

Editors

Karen Hellekson

16 Rolling Rdg.

Jay, ME 04239

karenhellekson@karenhellekson.com

sfrareview@gmail.com

Craig Jacobsen

English Department

Mesa Community College

1833 West Southern Ave.

Mesa, AZ 85202

jacobsen@mail.mc.maricopa.edu

sfrareview@gmail.com

Managing Editor

Janice M. Bogstad

McIntyre Library-CD

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

105 Garfield Ave.

Eau Claire, WI 54702-5010

bogstajm@uwec.edu

Nonfiction Editor

Ed McKnight

113 Cannon Lane

Taylor, SC 29687

emcknight@andersonuniversity.edu

Fiction Editor

Edward Carmien

29 Sterling Rd.

Princeton, NJ 08540

sfracfiction@mac.com

Media Editor

Ritch Calvin

16A Erland Rd.

Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114

rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

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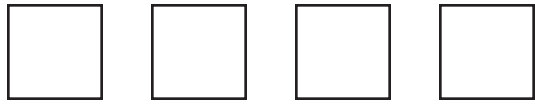
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The *SFRA Review* (ISSN 1068-395X) is published four times a year by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA), and distributed to SFRA members. Individual issues are not for sale; however, all issues after 256 are published to SFRA's Web site (<http://www.sfra.org/>) no fewer than 10 weeks after paper publication. For information about SFRA and membership, see the back cover.

SFRA thanks the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire for its assistance in producing the *SFRA Review*.

SUBMISSIONS

The *SFRA Review* encourages submissions of reviews, review essays that cover several related texts, interviews, and feature articles. Submission guidelines are available at <http://www.sfra.org/> or by inquiry to the appropriate editor. Contact the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.



SFRA Review Business

EDITORS' MESSAGE

SFRA Review Institutes New Feature

Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen

Our last issue introduced a new feature: the 101 series, brief, pointed overviews of topics we think will interest the SFRA membership. Our second feature, Comics 101, by Joe Sutliff Sanders, provides useful insight into the world of comics and graphic novels.

To this new feature we add another: One Course, which harkens back to our Approaching... series, which longtime readers will remember ran during our previous tenure as editors. Just as the Approaching series focused on a single text or author, the One Course feature will focus on the construction of a single class, with particular attention to how the course addresses its context. Shelley Rodrigo launches this new feature with her description of teaching texts by and adapted from Philip K. Dick to students in a community college occupational program.

These features (and one more we have up our sleeves for next issue) reflect our desire to make this publication an indispensable resource for science fiction scholars and teachers. Their continued usefulness depends upon contributions from SFRA members. Those interested in sharing their experiences and expertise through these features should e-mail us at sfreview@gmail.com.

ERRATUM

In the last issue (*SFRA Review* 283), the anthology *The Future We Wish We Had* was incorrectly identified as *The Way The Future Was*. We regret the error.



SFRA Business

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SFRA in Transition

Adam Frisch

When Farah Mendlesohn informed me last November that the dollar's plunge against the euro had undercut the feasibility of holding our July conference in Dublin, I figured 2008 was going to be one of the "bad-est" years ever for SFRA. What a time to

be president! But thanks to some help from Jim Gunn and his Kansas friends, this summer's speedily relocated conference in Lawrence is turning into one of the more academically interesting and generative meetings in my memory.

Program director Karen Hellekson quickly had an abundance of proposals to work with, although the date for abstract acceptances has now closed. Author guests include Karen Joy Fowler, Joan Slonczewski, and James Van Pelt. Meanwhile, SFRA's various awards committees have chosen a powerful group of distinguished winners, almost all of whom plan on being in Kansas to thank SFRA personally.

Meanwhile, SFRA has started getting a whole lot of new memberships from young academics who seem to have tons of innovative ideas and boundless energy, and more and more former members are renewing their memberships—to the point where Treasurer Mack Hassler believes our 2008 membership roster will set a record.

Meanwhile, Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen are transforming the *SFRA Review* into a wonderful periodical that's a lot of fun to read through. And the 2009 Atlanta conference being put together by SFRA VP Lisa Yaszek promises to be even richer than our Lawrence experience. So it looks like the bad-est year even might turn into one of the good-est, and that SFRA will continue to grow as an exciting organization that will make some kind of difference in the crazy future toward which all of us seem to be hurtling headlong. Wouldn't that be nice? And meanwhile, what a time to be SFRA president!

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

SFRA Executive Board Meeting

Rochelle Rodrigo

The meeting was held January 15–April 15, 2008, via e-mail discussions. This update was written April 15, 2008.

Attending:

- Adam Frisch, President
- Lisa, Yaszek, Vice President
- Shelley Rodrigo, Secretary
- Donald M. Hassler, Treasurer
- David G. Mead, Immediate Past President

1. **Motion to approve minutes from July 5, 2007, meeting; motion passed.**
2. **Officer Reports**
 1. President
 1. With the exception of the Pilgrim award, has received names for the 2008 awardees from all the award committees. Invited award recipients to attend 2008 conference.
 2. Vice President
 1. Contacted other organizations to announce the "opening" of the SFRA listserv to non-SFRA members.
 3. Secretary
 1. Revised and submitted minutes of the July 2007 executive board meeting.

2008 Program Committee Update

Karen Hellekson

The academic programming committee—me, Craig Jacobsen, Patrick Sharp, and Lisa Yaszek—have been hard at work creating the program, along with the advice of the Board and the general oversight of Ritch Calvin, the conference director. Because of the late change in venue, we had to work extraordinarily fast to craft a schedule, although the task has been made much easier by the support and help of the Campbell Conference folks, particularly James Gunn, Chris McKitterick, Lydia Ash, and Kevin Curry.

The program committee is no longer accepting abstracts. A schedule is up at the SFRA Web site (<http://sfra.org/>); it will be periodically updated. We're pleased to announce the following special guests: Karen Joy Fowler, Paul Kincaid, Joan Slonczewski, Maureen Kincaid Speller, and James Van Pelt.

The schedule this year is very full. We are happy that there was quite a bit of interest from Campbell Conference attendees to also attend SFRA. This resulted in more paper proposals, particularly in teaching SF (part of the conference theme). In addition, we can expect papers from grad students new to the conference circuit, and from scientists. To expedite cross-pollination with the Campbell Conference, we've instituted a shared fee. People interested in attending events for both SFRA and Campbell Conference should sign up for SFRA only.

AWARD

2008 Clareson Award

Bruce L. Rockwood

The SFRA's Clareson Award Committee announces that the 2008 Clareson Award goes to Andy Sawyer. As we noted in our message to SFRA President Adam Frisch: "The committee would like to give the Clareson award this year to Andy Sawyer, for his work over the years at Liverpool, the library archive & web site, the MA in SF Studies, his many academic contributions, and his long time support of the SFRA and participation in many of our meetings, over the years, among other things."

Adam commented in his message to Andy: "The very phrase, 'among other things,' seems to me especially telling, as this award can only begin to acknowledge the breadth and the depth of the many contributions we all know that you have made to the study of science fiction."

Congratulations again, Andy, and we hope to see you in Kansas!

2. Sent 2008 renewal letters in September and November 2007 and March 2008.
3. Sent a letter about the 2008 conference relocation in November 2008 and a registration form about the new conference in March 2008.
4. Updated addresses with Treasurer.
4. Treasurer
 1. 329 members for the 2008 calendar year as of April 11, 2008.
5. Immediate Past President
 1. Will be working on developing slate of candidates at the 2008 conference.
3. **Convention Updates**
 1. 2008 Lawrence
 1. Due to the changing exchange rate, the 2008 conference location has been moved from Dublin, Ireland, to Lawrence, Kansas. The conference is now currently running currently with the Campbell Conference.
 2. Karen Hellekson is program chairperson, has collected proposals, and is currently putting the program together.
 3. For more information about the conference and/or to register, visit the Web site at: <http://wiz.cath.vt.edu/sfra/conferences.html>.
 2. 2009 Atlanta (Lisa Yaszek and Doug Davis)—planning on track!
 3. 2010—Phoenix/Tempe (Craig Jacobsen and Shelley Rodrigo)—planning to do a lot of planning, scheduling, etc. in June 2008.
4. **Old Business**
 1. SFRA Listserv: The board voted to open the listserv to nonmembers of SFRA in hopes to gain more paying members. The listserv administrator says we got 15 new listserv members within 15 minutes of the Vice President sending out advertising to join the organizational listserv.
 2. SFRA 2008 Award Committees: All committees have forwarded the name of 2008 awardees to the President so that he may invite them to the 2008 conference in Lawrence, Kansas.
 3. Support-a-Scholar Fund: The board has decided to officially wait to kick off the new Support-a-Scholar structure until we have received the return on investment for the monies allocated to this endeavor. This new award program will probably be introduced either at, or directly after, the 2008 conference.
5. **New Business**
 1. Collaborative Activities with SFWA Members: Marleen Barr approached the organization to develop collaborative activities between SFRA and SFWA members to increase membership and promotion of both organizations. The board is still exploring ideas and discussing possibilities with members of SFWA.

AWARD

2008 Pilgrim Award

Adam Frisch

British SF critic and writer Gwyneth Jones has been selected as the recipient of this year's SFRA Pilgrim Award. She joins an illustrious set of former Pilgrim winners whose criticism has continually demonstrated science fiction's relevance to our contemporary world, its problems, and its potential.

AWARD

2008 Pioneer Award

Lisa Yaszek

As chair of the Pioneer Award Committee, I'm pleased to announce that the 2008 Pioneer Award goes to Sherryl Vint for her outstanding essay in the March 2007 issue of *Mosaic* entitled "Speciesism and Species Being in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" As we noted in our message to SFRA President Adam Frisch: "The committee was extremely impressed with both the originality of [Vint's] textual readings in this essay ...[and] [her] ability to show readers how SF authors (and scholars!) engage a wide range of scientific, social, and philosophical issues ranging from meditations on classical Cartesian selfhood to the impact of speciesism on new forms of technocultural subjectivity. We very much look forward to reading more of [Vint's] work in the future."

Please join me in congratulating Sherryl, who will be in attendance at SFRA 2008 in Lawrence, Kansas.



Feature Article: 101

Comics Studies 101

Joe Sutliff Sanders

One of the most cherished announcements in introductions to monographs of comics scholarship is that comics scholarship has finally arrived, that at long last, people are talking about comics. Such a sentiment dates back at least thirty years and is obviously not perfectly accurate. Comics studies today is a field with multiple international conferences and journals, scores of articles, many excellent (and many more less than excellent) monographs, and one remarkable university press that has carved out a market identity partly thanks to its dedication to quality scholarship on comics. This is a robust field with its own terminology, ideological camps, and venues. In this article, I provide an introduction to the shape of the field with an eye toward revealing good opportunities for an interested but uninitiated researcher to make an entrance.

What Is a Graphic Novel?

The most important step in an introduction to comics studies is a definition of the terms that the field has settled on. First, the umbrella term: *comics* is the term used to refer to graphic novels, comic books, comic strips, one-panel illustrations intended to stand on their own, and the immediately surrounding forms of expressing (including, for example, safety instructions on commercial airlines). *Comics* is the one term that can mean all the others, each of which refers to a specific subset of the broader field.

The other key terms to the field are best understood by their historical links. One-panel illustrations have been used for centuries to make satirical commentary, and it is through them that fundamental tools of comics—for example, the word balloons that enable dialog in comics—were popularized. In nineteenth-century America, editors caught up in the newspaper wars found that short stories involving a sequence of these illustrations—what we would now recognize as “comic strips,” the often four-panel form on the comics page of major newspapers—could increase sales enormously, thus ushering in an age of comics in a popular form that has yet to abate. For the sake of simplicity, here, the term *comic strips* tends to refer to these short, serial narratives, even if they have only one panel.

Publishers further found that they could use the same materials they had originally printed as comic strips to generate another stream of revenue if they pasted those strips together and reprinted them in book form. These cheap, magazine-format books came to be known as *comic books*, and although today they almost invariably feature original content (thus the newest issue of *Detective Comics* will feature an original story that takes up the entire content of the book, rather than several strips reprinted from original appearances in newspapers), their basic form has remained the same. Today, comic books are most easily recognizable because of their format: their spines have staples, and their pages (usually around thirty-two per book) are printed in vertical rectangles.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a new form of comics began appearing, spawning the term *graphic novel*. Today, this term tends to be reserved for book-length comics, and it can mean either a book composed of material reprinted from magazine-style comic books or original material that fills the book from beginning to end. The industry originally differentiated between book-length compilations of reprinted comics by calling them *trade paperbacks*, an unimaginative if perfectly accurate name, keeping the term *graphic novel* for original-content books, but that distinction has grown lamentably rare. *Graphic novels* is also the term currently used to refer to reprints of comic strips, such as in the case of the handsome two-volume compilation of the entire run of *Calvin and Hobbes*. Thus, just as a comic book can best be identified by its similarity to a magazine, with staples in the spine and relatively few pages, *graphic novel* now refers to a square-bound comic of any length, with original content or not.

There is still a great deal of grumbling about the term *graphic novel*. People outside the field tend to assume the term refers to a book containing something particularly violent or racy. Scholars who champion autobiographical comics point out that, for example, a book about the author's father's experience during the Holocaust should no more be called a novel than any other

book about true events. And most books published in this format are reprints of comic books published separately, meaning that graphic novels are often better understood as graphic story arcs. Regardless, the name seems to have stuck.

What Is the Machinery of Comics?

Comics tend to use a sequence of still images, thin lines between those images, and a set of iconic tools to imply sound and movement. Each of these still images is called a *panel*. Panels are usually separated from one another by a thin line called a *border*, a nearly invisible element of comics art that has enormous artistic potential, since its thickness can imply mood, its angle can imply genre, its distance from the next border can imply time, and its absence can imply sublimity. Within panels, characters generally speak to each other in word balloons (rounded objects with tails pointing to the mouths of the speakers), while narrators or off-scene characters speak in captions (small fields of text enclosed in square-edged boxes).

Fields of Study: Formalism

The eloquence of the visual elements of comics has inspired a major concentration within the field of comics studies. Charles Hatfield, in his 2006 survey of comics scholarship, makes the claim that formalism returned to the forefront of comics studies after the publication of the massively influential *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud's 1993 book-length comic book both examining and portraying the formal principles of comic art. Hatfield is very likely correct, considering the field's ongoing interest in the nuts and bolts of how comics work. Robert C. Harvey's 1996 *The Art of the Comic Book*, for example, insists that the study of comics may include traditional literary tools for analysis of, for example, plot, character, and theme, but it must include a careful reading of how the visual dimensions of the text perform their work. A similar strategy underlying Hatfield's own excellent work on comics can be detected in the subtitle to his 2005 book, *Alternative Comics: an Emerging Literature*. Here, Hatfield thinks through the underground comics scene in terms of genre and international borrowings, claiming that "alternative comics invited a new formalism" (x). *Alternative Comics* engages fully with the historical and cultural milieu that helped produce the alternative comics scene, but the book is primarily a close reading enabled by keen observations of how comics work. Even more recent is Douglas Wolk's *Reading Comics* (2007), which explores the metaphors of comics. For each of these scholars, the machinery of comics is a primary concern.

Children and Comics

Often when critics have talked about comics, they have felt a strong need to distance their subject from literature for children, often using the tiresome cliché that comics are not just for children anymore. There is, however, a great deal of excellent work on comics and children, and there is room for much more. Hatfield (2006) makes this point compellingly, offering a thorough reading of the field for scholars interested in pursuing questions of children and childhood through comics. Similarly, Stephen Cary speaks for an important segment of the field in his book *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*

(2004), a study of how comics can be used in service of teaching literacy. A recent meeting of the annual academic conference on comics at the University of Florida focused on the intersection of childhood and comics, as did issue 3.3 of the online journal *ImageText*. This area of the field is newly revitalized and seems ripe for exploration.

When the Fans Become the Subject

Another promising line of inquiry in comics scholarship is fan studies, a burgeoning field in many areas of academia. Will Brooker's *Batman Unmasked: Analyzing a Cultural Icon* (2000) works as the cultural study of the Batman phenomenon it clearly intends to be, but it also opens for comics scholarship some important insights on how a fan community can manufacture its own history. By reading closely the aspects of Batman that fans have clung to, as well as reading the battles between fans and merchandising media, Brooker lays the groundwork for exploring a dialectical relationship between fans and comics. Too, Jeffrey A. Brown's *Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans* (2001) works primarily as a study of how race, creativity, and the economics of comics work, but it is perhaps most valuable for its insights on how the fan culture engaged with questions of ethnicity and comics during the brief life of a comic book company that fans perceived to define itself according to race. As with those of Brooker's text, the fans in Brown's study reveal a thriving culture in which difficult questions of market and identity can be tested.

