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SUBMISSIONS
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
<k1h25@juno.com>

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

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

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MEMBER UPDATES
Karen Hellekson has signed a contract with MacFarland & Company for publication of her book on Cordwainer Smith, which was released by Borgo Press.

Terry Heller reports that he’s working on a Sarah Orne Jewett text project, which can be viewed at <www.public.coe.edu/~theller/iso/jsj/index.htm>.

New members Bruce L. Rockwood and Susan M. Rockwood list the following address: 807 Cherry Hill Road, Bloomsburg, PA 17815; <rockwood@planetx.bloomu.edu>.

Bruce L. Rockwood is a professor of legal studies at Bloomsburg University and is working on a collection of essays on law, literature, and science fiction, building off a symposium of that name which he recently edited for the journal Legal Studies Forum. He suggests that the SFRA undertake the following tasks: interviewing and documenting work and views of living SF writers; creating links to interdisciplinary groups; keeping SF in print; creating CD-ROMs of all the old pulps.

Patrick Sharp is working on Nuclear Apocalypse Narratives in American Culture.

Joan Slonczewski’s newest novel, The Brain Plague, which concerns intelligent microbes inhabiting human brains, a sequel to The Children Star, is scheduled to appear in August 2000.

Leslie Kay Swigart reports that she is working on a never-ending primary and secondary bibliography on Harlan Ellison.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
The New Millennium
Alan Elms and the Executive Committee

...And a Happy New Millennium to All!*

*However you calculate its onset.

EDITORIAL
Proselytizing SF
Craig Jacobsen

This is the last issue of the 1990’s, and while we are skirting the contentious issue of when the swap of new millennium for old will actually occur, it does seem like the year 2000, bug or no, marks an important milestone. It is an especially significant one for SF. As others have noted, we will be living in the former future. Though our cars aren’t capable of sustained, controlled flight, and our cities have yet to be covered with spiffy transparent domes, it is an SF world out there, with cell phones that put Captain Kirk’s communicator to shame (Could he get stock quotes on that thing? Check for email from Federation Headquarters? I doubt it), and the growing ability to order to your door almost anything you can think of (and many you couldn’t) with just a few strokes of the keyboard. A Furby has more computing power than the Apollo lunar landers.

“So what?” you say. “That’s all very nice, but I’ve heard it before. What does this have to do with the SFRA?”

Glad you asked. Science Fiction is the primordial soup in which the future simmers. As lots of folks have noted, SF isn’t really a good prediction tool. It takes in more ideas than it gives out. And all of those ideas go into the pot. They bubble. They bump against each other, combine flavors, and soften a bit maybe. The ingredients come from all over the place: the hard sciences, the soft sciences, the pseudo-sciences. Once they’ve been dropped into the SF pot, they’re fair game for anyone who want to explore them, think about the implications of new ideas, speculate on how they might interact with other new ideas, or old ideas, or human nature. To pile up mismatched metaphors, science fiction is beta testing for new ideas. It is where we work out the bugs, anticipate the pitfalls, revise our approach. SF is a loosely organized think-tank that produces, in the form of novels, frequent reports on cutting-edge knowledge.

Yet the population at large thinks SF is Star Trek/Wars or, worse, UFO nuts.

And we let them.

SFRA numbers about 300 members, but we have potential influence vastly out of proportion to those numbers. Most of us teach, many of us write, some of us work in libraries. We have continuing contact with students, readers, and colleagues. But most often we write for each other. We talk about SF to each other. We go to conferences, maybe conventions, and we talk about SF with other SF folks. When we’re not in these places, we lay low, downplay the SF angle, lest our peers suspect us of secretly wearing pointy rubber ears when our office doors are closed.
In 2000, let's make a concerted effort to show how relevant SF can be. Show a colleague in the Psychology Department how an SF short story might illustrate something she's teaching. Give your students a Newsweek article about Dolly the sheep and a story that explores the legal status of cloned humans. Lend someone teaching Shakespeare's The Tempest your tape of Forbidden Planet.

Let's stop preaching to the choir. Let's use our considerable collective creativity, experience, knowledge and resources to show others what we already know: science fiction is valuable.

INTERVIEW WITH KATHLEEN ANN GOONAN

Reader Beware!

Conducted by Craig Jacobsen

Kathleen Ann Goonan's first novel, Queen City Jazz, appeared in 1994 to effusive praise from both within the genre (Locus called it "almost certainly the most important debut novel" of the year) and from without (The New York Times named it a Notable Book). She continued her story of a world changed by nanotechnology in her third novel, Mississippi Blues. In between, The Bones of Time explored connections between the remains of Hawaii's King Kamehameha and space travel. She has also published a number of well-received short stories. Her works demonstrate a continuing fascination with the complex interplay of cultural forces as technology blurs the lines that separate past from present and art from life.

Though Goonan was a guest at the Science Fiction Research Association Conference in Mobile, Ala., in June 1999, conflicting flight schedules moved the formal interview off the conference program and onto e-mail.

Jacobsen: Your novels seem to be much like the city of Cincinnati in Queen City Jazz, an amalgam of futuristic high technology and nostalgic past, where “regular” people mingle with, and sometimes become, famous figures from history, art, music and literature. What drew you to this mix and what draws you back to it?

