Cyberspace fictions continue to be of considerable interest to SFRA members; note for instance the twenty pages on “Approaching Neuromancer” in the February issue of the SFRAReview. Until recently, SFRA itself has been nearly invisible in cyberspace—but no more!

First, Peter Sands has been working to expand the scope and content of the official SFRA Web page, with the help of vice president Adam Frisch and others. If you haven’t visited our Web page in the past few weeks, give it a try at <http://www.uwm.edu/~sands/sfra/scifi.htm>. (If you bookmarked the page earlier, you may be using an old address that leads to an earlier version; replace it with the address above.) By the time you read this, we may have been able to obtain an address that’s easier to remember: <http://www.sfra.org>

Second, Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen have established a separate SFRAReview Web page. It’s linked to the official SFRA Web page, but you can get to it directly at this address: <http://members.aol.com/sfrareview>. Karen and Craig will use this page to publish material that’s just too long for inclusion in the SFRAReview’s print version (see, for instance, the twenty additional pages of detailed commentary on Neuromancer by Rich Erlich), as well as abstracts and excerpts from published SFRAReview articles. We have great hopes for both Web pages.

Meanwhile, the Web is steadily becoming more useful for SF researchers. Sturgeon’s Law applies with a vengeance to Web content, but with care you can quickly locate all sorts of interesting and useful information. Here are some sites I’ve found to be especially reliable and productive:

- The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers’ Association, <http://www.sfwa.org>. This page will lead you to a large number of members’ pages, current SFWA news, some obituaries, etc.
- The International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/iafa/iafa.home.html>. In addition to such material as an index to the Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, this site will link you to Hal Hall’s extensive index of “SF Criticism 1992–1995” and to “The Year’s Scholarship..."
The SFRAREview editors encourage submissions, including essays, Review Essays that cover several related texts, and interviews. Please send submissions or queries to both coeditors. If you would like to review nonfiction or fiction, please contact the respective editor. The general editorial address for the SFRAREview is: <SFRAReview@aol.com>.

Karen Hellekson, Coeditor
742 N 5th Street
Lawrence, KS 66044
<khl25@juno.com>
<khelekson@hotmail.com> (for attachments)

Craig Jacobsen, Coeditor & Fiction Reviews Editor
208 E Baseline Road #311
Tempe, AZ 85283
<SFRAReview@aol.com>

Neil Barron, Nonfiction Reviews Editor
1149 Lime Place
Vista, CA 92083-7428
<nneilbarron@hotmail.com>

Visit us at http://members.aol.com/sfreview

There are lots of other SF-related sites available, including individual authors’ personal home pages not linked to those above. (If you’re interested in Orson Scott Card, for instance, go immediately to <http://www.hatrack.com>, which will tell you more about Card than you may want to know.) I’m sure I haven’t found all the good ones; let us know if you have others to suggest.

The SFRAREview website is up and running at <http://members.aol.com/sfreview>. It can be linked from our regular home page (the URL of which is listed on the back cover of this issue). This site, which is maintained by SFRAREview coeditor Craig Jacobsen with content he and coeditor Karen Hellekson put together, contains information relating to the SFRAREview, including links to amazon.com for ordering books reviewed in the SFRAREview’s pages. We are also assembling a Review archive. In order that content will reach paying SFRA members first, selected review essays and other features of the SFRAREview will be posted six months to a year after their initial publication. Occasionally, the “director’s cut” of an essay cut for length will appear simultaneously with its publication.

Because many of our new members have come from our organization website, we want to make it as exciting and informative as possible while maintaining certain benefits for subscribers. Webmaster Peter Sands has some exciting ideas; look for a definite improvement in timeliness and content of our home page. In addition, the Board is working on a statement of intent for our home page in order that we might more successfully focus on soliciting and posting material of interest to SFRA members at large; we will be focusing on the teaching of SF and SF research opportunities. As Alan mentions above, be sure to share any internet resources that you’ve found particularly valuable. We’d like to make the SFRA website the place to start SF research on the web.

Keep in mind that SFRA receives a kickback from, um percentage of, any books that you order through Amazon.com when you connect through the link on our page, and it doesn’t add anything to your cost.
Vice President’s Report

Adam Frisch

I have been working steadily since SFRA’s early February executive conference call to help Peter Sands update the SFRA Website so that it might serve as a more efficient recruitment and research tool. Since most of our new membership during the past year has come out of initial inquiries via this Website, it seems important to make it as accessible as possible to the widest range of potential members. I hope that by the time you’re reading this, we will have secured the common sense Internet address for our organization: <www.sfra.org>; this will make it easier for everyone to access our organization.

Also, I am working to make our Website a truly useful instrument for our own members to discover successful classroom tools and approaches, to conduct serious SF research on their own, and to engage in productive dialogue with others currently working in the same SF areas. To these ends, I’d like to ask any member who currently has an online home page, online class syllabi, and other like materials that might prove helpful to a broader range of SFRA members to e-mail me at <frisch@briar-cliff.edu> or snailmail me at 2308 Summit, Sioux City, IA 51104-1210 with those Internet address so that we can create links to these sites on the SFRA’s own home page. I am confident that with new tools such as our Website to supplement our traditional tools for recruitment, such as fliers, brochures, personal notes, etc., SFRA’s membership will continue strong into the next century.

Secretary’s Report

Carolyn Wendell

CONFERENCE CALL, SFRA EXECUTIVE BOARD, 7 FEBRUARY 1999

On the line: Alan Elms (president), Adam Frisch (vice president), Joan Gordon (immediate past president), Karen Hellekson (coeditor, SFRA Review), Mike Levy (treasurer), Carolyn Wendell (secretary).

The meeting began when everyone was on the line, at 1:04 P.M., EST.

SFRA 1999 Conference Update

It was reported that the Mobile conference plans were proceeding well, despite the unfortunate cancellation of guest Michael Bishop. Greg Benford will be guest of honor in Bishop’s place. Tom Brennan needs to schedule a time for a board meeting during the conference and to send the SFRA Review a conference progress report.

Treasurer’s Report

Mike Levy’s treasurer’s report was accepted with one small correction (the Scholar Support Fund Balance should be $164.90).

SFRA Review Concerns

The February SFRA Review is nearly completed and the Board agreed to future SFRA Reviews having volume and issue numbers, so that pages can be numbered consecutively from issue to issue. This will make for much easier indexing.

Putting the SFRA Review on the Web page has become more and more obviously a necessity: almost every new SFRA member in the last year has come to us through the Web page. Peter Sands, Adam Frisch, Karen Hellekson, and Craig Jacobsen will discuss and oversee the process of upgrading the Website. Some things the Board noted: the SFRA Web page banner does not reflect SFRA (currently, Star Trek motifs are used); the SFRA Web page should be linked to the SFRA Review page, with parallel appearances; permission from...
to amplify that brief listing, or add a new listing, send full details to Neil Barron (address page 2) no later than June 1, 1999.

MISSING ISSUES OF THE SFRA REVIEW?

The SFRA Review is now back on track, with a full complement of issues printed in 1998 and the February 1999 issue mailed on time. However, we have been receiving trickles of complaints from members regarding missing back issues. We are now photocopying the labels stuck to the SFRA Review when it is mailed to verify whether or not particular issues were sent. But if you or your institution are missing some SFRA Review back issues, please contact SFRA treasurer Mike Levy. We will arrange to have back issues or photocopies of back issues sent to you. Not all back issues are available as originals.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

SFRA has always financially supported scholars in need. Mike Levy reminds everyone to nominate scholars for SFRA to subsidize. In the past, SFRA has supported third-world scholars; American graduate students overseas; and graduate students in other countries. Donations are welcome. Contact Mike with nominations and donations.

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER AWARDS

This award is a way to recognize the fine scholarship by graduate students, to encourage graduate student work in science fiction and fantasy literature and film, and to recruit new members for the organization and annual conference.

SFRA Review contributors to put their material on the Web must be granted; material on the Web will be older (so that the printed SFRA Review will remain current); and datelines for updates must be established and met.

The organizational Websites must show those characteristics our association is unique for: an emphasis on research, a welcome to new members, ideas for paper topics, information on teaching SF, papers and panels from the last two or three conferences. In the near future, SFRA may need to add the position of Webmaster to its official list of officers and editors. URL space is available for an easy-to-find address: <www.sfra.org>—let’s see if we can get it. And we definitely are looking for more and better ways to use the Website.

Since this meeting is not taking place in the traditional face-to-face method, but in a conference call, the savings can and should be applied to ensure attendance of the Board at the conference in Mobile—especially Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen, coeditors of the SFRA Review.

It is assumed that Geoffrey Sperl (former coeditor of the SFRA Review still holds materials, including submissions, back issues of issues he put out, materials from past editor Amy Sisson (some archival). Attempts to retrieve these have not yet met with success; Alan Elms will send Geoffrey a letter. If any member is missing an issue or a submission, please let Karen Hellekson know.

Election Concerns

Since there is increasing difficulty in finding people willing to run for office, should we consider abolishing the tradition of opposing candidates? The consensus was no, because people should be willing to show commitment to the organization by running (besides, it’s flattering to be asked and can be used in annual review processes). Probably more nominations should be lined up at the annual conference; also, descriptions of officers’ duties would help so people know what they’re agreeing to. The SFRA Review will run such descriptions in the October 2000 issue; meanwhile, please work on them, officers.

SFRA Book Bequest

Mary Bray has donated books to SFRA: what to do with them? The best idea was volunteered by Joe Sanders: he will collect the books (SFRA will pay mileage) and auction them off at the Cleveland 2001 meeting. We need a list of the books or, Karen Hellekson suggests, photographs so that we can ask a knowledgeable member about what we own (Ron Larson was mentioned).

Pilgrim Award Winners

A good portion of our membership derives from Pilgrim winners, all of whom are provided with free memberships. As the years go by, the list grows longer. No one wants to remove this benefit, as Pilgrims deserve it; instead, we will concentrate in building paying memberships to offset the cost. (Some past presidents and Pilgrims do pay their way.)

Subscriptions Included in SFRA Membership

The question has once more been raised about continuing to include subscriptions to Science-Fiction Studies and Extrapolation as part of the membership cost, as this raises it. The vote was unanimous to continue the situation as is; our support of these two major journals keeps us unique and emphasizes the scholarly aspect of the organization.

Membership Recruitment

Membership is now (February 7) at 219; the high was 1997’s 230 at this point.

To recruit new members, the following will be done: upgrade the Web page (Adam will contact other organizational Web pages to find out how they do it); solicit a member list from the International Association of the Fantastic in the Arts (can we?); and write new flyers (how to produce—Liz? Craig?) or write inserts to make changes to old flyers.

Ads should be placed in other publications, both to recruit new members and
Stationery

Although e-mail decreases the need for stationery, Mike Levy needs it for his correspondence, as will Craig Jacobsen and Neil Barron, who need it to solicit review copies from publishers. Carolyn Wendell will request such from David Mead. Karen Hellekson uses postcards to acknowledge receipt of material for the newsletter that is received in hard copy and e-mails acknowledgments for copy received via e-mail.

Proposed Change of Membership Schedule

A suggestion was made to change membership schedule from the standard calendar year to twelve months from whenever the initial payment or renewal is made. This was voted down as involving too much tracking.

Graduate Student Paper Award

Elizabeth Cummins and Susan Stratton devised guidelines for the proposed graduate student paper award, the idea of which was distributed and approved at the meeting in Phoenix in June 1998. Liz and Susan should be asked to serve as the first committee, along with a graduate student of their choosing. The winner will serve on next year’s committee. An announcement of this award will be posted on the Web page and put in the SFRA Review.

Miscellaneous Concerns

A call needs to be made (via the SFRA Review) for candidates for the Overseas Student Scholar Support Award (paid membership) as well as for donations to the fund.

