes for 2004 are: A. Developing a new form: contemporary textual works in new media and performance; B. The practice of making: creative and professional practice; online teaching and learning; C. Critique and criteria: criticism, reviewing, defining, and archiving of new media writing.

SUBMISSIONS: Proposals should be submitted via an online form which will be available from 10 October 2003 on the website <<http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/incubation/>> Proposals will not be considered unless they are submitted via the online form. When completing the form please indicate which of the above themes (A, B or C) your proposal relates to.

DEADLINE: 1st December 2003

INFORMATION: Catherine Gillam at <incubation@ntu.ac.uk>. Check the website for further details about the types of proposals/presentations being considered aside from the usual 20 minute paper/panel sessions.

WHAT: Ninth Nordic Conference for English Studies: (Dis)junctures of Popular Culture and Media

WHEN: May 27-29, 2004

this does not even qualify as a minor offence.

So there it is – finally, in one place, in one volume – as much Bear as you can bear.

FICTION REVIEW

Live Without A Net

Jeff Prickman

Anders, Lou, ed. *Live Without A Net*. New York: Roc, 2003. Trade paperback, 321 pp, \$14.95. ISBN 0451459253

Editors of anthologies often feel a need to justify gathering a group of stories by different authors together in one volume. While the shelves groan under the weight of Year's Best and alternate history collections that have the advantage of a built-in premise, the true test of the merit of any set of short stories is the amount of quality amidst the quantity. The number of quality selections particularly matters when considering a text for a course syllabus. Editor Lou Anders gives himself a broad mandate in his Introduction to explain the rationale behind *Live Without A Net*: "Cyberpunk may prove to be the most prophetic subgenre to arise from SF, but it is also, at least in my mind, creating something of a bottleneck in our speculative futures" (2). This will be news to those who say that cyberpunk is far from thriving, and terms such as "post-cyberpunk" have already been bantered about for years. However, concluding that all the cyberpunk tropes inhabiting current SF are "too much of a good thing," Anders proclaims that *Live Without A Net* will "shake things up, if only to see what new concepts might tumble out...an anthology of alternatives to the various virtual realities, where the tropes and trappings of cyberpunk are, shall we say, 'conspicuous by their absence'" (3). Presumably, herein are tales where anything non-cyber goes...and yet, the best tales in this anthology feature human-machine interfaces and embodied computers.

The strongest story is the last, "No Solace For The Soul In Digitopia" by John Grant. Part parody of endless VR sex, and part poignant meditation of an existence lived completely and eternally online, this intriguing tale seems to be out of place given the anthology's theme. Similarly, Mike Resnick's and Kay Kenyon's "Dobcheck, Lost In The Funhouse," features people with somatic computers run by DNA platforms, who long for genuine contact and community. Another worthwhile inclusion, but a very cybery setup, if not denouement.

In further contrast to the anthology's stated theme, Alex Irvine's "Reformation" features religious hacker squads who wage all-out cyber war in the Virt. Finally, early in Del Stone, Jr.'s strong and wrenching "I Feed The Machine," the nameless narrator explains the story's setup: "The machine is a man. He is called a Tabulator. He performs calculations, and he is the company's most valuable asset" (190). If any set of sentences sums up the vibe of most of *Live Without A Net* (and perhaps cyberpunk itself), these are the ones!

Overall, despite the strength of some of its offerings, I would hesitate to introduce students new to science fiction with this collection. Bigger names such as Michael Swanwick and David Brin deliver workmanlike, if intriguing, sketches of fuller tales, and while Rudy Rucker's "Frek In The Grullo Woods" is as fun as the title, it is an excerpt from a forthcoming novel. I also noticed that far too many of the authors present could not avoid the dreaded info-dump to explain how things came to be in the societies they created. Some humor does come from Pat Cadigan's Afterword, where even she is bemused by the implications of the book's title, but her point that computers do not always work when you

want them to seem as trite as the collection's jacket hype "Prepare Yourself For The Future Alternative."

FICTION REVIEW
The Light Ages

Bruce A. Beatie

Ian R. MacLeod, *The Light Ages*. New York: Ace, 2003. Hardcover, \$23.95, vi + 456 pages. ISBN 0-441-01055-5.

The title of this book intrigued me because, as a medievalist, I have studied the so-called "dark ages," and the potential contrast sounded interesting. Moreover, Ian MacLeod had, as I learned later, won the 1998 World Fantasy Award for his novella "The Summer Isles" and the 1999 award for his short story "The Chop Girl"—both published in *Asimov's*. His 2001 novelette "Breathmoss" (*Asimov's*, 2002) is the first story in Gardner Dozois' just-published 20th *Year's Best in Science Fiction*, and Dozois notes (1) that stories by MacLeod had appeared in the 8th-12th and the 15th-17th collections. It troubles me, therefore, to report that *The Light Ages* is the first book I've read in many years that I had to force myself to finish—and I don't think it has been simply a matter of literary taste. Before attempting to justify my reaction, let me try to describe the book.

The Light Ages is set in what Gardner Dozois called in the cover blurb "a strange Victorian age twisted out of true from the one we know by dark magics and darker secrets." On the Borders website, Ruth Mariampolski classifies it as belonging to "the Steampunk subgenre. . . a catchy name for what you might call historical future fiction. . . a variant of alternative history, in which the past is changed in a way that is specifically technological." Her examples of steampunk include Gibson's and Sterling's *The Difference Engine* ("the seminal novel in the steampunk genre"), Keyes' *Newton's Cannon*, Swanwick's *The Iron Dragon's Daughter*, and Blaylock's *Homunculus*, as well as the films *Wild Wild West* and the *Back to the Future* trilogy; the website <scififan.com/themes> lists more than a dozen books in the genre, going back to Jules Verne's *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (1863). The term "steampunk," according to the website <wordspy.com>, was first used in 1987 by Michael Berry in a review in *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

In *The Light Ages*, Robert Borrows narrates his life from the age of eight until an undefined time many years later. It begins in the town of Bracebridge (in Yorkshire—on a modern map, Bracebridge is a southern suburb of the city of Lincoln), known mainly because "aether" is mined there. The nature of aether is never defined, but it is obviously a substance rather than a gas; it runs "aether engines," and a by-product of its use is "engine ice," also undescribed. The main function of aether, however, is as a catalyst for magic. Various kinds of minor magic are used constantly by the Guilds to keep England's industrial society operating; aether and the spells it facilitates are a substitute for technological skill, which seems to be declining. The Guilds are effectively the government of England in the age toward the end of which Robert is living, having apparently displaced the monarchy at the beginning of the current age. There is an implication, never stated directly, that the present age began in 1800, and that it ends shortly before the novel does, in 1900; World's End, a festive ruin across the Thames from London proper, was built to celebrate the beginning of the age, and the ruins burn as the age ends.