Goonan: I suppose this comes from having lived with and in books since I was very young. My idea of a perfect summer vacation was ninety uninterrupted days of reading. When I woke in the morning I would pick up the book that fell from my hand the night before as I dozed off and resume reading. I put on and took off the mental personas of many writers, as do the characters in my books. Perhaps the Cincinnati of Queen City Jazz is the continued desire to live among the musical, literary, or visually artistic works of others in a very intense way.

Jacobsen: Many of your works are intertextual. “The Day the Dam Broke” makes reference to James Thurber’s works, Queen City Jazz brings in Flannery O’Connor’s Wise Blood, and of course the works of Mark Twain are central to Mississippi Blues. While they are all readable without a strong background in American literature, such a background enriches the works. Does this reflect your perception of the genre and your particular audience?

Goonan: I’m afraid this reflects nothing but my own self-indulgence as a writer. I don’t really have a particular audience in mind, and I’m quite grateful to have found one. Writers more often than not try to build several levels into their work; The Waste Land, for instance, can scarcely be appreciated except on the level of pure language and image without knowledge of all of the events and texts in which Eliot grounds his work. Perhaps that’s why he knew that he needed a day job—that, and the fact that he didn’t want a sponsor. I don’t want my work to be obscure or difficult to understand; I want a lot of readers because I want writing to be my day job. At the same time, I want the density that those who understand the underpinnings and references might appreciate.

For instance, it’s not at all necessary to the enjoyment of the recent
movie American Beauty to know that it is the name of a rose. But if you know this (I think that it is entirely possible that many viewers do not), it enhances appreciation for the artistry that went into the making of the movie and appreciation of the movie itself.

Jacobsen: Music is a central element of Mississippi Blues. Given the difficulty of recreating that medium with the written word, have you ever considered hypertext or multimedia presentation of your work?

Goonan: When I began writing Queen City Jazz around 1991, I dreamed of such mediums. I remember going to a panel called “The Future of Publishing” hoping to hear about such applications, when instead the panelists simply spoke of doom and gloom in marketing the same old undigitized books. In my case, I think that obtaining the rights to incorporate the music and art that I’ve used into the books would probably be prohibitively expensive. I was just reading Gibson’s All Tomorrow’s Parties, in which he at one point paraphrases a Robert Johnson song, and I knew just why he did it. I think that being able to click on music or art while reading a relevant passage would be marvelous, though.

Jacobsen: You’ve got a Website <www.goonan.com> devoted to your work, and you’ve published a few stories online. What does the Internet offer you as a writer?

Goonan: Publicity, for the most part, though like all publicity it is hard to judge the impact or to count the benefits. It is also very good for networking, and wonderful for conducting interviews. I don’t believe that digital books will be very popular until more reader-friendly interfaces are available. I find that I don’t read anything of any length from my computer screen; I still have to print it off. With a book-length work, you end up paying as much or more to print it off at home, and it is also inconveniently unbound.

Jacobsen: You mention on your Website that a reader suggested to you that science fiction writers should make explicit where “real” history stops and the author’s “fictional” history begins. Would you like to comment on the desire for that kind of clear-cut division and how it relates to both the form and content of your works?

Goonan: This suggestion was in regard to The Bones of Time. In this novel, I use the life of Princess Kaiulani, Hawaii’s last princess. She died tragically at the age of twenty-three, of a rather mysterious and sudden illness, the year after Hawaii was illegally annexed by the U.S. government. She never took the throne despite her intensive European education, which was to fit her for this task. The book begins in the year 2012, when a Hawaiian orphan “sees” Kaiulani in the streets of Honolulu. He grows up to become a gifted mathematician, determined to solve the mysteries of time and space, in order to validate these continuing visions and time crossovers, for of course he has fallen in love with Kaiulani.

As I say on my Web page: “All the Hawaiian history in The Bones of Time is true. The royal family was quite progressive, and Lunalani Palace was actually wired for electricity years before the White House was on the grid. The only liberties I took with history were that Kaiulani most probably did not see a man from the future, and that she may not have given birth soon before she died.” Kaiulani may not have given birth before she died, but it is a possibility, one that is seriously regarded by many in Hawaii—though just as many become quite agitated at such a suggestion.

John Kessel, when attending a reading of The Bones of Time, commented that perhaps science fiction writers are all frustrated historians, since so many of us are obsessed with history—with how it was, or how it might possibly have turned out otherwise.

I must say that I think that it’s up to the reader to beware when reading a book of fiction with historical characters in it—particularly science fiction. Part of the frisson of reading Harry Turtledove, for instance, lies in knowing the truth—or what is commonly thought of as historical truth—and measuring the fiction against it. An afterword might be in order, but that de-

ERRATA
Karen McGuire, not Karen McBride, reviewed Dracula: Bram Stoker in SFRAReview #242 (p. 27).


REPRINTS
Kenneth Andrews notes a spate of reprints of classic SF, some long unavailable. Send any additional titles to Craig Jacobsen for future issues. These reprints offer teachers of SF, and scholars, a wider range of historically significant works.