Neil Barron suggested compiling an interest index for the SFRA annual directory, one that could be used by publishers and reviewers. This seems a practical and workable idea, but it will require a redesign of the membership form, to which a list of numbered interests will be appended for easier compilation of the material.

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m., EST.

Approaches

Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Left Hand of Darkness

Hardcover: 25th anniversary edition
Walker & Co (1994); ISBN: 0802713025

Paperback: Reissue edition
Ace Books (1991); ISBN: 0441478123

APPROACHING THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

James Gunn

The Left Hand of Darkness has been part of my course in science fiction almost since the novel was published. Even when I teach only the short stories from The Road to Science Fiction, I include the opening chapter in the discussion of feminism (and feminism as an example of the way in which SF deals and is able to deal with cultural issues). Since I am teaching a genre course rather than a great books course or an idea course (even though I think Left Hand is a great novel and filled with ideas, both of which I touch upon), the aspects of Left Hand that I deal with are primarily the novel’s science fiction qualities and particularly its place in the evolution of the SF novel. Certainly there was anthropology in science fiction before Le Guin, but the anthropological aspects of Left Hand represent a new central emphasis, and certainly there were feminist works before Left Hand, but the anthropological approach to feminism is illuminating. But because I teach a genre rather than great books, I place Left Hand in the context of the consensus galactic

The guidelines for the award are as follows:

1. The first awards will be given to papers presented at the 1999 conference.
2. Students who wish to have their work considered for the award must submit their papers to a member of the Graduate Student Award Committee or of the SFRA Executive Board by the end of the 1999 annual conference.
3. Judges for the award will be members of the Committee, appointed by the President of SFRA. Notices of the winners will be sent to the students within a month after the end of the annual conference and will be announced in the next SFRA Review.
4. Ordinarily, prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third places; however, the number of prizes awarded each year will depend on the number and quality of papers submitted. Awards for ties are possible.

First-place award will be $100 and membership in SFRA for the calendar year immediately following the conferences (i.e., the 1999 awardees will receive membership for 2000–2001); second- and third-place awards will be membership in the SFRA for the calendar year immediately following the conference. In the event of a tie, memberships will be awarded to both awardees; if the tie is for first place, the awardees will receive $100 each.

Elizabeth Cummins and Susan Stratton
The next title for the Approaching... series is Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? We will also accept copy for the movie Bladerunner.

Please send the SFRA Review editors copy by May 15. Directions for submitting are listed in every issue and are also available on the SFRA Review’s Website. We are looking for study guides, short essays about teaching the work, essay topics for student papers, and the like.

The calendar for the year’s remaining Approaching... features looks like this:

August (due date July 15): Russ’s The Female Man
October (due date September 15): Miller’s A Canticle for Leibowitz
December (due date November 15): Clarke’s 2001: A Space Odyssey and Kubrick’s film

WORKS IN PROGRESS

New member Rebecca Thomas Ankeny is working on the topic of evil and innocence in William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience.

Andrea Bell is working on a critical anthology of Latin American SF in English translation.

New member Helen J. Burgess is working on interdisciplinary multimedia projects involving cultural studies of technology.

Peter Cannon is working on an annotated edition of H. P. Lovecraft.

Patricia Ciuffreda, who teaches political history and what it borrows from and adds to it, and Gethen in the context of SF’s ability to contextualize the thought experiment.

I begin by asking students, “What is the most important chapter?” My answer is chapter 7—The Question of Sex (students often have other answers but can be brought around to see the defining nature of Ong Tot Oppong’s report). A more important question is whether students see Estravan as male or female. Curiously enough (from my viewpoint), most see him as male. We consider why this is—mostly, I believe, because of the male pronoun. But I point out the description of Estravan in the first chapter (and the name’s evocation of “estrogen”) and Genly Ai’s evaluation of him as an example of the need to read SF carefully if we are going to get out of it what SF has to offer. We discuss the difficulties of finding an appropriate pronoun. And then I ask how the novel would be changed if Genly Ai had been a woman instead of a man.

The question of whether Genly Ai might have been a different sex leads to a consideration of the decisions an author makes and the possibility that she could have made other choices. One of my goals is to demythologize literature so that students see fiction as works created by people much like themselves instead of as sacred documents (many of our literature courses could profit from that approach as well). The better the work, the better the process works. I consider The Left Hand of Darkness one of the breakthrough SF novels of our time (and say of it what Raymond Chandler said of The Maltese Falcon, it demonstrated that a genre novel capable of this was not, by definition, incapable of anything).

But that leads us to consider Genly Ai and why he was chosen as the First Mobile, the envoy to the Gethenians. What is wrong with Genly Ai? Clearly if he had been more sensitive or more experienced, he would have understood in chapter 1 (as the reader does), that Estravan was not being evasive or lying to him but was trying to help as best he could, and if Genly had known then what it took most of the novel for him to learn, events would not have happened as they did. Like me, the students are willing to overlook Genly’s inadequacies and Le Guin’s willingness to choose someone for the job who is not (at first, anyway) up to the task, but I find it useful to suggest that the Ekumen (and Le Guin) could have chosen more wisely and the novel could still have worked (perhaps even better), even though the author might have had to struggle harder and longer to make the conflict unavoidable. I don’t conceal from the students (and I grant them the same right to be annoyed with aspects of novels and stories) my irritation with characters who are not as smart as their readers nor plots based on misunderstandings, even if misunderstanding because of gender is at the work’s thematic heart.

Finally, because I try to relate any particular work to the genre from which it draws and to which it contributes, I compare Left Hand with Hal Clement’s Mission of Gravity (a novel we have read earlier). Although at first glance the novels seem dissimilar, they offer useful parallels as “thought experiments,” as demonstrations of how environment shapes culture and psychology, and as examples of what science fiction says (and what these two novels say) about the human condition: not only their specific comments about biology and gravity and our cultural, psychological, and sociological adaptations, but the message that, because we are rational beings, we can rise above our evolutionary origins by recognizing the nature of our limitations and their origins, and consciously decide to override our conditioning.

Richard D. Erlich

The point I make below about The Left Hand of Darkness and sexual harassment didn’t get discussion going last time I tried it, but next time I’ll prepare my audience a bit with some work on Buck Rogers and try this:

In the mid-1980s, some undergrads worked on a project eventually pub-
lished under the title, "For Our Balls Were Sheathed in Inertron": Textual Variations in "The Seminal Buck Rogers Story," *Extrapolation* 29, no. 4 (winter 1988): 303–18, by Alan Kalish, Michael Fath, Chris Ehrman, John Gant, and me. We looked at the original Buck Rogers story in *Amazing* (1928, 1929), comparing it with the 1962 fix-up and 1978 reissue, focusing on the changes made to make the story acceptable to post–World War II readers, and, in 1978, at a high point of second-wave feminism.

The story remained somewhat sexist and, far more centrally, racist and genocidal: the happy ending is the utter extermination of "Mongolians" called the "Han"—who have a "taint" of an alien race about them. (Even in 1929, there seems to have been a problem with murdering off an entire Terran people.)

The Buck Rogers science got updated for the fix-up and the reissue. The plots remained the same for the genocidal "Yellow Peril" politics; what got changed was the vocabulary. The "Han" were still utterly destroyed, but the ways of talking about them were cleaned up.

One could defend the readers in 1962 and 1978 by saying that even a genocidal story is only a story and using racist terms is an immediate offense in itself. Kalish et al. did not take that approach, instead gently chiding readers of 1962 and 1978 (and later) for failing to look beyond words. (And one could bring in here the flap a few years ago on *Huck Finn* as racist because of its use of "nigger").

Similarly, I think, though far less culpably, there was much discussion of Le Guin's use of pronouns in *Left Hand* and mostly (entirely?) silence on the sexual harassment imaged in the foreretelling scene in chapter 5 ("The Domestication of Hunch").

The Pervert of the group . . . paid no heed to anyone but the one next to him ['him' probably = "pronoun that designates a male animal"], the kemmerer, whose increasingly active sexuality would be further roused and finally stimulated into full, female sexual capacity by the insistent, exaggerated maleness of the Pervert. The Pervert kept talking softly, leaning towards the kemmerer, who answered little and seemed to recoil . . . there was no sound but the whisper, whisper of the Pervert's voice . . . . The kemmerer avoided the touch hastily, with fear or disgust, and looked across at Faxe as if for help. Faxe did not move. The kemmerer kept his [Le Guin's generic] place, and kept still when the Pervert touched him again. (p. 64 in the Ace 1976 edition)

I'm willing to argue that one big figurative tree was missed for seeing the forest of pronoun use (and the unfortunate analogy earlier on p. 64 speaking of tolerant disdain for homosexuals even in the time of the Ekumen). I strongly agree that *Left Hand* can be a Rorschach, not only for students but for critics and other sophisticated readers. And I continue to argue that *Left Hand* is a great work, even if Le Guin did err in letting the harassment images pass without comment, and erred later in getting stubborn about pronouns.

(Although I've sort of arranged a test of reader tolerance of the use of a made up gender-neutral pronoun: in a discussion of a section of *Always Coming Home*, I use the "pe/per/pen" system.)

Anyway, I wasn't very successful in the attempt with my students last fall, but I think it would be good idea to historicize *Left Hand* in terms of the feminist debate in the 1970s and early 1980s (before most of our students were born, and therefore history)—and in terms of current debates on words/actions/policy. As Lenny Bruce and Fire-Sign Theatre pointed out even before some of the users of this list were born, people can do good for a group while using a taboo term for them and recommend harmful policies in the most sensitive, or even radicalized, of language.
Michael Orth invites SFRA members to check out his online resource on futures called Headlight. It can be found at <http://www.calpoly.edu/~morth/>.

Active SFRA member Joan Slonczewski is working on a new novel, The Carrier, about microbial aliens.

Samuel Vasbinder is working with astronauts at NASA’s Lewis Space Research Center in Cleveland to develop ways of teaching students about possibilities in the third millennium.

Projects SFRA Should Undertake:

Richard Mathews wants to maintain the quality of the SFRA Review but lower membership costs.

John L. Murphy suggests updating the 1988 Warrick-Waugh-Greenberg SFRA anthology to reflect the past fifteen years and to make it more student friendly.

SO YOU’VE HEARD ABOUT THE SFRA LISTSERV...

If you do not presently subscribe to the SFRA’s listserv but you want to, please e-mail Mike Levy <levym@uwstout.edu> or Len Hatfield <len.hatfield@vt.edu> to be put on the list. That’s all there is to it! The listserv can be a wonderful research tool as it draws on the collective knowledge and experience of dozens of SFRA scholars (as one member called it, “the hive mind”).

Dave Samuelson

I have little to say on this subject, despite having used the book in class numerous times over the last three decades. I’ve not had any great difficulty in getting students to grasp it, nor any sexist responses: the first time I taught it, a male student (unaware of Sturgeon’s Venus Plus X) opined that a man would not have been likely to write it because a man wouldn’t have seen anything wrong with the existing order. Gender put-downs (male/female, straight/gay) don’t seem as big in Southern California as they may elsewhere.

Students have objected to the length of the chase across the ice and questioned whether a genderless society would avoid wars or decelerate technological progress (the climate can also be blamed). I have raised questions about multiple points of view and their associated styles, about the book’s various mentalist fantasies, and about various images and image patterns, from weaving to the Swiftian ending in which Genly seems to favor the Gethenians over the conventional (to us) gendered humans debarking from the ship.