History in and through Comics

Comics have also benefited from a series of historical treatments. For the most part, these have consisted of studies about the history of comics itself. Women in comics are a particular field of interest, as in Maurice Horn's *Women in the Comics* (1977) and books by Trina Robbins, including *From Girls to Grrrlz* (1999), which traces how the comic book market abandoned a girl readership. Others attempt to give a historical explanation for the context of a certain kind of comics, as Roger Sabin does in his book on comics for adult readers (1993). Joseph Witek provides a close reading of autobiographical comics in his book *The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar* (1989), but his real goal is the historical situation of the autobiographical movement in the history of comics.

More broadly useful are books that use comics to read history. Best known of these titles is Bradford W. Wright's *Comic Book Nation: the Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (2001), a wonderfully thorough analysis of how certain kinds of comics over the decades corresponded with changes in American youth culture.

Theory and Comics

There has been very little application of critical theory to comic books. Geoff Klock's *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why* (2002) uses psychoanalytic theory to explain the power of superhero comics, but it seems to be the exception rather than the rule. A new annual journal, *Mechademia*, makes some strides in filling the void with exceptional articles (some in translation) using theoretically informed analysis to discuss—in the example of

the recent second volume—the theme of networks of desire. No theoretical angle seems out of bounds for the journal, although there is a clear sense that purely formal approaches are not as interesting as historical, cultural, or theoretical readings. The journal focuses on Asian (primarily Japanese) comics as well as anime and the other art forms relevant to comics in Southeast Asia.

Talking about the Contexts in which Comics Work

By far the most common form of comics scholarship, and the one exception to the general absence of critical theory in comics scholarship, is cultural studies. It is not surprising that comics studies have thrived when performed from a cultural studies perspective. Cultural studies' emphasis on how marginal texts coalesce to nudge and be nudged by a broader culture allows readers to skip over the question of formal quality entirely and go right to a study of what the books mean, what they are trying to achieve, and whether they have achieved those goals.

Comics studies has provided a great deal of useful insight on how and why cultures work the way they do. Alphons Silbermann and H. D. Dyroff's edited collection, *Comics and Visual Culture* (1986), includes essays on comics in ten different countries, each essay driven by excellent research and hard data on how the economics of popular culture work. Martin Baker has produced two strong books on comics in Britain, including one on the public reaction to horror comics in the mid-twentieth century (1984) and another on the way ideology is deployed in the public space to justify regulation of popular media (1989); both books, it should be noted, also have implications for the study of children and comics. Another example is M. Thomas Inge's 1990 *Comics as Culture*, which uses close reading and insights on the formal qualities of comics to explain how "comics serve as revealing reflectors of popular attitudes, tastes, and mores" (xi).

Two books expand this kind of inquiry to the use of comics in non-Anglophone cultures. First, Allen Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas's *Arab Comic Strips: Politics of an Emerging Mass Culture* (1994) provides a provocative look at how comics themselves can represent Occidental depravity to Muslim cultures and how the unique social structures of the Arab world can force new meanings from familiar comics icons. Anne Rubenstein's *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation* (1998) shows how "The story of comic books, their readers, their producers, their critics, and their relationship to the Mexican state offers an excellent window into...cultural processes" (6). It is further useful as a brand of fan studies, since it is actively interested in the productively subversive readings fans insisted on making of their comics in postrevolutionary Mexico.

Comics are well situated to talk about the pulse of a culture, and it is therefore likely that this will continue to be the main thrust of comics scholarship for some time to come.

Where Is This Conversation Being Held?

There is a long tradition in comics criticism of useful insights from sources less formal than obviously academic journals. The *Comics Journal*, for example, is a mainstay in the comics

community with no academic pretensions, and it continues to provide strong readings of comics and the comics industry. In the tradition of the journal, nonacademic presses have produced thoughtful insights on the field. To this end, for example, Fantagraphics—a publisher better known for printing the work of underground comics legends—has published books such as *Reading the Funnies* (2001) and *The Sandman Papers* (2006). As the editor of the latter says in his introduction, his advice to contributors "encouraged direct, non-jargony writing" (viii). With the continued publication of the *Comics Journal* and new books from the likes of Fantagraphics, it is likely that an important part of the discourse on comics will continue to take place outside strictly academic borders.

But there are new and exciting venues for comics scholarship that are more immediately recognizable as academic. A handful of journals with an academic pedigree focus on comics scholarship, including *Mechademia*, mentioned above, as well as *ImageText*, *Image [&] Narrative*, and the *International Journal of Comic Art*. Other journals eagerly consider work on comics, including *Extrapolation*, *Foundation*, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, and *Science Fiction Studies*.

One of the most significant places for the conversation in comics studies is the University Press of Mississippi. M. Thomas Inge has helped guide the selection of excellent works of criticism for the press, which continues to produce crucial monographs. Additionally, the press has an impressive line of compilations of interviews with important creators, including Art Spiegelman, Charles Schulz, and Carl Barks.

What Still Needs to Be Done?

Comics studies is, as I said in my opening, already robust and thriving. However, there are areas within the field that clearly need development. From my comments in the preceding categories, some of those areas will already be evident: a recapturing of the intersection of children and comics, more and broader analyses of what comics and fans have meant to each other, historical research into critical moments of comics history, and a more robust use of critical theory could all improve the conversation already in place.

Further, although there are a good number of works on women in comics, there are few works on the women who have helped produce comics. Neil Gaiman tells stories of the importance of a female executive at DC, for example, who made a point of drawing British talent into American comics, leading directly to some of the best superhero comics the field has seen. Louise Simonson has worked on comics for decades, as have Gail Simone and Trina Robbins. Phoebe Gloeckner has published an important collection of her own underground comics, perhaps providing an alternate history to the story of alternative comics previously told. And very recently, Alison Bechdel won enormous acclaim for her autobiographical graphic novel after a long career writing one of the only widely printed comic strips about lesbians. But there has been very little work making figures such as these central to the history of comics.

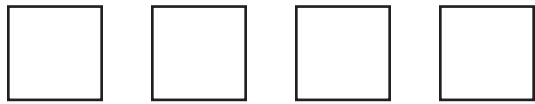
A typical stumbling block for all criticism that has had especially profound consequences for the study of comics is that scholars in the field have a tendency to theorize comics through

the narrow examples of only what they like the best, arguing implicitly and often explicitly that other comics—comics that don't fit the theories being tested—are not important enough to bring to the center of analysis. The formalists are the best at surmounting this divide, but other comics studies have had little success addressing a truly inclusive cross section of the field.

In addition, until very recently, there has been too little work on comics outside the English-speaking world. Japanese comics—manga—have received some attention and seem to be catching up more quickly than other nationalities, but it is often difficult to find work on Korean or even French comics.

Conclusion

Comics studies has been an active field for long enough to boast its own venues and debates. The work remaining to be done is still vast, but the discourse is enthusiastic and increasingly theorized. Come join the fun.



Feature Article: One Course

PKD Lit and Film

Shelley Rodrigo

The Course

I have taken my ENH 255 Contemporary American Literature and Film class, which I teach at Mesa Community College, Mesa, Arizona, and solely focused it on the works of Philip K. Dick (PKD) and the films adapted from those works. As a 200-level course, the general course outcomes relate to teaching general literary and film analysis skills; the course also introduces issues related to adaptation.

The Context

This is not your average community college film and literature course! Besides narrowing the focus of a contemporary American literature and film class to just the works of PKD, this class is the humanities course taught in our college's Think Big program. Caterpillar XXX has local Caterpillar dealers pair up with community colleges, where students learn to work on Caterpillar machinery and earn a two-year associate degree. The classes are made up solely of the Think Big students and are taught in the local Caterpillar dealer's training facility. This is my third year teaching both the technical writing and humanities courses for these students. By the time these students are in my humanities class, I've worked with them once before, and they've been together for over a year and half. They are also eight weeks away from graduation. Not only could they not care less about the humanities, but they also have no idea about how or why the humanities are important to their future career of fixing Cater-

pillar machines.

This course is heavily adapted for this student population. First, I have to grab and hold their attention for eight weeks. The first two times I taught the course, I themed it on cars; however, I figured science fiction with film adaptations with lots of SBU (stuff blowing up) might work just as well. Second, I have to keep the written texts short. I'm not saying these guys (yes, they are all guys) can't read; however, they don't want to read and when forced to do so are not very fast readers; they get overwhelmed and discouraged easily. It works out nicely that with as many novel-length works PKD wrote, most of the film adaptations are based on short stories. Finally, it helps to have some built-in humor to work with these students. I'm sure you can imagine the Beavis and Butt-head type sounds that came from the class the first day when I said we would be "focusing on Dick" and at times when I say, "So, what are the 'Dickian' elements in this text?"

The Philosophy

I want these humanities classes to get the students thinking about how our culture thinks about and depicts technology. I also want them to consider human interaction with different technologies, particularly because the students will be working professionally with machinery. With the critical eye PKD brings to technological advancements, I'm still able to make this connection to their future professional identities. I also want them to learn basic textual analysis skills, which I find are easier to learn when different media (film and written texts) are being compared.

The Texts

With the exception of *A Scanner Darkly*, I require reading and viewing of all PKD works that have been adapted to English-language films with reference back to the original text.

- "The Golden Man" and *Next* (2007)
- "Second Variety" and *Screamers* (1995)
- "Paycheck" and *Paycheck* (2003)
- "Impostor" and *Impostor* (2001)
- "We Can Remember it for You Wholesale" and *Total Recall* (1990)
- "The Minority Report" and *Minority Report* (2002)
- *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, the original American theatrical release of *Blade Runner* (1982), and the 1991 Director's Cut of *Blade Runner*

The choices are primarily based on which PKD texts have been adapted; however, I also wanted to focus on the works that dealt with themes about technology and humanity—*A Scanner Darkly* is not as directly focused on these subjects (although it is obviously focused on questions of reality, a major PKD theme that we do discuss). One of the reasons I like PKD's works for a literature and film class is that there are some films that parallel closely the story, imagery, and themes from PKD's original works and others that diverge greatly from his original texts. This diversity in adaptation facilitates rich discussion about the hows and whys of adapting a written text to film.

The Assignments

Except for *Next* and the original American theatrical release of *Blade Runner*, the students are responsible for reading and viewing everything as homework. They are also responsible for writing response-and-reflection posts in their course blogs before the course meeting, when we'll be discussing the assigned text. I have them read the required text before Tuesday's class and view the film before Thursday's class. The major purpose of the response-and-reflection posting is both obtaining proof of reading and getting an advance idea of what the students are focusing on, what they did or didn't understand, and what they were excited about. I've asked them to analyze basic narrative components (character, setting, plot) as well as cultural elements (theme, gender, race, class).

During class, we talk our way through the texts. I then add a critical element for them to analyze in their next round of response-and-reflection postings. Finally, I also assign a paper as the final for the course. The paper assignment asks them to compare and contrast one of the film-text pairs that diverge, then to argue whether or not the different film is still a Dickian text (they are allowed to choose from the following PKD texts and adapted film: "The Golden Man," "The Minority Report," *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, and *A Scanner Darkly*).

The Calendar

This is an eight-week class that meets twice a week for three hours. I start by viewing *Next* the first day of class. I do this for two reasons: first, it is a three-hour class period, so showing the film fills all the time; and second, I want to start with this pairing of texts because the film is wildly divergent from PKD's text. The divergence both excites and frustrates the students; it also gives me two separate texts to start talking about literary terms and filmic elements in a way that allows for easy comparison and contrast to help define the concepts.

We then move onto "A Second Variety" and *Screamers*. This adaptation closely parallels the original, thus contrasting with the previous pairing. Both sets of texts also heavily emphasize issues of evolution and questions about humanity; which then allows us to start discussion of what it means to be a Dickian text. Because both texts emphasize sound, I highlight the sensual nature of reading and viewing.

We then move through the remainder of the texts, ending with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and the two different versions of *Blade Runner*. We end with these texts so that I could assign parts of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* throughout the class so that they read the entire text. The 1991 Director's Cut of *Blade Runner* is one of the texts that they might choose to analyze in their final paper.

The Results

I am still teaching the course for the first time, but the students are having a good time, and they've stayed engaged. First, the students have really learned to enjoy teasing how the hows and whys the various texts, both text and film, set up the future. Without too much prompting, they not only identify how the text constructs a future, usually through setting (postnuclear apocalypse with oppressive military/government rule), gadgets (spaceships and futuristic travel), and some form of human or

technological evolution; they also take the next step of demonstrating how that futuristic element fits into the story. For example, they figured out that the mind-erasing capabilities in the short story "Paycheck" just set the stage for the story whereas in the film *Paycheck*, the mind-erasing technology becomes a part of the bigger question of what it means to live life. Therefore, the mind-erasing aspect of the story is more present in the film than in PKD's original story. We've begun having interesting discussions about class, race, and gender, especially while discussing how Hollywood adaptations of PKD's texts have had to present a more diverse world in terms of both class and race as well as more complex and positive female characters.

The students are struggling through discussing bigger PKD themes, especially questions about reality (what is "real"?) and evolution (what is "human"?). The flip-flops that PKD's stories take in terms of presenting the "real" keep the students on task while they are reading the texts. In other words, if they are not paying attention while reading, they will not "get" the shifts in reality and perspective—for example, in discussing the mood organ in the opening chapter in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. I do, however, think that the guys are beginning to think about how "reality" is affected by things that pretend, or pass, as well as by the experiences and memories of individuals. Ultimately, they are growing to understand that "truth" and "real" are not always as simple as we would like them to be.

The evolutionary questions, especially those applied to technological constructions in "Second Variety," "Impostor," and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, are where one of PKD's themes directly intersects with the interests of this particular batch of students. We've had good discussions about the original purpose and audience for technologies and how those technologies are either adapted or grow to fulfill new purposes and audiences. We've had a few chats about how literary texts usually leave things more complex and messy, whereas Hollywood films need clear-cut good and bad characters and resolutions—especially how Hollywood likes to scare the audience with technology out of control but then just fixes the problem with some other technological solution (insert *Terminator* narrative franchise here). With a student population who are irritated because they have to take a humanities class and who just want to graduate so they can work and make money, these various discussions about technology, reality, humanity, and adaptation all help the students see the world in a more complex manner, which is my ultimate goal for this course.



Nonfiction Reviews

Charles Williams

Bruce Beatie

Gavin Ashenden. *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008. Hardcover, xii + 275 pages, \$55, ISBN 978-0-87338-781-1.

Kathleen Spencer begins her 1986 *Starmont Guide to Charles Williams* by noting that “The first answer to the question ‘Who is Charles Walter Stansby Williams?’—in America at least—is likely to be: ‘the friend of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien’” (7). And her conclusion is that “Charles Williams is, undeniably, a minor writer... whose audience is likely to be even more limited than most minor writers” (87). Ashenden’s book, excellent as it is in some respects, is unlikely to change those views, especially among readers who consider Williams to be a writer of religious fantasies. Indeed, Ashenden begins with a similarly reserved statement in the introduction. Williams, he says, “was a close friend of T. S. Eliot, deeply admired by C. S. Lewis, inspiration for W. H. Auden... , and a literary sparring partner for J. R. R. Tolkien. Yet half a century after his death, [his] life and work remain an enigma for many” (vii). He sets out to show how Williams, starting from the “Rosicrucian and Q’abalistic traditions [he] learned from [A. E.] Waite,” “developed his own distinctive mythical framework and mythically charged language” out of that tradition that “enabled him to speak remedially from within Christian culture and prophetically confront some of its blind spots and prevailing dualism” (viii, ix).

His first three chapters are essentially historical, taking us through “The Encounter between Poet and Magus”—Williams’s involvement with the Golden Dawn and Waite’s Rosicrucian variant of it—and analyses of “Modern Hermeticism” and “The Q’abalah, *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*, and the Influence of A. E. Waite.” The remaining chapters deal with Williams’s work and life, looking only in part at his fiction. “The ‘Two Ways’ and the ‘Theology of Romantic Love’” considers his adaptation of the Christian via affirmative and via negative in his theological and critical writing; and “Alchemy as Metanarrative” discusses their use in his first two novels, *Shadows of Ecstasy* (drafted 1925, revised and published in 1933) and *War in Heaven* (1931). The next two chapters, however (“The Goetic, Theurgic, and Wisdom Traditions” and “The Integration of the Natural and Supernatural in Charles Williams”), turn back to Williams’s nonfiction, especially to his wonderful study of Dante, *The Figure of Beatrice* (1943).