One rather understated plot line lies in an effort to overthrow the Guild structure by revolutionary "marts" like Robert and his friend Saul; but Saul rather than Robert is the active revolutionary. The end of the age seems to involve

WHERE: University of Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark

TOPICS: The study of the mass media and their cultural products has often revolved around the popularity of media artifacts in a variety of approaches sometimes grouped together and labeled populist. Yet within or in relation to such approaches there has been an ongoing engagement with dichotomies such as mass / cult, broad (appeal) / niche (market), underground / mainstream. A related set of questions concerns how recent developments in media and communication technologies have (or haven't) democratized technology through the egalitarianism of access to media previously available in physically distinct spheres. What often seems to be at stake in much work on popular culture and the media is thus an interest in what we may understand by popular, and consequently how the popular is constituted. Is there a such thing as non-mass mediated popular culture? Is there a such thing as a non-popular mass mediated cultural artifact? Do the mass media need the popular? Does the popular need the mass media? What is the relationship between the form of popularity and specific media and the constitution of publics/markets in relation to the medium and/or the product/artifact? Answers to these questions can be explored in various periods of popular culture. In this workshop, speakers are invited to investigate issues suggested by these questions, focusing on popular culture and media since the 1960s. SUBMISSIONS: <hebo@asb.dk> and <engip@hum.au.dk> DEADLINE: December 1, 2003 INFORMATION: Check the website: <<http://www.hum.au.dk/engelsk/naes2004/naes.html>>

WHAT: 12th ANNUAL COMICS ARTS CONFERENCE**WHO: Comic-Con International****WHEN: July 22-25, 2004****WHERE: San Diego, California**

TOPICS: We seek proposals from a broad range of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, and welcome the participation of academic, independent, and fan scholars. We welcome professionals from all areas of the comics industry, including creators, editors, publishers, retailers, distributors, and journalists. We also invite scholars and professionals to participate as respondents to presentations. The Conference is designed to bring together comics scholars, professionals, critics, and historians who wish to promote or engage in serious study of the medium and to do so in a forum that includes the public. Papers and poster sessions may take a critical or historical perspective on comics (juxtaposed images in sequence).

SUBMISSIONS: 100 to 200 word abstract to: Dr. Peter Coogan, Kinkel Center, Fontbonne University, 6800 Wydown Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63105-3098. USA. <coomics@hotmail.com>

DEADLINE: abstracts by March 1, 2004; Papers by June 1, 2004

INFORMATION: Check the website <http://www.hsu.edu/faculty/dunanr/cac_past_presentations.htm>

Recent and Forthcoming Titles

Balun, Charles. *Beyond Horror Holocaust: A Deeper Shade of Red*. Fantasma Books, Fall 03.

Barr, Marleen S., ed. *Envisioning the Future: SF and the Next Millennium*. Wesleyan UP, Sep 03.

Bartter, Martha S., ed. *The Utopian Fantastic: Selected Essays from the 20th [1999] ICFA*. Praeger, 2003.

a successful “revolution”—but in the brief epilogue (Part Six: Children of the Age) Robert is himself now a “grandmaster.” “For things have changed,” says Robert, “and things have remained the same, and I realize now that this is the pattern which life always makes for itself.” (439)

The vagueness of the preceding paragraphs illustrates one of my major problems with MacLeod’s novel: too much that is central to understanding the world of the novel is left totally unexplained, and the reader is constantly distracted from the action and the characters by the effort to figure out the meaning of what’s going on. One may argue that this lack of explanation is appropriate to Robert’s narration; on one level, the novel is an account of a young man’s attempt to understand and to cope with the world in which he finds himself. But when the point of view from which the story is narrated leaves the reader floundering, its aim is defeated. In the novel’s concluding words, Robert says of himself and his (dead!) mother that “in my mind we’re leaving Bracebridge forever, heading together into incredible adventures which will take us to the deeper truth on which I have always felt my life to be teetering. I still don’t know what that truth is, but I’m sure that, when I find it, it will be marvelous.” (456) In an *Entwicklungsroman* of this sort, the reader should know more than the narrator—but here we know much less. And these readerly questions are not balanced by an exciting plot; it is hard to know where the story is going or, when you have come to the end, where it’s been. The characterization is well-developed but neither Robert himself nor any of the people with whom he interacts over some 450 pages are particularly attractive or interesting, not even the mysterious Annalise, the “changeling” girl who seems to represent the elusive truth that Robert is seeking (and what defines her as a “changeling” is never clear).

Considering that his first published story appeared in 1989, MacLeod is a prolific author. Nick Gevers’s “Chronological Fiction Bibliography” (*Interzone* 169, 2001, 20) lists 18 novelettes, nine short stories, seven novellas, a novel, and a collection of short fiction. His 1997 novel *The Great Wheel* seems fairly traditional SF (a story of a lapsed priest working in a future Africa), but most of his shorter fiction tends more toward fantasy or, to use a looser term, speculative fiction. In an interview with MacLeod, Gevers notes that he writes “with remarkable feeling about childhood,” citing especially the 1992 novelette “Grownups,” a coming-of-age story set in what seems a very ordinary world—except that there are three sexes involved in reproduction (males, females, and “uncles”), and the moment of “growing up” (puberty) seems physically far more traumatic than in our world (16). More than half of the stories in his 1996 collection *Voyages by Starlight* either focus on childhood or are narrated by children (as is, at least initially, *The Light Ages*). Dozois notes that “Breathmoss” is “the intimate story of a child growing into a woman.”