The issue of “betrayal” is often eye-opening, since learning to accept anything new is a kind of betrayal of the old (we can usually each relate it to our own upbringing and education as well as to every mediator of political division—the former Yugoslavia was fertile ground this year, while Israel and Northern Ireland always seem relevant). Nobody much seems to object to the jejune politics of the two nations—they don’t expect sophisticated political theory in SF—but we do typically boggle over the pronoun question (and I throw in other override attempts: e.g., Le Guin’s own, Piercy’s, Delany’s).

Susan Stratton

My students (perhaps because they live in Canada) are interested in Le Guin’s idea about living in a cold climate that only marginally supports human life resulting in wise caution about headlong “progress” and the Gethenians’ preference for now, the Year One, and myth, rather than history and progress.

Tracing how the myths suggest ways to fill in gaps in Estraven’s personal history aids comprehension of both—and of the relationship between myth and history.

As to gender, and particularly gendered pronouns, students are interested in Le Guin’s periodic retrospectives on the subject as her own feminism evolved. Material in the 1994 twenty-fifth anniversary edition of Left Hand updates and expands the commentary she offered in her earlier essay (in Language of the Night, I think, but possibly Dancing at the End of the World).

It does make a difference which course it’s being taught in. It went over better in a course I taught last year for senior English majors in contemporary (post-1960) American SF class than it did in the broader SF survey for everyone. It’s been a while since I’ve taught the survey course, but I was always disappointed that the students’ response to Left Hand seemed only lukewarm and figured there was something wrong with the way I was teaching it—so I look forward to seeing other people’s tips.

Rob Latham

I taught Left Hand in my Fall 1997 course on American SF since 1960, and it precipitated one of the most interesting class discussions I’ve ever moderated. Granting the ideological limitations of the book that Le Guin herself has acknowledged, I think Left Hand remains enormously valuable as a kind of Rorschach test of students’ attitudes toward gender and sexuality. When reading and responding to SF, students clearly feel freer in venturing large-scale opinions than they might when confronted with more realistic texts; Left Hand in particular, with its
thought-experiment testing of whether gender is a necessary component of social experience, is liable to provoke strong reactions. It certainly did in my class, where students took the novel as a provocation to expound their points of view on gender equality, androgyny, and the persistence of sexist (and heterosexist) attitudes.

Basically, the class divided into gendered camps: the men (sounding, in their husky defensiveness, a lot like Genly Ai) attacked the premise that a social world can survive without gender divisions and, by implication, gender hierarchies, while the women were more willing to entertain the possibility. What provoked the sharpest reaction was Le Guin’s alternative biology, which many of the male students loudly proclaimed to be simply impossible, since settled dimorphic genders were allegedly inescapable. In the midst of this by now rather heated exchange, one of the guys offered the observation that women are, biologically, predisposed to be the more nurturing sex because of their “enzymes.” There was a brief silence, into which I interjected, incredulously: “Enzymes? Did you say enzymes?” Needless to say, the women jumped on him immediately.

After the class was over, I found much to be optimistic about and much to regret. I was very pleased to see that the women students were unwilling to sit and listen to inane sexist pronouncements, but I was depressed that these pronouncements came so readily to the male students’ lips. (I should say that this was not true of all the men, but only of a vocal few.) Still, I think it is important that these attitudes be given an opportunity for expression, lest we feel inclined to prematurely congratulate ourselves on having achieved gender harmony. Unfortunately, Enzyme Boy (as he soon became known by many of his fellow students) is not alone in his beliefs and values. *Left Hand* is an important book because it calls these attitudes onto the carpet, where they can be examined and analyzed. The same cannot be said of much recent SF, alas.

Warren Rochelle

*I love* *The Left Hand of Darkness.*

I mean, it is one of my all-time favorite books. I have read it over and over again, and it never fails: Each time I am caught and lost in Le Guin’s evocative and lyrical language, her keen sense of metaphor and imagery, and her power as a story-teller. I willingly suspend disbelief: Winter is a real place; the Gethenians are a real people. I fall in love as Genly does; I can imagine that long trek over the ice. The questions Le Guin raises about gender and how it is constructed I find intriguing and provocative. I was so struck by Le Guin’s use of myth and of story, and the idea that “Truth is a matter of the imagination” that I wrote a paper on the subject. I mean, I really love this book.

So, a few years ago, when as a somewhat naive graduate student at UNC Greensboro, I finally got the opportunity to teach English 105, an intro lit class, *The Left Hand of Darkness* was at the top of the book order I sent in to the university bookstore. If I loved the book, then, of course, my students would love the book. As I filled in the ISBN, the publisher, and the number of copies, I had visions of what would happen when the time came to discuss the novel. There would be scintillating discourse on the question of gender and the definitions of masculinity and femininity. All thirty-five of them would have epiphany after epiphany: yes, gender is a social construct; yes, we have all, all of us, been trapped by societal definitions that constrict and restrict; and, look, look, see how language and gender has shaped our thoughts, our world-view; and the environment and language—did I tell you about all the Inuit words for ice?—oh, it was going to be grand.

I was going to enlighten them all.

I made sure the class was thoroughly prepped. I gave a background lecture on science fiction, on Le Guin, on language and gender. I drew on the board a map of Le Guin’s Hainish universe; I talked about *Stars Wars* and *Star Trek*—see...
Gill, P.O. Box 260042, Madison, WI 53726; e-mail <ckgill@students.wisc.edu>.

Young Adult Literature: Facets of Fantasy in YA Literature. This session examines many aspects of young adult fantasy, a genre frequently overlooked by YA scholars; Contact Judith Gero John, Department of English, Southwest Missouri State University, 901 South National, Springfield, MO 65804; e-mail <jaj225f@mail.smsu.edu>.

Special Session: Feminism and the Very Idea of the Future. This session seeks papers on the role the idea of the future and/or paradigms of temporality play in feminist theory, criticism, and political practice. Contact Judith Roof, Department of English, Ballantine Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405; e-mail <jroot@indiana.edu>; and Lynda Zwinger, Department of English, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721; e-mail <lyndaz@u.arizona.edu>.

The Female Gothic and the Horrors of Women’s Place in Nineteenth-Century America. Contact Abbey Zink, Department of English, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115; e-mail <azink@niu.edu>.

FEMSPEC CALLS FOR PAPERS

FEMSPEC, an interdisciplinary feminist journal dedicated to critical, pedagogical and creative works in the realms of SF, fantasy, magical realism, and other supernatural genres, is soliciting material for upcoming issues. The deadline for consideration for the second issue is April 10, 1999. For consideration for the third issue, the deadline is September 20, 1999. These deadlines will be our permanent deadlines in the future. The FEMSPEC office is not all of you already know about science fiction, you are all ready to just jump right in, right?

My students hated The Left Hand of Darkness.

It was too complicated. They couldn’t figure who was telling the story, Genly or Estraven. What was the point of all these extra stories? What did "Odyrny Thern" and "Gethey Thannen" mean and why were these words used as subheadings? What was the point? Yeah, men and women are different, and? I knew all was lost when one of my better students told me that she got the idea of gender as a social construct, and yes, she agreed. "But, as for this book," she added, "I wouldn’t recommend it to anyone."

Maybe enlightenment wasn’t quite the right word.

Would I teach The Left Hand of Darkness again? In a heartbeat, but not to an intro lit class, one meant for non-English major students who needed a lit credit—at least not as their first introduction to science fiction as literature. Stars Wars and Star Trek are just not enough of an introduction to the genre, This is especially true for these students who, more often than not, have already made up their minds that they don’t like English, they don’t like to read, and can’t we just get this over with as painlessly as possible. I am not saying that non-English majors couldn’t ever get The Left Hand of Darkness; I know they could. But an intro lecture on SF really isn’t enough prep. The leap I asked my 105 students to make was one they weren’t ready for.

Oh, yeah, I still really love The Left Hand of Darkness.

APPROACHING THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

THE NOVEL WHOSE SECRET NAME IS "LIGHT"

Charles Nicol

1. Ishi

Genly Ai makes his report "as if I told a story," and when I teach Left Hand, I tell a number of stories. Ideally, each creates another context into which the novel fits, until eventually the students have a solid foundation on which to build their reading, even if it is bolted together in strange ways. My first story for my class, intended to provide contexts for both Genly Ai and his author, is about Ishi, one of the most important people in the biography of Ursula Kroeber Le Guin’s father.

Ishi grew up in a small Native American tribe in northern California that hid from sight for forty years. Eventually the only survivors were Ishi’s own immediate family: father, mother, and sister. And then they died and Ishi lived alone. Malnourished and in rags, he stumbled into white civilization in northern California in 1911, speaking a dialect that was not spoken by anyone else in the world.

He was as alone as anyone has ever been. Yet he spent the last five years of his life learning English, teaching Yahi, making artifacts, and demonstrating his skills at the Anthropological Museum of the University of California—sometimes wearing a suit and tie, sometimes a loincloth. Before he died he had become a close friend of several anthropologists, including Alfred Kroeber. Although Ursula was born quite some time after Ishi died, her mother wrote two books about him. His story must have been part of Ursula’s childhood imagination. (In a way, she eventually brought back the Indians of Northern California in Always Coming Home.)

When Genly Ai arrives on Gethen, he is of a somewhat different appearance than the natives. He speaks their language, but his own language is unknown to anyone on the planet. He is all alone: because of the immense time spent in space travel, he will never see his relatives again; even his few associates from the Ecumen will age only a month during the two years he spends on Gethen. He is dependent on only himself to explain his world to the Gethenians. It the drama of Genly’s isolation that I want my class to comprehend. I tell them that surely Ishi
must have been among Genly’s precursors as ambassador to an alien race. All we know of Genly’s appearance is that he is from Earth, taller and darker than most Gethenians; probably most readers assume he has some African blood, but I tend to think that perhaps his skin is the color of copper.

2. Androgyny, Yin and Yang

Like many of the teachers who have already comments on how they teach *Left Hand*, I place it for my class in the context of late-1960s feminism. I doubt that I need to expand on this at any length here. I explain to my class that the theoretical mother of that brand of feminism was Virginia Woolf, one of Le Guin’s personal writing models as well, and that is primary emotional label was, following Woolf, androgyny. This is the concept developed in what Le Guin calls her “thought-experiment.” For feminism, an androgynous society was one where one’s androgyny was not a concept but a fact of existence.

What is important in my teaching of feminism in the novel is to connect it to another important facet, already mentioned in several books on Le Guin: Taoism. I draw the Tao on the blackboard, “the double curve within the circle” (p. 267), and ask them what it is. Always someone identifies it correctly as yin and yang (although I then kid them for a moment, claiming that actually I drew a base­ball). In the Tao, contraries are resolved by the larger context: the male and female principles each contain the seed of their opposing principle, and the two make up a greater unity of the Tao itself. We then look at “Torner’s Lay” (pp. 233–34), the poem that gives the novel its title, and analyze its obvious connection to Taoism—right up to its last word, “way” (the Tao is often translated as “the Way”).

The ultimate point here, as far as I am concerned in teaching it, is not so much that it is a feminist novel and a Taoist novel, but that its politics and its metaphysics are identical; as Genly says about the Tao to Estraven, “It is yourself.” In its larger contexts, *Left Hand* is a seamless whole. And this kind of greatness is important to point out.

3. Shifgrethor, Chauvinism, Communication

At this point I go into some close reading to show that the real drama in this novel lies under the surface. I explain shifgrethor, or at least the part of shifgrethor that I understand and can explain. (No doubt other people have commented on this, but I haven’t seen it.)

What I know about shifgrethor is that because of it, Gethenians never offer or listen to advice. To give someone advice is to insult him or her. (Only the King deliberately gives Genly advice, and that is because he is the King, is insane, and intends the insult.) To avoid giving advice, the Gethenians go through elaborate parables and elliptical references; even then, such assistance is rarely offered unless the recipient has already said, “I waive shifgrethor.” After this, we reread a number of situations in the novel showing the drama hidden beneath the surface when Estraven’s shifgrethor and Genly’s male chauvinism collide and result in a hopeless failure in communication. Here is an early example of Estraven failing to give needed advice and Genly compounding the failure because of his gender preference:

“Did you hear what the king said to me at the ceremony today?”
“No. . . . The king didn’t speak to you in my hearing.”
“Nor in mine,” said he.