The next chapters, however, return to the fiction. In “The Second Phase of Maturation,” Ashenden interprets Williams’s last two novels, *Descent into Hell* (1937) and *All Hallows’ Eve* (1945, published after his death in May 1945), as realizations of the ideas and relationships central to, but incompletely expressed in, his first two novels. And in “Vocabulary and Imagery,” he presents a commentary, with extensive quotation, of Williams’s Arthurian poems. His commentary, however, considers not so much the Arthurian content as the poems’ use of Williams’s “theology of romantic Love,” and so provides a transition to the final chapter, “The Quest for Integration.” This is the most fascinating and original chapter, making use of unpublished poems and letters Williams wrote to “Celia” (Phyllis Jones, whom he met as a coworker at the Oxford University Press), the woman with whom he had an apparently platonic affair from the late 1920s until shortly before his death. Through analysis of these materials, as well as Williams’s letters to his wife, Frances (“Michal”), Ashenden clearly shows Williams’s attempt to integrate in his own life and loves the ideas of the unity of body and soul, spirit and flesh, divine and secular, that he had derived from the

hermetic tradition. It is by far the most interesting chapter in itself—but it offers little to the reader interested in Williams as a writer of fantasy.

Ashenden’s brief conclusion returns to his point of departure: “In death Williams remains as he was in life, not widely known... His fellow Inkings, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, both also engaged the tools of myth and enchantment and became and remain highly popular. Williams’s lack of widespread popularity can be partly attributed to the style of his writing, which is characterized, as Brian Horne suggested, ‘by a peculiar quality of density’” (232). The volume has extensive notes, a bibliography, and a highly inadequate index.

The phrase “a peculiar quality of density” also characterizes Ashenden’s book. That is certainly partly the result of the ideological difficulty of the mystic tradition that is his focus, and to its peculiar jargon. Ironically, Ashenden notes at one point, “The remarks that Williams makes in the preface [to *Witchcraft*] clearly indicate that he valued as a top priority a keen sense of the definitions of words and ideas that he used” (116). I wish that Ashenden had done so as well. One problem is that he seems to be writing only for those who already know Williams’s work well. Even in discussing the novels, he never offers the uninitiated reader the slightest background information. (Kathleen Spencer’s discussion of the novels, by contrast, sets a concisely sophisticated analysis in the context of the ongoing plot.) Another lies in his extensive (and highly pertinent) use of quotations, both long and short. Unfortunately, he rarely identifies the source of quotations parenthetically but rather inconveniently in the 702 endnotes—and sometimes, frustratingly, even the notes don’t provide clarity.

There are other problems of this sort, but since I am not recommending this book to the average reader of the *SFRA Review*, there seems little point in detailing them. Ashenden has given us a significant contribution to Williams scholarship and criticism, but its audience is likely to be limited.

Two Approaches to Fantasy and SF Film

Bruce Beatie

Leslie Stratyner and James R. Keller, eds. *Fantasy Fiction into Film: Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007. Softcover, vi + 197 pages, \$35, ISBN 978-0-7864-3057-4.

Steven M. Sanders, ed. *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. Hardcover, viii + 232 pages, \$35, ISBN 978-0-8131-2472-8.

In his introduction to *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film*, Sanders notes that “good science fiction film criticism remains in perilously short supply” (16), and the same is true of fantasy film criticism. These two books are therefore inherently valuable. However, though both of these books are collections of essays that focus on films, one directly and the other mostly on films based on fictions, they could hardly be more different in their approaches. Let me begin with the one that is most accessible to the general reader.

I

The essays in *Fantasy Fiction into Film* seem to have been solicited by the editors; there is no evidence of their having been presented as conference papers, either separately or as part of a program. Four of the essays discuss Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films, and two each are about the more recent Disney version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The remaining six are on different films. The editors' introduction offers concise summaries of each essay.

The four essays on the Jackson films include the following: Janet Brennan Croft's "Three Rings for Hollywood: Scripts for *The Lord of the Rings* by Zimmerman, Boorman, and Beagle"; "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore": Peter Jackson's Film Interpretations of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*" by Gwendolyn A. Morgan; Robin Ann Reid's "'Tree and flower, leaf and grass': The Grammar of Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings*"; and "'My brothers, I see in your eyes the same fear': The Transformation of Class Relations in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy" by Sharon D. McCoy. Croft's analysis is textual, considering unfiled scripts from 1957 and 1970, and Peter Beagle's script for Ralph Bakshi's 1979 torso. She comments on Jackson's film only in her conclusion, and ignores, no doubt rightly, Romeo Muller's awful (*sic!*) script for the 1980 *Return of the King*, an animated color video made for television by Jules Bass and Arthur Rankin Jr. Morgan's approach is also intertextual, considering the influence of the 1939 *Wizard of Oz* on Jackson's compression and reinterpretation of Tolkien's text. Reid is the only one of the four who seems to concentrate on Jackson's cinematography. Her analysis is linguistic, based on M. A. K. Halliday's 1994 *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, and ultimately more textual than filmic. Almost four pages are devoted to passages from Tolkien's text, making it the longest of the essays. The most interesting of the four is McCoy's analysis of the way Jackson's minimized the social class structure, at once both medieval and English, in Tolkien's book. She quotes extensively from the film's dialogue to show how Jackson's film has limited "its vision to people it defines as 'like us'" and its "attempts to emphasize the possibility that any one of us can be a hero—if we so choose, when our moment comes" (71).

Megan Stoner's too-brief "The Lion, the Witch, and the War Scenes: How Narnia Went from Allegory to Action Flick" summarizes the "modernist" changes Andrew Adamson made in his 2005 film that sacrifice "the very foundational elements of Lewis' *Narnia*: belief, salvation, and destiny" (75, 78). Paul Tankard's "The Lion, the Witch and the Multiplex" covers essentially similar ground, focusing on changes in the children, the land itself, the witch and the party animals, and Aslan. His comment about "the most significant divergence between the two texts" (90, emphasis mine) illustrates a problem with both essays; they treat the film not as visual art but as text. And neither mentions the 1967 and 1988 British made-for-television versions of Lewis's novel, nor the delightful 1979 American animated version.

The two treatments of films based on Roald Dahl's 1964 novel parallel McCoy's emphasis on social structure in Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films, although with different points. June Pulliam's study of "Charlie's Evolving Moral Universe: Filmic Interpretations of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*" compares both Melvin Stuart's 1971 musical film, for

which Dahl wrote much of the script, and Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) with Dahl's original novel. Unlike many of the essays in this collection, Pulliam provides enough background information about the three versions that a reader unfamiliar with any of them can nonetheless follow her argument clearly. "Dahl's novel," she concludes, "is a fairly straightforward morality tale, while 'Stuart's musical is framed in a quasi-religious context...which pits predetermination against free will. Burton's version, however,... deconstructs the larger-than-life candy maker and shows us that, for all of his preternatural skill with confections, he is all too human'" (113, 114). Elizabeth Parsons's "Buckets of Money: Tim Burton's New *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*" argues that the "alterations that Burton makes to Dahl's story...point to the new political agendas that emerge... most notably in the models of contemporary western world capitalism the film promotes" (93). She makes only passing reference to the 1971 film.

Of the remaining six essays, four are on familiar films. Donald Levin's "The Americanization of *Mary*: Contesting Cultural Narratives in Disney's *Mary Poppins*" sees the film version "as a cultural statement that symbolically subverts representations of the dominant values of one society [English] and replaces them with representations of the values from another [American]" (123). Eric Sterling's "From Book to Film: The Implications of the Transformation of *The Polar Express*" is interesting because its source is a children's book in which illustrations are equally balanced with text. Although Sterling notes briefly that the screenwriters "are not constrained by cardboard and thus employ, for various effects, music, sound..., and Performance Capture" (146), his comparison is again largely textual. The title of Sarah E. Maier's "From *Peter Pan* to *Finding Neverland*: A Visual Biography" suggests the potential for a major book. Keyword and title searches for "Peter Pan" in the Internet Movie Database produce some three dozen titles, including Barrie's play and novel, the Rogers and Hammerstein musical, and probably other textual versions. However, Maier's essay focuses mainly on Barrie's biography and the *Finding Neverland* film, although she mentions Spielberg's *Hook* (1991, not included in the "Peter Pan" search lists just mentioned) and the excellent 2003 *Peter Pan* directed by P. J. Hogan. Maier's is one of the most interesting in the volume, along with McCoy's.

The most narrowly focused of the essays is "From Witch to *Wicked*: A Mutable and Transformational Sign" by Jessica Zebrine-Gray, which, as the title implies, looks at the physical characteristics of the witch as a gender stereotype from American folklore through Baum's novel, the 1939 film, Gregory Maguire's 1995 novel *Wicked*, and the musical adapted from it. Because of her focus on imagery, Gray deals more with the visual aspect of film (and musical) than most of these essays. A less familiar film about witchcraft (which Leonard Maltin's *Movie Guide* calls "a lumpy brew") is the subject of Kathy Davis Patterson's "From Private Practice to Public Coven(ant): Alice Hoffman's *Practical Magic* and Its Hollywood Transformation," in which she argues that the film gives the novel's "outsiders" a "warm, fuzzy ending" (185, 186). Finally, in Matt Kimmich's "Animating the Fantastic: Hayao Miyazaki's Adaptation of Diana Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle*," we consider a film involving witchcraft (the heroine Sophie is transformed by a witch), but this time, the novel is adapted into an animated

film—an obvious stimulus for consideration of visual and filmic elements. But again, Kimmich focuses mainly on changes in the plot.

This collection of essays is readable, interesting, and useful for anyone interested in fantasy films. Its main problem is described best by Morgan, who begins her essay by noting, “With good reason, our colleagues in film studies are suspicious of those of us in literature using their medium as grist for our critical mill. Too often, we expect to see the coherence and richness of a written tale. . . , ignoring the fact that film is a *visual art*. . . . Indeed, overwhelmed by its visual richness, we tend to ignore it or, at best, consider it ornamentation of some essential storyline” (21, original emphasis). As I have noted along the way, Morgan and most of her colleagues have fallen victim to this fault.

The book is not too well edited. I caught a number of typos and errors of fact. The book concludes with brief biographies of the contributors and an index.

II

As with the *Fantasy Fiction into Film* collection, the essays in *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* seem to have been solicited for this volume, which is part of an ongoing series titled “The Philosophy of [some aspect of] Popular Culture.” And again, the editor’s introduction offers summaries of the individual essays. In contrast to the former volume, however, those in *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* may be interesting and useful, but they are not particularly readable. In “An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science Fiction Film,” Stephen M. Sanders says, “The philosophers who write about science fiction films in this volume describe what happens in these films and identify and analyze what is implied. They explain the philosophical arguments, ethical perspectives, and metaphysical ideas behind the images we see on the screen” (4). Virtually all of the essays consider the films they discuss not as films but as stimuli for raising philosophical questions—a point emphasized by the division of the essays into three sections: “Enigmas of Identity and Agency,” “Extraterrestrial Visitation, Time Travel, and Artificial Intelligence,” and “Brave Newer World: Science Fiction Futurism.” Because I am not a philosopher but a literary scholar, I shall list the separate essays, but I will comment more on their filmic than their philosophical content.

In part 1, the essays are “What Is It to Be Human? *Blade Runner* and *Dark City*,” by Deborah Knight and George McKnight; “Recalling the Self: Personal Identity in *Total Recall*,” by Shai Biderman; “Picturing Paranoia: Interpreting *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*,” by Steven M. Sanders (the 1956 version only), and “The Existential Frankenstein,” by Jennifer L. McMahon (the 1931 version only). Knight and McKnight’s comparison of the two films is interesting, and they comment briefly on “the way Roy’s death is shot and edited” (31). Sanders also briefly comments on *Invasion*’s “flashback structure with voice-over narration, unusually angled shots, scenes of claustrophobic darkness” as “characteristics. . . of the classic film noir cycle” (55), but he then uses philosophical arguments to develop the odd theory that the narrator’s account is “a product of paranoid delusion” (68). McMahon’s essay is the most interesting of these, not only for her Heidegger-based analysis of novel and film, but on her concern with the film’s visual aspects.

The essays in part 2 are “Technology and Ethics in *The Day*

the Earth Stood Still,” by Aeon J. Skoble; “Some Paradoxes of Time Travel in *The Terminator* and *12 Monkeys*,” by William J. Devlin; “2001: A Philosophical Odyssey,” by Kevin L. Stoehr; and “*Terminator*: Fear and the Paradox of Fiction,” by Jason Holt. Holt’s essay is like Biderman’s in part 1: a philosophical exercise whose point is to offer “two alternative solutions to the paradox of fiction” (147). *Terminator* is scarcely discussed as a film. Devlin’s comparison of *Terminator* and *12 Monkeys* stays much closer to the films themselves, as does Skoble’s brief study of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, which concludes by comparing the earlier film to *Terminator*. Stoehr rightly terms *2001* a “philosophical odyssey,” and in making his argument that the film “impels us to ponder the moral, psychological, existential, and even spiritual dangers of our drive to transcend our general state of humanity” (132), he actually gives some consideration to the purely visual elements of the film.

Finally, part 3 turns to that perennial topic loved by people outside the field: the predictive value of science fiction. The essays are “The Dialectic of Enlightenment in *Metropolis*,” by Jerold J. Abrams; “Imagining the Future, Contemplating the Past: The Screen Versions of *1984*,” by R. Barton Palmer; “Disenchantment and Rebellion in *Alphaville*,” by Alan Woolfolk; and “The Matrix, the Cave, and the Cogito,” by Mark T. Conard. Abrams is the only author in this collection who prefaces his analysis with a summary of the film’s narrative; he argues that *Metropolis* anticipates “by almost two decades” “the entire philosophical movement of Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*” (168). Palmer compares the 1956 and 1984 film versions of *1984* with Orwell’s book. Woolfolk’s analysis of Jean-Luc Godard’s *Alphaville* is the only essay in the volume where the visual aspects of the film are central to the argument, while Conard’s Platonic interpretation of *The Matrix* is almost totally philosophical.

Although most of the films discussed in this volume are based on published fictions, only McMahon and Palmer seriously consider the printed source; most of the other essays don’t even mention it. As noted earlier, few of the essays consider the films as films in their own right, deriving their philosophical points mostly from the films’ plots and ideas—but most don’t. The book is better edited than the *Fantasy Films* volume, with no typos that I could find. Overall, this volume is probably as valuable to scholars interested in fantasy and science fiction films as the other. Indeed, the radical differences in approach between the two volumes may make it worthwhile to read them together.

Playing the Universe

Jason W. Ellis

David Mead and Paweł Frelik, eds. *Playing the Universe: Games and Gaming in Science Fiction*. Lublin, Poland: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2007. \$14.35 (31,5 zł), ISBN 978-83-227-2656-3.

The nineteen essays that comprise this fine collection represent a broad spectrum of ideas engaging the convergence of games, gaming, and SF. The collection includes an introduction by the editors and four essay sections: Literature (nine essays),

Film (three essays), Gaming (five essays), and Intermedia (two essays). The breadth of these works covers focused readings, comparative analyses, historical and cultural interpretations, and theoretical constructions. As seemingly dissimilar some of these works at first appear, the common thread binding them together is the often overlooked and increasingly significant connection between and within games and SF. Play, as an important aspect and production of culture, informs and is informed by SF. Furthermore, games are consequential aspects of some SF, and SF is likewise an integral part of contemporary games. It is within these networks that the contributors to this volume enact their own intellectual play, scoring new and insightful SF scholarship.

One such playful and thought-provoking essay is Thomas J. Morrissey and Oscar De Los Santos's "SF Plays Dice with the Universe: Investigating the Rules of the Game in Science and Science Fiction." They use the concept of time travel to argue that SF and science can be viewed as one big game. After an overview of contemporary science behind speculations on time travel, the authors delve into what they call the "time travel game," teasing out the language and rules of time travel shared in the two overlapping fields of thought. However, what makes this piece stand out is how they shift midstream and incorporate other modes of play in SF including politics, ecocriticism, and economics.

Tangentially connected to Morrissey and De Los Santos's essay is a strong representative from the film section: Jonathan Goodwin's "Sports, Repetition, and Control in Shane Carruth's *Primer*." However, the time travel subject matter is not that important to the overall idea that comes out of Goodwin's paper. He makes a compelling argument that SF can be read as sport. He develops this idea by considering the gamelike aspects of the challenging time travel narrative in *Primer*, which include: jock character types, sports signifiers, and competition arising from the possibilities afforded by time travel. The author's core idea of reading SF as sport rather than the other way around via cyborg and posthuman narratives is interesting and will likely receive further attention.