While I have not read all of MacLeod’s fiction in preparing this review, I have found many of his stories fascinating and delightful. His creative imagination tends to focus on worlds that seem very familiar and are presented in often wonderfully descriptive detail, but in which one characteristic is drastically different from our own reality—the three sexes in “Grownups” or the shape-changing ability of humans in “The Family Football,” for example. Given his obvious skill and recognition as a writer, and the pleasure I found in some of his stories, I remain surprised at my negative reaction to *The Light Ages*. It is possible that, if I were to read the novel a couple more times, the things that puzzled and distracted me might become clear—but I have little desire to do so. MacLeod’s London is almost as strange as Peter Ackroyd’s in *The Plato Papers*, which I reviewed in these pages some time ago, but it is by no means as fascinating.

Archform: Beauty

Miriam Jones

Modesitt Jr., L.E. *Archform: Beauty*. New York: Tor, 2002. Hardcover, 330 pages, \$25.95. ISBN 0-765-30433-3.

Archform: Beauty is a departure from the fantasy series for which Modesitt is mainly known: it is set on Earth, three and a half centuries in the future, in NorAm, an amalgam of what is left of what used to be Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The main action involves a series of unexplained suicides that may be linked to “RezPop,” a type of music that uses harmonic resonance to evoke powerful emotional responses in listeners. The novel presents a series of increasingly interrelated first person narratives, shared between five main characters: Chiang, a cop who heads a department that studies trends; Parsfal, a researcher for a news outlet; Cannon, a senator; Cornett, an adjunct professor of classical music and the only female of the five; and Kemal, a crime boss. Despite the futuristic setting, these characters are by and large all recognizable “types” in the police procedural genre. Though some expressions are too cute—Chiang “went by the screen” (i.e. the book)—the individual voices are good, each distinguished by its various quirks and blindnesses. Cornett is tetchy and self-righteous; Kemal is a shark, but with an overlay of self-justification about “the family”; Chiang sounds like the quintessential hard-boiled detective; Parsfal is a trendy geek; and Cannon seems genuinely to believe the down-home values he espouses.

In *Archform: Beauty*, Modesitt demonstrates the same concern for environmental issues that has been evident in his work since the 1980s. This future Earth is severely depopulated and the environmental balance is a constant concern. It is a world of droughts, population caps, contested water rights, and grass green in winter. There is mention of the “Ellay desert,” and much of the novel is set in Colorado as the old capital cities are underwater or uninhabitable. If this were not enough, the Martian Republic appears to be lobbing asteroids at the Earth.

Against this somewhat dire background, Modesitt creates a society dependent upon nanotechnology, yet one which is stratified in familiar ways despite the neologisms: there are the “filch,” the rich elite (the filthy rich?); the “sariman” or professional classes (salary-men?); the “servies” or service-sector working-classes; and the “permies”: felons permanently altered by nanotech so that they must always tell the truth. All these groups follow appropriate sartorial codes. “English stock” accounts for seventeen per cent of the NorAm population—though a considerably higher percentage of the main characters—and it is this group, in a fitting Darwinian touch, that is most susceptible to RezPop. The media has continued on its present trajectory of presenting life in five minute chunks, politicians and partisan politics continue apace, and adjunct professors continue to get shafted. And, there is still a Taliban.

Upon this setting Modesitt grafts the theme of his title. He uses the mystery surrounding resonance-enhanced music to gesture to an aesthetic that exists beyond technology: something apparently intrinsic to art, to the “human condition.” The novel is laden with references to Beethoven, Yeats, Donne, and other canonical artists. Professor Cornett becomes the spokesperson for the value of culture when she takes a Quixotic stance in favor of traditional vocals, called “artsong,” over technologically-enhanced music. She is slightly priggish and pig-headedly naive, but she has a strong moral effect on each of the other main characters she meets. In some sense the novel seems intended as a medita-

Bassham, Gregory & Eric Bronson. *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy: One Book to Rule Them All*. Open Court, Sep 03.

Bates, Brian. *The Real Middle Earth: Exploring the Magic and Mystery of the Middle Ages, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the LotR*. Palgrave Macmillan, Oct 03.

Bowker, Gordon. *Inside George Orwell: A Biography*. Palgrave Macmillan, Oct 03.

Brooker, Will. *Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans*. Continuum, 2003.

Carrere, Emmanuel. *I Am Alive and You Are Dead: The Strange Life and Times of Philip K. Dick*. Metropolitan/Holt, Jan 04.

Carroll, Joseph. *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature*. Routledge, Apr 04.

Coddon, Karin S., ed. *Readings on Stephen King*. Greenhaven Pr, Apr 04.

Cork, John & Maryann D’Abo. *Bond Girls Are Forever*. Abrams, Nov 03.

Costello, John. *Science Fiction Films*. Pocket Essentials, UK/Trafalgar Square, US, 2003.

Dubeck, Leroy W., Suzanne E Moshier & Judith E Boss. *Fantastic Voyages: Learning Science Through Science Fiction Films*. Springer, 2nd ed, 2003. Revision of authors’ *Science in Cinema*, 1988.

Fisher, Jude. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King Visual Companion*. Houghton, Nov 03. Companion to concluding film.

Frost, Brian J. *The Essential Guide to Werewolf Literature*. U of WI Press, Oct 03.

Garrett, Peter K. *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth Century Fiction*. Cornell UP, Sep 03.