I saw at last that I was missing another signal. Damning his effeminate deviousness, I said, “Are you trying to tell me, Lord Estraven, that you’re out of favor with the king?”

I think that he was angry then, but he said nothing that showed it, only,
The first issue due subscription will consider memberships include listing on the magazine editorial page. Regular and sustaining membership, $75/year. Charter membership, $50/year, and sustaining $30/year; students or low-income subscribers, $20/year; charter membership, $50/year; sustaining membership, $75/year.

CALL FOR PANEL AT SFRA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Mike Levy writes, "We're trying to put together a panel on teaching the

“I'm not trying to tell your anything, Mr. Ai.”
“By God, I wish you would!”
He looked at me curiously. "Well, then, put it this way . . . ."

The two of them cannot get past their own social taboos. It seems to me that only by carefully demonstrating this communication problem can I eventually show the drama of its resolution, when Genly and Estraven are alone on the ice and Genly can finally see Estraven as "a woman as well as a man" (p. 248). This, of course, is the real culmination of the novel.

4. The Beauty of Anticlimax

One of the many qualities of Left Hand that I admire and try to communicate to my students is its marvelous understatement, its lack of grandstanding. Having told them that the climax of the book is Genly's breakthrough to Estraven, his finally "being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes" (p. 12), and their achievement of mutual acceptance and trust, I then comment on their decision not to go to bed together: "For us to meet sexually would be for us to meet once more as aliens" (p. 249). As a writer myself, I admire Le Guin's ability to resist the temptation to write such a scene. And it is in this context that I then discuss the "Gulliver syndrome" (possibly my own term, but the idea has been mentioned by a number of commentators), the moment when Genly's fellow Ekumen arrive on the planet and he sees them not as people like himself but as strange apes, just as Gulliver, after being reunited with his fellow men, had a hard time not seeing them as Yahoos. If course this gives me a chance to briefly summarize Gulliver's Travels, but I also remind my class that if Left Hand were a piece of fluff like Star Wars, we would have had a grand parade (echoing the initial parade) and a triumphant reunion scene. Instead, we have Genly retreating to his room and summoning a physician to treat his nerves. Le Guin paid a price for the modesty of these scenes, and I want my students to appreciate how they work. You can't appreciate the art if you can't see the craft.

APPROACHING THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

A CONVERSATION

Richard D. Erlich and Farah Mendelsohn

Richard Erlich

I think it would be good idea to historicize Left Hand in terms of the feminist debate in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Farah Mendelsohn

While I quite agree re historicizing texts before we start criticizing their politics, I had trouble with Left Hand even in the 1970s for the continual use of derogatory adjectives associated (in our world) with women: "shrill" comes immediately to mind. I accept that this may have been Le Guin allowing us to see the world through her character's eyes, but the choice of adjectives implies, at the least, a lack of imagination in visualizing the far future, surely?

Richard Erlich

Le Guin was less sensitive than she should have been in 1969, and her use of "shrill" (etc.)—primarily for King Argaven's cousin Tibe—was unfortunate insofar as it kept in "use . . . derogatory adjectives associated (in our world) with women." But the immediate context in Left Hand has, before Genly Ai's ship lands, only three persons sexed—not gendered—as women: the kemmerer at the Foretelling, the Orgota person in kemmer on the truck to the prison farm, and Estraven in kemmer on the Ice. (Caution: I'm depending on my memory here,
which ain't what it used to be and was never too good.)

Genly Ai looking at an obstreperous Gethenian and seeing pem as a woman thinks "shrill," and that's not good for the heads of readers identifying strongly with Genly. Still, the Gethenian is not a woman but, Le Guin insists, a human, potentially sexed male or female and without gender.

I’d ask my students to consider the possibility that even as violence is a possibility in the human repertory of behaviors, so is shrillness, and how we go about gendering adjectives in English.

Most people read books without teachers around, though, so I haven’t denied Farah Mendelsohn’s objection. Still, if it’s important to point out that violence isn’t encoded solely on the Y chromosome and limited to males—and Le Guin, Russ, Charnas (and maybe Sheldon?) all seem to agree on that one—it’s also important to allow that shrillness, a tendency to gossip, and/or the ability to nurture aren’t limited to XX female folk. And that is one way (charitably) to read Left Hand.

For a painless introduction to gendering adjectives, you might ask students to consider an old joke on how we decline them:

We are firm. / You are stubborn. / They are pigheaded.
We are flexible. / You are arbitrary. / They are tyrannical. (This one is useful when dealing with authorities who want “flexibility.”)
We are flexible. / You are wishy-washy. / They are spineless. (A complement to the one above, sent me by a conservative friend.)

The same behavior can be typified in many different ways, beginning in bôna (the good way) and in malo (the way the Others do it).

APPROACHING THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

STUDY QUESTIONS

David Mead

• Where does Genly Ai come from? How old is he? How long has he been gone from home?
• How did he get to Gethen? How long did it take to travel? Does he have companions? Does he have friends? What happened to his family? Is his singularity or difference important to the story?
• What is Genly’s job? What is the rationale for it?
• Who is Estraven? Tibe? Argaven? Shusgis?
• What are the principal nations of Gethen? What are their distinguishing characteristics? What are their state religions? Is there a relation between the political system of a nation and its dominant religion?
• Who was Meshe?
• What was the Lord of Shorth’s question?
• What is the significance of “nsuth” to the Handarata?
• What narrative devices does Le Guin/Genly use to tell the story? How do these affect our reception of the story?
• What is the significance of the trek cross the Gobrin Ice? What happens to Genly and Estraven in the course of that journey?
• What is the significance of mindspeech in the novel?
• What is the significance of the opening scene in Ehrenrang? What is being done? What is being built? Do similar events occur later in the story? Are these events symbolic?
• What is Shifgrethor? What does the word derive from?
• What is a kemmer? What is the sexual cycle of Gethenians?
• Why don’t the Gethenians fight wars? How do they resolve conflict?
• What do the Gethenians call/consider Genly (sexually)? Why?
• Are Gethenian proverbs appropriate to their lives and place?
I'm especially interested in recruiting additional papers (maybe the twenty-two listed below will inspire you), including papers on the works of our guests, Benford, et al. Also people willing to do public hour-long interviews with same. And anything else that springs to mind.

Presentations are listed alphabetically by presenter, regardless of scheduling or grouping by panel.

Kenneth Andrews
Philander Smith College
"Multiple Personalities in Science Fiction"

Susan Baugh
Louisville, Kentucky, Public Library
"Kentucky Writers in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror"

Janice Bogstad
University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire
"Octavia E. Butler's Post-Holocaust Parables: The Xenogenesis and Parable Series"

Wendy Bousfield
Syracuse University
"Uplifted Animals: From The Island of Dr. Moreau to Lives of the Monster Dogs"

I. F. Clarke
Retired from University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
"Albert Robida: First Artist to the Future"

Solomon Davidoff
Bowling Green State University
"The Heir of Patrick Henry: Robert Heinlein's Attack on Communism in Starship Troopers"

Alan C. Elms

Dave Samuelson
In a sense, the subject of every essay in this class is the nature of SF, illustrated by a text by a specific author. Whether your author writes predominantly "hard" or "soft" SF, consider both scientific and literary aspects, both extrapolation and speculation. You may also discuss the author's claim to fame, but you must include how he or she uses, misuses, or ignores science in the text you have studied.

Susan Stratton
My essay topics are generic. I ask for a topic to be generated from some aspect of the student's personal response to a text: I hated this, I was puzzled by that, etc. I show them how to develop their response into an essay of significance beyond themselves. This approach emphasizes their role as reader, it teaches me more about them and their readings than I'd learn from topics I set myself, and it subverts impulses to plagiarism, since they have to trace the connection between their reading and their essay in a preface if it doesn't work into the essay itself.

Richard D. Erlich
Prepare a brief table listing the various statements in Left Hand of Darkness on Gethenian capacity for violence and the explanations given for why the Gethenians have never had a war (plus the names of the characters presenting the suggestions and the chapter and page number). Starting from that table, generate a thesis on violence, war, and peace on Gethen; prove that thesis. Append the table to your essay as an appendix.

Anne Weinstone
Left Hand of Darkness is not only about sexuality and gender, it is also an erotic text. How would you characterize the text's eroticism or eroticisms? How is the reading experience or the trajectory or structure of the narrative shaped by eroticism? How does the eroticism of the text interact with or inflect the narrative's more explicit pronouncements about sexuality and gender?

Margaret McBride
The students may use any one of several quotations as a springboard for a short paper. Some examples:

- Damien Broderick, Reading by Starlight: "Does SF, above all else, write the narrative of the other/s? If this suggestion is taken in a spirit of description (though hardly of definition), a negating and demystifying alternative is instantly inscribed in its logical shadow: that SF writes, rather, the narrative of the same, as other."
- Clifford Geertz, Works and Lives, quoting Loring Danforth from The Death Rituals of Rural Greece: "Anthropology inevitably involves an encounter with the Other. The ethnographic distance is often rigidly maintained and even artificially exaggerated. This distancing leads to an exclusive focus on the Other as primitive, bizarre, and exotic. The gap between a familiar 'we' and an exotic 'they' is a major obstacle to a meaningful understanding of the Other, an obstacle that can only be overcome through some form of participation of the world of the Other."
- Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light*: “Real change requires we 'stop killing / the other / in our selves / the self that we hate in others.'”

Some of the questions I give the students to focus their thoughts for journal entries or more formal papers include the following:
- What are the differences between Karhide and Orgoreyn (environmental, politics, technology, cultural mores, etc.)?
- What do these things say about the kind of people they are and the decisions they make about Genly Ai and the Eckumen?
- Genly Ai makes a number of references to gender, calling some things “shrill, effeminate or womanly.” Analyze several of these to describe his view of the differences between the sexes, especially where he compares women to animals. What difficulties do these views cause him?
- What may Le Guin want readers to think about in the foretelling section in relationship to plot and larger thematic ideas? Consider the role that the idea of teachable mindspeak (which Terrans use differently than the Gethenians) and other mystic interactions might play.
- Explain the reason for chapter 12. How does it fit in with other aspects of the novel? Remember that the Yomesh cult is seen as heretic by the Hadadanta.
- Genly Ai, on the first page, says other people will tell part of the story and that he’s not sure whose story it is. Why might Le Guin break up his narrative? What do you learn in the other sections that he couldn’t tell you? Whose story is this and why? How does his first sentence about truth, imagination, and storytelling fit with the book?
- Analyze any of the myth’s connection with the plot/characters/theme. Or write a myth you think would fit.
- The book is full of paired images: light/dark, Karhide/ Orgoreyn, isolation/union, cold/warm, left/right, etc. Discuss the use of these images. What is

**SECONDARY SOURCES**

*Domna Postournatzin*

**Books**


**University of California—Davis**

"Between Mottile and Ambiloxi: Cordwainer Smith as a Southern Writer"

Fred Erisman
Texas Christian University

"Boys' Books and the Gernsback Milieu"

Bud Foote
Georgia Tech

"In the Wet, Not On the Beach: The Other Science Fiction of Nevil Shute"

Adam Frisch

Patricia Harkins-Pierre
University of the Virgin Islands

"The Sacred and Different Invisible Mantle: Virgin Islands Fantasy Poetry Since 1973"

Darren Harris-Fain
Shawnee State University

"Octavia E. Butler's Kindred: Science Fiction Meets the Slave Narrative"

Karen Hellekson
Lawrence, Kansas

"Catherine L. Moore's Vintage Season: Death as Spectacle"

Heather Hicks
Villanova University

"Striking Cyborgs: Reworking the Human in Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It*"

Craig Jacobsen
Arizona State University

"Freeze, Release Me, Thaw Me Slow: Cryonics in Science Fiction"

David Ketterer
Concordia University
"Vivisection: Schoolboy John Wyndham's First Publication?"