P 27: 1971 Pilgrim is
Nicolson
It puts me in mind of having read a book, when I was about twelve, called The Day on Fire by James Ramsy Ullman. A boy in rural France grows up to be a radical poet. What a fabulous character, I thought. And how strange that this character went off to Africa after all that and never wrote again. I identified with him quite deeply as he struggled with issues of authority and with the energy, made concrete in his poetry, that picked him out of one life and threw him into another. Several years later, I came across Rimbaud’s poems and recognized them as being the same as those of this character; I was... it’s kind of an odd sensation, but surely there is a concise word for it in some other language. ... I was struck with pleasure to find that this tortured boy was a real person. No doubt this explanation—that Ullman’s character was based on a real person—was somewhere in the book and I just skipped it; it was not, however, billed as biography.

I don’t think that it is the duty of a fiction writer to inform the reader directly about what is “real” and what is not.

To reply more succinctly to the content question: it is true that my characters tend to fall into, or are subsumed by, fictional characters or by the authors of fiction, as happens to Mattie in Mississippi Blues. Mattie herself is based on the main character in True Grit, but is host to the later, darker Mark Twain who railed, after the death of his sometimes censorious wife, about religion, imperialism, the hypocrisy of the country, and racism. My characters are in real places with which we are familiar, yet they carry the weight of American history and literature. As far as I’m concerned, they are real as real can be. No explanations or authorial clarifications necessary, or, probably, required. This is the historical and literary soil from which these characters originally sprang; I’m just taking them one step further into pomo land.

As for form: The form of Queen City Jazz was jazz-based in that it was improvisatory; it was also more strictly ragtime in the sense that time itself was torn apart and embedded in the city, so that the characters found themselves infused with different realities much the way we experience art: in pieces. As we live our ordinary lives, we are able to incorporate within them glimpses of other realities via novels, poetry, music, paintings, etc. We almost take this for granted, yet it is an extraordinary gift of our neurobiology that we are able to both create and experience these other worlds. As I composed the book, the chapters were floating free in time; I almost wished I could just tell the reader to access them in any order, but I finally laid them all out and decided on a sequence. The chapter titles echo the titling penchant of jazz composers; they are oblique and intellectual. The chapter may, like jazz pieces, have its foundations and literary soil from which these characters originally sprang; I’m just taking them one step further into pomo land.

Mississippi Blues, on the other hand, was linear in form, like the blues, which often tell a direct story. The form is echoed by the river trip, also linear, down the Ohio and Mississippi, and so the book in some sense is picaresque as the characters encounter one adventure after the other. But the adventures are revelatory; more and more of the time-hidden world is revealed in each one. The chapter titles are carefree and descriptive of the contents, like those of blues tunes.

Jacobsen: In Mississippi Blues, one of your characters (Lil, p. 458) observes from her future perspective that at the turn of the millennium there seemed to almost be a conspiracy to keep people ignorant of math, technology, even the effective use of language. Several other characters espouse a sort of anarchist view that all information should be freely available. How much is this a reflection of your own view?

Goonan: In regard to the first part of the question: I come by my soapbox honestly; I owned and operated a Montessori pre-through-elementary school for about ten years and taught for thirteen years. Although the seeming rigidity of the Association Montessori Internationale (Dr. Montessori’s
When we look forward, what do we see behind and around us? We invite papers on any aspect of this question: alternate histories, nineteenth-century visions versus twentieth-century visions, utopias and dystopias, and future histories.

Proposals or papers: Send proposals or papers postmarked by March 31, 2000, to the program chair for the SF and Fantasy Discussion Circle, Warren Rochelle.

Send to: Warren Rochelle, Box F41, 1115 Limestone College, Gaffney, SC 29340; (864) 488-4503 or (800) 795-7151; x503; e-mail <wrochelle@saint.limestone.edu>.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE THOMAS D. CLARESON SERVICE AWARD

Muriel Becker writes: The Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service, instated by SFRA in 1995, seeks nominations for the year 2000. The award is given for "outstanding service activities—promotion of SF teaching and study, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing SF meetings, mentoring, leadership in SF/Fantasy organizations such as SFRA, World SF, etc. Scholarly achievements (books, essays) will be considered as secondary for the purposes of selection" (SFRA Review 21:921).

Recipients of the "Clareson Award" have been Fred Pohl ('96), Janet Gunn ('97), Betty Hull ('98), and Dave Hartwell ('99).

The year 2000 committee (Muriel Becker, chairperson, with Carol...
phers and perhaps many religious philosophers were frustrated scientists. They wanted to know what I want to know—what is going on? But they lacked the tools—the microscopes, telescopes, spectrometers—which would have enhanced their own senses and given them the information they so desperately wanted.

It is possible for most people to accept one paradigm or another of what is going on and happily (or unhappily, as the case may be) go through life according to those strictures. Perhaps this is not true of those who read science fiction, at least challenging science fiction, rather than media science fiction, which generally falls into the category of comfort fiction, for which there will always be a market. One can hope that readers such as these—the ones who can't help but question reality—will continue to keep such radical fiction viable.

The marketing realities are another factor, though. I noticed when in London a few years ago that science fiction was shelved with all the other literature, by author. I have also noticed that there are both readers and writers of SF who have read little else than SF, and this contributes to a marked etiolation of the genre. Readers who want a good SF book must keep abreast of the critical literature, which is work, to avoid being disappointed in their purchases. But that is true no matter what kind of literature you prefer.