- Grant, John & Elizabeth Humphrey. *The Chesley Awards for Science Fiction and Fantasy Art: A Retrospective*. Paper Tiger/Sterling, Oct 03.
- Kermode, Mark. *The Exorcist*. 2nd rev ed. British Film Inst/U of CA Pr, Oct 03.
- Klinkowitz, Jerome. *The Vonnegut Effect*. U of SC Pr, Feb 04.
- Langford, David. *Up Through An Empty House of Stars: Reviews and Essays, 1980-2002*. Cosmos Books/Wildside Press, 2003.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination*. Shambhala/Random House, Jan 04.
- Lockhart, Darrell B., ed. *Latin American SF Writers: an A-Z Guide*. Greenwood, Apr 04. About 70 authors, 18th cent to present.
- Lukeman, Adam. *Fangoria's 101 Best Horror Movies You've Never Seen: A Celebration of the World's Most Unheralded Fright Flicks*. Three Rivers Pr, Sep 03.
- Magistrale, Tony. *Hollywood's Stephen King*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Petty, Anne C. *Tolkien in the Land of Heroes: Discovering the Human Spirit*. Cold Spring Pr, 2003.
- Punter, David & Glennis Byron. *The Gothic*. Blackwell, Apr 04.
- Rickman, Gregg, ed. *The Science Fiction Film Reader*. Limelight Editions, Nov 03.
- Roemer, Kenneth M. *Utopian Audiences: How Readers Locate Nowhere*. U of MA Pr, Nov 03.
- Rowlands, Mark. *The Philosopher at the End of the Universe*. Ebury, UK, 2003.
- Rutledge, Fleming. *The Battle for Middle-Earth: Tolkien's Divine Design in the LotR*. Eerdsman, 2003
- Sage, Victor. *Le Fanu's Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

tion on different approaches to beauty, for each of the five point-of-view characters defines it in his or her own way. Parsval, the media researcher, uses the phrase “a beauty of coverage” (31) to describe a well-researched story; Chiang, the cop, sees a “terrible and inevitable beauty” (99) in death statistics. To Cannon, politics are intricate and beautiful. But there is never any doubt that Cornett (Coronet? Crown?) is the designated moral center of the text, while Parsval (Parsival? Knight?) does indeed take on the role of her knight errant. In case the reader is in any doubt about his stance on the value of art, Modesitt quotes from W.H. Auden’s “The Unknown Citizen,” a poem which satirically deplores the grey conformity and impersonality of modern life.

This novel is a work of popular genre fiction that makes a paradoxical plea for the superior value of high culture. It presents a future world in which the destructive trends of the present time have reached logical conclusions: the earth is poisoned and depopulated; social disparities are more pronounced than ever; and media and entertainment are increasingly more seductive, and more empty. Yet conversely, it also reifies elements of that same destructive culture—our culture—in its use of the police procedural and the romance, and particularly in the heavy underscoring of the themes of culture and aesthetics.

FICTION REVIEW

Nowhere Near Milkwood

Matthew Wolf-Meyer

Hughes, Rhys. *Nowhere Near Milkwood*. Canton, OH: Prime Books, 2002. Trade paperback, \$17.95, 264 pages. ISBN 1-894815-11-4.

To say that *Nowhere Near Milkwood* is simply a postmodern rehashing of Dylan Thomas’ *Under Milk Wood*, *A Play for Voices*, would be disingenuous, but in some respects appropriate. Thomas obviously haunts Hughes’ text (although he doesn’t actually show up in the story to my recollection, although a host of other writers of various sorts do), most obvious in that Hughes has learnt lessons regarding the slipperiness and joy of language from Thomas. Like *Under Milk Wood*, *Nowhere Near Milkwood*, takes place, in part, on the edges of the Welsh countryside, which both authors seem to equate with the edge of reality itself, but where Thomas takes a flight into the dreamlife and unconscious of the inhabitants of his fictional Welsh town, Hughes delves into the utterly fantastic, and possibly absurd, and the rules of reality and language.

Structurally, *Nowhere Near Milkwood* is a collection of three collections, the second binding the first and third into a cohesive book. The first section follows the musical pursuits of Disability Bill, the second a pseudo-storytelling contest in a bar on the edge of reality, the third the law-enforcement tactics of futuristic (and other-worldly) detective Titian Grundy (a summary of the plots would probably require more pages than the book, and the plots are often less important than the structural elements of the stories). In the course of the storytelling of the second section, Bill and Grundy both make appearances, helping to weave a metafictional reality out of the stories being told, much like what Hughes attempts to do with the whole of the book. A panoply of historical figures appear throughout the storytelling, and one of the storytellers himself is rather notorious – not as a storyteller, but as a rather power-hungry imperialist. But the most important figure for understanding the game that Hughes is playing with storytelling is Flann O’Brien, who puts in a number of cameos.

If *Nowhere Near Milkwood* is a postmodern attempt at recreating the effects of anything already written, it would be O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds* (al-

though that text itself is already rather postmodern). Characters within the story shift realities, becoming real and fictional, fictions are told about “real” people, historical figures from our reality become fictional – Hughes is telling a story about storytelling, and rather than being some overwrought episode of the *Twilight Zone*, Hughes’ facility for language and humor makes *Nowhere Near Milkwood* work in ways that more explicitly “postmodern” narratives fail to. Reading *Nowhere Near Milkwood* is like flipping through 120 channels and finding that the flickers of narratives, commercials, and freeze frames, hold together and tell a strange and wonderful story about the process of flipping channels.

Never dull, and always rather bombastic, Hughes may not be for everyone, and for most people, is probably best read sparingly. But there is an incredible energy to his work, like Michael Moorcock’s *Dancers at the End of Time* and Brian Aldiss’ *Barefoot in the Head*, which is rarely found. And that is where Hughes intersects with the tradition of SF/fantasy writers: He is very much a child of the New Wave, albeit with an eye towards the more experimental forms that New Wave narratives took rather than the psychologization of science fiction. He is, like O’Brien before him, a writer’s writer, and for people interested in words and their sometimes estranged relationship to reality, *Nowhere Near Milkwood* is an engaging exercise in narratological acrobatics and sly humor.

FICTION REVIEW

The Mighty Orinoco

John A. Wass

Verne, Jules. *The Mighty Orinoco*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, February 2003. Hardcover, xvii + 424pp., \$29.95. ISBN: 0-8195-6511-3.