Michael Levy
University of Wisconsin-Stout
"What If Your Fairy Godmother Were an Ox?: The Many Cinderellas of Southeast Asia"

Pete Lowentrout
California State University—Long Beach
"The Heart's True Home: Some Further Reflections on Community in Science Fiction"

Margaret McBride
University of Oregon
"Bildungsroman, Southern Gothic, and Fantasy"

Joe Sanders
"The Game of Seek and Hide in Michael Bishop's No Enemy but Time"

Carol D. Stevens
Eastern Illinois University
"Topological Dreams, Science Fiction Allusion, and the Surreal in David Wiesner's Picture Books"

Mark Weinert
George Fox University
"Michael Bishop as Baseball Historian: Brittle Innings as a Chronicle of Baseball in the 1940s"


Essays


APPROACHING THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

SECONDARY SOURCES

Hal Hall


1987): 34.

---. "Fantasy's Lost Children." Australian Science Fiction Review 6, no. 1 (summer 1991): 4-9. [Whole number 26]


Storytelling
- Story Form, Past, Present, and Future: Orality in Technology
- Storytelling Round Robin (a predetermined event)
- Story Swap (sit in the circle and tell a tale; be prepared to tell a short one if the circle is big)
- Storytelling Workshop
- Folktales to SF: Using the Oral Tradition to Enrich Writing

Media
- The Golden Years: Did They Exist?
- Book to Film to TV, TV to Film to Book: How the Medium Creates Meaning
- What Next, Hollywood? (films we'd love to see, and how we'd like to see them done)
- TV: SF or Just Plain Bad SciFi?
- TV We'd Like to See

Criticism
- Multiple Critiques on the Hugo Winner: An Interactive Panel (utilize your favorite critique method to examine the work, and describe how you construct your critique)
- Critique and Review: The Differences, the Similarities
- A Critical Preview: What to Expect Next from SF and Fantasy

Teaching
- Approaches to Teaching SF in the College Classroom
- Approaches to Teaching SF in the High School/Junior High Class
- Fighting the Bias against SF
- SF in the Diversity Classroom
- How do You Get Kids to Read SF?


Franko, Carol. "Self-Conscious Narration as the Complex Representation of Hope in Le Guin’s *Always Coming Home.*" *Mythlore* 15, no. 3 (spring 1989): 57–60. [Whole number 57]

Franko, Carol. "Dialogic Narration and Ambivalent Utopian Hope in Le Guin’s *Shikasta* and *Le Guin’s Always Coming Home.*" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 2, no. 3
Cross genre
- Why We Call Something Mainstream When It’s SF and Vice Versa
- Paranormal vs. SF
- Other Genres Whose Stories Could Read as SF

We are looking into a number of events that we can use to enliven SFRA 2001 even more for you. We are planning a non-banquet banquet—a pizza party—on the Wednesday evening before the conference. This will give the staff and any early attendees a chance to meet with our guests in an informal manner.

On Saturday, we plan to visit the “mailbox from whence it all comes.” On Monday, Memorial Day, we are looking at a breakfast cruise on the Hudson or Mohawk Rivers. We have a tentative agreement with the Schenectady Planetarium for a show during SFRA 2001. We welcome your suggestions for exciting diversions.

If you would be so kind, please indicate if you will be flying in for SFRA 2001. We hope to make arrangements with an airline for discounted rates. If we have some idea of the numbers involved, it will improve and ease discussions.

DARK FANTASY THEME OF SPECIAL NIEKAS ISSUE

Niekas began publishing eight years before the founding of the SFRA in 1970, was suspended about 1970–1976, resumed in 1977, and has been published irregularly ever since. Issue 43, 1998, was guest edited by Joe Christopher of Tarleton State University’s English Department in Stephenville, Tex. I hadn’t seen an issue of Niekas in some years, during which desktop publishing made dramatic progress, and it shows in...


———. "Legends for a New Land." In The Roots of Fantasy, pp. 35–46. Seattle, Wash.:
World Fantasy Convention, 1989.


Murphy, Patrick D. "The High and Low Fantasies of Feminist (Re)Mythopoeia." Mythlore 16, no. 2 (winter 1989): 26–31. [Whole number 60]


on subjects from fantasy and science fiction will be examined by Dr. Rose Wolf; prose will be the province of Andre Norton.

To make application for use of this facility, please write to the following address: High Hallack 114 Eventide Drive Murfreesboro, TN 37130-2123.

GAUGHAN ARTWORK FOR SALE

Paul DiFilippo writes, “As a longtime friend of Nora Gaughan, daughter of famed SF artist Jack Gaughan, I have been asked by the family to notify the SF world of a recent development in the Gaughan estate. After years of cataloging, Jack’s widow, Phoebe Adams Gaughan, is now offering selected works of Jack’s for sale. Both black-and-white illustrations and full-color cover illustrations are for sale. For more information, contact her at 93 Fair Street, Kingston, NY 12401, or phone her at 914/339-1724. Phoebe Gaughan will be attending this year’s Boskone with a selection of Jack’s work.”

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION AVAILABLE ON CD-ROM

For those who want the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls, online, finding it has been tough because for its CD-ROM form, the title was changed. The same content found in ESF is available as a CD under the title Grolier Science Fiction: The Multimedia Science Fiction Encyclopedia. John Clute notes that because of the name change, “many people have thought this is an entirely different product.” The fullest text available is available as 1998 SFE-Viewer from David Langford, who can

Rousseau, Yvonn. “Right Hand of Light, or, Mr. Rottensteiner and Mrs. Le Guin.” Metaphysical Review 5/6 (October 1985): 11–47.
———. “Vive la difference: Sexual Space in The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le


Thompson, Christine K. “Going North and West to Watch the Dragons Dance.” Mythslore 15, no. 1 (autumn 1988): 19–22. [Whole number 55]


sonal collection on the list, available on request." Neil’s address can be found on page 2. Contact him directly for titles and prices.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS COMPILED BY NEIL BARRON

*Review copy requested

HISTORY AND CRITICISM

*Warner, Marina. No Go to the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, February 1999. By the British cultural historian who wrote From the Beast to the Blond: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers


*Ducomet, Rikki. The Monstrous and the Marvelous. City Lights, August 1999


PRESENTING YOUNG ADULT FANTASY FICTION

Neil Barron

Young adult (YA) fiction has been a staple in public libraries for several decades, but it has not attracted much interest among SF/F fiction scholars, although the best of such fiction is fully equal to its nominally adult counterparts. To partially offset such neglect, all four editions (1976, 1981, 1987, 1995) of my Anatomy of Wonder have a chapter on YA SF, with an equivalent chapter in the 1990 editions of the companion fantasy and horror guides.

The 1999 revised one-volume fantasy/horror guide integrates adult and YA books but flags them. MacRae was a YA librarian for nineteen years and has put her experience to good use in this survey, which draws extensively on a group of teens with whom she worked at Boulder Public Library, the Fantasy Fanatics, and other teen readers around the USA. Quotes from many of these eighty-five teens are included throughout the book. She interviewed several of the writers whose works she discusses, such as Terry Brooks, Barbara Hambly, and Jane Yolen.

It is, I note with praise, one of the few books by a librarian who makes frequent use of Locus. MacRae organizes her guide "to offer useful categories for young adult readers, educators, and librarians searching for the type of fantasy story they want, illuminating fantasy's elusive meaning through careful description of its varieties" (p. 9). Six core chapters focus on distinct subgenres, four of them highlighting the work of a "featured author," followed by briefer discussion of other authors and their works. The subgenres include alternate worlds (Terry Brooks), magic realism—not the Latin American variety (Barbara Hambly)—myth (Jane Yolen), legends (Arthurian literature), magic bestiary (Meredith Ann Pierce), and time travel (multiple authors).

Chapter 2 can serve as a example of the book's organization and content. Alternate worlds (in the fans' ungrammatical version of alternative worlds) is equated with high/heroic/epic/secondary world/adventure/sword and sorcery, a conflation of categories that some purists may deplore. Comments by Tolkien and several other critics are cited to elucidate the nature and appeal of this subgenre, and some pre-Tolkien history is provided (Morris, Dunsany, Eddison, Peake, the Inklings, C. A. Smith, Howard, Leiber, Pratt, and de Camp). Tolkien is discussed in moderate detail, with various critical assessments quoted or summarized. Comments by YA readers show Tolkien's strong influence. Le Guin's Earthsea series is analyzed in some detail, including its much different fourth volume, Tehanu. YA comments are included.

The heart of the chapter, 66 of the 161 pages, is devoted to the works of Terry Brooks, mostly his Shannara series. Considerable biographical detail is presented, along with a lot of plot summary, intermixed with favorable and unfavorable comments by reviewers, critics, and YA readers (comments from maturing YAs showed a distinct shift from enthusiasm to disdain). American feminist fantasists (Bradley, McKillip, McKinley, Hambly, Pierce, Lackey) are given a section, followed by one on heroic fantasy writers writing for adults but having wide appeal to YAs: Anthony, Pratchett, Eddings, and Jordan. The chapter concludes with a recommended fiction reading list by authors discussed in the main text and other similar authors. A secondary bibliography concludes the chapter. Fantasy gaming and tie-in books are discussed in the chapter on magic (realism).

The survey concludes with notes and references, a well-chosen bibliography of secondary book sources, an appendix describing (but not listing) adult fantasy awards and sources of recommended fantasy works, an appendix listing the ALA's best YA fantasies, and the survey and questionnaire forms MacRae used with her teen advisors. A detailed index concludes the book which, at almost 500 pages, is the lengthiest Twayne book published to date (most TUSAS series books are devoted to a single author and run 150–200 pages).

The only other study roughly comparable to MacRae is the annotated bibliography compiled by Ruth Nadelman Lynn, Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults (4th ed., 1995), which is much more comprehensive but lacks
most of the critical dimension of MacRae and is designed more for reference than for extended reading or study. “Dark” fantasy is discussed, rather unsatisfactorily, in a companion Twayne study by Cosette Kies, *Presenting Young Adult Horror Fiction* (1992), whose focus is on writers of occult horror fiction who also appeal to teenagers. To be reviewed here is a second companion, *Presenting Young Adult Science Fiction* (1998) by Suzanne Elizabeth Reid.

MacRae well serves both her adult audience and teenage readers, who will find her survey easily accessible and are likely to find themselves comparing their own judgments with those quoted in the text. Strongly recommended.

**PRESENTING YOUNG ADULT SCIENCE FICTION**

Muriel Rogow Becker


Twayne’s useful Young Adult Authors series, begun in 1985, now includes twenty-two volumes, each about a single author of interest to young adults. 1992 saw the publication of a volume dealing with multiple writers of young adult horror, *Presenting Young Adult Horror Fiction* by Cosette Kies. (Since there are relatively few YA horror writers, many of the authors discussed by Kies are adult authors whose works are read by teens.) Last year saw the addition of two more multiple author volumes, one on fantasy and one on SF.