Nicola Griffith commented in a recent e-mail that she believes that the "art books" of SF will survive, and I think that this is a hopeful prognosis. My definition of such a book would be that it draw from sources other than SF and SF history, that it pay as much attention to language as to plot, that there is evidence of intellect and wit on the part of the author; that it, perhaps, combines low and high art in some new way. That, in short, it is a work that reverberates after being read.

Jacobsen: According to Locus, you've turned in the manuscript for the sequel to Queen City Jazz and Mississippi Blues. What can readers look forward to?

Goonan: Crescent City Rhapsody, due out from Avon Eos in February 2000, actually takes place before, and is a prequel to, the world of Queen City Jazz and Mississippi Blues. It begins about ten years from now, and ends several decades before Queen City Jazz begins. It is the story of how that world becomes possible and is about the simultaneous failure of radio and development of nanotechnology seen through the eyes of many characters. Queen City Jazz was seen through the eyes of one character, and Mississippi Blues was the story of what happened to the nation; Crescent City Rhapsody is international in scope.

Present-day New Orleans mob boss Marie Laveau is the victim of a hit when the story opens. However, she still plays a part and is in fact theynchpin of the book. A radio astronaut in southwest Virginia has information about the nature of the radio blackouts which quickly becomes classified; he must go underground in order to survive. There is also a Tibetan terrorist, an artist who radically transforms Paris down to its very molecules, a Japanese nanobiologist, and a jazz-and-word-loving dwarf. Some of the cultural vectors I use are voudoun and its nearest cousins; Cajun, Mardi Gras, and many mammals, and stir well.

I am presently working on Light Music, the final book in this quartet. I return to my fascination with the new science of Consciousness Studies and relate this to superstring theory and the fact that "All the distinctions we make to see plaids, Kandinskys, traffic lights, and flowers are stimulated by wavelengths of light that are so close to one another, it is as if symphonies of music were being performed and perceived in the range of tones falling between a B and its nearest Eb" (The Missing Moment, Pollack, p. 35). What if were able to expand this range of perception to, say, at least the next lower or higher half-tone? Let us say that we are living in the aftermath of an astounding change in human consciousness, or, at least, in a zeitgeist that began with the changes we digested (or not) when we became aware of evolution, the theory of relativity, and quantum mechanics. What will the next few zeitgeists be, and how will they, in turn, change us?
Introduction
The following is an extract from a paper I gave recently at a seminar group in Liverpool. Basically I wanted to think about Clarke's combination of realism and extrapolation, and 2001 is a good example to use because of the intense realism of Kubrick's "space" images—reflected in Clarke's description of the moon landing in which he is at great pains to stress that this is a perfectly routine operation during which nothing happens—combined with the intensely imaginative sweep of the final scene with the "star child."

I set Clarke against Kipling's "With the Night Mail" (1904) in which an author also attempts to build up a sense of realism while creating a world that to his readers is extrapolative fantasy. In creating his world, Kipling anchors the "future" world of dirigibles and aeroplanes in the "present" world of steamships and the esprit de corps of the British civil service, but also reflecting the current speculation about the possibilities of air travel. Similarly, Clarke's "default" reality is the world of commercial air travel to which is added the speculation about moon landings, which by then were only a matter of time.

Of course, other texts could be used for comparison; the point is that Clarke is involved, as he so often is, in speculation based upon realism. This would involve a close look at Clarke's prose, which is often thought of as flat, and so it is, but a more flowery style would be inappropriate to the sense of the mundane realism of the fantastic that he is trying to instil. When looking at Clarke with a group of students, I like to point out the way he writes blocks of completely straightforward narrative which ends with an enigmatic image or twist: the example below concerning the moon landing, where "he had landed on the moon" suggests both the fact that to the viewer character this is a straightforward journey and to us a wondrous one—is one example, but in 2001 the best examples are probably the parallel sections ending, "but he would think of something," which throws the whole narrative open and suggests, as science fiction does, the dislocating and unsettling nature of change.

2001
Clarke's novel 2001: A Space Odyssey was essentially a collaboration between Clarke and Stanley Kubrick; nevertheless, although numerous ideas came from Kubrick, we can see that the novel's narrative techniques are essentially Clarkeian (just as we can say the reverse about the film). Clarke is a writer of conventional, realistic prose: often stiff but frequently—when he is describing aspects of the physical world no one has ever seen—possessed of an astonishing poetic charge. Like Kipling, he creates the illusion of a realistic world of the future. We perhaps remember Floyd's journey in the space shuttle through Kubrick's detailed visual images and use of special effects, but Clarke's flat prose creates precisely the effect he wants to create. This is not writing intended to do much more than present information:

The pilot's voice was firm and confident as it came over the cabin speaker. "Please observe all zero-gee regulations. We will be docking at Space Station 1 in forty-five minutes." The stewardess came walking up the narrow corridor to the right of the closely spaced seats. There was a slight buoyancy about her steps, and her feet came away from the floor reluctantly as if entangled in glue. She was keeping to the bright yellow band of Velcro carpeting that ran the full length of the floor—and of the ceiling. The carpet, and the soles of her sandals, were covered with myriads of tiny hooks, so that they clung together like burrs. This trick of walking in free-fall was immensely reassuring to disoriented passengers. "Would you like some coffee or tea, Dr Floyd?" she asked cheerfully. (pp. 50-51)
The advantage and disadvantage of basic narrative prose is that the ambiguity we learn that they are in free-fall. Even the toilet cubicle has where Floyd is pestered by stewards offering

informs us that

the new discoveries which brought about his world:

beyond the mental and physical capabilities of his fellows: not sure what to do

an ordinary airline

the hominid Moonwatcher, standing over the corpse of the enemy he has de­

lar. The space station:

The lounge had been redecorated since his last visit, and had acquired several new facilities. Besides the usual chairs, small tables, restaurant, and post office there was now a barber's shop, drugstore, movie theatre and a souvenir shop selling photographs and slides of lunar and planetary landscapes, guaranteed genuine pieces of Luniks, Rangers and Surveyors, all neatly mounted in plastic, and exorbitantly priced. (p. 54)

Both these passages, and the description of the actual flight to the moon where Floyd is pestered by stewards offering “unwanted meals” and uses the free-fall toilet facilities are designed to give information as clearly as possible, to present the illusion (if we like) that this is part of everyday reality. But whereas Kipling’s “default” reality is the time of steamships and engine rooms, Clarke’s is that of commercial air travel and shiny surfaces: officious cabin staff, decorative stewardesses, high-priced souvenirs and—to give us that jolt which informs us that Clarke’s viewpoint character is not aboard a transatlantic jet—the focus upon the “slight bouyancy” of the stewardess’s gait through which we learn that they are in free-fall. Even the toilet cubicle has “all the fittings of an ordinary airline toilet.” Later, we hear about the “Newspad,” the electronic transmission of information, but just as Kipling’s dirigibles are “boats” with “bridges” crewed by “sailors,” so what Floyd actually reads are the headlines of “newspapers”: “That very word ‘newspaper,’ of course, was an anachronistic hang-over into the age of electronics” (p. 62).

Finally, there is the moon landing: everyday, factual information—the mountains below, the flickering numbers on computer displays, the slow descent—mixed with a sense of wonder at the scale of the achievement. In one of Clarke’s characteristic touches, the final paragraph sums up the journey with a paradox: “He had made, utterly without incident and in little more than one day, the incredible journey of which men had dreamed for two thousand years. After a normal, routine flight, he had landed on the moon” (p. 66).

Whereas Kipling’s journalist stressed the romance of the airways, Clarke offers the mundanity of space. Of course, this mundanity—as it was in those far-off pre−Stone Age days with which the novel opened—is about to be shattered. What Clarke in the end offers us is not the routine event but the idea of change. 2001 ends with the Star Child brooding over another paradigm shift. The advantage and disadvantage of basic narrative prose is that the ambiguity present in a situation merely given—presented without interpretation—is often spelled out. Kubrick told the story of 2001 through the juxtaposition of images; Clarke interprets for us what is happening. Bowman/The Star Child is beyond the mental and physical capabilities of his fellows: not sure what to do next, but he would think of something, reflecting, of course, the position of the hominid Moonwatcher, standing over the corpse of the enemy he has defeated with his new discovery, the weapon. New discoveries change the world.

To return to what Captain Hodgson in “With the Night Mail” remarked about the new discoveries which brought about his world: “I wonder if any of us ever know what we’re really doing” (p. 113).

APPROACHING ARTHUR C. CLARKE’S AND STANLEY KUBRICK’S 2001

ON DVD

Adam Frisch

I teach 2001: A Space Odyssey every year in my Literature and Film class. (We contrast the the film’s lunar episode and overall attitudes toward the alien with Clarke’s originals in “The Sentinel.”) This year, for the first time, I was able to use the DVD version of Kubrick’s film projected onto a big screen.

NEED A PUBLISHER?

Neil Barron is compiling a new survey of book and magazine/journal publishing opportunities, to be published early next year as a supplement to the SFRA's The survey is limited to English language publishers of secondary literature devoted to fantastic literature and film: criticism, biography/interviews, bibliographies, etc. YOU CAN HELP TO MAKE THE SURVEY MORE AUTHORITATIVE. If you know of a magazine or book publisher that he might have overlooked, e-mail or letter mail IMMEDIATELY full details to him (see Submissions sidebar at beginning of magazine). If in doubt, send information anyway.

LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS TO BE DISCUSSED

Neil Barron reports that Michael Dirda, the gifted critic for the Washington Post Book World, will host an online discussion of Le Guin's novel in January 2000. Details from him at dirdam@washpost.com

NEW SFS WEBSITE

Rob Latham announces that the new, official Science Fiction Studies, website, designed by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. and maintained by Rob Latham, is now up and running at <www.uiowa.edu/~sfs/>.

The site includes abstracts of every article published in SFS since its founding in 1973; full texts of every review (subject to a one-year blackout from the current issue); documents in the history of sf published in SFS (including hard-to-find occasional writings by Bellamy, Wells, Morris, Maitland, Capek, Renard, and
incapacitated because
Mary Kay
about her contributions
colleagues would like
chronic illness. Her friends and former
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timely fashion; remember
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MARY KAY BRAY
Mary Kay Bray, a longtime student
and teacher of SF at the college level
and formerly an active member of
SFRA, is now retired from teaching and
incapacitated because of a long-term
chronic illness. Her friends and former
colleagues would like to learn more
about her contributions to SFRA as
they consider how best to pay tribute
to her work in the field.