This work, the first English translation since the book was written in 1898, might be accurately subtitled “A 19th Century National Geographic Special”. It was difficult to find anything that could be called science fiction and certainly nothing of the hard SF that the reader of Verne is accustomed to seeing (note to the naïve: Verne was known to have written works other than SF). It is the adventures of one Jeanne De Kermor, a young French girl and her uncle (or more accurately a close friend of the family), searching for her lost father in the hinterlands of 1893 Venezuela. The river of the title plays a major role in the action as most of the plot involves the protagonists and their allies making their way down the river, collecting specimens, conversation, and danger as they go.

The story opens in Caracas as three geographers argue the origins of the title river. It is this question regarding the origins and flows of the river that imparts the scientific content to the story. As with the origin of the Nile in Africa, this was one of the great scientific questions of the day. M. Felipe believes that the Atabapo is really the Orinoco and just as energetically, M. Varinas believes it is the Guaviare. Their colleague and referee M. Miguel, siding with (then) current scientific opinion, believes that the Orinoco begins in the area of Venezuela bordering Brazil and British Guiana (the 2003 Encyclopedia Britannica lists its source “in the Guiana Highlands,” a fact discovered over 50 years after Verne started his novel). The author helpfully includes a map of the river based on the explorations of a real 19th century French explorer and naturalist, and this will be consulted repeatedly by the avid reader as the action proceeds up the river (or down, depending upon which geographer you choose to believe).

After a bit of background material on the country, its inhabitants and government, we are given more information on the scholars to set the characters of the minor supporting cast. The second chapter introduces the protago-

Schweitzer, Darrell, ed. *The Thomas Ligotti Reader*. Wildside Pr, 2003.

Smith, Chris & John Howe. *The Lord of the Rings: Weapons and Warfare*. Houghton, Nov 03.

Squires, Claire. *Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials Trilogy: A Reader’s Guide*. Continuum, 2003.

Taylor, D.J. *Orwell: A Life*. Holt/Macrae, Sep 03.

Yeffeth, Glenn, ed. *Seven Seasons of Buffy: SF and Fantasy Writers Discuss Their Favorite Television Show*. Benbella Books, Oct 03.

Directory Corrections

The following are corrections/additions to the 2003 SFRA Directory. Please send changes in contact information to both Treasurer Dave Mead <Dave.Mead@mail.tamucc.edu> and Christine Mains <cemains@shaw.ca>.

Dr. Darko Suvin, F.R.S.C. email to: <darko.suvin@tin.it>

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Dr. Margaret McBride, email to: <mcbride@darkwing.uoregon.edu>

Neil Barron, phone: 541-772-3034.

nists, a young Frenchman (Jean Kermor) and his uncle (Sargent Martial), as they mysteriously seem to be establishing aliases and plotting the unknown. They soon tell the others that they are searching for Jean's father, Colonel de Kermor, who had last been heard from in Venezuela several years earlier. After the initial trip on a riverboat, with more local color, the passengers change to smaller boats to traverse the shallower and more treacherous portions of the river with a crew of local boatmen. With the addition of two French explorers, the cast is complete and proceeds down (or is it up?) river, encountering giant crocodiles, legions of huge turtles fleeing the tremors of a local earthquake, friendly natives, unfriendly natives, and a host of lovely scenery.

The characters of the two young French explorers are firmed up and expanded, as the reader discovers that Jacques Helloch had several successful missions under his belt and had been charged by a government official with an expedition along the Orinoco. His companion, also charged with the mission and also from the same area of France, has a passion for botany and photography. Both possess many admirable traits and agree to travel further in the company of the three geographers and our two protagonists. For the next six chapters, the river itself provides the tension and plot device to further the action. The group encounters local hostiles (Sargent Martial is wounded), raging currents (Jean falls in and is rescued by the dashing Helloch), and stampeding cattle. At the end of Part I we are on the receiving end of ye olde cliffhanger as it appears the young man, Jean de Kermor, is actually a young lady and that the Sargent is not really her uncle!

Part II finds Jeanne coming down with malaria, and we meet the novel's human antagonist, the mysterious Spaniard Jorres. At this point the pace quickens and the plot thickens as the party makes its way to the final destination, a mission town run by a very competent and compassionate churchman. Before arriving however, they are ambushed by more hostiles, under the control of escaped convicts. The identity of the mysterious Spaniard and kindly missionary are almost anticlimactic to the modern reader after the he/she revelation of the first section.

I found this a slower and more tedious read than Verne's usual science fiction stories but a great look at 19th century Venezuela along the Orinoco. For fascinating background material the interested reader is encouraged to consult the February 1896 (that's right, *eighteen* ninety-six!) issue of the National Geographic. Perhaps one of the more pleasurable discoveries for the casual Verne reader will be the many fascinating bits of knowledge contained in the introduction and notes to this edition. As teenagers, many were first introduced to the written works of the author through the I.O. Evans editions in paperback series. What we did not imagine, beyond perhaps the odd mistranslation, was the degree of censorship and suppression Verne's novels often encountered due to his views on colonialism and injustice to the subject races. The translator and editor recount numerous examples of bungled translations, alterations, rewritings, and the final insult of not being translated into English editions due to being politically incorrect for the late 19th and early 20th century sensibilities. This edition is highly recommended based on these annotations beyond the rather mild story line.

FICTION REVIEW

Robert Silverberg Presents The Great SF Stories: 1964

Batya Weinbaum

Silverberg, Robert and Martin H. Greenberg, eds. *Robert Silverberg Presents The Great SF Stories: 1964*. Framingham, MA: NESFA Press, 2002. Hardcover. 395 pp. \$25.00. ISBN: 1886778213.