Twayne says each book in the series offers support matter such as a chronology, notes and references, a selected bibliography, and a concise, readable summary of the life of each leading YA author. The literary analysis is jargon-free. Each book in the series should “enable young readers to research the work of their favorite authors...[and should] provide teachers and librarians with insights and background material for promoting and teaching young adult novels.” Reid succeeds valiantly in meeting these requirements. A brief history of SF and commentary on the major adult and juvenile SF writers of the last 60 years begins the volume. Chapters 3-9 examine individual writers, beginning with her son’s favorite, Orson Scott Card, titled “A New Master.” Douglas Hill exemplifies adventure; H. M. Hoover her didactic quality; Pamela Sargent for feminism (with additional commentary on Russ, Charnas, and McIntyre); Octavia Butler for race and gender; Pamela Service and Piers Anthony for science fantasy; and Douglas Adams for humor.

Chapter 10 defines cyberpunk and analyzes the strong influences of Gibson, Sterling and Pat Cadigan. Chapter 11 surveys SF films, emphasizing Star Trek. The concluding chapter, “New Themes and Trends,” is a clear essay in which she deals with pessimism and optimism, citing such works as Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993) as “emblematic of the best science fiction now being written.” Reid’s research techniques could in themselves serve as a superb example for the ubiquitous high school term paper, especially her filmography, notes, and detailed bibliography of primary and secondary sources ordered by chapter.

Strangely missing from the bibliography, since it is so closely related in subject and purpose, is the collection of sixteen essays about SF writers of interest to younger readers (many of them the same ones she selected), *Science Fiction for Young Readers*, edited by C. W. Sullivan III (Greenwood, 1993). In this work you’ll find a full explanation of the influence of the Tom Swift books; a treatment of the juveniles of Asimov, John Christopher and Andre Norton; analyses of the YA works of Heinlein, Hoover, Hughes, Lawrence, L’Engle, and McCaffrey; a study of the contrasting world views of Doctor Who and Captain Kirk; and more.
This work treats extensively what's sometimes called "all three-thirds" of C. S. Lewis: the literary scholar and critic, the writer of imaginative fiction and poetry, and the Christian philosopher. It will entertain and educate aficionados of any aspect of its complex and multifaceted subject. One of the many seeming paradoxes of "Jack" Lewis is that he practiced his deeply held beliefs in individual privacy while his writings nonetheless freely use details of his life and personality. For those interested in his life, John Bremer's "A Brief Biography" distills much information in about 55 pages. He paints every known wart into the portrait while also limning a man dedicated to growing morally and spiritually. (Bremer was perhaps paying heed, though perhaps not quite enough, to Christopher Mitchell's caution in his foreword against a tendency in recent years to exaggerate Lewis's character flaws in reaction to the many hagiographies.) Bremer also contributes the entry "Biographies, Review of" to the encyclopedia section. There are many studies of Lewis that include a biographical chapter, and some books that are rather derivative, but he sensibly passes over these in favor of important volumes of letters and reminiscences, while concentrating on major studies. He and I agree that the biography by George Sayer (a student of Lewis who became a close friend) is the best one overall, and we also have similar impressions of the "dramatic life" by William Griffin and the photobiography by Douglas Gilbert and Clyde S. Kilby. I have a rather higher opinion than he of the early (1974) book by Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper. And I think A. N. Wilson was trying to be more judicious than he gives him credit for, and can be a salutary, if not altogether satisfactory, corrective to unduly reverential treatments.

I mention this to indicate that the entries in this encyclopedia, even where another Lewis scholar might shade matters a little differently, are all informed opinions. Finally, for devotees of biography, appendix B has a useful timeline of significant dates, from the birth of Lewis's mother in 1862 to the death of Lady Dunbar of Hempriggs (the closest thing he had to a sister) in 1997. The main encyclopedia section is also full of riches. The three editors have assembled some 40 other contributors, many of them luminaries in the field of Lewis studies, and all of them knowledgeable. The editors work primarily in political science (though a description of Schultz has unaccountably been omitted from the list of contributors), but they plainly know Lewis's work, and this perspective helps John West's entry on the politics of Lewis, who was largely an apolitical animal.

There are entries not only for each of Lewis's many books but also for each essay and poem, for close friends and many acquaintances, figures who influenced him (Plato, George MacDonald), and places important in his life, and major themes and concerns. All but the shortest entries have useful, annotated bibliographies for further reading. Other valuable features include a checklist of resources (societies and publications and Websites devoted to Lewis, where to find collections of his papers, and where to get his books), photographs of dust jackets and book covers scattered entertainingly throughout, and a handy list identifying the
LODGI~ OF NOTE

R-ECENT FICTION OF NOTE

COMPILED BY NEIL BARRON

The February 1999 Locus has a detailed year in review, providing abundant statistics on books and magazines, commentary by the staff, and lists of recommended novels, first novels, collections, anthologies, nonfiction, illustration/art, and shorter fiction. Subscribers complete a ballot, with votes to be tallied in the August issue.

Other recommended books include:

Washington Post Book World, January 24, 1999: Brian Stableford, Inherit the Earth (Tor), Octavia Butler, Parable of the Talents (Seven Stories), Jeff Greenwald, Future Perfect: How "Star Trek" Conquered the Earth (Viking, nonfiction)

Locus, February 1999: John Barnes, Apostrophes and Apocalypses (Tor; 13 stories, 8 essays); Stephen Baxter, Vacuum Diagrams (HarperPrism); Michael Bishop, Time Pieces (Edgewood; 49 poems, to be reviewed); Peter F. Hamilton, A Second Chance at Eden (Warner Aspect); Jamil Nashir, Tower of Dreams (Bantam Spectra); Debbie Notkin et al., eds., Flying Cups

dedicates of his books.

With as wide an acquaintance as Lewis had, there are bound to be omissions. There's no entry for E. R. Eddison, with whom Lewis corresponded and who had the rare honor of twice visiting the Inklings by invitation (but Lewis's comments on The Mezentian Gate are described). Christopher Tolkien was a regular of the Inklings and is a fine scholar in his own right, and might have had a separate entry, but he's mentioned passim. There are mentions but no entries for student and friend John Lawlor, correspondent Naomi Mitchison (who died last January at 101), colleague Eugene Vinaver, and others. A few misprints in names or titles mar the text.

Most of what I want is here; the information is solid, even when interpretations might differ, and the volume is generally very well produced, and at a very reasonable price. There are not many other books of this kind. There are many specialized guides on narrower topics that aren't comparable. The C. S. Lewis Handbook (1990; 1996 paperback reprint, $4.98) by Colin Duriez is of similar scope and arrangement, more limited but still a valuable resource. The closest rival is Walter Hooper's C. S. Lewis: Companion and Guide (1996; 906 pages, $28), the result of a lifetime's work editing Lewis's manuscripts and studying his oeuvre. ("Rival" is perhaps an apt word. Good use is made of Hooper's work, and the contributors try to be fair, but some of them are less successful than they may think in avoiding an appearance of personal animus. See almost any mention of Hooper.) The Hooper is differently organized from the encyclopedia, but both are well indexed and extensively cross-referenced. They overlap, but each has good information the other lacks. I'd rank Hooper first, then Schultz and West, then Duriez. Large university and research libraries will want all three books, and even smaller colleges may want the first two. The general reader would find any of them readable and worthwhile.

NONFICTION REVIEW

A GLANCE FROM NOWHERE

Joan Gordon


This booklet is one of a handful issued as Babel "handbooks" on fantasy and SF writers, with an emphasis on Australian writers. This longish essay offers a quick but solid and useful overview of Tepper's SF and fantasy while providing a bibliography of primary and secondary works. Because little has yet been written about Tepper, who has achieved considerable prominence in the past few years (she was interviewed in the September 1998 Locus), this glance is particularly welcome.

Using Ricoeur's idea of the "glance from nowhere," which subverts the accepted and produces new possibilities, for her thesis, Kelso discusses first her fantasy, then her SF. In her discussion of the fantasies, citing Cixous, she sees their use of "child-like attributes of language" in conjunction with "adult issues from child abuse to euthanasia," as a characteristically feminist project. Kelso maps this theoretical stance concisely, lucidly, specifically, and usefully. The discussion of SF is less theoretical, exploring feminist and ecological issues, and resulting in several solid readings, particularly of The Gate to Women's Country and Raising the Stones, which she sees as among Tepper's most important works. The essay assumes an audience already familiar with Tepper's novels. In spite of its brevity, it's clear, useful, perceptive and critically adept, even if a bit pricey.
There is no escaping the conclusion that for nearly two generations these two men, the genre's "first significant critic." As you scan these differing cut-off years, you see the second important consequence: while the work of early investigators continuously expanded the compass of SF, that of the moderns is increasingly contracting it. Forget about Gilgamesh, Frankenstein, Lucian, utopias, imaginary voyages, the scientific hoaxes and romances; they aren't the real McCoy. Let me be exact here: we aren't actually forbidden to examine them, but we must do so only "in the context of science fiction"—i.e., this new "Gernsback tradition."

Westfahl sets forth his arguments in his first chapter; his arguments are better presented and contain fewer factual errors here than they did in their initial appearance in Foundation 47 (winter 1989–90), but I still find their exclusivity reductive, disturbing, and unacceptable. That stated, I am pleased to add that although the rest of the book was supposedly written to support the arguments, it can be read without worrying about any new airy hypotheses—not only read, in fact, but enjoyed.

It is interesting, well written, and collects a wealth of information; having to endure a few pages of mental masturbation as a prelude is truly a small price to pay for what follows. What we are given are detailed evaluations of Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr.: how they looked at SF and its history, their immense influence upon it, and how it evolved under their leadership and guidance. There is no escaping the conclusion that for nearly two generations these two men, in their pulp magazine setting, largely controlled its development.

Both come off well here. The picture of Gernsback should add to his reputation, which recently has undergone steady improvement; that of Campbell, who over the years has been virtually defied, becomes more believably human without losing importance. Westfahl uses their own words to support the thesis.

When I was an adolescent, you read science fiction chiefly for pleasure and few people worried about defining it. Had anyone asked me, I'd have handed my questioner a couple of issues of Astounding, saying, "Stories like these." Frederik Pohl and Norman Spinrad also defined it by example, just as A. E. Housman did poetry. But by the late 1930s, those dealing with the genre began to include simple definitions in their writings, mostly to help readers who knew little or nothing about it. These were based largely on the breadth of their own knowledge of SF, which was gradually being perceived as an ever-larger body of writings whose roots went back some two thousand years. In the 1950s academics entered the field. For most of them it was a terra incognita rather than a terra firma, so they understandably sought to impose order on what seemed to them an area of amorphous disorganization. Unfortunately, their attempts never led to a single, nicely honed description that became generally accepted.

We live today with widely different schools of thought at the most basic level of criticism. There are two important consequences of this. How you define SF determines where you place its chronological origin, and critics have suggested dates such as 1634, 1644, 1790, 1818, and 1870. Now Westfahl climactically states that it all began in the 1920s with Hugo Gernsback because, inter alia, he was the genre's "first significant critic." As you scan these differing cut-off years, you see the second important consequence: while the work of early investigators continuously expanded the compass of SF, that of the moderns is increasingly contracting it. Forget about Gilgamesh, Frankenstein, Lucian, utopias, imaginary voyages, the scientific hoaxes and romances; they aren't the real McCoy. Let me be exact here: we aren't actually forbidden to examine them, but we must do so only "in the context of science fiction"—i.e., this new "Gernsback tradition."

Westfahl sets forth his arguments in his first chapter; his arguments are better presented and contain fewer factual errors here than they did in their initial appearance in Foundation 47 (winter 1989–90), but I still find their exclusivity reductive, disturbing, and unacceptable. That stated, I am pleased to add that although the rest of the book was supposedly written to support the arguments, it can be read without worrying about any new airy hypotheses—not only read, in fact, but enjoyed.

