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

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SFRA Election Results: For President: Dave Mead (80), Phil Kaveny (27); For Vice President: Bruce Rockwood (57), Phil Snyder (50); For Treasurer: Donald Hassler (56), Joe Sanders (52); For Secretary: Warren Rochelle (83), Ed Carmien (24).

The new edition of the bi-monthly YLEM Journal, Vol. 24 #10, featuring interviews with Richard Calder, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, and China Miéville, would normally be available only to members of YLEM, an international organization dedicated to the nexus of art, science, and technology. However, for a gratis copy, send an email with a physical address to Lorena Means, Executive Editor, at <lorene@pacbell.net>.

Awards Juries 2004-05


Two discoveries: an exoplanet has been discovered. The jovian planet, orbiting a star in lyra more than 500 light-years away, is being called Tres-I, and has an estimated temperature of 815°C. And scientists claim that ice core samples from 400 meters below the sea floor of the Arctic reveal that 55 million years ago, the region enjoyed a sub-tropical climate; the presence of algae demonstrates a temperature about 21°C higher than current averages.

SFRA BUSINESS

Editor's Message
Christine Mains

This is the final issue of the Review for 2004, and happily, the editorial team can report that we managed to keep things on schedule for the entire year, thanks in large part to the board's decision to move to a quarterly publication. Now that the schedule is running more or less smoothly, there's time and energy to devote to improving the Review in other ways. We'd like to publish content other than association business and reviews of both fiction and nonfiction, and certainly we were able to publish a few such pieces this year, including Darko Suvin's two-part essay, but we'd like to encourage more submissions of short essays and informal pieces by SFRA members. Also keep an eye on the website; we'll be updating guidelines for review contributors in the near future.

In Peter Brigg's final message as president of SFRA, he shares his thoughts on the possibility of someday transforming the Review from a newsletter to, perhaps, something more closely resembling an academic journal; we'd welcome any thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks of such a move. Something to talk about, perhaps, in between sessions in Vegas in June.

SFRA BUSINESS

Outgoing President's Message
Peter Brigg

I urge members to take note of the juries that have been selected for the Association's awards for the coming year. They have been posted on the web site (and are listed on p. 2) and their members would welcome suggestions from the membership for those should be considered for awards. You can refresh your memory about the terms of those awards by looking at the top of the lists of winners in the back of your Directory.

With these jury nominations I come close to the end of my two years as president of SFRA. Your new executive, headed by Dave Mead, will take over January 1st, and, after an election which saw one third of the membership sending in the required postal votes (a very high proportion for a postal ballot) we are well set up for the future.

Looking back I think I can say that I did not know what to expect as your president. I suppose I thought running a scholarly association would be a day-to-day job for two years. But in fact it is not, by and large, a task which involves responding to demand on an ongoing basis. It is very much up to the president to make the running: encouraging the members to pay their fees, to submit material to SFRAR, to attend the conferences, and to offer opinions on various initiatives such as changes in the Constitution. With the continuity provided by Dave Mead as treasurer over two terms and the continuing advice of Mike Levy as past president, there has been a strong thread of knowledge and experience for me to call on.

Coming up to the end of 2004 the Association finds itself in a strong position. Membership has edged up over the past two years from 273 to 298. As I see it the effort to reach out and attract new members (and to encourage younger members to run for election) is one of the most important functions of the whole executive and of the membership. We changed the constitution last June so that the vice president is formally in charge of membership recruitment, but no one person can mount an effort which touches all the bases in a drive to renew the
Looking forward to working with the newly-elected officers — Mack, Warren and Bruce — as well as Sam McDonald, our new webmaster, and our incredibly hardworking SFRA Review editorial team."

"As my last planned task as your president I am undertaking to draft a policy concerning our annual conferences. Without binding future conference directors so that they cannot cope with their local circumstances it is hoped that such a policy will encourage the success and consistency of future conferences. It needs to deal with issues such as affordability, the relationship between the executive of the day and the organizers, the system for encouraging and accepting of papers, and to set standards in such matters as hosting of guests, dealing with vendors, the suitability of dates, provision of audio-visual-computing resources, and the contents of conference programs. Of our nearly 300 members I would estimate that fewer than 50 attend the average conference, bolstered in each locale by graduate students or academics from the region attracted to a single conference. The policy I hope to draft will be partly aimed at increasing the attendance of our regular membership and I would welcome any suggestions as to how I should go about this."

"Ursula K. Le Guin, who I think of as the most important writer of science fiction in our era (there, Christine, that should prompt some letters to the Review), is to be our guest of honor at Las Vegas next June. Dave Mead and Peter Lowentout are gambling on Vegas as a location that will prove really attractive and I look forward to seeing you there, where you will see me in the traveling rug, food-stained clothing, and carpet slippers characteristic of past presidents of SFRA."

"SFRA BUSINESS"

"Incoming President’s Message"

"Dave Mead"

"Thank you for electing me to be President of the Science Fiction Research Association. I hope to be worthy of your trust, and to serve the members and the organization as well as Peter Brigg has done the last two years. I am certainly looking forward to working with the newly-elected officers — Mack, Warren and Bruce — as well as Sam McDonald, our new webmaster, and our incredibly hardworking SFRA Review editorial team."

"Like Peter and the current Executive Committee, I will be working to keep our membership growing. I also hope to get our tax-status changed so that SFRA will be recognized as an educational organization, and our dues will become tax-deductible."

"Interaction, the 2005 Worldcon in Glasgow, announces that rates will increase on December 1."

"The 2007 Worldcon will be held in Yokohama from August 30-September 3, 2007, with guests of honor Sakyo Komatsu, David Brin, Takumi Shibano, Yoshitaka Amano, and Michael Whelan."

"The winners of the South Eastern Science Fiction Association Award have been announced. Novel: Hypersketch M. M. Buckner; Short Fiction: “The Door Gunner” Michael Bishop; Lifetime Achievement: Joe Haldeman."


"The winners of the British Fantasy Award are Novel: Full Dark House, Christopher Fowler; Best Short Fiction: “American Waitress,” Christopher Fowler; Anthology: The Mammoth Book of New Horror: Volume 14, ed. Stephen Jones; Best Collection: Told by the Dead, Ramsey Campbell."

"The winners of the 2004 Mythopoeic Award are Adult Literature: Sunshine, Robin McKinley; Children’s Literature: The Hollow Kingdom, Clare B. Dunkle; Scholarship in Inklings Studies: Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth, John Garth; Scholarship in General Myth and Fantasy Studies: The Myth of the American Superhero, by John Lawrence & Robert Jewett."

The Sidewise Award, created in 1995 to recognize excellence in alternate history, and named for Murray Leinster’s short story “Sidewise in Time,” go to: Short Form: “O One,” Chris Roberson, and Long Form: Collaborator, Murray Davies.

The Prometheus Awards are presented by the Libertarian Futurist Society to recognize outstanding science fiction and fantasy exploring libertarian themes. Best Novel: Sims, F. Paul Wilson; Hall of Fame Award: “The Ungoverned,” Vernor Vinge.

This year’s Robert A. Heinlein Award was presented virtually to Arthur C. Clarke at a banquet held by the Robert A. Heinlein Society.

Cory Doctorow has won the Sunburst Award, for excellence of writing by a Canadian writer in the previous year, for A Place So Foreign and 8 More.

The Gaylactic Spectrum Awards were created in 1998 to honor works of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters, themes, or issues. Best Short Fiction: “Lark till Dawn, Princess,” Barth Anderson; Best Novel: The Salt Roads, Nalo Hopkinson.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Dark Horizons

Arthur O. Lewis


This excellent collection includes an introduction and conclusion by the editors and essays by twelve scholars representing six different countries. The contributors, all well known in their own right, depend heavily on the work of other scholars, especially Bloch, Jameson, Sargent, Suvin, and Williams, as well as on the previous work of the editors. It is also a highly political book, with a cause to present.

In the aptly titled Introduction, “Dystopia and Histories,” the editors trace dystopia from the early 20th century “dystopian accounts of places worse than the times we live in” (1) through the several forms that developed late in the century. Classical dystopias (e.g. 1984), marginal mainstream (e.g. Anthem), dystopian SF (as in Bradbury and Ballard), feminism, ecology, and the New Left in the 60s and 70s fashioned the critical utopias of Russ, Le Guin, and Piercy. By the 80s Butler, Le Guin, Robinson, and others “refunctioned dystopia as a critical narrative” (2). In 1993, Lyman Tower Sargent suggested the term “critical utopia” to cover this trend, and the term has stuck. In examining these phenomena, the editors divide these essays into three groups of concerns: investigation of dystopia’s roots and inter-textual relations with other literary forms; the relationships among utopia, history, and memory; and the relationships among critical dystopia, cyberpunk, and feminist cyborg imaginary.

“Utopia in Dark Times: Optimism/Pessimism and Utopia/Dystopia” is an exchange of pessimistic letters between Ruth Levitas and Lucy Sargisson, much influenced by events surrounding 9/11, that express their hope that despite the totalitarian aspects of utopia this “dystopian” world will not fall into an anti-utopian future. Jane Donaworth’s “Genre Blending and Critical Dystopia” relates development of more openly critical dystopian texts to pressure from feminism, anti-war protest, and gay rights. Ilney Cavalcanti’s “The Writing of Utopia and the Feminist Critical Dystopia: Suzy McKee Charnas’s Holdfast Series” attempts to define the feminist critical dystopia. David Seed looks at the writer’s examination of the human costs of virtual reality in “Cyberpunk and Dystopia: Pat Cadigan’s Networks.” In “Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler’s Xenogenesis” Naomi Jacobs finds that the posthuman hybridization of human and Oankali offers greater hope for future utopia than attempting to continue as purely human. Ursula Le Guin’s The Telling is considered by Raffaela Baccolini and, along with Robinson’s Antarctica, by Tom Moylan in essays concerned with the shift to the right and replacement of state power by corporate power that is influencing current portrayals of a dystopian world.