Reading the proofs of this first edition book, I cannot comment on the ability of the 1973 dust jacket illustration to capture the essence of the period. But the book as a whole certainly has, collected because of the editors' perception that we "are in danger ... of losing much of our heritage of classic short science fiction" (13). 1964 was a year which began still shaken by the assassination of John F. Kennedy only 6 weeks before. The cold war was raging, with Senator Barry M. Goldwater threatening to break off diplomatic relations with the Soviets and to renounce the nuclear test ban treaty if elected. Marches, sit-ins, boycotts and all sorts of demonstrations continued in the battle for racial equality known as the civil rights movement. The war in Vietnam was becoming a growing concern. Further expansion beyond the 21,000 American forces in Southeast Asia was planned. We went to the moon. Rachel Carson died. Terry Southern's erotic novel *Candy* was a best-seller. *A Hard Day's Night* and *Dr. Strangelove* were favorite movies.

In this tumultuous year, over 100 SF books were published. SF magazines were nonetheless more important than they are today. Most of the canonized writers in the field were still (or had become) men—Robert Heinlein, Philip K. Dick, Jack Vance. The World Science Fiction Convention was held in Oakland, CA, at a tiny hotel; 523 attended. Edmond Hamilton

and Leigh Brackett, husband and wife, were the guests of honor. Ursula Le Guin attended. This was the first con for a new writer. And 1964 was in hindsight a transitional year for SF.

Thus, these 14 stories selected from *Fantastic*, *Amazing Stories*, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *New Worlds*, *Galaxy*, *Playboy*, *If* and John Campbell's *Analog*, capture a particular moment and tell a significant story especially for those involved in revising the history of the genre.

Of particular interest is Leigh Brackett's "Purple Priestess of the Mad Moon," a story whose title is reminiscent of the fiery letters across the early 1940s Planet Stories or Thrilling Wonder Stories. The lead story in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in October 1964 does appear in title an homage to the pulp magazine era of SF, bristling with swashbuckling adventure. Also a writer of screenplays for the movies (1946-1979), she had a love for SF space opera so common in the early pulps and with which she began her own career in *Astounding* with a story called "Martian Quest" published in 1940.

Like most earlier women writers of the genre, she begins her story from the male view point, seeing the world through the eyes of a male character: "In the observation bubble of the TSS Goddard Harvey Seldon watched the tawny face of the planet grow" (202). The story unfolds as the males talk with and interact with each other, by bristling over issues of rank, protocol, manners and order brought with them to outer space as they approached a visit to a Martian home and Martian family. Yet the incidences of "soft SF" which blossomed in the 70s had forewarnings here. Seldon, the main character, ashamed of his own insecurities, once he brought out the negative attitude of uneasiness he had had, was able to correct it after "a quarter of an hour of positive therapy" (203).

Mars was well developed, as evidenced as the space port skimmer flew him over Kahora, the administrative capital. Still, the men on Mars were in charge, waited upon by females who came bearing drink from the kitchen. Brackett, writing in the early 60s, imagined a female costume of brilliant silk, "something between red and burnt orange," (205), wrapped about her hips, caught by a broad girdle. Lella, the character, wore anklets and tiny golden bells that chimed as she walked, a necklace of gold placques around her throat; tiny bells hung from her ears, visible behind long black hair; her eyes were green; she smiled at the arriving Earthmen.

Yet this is a culture in which the men of Earth are willing to admit that Earth has made mistakes; although charmed by local native (topless) women, they are willing to correct the problems.

Ursula Le Guin, still virtually unknown in the SF world of 1964, had by then only published 6 previous stories; the novel that put her on the SF map forever, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, would not appear until 1969. Thus editor Cele Goldsmith Lalli of *Amazing Stories* showed great clarity in publishing "The Dowry of Angyar" in which various life forms of intelligence levels and seven sociocultural races are demonstrated. The cold and technical way of presenting five distinct species discussed in terms of "hominids," telepathy, technology and cultural patterns, turns out to be An Abridged Handy Pocket Guide to Intelligent Life Forms being examined by males trying to identify a "very tall, brown-skinned, yellow-haired woman" (320) standing half-way down a museum hall, surrounded by four uneasy, unattractive, fidgeting dwarves. Creating exotic women pursued or confronted by hard-tech scientific exploring males still seemed to be a way for women writers to sell their stories; yet, marriage forms and riding women and wild maidens enter and are discussed, at least from domestic perspectives.

Wyman Guin's "Amand the Renaissance" (*Galaxy*) included a fabled Sea Goddess cohabiting with the Sun Gods (296). Frederick Pohl's "The Fiend" (*Playboy*) opens with a male perceiving how beautiful and helpless a woman was, wearing nothing except a plastic identification ribbon around her neck as she stepped out of a transport capsule (343). The male observer gets sexually worked up; as she was sleeping, he was turned on because "she was so passive and without defense. A man could come to her now and be anything at all to her, and she would not resist. Or, of course, respond" (344). But when he looked again, "She was awake...wearing an expression of anger" (loc. cit). She knew what the score was, and asked, "Do you know what they can do to you for this?" (344). He was startled; he did not like to be startled; but the unfrozen woman accuses her wrongdoer. He deep-freezes her again, to silence her. But a woman's angry voice has shattered the spacy world of SF.

Other writers' stories in the collection might not pick up that theme, such as Cordwainer Smith's "The Crime and the Glory of Commander Suzdal," Roger Zelazny's "The Graveyard Heart," John Brunner's "The Last Lonely Man," Godren R. Dickson's "Soldier, Ask Not," Fritz Lieber's "When the Change-Winds Blow," Fred Saberhagen's "The Life Hater," Robert Silverberg's "Neighbor," and Norman Kagan's "Four Brands of Impossible." But the world of SF has passed a point of no return. The decade of women's SF of the 1970s would demonstrate this shortly, echoing her call, as women creators took up the genre to write from women's perspective as they gazed at, used, and dissected men, and imagined women's worlds rather than women as objects in male worlds.

FICTION REVIEW

Orphans of Earth

Pawel Frelík

Williams, Sean and Shane Dix. *Orphans of Earth*. New York: Ace Books, 2002. (Reviewed in uncorrected proofs. Paperback, 374 pp., \$7.50. ISBN 0-441-01006-7.