It is interesting, well written, and collects a wealth of information; having to endure a few pages of mental masturbation as a prelude is truly a small price to pay for what follows. What we are given are detailed evaluations of Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr.: how they looked at SF and its history, their immense influence upon it, and how it evolved under their leadership and guidance. There is no escaping the conclusion that for nearly two generations these two men, in their pulp magazine setting, largely controlled its development.

Both come off well here. The picture of Gernsback should add to his reputation, which recently has undergone steady improvement; that of Campbell, who over the years has been virtually defied, becomes more believably human without losing importance. Westfahl uses their own words to support the thesis.

When I was an adolescent, you read science fiction chiefly for pleasure and few people worried about defining it. Had anyone asked me, I'd have handed my questioner a couple of issues of Astounding, saying, "Stories like these." Frederik Pohl and Norman Spinrad also defined it by example, just as A. E. Housman did poetry. But by the late 1930s, those dealing with the genre began to include simple definitions in their writings, mostly to help readers who knew little or nothing about it. These were based largely on the breadth of their own knowledge of SF, which was gradually being perceived as an ever-larger body of writings whose roots went back some two thousand years. In the 1950s academics entered the field. For most of them it was a terra incognita rather than a terra firma, so they understandably sought to impose order on what seemed to them an area of amorphous disorganization. Unfortunately, their attempts never led to a single, nicely honed description that became generally accepted.

We live today with widely different schools of thought at the most basic level of criticism. There are two important consequences of this. How you define SF determines where you place its chronological origin, and critics have suggested dates such as 1634, 1644, 1790, 1818, and 1870. Now Westfahl climactically states that it all began in the 1920s with Hugo Gernsback because, inter alia, he was the genre's "first significant critic." As you scan these differing cut-off years, you see the second important consequence: while the work of early investigators continuously expanded the compass of SF, that of the moderns is increasingly contracting it. Forget about Gilgamesh, Frankenstein, Lucian, utopias, imaginary voyages, the scientific hoaxes and romances; they aren't the real McCoy. Let me be exact here: we aren't actually forbidden to examine them, but we must do so only "in the context of science fiction"—i.e., this new "Gernsback tradition."

Westfahl sets forth his arguments in his first chapter; his arguments are better presented and contain fewer factual errors here than they did in their initial appearance in Foundation 47 (winter 1989–90), but I still find their exclusivity reductive, disturbing, and unacceptable. That stated, I am pleased to add that although the rest of the book was supposedly written to support the arguments, it can be read without worrying about any new airy hypotheses—not only read, in fact, but enjoyed.

It is interesting, well written, and collects a wealth of information; having to endure a few pages of mental masturbation as a prelude is truly a small price to pay for what follows. What we are given are detailed evaluations of Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr.: how they looked at SF and its history, their immense influence upon it, and how it evolved under their leadership and guidance. There is no escaping the conclusion that for nearly two generations these two men, in their pulp magazine setting, largely controlled its development.

Both come off well here. The picture of Gernsback should add to his reputation, which recently has undergone steady improvement; that of Campbell, who over the years has been virtually defied, becomes more believably human without losing importance. Westfahl uses their own words to support the thesis.
that Gernsback defined the nature, purpose, and origins of SF and that Campbell mentioned and extended many of his ideas. He also analyzes works that exemplify their credos in practice, Ralph 124C41+ and Heinlein’s Beyond This Horizon. His interpretations are usually fair; my only quibble would be that he is occasionally a bit too willing to accept their statements at face value if they happen to fall his way.

In summation and comparison, I should rate the treatment of Gernsback as fair and as up to date as you’ll find today. Michael Ashley’s account of the man, The Gernsback Days: The Evolution of Modern Science Fiction, 1911-1936, covers more ground, but is still awaiting publication by Borgo Press, possibly by late 1999 (although two chapters from it have been printed in Fantasy Commentator). Sam Moskowitz’s pieces remain useful, and so are sections of Everett Bleiler’s Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years [reviewed in #237]. Similarly, while The Collected Editorials from “Analog” and Alva Rogers’s A Requiem for Astounding help with the big picture, Westfahl’s account is more analytical and punchier. What comes across, too, is that both men clearly loved what they were doing.

Score one for good, old-fashioned nostalgia. The book has an index of names, and a works cited section that runs to 20 pages. The far-ranging entries in the latter certainly emphasize that Westfahl put a lot of hard work into his research. Unfortunately, this work isn’t available in North America; order direct from England. The Mechanics of Wonder is worth a little extra effort to obtain, for

NONSECTION REVIEW

A STRANGER SHORE

Erin Brenner


Maureen Mollie Hunter McVeigh, born 1922, is a relatively prolific author of children’s and young adult fiction under her pseudonym. The stories range from realistic to fantastic and often draw on the folklore and history of her native Scotland. Her first work, Patrick Kengiern Kenman (sold in the USA as The Smartest Man in Ireland), a short children’s fantasy, appeared in 1965. Many of her books since have been on the best or notable books lists of various organizations, such as the Child Study Association of America and the American Library Association. The Stronghold won the Carnegie Medal (the British equivalent of the Newbery) in 1974.

This study of Hunter by an English professor at Youngstown (Ohio) State University examines more than thirty of Hunter’s works, including her essays on writing for children. One chapter each is devoted to the four genres of her work: fantasy, historical fiction, modern realistic novels, and essays. Individual works are examined in chronological order. A 1996 interview at the subject’s home supplements Greenway’s use of secondary materials. Greenway draws on feminist and Freudian theories in showing how Hunter’s personal philosophies are incorporated in her fiction and essays. She focuses largely on Hunter’s relationship with her father and her coming to terms with it: “When writers draw their energies from sublimated, unresolved childhood conflicts, the result can be great fantasy and imaginative working out of conflicts in mythic terms, but when the experiences are brought to the light of common day, out of the shadows, they can become overt and somewhat ordinary, losing their talismanic power” (21).

Greenway presents a solid argument for her theory. She parallels each protagonist, who must come to terms with a fatherlike figure, with the young Hunter. The appearance of the female protagonist in later novels follows a period
when Hunter herself was finally coming to grips with her father’s ghost. Her fe­
male protagonists remain as courageous in their search for truth and love as their
masculine counterparts. Greenway shows how Hunter has struggled with her de­
mons and become a more independent woman for it. Interestingly, Hunter does
not talk about her father during the interview with Greenway. She discusses the
importance of storytelling and how her mother instilled that in her. She talks of
writing for children, her in-depth research, and her belief in courage, truth, and
love—something else she credits her mother with.

Although Hunter remains silent on her father, Greenway finds evidence
to support her theory throughout Hunter’s writings. Hunter’s philosophy of love
courage is capably explored in detail, and her writings show the dichotomy of
good and evil. Characters overcome their faults to triumph over evil, as in her first
book. Hunter writes about what is taboo in her

A VERY DIFFERENT STORY

Arthur O. Lewis

Gough, Val, and Jill Rudd, eds. *A Very Different Story: Studies on the Fiction of
Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. Liverpool University Press, Senate House, Aber­
£32.0-85323-591-0; £15.95, trade paper, -601-1. Orders to Marston
Book Services, Box 269, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4YN, UK (<direct.
order@marston.co.uk>). Add for shipping: to North America, £6/book;
UK, ££2.50/book, £0.50 each additional book.

No female writer of utopias has been more thoroughly studied in recent
years than Gilman. Another collection of essays about her might seem redundant,
but these eleven pieces are all well researched, well written, and useful additions.
Through discussions of several aspects of her life, as well as her fiction, nonfiction,
poetry, and correspondence, they demonstrate the breadth and significance of Gil­
man’s accomplishments. Representative of the two dozen previous books about
Gilman, reprints, biographies, and criticism, both full-length books and edited
collections, are *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work*, edited by Sheryl
L. Meyerling (UMI Press, 1989), Mary A. Hill’s *A Journey from Within: The Love
Letters of Charlotte Gilman, 1896–1900* (Bucknell University Press, 1995), and
Carol Farley Kessler’s *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Her Progress toward Utopia, with
Selected Writings* (Liverpool and Syracuse University Press, 1995). Notable among
the fourteen studies in Meyerling is a useful reprint of Charles N. Degler’s seminal
1956 critical assessment of Gilman. Hill, who contributed to both Meyerling and
the present volume, offers perceptive insights into Gilman’s emotional state. Kess­
er discusses aspects of Gilman’s life in relation to both fiction and nonfiction and
concludes with fourteen selections that illustrate the importance of utopia in Gil­
man’s lifelong search for women’s rights.

Novellas:

Asaro, Catherine: *Aurora In Four Voices* (Analog, Dec98)
Davidson, Avram & Davis, Grania: *The Boss in the Wall* (Tachyon Publications, Aug98)
Finch, Sheila: *Reading the Bones* (F&SF, Jan98)
Fintushel, Eliot: *Izzy and the Father of Terror* (Asimov’s, Jul97)
Gerrald, David: *Jumping Off the Planet* (SF Age, Jan98)
Landis, Geoffrey A.: *Ecopoiesis* (SF Age, May97) Novelettes:
Feely, Gregory: *The Truest Chill* (SF Age, Nov97)
Klages, Ellen: *Time Gypsy* (Bending the Landscape; SF, Overlook Press, Oct98)
McGerr, Mark J.: *The Mercy Gate* (F&SF, Mar98)
Rusch, Kristine Kathryn: *Echea* (Asimov’s, Jul98)
Williams, Walter Jon: *Lethe* (Asimov’s, Sep97)
Yolen, Jane: *Lost Girls* (Realms of Fantasy, Feb98)

Short Stories:

Brust, Steven: “When the Bough Breaks” (The Essential Bordertown, Tor, Sep98)
Fowler, Karen Joy: “Standing Room Only” (Asimov’s, Aug97)
Goldstein, Lisa: “Fortune and Misfortune” (Asimov’s, May97)
Landis, Geoffrey A.: “Winter Fire” (Asimov’s, Aug97)
Rogers, Bruce Holland: Thirteen Ways to Water (Black Cats and Broken Mirrors, Martin Greenberg and John Hel­
fers, Ed., DAW, Jun98)
Wentworth, K.D.: “Tall One” (F&SF, Apr98)

The Award will be announced at the 1999 Nebula Awards Weekend to be held in Pitts­
burgh, PA April 30-May 2, 1999.
Gough and Rudd present a worthy addition to an understanding of the woman whose "published legacy—equivalent to some 22 books" (Hill, p. 9) made her "[d]uring the first two decades of this century . . . the leading feminist theorist in the United States" (Kessler, p. 42) and gives the lie to Degler's uncharacteristic comment that "her thought . . . is hopelessly [my emphasis] tinged with utopianism" (Meyerling, p. 23). This collection demonstrates there is nothing "hopeless" about Gilman's work, utopian or otherwise.

Anne Cranny-Francis clarifies the role of The Forerunner in "Spinster of Dreams, Weaver of Realities," and Amana Graham presents a reading of Herland I hadn't previously considered in "Herland: Definitive Ecofeminist Fiction." Although their concerns were less new to me, Chris Ferns's "Rewriting Male Myths. . . ." Ruth Levitas on domestic labor in Bellamy, Gilman, and Morris, Nancy Beer on Gilman and women's health, and Val Gough on the much underrated Moving the Mountain also have special appeal.

Each essay has many notes, and there are seven pages of bibliography, more than 90% of which are works by women; most of the male authors mentioned are either writers of utopias as such or critics of the same. References throughout Gilman scholarship are similarly lopsided evidence of the paucity of criticism by men of her work. A brief index concludes the book, which is recommended to Gilman scholars, anyone interested in utopias, and larger academic libraries.