A significant contribution to the overall collection from the gaming section is Laurie Johnson's "Speculations on the Emergence of a Cultural Practice." This work raises many questions about the importance of SF to computer and video games, as well as the extended cultural effects made possible by the networks of SF and computer/video gaming. The essay begins with a well-researched survey of video game history, which launches into his in-depth discussion of the first computer game, *Spacewar!* It's within this analysis that Johnson effectively engages the cultural history of computer games and SF with the overarching historical milieu of the cold war. This is a must-read essay for scholars interested in the diachronic junction of SF and video games within a broader cultural context.

A final essay to consider from *Playing the Universe* is Loren Eason's "First Person Plural: *Ender's Game*, *Broken Angels*, and Video Game Subjectivity." He argues that military video game simulations problematize or challenge individual subjectivity by favoring a plural subjectivity that arises from infantry company integration and command. Eason supports his idea with two military SF examples that deal with war simulations, but the theoretical implications extends beyond SF into the real world of soldiering and the creation of modern soldier subjects.

These four essays are only a sampling of the full collection, which range widely. All of them have an appeal for SF and video game scholars interested in the junction of play, gaming, and sports in traditional SF narratives as well as the burgeoning field of computer and video game narrative. *Playing the Universe* would make a great addition to library collections because this collection caters to a variety of research interests. Additionally, this collection would be a useful pedagogical tool in the undergraduate classroom because it has germane and interesting scholarship as well as a very affordable price. Unfortunately, it should be noted that there is currently an international distribution problem with the text, which means it is only available from online retailers in Poland (merlin.pl or ksiegarnia-ae.com). However, this should not be a deterrent for potential readers of this valuable work, who, I suspect, would enjoy these ideas and find them useful in their own work.

Universal Horrors—The Studio's Classic Films, 1931–1946

Van Norris

Tom Weaver, Michael Brunas, and John Brunas. *Universal Horrors—The Studio's Classic Films, 1931–1946*. 2nd rev. ed. Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2007. Hardcover, 608 pages, \$55, ISBN 978-0-7864-2974-5.

Accessible and *comprehensive* appear to be the buzzwords for this MacFarland title, which is another in the brace of horror-related titles that the company has been currently saturating the market with. This attractively presented book has already seen light as a well-admired first edition, and this revised edition provides a further wealth of information relating to the high-water years of the Universal Studios output. Taking the turning point of Tod Browning's 1931 *Dracula* as a kind of year zero, this survey combines plot synopses, full credit listings, behind-the-scenes trivia, and quotations with light, even glib, review and intriguing glimpses of selective contemporary critical opinion. Black-and-white poster reproductions and illustrative photos round out the text.

To the committed horror fan, much of this material—originally buried within articles, chapters, magazines, fanzines, and journals—will already be familiar, but having it collated here into a single tome offers great convenience. It is certainly more soberly pitched than the bumptiousness of Denis Gifford's *Pictorial History of Horror Movies*, which this book resembles but exceeds, if simply in terms of scope and depth. This collection is also better than recent coffee-table-book efforts such as the official 2006 *Monsters: A Celebration of the Classics from Universal Studios*. Weaver et al. present an impeccable span of research that dovetails (but crosses over a little too much) with John T. Soister's similarly rigorous 2005 book, *Of Gods and Monsters: A Critical Guide to Universal's Science-Fiction, Horror and Mystery Films*. What soon becomes obvious when perusing *Universal Horrors* is that there isn't really that much more than can be said, critically or historically, about the best-known films in the horror canon such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and their myriad sequels. The inclusion of opinions and facts so

extensively covered elsewhere means that the casual reader may find more here than the obsessive reader.

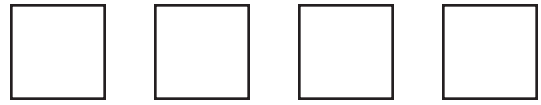
The monster cycle is obviously the prime selling point in any discussion of Universal Studios, and like the Soister book (and as the title implies), the emphasis here remains more on the horror genre rather than any exploration of the later 1950s “mystery films.” But what is present here is certainly collated efficiently and detailed with occasional wit. It offers a useful jumping-off point for those unfamiliar with the finer points of the studio’s less celebrated work; it also provides a sense of where many of the key films reside in terms of current critical opinion. The rigorous assessments of long-forgotten films like *House of Fear* (1938), *The Strange Case of Dr. Rx* (1942), and *Pillow of Death* (1945) are particularly strong.

Despite the arbitrary list of exclusions given at the back of the book, this is indeed an excellent reference work. Yet it’s in the ambiguous introductory statements about reinstating the studio’s critical status where the book’s minor failings are highlighted, including the lack of any credible discussion of Universal’s silent cinema. Until a book comes along that miraculously combines the deconstructive impulse of Mark Vieira’s 2003 *Hollywood Horror*, full accounts of studio practice that match Michael Freedland’s still-potent 1983 *The Warner Brothers*, and the exhaustive list-style attention to production detail found here, then this valuable book will more than suffice for now.

FORTHCOMING NONFICTION

Spring 2008

- Bolton, Christopher, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds. *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dream: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*. Minnesota, 2007.
- Cornea, Christine. *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality*. Rutgers, 2007.
- Harriman, Lucas H. *Lilith in a New Light: Essays on the George MacDonald Fantasy Novel*. McFarland, 2008.
- Hassler, Donald M., and Clyde Wilcox, eds. *New Boundaries in Political Science Fiction*. South Carolina Press, 2008.
- Kincaid, Paul. *What It Is We Do When We Read Science Fiction*. Becon, 2008.
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FICTION REVIEWS

The Martian General’s Daughter

Janice M. Bogstad

Theodore Judson. *The Martian General’s Daughter*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2008. Trade paperback, 294 pages, \$15, ISBN 978-1-59102-643-3.

Told from the perspective of the illegitimate, outcast daughter of an aging general, Peter Black, this work spans decades of time in the rise and fall of a planetary conquest, with limited outposts off-planet. Young Justa begins her story in late March 2293, while she and her father are in a Middle Eastern outpost and at the point where the general’s leader, the Pretext, has lost his throne to a particularly nasty underling, Selin. She quickly explains that she is with her father because they are in far from the capitol and all its perils, and that his real family is in the capitol. Her mother, a Syrian concubine to her father, was a member of one of the subject races and is now dead. Nevertheless, her father depends on the ministrations of this lonely daughter and his servants in order to maintain his command of the remote Antioch Station, as his physical health and his political credit have both greatly declined in recent years. Then Justa continues her story by describing the history of their gradual fall from grace, beginning in 2278, fifteen years previously, when she was only twelve. To this point, her father had served in the Middle East, as well as the asteroid belt, and was to end up for a time on Mars. So the novel is organized in the classic form of in medias res with a frame story, the majority of the narrative as a backstory, and the whole twenty-or-so-year adventure neatly tied up with a return of Justa and her father, General Black, along with his loyal retainers, to the quiet life of private citizens in 2323. And the author has thoughtfully provided historical context by titling each chapter with the year in which it starts.

The opening of this novel is dramatic in that it is both recognizable, a general shopping for military vehicles from local sources, and distancing, as the vehicles are mostly inadequate. They are damaged by a kind of nanovirus that eats metal and that was introduced during a previous military campaign. All devices with metal parts are being gradually destroyed as the civilization itself, once interplanetary in nature, begins to decline. In fact, the novel closes in 2323 when Justa, her father, and a few of his retainers have made it back to Earth on one of the last transports from Mars and many thousands of others who had been on the moon, Mars, and in the asteroid belt are stranded when the metal transports they rely on finally disintegrate. One given of both Justa’s society and those she visits with her father is that women are devalued, and Justa, an educated and talented woman, must help her father—reading his letters, helping him with strategy and finances—in the background. The novel is full of references to the primitive practices of warring nations, such as near the end of the novel, where she relates the actions of her father’s erstwhile enemy (with her help, her father defeats him). Selin, described in the most unflattering terms as someone who

delights in arranging assassinations and executions, focused his attention on the Americas after he was defeated by General Black on the worldwide arena. One of his acts was to punish those who opposed his rise to the throne or were merely suspected of doing so. And thus, “In the countryside around Garden City (the capital) he put to death thousands of indigenous farmers as he thought the members of his clan should own the land” (227). Apparently this also eased some of his frustrations for no longer being able to attach China because the declining navy could no longer rely on any metal ships or ordnance.

The author obviously patterned his views of government, leadership, and war after popular views of Roman history; in fact, Justa quotes from Roman texts as she describes the misadventures of her father and her former society. In the end, she is happy to work with Samuel, who they meet as they first enter his city, to live in relative obscurity, and to run a little coffee shop for a living in Amsterdam, which she describes as a human anthill. She also marries Jon, at the advanced age of thirty, and in another reflection on received knowledge about the last days of Rome, she watches her family retainers succumb to the new religion of Christianity, which has begun to reassert itself, at least in Europe.

I am not sure that retelling the fall of Rome, with planetary colonies and nanoviruses, through the voice of a general's daughter is enough to inject new interest into a very old story, but it is still an entertaining story told from an unusual perspective, and it should interest science fiction readers who enjoy considering human culture as a succession of wars and rulers. Justa's observations transformed the story into a relaxing page-turner. Judson's novel fits well into an enduring SF niche.

Of Love and Other Monsters

Ritch Calvin

Vandana Singh. *Of Love and Other Monsters*. Conversation Pieces Vol. 18. Seattle: Aqueduct, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-933500-16-4. 76 pp. \$9.00.

The novella *Of Love and Other Monsters* by Vandana Singh is the eighteenth volume in Aqueduct Press's Conversation Pieces. Although Singh has had short pieces published before (*So Long Been Dreaming*, *Polyphony*, *Strange Horizons*), this is her first book in the United States. A collection of her short fiction was scheduled to be published in late 2007 in India by Zubaan Books. Singh, born and raised in India, was there raised on a diet of both Indian and English myths and stories. She has a PhD in theoretical particle physics and lives in Boston, where she teaches physics and writes fiction. So it is no surprise that *Of Love and Other Monsters* begins with a metaphor drawn from physics, the soliton, a type of wave or pulse that does not change shape on collision with another soliton.

In the novella, Arun (whose name means “red” in Hindi) is a seventeen-year-old; he has the ability to read minds, and more significantly, he can meld them together into a “meta-mind.” He had been “rescued” from a burning building by a woman named Janani Devi (*devi* means “goddess”), and since he was orphaned in the fire, he has been raised by her as well. He has no memo-

ries, however, of anything before the fire, and consequently, he feels ill at ease and rootless. Although she has none of Arun's capabilities, Janani is a “sensitive”; she is able to detect telepathic activity used around her. She tries to discourage Arun from using and developing his talent. Eventually, of course, another person with a similar ability, Rahul Moghe, “finds” him. Once this happens, Janani sends Arun packing.

On the lam and on his own, Arun practices reading, in both English and Hindi, and he discovers that writing has a similar ability to open up one's mind: “For the first time I realized that there were many ways to be a foreigner” (11). After Arun goes to school and becomes a software checker, he moves to New Delhi. There he becomes lovers with Manek and then Sheela; he seems to transcend traditional boundaries of gender and sexuality: “I decided... that rather than two sexes there were at least thirty-four. Perhaps ‘sex’ or ‘gender’ isn't right—perhaps a geographical term would be more appropriate—thirty-four climactic zones of the human mind!” (17). Later, he amends this theory: “I think it's like colors in a spectrum” (57–58).

When his software company sends him to the United States, he discovers, despite the “much touted individualism” of the States, widespread “similar belief systems and mental processes” (20). There he meets a fellow Indian, a postdoc in astrophysics, the soliton with whom he collides. Arun feels a strong attraction to Sankaran—of various kinds—and is reminded that one of the incarnations of the Hindu god Shiva is Ardhanarishwaram, half man, half woman. Despite a deep connection, when Sankaran's family arranges a marriage for him, he is bound to comply, even though it signals the end of his connection with Arun.

Eventually, Rahul Moghe sets a trap for Arun, and he falls right into it. He tells Arun, “You and I are one of a kind... both alien, both lost, both pretending to belong”; “You live in a dangerous place outside the boundaries humans create around themselves. Man-Woman. Mind-Body” (35). Through correspondence with Janani and conversations with Rahul, Arun discovers that he is not human after all, but an alien. Janani belongs to a network of humans who try to alter the aliens through a ritual of fire. Within Hindu practices, fire signals cleansing and rebirth—see, for example, the trial by fire imposed on Sita in the *Ramayana*. As a friend tells him, “whatever decision you make, you will still be you. Alien or human—those are just words, labels. You are what you are” (59).

The aliens had long ago colonized earth, but the colonizers had gone native and lost their sense of self. Rahul had come to earth to try to rediscover and resurrect the original minds. But when pondering Rahul's liberation or decolonization, Arun imagines the mitochondrion that has become an integrated part of the cell. “If you could offer a mitochondrion its freedom, would it take it?” (73).

Because of Singh's scientific background, the novella is filled with this kind of comparison. Yet despite this, the central premises of the book—telepathy and mind melding—remain unfounded in scientific or rational principles. But as with so many elements of the novella (sexuality, gender, alienation), that may well be the point. Nevertheless, *Of Love and Other Monsters* offers a beautiful and compelling tale of alienation and difference, of groundedness and transcendence. Arun possesses this atavistic alien ability (or it possesses him), which may just be another way of perceiving and tapping into the world around him.

Because of this ability, he is an alien in his own country. Once he moves to the United States, he is an alien there as well. Arun struggles with the question of allegiances, of assimilation, of rootlessness (and rootedness). But as Binodini tells him, “‘You’re not alone. [...] At least, not any more than anyone else’” (75).

Certainly Singh’s novella is not the first to imagine the alien as among us—see much of the New Wave for that. And Singh is not the first to imagine other conceptualizations of gender or sexuality. New Wave and feminist writers have done that as well. But Singh brings all of these together seamlessly and draws on another storytelling and mythological tradition not often seen in U.S./British science fiction. I have a strong hunch, though, that that will not be the case for long.

Rewired

Sandor Klapcsik

James Patrick Kelly and John Kessel, eds. *Rewired: The Post-Cyberpunk Anthology*. San Francisco: Tachyon Publications, 2007. Trade paper, xv + 425 pages, \$14.95, ISBN 1-892391-53-8.

The “humanist” background of the editors (who also published a slipstream anthology) and their introduction to *Rewired* make it clear that they want to go beyond the excessive technomania, body phobia, street culture, and posthuman point of view that occasionally characterized early cyberpunk. Kelly and Kessel argue that postcyberpunk “has become a literature for grownups” (389), probably because the science of computing has also come of age, generating “a remarkably rich jargon, and a shared culture to go with it” (Stross 263). Like other postcyberpunk texts, this anthology focuses on existing difficulties with the Internet (such as spamming and Trojans), biotechnology (genetically modified foods), and other everyday nightmares of the average computer user, such as upgrading, annoying system messages, and software licenses.

The (sub)genre is hardly “punk” anymore: hackers and street samurais are replaced by programmers (“sysadmins”) and social workers, while street life is supplemented by everyday life and virtual reality (VR) occasionally turns into a bureaucratic machinery (see Pat Cadigan’s orientation program in *Tea from an Empty Cup*). If hackers are portrayed, they appear not only as console cowboys or spy heroes, but as “meticulous, intelligent, mathematically and linguistically inclined obsessives. Far from diving in and out of your bank account details, they’re more likely to spend months working on a mathematical model of an abstraction that only another hacker would understand, or realise it was an elaborate intellectual joke” (Stross 263). The postcyberpunk characters, as Lawrence Person puts it, are “anchored in their society rather than adrift in it.”

The anthology includes veteran cyberpunk authors such as William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Pat Cadigan, and Paul Di Filippo. Although Gibson’s story does not present cyberspace or biotechnologically modified bodies, it is traditional, hard-core cyberpunk when it sticks to the surfaces of an urban subculture, presenting noninterpretative descriptions of murals and photographs. Other cyberpunk traits are the compressed, nonverbal,

movie script–like, descriptive prose; the references to avant-garde painters (Klee, Mondrian, Picasso); the garbage assembly (“Oxfam-Cubism”) that evokes “Burning Chrome” (the street finding its own uses for things); and the cardboard city in the beginning of *All Tomorrow’s Parties*. If, as Gibson indicates in an interview, he wanted to learn how to write a traditional story in *Count Zero*, he wanted to utterly forget that knowledge in “Thirteen Views of a Cardboard City.” Gibson’s experimental text resembles mainstream literature, becoming an inversion of *Krapp’s Last Tape*: while in Beckett’s drama, fragments of audio-recorded memories describe a human tragedy, here those of visual images do the same.