A year ago or so, when I was reviewing *Echoes of Earth*, I said I wouldn't mind reading a sequel. Little did I know (or, maybe, I should have known better?) – *Orphans of Earth* is only the second installment of what promises to be at least a trilogy. And what a trilogy will it be!

This is naturally not a place to summarize the novel and spill all the beans, especially if you have not read the first installment, but the main points are as follows. *Orphans of Earth* picks up where *Echoes* ended – after the destruction of the transformed Earth the entire humanity consists of the old-style human Caryl Hatzis and a number of engrams, digitally encoded albeit imperfect constructs constituting the crews of a fleet of spaceships sent to investigate the galaxy. Hatzis and Peter Alander, an engram and for all purposes the protagonist of both novels, attempt to warn the surviving ships and colonies of the mortal threat the use of the Gifts (an array of almost-marvelous technological innovations left by a nameless race of super-advanced aliens) poses. They manage to locate more and more of the engram colonies, but the pace with which the Starfish, hostile aliens attracted by the very use of the Gifts and bent on unconditional destruction of any life-form, track them and destroy also increases – Hatzis, Alander and others soon realize that unless they learn more of their attackers, humanity will disappear completely within a very short time. As they frantically search for answers, these orphans of Earth find some unlikely allies in yet another alien race (well, technically even two) and the new perception of the universe consolidates – one in which entire races are obliterated or saved, millions of light years and galaxies traversed, and the inexorable logic of truly cosmic proportions takes shape.

These may read like big words, but I do think that the novel deserves them. At its close, there are far more questions left unanswered than in *Echoes of Earth* and the reader is still grappling with uncertainty, trying to come to terms with what the Australian tandem is offering here. What exactly is that? Well, the deep-space and grand-scale adventure, another first contact – again, very convincing and devoid of cheap artificiality – some political intrigue (how human even on the eve of imminent race-destruction!), a healthy dose of (post)-humanistic status-questioning – Williams and Dix mix these together with great skill and sensitivity. However, what I think they really succeed at is in portraying the sense of coldness and indifference of the universe and the magnitude of the force (not without reason named here “the Ambivalence”) at work in it – all of which come as startling realizations to these post-humans whose race may have been capable of sending space missions to survey and colonize the stars but was completely unprepared for the scale of events that are now unveiling before their very eyes.

Of course, *Orphans of Earth* is a novel in its own right and for those who haven't read the first part there is a short, preface-like section titled “What Came Before” summarizing the major points of the series opener but it is necessarily sketchy and does not quite give a sense of the scale of events. Still, the novel works best if you know its predecessor. This, consequently, limits somewhat its usefulness as a stand-alone course reading assignment. At the same time, however, *Orphans* improves on *Echoes* and extends it in a number of ways. To return to my earlier comparison to Clarke's *Childhood's End* – if the main preoccupation of *Echoes of Earth* was the very moment of contact, this volume clearly harks back to the latter part of Clarke's opus where the adventure-driven novelty is replaced with the vision of cosmogonic proportions.

I must say I cannot remember the last time when I was so eager to read the follow-up – to my mind few of the recent cycles in science fiction have left so much anticipation and suspense without, at the same time, cutting the plot in mid-motion. Of course, I may not have read too many that deserve equal attention, but one way or another *Orphans of Earth* is a great read. Would I like more? Oh yes.

FICTION REVIEW

In the Forests of Serre

Christine Mains

Patricia A. McKillip. *In the Forests of Serre*. New York: Ace, 2003. Reviewed from Uncorrected Proofs, 304 pages, \$22.95. 0-441-01011-3.

At the 2001 International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, at which Patricia McKillip was the Special Guest Writer, I presented a paper on several of her works, outlining her representation of the figure of the wizard and the need to balance intellect and emotion in the pursuit of knowledge. Later that evening, McKillip read from her then-current work-in-progress, the tale of a grieving prince named Ronan, a brave princess named Sidonie, and their encounter with the young wizard Gyre, whose sudden discovery of the depths of his heart's desires leads him to twist his powers to dark and selfish ends. After her reading, McKillip remarked that she had realized as she read that she'd once again written about a wizard who needed to learn something about love. *In the Forests of Serre* draws on elements of Russian fairy tales—the witch Baba Yaga, whose hut runs through the forest on chicken legs, the firebird with the beautiful song, the wizard who hides his heart, the hero who aids animals and is aided in return—in a lyrical reflection on the distinction between selfless love and selfish desire, and the role played by stories and storytelling in the construction of self-identity.

The tale begins with an encounter between Prince Ronan of Serre, the land where tales become true, and Brume, the “Mother of All Witches” (1). Ronan, having been recalled by his father King Ferus from a battle in which he had hoped to die, accidentally kills Brume's favorite white hen and is cursed to “have a very bad day. And when you leave your father's palace at the end of it, you will not find your way back to it until you find me” (3). Still mourning the death of his young wife and their newborn child, Ronan is stunned by his father's demand that he marry Sidonie, youngest daughter of the neighboring king of Dacia. Before the bride can arrive for the wedding, however, Ronan becomes entranced by the firebird and wanders out of the palace and into the forest, out of his wits and into a quest.

For her part, Sidonie has no wish to leave Dacia, but her father and his advisor, the ancient wizard Unciel, see no other way to protect Dacia from invasion by Ferus, as the power of sorcery for which Dacia is famed and which has prevented Ferus' attack is more reputation than fact. Unciel asks Gyre, a young wizard who owes him a favor, to travel with Sidonie as guide and protector, but Gyre finds himself falling in love with both Sidonie and with Serre itself; he attempts to steal Ronan's face and form in order to marry the princess and inherit the land. In exchange for Brume's aid in escaping from Gyre, Ronan surrenders his heart, which he no longer values; Sidonie, not wishing to marry a prince as heartless as his power-hungry father, goes on a quest of her own to buy back Ronan's heart from the witch.