NONFICTION REVIEW

BETWIXT WOOD-WOMAN, WOLF AND BEAR

Richard Mathews


Talbot first fully outlined his perspectives on the powerful female presences in William Morris's writings in his "Women and Goddesses in the Romances of William Morris" in Australia's Southern Review in 1969. His perceptions have become even richer and more complex over the past three decades and form the context for the insights in this pamphlet, one of a new series, Babel Handbooks on Fantasy and SF Writers (ISSN 1326-561X), which average about 10,000 words in length. Interesting and provocative ideas abound, but the scope of Talbot's writing is far broader than The House of the Woodwals and The Roots of the Mountains (the two texts mentioned in the title), and the compressed critical references are difficult to unpack. It will be heavy going for readers seeking an introductory treatment—a full-fledged academic essay here, but no beginner's handbook.

NONFICTION REVIEW

MONSTER MADNESS

Neil Barron


As the one-page introduction suggests, monsters have a long history: the Gorgon, Hydra, Charybdis, and the Chimera. So it's not surprising that they've been refurbished, with new variations introduced for films. This ephemeral survey discusses twenty-four films from the 1920s to 1990's Edward Scissorhands, grouped in four clusters: Gothic tales of terror, they came from outer space, science has run
amok, and prehistoric throwbacks and post-atomic mutants. Lots of color and black-and-white stills are present, plus reproductions of some film posters, with about a page of text for each. The captions to the stills and posters are, lamentably, in the rear of the book. There is nothing new and no surprises in this quickie destined for the remainder bins.

The best survey of fantastic cinema to date is The World of Fantastic Films: An Illustrated Survey (UK title: Fantastic Cinema), published in 1984, by Pilgrim award winner Peter Nicholls. The illustrations enhance, not overwhelm, the text, which is very well informed and lucidly written. Australian-born UK resident John Brosnan’s witty survey, The Primal Screen: A History of the Science Fiction Film (1991) usefully supplements and updates Nicholls. Ronald V. Borst’s enormous collection of fantastic film memorabilia is the subject of his Graven Images: The Best of Horror, Fantasy, and Science Fiction Film Art from the Collection of Ronald V. Borst (1992).

**POETRY REVIEW**

**HAPPINESS**

*Sandra Lindow*


Pollack’s *Happiness* might more aptly be entitled *Unhappiness.* None of his posse of disaffected, self-appointed Marxist enforcers seems to be particularly happy, despite the tyrannical power they hold in a brave new dystopia where an anomaly in the space/time continuum has created a wall separating them from the old, unfair world where they were mere drudges and marginal players. Now they, with the help of an amazing glove, travel the world healing the sick, saving the abused, and correcting the politically incorrect. A shadowy but physically hale Stephen Hawking lurks in the background, commenting and calculating. Approach the wall and bleeding ears and nausea are induced. Flee, and time flows backward to birth, restarting in a Marxist utopia where capitalism has disappeared and learning is everything.

Pollack has been described as a modern-day Dante and, certainly, *Happiness* has much in common with *The Inferno.* However, there is little here of the music in Dante’s verse. Written in terse, unrhymed quatrains, *Happiness* can be read as prose, but it becomes poetry through the density of metaphor and the power of few words. Still, it’s more the stuff of nightmares than of mainline speculative poetry. Two of the enforcers interact as follows:

We are nightmares trying to become dreams.” “What sort of art do you want?” she demanded. “A histrionic festival,” I said. “Unanimity. Vast Stalinist processions, but without lying.” She stared at me, Appalled. “But that’s impossible—the form itself is a lie.” I shrugged: “Short of that, it scarcely matters.”

The tyranny of Marxist criticism. Like a Kline bottle, the poem doubles
back and critiques itself. When all has been deconstructed, little is left. Thomas Disch likes Happiness, describing it in a blurb as "a stern judgement and a guilty pleasure." One of the very few SF poets Disch praises in The Temple of Indolence, his cri-
tique of the genre, Pollack shows undoubted brilliance in doing what he sets out to do. I, however, in reading Happiness, ex-
perienced little of Disch’s pleasure, guilty or otherwise.

**Fiction Review**

**Flying Cups and Saucers**

Sandra Lindow


Gender transcendence becomes gender benders. If you set out to write a story that will Tiptree the gender establishment you probably won’t succeed. (Hugo winner David Brin failed in Glory Season.) Rather, you have to be that way, different, wobbling down the gender highway on an indeterminately wheeled bike, sometimes taking your half out of the middle, other
times going the wrong way, not much in control of velocity, or destination, either. Then, when you finally stop to write your story, your characters may transcend gender.

The thirteen stories here have all been chosen from Tiptree award winners and honorable mentions (a complete list of winners and shortlisted nominees is included). Each is outstanding in its exploration of the turbulent meeting of streams called Sex, Desire, and Culture. Many of the stories have characters with a kind of slant stream gender, such as the hermaphrodites in Graham Joyce and Peter F. Hamilton’s “Eat Reecebread” and L. Timmel Duchamp’s “Motherhood, Etc.” Some, like the characters in Kelley Eskridge’s “And Salome Danced,” Ian McDonald’s “Some Strange Desire,” and Lisa Tuttle’s “Food Man,” take us down that slippery slope from wish fulfillment to horror. Others, like R. Garcia y Robertson’s “The Other Magpie” and Delia Sherman’s “Young Woman in a Garden,” take place in alternative histories where the threshold between

life and death is blurred and can be crossed if love is powerful (obsessive?) enough.

Le Guin’s “Forgiveness Day” is a traditional love story set amidst the dangerous politics of an Arab-like alien world. Carol Emshwiller’s “Venus Rising” is a mythic/SF prehistory that defies explanation. Particularly interesting is that six authors are men. In “Chemistry,” James Patrick Kelly speaks through the voices of Marja and Lily, credibly female main characters.

Ian MacLeod’s “Grownups” is a rite of passage piece set in a world where three sexes are required to create life—male, female, and uncle.

Historically, speculative fiction’s primary gender benders have been women, perhaps because girls are interested in reading about both sexes (especially if they own a horse, my daughter says), whereas boys only want to read about boys. Thus, by reading about and identifying with the Other, girls come to gender bending early. Traditionally, male authors have been too caught up in the values of heterosexual culture to explore or bend gender. However, SF’s willingness to explore other ta-

boos has given a kind of permission. These male authors have overcome their pink and blue stereotypes to explore the lavender shades of the truly slip gendered.

**Correspondence**

**Letters to the Editors**

Solomon Davidoff’s review of Jeff Greenwald’s Future Perfect (a book that has as subjects some of the people who contributed back cover blurbs) in SFRAReview #237 has engendered much discussion. Davidoff writes of cover blurbs, “Since I know that most, if not all, of these comments are solicited with an added incentive (read: paycheck), I take them with a grain of salt.” However, publishers do not pay money for blurbs, and many people have written to clarify the issue.

Ursula K. Le Guin, SFRA Pilgrim winner and esteemed creative writer, responds in a Letter to the Editors in SFRAReview #238, “No added incentive was ever offered me, by any publisher, for any blurb. (Read: no paycheck.)”

Others have been weighing in. Jim Gunn writes, “I don’t know where the idea originated that authors got paid for contributing blurbs for the back covers of books. Like Ursula, I’ve done a good deal of them but no one ever offered me any-

thing but the manuscript or bound galleys that accompanied the request.”

Gordon Van Gelder, senior editor at St. Martin’s Press, writes, “In response to Ursula Le Guin’s letter in the Febru-

ary SFRAReview, I can say that in almost eleven years at St. Martin’s Press, I have never seen nor heard of anyone paying money for a promotional blurb.” He goes on to cite from Richard Laymon’s A Writer’s Tale. “We call them ‘blurbs’ or
'endorsements.' Sometimes, they are phrases plucked from a published review. Other times, they come from authors who are recognized in the field. Sometimes, they are fake. . . . If you look behind the scenes, you’ll find that a lot of quotes come from writers who share the same agent or publisher as the author whose book gets a favorable blurb. Often, too, the creator of the quote is a friend of the author who is on the receiving end. I even know of instances in which an author provided his own endorsements, penning them under a nom de plume" (pp. 161–62).

Another letter from Ms. Le Guin perhaps clarifies the situation:

Dear Editors,

A follow-up to my letter about whether or not blurbs are commonly paid for by the publisher: Immediately after I had indignantly stated in that letter that I had never been offered money to write a blurb, and nobody I knew had ever been offered money to write a blurb, I got a letter from a publisher offering me money to write a blurb. (Twenty-five bucks.)

But the circumstances of the offer shed light on a possible source of the original confusion. The press is a small literary one; the author of the MS is a distinguished academic. The author insisted to the publisher that he should offer money to people who read the MS in order to write a blurb for it. The publisher had never heard of such a practice, but consented, because the author insisted it was common practice. But the author, I am certain, was thinking of the practice, common in academic presses, occasional in literary presses, of offering an honorarium for "expert advice"—asking an expert in the field to read a MS and to advise the press whether they should publish it and what kind of editing it needs. That has nothing whatever to do with blurbing. It’s internal, editorial. The press might later ask a reader who recommended that they publish a book to write a blurb for it—but that request would not include an honorarium.

I wrote the publisher & told him about my letter to SFRA, and he wrote back in dismay and relief saying that all blurbs he has ever printed had been freely given, that he regretted his reluctant agreement to offer payment, would return to the usual practice, and would “not be persuaded to do otherwise in the future.”

Meanwhile, I continue to ask all my writer friends whether they have ever been offered or have taken money to write a blurb, and to my great pleasure, so far not one has done anything but stare at me and say, “What?” as if I’d asked them if they ate toads.

Very truly yours,

Ursula K. Le Guin

---

**SFRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**President**
Alan Elms  
Psychology Department  
U of California–Davis  
Davis, CA 95616-8686  
<acelms@ucdavis.edu>

**Secretary**
Carolyn Wendell  
English Department  
Monroe Community College  
Rochester, NY 14623  
<cwendell@monroe.cc.edu>

**Treasurer**
Michael M. Levy  
Department of English  
University of Wisconsin–Stout  
Menomonie, WI 54751  
<levym@uwstout.edu>

**Vice President**
Adam Frisch  
2308 Summit Street  
Sioux City, IA 51104-1210  
<frisch@briar-cliff.edu>

**Immediate Past President**
Joan Gordon  
1 Tulip Lane  
Commack, NY 11725  
<gordonjl@earthlink.net>

For an application, contact SFRA  
Treasurer Michael M. Levy or get one from the SFRA Website: <http://www.uwm.edu/~sands/sfrafiction.htm>
The SFRA is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries---students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, booksellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership.

Visit the SFRA Website at <http://www.uwm.edu/sands/sfra/scifi.htm>. An application for membership is available at this site.

SFRA Benefits

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

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

SFRA Annual Directory. One issue per year. Members’ names, addresses, phone, e-mail addresses, and special interests.

SFRA Review. Six issues per year. This newsletter/journal includes extensive book reviews of both nonfiction and fiction, review articles, listings of new and forthcoming books, and letters. The Review also prints news about SFRA internal affairs, calls for papers, updates on works in progress, and an annual index.

SFRA Optional Benefits

Foundation. Discounted subscription rate for SFRA members. Three issues per year. British scholarly journal, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, reviews, and letters. Add to dues: $27 surface; $30 airmail.

The New York Review of Science Fiction. Discounted subscription rate for SFRA members. Twelve issues per year. Reviews and features. Add to dues: $25 domestic; $34 domestic first class; $27 domestic institutional; $28 Canada; $36 overseas.

SFRA Listserv. The SFRA Listserv allows users with e-mail accounts to post mail to all subscribers of the listserv, round-robin style. It is used by SFRA members to discuss topics and news of interest to the SF community. To sign on to the listserv or to obtain further information, contact the list manager, Len Hatfield, at <lhat@ebbs.english.vt.edu> or <len.hatfield@vt.edu>. He will subscribe you. An e-mail sent automatically to new subscribers gives more information about the list.