Peter Fitting’s “Unmasking the Real? Critique and Utopia in recent SF Films” rightly points out that the “critical” of critical dystopia “implies an explanation of how the dystopian situation came about as much as what should be done with it” (150) and supports his thesis through discussion of four films from the 1990s. Philip Wegner finds that Fight Club and Ghost Dog carry the pessimism of nineteenth century literary naturalism into dystopian situations that express “current middle class and masculine anxieties about status and identity in an emerging global economy” (182). Maria Varsam’s “Concrete Dystopia, Slavery and Its Oth-
ers” finds the worldview in dystopias of Atwood, Butler, and Jacob traceable to slavery in its various forms as a major effect on women’s consciousness and ability to act.

For Darko Suvin (“Theses on Dystopia 2001”) “we live in highly endangered times . . . on the razor’s edge of collapse,” (187) and his 30 theses demonstrate his view of how a study of utopianism can help to prevent this collapse. Lyman Tower Sargent, whose “Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited” has been frequently referred to throughout this collection, offers a short note on the “flawed utopia.” The term refers to works (e.g., “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”) that present a good society until one learns of something that raises the question of its right to be called a good society.

Criticism of globalization and corporate hegemony has permeated this book and is amplified in the editors’ “Conclusion, Critical Dystopia and Possibilities.” Here they adopt the all-too-familiar line that the events of 9/11 “grew out of a very real worldwide situation for which the logic of capitalism and the arrogance of the U.S. super power are deeply to blame (233). They call for international opposition and continuing protests by the people against capitalist, American-led globalization. Many of us who agree that critical dystopias have an important role in reversing the current trend toward loss of liberty to hard-line governments will find it difficult to join them in blaming all current evil on American capitalism alone.

NONFICTION REVIEW

The Large Illustrated Bibliography of SF in East Germany
Sonja Fritzsche


East German science fiction remained one of the most popular genres throughout the entire forty-year existence of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Hundreds of titles appeared primarily as novels that consistently sold out in bookstores. The genre also took the form of short stories, comic books, radio plays and film. In addition to the exoticism of far away places, many read the genre for its often-subtle critique of the existing political system. A number of East German science fiction authors used the estranged setting in another place and time to elude the censors. Today, East German science fiction is slowly disappearing from public libraries in the east, who sell off their old collections for more interesting titles in greater demand. Luckily one library exists that is dedicated to the preservation of this genre - the Fantastic Library (Phantastische Bibliothek) in Wetzlar, Germany.

East German science fiction has received little reception in the west, in part due to the difficulty of accessing material. Neumann’s recently published bibliography represents the most comprehensive resource for research not only in the area of East German science fiction, but for those interested in other science fiction that appeared in East Germany. It includes detailed entries for all East German science fiction writers, including their pseudonyms, subsequent editions, inclusion in magazines and anthologies as well as pictures of book covers where space allows. As Neumann first became involved in the field of

Recent and Forthcoming Titles:

Weaver, Tom. Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Flashbacks: Conversations with 24 Actors, Writers, Producers and Directors from the Golden Age. McFarland, 2005.

CFPs:
WHAT: SFRA2005
WHEN: June 23-26, 2005
WHERE: Las Vegas, Nevada
TOPICS: Proposals for papers on featured authors — Ursula Le Guin, John Barnes, Kij Johnson, and Tim Powers — as well as the American West in SF and Gambling/Gaming in SF, are especially encouraged, although proposals on all F1SF subjects are welcome.
SUBMISSIONS: Contact Peter Lowentrout, Department of Religious Studies, MacIntosh Humanities Building 619, California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach, California 90840. <plowentr@csulb.edu>
DEADLINE: February 1, 2005.

East German science fiction through the East Berlin fan club Andymon, he also includes fanzine publications. Foreign science fiction includes entries from all former Soviet Bloc countries as well as other German-speaking countries, English-speaking countries, French-speaking countries, Spanish-speaking countries, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia, as well as Serbian authors. While listed under the title in German translation, Neumann's careful cataloging includes the original name in most cases. Neumann also includes a significant list of secondary literature on East German science fiction. Note that the bibliography does not include film or television series, which would be a useful addi tion.

The bibliography used as its starting point the 1980 history and bibliog raphy of East German science fiction compiled by Erik Simon and Olaf Spittel. Both were editors at New Life Publishers (Verlag Neues Leben), a subsidiary of the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend) and one of the premier science fiction publishers in the GDR. In 1998, Neumann first published a less comprehensive edition restricted to East German science fiction authors. His newly expanded bibliography should be praised for its attention to detail and practical format that includes a number of useful indices.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Alien Woman
David Carlson


Science fiction cinema has seldom been kind to women. Historically, even when female characters have not been consigned to complementary roles vis-à-vis dominant males, they have been "invariably undermined by various devices in plot, characterization, and cinematography" (1). With these observations, coming in the first sentences of their book, Jimena Gallardo-C and C. Jason Smith establish the critical context for their study of the four Alien films and their unus ual hero—Ellen Ripley. While wisely avoiding academic jargon, Alien Woman is clearly a work of feminist film criticism that is deeply informed by the insights of theorists such as Julia Kristeva and Donna Haraway. Not surprisingly, then, it is a book about bodies—what they look like, how they reproduce, how they "open" and "close," how they interact with technology, and how (and by whom) they are controlled. The trajectory of the book's argument is set up clearly in the introduction. In their series of detailed close-readings of each film, Gallardo-C and Smith illuminate how the Alien tetralogy's shifting visual metaphors and plot structures reveal the gradual evolution of Ripley into a postmodern feminist icon. Alien Woman argues for her transformation from a "resolved yet feminine protagonist" struggling to fend off a "relentless reproductive machine" into a "darker or monstrous posthuman superwoman," a kind of alien herself (9, 11). In doing so, the authors provide considerable insight into the series' manipulation of film genre conventions and its relationship to American politics and feminism from the late 1970s to the present. The net result is an accessible and insightful analysis that, for this reader at least, greatly enhances the pleasure of viewing all the Alien films.

Each of the four chapters of Alien Woman focuses on a specific film. The analysis of Ridley Scott's Alien in the first chapter is the tightest of the book, reflecting the fact that this film is probably the most fully-realized cinematic achievement of the series (despite the fact that it was originally conceived as a "B" movie).
Exploring *Alien’s* combination of science fiction and horror conventions, Gallardo-C and Smith convincingly demonstrate that the Alien lifeform represents a kind of monstrous cyborg that “challenges human notions of biology, sex, and gender” (37). The Alien’s assault on the crew of the *Nostromo* essentially transforms “male” bodies into “female” ones (the “facehugger” orally rapes crewman Kane, transforming his body into a womb that will be violently exploded from within in the infamous chest-birth scene). This act opens up a space for a specific kind of transgressive hero—the independent-minded female officer, Ripley—to assert her own body (which contains a gestating alien queen) and with patriarchal underpinnings of the nature of woman. Her death at the end of the film, in the authors’ view, represents both a redemptive sacrifice and a rejection of the patriarchal concept of-saving humanity from the destructive impulses of patriarchy” (61). If *Alien* opens up the possibility of a heroically transgressive woman in science fiction, however, James Cameron’s *Aliens* does everything it can to reinscribe Ripley within a patriarchal discourse. In chapter two, drawing in part on previously deleted scenes, Gallardo-C and Smith show how Cameron re-codes Ripley as a traumatized rape-victim driven by guilt over her own failures as an excessively career-oriented absent mother. The analysis here cleverly highlights Cameron’s manipulation of “patriarchal” science fiction film conventions as well as the way that *Aliens* (and its politics) echoes other Reagan-era action movies, such as *Rambo*. Though occasionally the writers’ own politics lead them into oddly forced interpretations (the comment about the Alien queen’s resemblance to Reagan’s “black welfare queen” might raise an eyebrow), overall the discussion here quite convincingly shows how Cameron’s movie seeks to put Ripley back “in her place.” In his hands, the character becomes “a woman fighting woman’s battles,” a traumatized mother choosing to fight her monstrous counterpart in an effort to redeem her own femininity.

The analysis in the last two chapters of *Alien Woman* reveals how David Fincher’s *Alien3* and Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s *Alien Resurrection* rebel, in very different ways, against the conservatism of Cameron’s commercially successful sequel. While Gallardo-C’s and Smith’s analysis makes clear that, cinematically, neither of the final two installments quite live up to the aesthetic standard of the Scott original, their discussions can contribute greatly to any viewer’s enjoyment of both films (which were seen as disappointments by many fans and critics). *Alien3*, they argue, reimagines Ripley as a “bitchy” anti-staetv-straugling against a range of deterministic narratives (both religious and biological) once she crash lands on a prison planet populated by ‘double-Y chromosome males’ (rapists and murderers) who now live in a kind of quasi-Christian monasticism. Ripley’s primary battles here are with her own body (which contains a gestating alien queen) and with patriarchal understandings of the nature of woman. Her death at the end of the film, in the authors’ view, represents both a redemptive sacrifice and a rejection of the patriarchal Company’s ongoing claims of ownership of her body. Admittedly, though, the death of the hero at the end of *Alien3* may mitigate some of its radical potential. Cue, then, installment four in the series. In the cinematic pastiche that is *Alien Resurrection*, Gallardo-C and Smith suggest, the Ripley character fully embraces transgressive deviance. Reborn as a cloned alien-human hybrid, she becomes a cyborg superhero leading a group of “freaks” (the pirates of the spaceship *Betty*) in yet another battle against the Aliens, this time a frankly parodic one that undercutting a range of masculine film conventions. Ripley’s primary love-interest here is a “simulated” woman (the android Call, played by Winona Ryder), and Ripley herself becomes an ambiguous kind of “posthuman female.” The film shows us that she is capable of choosing both to appropriate the “Alien” within herself and
 fandom, the Internet, science fiction tradition, the television industry, the animated series, cult stardom, music, Paramount franchise branding and advertising. Contributions that examine the overall impact of an entire series or compare two or more are particularly welcome, as are those contributions that examine the film franchise in its industrial and cultural context.