Gyre escapes from the witch by taking on the form of a monster whose heart had been hidden and then stolen by Gyre, a monster who had been thought defeated by Unciel at the cost of most of his power and almost his life, a “monster that saw nothing everywhere it looked, except when it looked at itself” (265). The monster wears the faces of both Gyre and Unciel, driven to narrate to his scribe the tale of his nearly fatal encounter with it. The conflict between the self and its shadow, between the fairy tale hero and his darker desires, is one recurring theme in McKillip's work; another is the resolution of the wizard's quest for the power gained through knowledge in the discovery of his or her own heart and need for community. Only when Gyre commits the selfless act of offering his own heart to the monster that he has seemingly awakened to terrorize Serre are his actions redeemed and peace returned to Serre.

The land of Serre itself is another archetype, a symbol of the unconscious mind through which the hero journeys on a quest of self-discovery, a land created by and constructed of tales told since times past. Most of McKillip's stories, while unconnected by the maps or chronologies that other fantasists use to keep their readers oriented trilogy after trilogy, seem to be set in that same imaginary land, not a named place on the map but a world of the imagination, the timeless and universal world of fairy tale and myth. Like other McKillip heroes and wizards, both Ronan and Gyre learn about themselves and their responsibilities towards others in their community only when they journey into the land and become part of its tale, the stories that are their lives only fragments of the story that makes up the land. The connections between life and story, the ways in which identities are constructed out of narrative and the impossibility of words to contain the meaning that they construct, is another thread that runs through much of McKillip's writing.

McKillip's work deserves much more critical attention than it has received in the past three decades. Her body of writing, of which *In the Forests of Serre* is only the latest and certainly not the last, should be read by scholars interested in quest fantasy and the figure of the hero, in the uses which authors make of the traditional material of folk and fairy tale, in metafictional reflections on the art of storytelling, in strong female characters and male characters who are caring and compassionate. Her most recent novels, published by Ace in small hardcover format with beautifully-detailed covers by artist Kinuko Y. Craft, make attractive additions to any bookshelf, but in the end it is the lyrical and whimsical words inside the covers that appeal to anyone with an interest in the art and craft of writing.

FICTION REVIEW

Devil's Bargain

Christine Mains

Tarr, Judith. *Devil's Bargain*. New York: Roc, 2002. Trade paperback, 387 pages, \$16.00. ISBN 0-451-45896-6.

Speculating upon history has proven to be an inspiring enterprise for many writers of fantasy and science fiction, World Fantasy Award nominee Judith Tarr among them. Much of Tarr's work falls into the category of historical fantasy, a subgenre marked by the introduction of magic into the events of history. Most authors of this subgenre consider themselves bound by the historical record, imagining conversations or creating secondary characters but not straying too far from the known facts. This is the path followed by Tarr in an earlier novel, *Pride of Kings*, which told the tale of the Plantagenets — Richard the Lionheart, his brother John Lackland, their powerful mother Eleanor of Aquitaine — in a reimagined medieval England. Offered both a mortal and a magical crown at his coronation, Richard chooses to neglect the magical realm, abandoning his country to win glory in the Crusades, while his brother John, a much more sympathetic character in Tarr's novel than he is in the history books, accepts the responsibilities of magical kingship. Although magic and myth play a hidden part in motivating the characters and shaping the outcome of the tale, events unfold as any student of history would expect.

Also set during the time of the Third Crusade, *Devil's Bargain* should be considered a companion to *Pride of Kings* rather than a sequel or part of the same series; the story does not follow chronologically from the earlier novel, nor does it relate the same events from the point of view of a different character. *Devil's Bargain*, while still a fantasy as magic plays a significant role, belongs to a different subgenre, that of alternate history, in which authors examine a turning point in real world history and imagine what might have happened if events had followed a slightly different path. Developed from the short story of the same name included in Harry Turtledove's anthology *Alternate Generals 2*, *Devil's Bargain* speculates on how Richard might have won Jerusalem during the Third Crusade, if he and his adversary Saladin had made different decisions at crucial moments. In a note following the novel's conclusion, Tarr informs the reader of the true ending of the conflict between Richard and Saladin, which she describes as "one of the great adventure stories of history" with "no satisfying conclusion" (386). Listing some of the historical factors which underlie her alternate vision, as well as some of the nonfictional texts which she used during her research, satisfies the curiosity of those readers who may not have the necessary historical knowledge but do want to explore history further, something which many authors of alternate history or historical fantasy do not always consider.

While much of Tarr's historical fantasy is of the highest quality, reflecting her scholarly background and meticulous research, her narratives are sometimes rushed and underdeveloped, and unfortunately *Devil's Bargain* is no exception. It fails to fulfill the potential inherent in either historical fantasy or alternate history, as Tarr chooses to recount a fast-paced adventure romance rather than the examination of the larger themes of political, religious, and ethnic conflict often key to historical fantasy. Nor does she take advantage of the opportunity to examine the possible implications to history of Richard's victory over Saladin in Jerusalem, as would the best works of alternate history. One reason for this neglect is that the plot follows the conventions of a different genre, that of romance; the major focus is the love affair between two secondary characters: Richard's illegitimate half-sister Sioned, a Welsh sorceress, and Saladin's brother Ahmad, an Islamic mage. This relationship could have provided a means to explore larger political themes, but while the two lovers do occasionally remark that they are expected to be enemies, the conflicts between them spring from lovers' misunderstandings rather than torn allegiances, and the narrative ends as romances do, with marriage and impending parenthood.

Although it is disappointing that *Devil's Bargain* fails to live up to its potential, it does provide more than an entertaining tale. Scholars interested in the representations of magic will find Tarr's comments on the nature of magic and how magic is perceived and taught differently within different cultures intriguing. Some of the most thoughtful passages have nothing to do with the history of the Crusade or with the relationship between Sioned and Ahmad as lovers, but explore instead Sioned's education in the craft of magic envisioned as diplomacy or commerce. If only this insight into one of the fundamental elements of fantasy could have been further developed, or the larger questions of history explored, *Devil's Bargain* could have taken its place in the classroom alongside more ambitious works of historical fantasy.

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