Michael Swanwick is a member of both cyberpunk and “humanist SF”; he coauthored “Dogfight” with Gibson (it appeared in *Burning Chrome*), and he wrote an essay, “A User’s Guide to the Postmoderns,” that set up the humanist–cyberpunk opposition. In his humorous story, an alternate history setting is populated by biotechnologically modified characters: a talking dog, a multiple-headed queen, autistic servants. The virtual gods have turned hostile and rampage if anyone uses a computer. Christopher Rowe also creates a bizarre, madcap future in which the national anthem might kill you if you are not a citizen, cars pine for and track down their owners, and garages need to be fed every morning. Paolo Bacigalupi might have created “spring-punk”: he describes a world after the energy contraction, in which fuel corporations are abolished but bioengineering companies rule, and kinetic energy created by hybrid animals and stored in springs is the only available power source.

A street-artist kid, his overprotective mother, a flooded, rainy New Orleans, and a society based on castes and tattoos feature in Elizabeth Bear’s “Two Dreams on Trains,” reviving cyberpunk’s shady, urban, *Blade Runner*–like landscapes. In Mary Rosenblum’s “Search Engine,” the sleuth of cyberpunk film noir investigates the data flow in a future world where chips record all details and AIs run the most complicated search programs, but PIs are still needed because “intuition mattered—the ability to look behind the numbers and sense the person behind them” (377). Film noir is also evoked by Paul Di Filippo, accompanied by Woody Allen’s absurd farces, in a world of reflections generated by the invention of cheap intelligent paper, the “proteo-pape.”

The psychological depth of the New Wave is no longer irreconcilable with cyberpunk; its complexity is revived, for example, in Gwyneth Jones’s “Red Sonja and Lessingham in Dreamland,” in which the female character’s alienation from society cannot be dissolved even by cyberspace therapy sessions. The postmodern loss of historicity is recapitulated in Pat Cadigan’s “The Final Remake . . .” a story presenting deteriorated song lyrics and idioms as well as a fragmented rock history, all the result of a cultural collapse after which the past can only be accessed through memories retained by biochemical genealogy.

Although the scientific background is usually based in realistically detailed if crackpot ideas, emotional, flesh-and-blood characters inhabit most stories. The humanist approach is clearly shown by the editors’ choice of Greg Egan’s “Yeyuka,” in which criticism of the West’s actions concerning the third world is highly tangible, and a bootlegged computer and unlicensed medical software play crucial roles. Criticism of postindustrial capitalism is also visible in Jonathan Lethem’s “How We Got

in *Town and Out Again*,” a rewriting of Horace McCoy’s *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?*

Reading Doctorow’s “When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth,” we will never know who has triggered the apocalypse that kills the majority of the population and spawns the “Distributed Republic of Cyberspace” (based on John Perry Barlow’s “Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”), in which the first prime minister finds no time to govern as a result of his everyday maintenance of Internet routers. We do find out in spades, however, about the lives of sysadmins, such as what their T-shirts say (“HELLO CTHULHU”), what they mean by PEBKAP (“Problem Exists Between Keyboard and Chair”), how they name their servers (after *Star Wars* and *Smurfs* characters) and their children (the kid’s name is “2.0,” but his nickname was “Beta Test” before birth).

In David Marusek’s “The Wedding Album,” the tribulations of the digital alter egos of a married couple and the almost surreal multiplication of selves create a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale of animated objects. The eternity of VR becomes a Dickian nightmare here, similar to Walter Jon Williams’s “Daddy’s World,” in spite of the positive aspects to Williams’s VR, such as the education programs that Jamie, the young character uses for his studies.

“Lobsters,” a story Charles Stross extended into the novel *Accelerando*, describes a postcapitalistic Europe, in which, much like Bruce Sterling’s Japan in “Maneki Neko,” life is based on bartering favors, thus portraying a near-future gift economy. At least, this is how the world is experienced by Manfred Mancx, a meme broker who lives by filing for patents on new inventions and crackpot ideas, and who sends the licenses later to free online sources. His freedom is based on state-of-the-art information, adrenalin rush, melatonin sleeps, “a constant burn of future shock” (231), Internet OD—yet he still has time to have an edible breakfast, go to a meatspace party, and enjoy a bottle of *geuze* (Belgian lambic beer).

Like in “Lobsters,” the overall question of Sterling’s “Bicycle Repairman” is whether to remain punk or to fit into society. Sterling’s ironic story describes the disillusioned postcyberpunk visions of the 1990s, when an outcast bike geek and a hippie hacker happily put up with politicians, even getting funded by them. The Futurist obsession with power finds a practical target here: “Politicians are hot! They have charisma. They’re glamorous. They’re powerful. They can really make things happen! Politicians get around. They know things on the inside track” (35).

The sixteen stories in this well-selected anthology undertake to provide insight into the future visions of three generations of cyberpunks. Although certain crucial writers (such as Neal Stephenson, Lewis Shiner, John Shirley, Melissa Scott, Richard K. Morgan) are missing, this can mostly be explained by Kelly and Kessel’s decision to limit the book to short stories. The detailed psychological and social backgrounds of characters are just as much tangible in the texts as the recent terms and issues of cutting edge technology: kernels, uptime, slashdotting, IRC, vcards, the Singularity. The short stories emphasize the interrelatedness of science, culture, and economy while they help us in “rethinking and extending [both] humanism” and technology (Luckhurst 11). Cyberpunk was always a hybrid, mixing film noir, anime, hard SF, postmodernism, hard-boiled detective fiction, avant-

garde, and underground punk culture. Postcyberpunk has been supplemented with psychology, social sensibility, and social criticism, all reinterpreted through the lens of (post)humanism.

Although the editors decline to conceive of cyberpunk as merely a “flavor” of SF (viii) and intend to revive the technorevolution, contemporary cyberpunk often manifests itself as a specific textual tendency instead of a unified and influential movement (Person; Butler). Even in the works of Stross and Doctorow, today’s “alpha cyberpunks” (389), the postcyberpunk overtone is intertwined with urban fantasy (Doctorow’s *Someone Comes to Town, Someone Leaves Town*), Lovecraftian horror, and British spy novel (Stross’s *The Atrocity Archives*), or Asimov’s robot stories and Orwellian dystopia (Doctorow’s “I, Robot”). Kelly and Kessel extract and concentrate the postcyberpunk flavor in an excellent anthology.

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Rolling Thunder

Doug Davis

John Varley. *Rolling Thunder*. New York: Ace Books, 2008. Cloth, 352 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-441-01563-4.

“*What a horrible book!* What a mean old man! He spends the whole book getting you to like this sweet little airhead, and then he does terrible things to her. Don’t you hate it when an author does that? I’m not reading any more of *his* books, I promise you!” So writes Podkayne—of Mars—in her book review of Robert A. Heinlein’s *Podkayne of Mars*. As far as minireviews go, this one is quite accurate, at least up to that last sentence. Of course, as Podkayne tells her readers in the opening paragraph of John Varley’s latest installment in his Mars family saga, she doesn’t like science fiction. Her distaste for the genre is understandable. Podkayne’s parents are the heroes of Varley’s previous Mars novel, *Red Lightning*, and named her after Heinlein’s battered heroine. By the time that Varley’s heroine gets around to reading her Heinlein, she has been thoroughly roughed up by the cosmos too. So has the rest of humanity, for that matter.

Rolling Thunder is the name of a bollixed three-year-long strategic bombing campaign waged by the U.S. Air Force and Navy during the Vietnam War. The wartime reference in Varley’s title is appropriate, considering how much Varley self-consciously draws from both Heinlein’s cold war-era fiction and

current events to plot out this novel and rain ruin on poor old terrestrial civilization. Varley has packed an incredible amount of plot and backstory into *Rolling Thunder*, making it a much faster-paced, wondrous, and unpredictable read than his previous grim installment in the future history of Mars's first family. This time around, Varley riffs through a number of narratives, devices, and themes that not only Heinlein used throughout his career, but that Varley himself has also used to great effect.

All Podkayne wants to do is finish her stint serving in the Mars navy and become a twenty-first-century diva, dazzling the solar system with her quirky repertoire of retro and avant-garde musical numbers. Podkayne gets her wish, but to achieve megastardom, she must be a stranger in a strange land, deal with suspended animation, explore big, dumb objects, make first contact, traverse an oppressive media landscape, survive an interplanetary war, witness apocalypse, and board a generation ship—among other doings. Podkayne visits so many dazzling, depressing, and awesome locales, on planet and off, and is subjected to so many different g forces that it is a wonder she can even stand up straight by book's end. In perhaps his greatest homage to Heinlein of all, Varley's Podkayne retains her good looks, indomitable humor, and positive attitude throughout her adventures. Podkayne, with her pluck and common sense, and Martian civilization itself, with its gung-ho laissez-faire attitude and frictionless multiculturalism, seem designed to stand as an inspiration for us all. When we see how people on Mars can compete in the marketplace yet care for each other, and how different races and ethnicities can unite in a homogenous whole and share a sense of identity, *it's almost like we're reading about a different planet....*

We need inspiration, it seems. As in *Red Thunder* and *Red Lightning*, Varley weaves the latest trends and events into his narrative. Downloading music is all the rage, Google is embedded in eyeballs, and Bed Bath and Way Beyond has colonized the moons of Jupiter. These innocuous developments add realist texture to Varley's narrative. Yet Varley turns to several current tragedies to drive *Rolling Thunder's* plot: global warming, the occupation of Iraq, and the travails of Britney Spears. Mars in Podkayne's time has become the supreme military power in the solar system, the sole possessor of squeezer and bubble technology, a pioneer in interplanetary exploration, and the last refuge of polite civilization. Earth, devastated by a massive terrorist attack in the previous book, is even more of a starving, illiterate, war-torn wreck, flooded by global warming, wracked by ongoing nuclear terrorism, cleft by divisions of wealth, and increasingly balkanized along religious lines. Varley's North America has become present-day Iraq: broke, fragmented, and barely working. Florida is underwater. And stardom, when it hits, strips the star of her privacy and takes the joy out of her art. Adding awesome and thoroughly indifferent aliens into this mix would be, as Podkayne puts it, a terrible thing. So here they come.

Varley's aliens are a new twist in this saga and allow him to return to a theme and a narrative effect that is far more his than Heinlein's: the insignificance of humankind in the face of a huge, indifferent, and profoundly unknowable universe. This theme undergirds his eight worlds stories from the 1970s in particular, endowing those superb stories with a sublimity that only the very best of science fiction can deliver. Varley's Invaders, past and present, reshape human destiny in a way that

makes human action look puny and human strife look pointless. The often glorious ways that humanity responds to its existential crisis of being disinherited from its planetary home fill his future worlds with new and intense joys—all worlds, that is, except earth. According to an interview with *Sci Fi Wire*, Varley is at work on the fourth installment in this saga, *Dark Lightning*, which will also star Podkayne, now at home in an expanding universe. I look forward to the next installment in Varley's somewhat implausible, always surprising, and ever-evolving Martian family saga. On the basis of the present volume's conclusion, I suspect that Varley is looking forward as well, this time at the looming course of American civilization in the here and now. Being famous is intolerable; being earthbound is deadly. Best to cut and run.

The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy

Rikk Mulligan

Ellen Datlow, ed. *The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. New York: Del Rey, 2008. Cloth, 416 pages, \$16, ISBN 978-0-345-49632-4.

In her preface to the *Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Ellen Datlow says that the selection of sixteen stories reflects the kind of fiction she published while with SCIFITION: "fantasy, science fiction, and a touch of horror." These stories run the gamut of speculative fiction, although they tend more towards alternate histories and the fantastic and an emphasis on the aesthetic or affective than stories of hard SF or sword and sorcery.

The collection opens with Jason Stoddard's intriguing "The Elephant Ironclads," both a coming-of-age story and an alternate history with a Native American nation struggling with the decision to become a nuclear power. Lucy Sussex's "Ardent Clouds" incorporates light SF with a nod to magical realism with the story of a photographer who specializes in volcanic eruptions and nearly dies getting her footage. Christopher Rowe's "Gather" has the feel of postapocalypse, while Elizabeth Bear's "Sonny Liston Takes a Fall" is an alternate history that will hold deeper meaning for boxing fans and historians. Nathan Ballingrud's "North American Lake Monster" plumbs the reactions and thoughts of the damaged psyche of a former prisoner and reflects them in a monstrous decomposing corpse on a lakeshore. Carol Emshwiller's "All Washed Up While Looking for a Better World" takes an attempt to escape the mundane and twists it into the story of her adventures on an island Gulliver would have found disturbing. "Special Economics" by Maureen F. McHugh is a particularly strong story that could be considered near-future as she considers the likely effects when capitalism clashes with communism when it rises in China. The visions of a performer form the basis for Richard Bowe's contemporary urban fantasy in "Aka St. Mark's Place."

The second half of the stories continue with Margo Lanagan's revision of the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale in "The Goosele," while Lavie Tidhar's "Shira" offers an alternative history set in the Middle East that is almost as frustrating as fascinating

because of its brevity. Barry N. Malzberg's "The Passion of Azazel" uses humor and kabbalic lore to fashion a talking goat golem and the role of the scapegoat. The touch of horror appears in Laird Barron's "The Lagerstätte," a story of despair and survivor's guilt, and also in "Gladiolus Exposed" by Anna Tambour, whose story of obsession ends on a very dark note. Jeffrey Ford's "Daltharee" is a science fantasy with its miniature bottle cities and shrinking rays. Pat Cadigan's "Jimmy" is the dark tale of an eleven-year-old's ability to "know" things, although whether it is given by supernatural or alien entities is as unclear as his fate. Last, Paul McAuley and Kim Newman offer a quirky and off-beat tale that mixes alien invasion, prisoner abuse, and voodoo in an odd little package in "Prisoners of the Action."

Ellen Datlow is a talented editor with deep insights into all of the facets of speculative fiction, as she has demonstrated in the Year's Best anthologies, as well as other collections of science fiction, horror, and fantasy. If there is any unifying theme in this collection, it is the feeling or experience of loss, especially those who bear the scars or must work through that loss. To some degree that loss is transmitted to the reader as some of the strongest stories hint at much more than they had space to deliver, especially the alternate histories of Stoddard and Tidhar. Several of the stories incorporate political commentary: Stoddard's and Tidhar's stories reflect postcolonial perspectives, while McAuley and Newman definitely provoke comparisons with U.S. policies and behavior concerning prisoners and enemy combatants since 2001. McHugh's consideration of the people's response to capitalism, especially capitalist exploitation, lends itself to a timely analysis of the influence and possible resistance to capitalism among the young in China; globalism versus Maoist nostalgia. Several of the stories are evocative and descriptive; they create moods that linger, providing an option for creative writing students to analyze and emulate. The range of stories and their tone might also support a meta-level reading of the selections and what they say about the current field of speculative fiction, especially through a collection that drops genre borders and incorporates the work of multiple nationalities who are scattered across the globe.

Extras

Thomas J. Morrissey

Scott Westerfeld. *Extras*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2007. Hardcover, 417 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 978-1-4169-5117-2.

Extras, Extras, read all about 'em!

It isn't every day that one gets to review the fourth book of a trilogy. So popular were Westerfeld's first three stories of youthful rebellion against dystopia—*Uglies*, *Pretties*, and *Specials*—that *Extras* has come along to make the trilogy a series. This fourth tale of life on earth three hundred years after the civilization of the Rusties—that's us—has collapsed unfolds in a Japanese city-state far from the Southern California setting of the first three novels. The heroine of the first three books, Tally Youngblood, reappears, but the focus is on fifteen-year-old Aya, whose quest for celebrity leads her to the discovery of mysterious clandestine industrial activity that just might threaten human

survival.

In this installment, the authoritarian regimes based on the domination of dim-witted party animals by ruthless doctors and their souped up specials—bionic enforcers with pointed teeth and violent tendencies—have given way to gentler politics that do not show quite the same environmental restraint that was a hallmark of their predecessors. Before the overthrow of the former system by Tally Youngblood and her coconspirators, the powers that were had dumbed down the masses by means of an operation that transformed them at age sixteen from genetically random uglies to carefully sculpted pretties. With a few notable exceptions, the pretties are vapid eye candy who would grow up to become *Pleasantville*-like suburbanites and, finally, aged crumbles. Their lack of curiosity and initiative is what, in the eyes of the city planners, keeps them from running roughshod over the planet and ending up like the defunct Rusties.