SUBMISSIONS: Abstracts of 500 words and a short attachment to Lincoln Geraghty at <aaaxlgg@nottingham.ac.uk>.

WHAT: Accio 2005
WHEN: July 29-31, 2005
WHERE: University of Reading, UK
TOPICS: Accio UK is aimed at both academics and adult fans of the Harry Potter series. Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to: Characterisation, Archetypal yet unconventional or merely one-dimensional stereotypes; Religious Studies; Social Issues, including Gender Studies, Race Relations, Class portrayal; Legal Issues (Government and Justice in the Wizarding World); Mythopoeia; Education; The Heroic Quest; Alchemy and Symbolism; Concepts of Power; Fandom Concerns; Fanfiction and Intellectual Property issues.

SUBMISSIONS: 500 word abstract or completed 4000 word paper by email to <Submissions @ accio.org.uk >. Include "Accio 2005 Proposal Submission" in subject line.
DEADLINE: 31st December 2004

WHAT: Theorizing Fan Fiction and Fan Communities
TOPICS: We are looking for academic essays geared toward a general readership and particularly well to abort the monstrous "Newborn" that results from the fusion of her own DNA with that of the Alien Queen taken from her chest in the film's opening scenes. Significantly, though, Gallardo-C and Smith note that Alien Resurrection fails (intentionally, perhaps) to answer the question frequently asked of Ripley throughout the movie—"Who are you?" In this respect, the Alien series concludes with a radical set of questions about the nature of gender and identity in a post-biological future—the kinds of questions raised by Donna Haraway in her famous "Manifesto for Cyborgs." At its conclusion, Gallardo-C and Smith show, the series continues to challenge "human notions of biology, sex, and gender." In 2003, however, the focal point of that challenge is not a monstrous facehugger or another of H.R. Giger's biomechanoid nightmares, but the appealing body (and charismatic presence) of Sigourney Weaver. As the authors of Alien Woman suggest, that shift says a great deal about the significance of Ellen Ripley in the history of science fiction cinema (and about the development of contemporary feminist thought).

NONFICTION REVIEW

Doctor Who: The Audio Scripts
Karen Hellekson


Big Finish Productions, PO Box 1127, Maidenhead, SL6 3LW, UK (http://www.bigfinish.com). Distributed by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret, VT 05053 (http://www.trafalgarssquarebooks.com). Please check these sites for pricing.

Fans of the world's longest continuously running science fiction television program, rejoice! At long last, the BBC has decided to take the show up again, and they've cast Christopher Eccleston as the new Doctor. Doctor Who, the popular, low-budget, campy British children's show, ran from 1963 to 1989. The program, usually shown in the United States on PBS stations with the short half-hour episodes cut together into one long movie, is as iconic in Britain as Star Trek is in the States, with British schoolchildren, now all grown up, fondly remembering cowering behind the couch as the evil Daleks expressed their intent to "Exterminate!"

In 1999, Big Finish obtained permission from the BBC to air audio adventures featuring the Doctor, and the franchise began a new life: Big Finish cast past Doctors and companions, bringing back actors such as Peter Davison, Sylvester McCoy, Elisabeth Sladen, Nicholas Courtney, and Lalla Ward to reprise their roles. In addition to revisiting some dynamic duos, such as Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant as the Doctor and Peri, new characters—Time Lords and companions alike—have been created, some voiced by old Wobb favorites (Katy Manning) and others by actors famous in other venues (Anthony Stewart Head, known for his work as librarian Rupert Giles in Buffy the Vampire Slayer). Big Finish even invented an entirely new character, Professor Bernice Summerfield, set in the same universe, with her own adventures. The audio releases feature expert voicing, great scripts,
and wonderful sound effects, and the topics range widely, from silly high adventure (Doctor Who and the Pirates) to arcane language play murder mysteries ( ...ish) to straight-up quests (the Excelsis series).

Big Finish, in 2003, published a number of reference books related to the popular audio scripts. Three volumes of scripts reproduce favorites (four in each book), complete with endnotes that describe line changes, with added words presented in boldface and deleted words struck out, so the script can be compared against the final product. Scripting notes, outlines, cast listings, and director’s notes round out the content. The dust jackets provide a picture of the audio CD jacket and brief synopses for each story. A major omission is the date of release. My primary quibble: the typeface used for the scripts themselves seems blotchy and is hard to read.

The New Audio Adventures, a companion to the audio shows, includes information the volumes of scripts don’t give: each audio adventure has its own section, with cast credits, information about the date and site of recording, release date and ISBN number, the running time, the location of trailers, the radio show’s location in time, and selected references (previews published in Doctor Who Monthly or other specialty publications, published interviews with cast or crew, inclusion in The Audio Scripts). Each section outlines the making of the audio show, with quotations from producers, writers, and cast members describing the creative process—as well as recording mishaps. The cover art for each is provided, along with a synopsis, and I found the trivia particularly amusing and interesting. Frequent use of sidebars, graphics, and posed photographs break up the text. Cook writes informally, with an engaging fan-to-fan tone, although the very British writing style, which permits incomplete sentences, may occasionally strike Americans as grammatically incorrect. An extremely small typeface and a ragged-right margin add to the informal feel. Although the book is an oversized hardcover, this isn’t a coffee-table book in the strict sense of the term: the paper isn’t glossy, and all the art is black and white.

Together, these books provide all the information one could hope for in an informed reading of these texts. The Audio Scripts elevates audio to the status of literature and helps in canon formation for the audio shows (because Big Finish selected what they consider favorites), and The New Audio Adventures acts as a fun, useful, and detailed episode guide. Media scholars working on Doctor Who will find both invaluable. Canadian and British libraries will want all of these texts—if not as an homage to an iconic television program, then because their savvy audio-Who-loving patrons will demand it. Because the audio shows haven’t caught on in the States as they have elsewhere—they are mostly sold either online or in specialty SF or comic shops, not in regular media outlets—likely only U.S. libraries with comprehensive holdings in media studies will want these.

NONFICTION REVIEW

The Poe Cinema

Pawel Frelik


To begin with, this isn’t really an entirely new tide. The Poe Cinema is a softcover reprint of the library bound edition of The Poe Cinema: A Critical Filmography of Theatrical Releases based on the works of Edgar Allan Poe, which came...
WHAT: Comics and Culture
WHO: Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies
WHEN: Spring 2005 special issue
TOPICS: Comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels remain under-examined artifacts of mass and popular culture, despite long-standing production and consumption alongside other, well-analyzed media (cinema, television, popular literature, etc.). Even recent film adaptations have yet to generate significant critical (formalist, psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist, or cultural studies) assessments of their often superior but still neglected comic book sources.

Essays for this special issue should aspire to correct this negligence by examining comics in cultural contexts and through sophisticated methods of cultural analysis. Original treatments of classic comic strips and comic books are desired as well as critical essays on recent mainstream comics (such as The Authority, X-Force, The Invisibles, or Promethea) and/or their creators (Alan Moore, Grant Morrison, Warren Ellis, etc.).

SUBMISSIONS: Essays should range from 9000-11000 words, review essays 2000-4000 words, and individual reviews less than 2000 words, not including citations. Essays must be in MLA format. Acceptance of a manuscript will be contingent on clearance of copyright. Submit two hard copies as well as a copy on disc along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies, c/o Comics and Culture, 308 English-Philosophy Building, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1492

CONTACT: Correspondence and inquiries only; no submissions to <ijcs@uiowa.edu>


WHAT: Fem-scape: A Special Edition

out in 1999. Now with a shorter title and better availability the volume has a chance of reaching the hands of many more Poe enthusiasts.

Don Smith is a professor of history and philosophy and a Poe fan himself—“Introduction” traces that fascination back to his early childhood years. We also learn that an article published in Poe Studies remains Smith’s most valued academic publication—quite a statement from someone who is not professionally involved in literature. With those credentials it is clear that The Poe Cinema is a work of love, a very well-researched love, one might want to add.

Following the above-mentioned introduction, which also includes Poe’s short biographical sketch, is the main part of the book devoted to the movies. Each entry consists of five segments: the full release information such as date, production company and country of origin; the credits and cast; the detailed synopsis of the plot; the production and marketing history; and the critique. The length of these varies—some movies receive several paragraphs (usually when the film is lost or the information is quoted from other sources) but the entries for more famous screen adaptations may run for several pages. The volume is rounded out with three appendices listing filmworks according to various criteria, the index, and the annotated bibliography.

The selection of the movies is impressive. Smith concedes that, while a completist, he could not include a number of titles—such as TV shows and educational adaptations of Poe’s writings—but when it comes to general theatrical releases, the author clearly did his best to dig up even the most obscure pieces. Among some eighty motion pictures spanning almost the entire century are a number made in such countries as Argentina, Czechoslovakia or Italy. Even though the author admits to not seeing all releases (also because some are long lost and others not available), he has still researched their secondary material, some of which must have been particularly hard to obtain.