While I've always told my classes what a difference a 9 x 15
rectangle makes, this truism was ultra-confirmed for me as I viewed the closing
fifteen minutes of the film via the DVD projection. Of course, it helps at
film's end to see the giant fetus actually observing the Earth while Strauss plays
(versus the VCR's shot of first only the Earth, and then a gradual pan left to
mostly the fetus). But I was also struck during "The Trip" scene by the obvious
cinematic parallelism of the microcosm (the conception of individual human
life) with the Big Bang macrocosm, much of which gets lost when the shots get
framed down to 4 x 5 boxes.
The gel patterns gelled for both me and my students; all that stuff on both
sides really matters to the film's creation of meaning. I'd encourage any teacher
whose school has a high-tech classroom to switch the class to that room, even
if for just one or two days, to show the DVD version of the Clarke/Kubrick
masterpiece on a big screen. It's worth the hassle.

APPROACHING ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S AND STANLEY KUBRICK'S 2001
2 0 0 1 B I B L I O G R A P H Y
Hal Hall


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Anyone who has not received all six issues of the SFRAReview should notify coeditor Craig Jacobson immediately, before he sells our small supply of back issues on the black market.

THE CHILDREN STAR
AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK
SFRA member and SF writer Joan Slonczewski <slonczewski@kenyon.edu> writes: I wanted to let people know that The Children Star [reviewed by Michael Levy in SFRAReview #234 and by Joan Gordon in SFRAReview #235/236] is in paperback, and I can send an exam copy for anyone considering for inclusion in a course. The book has gotten good reviews, including the New York Times, and was featured by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute as an example of teaching biology through science fiction. I'm now set up to provide Web support for anyone using my books; I can send a study guide and answer student questions. Also, we now have a virtual classroom for long-distance conferencing.

THE LATEHE OF HEAVEN
TO BE RELEASED ON VIDEO
SFRA member Kenneth Andrews reports that he has been corresponding with Ursula K. Le Guin. He writes: I had told UKL about seeing The Lathe of Heaven on a weak PBS signal when it was broadcast many years ago. It was only broadcast once and has been wrapped up in ownership disputes since the original broadcast. She tells me that at long last The Lathe of Heaven


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APPRAOCHING ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S AND STANLEY KUBLICK'S 2001

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Hal Hall


“Avon Projects with Clarke.” Locus 19, no. 9 (September 1986): 5.

“Bantam Becomes Clarke’s Publisher.” Locus 24, no. 6 (June 1990): 5.


video is about to be released. She also says that Lathe will be remade into a film, although she does not know when it will be released.

THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON, PART TWO
Neil Barron reports: The last issue listed Scott Montgomery's fall 1999 book, The Moon and Western Imagination. In September Macmillan Travel published a down-to-moon travel guide, Frommer's The Moon: A Guide for First-Time Visitors, $10.95, by Werner Kustenmacher. Unlike the original Frommer guides, which had the generic titles [Area] on $3 A Day, a lunar visit is likely to cost you a bit more, and the lodgings will be a bit spartan, even if very high tech. The usual information is here: what to bring, the weather, food, excretion, sights, costs, with sections on preparing for the trip, the voyage, life in space, and excursions. A lot of NASA photos enliven the text. You probably can't bring your golf bag, but a wood will be provided for anyone wanting to attempt a 20-km drive (no caddy, though). Souvenirs are a bit limited, partly because of severe weight limitations. You might find some pieces from the six previous landing modules. And rocks. Lots of rocks. Lots and lots of rocks. Stay a month and see the Earth go through all its phases. See a monolith. Think I'm kidding? Check out these sites: <www.spacefuture.com>, <www.spacetransportation.org>, <www.space-tourism-society.org>, <www.rss.org>, <www.spacetransportation.org>, <www.spacevoyages.com>, <www.lunacorp.com>, <www.deepseavoyages.com>, and <www.harrimansfolly.rh>. 

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Clarke Gets $4 Million for Collaborating. Locus 20, no. 10 (October 1987): 5.
---. “Out of This World.” Los Angeles (Calif.) Times (January 24, 1992): E1.
Greenwald, Jeff. “Arthur C. Clarke on Life (and Death).” Wired 1, no. 3. [3 pp.]
[Cited from the Hotwired on-line edition.]
AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL ISSUES ARRIVE
Issues 40 (14:2, 1997) and 41 (15:1, 1998) of the semiannual Science Fiction: A Review of Speculative Literature reached me via slow glass on 20 October. Number 40 has a survey of aliens in speculative fiction; interviews with Aussies Dirk Strasser, Traci Harding (cover photo) and Rick Kennett, all of whom have entries in The MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy (reviewed in SFRA Review #240); bibliographies of Strasser and Kennett; six reviews; and a poem.

Number 41 has interviews of Simon Brown (on the cover) and Kate Forsyth (ditto above); a bibliography of Brown; a brief e-mail debate on Brown's Winter (1997); an article on The Time Machine; nine reviews; and two poems. Two 60-page issues per year cost A$15 or U.S.$20 from Van Ikin, English Department, University of Western Australia, Nedlands WA 6907; or from the U.S. agent, Jonathan V. Post, 3225 N Marengo Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91001.