In Aya's world, instead of relying on brain surgery, the new leaders have developed a society based solely on celebrity. Each person can view his or her fame ranking by means of a direct feed to the visual cortex. For a teen like Aya, the goal is simple: become as famous as possible. The less adept remain "extras," the lower echelon who are merely accessories to the lives of those who really count. Preoccupied with social climbing and narcissism, the citizens have little time to despoil the environment. Even so, the carefully controlled city-states are gradually moving their boundaries beyond the limits set by the social architects who learned from the Rusties that economies based on growth mean death for the planet.

Westerfeld's series is rich with the tropes of YA dystopias. In so many of these books, young people live in regimented worlds made by adults who have no problem with invasive social or even biological engineering. The brain manipulation in Westerfeld's books plays the same role that chemotherapy plays in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. Family bonds are as weak as they are in Lowry's dystopia, and the life script of each individual is just as predictable. Like the hapless victims of Garth Nix's *Shade's Children* or Suzanne Weyn's *The Barcode Tattoo*, Westerfeld's teens are forever altered by a surgical procedure performed with something less than informed consent. In all of these books, developing teens are ultimately denied full human adulthood. Puberty is not the gateway to growth, but a transition into servitude. Lowry's characters are stunted by drugs that leave them in a perennial state of presexuality. Nix's are literally transformed into monstrous fighting machines. Weyn's world features a simple tattooing procedure that gives the authorities control over one's genes: make a false move or carry a negative trait, and you can easily be shut off for good. In these stories, and many like them, the trials and tribulations of puberty and adolescence are given metaphorical expression, but the prize—true adulthood—is elusive.

Wrecking the ecosystem is another recurring theme. M. T. Anderson's *Feed* and Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* and *Zenith* explore the impact of humanity's mindless stewardship of Earth. Either our poisons or human-induced global climate change will sink us. Consequently, the aim of Westerfeld's dystopians—protecting the environment—is a cause that resonates with contemporary calls for preventive action. It is a stance that young readers can appreciate, even if they cannot abide the suppression of individualism. Likewise, the vacuous partying that typifies all of

the post-Rusty societies we see might be attractive to some readers, although the fact that they are reading would suggest that it would get old fast, as it does for Tally Youngblood. Hence, this is a potentially seductive dystopia.

Extras reinforces the surface attractiveness of belonging to “society.” Aya’s goal is to get famous like her brother by “kicking stories”—that is, posting them on her world’s version of the Web. Becoming a famous kicker will elevate her social standing, enabling her to attend glitzier parties and to live in a more exclusive building. It will also lead her to discover the clandestine activity that she and her friends, and ultimately the legendary Tally Youngblood, will investigate. Like Tally before her, Aya will need to make some ethical choices that set her apart from the parasitic cultural icons from whom she so earnestly seeks acceptance.

One of the great strengths of all of these books is the evocation of place. The evolving post-Rusty world is drawn with precision. All of the books give the reader the feel of teen paradise gone wrong. Like the previous three titles, *Extras* features the high-tech hoverboards, the flying version of today’s skateboards and snowboards, but in the media-mad world of Aya’s city, the air is also filled with automated flying cameras that doggedly besiege anyone with a high social rank. Many of Aya’s contemporaries are “surge monkeys,” people who have had their appearance altered through radical cosmetic operations that leave some looking like characters from Japanese anime. To today’s tech-savvy youth, this world should not look all that futuristic.

Westerfeld is a strong storyteller, which is why some readers might not like the book’s anticlimactic ending. The surprising conclusion is probably less dramatic than most readers will expect. Certainly it opens Aya’s eyes to a level of dissatisfaction with the way things are that transcends anything she might have suspected, and it may well lead to a fifth book in the series, but whether it is totally successful is open to question. *Extras* is a worthy successor to the Ugliers “trilogy.” Whether this fourth title is the finale remains to be seen.

FICTION MINIREVIEWS

Mariah Mundi: The Midas Box

Nolan Belk

G. P. Taylor. *Mariah Mundi: The Midas Box*. New York: Putnam Juvenile 2008. Hardcover, 292 pages, \$17.99, ISBN 978-0399243479.

In *Mariah Mundi: The Midas Box*, Mariah Mundi begins his life after the orphanage, fighting magical and human foes in the dangerous Prince Regent hotel. G. P. Taylor’s first Mariah Mundi book works like a Victorian adventure novel, exploring issues of heroism amidst the huge gothic Prince Regent. In addition to Mariah, the novel follows the adolescent girl Sacha and the men Perfidious Albion, Isambard Black, and Jack Charity on a mission to save kidnapped adolescent boys and the magical artifacts, the Midas Box and the Panjandrum, from the clutches of the sea witch Monica and the evil mastermind Gormenberg.

As Mariah uncovers more of the magical world inside and

around the Prince Regent, each solved mystery leads to new, more challenging ones, and easy judgments fall to the demands of a complicated plot structure. Taylor has quickly built a reputation as an author of adolescent adventure with the novels *Shadowmancer* and *Wormwood*. With its Bureau of Antiquities detectives, young adventurers, evil creatures, and magical elements, this British adolescent adventure novel combines H. Rider Haggard, Jules Vern, and Edgar Allan Poe with a side of Charles Dickens and a dash of Lewis Carroll. *The Midas Box* shows Taylor’s trademarks: a remarkable level of detail along with a genuine mastery of the conventions of the genre. Mariah Mundi and Sacha prove to be interesting subjects for the formation of adolescent identity in the face of moral quandaries along the lines of Harry Potter and Lyra Silvertongue.

The novel is a well-written, fun, fast-paced adolescent adventure. Considering that Mariah’s stories have just begun, this novel could stand as the foundation for a remarkable series, and as such deserves a place in any library.

Out of the Wild

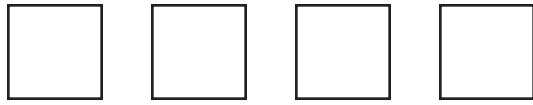
Nolan Belk

Sarah Beth Durst. *Out of the Wild*. New York, Razorbill 2008. Hardcover, 272 pages, \$15.99. ISBN 978-1595141590.

In *Out of the Wild*, the sequel to the E. B. White Read-Aloud–nominated *Into the Wild*, Julie Marchen fights to keep the Wild from taking over the Earth. Sarah Beth Durst’s *Out of the Wild* follows young Julie, the daughter of Rapunzel and her fairy-tale Prince, on a quest to rescue her father and defeat the rapacious Wild, the place where fairy-tale creatures are trapped in their stories. The Wild is able to enter the world and grow whenever true fairy-tale events occur, and Julie’s father—a true prince—creates havoc as he travels from Massachusetts to Cinderella’s castle in Disneyland, fighting numerous fairy-tale creatures along the way.

Julie begins the novel trying to save her father but soon becomes a true hero herself, saving the world by enabling a ideal union of Earth and Wild. With echoes of Disney films and Narnia, this children’s fantasy novel seems most like Bill Willingham’s comic series *Fables* edited for children. Although Durst places her characters in well-worn fairy-tale situations on purpose, the use of a young girl as hero is a significant move, as is the success of a union of Earth and Wild rather than a defeat of the Wild.

Along the way, Julie learns lessons about life including that parents can be trapped in their society and gender-defined roles, and that she shouldn’t limit herself according to those roles. These lessons can certainly teach young readers to work to defeat such roles, making the novel a valuable addition to any child’s reading list. In addition to being fun reads for their audience, Durst’s first two novels work well as an antidote to the sexism present in much children’s fantasy—and may ultimately deserve study as such.



Media Reviews

Beowulf

Kristin Noone

Beowulf. Dir. Roger Zemeckis. Perf. Ray Winstone. Paramount Pictures and Shangri-La Entertainment. 2007.

“I am ripper and tearer and slasher and gouger. I am the teeth in the dark and the talons in the night... Mine is strength and lust and power. I am Beowulf!” proclaims the hero as he introduces himself in the 2007 retelling of the epic poem, a revisioning that is less concerned with fidelity than it is fascinated by possibilities. This adaptation does not faithfully recreate the *Beowulf* of high-school English classes, but it never intends to do so, as *Beowulf*’s introductory lines make clear. Instead, the film exuberantly embraces new potential within the legendary tale and without it, invoking the arts of computer animation and motion capture to give form to the ancient Danish world.

The film rewrites its source material in dramatic ways, departing from the original poem at certain key points—Grendel, for instance, is Hrothgar’s son and dirty little secret, and *Beowulf* himself falls victim to the promises of seduction and glory embodied in Angelina Jolie as Grendel’s mother. (In his introduction to the script book, cowriter Roger Avary mentions that these elements of the plot came out of questions he asked while reading the poem in high school: Who was Grendel’s father? Where is the proof that *Beowulf* actually killed Grendel’s mother?) But although this dark intertwining of the poem’s heroes with its villains is certainly not a purist’s reading, the film does succeed in creating *humans*. This *Beowulf* is a flawed man who has made mistakes. He has given in to his desires. But he is also capable of redeeming himself. This kind of hero appeals to a more modern audience—he embodies the idea, fundamental to fantasy and science fiction everywhere, that change is possible, on a personal level as well as a societal one. *Beowulf* has the potential to save himself, to make right the wrong choices he has made. He is, of course, a hero because he manages to do so in the end, even at the cost of his own life.

The film explores possibilities on the technical front as well. Each cast member was filmed using motion capture (used, for example, in *The Polar Express* and for Peter Jackson’s *Golum*) involving 244 cameras that recorded the movements of the actors; this also allowed for a wider range of camera motion and more unusual shots. Roger Avary, clearly on board with the film’s enthusiasm for new ideas, also has observed that the motion capture technology allowed the actors to fall deeper into their performances, as they were unencumbered by worries about hitting marks or finding proper lighting. The animation is extremely detailed, especially in major characters such as *Beowulf* himself, and it is a large step forward from the somewhat eerie children of *The Polar Express*. This may be partly the result of the animators’ concern with replicating the actors who

provided voice and motion. *Beowulf* is particularly impressive. The women in the film are less so, coming across as slightly too smooth and perfect (Queen Wealtheow, as other reviewers have noted, does bear a somewhat unfortunate resemblance to the Queen of Far, Far Away from the films in the *Shrek* franchise). The humans in the film—the monsters need not appear natural, after all—are still not quite perfectly lifelike, particularly in small movements such as speaking lips, but they are closer than what we have seen before.

The 3D version of *Beowulf* emphasizes the quality of animation even more strongly, as well as the filmmakers’ commitment to embracing all visual possibilities. Occasionally a shot seems to exist only to call attention to the 3D, such as spears that fly directly into the audience, but this is not necessarily a negative because it allows the audience to enter into the world of the film more completely than usual. On the less technological front, the script, written by Roger Avary (*Pulp Fiction*) and Neil Gaiman (*Stardust*), not only brings writers from different genres together, but also incorporates bits of Old English from the poem, exploring the possibilities of the text as the film embraces the potential of computer graphics.

Despite the few animation flaws and the movement away from the source text, Zemeckis’s *Beowulf* would provide an excellent way to bring the Old English epic back into the classroom—perhaps not as a replacement text, but certainly as a work that raises questions in its own right. A discussion of heroism (and, in some ways, antiheroism) would certainly be informed by *Beowulf*’s evolution from an honest warrior to a man who deliberately hides his fatal mistakes. The film’s concern with truth, storytelling, and self-creation is also ripe material for analysis, as is the central question of possibilities and potentials that informs not only the film but also its production. The technologies of the film, as another step forward in the area of computer animation, would also certainly be of interest to anyone intrigued by the field.

“We have heard,” the original epic poem begins, “of the glory of the Spear-Danes,” and despite the liberties it has taken, this *Beowulf* captures the glory at the heart of the tale beautifully. Viewers of the film will experience a visually rich and exuberant piece that, although not without flaws, nevertheless understands magnificence, heroism, and the realm of possibility.

Bioshock

Javier A. Martínez

Bioshock. Xbox 360. 2K Games, 2007.

Bioshock is a first-person shooter (FPS) that immerses the player in the underwater city of Rapture, a failed social experiment inspired by Ayn Rand’s philosophy of objectivism. Progressing through the game, one encounters some familiar SF tropes: genetic modification, alternate history, the underwater city, the dystopia. Although none of these is particularly new to SF audiences, each is used with great style in a story that is intriguing and far more intelligent than many might expect from a piece of interactive entertainment.

As the game opens, Jack, the main character whose identity

the player assumes, finds his plane crashing into the ocean. Lucky to be alive, he swims to a lighthouse and finds a bathysphere that takes him to the ruins of Rapture. Once there, the player opens communication with Atlas and Andrew Ryan, the mad genius who founded the city. Atlas gives the player directions and goals to meet, which in turn move the plot forward as the player comes up against numerous challenges, in the form of enemies and puzzles. As the player moves through the game, much is revealed about the history of Rapture and its eccentric founder, as well as why the city has collapsed. Jack finds tape recorders everywhere, and the city's history is narrated by various speakers, all of whom provide details about the world the player explores. In a nutshell, what began as a haven for scientists and freethinkers who did not want to be limited by conventional morality quickly collapsed into a power struggle between two camps. Ryan and his supporters—who sought to control the distribution and development of ADAM, an underwater parasite that develops new stem cells in its host's body and grants enhanced abilities—were challenged by mobster Frank Fontaine and his black market in plasmids, specific enhancements generated by a combination of ADAM and EVE, a serum that allows the plasmids to function. Ultimately, Rapture descended into class warfare, and its citizens were driven mad by their modifications.

Rapture is populated by these folks, now referred to as Splicers, and menacing Big Daddies, hulking creatures wearing old-fashioned diving suits with a giant drill in place of an arm, who guard the Little Sisters, adolescent girls who have the ability to harvest ADAM from dead bodies. Fortunately for the player, Jack has access to numerous weapons: wrenches, pistols, shotguns, machine guns, and grenade launchers as well as more exotic armaments, all of which are the standard fare of the FPS. Upgrades are also available, not only to the weapons, but also to Jack himself. ADAM and EVE give Jack the ability to enhance his body with plasmid-based powers, including the ability to generate electrical, flame, ice, and telekinetic attacks. Part of the challenge of the game is learning which weapons and attacks work against which enemies while playing through the game.

One of the standard fares of video games is to ramp up the difficulty as players progress through different levels. That same approach is used here. What makes *Bioshock* an engaging play is the moral choices the player is forced to make, the consequences of which affect gameplay. Each level of the game—and each level is some part of the decaying city that the player must explore—has a given number of Little Sisters that must either be harvested or rescued. To harvest the child is to kill her, but the player gains ADAM and hence additional strength and abilities. Atlas urges Jack to kill the children, as the extra ADAM will increase his strength, thereby giving him and the player a better chance of surviving. Opposing Atlas is Dr. Tennenbaum. She shows Jack how to rescue the children by removing the parasite that has turned them into collectors of ADAM. Rescuing the children means gaining less ADAM, but the doctor promises Jack something special in exchange for letting the children live. This game mechanic makes *Bioshock* into a moral sandbox, a term used in gaming to describe an immersive world where the player's choices have specific effects on gameplay mechanics and narrative resolution. *Bioshock* is by no means the first game to use this approach; other recent Xbox 360 examples include

Crackdown and *Condemned: Criminal Origins*. But *Bioshock* uses this technique very effectively, creating an emotional bond between the player and the world being explored.

I decided to rescue the Little Sisters, an action that results in an animated cut scene that shows Jack lifting the terrified and angry child, her face contorted and her eyes glowing red, then placing a hand on her head and calming her as she is purged of her parasite. This quasi-religious image concludes with the child thanking the player and then running off, scurrying into one of the many portholes scattered throughout the levels. One cannot harvest or rescue a Little Sister without engaging a Big Daddy. Confrontations with the character are always violent, and it must be killed if the player is to harvest or rescue the children and thereby advance the game. The violent battles with the Big Daddies, which very often leave your character depleted and seriously wounded, are effectively offset by the emotional, but never melodramatic, moment when Jack cures the girls. Because *Bioshock* is an FPS, the player sees all this through the eyes of Jack. His actions are the player's actions, his hands the player's hands. The choice to save or kill the children viscerally enhances the game and leads to the player's deep investment in it, just as readers find themselves invested in a quality work of fiction. The player's moral choices determine the resolution of the game, with two different endings available depending on whether Jack harvests or rescues the girls. *Bioshock* also contains the obligatory plot twist that effectively develops the game's theme of how our choices determine our identity. Dr. Tennenbaum's unstated promise is also finally made known.

Bioshock separates itself from many other video games by its story. It is not easy to discern what has happened in Rapture. Players have to make the effort to piece together hints and bits of information that are revealed over the course of the game. Like a good book, only after completion does the player come to a better understanding of the story they have just experienced. Once can play *Bioshock* purely for the challenge and stunning visuals, yes, but SF readers will find much to admire in both the quality of the writing and the elegant manner in which Rapture is presented. *Bioshock* actively builds its world, and it is a world that is revealed gradually over the course of the game (an experienced player can complete it in twelve to fifteen hours). At the same time, *Bioshock* is also a sustained critique of by-your-bootstraps politics and the Heinleinesque fantasies that have informed SF over the years.