This diligence and attention to detail is particularly obvious in the entries in the sections devoted to the production and marketing history and critique. The material discussed in them includes articles and reviews but also pressbooks, promotional materials and other kinds of obscure and hard-to-find sources. While the production and marketing politics may seem to be tedious and of interest only to film buffs, the sections in question are actually very readable. At the same time, however, the Poe-loving author maintains critical detachment—the critique is always very balanced and comprehensive.

Someone looking for faults might want to see the volume as an enhanced listing of Poe films—that the book certainly is not. In one of his analyses Smith states that “loose adaptations are the rule, not the exception, in the cinema of Edgar Allan Poe” (220) and even a cursory glance at randomly selected entries confirms that. Consequently, The Poe Cinema is not just a crafty compilation of more or less known facts but in many instances an investigation of sometimes nebulous inspirations, motifs and elements.

With a few exceptions Poe adaptations are not commonly counted among the finest examples of horror or gothic cinema, but Smith’s study shows that at least in some cases their position deserves re-evaluation. For the general readership (and audiences, too) The Poe Cinema: A Critical Filmography is definitely an interesting opportunity to broaden their knowledge. For Poe specialists it is a must.
Jacking in to the Matrix

Jeff D'Anastasio


Matthew Kapell and William G. Doty compile an intriguing set of eleven essays examining the cultural implications of the phenomenon surrounding The Matrix movie (1999) and sequels (2003). Sales and rental figures prove that the trilogy and its related works rival both the fading Star Trek and Star Wars empires in terms of sheer profitability and popularity. Thus, the word “Franchise” in the book’s title is deliberate, and Doty’s “Introduction” details the scope of the “universe” tied to the films, including the animated short films sequence The Animatrix, comics, plus the Enter The Matrix video and Matrix Online games. His assertion that the entire project conceived by brothers Larry and Andy Wachowski rivals the operatic works of Richard Wagner—the Matrix world as “space operas” (9) (if not “cyberspace operas”?)—emphasizes that Jacking In To The Matrix focuses on far more than just the first movie (the “flaw” with an otherwise excellent book such as Exploring The Matrix edited by Karen Haber, but appearing in 2003 just before the second film’s release).

This anthology will likely not hold the distinction of covering all-three-films-and-beyond for long, for clearly there is much to say and think about the Matrix franchise, simply judging by the staggering variety of topics the essays herein address. To echo main character Neo’s remark when he realizes the true nature of his new abilities in the first movie: “Whoa!” There is a rich mix of critical approaches and writing styles, and most adhere to the editors’ plea to contributors for clearly written, non-academic prose.

The contributors deliver on a grand scale. Five of the eleven essays address aspects of religion and philosophy. Gender, race, postmodernism, politics, violence, and the posthuman condition round out the wide net the book casts. I found the two essays that begin the collection to be the strongest. First, Martina Lipps’ “Welcome to the Sexual Spectacle” succinctly critiques the depiction of women in the trilogy. Delving below the initial reaction of many to Trinity’s tough traits as empowering, Lipps finds that Trinity and the other major female characters are still firmly fixed around the male characters. Her argument about the significance of the kiss between Neo and Trinity at the end of each movie is compelling.

C. Richard King and David J. Leonard’s “Is Neo White?” offers an outstanding reading of race in an examination of the trilogy, selections from The Animatrix, and the comic “Bits and Pieces.” The parallel of the slavery of machines to the history of human slavery is just one angle of their analysis. Drawing upon depictions of black and white relations from Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884) to more recent Hollywood flics, King and Leonard argue persuasively that, despite a multiracial cast, the Matrix franchise privileges whiteness over other racial and ethnic identities. They also wrestle with the implications of such privileging for audiences.

Ultimately, an interested potential reader of Jacking In To will need to enter his or her own matrix and access the essays that hold the most topical appeal. Fortunately, the price supports such an exploratory approach; on the other hand, if the movies never did much for you, even the book’s automatic passion for its
Contributions of the Digital Humanities
WHO: Consortium for Computers in the Humanities
WHEN: May 29-31, 2005
WHERE: University of Western Ontario
TOPICS: Proposals that develop the idea of the networked citizen and the role of the Arts and Humanities in their work/lives. Further topics may include, but will not be limited to: the web as network, the post-national citizen, humanities computing as an agora for multi-disciplinary engagement, the network and society, humanities computing and pedagogy, computing in the visual, musical, and performance arts.
SUBMISSIONS: 150-300 word abstracts of papers clearly indicating the paper’s thesis, methodology and conclusion, to Patrick Finn (St. Mary’s University-College) and Alan Galey (University of Western Ontario): <conference@coch-cosh.ca>
DEADLINE: December 15, 2004
WHAT: Science Fiction: one universe?
WHO: Edited by Nick Heffernan and Lorna Jowett.
TOPICS: Having received preliminary interest from a publisher, we invite chapter proposals or already completed essays for a collection focusing on the range of different media within science fiction (film, television, literature, comics/ graphic novels, computer games). How is science fiction identified across these different media? How do they interact? How do fans construct the genre from the different media? Are the major tropes of science fiction constructed or represented differently within these different media? How do thematic areas such as class, race, gender, compare across different formats subject will probably not be enough of a red-pill to change your mind. Finally, for college classroom use, I recommend putting Jacking In To The Matrix on library reserve so students can peruse the collection as needed—unless an entire course is devoted to the Matrix universe, in which case it will make a solid and affordable required text.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Wizardry and Wild Romance
David Carlson


The subtitle of Michael Moorcock’s Wizardry and Wild Romance is actually a bit misleading. This book (a slightly revised reissue of the original 1987 edition) is not truly a “study” of epic fantasy; that would imply close textual analysis and some kind of theorization of genre. To his credit, Moorcock explicitly announces in the opening pages of Wizardry and Wild Romance that he has no intention of defining epic fantasy as a literary form. Instead, his primary purpose is to write a polemic about what he refers to as “romantic fantasy.” The main thrust of this polemic, one quickly discovers, is to lament the poor quality of the majority of genre fiction being published under the label “epic fantasy.” In making this qualitative argument, Moorcock’s primary rhetorical strategy involves presenting his readers with often lengthy quotes from well-known writers, quotes that he sees as supporting his claims about the nature of effective (and ineffective) “romantic” writing. Unfortunately, a lack of detailed explanation or analysis of this evidence often undermines the book’s overall effectiveness. An active reader willing and able to work a bit at making his or her own connections should find some value in the book, however. And as a polemic, Wizardry and Wild Romance does succeed in being provocative.

Moorcock begins his text with a chapter titled “Origins” where he asserts that modern fantasy derives largely from the traditions of Chivalric and Gothic Romance. That literature, he goes on to suggest, centered around the use of archetypal characters, scenery, and plots. It also was instrumental in developing an externalized symbolic language for representing the “internal landscapes of the mind” (36). For serious readers and academic critics, these are all fairly unsurprising claims. In this respect, the “Origins” chapter actually begins to reveal Moorcock’s murky sense of his own audience—probably the central flaw of Wizardry and Wild Romance. On the one hand, it is clear that he assumes many of his readers (both genre fiction fans and writers) will lack any deep familiarity with Western literature. As a result he references (and quotes) numerous works that he sees as important parts of the romance tradition. At the same time, Moorcock will allude to the work of critics such as F.R. Leavis and Northrop Frye in a way that only makes complete sense to someone who has already read their works of literary criticism. One wonders, for example, what a reader who needs to be told who Anne Radcliffe or Horace Walpole are will do with an offhand reference to the presence of “naive fantastic elements” in texts by recent writers such as A.S. Byatt—a claim that seems like a reworking of Frye’s discussion of “naive romance” in his The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (16). As in his use of lengthy quotes from modern fantasy authors to support his claims in subsequent chapters, here Moorcock is leaving his readers to connect many of the dots in his argument.

Jacking In To The Matrix
David Carlson

Jacking In To The Matrix is the story of a popular cyberpunk novel, shopper, and virtual reality computer game. If you’ve never heard of it before, you’re likely living under a rock. This book is a guide to the world of the Matrix, the source book for the cyberpunk universe. It’s also a primer on the world of cyberpunk, a genre that has become increasingly popular over the past few years.

The Matrix is a computer-driven reality, created by human brains. The main character, Neo, is a software developer who becomes aware of the Matrix through a dream-like experience. He begins to explore the Matrix, using his computer skills to navigate through it and uncover its secrets. As he delves deeper into the Matrix, he discovers that it is not just a computer simulation, but a reality in itself, inhabited by millions of people who have been enslaved by the system and manipulated by the government. Neo becomes a hero, leading a rebellion against the Matrix and its creators.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part tells the story of Neo’s journey through the Matrix, exploring its different levels and giving an inside look at the world of cyberpunk. The second part is a collection of essays and interviews with experts in the field, discussing the history of the cyberpunk genre and its influence on popular culture. The essays cover a wide range of topics, from the roots of cyberpunk in science fiction to its impact on music, film, and literature.

The book is written in a fast-paced, action-packed style, with a lot of dialogue and exposition. The author, David Carlson, is a well-known cyberpunk writer and a former computer programmer, which gives him a unique perspective on the subject. He is also a self-proclaimed “cyberpunkody,” which means he has a deep love for the genre and its inhabitants.

Overall, Jacking In To The Matrix is a fascinating read for anyone interested in cyberpunk or virtual reality. It provides a comprehensive overview of the Matrix universe, as well as valuable insights into the world of cyberpunk. The book is well-researched and written in an engaging way, making it a must-read for fans of the genre.

The book is available in print and ebook formats. It’s worth noting that the print edition is larger and contains more illustrations, which can be helpful for readers who want to see the world of the Matrix in more detail. The ebook edition is more portable and convenient, especially for readers who prefer to read on devices like tablets or smartphones.