PW Chooses Best 1999 SF Books
The November 1 issue of Publishers Weekly has its best books listing, based on earlier forecasts (reviews). Most of the reviews of SF are by the SFRA's Michael Levy. Recommended SF: Darwin's Radio by Greg Bear, Ender's Shadow by Orson Scott Card, Cryptonomicon by Neal Stephenson, and A Deepness in the Sky by Vernor Vinge.

Puns Anyone?
Stefan Dziemianowicz, an expert in horror fiction, recently received a


“King Over Clarke 8 Million to 1.” Locus 20, no. 6 (May 1987): 4.


“Nebula Award Winners.” Locus 19, no. 6 (June 1986): 1, 56.


**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE**

Neil Barron


How many people who are thought of mostly as SF writers have published book-length autobiographies, as distinct from shorter pieces, such as essays, interviews or correspondence? Six, by my count: Asimov in 1979–80, age 60; Clarke in 1989, age 72; de Camp in 1996, age 89; Pohl in 1978, age 59; Williamson in 1984, age 76; and Aldiss in 1998, age 73. Pohl’s The Way the Future Was is more memoir than straight autobiography, as was Aldiss’s Bury My Heart at W. H. Smith’s: A Writing Life (1990).

How many such authors have had full-length books devoted to them? Including figures like Leiber, Lessing, Lewis, Lindsay, Merritt, etc., and regarding the short Starmont/Borgo Press monographs as “full-length,” the number is about fifty, and many of those books were written early in the careers of their subjects. Certainly some SF writers have had lives interesting and lengthy enough to make an autobiography likely to appeal to the general public. Heinlein, Sturgeon, and Dick were candidates, and Ballard, Ellison, Vance, and Vonnegut are approaching an age suitable for a summing up. Whether a trade publisher would feel similarly is doubtful, since only about 5 percent of the approximately 7000+ original works of fiction currently published each year in the U.S. are SF, and most SF, excluding film/TV/game spinoffs, is consumed by fans.

Aldiss is a well-known writer in the U.K. and not simply of SF. He’s a member of the Royal Society of Literature. His books are widely reviewed, and most are in print. (In spite of that, he writes in the early 1990s, “I could tell my writing was improving: my sales figures kept getting worse.”) He was the literary editor of the Oxford Mail for some years, has served as a Booker Prize judge, and frequently lectured overseas under British Council auspices. No U.S. SF writer even comes close to achieving equivalent recognition.

Aldiss is far less known in the U.S. outside of SF circles. Many of his books have never seen American editions, although he’s won Hugo, Nebula, and other awards. Will this autobiography find much of an audience outside...
the SF ghetto? Regrettably, I doubt it, even though I enjoyed and learned from it, as SF and non-SF readers will.

He presents his life in a series of parallel accounts, as one might expect of a novelist, not a straight chronology. He served about three years as an army radio operator in India, Burma, and Indonesia but was not in front-line combat. His service didn’t end with the Japanese surrender but in the summer of 1947, when his ship docked at Liverpool: “No crowds welcomed us home. The war had been over too long.” These years were transmuted into the bawdy best-selling three-volume saga of Horatio Stubbs (I treasure my 1985 Panther omnibus with his deliciously obscene dedication.)

But his hardscrabble life began in 1925, and much of his story recounts his earliest years, which shaped him in ways revealed throughout the book. Perhaps, as he suggests, “it is possible to discard the imprint of one’s early years, and to generate within oneself a new self.” American readers, especially those who know little of his SF, may find his life a bit too English, and the details of his disappointments and triumphs, his comings and goings, and his family too remote or specialized. In an Internet interview by Roz Kaveney, he admits, “an earlier draft of the book had a lot more twinkling in it—my life has had so many overnight changes and I originally felt I had to signal each and every one of them. But I realized that I had overdone it, and I took a lot of them out.” (According to the Kaveney interview, Aldiss wrote in detail of his wife, Margaret, who died of pancreatic cancer in November 1998. When the Feast Is Finished was published last May by Little, Brown, U.K.)

But for those who have read a fair amount of his fiction, this chronicle should prove enlightening and often fascinating, for incidents in his life have been repeatedly reworked for his fiction and essays. The breadth of his interests, his wit, and his humor are present throughout. Literary archeologists won’t be able to resist.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Science Fiction Magazine Story Index

Neil Barron


Born in 1953, Murray began collecting SF magazines in the early 1960s and later discovered the indexes that then existed, listing some of the principal ones in his two-page bibliography. Notably absent is Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Magazines by Marshall Tynn and Mike Ashley (1985), a near-definitive history of hundreds of magazines published from 1882 to 1983.

Like any collector, he found every index limited and began to compile his own index in notebooks, information he converted to a computer database over more than three years. He notes that he couldn’t acquire copies of foreign magazines (including standard British titles like New Worlds and Interzone) or semiprofessional magazines. Included in the 134 titles he does index are complete runs of all the standard pulps you’d expect, mostly American, including many overlapping fantasy magazines such as Unknown, plus a few serial anthologies published as books. To keep things manageable, he indexed only the fiction—no articles, columns, poems, etc.—in 4953 issues.