In playing *Bioshock*, one begins to appreciate why the video game is a medium worthy of serious study. I recommend it strongly to people who are somewhat familiar with FPS games. Novice players may find it intimidating even at the lowest difficulty setting, given the complex weapon system and the aggressive enemies. And although the story can sometimes become a bit convoluted, it remains a quality SF narrative that readers familiar with the genre will enjoy on many different levels.

Devi

Ritch Calvin

Shekhar Kapur. *Shekhar Kapur's Devi: Namaha*. Vol. 1. New York: Virgin Comics, 2007. \$14.99. ISBN 978-1-934413-00-5.

Shekhar Kapur. *Shekhar Kapur's Devi*. Vol. 2. New York: Virgin Comics, 2007. \$14.99. ISBN 978-1-934413-06-7.

The *Devi* comics are one of the early titles from Virgin Comics. As the famed film director (*Elizabeth*) and creator of *Devi*, Shekhar Kapur, tells it, no one save Richard Branson was willing or able to see the market possibilities of an indigenous Indian pop culture. Whenever Kapur and his team pitched the idea to investors, they were told that they were better off working as outsourced talent for Western companies. Finally, though, Branson took the risk, and Shakti Comics, an imprint of Virgin Comics, was born.

According to the *Devi* home page (<http://www.virgincomics.com/minisites/devi/devi/html>), eleven installments of the comic have been published, the first ten of which have been collected into two volumes as graphic novels. The narrative centers on Devi (“goddess”), a female warrior called forth to save the mortal world from evil. The first installment, “Bhairavi” (“terrifying beauty”), tells a mythic tale of Lord Bala, the son of Bodha, king of the gods. Bala had grown tired of his limited role among the gods and left to hold dominion over the mortal realm. As he takes up arms against the gods, Bodha creates Devi to defeat him. She is a female warrior who wears a bikini and a bindi made of fire. She defeats him, but the gods will not allow her to destroy him. In the second installment, “Dwijia” (“twice born”), the narrative jumps forward to present-day India, in the city of Sitapur, which labors under the corrupt gang lord, Iyam, who was once a favored general of Bala. Lord Bala hires the services of one of the most successful assassins, Kratha. Instead of a fire bikini, Kratha prefers a form-fitting—and form-revealing—leather suit. Bala hires Kratha to kill Tara Mehta, Iyam’s socialite girlfriend. Unbeknownst to her, Tara is the Devi in waiting, a reincarnation waiting to happen. In the meantime, an ancient council called the Durapasya believes it is time to call Devi forth, and after kidnapping and drugging her, it plans to sacrifice the mortal body of Tara in order to resurrect Devi. But the alcoholic cop Rahul Singh has been following the gang lord Iyam, and he is drawn into the matrix of forces. In the climax at the Citadel, he tries to save Tara from sacrifice. Although Devi emerges, things do not go according to plan. Instead of destroying the mortal form of Tara, Devi inhabits her. She is now Devi/Tara, and she has no intention of following the plans of Durapasya. Instead, she argues that Rahul was the only one who fought for Tara as Tara, and at the close of volume 1, she walks off into the sunset with Rahul’s unconscious body in her arms.

While installments two through four introduce the various characters and parties, installment five, “Aagaman” (“beginning”) tells of the reincarnation of Devi. As Devi awakens, she is acknowledged and given blessing by many other gods from a variety of mythic traditions. The war god Mars grants her skill and strength; Cupid assures that all will fall in love with her and ensures that she herself will not fall victim. However, Devi is

also blessed by the god Kapital, who grants her that “labour and capital” will be hers “in plenty.” Finally, the god “Interface-Messenger” promises her “perfect PR, killer charisma, terrific trips and the coolest catchphrases.” Old boss, meet the new boss....

Volume 2 (installments six through ten of the comic) shifts focus. With the cosmogony firmly established and the conflicts between gods and mortals, sacred council and goddess, and good and evil aligned, volume 2 begins with the struggle of the mortal Tara to come to terms with the goddess within. In the introduction, Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra suggests that Devi/Tara’s internal conflict of the “divine and mortal forces tearing her apart” as “a conventional story of a conflicted woman set in a great epic fantasy.” The five chapters here, “Samsara,” “Sandeha,” “Aks,” “Yudh,” and “Samvara” (meaning, respectively, “the world at large,” “doubt,” “reflection,” “war,” and “the slaying”) represent the growing battle between the evil Bala and Devi/Tara over the location and control of a treasure that holds the key to unlimited power. Once the battle is over, Devi’s father, Bodha, returns to bring Devi home. Her task is at an end. But somewhat predictably, Devi decides to remain: “There is still so much to do. I promised a man I would heal his world. He trusted me and lost his life.” As Chopra notes, this incarnation of Devi is not on a “quest to exorcize the demons of a city but those of the hapless citizens that populate it.”

In a graphic novel, one of the primary concerns for readers is the visual element, and in this *Devi* excels. Visually, nearly every page is striking, and the artists provide a great deal of variety in styles and colors. The characters are well drawn, with attention to detail. In volume 1, the artwork is credited to Mukesh Singh. In volume 2, only the cover art is by Singh; the remainder of the artwork in the volume is credited to Aditya Chari and Saumin Patel. The difference is appreciable. Of course, because it is a graphic novel, and because it is trying to tap into an existing market, it offers not one but two striking female leads who reveal a great deal of skin. Certainly they are not as sexually explicit as, say, the *Sandman* series by Neil Gaiman—indeed, any number of Western graphic novels. In the Sketch Book that appears at the end of volume 1, Kapur notes that Devi wears looser clothing to reflect an Indian aesthetic and value; she sports seven spots along her arm that reflect seven loci of energy; and finally, her flaming bindi signifies that she is living energy—and it reflects her state of agitation. Kratha, on the other hand, because she is “less divine and more lethal,” is deliberately more seductive and thus less clothed. So while the writers clearly try to subvert some of the traditional roles and stereotypes, they simultaneously perpetuate some others. Although Bala, in his first encounter with Devi, is offended that the pantheon would send a woman to do battle with him and mocks what he perceives as a weakness in her sex, the Durapasya, a council entirely composed of men, has no problem at all with a woman as savior.

As a teaching tool, the *Devi* graphic novels have several strengths. Students at institutions with diverse student bodies might well welcome a text based on a non-Western mythological system. But even in a school that does not have a large Southeast Asian demographic, these books represent elements of Indian culture and demonstrate ways in which certain universal values or beliefs cross cultural boundaries. And although the *Devi* graphic novels begin in a mythological time, they quickly move into contemporary times, and they illustrate the universal ways

in which struggles may transcend time and culture. We face the choices of good and evil. We struggle with doing the right thing. We contemplate the divine within. And in the end, we contemplate the limits of humanity.

Somewhere, a Cog Turns

Ed Carmien

Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles. C-2 Pictures and Warner Bros. 2008.

Once upon a time in the 1960s Harlan Jay Ellison wrote *Outer Limits* episodes “Soldier” and “Demon with a Glass Hand.” The former featured two soldiers sent back in time by bright beams of light, the latter a time-traveling robot pursued by time-traveling aliens, representatives of warring factions.

In 1984 James Cameron made a little movie called *The Terminator*. This was after blue jeans but before *all* popular culture began devouring itself and excreting sequels. Human soldier Kyle Reese is sent back in time to rescue Sarah Connor from the clutches of a Terminator determined to slay the mother of John Connor, the human general close to defeating Skynet, the AI responsible for The End of the World As We Know It. This action movie was to become a hybrid cult hit—cultish, but with a good budget and, of course, the Governator played the heavy.

Harlan Ellison received and continues to receive credit for his inspirational works, and good karma ensued. The success of *The Terminator* (T1) led to James Cameron’s *Terminator: Judgment Day* (T2) in 1991. The mythology was carried forward on the shoulders—or, more correctly, the steel arm and broken CPU—of the wrecked Terminator from T1. These twonkies form the basis of research into AI by the Cyberdyne company, led by nice-guy family man Dr. Miles Bennett Dyson. Action-movie high jinks ensue as Skynet tries to eliminate John Connor (now a rebellious young teen) using a nifty new T-1000 Terminator; his defender is a reprogrammed original Series 800 model T-101 Terminator, played by a slightly older Arnold Schwarzenegger. Meanwhile, Sarah Connor, hearing of Dyson’s research, resolves to kill him and destroy his research in a bid to prevent Skynet from being created, primarily to avoid the nuclear Judgment Day of the title.

Of interest here is a shift in time-travel philosophy, from what is apparently a single-universe concept in T1 to a multiple or shifting universe concept in T2—a laudable idea, as “winning” in T1 still leads to the death of billions of humans in nuclear war and its aftermath before ultimate human victory under John Connor’s leadership.

About now, gentle reader, you’re no doubt thinking, “But isn’t this review about *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*? What’s all this?” In reply I must regretfully say—not yet to the television we shall go. For upon the waters did the Terminator franchise throw three novels by S. M. Stirling, novels that pick up the story soon after the events of T2. The Connors move to South America; Sarah Connor runs a trucking business, and John Connor, now sixteen, is a star pupil at a military academy. In inimitable Stirling fashion, Sarah meets the human face model for the Arnold Terminators; this former antiterrorist agent soon joins

the fight against the resurgent and soon to be nascent Skynet, who has sent a sure-nuff cyborg (human with brain augmented by machine) back through time to shepherd Cyberdyne, reconstituted through offsite backups, through the process of inventing Skynet.

More action high jinks ensue, and though the T franchise went a different direction with the movie *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (T3), the events of Stirling’s *T2: Infiltrator* are entirely consistent with the mythology of the first two films. The workmanlike novel includes (drum roll, please) Jordan Dyson, an FBI agent determined to find the woman he sees as having murdered his brother, Miles. While Stirling plants the seeds of future antitech baddies (who somehow come in on the side of the AI in later books, a remarkable feat of mental agility by people who are essentially Luddites), the main baddie here (an “I-950”) manufactures a number of T-101 model Terminators using CPUs sewn into her abdomen for the purposes of time travel (“only living flesh can go through”) who are fodder for the heroes throughout the novel. Of possible significance here is Stirling’s view that time travel in the T franchise allows for individuals to push against the known future, but, like rubber, the future pushes back. Skynet appears to be inevitable; whether it succeeds in making *Homo sapiens* extinct is unknown.

Ah. *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (T:SCC). Also set after the events of T2, the series picks up with Sarah hitting the road once again, turning her back on a small-town paramedic who has just proposed to her. John is in high school, so some years have passed since Cyberdyne was destroyed. After settling into a new small town in the west (John complains he’ll need all new clothes, and cowboy boots as well), a substitute teacher turns out to be a Terminator sent to assassinate the future leader of the human resistance. Action high jinks ensue; once again, a character in the world of T says, “Come with me if you want to live.”

Throughout the TV series, there is a considerable amount of attention paid to the mythos. Details change—Sarah is a brunette, her ex-psychiatrist has a full head of hair—but “historical” accuracy is high. For example, the friendly Terminator, model number unknown, has blue glowing eyes, in contrast to the traditional red robot eyes of the Series 800 “Arnie” Terminators. Such eyes are a detail from T3, in which the Terminatrix also has blue glowing eyes. And speaking of eyes, Sarah and John do indeed have the same shade of peepers, as Kyle Reese tells Sarah in T1.

Their savior is the Terminator glaufully dubbed “Summernator” by fans of the “girl in the box” of *Firefly* fame. The Connors are once again on the run, this time pursued by a Terminator (now a Series 888) with a name—Cromartie. The show goes on to a mix of drama and action, and owes an awareness of plot depth to Joss Whedon’s work in serial television. Sarah Connor—still in charge, despite her quickly maturing son’s future role as savior of humanity—vows to prevent Skynet from being created. Various ways and means are put to use in pursuit of this goal, but notable here is the presence of a black FBI agent, James Ellison, who fervently hunts the Connors. James Ellison. Jordan Dyson. Aside from the obvious homage to the real Ellison, could there be a link to Stirling’s work?

If the blizzard of detail hasn’t put you to sleep yet, on we go to the metal of the matter. Somewhere a cog is turning. Somewhere there is a classical understanding of what science fiction is, or at

least can be. In T:SCC's "Heavy Metal," Cromartie's relentless pursuit of a new human disguise for his chrome combat chassis leads him to a scientist who, apparently awed by this killing machine of the future, provides him with new synthetic flesh and skin, a disguise essential to Cromartie's main mission. In the standard show-closing monologue, Sarah Connor evokes J. Robert Oppenheimer, who quoted the *Bhagavad Gita* upon witnessing the first atomic explosion: "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds." I much prefer Kenneth Bainbridge's reply to Oppenheimer, also quoted in this episode: "Now we are all sons of bitches."

Here we have a classic SF theme, echoing from *Frankenstein* to today: we are the instrument of our own destruction. Science fiction's take on this theme is, as Gunn would say, part of the literature of change that is SF. This theme is introduced in "The Turk," a chess-playing computer with moods; Sarah burns the house in which the computer (a home-built creation) resides. But the computer is rebuilt and becomes a McGuffin in its own right—eventually, its creator is killed in an attempt to stave off Skynet's arrival on the world scene.

Although this taste is satisfying, it is only a taste of the SF we crave. In other moments, somewhere there is a round peg being jammed into a square hole. In "Gnauthi Seauton," Cromartie's headless torso reanimates in a junkyard, kills a man, takes his head and puts it inside a motorcycle helmet, dresses in the dead man's clothes, and then makes its way some distance to the location of its own chrome dome. This sort of nonsense is no doubt done to provide a continuing threat to the otherwise safe-for-now Connors, but it prompts SF fans to shake their heads in disgust. Where's the internal consistency? How is a blind bit of machinery supposed to manage all these sleights of hand?

Luckily, such egregious moments are rare, while that moving cog kicks in every now and again, bringing SF themes to the fore. Another, the classic "what is human" so effectively expressed by *Battlestar Galactica's* current incarnation, shows up in T:SCC. In Harlan Ellison's *Outer Limits* episode "Demon with a Glass Hand," the time traveler of the title learns to his dismay that he is a robot, not a man. "The Demon Hand" of T:SCC shows the Summernator, Cameron, dancing alone in her room, for no discernible reason other than, perhaps, she was told "Dance is the hidden language of the soul." This is an important thematic link with T:SCC's literary grandparent.

The series offers other science fictional touches, as well: in flashbacks (which are, in the cunning madness of time travel, also flash-forwards), details about other human agents sent back (it is said) by John Connor are revealed. In one such revelation, a self-confessed creator of Skynet conveys to soon to be traveling through time Derek Reese (yes, related) his guilt and his wish to be killed in the past before he can contribute to the near-extinction of humanity. Ordinary logic does not prevail (as it fails to prevail in Heinlein's "All You Zombies"): the individual who wishes to be killed in the past is alive in the future—and as this is the Turk's creator, who collects a fatal bullet in "Queen's Gambit," he's also dead in the past. Ow. Explain that to the average TV viewer.

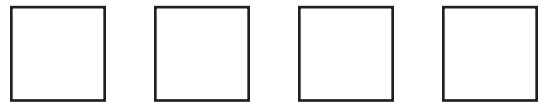
SF on TV—often awful, sometimes good, rarely great—is best when it speaks the language of SF we in the business take for granted. T:SCC isn't great—not yet—but it is good, thanks to that cog out there somewhere, turning over and pushing forward

real SF ideas and themes. For it to be great, the round-peg-in-square-hole stuff will have to stop.

It is a pity the show has a modest budget to play with; fans of *Battlestar Galactica* will probably observe that BSG seems to spend more money on visuals. In one climatic action scene, for example, an FBI SWAT team faces a Series 888, but the end result is a swimming pool, some artistic shots of SWAT guys falling into the pool, some red ink. . . .

On the other hand, the more this forces the writers to continue to speak the real language of SF, rather than rely on gaudy special effects, the better the show will be, assuming Fox picks up the writer's strike-limited (only nine episodes) show for another season. This is probably counter to popular wisdom, which prefers less SF introspection and more gee-whiz scenes that are the contemporary equivalent of the General Lee leaving Rosco mired in yet another pond of pig excrement. Alas, the pratfalls of popular culture are always with us.