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In summary, Jacking In To The Matrix is a comprehensive guide to the world of the Matrix, written by an expert in the field. It provides valuable insights into the world of cyberpunk and is a must-read for anyone interested in the subject.
As one reads further in the book, however, it does become clear to a patient reader that Moorcock is essentially trying to suggest the need for readers and writers to fully digest the literary tradition of romance in order to liberate commercial “epic fantasy” from its shallow appropriation of clichés and conventions. In his second chapter, “The Exotic Landscape,” he makes the important point that setting in fantasy should be intimately connected to the characterization, themes, and overall symbolism of the tale as a whole. One of his major complaints, then, is that many writers of genre fiction fail to grasp the aesthetic of, say, gothic romance. Instead, they simply derive from that tradition a false notion that the presence of archaic elements and quasi-medieval settings is what constitutes “romantic fantasy.” The major villains in Moorcock’s book are cliché, flat writing, sentimentalism, and uncritical nostalgia for a pre-industrialized past. His chapter on “The Heroes and Heroines” rightly points out that too many of the protagonists of fantasy fiction are “permanent adolescents” who “rarely show mature human responses to their environment, their fellow creatures, or the problems they face” (84-5). Regrettably, in his assault on Tolkien and the Inklings in “Epic Pooh,” Moorcock reveals some of his own blind spots and biases, dismissing the Christian ethos of writers such as C.S. Lewis and Tolkien as similarly immature and sentimental. (He actually goes so far as to refer to Tolkien’s distaste for industrial modernity and “consolatory Christianity” as “misanthropic” [126].) In discussing those fantasy writers he admires, though, Moorcock does effectively goad his readers into a broader sense of what is possible in “romantic fantasy.” He celebrates the complex anti-heroes, dark humor, and urban sensibilities of writers such as China Miéville. He offers a powerful moral critique of the mindless, amoral violence and sadism of much popular fantasy (both in fiction and film), contrasting this with the compassion (and literary sophistication) of M. John Harrison. He applauds the stylistic clarity of writers ranging from Ursula Le Guin to Robin McKinley.

Moorcock’s decision to conclude his book with a series of his fiction reviews, all focusing on recent authors whose work he values, underscores his larger intention for Wizardry and Wild Romance. In the book’s final chapter, “Excursions and Developments,” he explicitly calls for (and predicts) a “revival of direct and unashamed romanticism” that “will have some sort of profound effect on our culture” (148). This sense of artistic commitment does offset many of the obvious weaknesses of the book. Moorcock exposes the literary failures of much of the worst fantastic genre fiction, and he offers an impassioned call for writers and readers to rediscover the essence of romantic aesthetics. One wishes that he had taken more time and care to explore that aesthetic in an analytically and philosophically precise manner. It is probably more appropriate, though, to compare Wizardry and Wild Romance with Wordsworth and Coleridge’s “Preface to Lyrical Ballads” than to M.H. Abrams’s The Mirror and the Lamp. Moorcock has given his readers not so much a “study” as a call to arms.

or genres? What distinguishes the treatment of such themes in closed, short narrative as opposed to their treatment in serial, developing narrative? How do varying emphases on narrative and/or spectacle (according to format) affect science fictions? What advantages and disadvantages are there in these varying formats for the messages of science fiction? Does the range of formats provide limitations or new departures?

SUBMISSIONS: 500 word abstracts or completed 5-6000 word papers should be forwarded to both of the coeditors: Nick Heffernan at <nick.heffernan_at_northampton.ac.uk> and Lorna Jowett at <lorna.jowett_at_northampton.ac.uk>. DEADLINE: 15 December 2004

WHAT: At the Crossroads of New Horizons: Speculative Cultural Productions of Women of Color

WHO: Ritch Calvin & Angela Cotten

TOPICS: The face of science fiction has undergone significant changes in the past thirty years as women writers and writers of color have moved into speculative fiction in increasing numbers since 1970. We are seeking contributions that examine the speculative cultural productions of women of color for our anthology. We would like essays that examine ways in which women of color writers and artists operate within the field of speculation and how their works contribute to the speculative genre. Essays might focus on a single writer/artist or deal with several writers/artists comparatively.

SUBMISSIONS: Completed unpublished essays and/or abstracts to coeditors Ritch Calvin at <rcalvink@notes.cc.sunysb.edu> and Angela Cotten at <acotten@notes.cc.sunysb.edu>. DEADLINE: December 15, 2004

WHAT: Green Letters 7: The Future
of Ecocriticism
WHEN: Spring 2005 edition
TOPICS: Topics may include, but are not limited to: Ecocriticism and socio-cultural, cultural or literary theory; Examination and advocacy of hitherto under-represented authors, genres, periods or movements.
SUBMISSIONS: 4000-6000 word articles via MSWord email attachment to <GreenLetters@asle.co.uk>
DEADLINE: 1 February 2005
WHAT: "Imagendering": Gender and Visualisations
WHEN: Publication: March 2005
TOPICS: The online journal "gender forum" (www.genderforum.uni-koeln.de), affiliated with the University of Cologne, Germany, invites scholars to contribute target articles and reviews to its upcoming issue on gender and visualisation.
SUBMISSIONS: 8,000 words, and a bio-blurb and an abstract of 10 to 15 lines, as email attachments to <genderforum@uni-koeln.de>.
DEADLINE: December 15, 2005
INFORMATION: <http://www.genderforum.uni-koeln.de>.
WHAT: WisCon Issue
WHO: Extrapolation
TOPICS: The WisCon issue of Extrapolation is intended to fulfill two main goals: To provide a space for the contextualization and examination of the field of feminist science fiction and to stimulate focused discourse by providing the best papers presented at WisCon to an extended audience. We are seeking articles concerning any and all aspects of the intersections of feminism, science fiction and fantasy. Papers presented at or inspired by WisCon are sought, and scholarly works concentrating on the work of Guests of Honor Eleanor Arnason and/or Patricia McKillip are particularly welcome.

NONFICTION REVIEWS

Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature
Michael M. Levy


Pilgrim Award-winner Brian Stableford's new *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature* is, I believe, an excellent and highly useful reference book. I should confess, however, that I may be slightly prejudiced in its favor since, at Stableford's request, I helped proofread the manuscript and made a number of suggestions concerning its content.

The book falls into three parts: the front matter, the dictionary proper, and an extended bibliography. The two major items in the front matter are a Chronology of important events in science fiction, science, and history, beginning in 1726 with the appearance of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and ending in 2003 with the publication of Charles Stross's *Singularity Sky*. This is followed by Stableford's Introduction, which covers such issues as the problems inherent in defining the term "science fiction," the often difficult relationship between science fiction and fantasy, the differentiation between science fiction as a literary field and science fiction as a commercial genre, the economics involved in publishing sf, and the aesthetics of science fiction. Stableford knows the field inside out and his arguments are invariably sensible, though colored, perhaps, by a certain wry cynicism resulting from his own experiences as a practicing fiction writer. He is particularly good on the question of whether or not it is legitimate to evaluate sf using rules that differ from those applied to literary fiction, coming down on the side of the argument that "the straightforward application of the conventional assumptions of literary criticism to sf is difficult, if not flagrantly inapt."

Any science fiction reference book that runs from A (beginning with Edwin Abbott) to Z (ending with Zoran Zivkovic) must of necessity be compared with the elephant sitting in the corner, John Clute and Peter Nicholls's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, a volume, it's worth noting, that Stableford contributed extensively. Stableford makes no attempt to be as complete as Clute/Nicholls and his essays in this volume, as befits something labelled a "dictionary," are shorter than the comparable pieces in the *Encyclopedia*, concentrating on bibliographic information and lacking all but the briefest critical commentary. A typical author entry gives the writer's birth and death dates, nationality, and basic publishing history, noting major books and themes. The entry on Roger Zelazny, for example, which runs about 300 words, mentions the author's "exceptionally vivid short fiction," his use of "hybridized sf and mythological fantasy, often drawing on anthropological and psychoanalytical interpretations," and the eventual decline of his work into a series of books that are mere "formal exercises in other fantasy genres." Most author entries are shorter than this (David Zindell, for example, gets 80 words, Alexander Besher, 60); a few are longer (Heinlein rates about 900 words). A judicious use of boldfacing within the essays on individual authors directs the reader to the dictionary's many thematic entries—in the case of Zelazny for example, "hybridized" sf, "transfiguration," "Promethean fantasy," "series" fiction, "time-twisting," and "hard sf," as well as a number of other writers with whom Zelazny collaborated.
Stableford also includes entries containing clear definitions for a variety of important terms created or popularized by other critics and writers: Darko Suvin's "novum," for example, or Gregory Benford's "mosaic" novel. Further, he introduces a number of useful critical terms apparently of his own invention, such as "transfiguration," which he applies to science fiction stories that work variations on earlier fictions, as for example Robert "Heinlein's transfiguration of Kipling's Kim into Citizen of the Galaxy." Another term Stableford is fond of is "chimerical." A chimerical text is one "that combines elements of sf with elements drawn from other fantasy genres in spite of the fact that they are based on fundamental assumptions that are opposed and irreconcilable," with China Miéville's Perdido Street Station being a prime example.

Although Stableford's opinions are on the whole both sensible and incisive, his dictionary does have a mild tendency towards Johnsonian irony, as for example, in his entry on L. Ron Hubbard, in which he refers to "the Writers of the Future contest founded in 1985 by followers of a religion he invented," but quite consciously fails to mention Hubbard's religion, Scientology, by name. Then there's his rather enigmatic description of Lester Del Rey as a man "who fabricated his life history up to the point when he began to write sf in 1958." As must always be the case in such a large undertaking, there are also a few errors of fact, as, for example, when Stableford refers to Eleanor Arnason's novels A Woman of the Iron People and Ring of Swords as two volumes in the same series, which they aren't (although it should be noted that both books do involve large, furry alien species with odd sexual practices).

The last part of the book consists of a valuable and extended bibliography of works relevant to the study of science fiction. This bibliography is in turn subdivided into General Reference Works, Historical Studies, Aesthetic and Theoretical Studies, Bibliographies, Thematic Studies (subdivided by theme), Nations and Regions, Studies of Individual Authors, Writing Guides and Manuals, Speculative Nonfiction, Journals, Fanzines, and Websites. The Nations and Regions section is particularly interesting and, indeed, the Dictionary's many entries on international science fiction are a particular strength.

Overall, as I mentioned at the beginning of this review, the Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature is an excellent reference book. On the one hand it's more portable than Clute/Nicholls and easier to find things in. On the other hand, Stableford is a major critic in the field and his opinions on the writers and works of literature contained herein are both succinct and valuable. Further, many of the terms he includes in this volume deserve to become part of the field's standard critical vocabulary. At $70 this isn't a book everyone is going to want for their home library, but it should definitely be purchased for library collections.

FICTION REVIEW

Cosmos Latinos

M. Elizabeth Ginway


This translation of science fiction texts originally written in Spanish and Portuguese opens up new horizons for speakers of English. The book's succinct
WHAT: Atwood Panel: Twentieth Century Literature Conference
WHO: Margaret Atwood Society
WHEN: Feb. 24-26, 2005
WHERE: University of Louisville
TOPICS: any aspect of Atwood's work for presentation
SUBMISSIONS: Send 250-330 word proposals (as part of email message, hard copy, or fax, no attachments
CONTACT: Both Dr. Karen Macfarlane, Department of English, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS Canada B3M 2J6 <karen.macfarlane@msvu.ca> and Dr. Cynthia Kuhn, Department of English, Metro State, CB 32, PO Box 173362, Denver, CO 80126 U.S.A. kuhnc@mscd.edu

WHAT: The H G Wells Society Essay Competition
WHO: The Wellsian
TOPICS: Papers concerning any aspect of Wells's life and work. Possible themes might include: Wells and utopias; Wells and science; Wells and women; Wells and the social novel; Wells and colonialism; Wells and his contemporaries; and Wells and the World State. A panel of appointed experts will judge the competition, and the winning entry published in TheWellsian. The winning entry also wins a free year's membership and free participation in the Annual Wells Society Conference.
CONTACT: Steve McLean, Hon. General Secretary, The Department of English Literature, University of Sheffield, Shearwood Mount, Shearwood Road, Sheffield, S10 2TD, U.K.
DEADLINE: March 1st 2005

WHAT: The Ring Goes Ever On
WHO: The Tolkien Society
WHEN: 11th - 15th August 2005
WHERE: Aston University, Birmingham England.

The anthology is organized chronologically, tracing the genre as it developed in Latin America and Spain. It begins with two excerpts from Mexican and Spanish works dating from the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The authors of these early works imagine brighter futures and ideal societies made possible by science and technology. Later stories are not so optimistic. Three representative stories published between 1912 and 1952 (by Spain’s Miguel de Unamuno, Chile’s Ernesto Silva Román, and Mexico’s Juan José Arreola) reveal an underlying fear of the mechanization and dehumanization of the city and of family life in the Spanish-speaking world.

Not surprisingly, most of the stories included here were published from 1960 to the present, and accordingly, Bell and Molina-Gavilán devote two-thirds of the 19-page introduction to the history and themes of the recent past. Were it not for the brief presentation of each author that precedes each individual selection, the reader could easily become overwhelmed by the sheer number of stories (22 in all), from diverse nations with different political histories. The pithy introductory materials serve as an invaluable resource for the casual reader and scholar alike.

In order to offer an idea of ways the book might be used in the classroom to convey the diverse Weltanschauungen of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking authors in the science fiction genre, I have organized my discussion of the stories into the following thematic clusters: dystopian societies and nuclear war, the alien, the cyborg, time travel and history, and postmodern texts.

Among the more predictable stories in the anthology are those that deal with dystopian societies and nuclear war, most of which were published in the mid- to late-1960s. A dystopian view of modern society appears in Argentine Pablo Campana’s 1966 “Anacronia,” where life is regulated by the clock, as well as in Venezuelan Luis García Brito’s 1970 “The Future,” which predicts that our brains will atrophy because of our dependence on technology. In Argentine Edmundo Golgorovsky’s 1967 “The Last Refuge,” the protagonist hopes to be abducted by aliens to escape political persecution, the same fate desired by a young Mexican boy who longs to escape from provincial life in Federico Schaffler’s 1983 “A Miscalculation.” Post-nuclear holocaust stories like Salvadoran Álvaro Menén Desleal’s 1965 “Cord of Nylon and Gold” and Argentine Alberto Venasco’s 1967 “Post-boom boom,” portray a world where the bombs have been dropped and the survivors are powerless to participate in the reconstruction of society, in the first case because the only survivor is stuck in orbit around the Earth, and in the
The alien figure appears in the greatest number of stories and generally serves as a gloss on political situations, either global or national. For example, Angel Arango's 1964 story from Cuba, "The Cosmonaut," describes an alien reproductive ritual, in which the technologically superior cosmonaut suddenly falls victim to seemingly "cute" aliens. The story could be construed as merely humorous, or as a critique of a small nation (Cuba) challenging the technologically superior US or even the USSR in a fantasy of reverse colonization. In another Cuban story, Daina Chaviano's 1983 "The Annunciation," Mary is seduced by an alien as an explanation for the immaculate conception, thereby transforming a "sacred" text and infusing it with life and hope of redemption. This can be read as a commentary desacralizing "sacred" texts as a means of resisting communist ideology and protesting the repression of dissent in the 1980s in Cuba.

Aliens often appear in the guise of religious figures in Latin American science fiction, reminding us of the strong presence of religion and Catholicism in the history and cultures of the region. In Peruvian José Adolfo's 1972 "The Falsifier," a monk cannot help but describe an Incan war god (an actual extra-terrestrial) in terms of the Christ figure in his writings, omitting the details of "celestial carriages" (space ships) and other alien imagery that might get him in trouble with the Inquisition. The story reminds readers of the power of self-censorship and the re-writing of history and culture in the chronicles of the colonial era. The savior myth also figures in the 1971 story by Chilean Hugo Correa "When Pilate said no," in which a reptilian-insectoid race invents and sacrifices a savior to outwit technologically superior human colonizers. The aliens tell the surviving humans of their plans to resist future human colonization, recalling the anti-imperialist resistance of countries in Latin America in the 1970s.

One of the most memorable alien stories of the period is Argentine Angelica Gorodischer's 1972 "Violet Embryos," a disturbing tale of the psychology of individual soldiers stranded on an expedition in outer space. When the follow-up mission finds the soldiers in unexplained and grotesque physical and psychological states, it becomes clear that the aliens (the violet embryos of the title) had allowed them to live out their innermost fantasies, including sadomasochism, masochism, drunkenness, homosexuality, and a return to the womb. This disturbing story focuses on the inner psychology of the military, and how violence destroys both victim and the perpetrator. In this sense it could be read as an allegory of those, who, while in power, tortured and killed thousands of individuals, scattering the lives of several generations during military rule in Argentina.

The aliens in Braulio Tavares's 1989 "Stuntninds" are of a different ilk and represent the pace and dehumanization of modern life. The alien "Intrusos" use humans to experience the thrill of human emotions, since they have none. While the human "stuntninds" learn an enormous amount from aliens and momentarily live a life of luxury, they die after only a few years, drained by the aliens' voracious curiosity. The story is part of Tavares's first anthology "A espinha dorsal da memória: The Spinal Cord of Memory) in which these aliens offer humans one-way portals for space travel, without the possibility of return. Here aliens represent the invasion of technology and globalization from which there can be no return to the past.

Another series of stories can be grouped around the image of the "cyborg" or the artificially enhanced human. One of the first is André Carneiro's 1978 "Brain Transplant." Carneiro uses transgenering and technology to explore sexu-
ality, a recurrent theme in his work. Here the invasive technology is not seen as a violation, but rather as an exploration of new identities and experiences, in line with sexual liberation in the 1960s and 70s. This use of technology is quite innocent when compared to that found in the other stories of the anthology. In two stories from Mexico from the 1990s, implants are viewed as a violation of the self and identity. In Ricardo Lavrin’s 1994 “Reaching the Shore,” a father is addicted to a pleasure chip in his brain, while in Pepe Rojo’s 1996 “Gray Noise,” a journalist is implanted with a chip that sends constant messages to his brain commanding that he investigate late-breaking cases of murder and death. Here the implants are symbols of dehumanization, representing the alienation of drugs and mass media.

Perhaps the most poignant story of this type is the Chilean author Pablo Castro’s “Exeron” (2000), a story which begins with the narrator’s recollection of Exerion, a video game from his childhood. Later, we discover that while technology has enhanced his body, he is missing limbs, because of brutal governmental torture. At the same time, technology allows him to create a fictitious family, recalling all those who have disappeared. Thus, Castro suggests that cyberspace is not a place to transcend the body, as it is in much of North American cyberpunk, but to meditate on torture, recreate the missing, and the dead, recalling the disappearances and brutality of Chile’s military regime.