I personally hope this grandchild of Harlan Ellison's dangerous vision of an outer limit of humanity's relationship with technology gets picked up for more episodes. It has the advantage of apparently close relations with its cousins, the three Stirling novels, but I have my doubts. Will the network that canceled *Firefly* stand by this iteration of the T mythos? One can always hope. So long as the cog turns, I figure Judgment Day can be held in abeyance, until, perhaps, this extrusion of popular culture is itself consumed and shat out in all its glory, perhaps in a fourth Terminator film. Or (another) video game. Perhaps a MMRPG. Or. . .well, you get the picture.



News

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Journal

Title: *Journal of Literature and Science*

Topics: The journal is dedicated to the publication of academic essays on the subject of literature and science, broadly defined. Essays on the major forms of literary and artistic endeavor are welcome (the novel, short fiction, poetry, drama, periodical literature, visual art, sculpture, radio, film and television). The journal encourages submissions from all periods of literary and artistic history since the Scientific Revolution; from the Renaissance to the present day. The journal also encourages a broad definition of "science": encapsulating both the history and philosophy of science and those sciences regarded as either mainstream or marginal within their own, or our, historical moment. However, the journal does not generally publish work on the social sciences. Within these confines, essays submitted to the journal may focus on the literary and scientific productions of any nation or group. All essays should be interdisciplinary in focus, offering an original view of both the literary or artistic subject matter and the science or sciences under consideration.

Due date: Rolling consideration of 6,000–8,000-word complete papers in MLA style

Contact: Martin Willis (mwillis_at_glam.ac.uk)

URL: <http://literatureandscience.research.glam.ac.uk/journal/>

Journal

Title: *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*

Topics: QRFV is devoted to providing innovative perspectives from a broad range of methodologies, including writings on newly developing technologies, as well as essays and interviews in any area of film history, production, reception and criticism. We are particularly interested in essays on video games and video installations, and postmodern examinations of images in popular culture and the video arts that intersect with film/video. We are especially interested in essays on women in all aspects of film, as filmmakers, producers, and actors. Papers are 17–25 pages long, including notes and/or works cited

Due date: There is no formal deadline; manuscripts are reviewed throughout the year. Manuscripts cannot be returned to contributors. Manuscript must be accompanied by signed copyright agreement (<http://eng-wdixon.unl.edu/QRFV.html>).

Contact: Wheeler Winston Dixon (wdixon_at_unlserve.unl.edu) and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster

URL: <http://eng-wdixon.unl.edu/format.html>; submissions accepted from this URL

New journal

Title: *Dialogues*

Topics: *Dialogues* as an online journal is setting out to deal with contemporary literature by entering into dialogic relations with writers, critics and fans to produce a constant roving barrage of arguments about the meaning of Literature. *Dialogues* is concerned with thought experiment; with the testing of written modes to redraw our interior maps of the literary and theoretical landscapes. *Dialogues* is fundamentally about peer debate and the critique of judgment drawn from the fast and furious argument of the fan base. Our interest is chiefly in cult writing and contemporary literatures; with the immediate and the ignored, the overlooked and the undervalued. Notions we will constantly examine and interrogate are those of “mainstream” versus “underground” writing and the “fringes” and “margins” of culture. Possible topics include: the value(s) of “cult” writing; who writes the canon?; immediacy in literature; textual surface and textual audiences; writing for “the masses”; tradition/countertradition.

Due date: September 15, 2008, with completed contributions 2,000–4,000 words long

Contact: Mark Williams (mark.williams_at_uea.ac.uk) and Martyn Colebrook (martyn.colebrook_at_english.hull.ac.uk)

Special journal issue

Title: *Creative Forum: A Journal of Literary and Critical Writing* special issue on Cyberpunk

Topics: This special number of Creative Forum on “Cyberpunk Literature” aims at examining the orbit of cyberpunk, from its origin as well as point of departure from science fiction to its trajectory through the postmodern, hyperreal, cyberspace, and its apparently dystopian destination that deglamorizes its scintillating movement. Critical interpretations of cyberpunk by authors as William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Neal Stephenson, K. W. Jeter, and Rudy Rucker, and application of postmodern

theories (Jean Baudrillard, Donna Haraway, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, et al.) to study the hyperreal, cybernetic condition, and identification of possible links with anticipatory cyberpunk works as Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* are encouraged.

Due date: June 31, 2008, with complete maximum 7,500-word paper in MLA style, plus a 250-word abstract

Contact: Dr. T. Ravichandran (ravic4_at_rediffmail.com), guest editor

URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/20th/3531.html>

Special journal issue

Title: *English Language Notes* special issue on Literature and Pseudoscience

Topics: This special issue will investigate science whose claims to truth are not bolstered by the experimental method. This topic is intended to shed new light on literary value by placing literature in the context of historical and contemporary forms of knowledge production. We welcome contributions on a broad range of issues and topics, including: the relationship between the truth value of literature and the truth value of the sciences; scientific and literary epistemologies; what constitutes unverifiable knowledge at particular historical moments; how pseudoscience intersects with broader issues of knowledge creation and knowledge management; the intersections of pseudoscience with particular literary or bibliographical scholarly methods; research findings on particular writers, texts, or cultural figures, or on particular pseudosciences: astrology; alchemy, the occult, mesmerism, phrenology, theosophy, parapsychologies, dietary reform, eugenics, scientology, medical quackeries and patent medicines and therapies, new age, the Gaia movement and ecological mysticism, creation science, intelligent design, and celebrated frauds (Piltdown Man, cold fusion).

Due date: November 1, 2008

Contact: Katherine Eggert (Katherine.Eggert_at_colorado.edu), issue editor

URL: <http://www.colorado.edu/English/eln/index.html>

Special journal issue

Title: *Utopian Studies* special issue on Octavia Butler (1947–2006)

Topics: The characters in Octavia Butler’s novels and short stories are often faced with circumstances that are quite hellish. Further, the dystopian leanings of her work might imply that her rejection of utopia is as complete as the quotation above suggests. And yet Butler’s work is deeply informed by utopian impulses. This special issue of *Utopian Studies* will celebrate the breadth and depth of Butler’s work and her constant questioning of human potential. We invite previously unpublished papers that address utopian and dystopian themes in any of Butler’s work. We welcome analyses from multiple disciplines and theoretical approaches. Comparative essays and reminiscences that engage the utopian and dystopian themes in Butler’s work will also be considered.

Due date: July 1, 2008, for completed papers

Contact: Claire Curtis (CurtisC_at_cofc.edu) or Toby Widdicombe (afrtw_at_uaa.alaska.edu)

Edited volume

Title: *Final Fantasy and Philosophy*, Blackwell Philosophy and PopCulture Series

Topics: We are interested in abstracts dealing with Final Fantasy in any media, including manga. Possible themes and topics might include, but are not limited to, the following: Vivi Ornitier's Musings on the Meaning of Life; Squall, Moral Relativism, and Moral Responsibility; As Ethereal as a Cloud: Problems of Personal Identity; Is Evil Self-defeating?: What Happens after Kefka Destroys the Universe?; The Chi of Chocobos; The Not-so Eternal Return: The Multiple Incarnations of Cid; Final Fantasy or Final Reality?: Game Play as a Mirror of Modern Life; The Problems of Technology and Religion: Yevonites v. Machina.

Due date: June 1, 2008, for 100–500-word abstracts and CVs; September 1, 2008, for first drafts of accepted papers.

Contact: Jason P. Blahuta (jblahuta_at_lakeheadu.ca) and Michel S. Beaulieu

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=162226>

Edited volume

Title: *Music in the Whedonverse*

Topics: From bands at the Bronze in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to Angel singing karaoke at Caritas to the traditional-style fiddling and guitar playing in *Firefly*, music is an integral part of Joss Whedon's universes. This collection seeks essays from both established and emerging scholars on the uses of and contributions made by music in the Whedonverse. Discipline-specific and interdisciplinary views are encouraged to address issues of power, relationships, identity, gender, communication, religion, multiculturalism, sanity and madness, and other topics present in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, and *Serenity*.

Due date: August 15, 2008, with 7,000–9,000-word essays in Chicago style, prepared for blind submission

Contact: Kendra Preston Leonard

URL: caennen_at_gmail.com

Edited volume

Title: *Reading the Rift: An Edited Collection of Essays on "Torchwood"*

Topics: *Torchwood* is a UK ratings buster, an award-winning science fiction series shot on high definition and filmed in and around Cardiff by BBC Wales. Beginning life as a spinoff from *Doctor Who*, it has now grown into a program that stands on its own with a unique blend of science fiction, humour, romance, and adult themes, and has dedicated fan followings growing across the globe. Such a distinctive and original blend of elements sets it apart from competitors and calls for scholarly discussion and analysis. Therefore, we are excited to be proposing this book and we are seeking original, well-researched scholarly essays that analyze aspects of this television series. We are particularly interested in essays that focus on gender and sexuality, the depiction of alien species, culture, identity and representation, characterization, and narrative, but are open to any theme or theoretical perspective.

Due date: May 31, 2008, with title, 300-word abstract, and brief bio or CV

Contact: Andrew Ireland (aireland_at_bournemouth.ac.uk)

URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Collections/3206.html>

Conference

Title: Century's End: Re-Evaluating Literature, Art and Culture at the Fin de Siècle (1880–1914)

Conference date: September 12–13, 2008

Site: School of English, Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland

Topics: Plenary speakers include Kate Flint and Roger Luckhurst. The collisions between old and new, high and low that characterize the Victorian fin de siècle mark it as a volatile period fraught with both a sense of anxiety and of real possibility. This was also an era of new advances and formations: the New Woman, the New Journalism, the New Imperialism, new technologies and the new sciences of psychology, sexology and eugenics. Suggested topics: genre fiction, including horror, crime fiction and sci-fi; notions of high and low culture; children's literature; degeneration and race; space and time; literature and science.

Due date: June 20, 2008, for 200–400-words abstracts for 20-minute papers and short bio

Contact: Clare Clarke, Clare Gill, and Beth Rodgers (century-send_at_qub.ac.uk)

URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/20th/3540.html>;
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/Research/Conferences/CenturysEnd/#d.en.98286>

Conference

Title: Contemporary Transformations

Conference date: May 23–24, 2009

Site: University of Westminster, UK

Topics: A significant characteristic of artistic movements is the reconfiguration, adaptation and transformation of texts. The focus of this conference is the appropriation and conversion of existing artistic works for use in a contemporary vogue. This ambition to 'make it new' in tandem with the politics and intentions behind the transformation has led to the emergence of startling works of contemporary art. This interdisciplinary conference seeks papers focusing on transformations where the new text has been created after 1968 and there is strong engagement between each work. There is no limit to the time period from which the source text can be located. Topics may include: modernism into postmodernism; poetry into prose or prose into poetry; theatrical/filmic adaptations of novels; the role of the graphic novel as medium for transformation; globalization and transformation; the intersection of different artistic movements; the fetishism of the transformation; cross cultural and cross genre adaptation

Due date: December 31, 2008, for 250-word abstracts for proposed 20-minute papers

Contact: martyn.colebrook_at_english.hull.ac.uk

URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/20th/3542.html>

Conference

Title: Doctor Who Area, Film & Science: Fictions, Documentaries, and Beyond, 2008 Film & History Conference

Conference date: October 30–November 2, 2008

Site: Chicago, Illinois

Topics: The Doctor is clearly a man of science, yet his function on the show is often God-like, with occasional explicit refer-

ences to him as a Christ-figure. How does the Doctor's dual role comment on the role of science in society? In its peregrinations through human events, what does the show say about the construction of history? What does it say about national/British identity in the new millennium or about the uneasy relationship between Western empiricism and theological mysticism? Papers and panels are invited on the topic of the Doctor Who series. Possible topics include but are not limited to the following: cultural commentary and transhistorical morality tales; issues of and intertextuality and metafiction; historical figures and the depiction of historical events (and the Doctor's role in them); the role of technological innovation and special effects; fan cultures; gender and sexuality; psychological models; canonicity of other media; use of guest stars/actors; religious imagery and allegory; the role of visual technology (including film and television) in the show's content.

Due date: August 1, 2008

Contact: Christopher Hansen (christopher_hansen_at_baylor.edu)

URL: <http://www.uwosh.edu/filmandhistory/>

New organization

Name: International Association of Audience and Fan Studies

Field: Audience and fan studies

Purpose: To facilitate scholarly activities in the interdisciplinary areas of audience and fan studies; to create cross-disciplinary communication, activities, and scholarship through traditional academic venues

Contact: iaafsorg_at_gmail.com

URL: <http://community.livejournal.com/iaafs/>



THE 30TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FANTASTIC IN THE ARTS

Time and the Fantastic

The 30th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts will be held March 18-22, 2009, at the Orlando Airport Marriott in Orlando, Florida. The conference begins at 3pm on Wednesday and ends at 1 am on Sunday upon the conclusion of the conference banquet. Malcolm J. Edwards and Brian Stableford write that "the metaphysics of time continues to intrigue writers inside and outside the genre" of the fantastic; thus, the focus of ICFA-30 is on the intriguing relationships between time and the fantastic. Papers are invited to explore this topic in science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other related modes of the fantastic. In addition, we especially look forward to papers on the work of our honored guests:

Guest of Honor: Guy Gavriel Kay, Aurora Award-winning, Caspar Award-winning, and Mythopoeic Fantasy Award-nominated author of the Fionavar Tapestry (*The Summer Tree*, *The Wandering Fire*, *The Darkest Road*), *Tigana*, *A Song for Arbonne*, and *The Last Light of the Sun*

Guest of Honor: Robert Charles Wilson, Hugo Award-winning author of *Axis*, *Spin*, *The Chronoliths*, *Darwinia*, *Mysterium*, and *A Bridge of Years*

Guest Scholar: Maria Nikolajeva, author of *The Aesthetic Approach to Children's Literature* (*Scarecrow*), *The Rhetoric of Children's Literature* (*Scarecrow*), and *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature* (*Scarecrow*)

As always, we also welcome proposals for individual papers and for academic sessions and panels on any aspect of the fantastic in any media. The deadline is October 31, 2008.

We encourage work from institutionally-affiliated scholars, independent scholars, international scholars who work in languages other than English, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

The Jamie Bishop Memorial Award for an Essay Not in English is open to all members of the IAFA. The IAFA Graduate Student Award is open to all graduate students presenting papers at the year's conference. Details are available via Robin Reid, Second Vice-President (Robin_Reid@tamu-commerce.edu). Finally, the Dell Magazines Undergraduate Science Fiction Award will also be handed out at this year's conference.

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

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

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

SFRA Executive Committee

President

Adam Frisch
343 Lakeshore Dr.
McCook Lake, SD 57049-4002
adam.frisch@briarcliff.edu

Vice President

Lisa Yaszek
Literature, Communication, and Culture
Georgie Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0165
lisa.yaszek@lcc.gatech.edu

Secretary

Rochelle Rodrigo
English Department
Mesa Community College
1833 West Southern Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202
rrodrigo@mail.mc.maricopa.edu

Treasurer

Donald M. Hassler
1226 Woodhill Dr.
Kent, OH 44240
extrap@kent.edu

Immediate Past President

David G. Mead
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
Dave.Mead@tamucc.edu

SFRA Standard Membership Benefits

SFRA Review

Four issues per year. This newsletter/journal surveys the field of science fiction scholarship, including extensive reviews of fiction and nonfiction books and media, review articles, and listings of new and forthcoming books. The *Review* also prints news about SFRA internal affairs, calls for papers, and updates on works in progress.

SFRA Annual Directory

One issue per year. Members' names, contact information, and areas of interest.

SFRA Listserv

Ongoing. The SFRA listserv allows members to discuss topics and news of interest to the SF community, and to query the collective knowledge of the membership. To join the listserv or obtain further information, visit the listserv information page: <http://wiz.cath.vt.edu/mailman/listinfo/sfra-l>

Extrapolation

Three issues per year. The oldest scholarly journal in the field, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, book reviews, letters, occasional special topic issues, and an annual index.

Science Fiction Studies

Three issues per year. This scholarly journal includes critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, review articles, reviews, notes, letters, international coverage, and an annual index.

SFRA Optional Membership Benefits

(Discounted subscription rates for members)

Foundation

Three issues per year. British scholarly journal, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, reviews, and letters. Add to dues: \$33 seamail; \$40 airmail.

The New York Review of Science Fiction

Twelve issues per year. Reviews and features. Add to dues: \$28 domestic; \$30 domestic institutional; \$34 Canada; \$40 UK and Europe; \$42 Pacific and Australia.

Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts

Four issues per year. Scholarly journal, with critical and bibliographical articles and reviews. Add to dues: \$40/1 year; \$100/3 years.

Femspec

Critical and creative works. Add to dues: \$40 domestic individual; \$96 domestic institutional; \$50 international individual; \$105 international institutional.