Under the rubric of travel and history, we can group Brazilian Jeronimo Monteiro’s 1964 “The Crystal Goblet,” Argentine Magdalena Mouján Otaño’s 1968 “Gu Ta Guttarak” (Ours and our own), and Spaniards Ricardo de la Casa and Pedro Jorge Romero’s 1998 “The Day We Went through the Transition.” The Brazilian story tells of a crystal goblet found by a middle-aged narrator near his home through which he is able to see acts of war and violence perpetrated throughout world history. This evokes the repressed violence in the narrator’s life as he recalls being beaten by both his father and by the secret police. While demystifying the image of Brazil as a peaceful nation, the story also foreshadows the repression that would characterize Brazil’s most recent military regime (1964-85). Otaño’s ingenious “Gu Ta Guttarak,” with its Basque title, centers on the idea of proving the superiority of the Basque people by tracing their history back to their origins. Written in 1968 during the military dictatorship in Argentina, the story questions notions of identity and nationalism, two of the concepts used by authoritarian powers to justify power. The innocent tone of the narrator contrasts with the irony with which the implied author presents the concepts of purity, race, and identity. Spain itself has also struggled with the legacy of the Franco dictatorship. “The Day We Went through the Transition” demonstrates the obsession with the past that still plagues contemporary Spain. In the story, time agents are sent to the past to sabotage all those who would attempt to change history to annul the transition to democracy. The constant battle they wage recalls the fragility of democratic institutions which must be constantly remembered and fought for.

Under the rubric of postmodern tales, those incorporating popular culture and popular genres, I have placed Spaniard Elia Barceló’s 1994 “The First Time,” Mexican Mauricio-José Schwartz’s 1996 “Glimmerings on Blue Glass,” and Cuban Michel Encinosa’s 2001 “Like the Roses Had to Die.” Barceló’s story, in the voice of an adolescent girl, questions gender roles, the human thirst for violence, and the process of adolescent identity formation. The diary of a privileged teenager in pursuit of her first kill, not her first sexual experience, is given a sinister touch by her semi-illiteracy. Mexican Mauricio José Schwartz’s critique of unemployment and capitalism, as the editors note, runs counter to the conventional Marxist rejection of popular culture. The story suggests that a popular genre (the detective comic book), consumed in secret by the protagonist and others like him, can be used as a form of resistance to a dehumanizing economic situation. Finally, Encinosa’s “Like the Roses Had to Die” tells the story of mutants in a way reminiscent of the Hulk and X-Men, yet in a more somber tone. As part animal and part human, the mutants struggle to survive in the face of constant subjection to viruses and violence. The atmosphere of conspiracy, betrayal and physical injury shows how cyberpunk and comic books have crossed into the “closed” communist society of Cuba, where those with dissenting voices may feel as persecuted and repressed as the characters in their stories.

I teach Brazilian Portuguese and specialize in the science fiction of Portuguese-speaking Brazil, and, unfortunately, have had little opportunity to learn about the science fiction being written in Spanish-speaking countries. This volume has given me new insight into the science fiction of Brazil’s neighboring cultures. I found the stories highly readable in English, indicating that the editors and translators have done a good job in translating them. The book has also provided me with a point of departure for comparative studies, and a great desire to learn more. I strongly encourage Anglophone scholars to take a look at this landmark work and its contribution to the field, and to adopt it for their science fiction classes as a way of adding a multicultural dimension to existing courses.
"Never trust a genemod general!"—that will probably become an adage on Greentrees, the colony world that is the primary setting for this sequel to Crossfire (Tor, 2003). In Crossfire the human colonists face mortal danger as they find themselves caught up in a millennia-long interstellar war between the intensely and instinctively xenophobic Furs and the apparently benign Vines. I imagine the warrior Furs looking like a cross between giant ground sloths and grizzly bears. A highly technological DNA-based species, they appear all the more menacing when arrayed in battle armor that any Klingon would be proud to wear. The thoroughly alien Vines are genetic engineers whose status as plants or animals is either in doubt or irrelevant, considering that they are the product of non-DNA evolution. At the close of Crossfire, humans and their Vine allies have embarked on a plan to neutralize the Fur threat. Crucible derives its name from a Terran ship that arrives unannounced after a fifty-year voyage from an Earth that has degenerated to become a filthy dog eat dog world (if there are still dogs) with fewer than half a billion surviving humans. The sequel continues the story of Furs vs. Vines with the addition of the Terran interlopers.

As her Beggars in Spain and Probability trilogies demonstrate, Kress is equally at home with high-tech violence and character-dependent political intrigue. Crucible relies on both, although there is a good measure of low-tech violence as well. Kress' long interest in bio-technology fosters the further and often surprising development of the Vines and their biologically derived weapons of mass incapacitation and defense. Crucible is, therefore, original and engaging hard SF. At the same time, the novel is an intelligent study of human behavior at both the societal and individual levels. Several characters from Crossfire play key roles in the novel. These savvy Earth-born colonists are joined by new generations of Greenies, as the Greentrees natives call themselves, and serve as a kind of control that allows Kress to show how the Greenies have and have not evolved socially in the decades without any contact with the homeworld.

It is certainly an underlying theme of this book that the people from Earth are in some ways as alien to the Greenies as are the extraterrestrials. On the one hand, Greenie society is plagued by economic and social inequality bred of the planet's having been founded by private interest groups with varying levels of capital investment. Crucible suggests that capitalism may not be the best model for founding colony worlds, especially since the inequalities on Greentrees reprise Earth's sad history of racial as well as class discrimination. On the other hand, Greenies have not despoiled their world or descended into me-first barbarity. The Terrans are like an urban street gang visiting Mayberry; they are contemptuous of the bumpkin Greenies who, living on a lush world with abundant resources, are unprepared to deal with predators from a depleted world. Readers from Earth will hear alarm bells when they meet the genetically engineered Terran commander, General Julian Cabot Martin, but the unsuspecting widow Alexandra Cutler, one of Greentrees' unofficial ruling triumvirs, hears only violins and falls hard for the man in uniform. But almost all Greenies are fair game for the sophisticated adventurer from the stars. The Julian-Alex affair recalls Aeneas and Dido as well as Adam and Eve, for not only is Julian a war-hardened veteran escaping from an embattled world, but he is also a deceitful and covetous tempter who threatens paradise.

Action, civil strife, weird science, and the ever-fascinating Vines make Crucible a good space yarn, but the novel is more than that. The Greenies wrestle with a problem that Americans should recognize. They are torn between preserving their traditional liberties and yielding to increasing regimentation and authoritarianism in the interest of global security. Furthermore, the pacific voices of the colony's New Quakers are muffled by fear and martial preparation. Can good come from immoral actions? The genocidal Furs would never entertain such a question, which is why they are such a terrible threat. It is the consummately alien Vines who seem to have considered such deep moral issues.

Crucible is a hard SF page turner, but it is also a book for our time. The base of the Statue of Liberty bears this quotation from Benjamin Franklin: "They who give up essential liberty to obtain a little safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." The Greenies are light years from New York harbor, so it is understandable that they might not recall Franklin's words, but we who should know better would do well to ponder that inscription, especially after witnessing what befalls the residents of Greentrees. Many Greenies not only trade their liberty for the promise of security, but they also turn against one
another in displays of hysteria that recall Arthur Miller’s *Crucible* and the McCarthy-era witch hunting that that play obliquely critized. In May 2004 Nancy Kress was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at her alma mater, Plattsburgh State University. She earned this award not simply because she is a successful SF writer but even more so because she has consistently turned out highly readable fictions that explore and illuminate the timeless human concerns that technology alone cannot resolve.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**Nebula Awards Showcase 2004**

Edward Carmien


This year’s *Showcase* is much like those of previous years. A collection of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writer’s Association (SFWA) Nebula Award winning stories (and an excerpt from the winning novel), each *Showcase* also includes commentary about subjects relevant to the organization’s membership. This year’s award-winners are Carol Emshwiller, Ted Chiang, Richard Chwedyk, and Neil Gaiman. Also included is material from Grand Master Ursula K. Le Guin, Author Eminent Katherine MacLean, and Nebula-nominated writers Adam-Troy Castro, Jack McDevitt, Megan Lindholm, Michael Swanwick, and Charles Stross. Commentary and appreciative material about the late Damon Knight is provided by Frederik Pohl, Carol Emshwiller, James Gunn, Robin Wilson, Edward Bryant, Eileen Gunn, and Leslie What. Molly Gloss contributes commentary about Ursula K. Le Guin, while Sharon Lee does the same for Katherine MacLean. Each story is introduced by a few words by the author, and editor Vonda N. McIntyre provides an introduction. As is true with all *Showcase* editions, a list of Nebula Award winners from the award’s inception to the present rounds out the text.

The *Nebula Awards Showcase 2004*, by presenting a snapshot of one year’s best work in the minds of the SFWA membership, is a text like no other. Though limited to work published by SFWA members, the collection still represents an excellent cross-section of a year’s output. The orientation is of course toward work produced in North America, and winners in the non-novel categories consistently first appeared in well-known science fiction and/or fantasy periodicals such as *Asimov’s, The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and *Analog*. Even within these strictures, and others imposed by the Nebula Award process (which relies on nominations and votes from the SFWA membership), this *Showcase* still represents a compelling collection of “the best” work of 2002. (Material appearing in 2002 is nominated and voted upon in 2003, making 2004 the publication year for the collection.)

This text has two primary academic uses. As a potential text for a class about science fiction and/or fantasy literature, *Showcase 2004* has many fine qualities. The stories are varied in style and content. Ted Chiang’s “Hell is the Absence of God” contrasts stylistically yet effectively with customary practice in contemporary fiction. His story is an effective example of how authorial voice can be manipulated to more effectively convey the artistic content (or “aesthetic effect” if you prefer) of a short story. Megan Lindholm’s “Cut” puts a speculative fiction spin on a present-day issue important to feminists and others. Other stories present opportunity for fruitful exploration in an academic setting. In a practical sense, the text is inexpensive.

As a tool for scholarship, this anthology not only touches on many important contemporary issues as mentioned above but also includes commentary from authors with long lineages, such as Frederik Pohl and James Gunn, about individuals central to the world of science fiction and fantasy literature, such as Damon Knight and Ursula K. Le Guin. This commentary is not itself scholarly, but can in turn be useful to scholars seeking primary material by and about important writers in the field.

*Nebula Awards Showcase 2004* is a useful text on many levels. I recommend it be thought of as an important and relevant periodical, an anthology that should be an annual acquisition by institutions as well as by scholars with an interest in the field. For those who write this sort of fiction, *Showcase* is a helpful benchmark of quality. Like a periodical, this text’s real value will begin to become apparent when it is viewed as part of an ongoing collection that stretches back in time, year after year. Each individual edition is valuable alone; a ten-year run of *Showcases* will possess scholarly value in excess of the sum of its parts.
DIES THE FIRE

David Mead

[Reviewed in uncorrected proofs]

In 2002, S.M. Stirling published The Peshawar Lancers, a very interesting alternate-history adventure set in a world where fragments of a great asteroid fell across the northern hemisphere in 1878, creating catastrophic climatic effects worldwide (four years of "nuclear winter") and destroying most of North America. In 2003, he published Conquistador, another alternate-history, set in California-as-we-know-it and in a wonderfully unmolested alternate-California where Europeans never came. Now comes Dies The Fire, an alternate-history set in 1998 and immediately afterwards in the Pacific Northwest (mainly Idaho and Oregon). Like The Peshawar Lancers, this story begins with a paradigm-smashing catastrophe, a mysterious "Change" which stifles electrical activity and suppresses explosives almost completely. This Change plunges humanity into a terrible die-off, pitting the most vicious criminals, who thrive by brutalizing others, against small groups of competent, civilized survivors.

Stirling's plot is fairly direct, given the scenario that suddenly, everywhere, everything electro-mechanical stops working and explosives simply fizzle. Those who escape the immediate physical consequences of the Change (e.g. huge inextinguishable fires caused by falling aircraft) have to survive the subsequent breakdown of civil order and civic services, and then the desperate violence and disease provoked by starvation and exposure (cannibalism, plague). Those with the luck, intelligence and competence in such (medieval) skills as swordsmanship and archery have a chance to live, if they act quickly. But most die, incapable of dealing with the failure of almost everything necessary to their lives: power, light, water, law enforcement, automobiles, etc.

To explore the possibilities of his scenario, Stirling weaves together three basic stories. The first tracks Mike Havel, an ex-Marine piloting a charter flight in Idaho when the Change changes everything. He manages to crash into a river, saving the Larsson family for whom he's working from immediate death. Havel is competent, as are his clients, and his individual heroism and competence explore the ways individuals might cope with such a transformation. The second narrative thread describes the adventures of Juniper Mackenzie, a Wiccan folksinger, and her friends and coven in Corvallis, Oregon, as they try to cope first with the fires destroying the city, then with the deadly violence and panic that follows. Juney's story is really the story of a community cooperating to deal with catastrophe. The third plot describes the anti-social work of Norman Arminger, a brilliant medievalist who, foreseeing the consequences of and opportunities offered by the Change, ruthlessly organizes the criminal elements of Portland, making himself "Lord Protector" of the Willamette valley. Perhaps because they are the heroic and positive figures, we see much more of Havel and Mackenzie than of Arminger, whose banner proclaims his linkage to Tolkien's Sauron, and his troops as Orcs. If there is a plot flaw, it is that Arminger's presence in the story is insufficiently realized, so that the triumph of sanity and competence over his maniacal selfishness and amorality is lessened a bit.

Arminger excepted, the majority of the characters are well realized and believable. Even the lesser villains seem quite plausible, and quite frightening. As one of those sure to die in circumstances such as Stirling posits I was quite impressed by the detail the author brings to the description of bow-making, trebuchet-construction, Wiccan rituals and songs, and so forth. The verisimilitude he achieves is quite persuasive, and the interaction of the various characters seemed to me quite real.

Although it is a (necessarily) violent story, Dies The Fire is an exciting alternate-history, perhaps even more interesting than Conquistador and The Peshawar Lancers because it makes us think (I think quite deliberately) about how insulated and vulnerable most of us are, protected from raw nature by modern technology and civic structures. It certainly made me wonder what I might do in such feral circumstances. Strongly recommended.

PS: there is a substantial body of post-apocalyptic fiction and film which might be compared to this story, for example George Stewart's Earth Abides, Mel Gibson's Mad Max films, Pat Frank's Alas Babylon, David Brin's The Postman.

For a useful list of such texts, check out the following URL at <http://www.fact-index.com/a/ap/apocalyptic_and_post_apocalyptic_science_fiction.html#Ecological%20catastrophe>. 


FICTION REVIEW

**Olympic Games**

Bruce L. Rockwood


“Alexander could ignore the bullshit without forsaking the real. Few mortals possessed that ability. Zeus admired him for that.” (158) Few mortal readers will reach that point in this novel of mixed results and genres, but it best expresses this one’s reaction to a well crafted book, whose intriguing characters—mortal and immortal—seem to be wound up and set in motion in a plot that transcends place and time, but really has no place to go. Zeus the philanderer, Penelope the naive naiad survivor, Possum the obsessive compulsive orphaned hermit who worries about hearing voices, and whose unusual gift for the arts finances his reclusive but organic life-style, are all characters one can appreciate but who feel under used and whose interactions lack dramatic tension.

The central relationship between Zeus and Hera, whose dysfunctional marriage reads like a script for a bad 4000 year daytime soap, is presented on one level as if this is a story we already know too well, versed as we are in the genuine Greek myths of Zeus’s wandering eye and Hera’s zest for revenge. Being immortal, both care little for the harm they do to others, or to themselves. The missing years between Penelope’s youthful fling with Zeus, and early 21st century New York City when Hera and Zeus finally reconnect over a computer bulletin board where Zeus logs on as “MGG Married Greek God, tests negative, seeks goddess to revive fun and games,” (33) go largely unexamined. There is an interesting explanation of how the tree into which Zeus turns Penelope to hide her from Hera eventually becomes a door in Possum’s Catskill Mountains cabin (18-22), but how Zeus and Hera wound up in New York remains a mystery. What have these two been doing with themselves, and why are their powers so diminished and ill-used? In contrast, Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods* does a much better job of making sense of the arrival and place of less familiar Norse and Egyptian gods in the new world, and how they come to terms with modernity. The character of the Oracle introduced in the Prologue, and who journeys from the New York City setting to the Catskill setting over the course of the book, is presented much as Gaiman would, but never with the same narrative effect.

Hera lacks good judgment as much as Zeus lacks self-control. On her way to meet Zeus at a bar, she conceals herself to watch him seduce a local lovely named Fawn, and then gets drunk and turns into a ladybug “to buzz Zeus’s table and eavesdrop more efficiently.” (38) As a result, “her blood alcohol hovered above ninety percent” and she is gang raped by a bunch of beetles. “The fog slowly dissipated, and Hera perked up enough to zap her suitors into transit cops, then sent them outside to prowl the streets with the rest of New York’s finest.” This turn of phrase is typical of much of the narrative—contemporary and ironic adaptation of the classical givens of her characters, but lacking in any depth of feeling. Traces of Douglas Adams with a feminist twist and a nod to modern masculine insecurity (as reflected in the coming together of Zeus’s followers in a steam bath) abound. These work well in episodes that could be short stories, but lack the carrying capacity for a full-length novel.

A modern woman who retains her sense of the pagan goddess she is, Hera determines to make Zeus take responsibility for her in her newly pregnant state, and Zeus promptly takes off for the hills—the Catskills in fact, where he begins to reconstruct Olympus in the guise of his newly assumed role as an Iron John-like cult figure. Hera loses all but one of the odd beetle-like babies she brings to term, and lacks any interest in rearing the surviving son once she rescues him from the diabolic clutches of the curious pediatrician, Dr. Sanders, who has named the baby’s peculiar malformations “Sanders’ Syndrome” (84) (one is reminded of the doctor discovering dual alien heart beats and envisioning himself on the cover of *Time Magazine* in the film *Earth Girls Are Easy*). The baby Igor is cared for by the widower Alexander (125), whom Hera had been “quietly enchanting when Zeus wasn’t looking” (69) and who spirits mother and son away to his long abandoned cabin in the mountains for safety. Alexander is bereft of his family after the accidental death of his daughter, and his devotion to Igor causes Hera to go off him as a lover or, at least, distraction. All of these and other characters come together in a flood at Zeus’s lodge whose climactic events help Alexander move past his fears and recognize, as the Oracle puts it, “It’s never too late. That’s the only
lesson worth learning. If we thought it was too late, we'd never accomplish a thing. Because it would always be too late...

If even gods can make mistakes, what makes you think you're any better?” (231)

*Olympic Games* shows talent and potential, but a need to develop characters beyond the stereotypes their names, roles or respective handicaps imply, and a plot whose complexity is both more fully worked out, and more rapid paced. To give a comparative contrast, my 18 year old son just had me read the first in a series of books he and his friends like, *Storm Front*, by Jim Butcher (ROC/New American Library, A Penguin Book, N.Y.: 2000). It too deploys traditional mythic figures in a modern, though noir, setting and has a variety of stereotypical characters briefly sketched out. But its murder mystery plot gives it momentum that makes it a page-turner, while reading *Olympic Games* reminds me of reading *Billy Budd*; it may be a better written book, but it's too much work reading it.
The SFRA is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching, to encourage and assist scholarship, and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and related media performances. Among the members are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurists, writers, authors, booksellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership.

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