The index consists of three parts. The longest (pp. 10–315) is the issue by issue listing in alphabetical-chronological order, with each issue numbered for indexing purposes. The author–title information is run on, which saves space but is a bit difficult to read. This is followed by an odd index (pp. 310–369) listing authors of twenty-five or more indexed stories, with all their
stories in title sequence. The title index (pp. 371–563) is keyed to the
issue number, as is the concluding author index (pp. 565–627).

I could find no evidence that Murray was active in fandom or knew of
similar indexing projects by others, which is a tragedy. Had he known of similar
efforts, he might have saved himself an enormous amount of time and lent his
knowledge and talents to others who were further along and indexing much
more comprehensively. Specifically, Stephen T. Miller in New Jersey, working
with Bill Contenko in California, had initially planned a massive print index (ca.
2100 letter-size pages) but found this uneconomical and issued in spring 1998
Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazine Index (1890–1997) on a CD-
ROM for $49.95, available from Locus (Box 13305, Oakland, CA 94611; $3.50
U.S. postage, $7 overseas; details from <Locus@Locusmag.com>.

The coverage dwarfs Murray: chronologically it’s thirty-seven years greater,
it indexes more than 11,000 issues of 730 English-language magazines, not just
SF, from the well known to the incredibly obscure. The issue by issue index
includes everything, with symbols used to denote length of fiction or other
contents (for instance, short stories or poems), with pagination and original
source if a reprint. The author index includes not issue numbers but a com­
plete citation in alphabetical order by title. The story title index is supplemented
by a cover artist index. A huge number of pseudonyms are identified and cross-
referenced.

Although Murray has less of everything, he might still have a place in large
libraries or the homes of pulp magazine collectors. In spite of a much inferior
format and far less information, he does index almost all the SF and some
related magazines many collectors or libraries will own. The index doesn’t re­
quire a computer to use, it’s portable, and it’s reasonably priced, given its small
print run. Unlike a CD-ROM, it can’t be updated easily, but it’s likely to be used
far more for long-defunct pulps than current magazines. Unfortunately, the
market for such indexes is very limited; I’d be surprised if McFarland finds a
hundred buyers. A pity.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**The Fantasy Literature of England**

Walter E. Meyers

Manlove, Colin N. *The Fantasy Literature of England*. St. Martin’s Press,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, August 1999. vi + 222 p. $49.95;

For more than two decades, Colin Manlove has been an important voice in
studies of fantasy and, to a lesser extent, science fiction. Since his *Modern Fanc­
tasy: Five Studies* (1975), he has built a considerable body of criticism that,
although familiar with modern theories, is not captive to them.

The only shortcoming noted in that body of work (for example, in his
*Impulse of Fantasy Literature*, 1983) has been a tendency to concentrate on Brit­
ish fantasy, scanting that of other English-speaking countries. In this present
book, he turns that drawback into a virtue by limiting his study to the fantasy
writing of England. He asserts that English fantasy can lay a special claim to our
attention because of its richness and variety, born of England’s long interest
in the genre. Whether one agrees with this or not, the result is a study that
is provocative, well written, and broad based. Every reader is likely to find some
new title or author worth investigating.

Manlove divides his subject into six overlapping groups. It’s possible to
complain both about his placement of particular works and the confident as­
urance of his judgment. But it’s a workable classification that allows him to
bring some order to this conglomeration of wildly disparate works.

He begins with a history of English fantasy before 1800 in 27 pages, sketching
a national literature from “The Dream of the Rood” through More,
In the Shadow of the Dreamchild

Richard Mathews


Leach revisits Carroll to revise what is known about his life and to make a case for “a radical re-evaluation of his life and work in the light of compelling new evidence.” Attractively produced and illustrated, the book has a seductive appeal, from the haunting images of Dodgson and his “dreamchild” on the jacket to the flashes of intelligence throughout the text.

Trained as an actress and professionally accomplished as a West End playwright, Leach argues in this, her first book, that the work of Carroll has suffered under the assumption that the author was “a man emotionally focused on pre-pubescent female children . . . who sought comfort and companionship exclusively through serial friendships with ‘little girls’ and who almost invariably lost interest in them when they reached puberty.” She shows that in fact he appreciated and had both emotional and physical relationships with mature women.

Most of the evidence Leach musters is circumstantial or extrapolated, since the letters and diaries that might have proven her thesis definitely seem to have been lost or intentionally destroyed. Nevertheless, much of what she argues seems plausible. I was prepared to grant her the point shortly after she began making it. Now, given that Carroll’s life was not limited to emotional involvement with children, what difference does this make? What radical reevaluation of his work will this entail?

Unfortunately, Leach barely hints at the implications. After a promising start, the book has little to offer. It dissects the life of the writer but ultimately reveals little about the greatness of his writings. Although she is apparently new to the work of scholar and critic, she has performed impressive research. Moreover, she delivers deft and brilliant gems of observation, such as her conclusion that the currently accepted Carroll biography “is, in some of its most important respects, an invented biography of an invented name. It is an extended essay on the unconscious power of myth and its place in civilized
THE Y2K SURVIVORS
by ABE O. KALIPSE

The new millennium brought celebrations, resolutions, and a threat—could they survive in a world without wireless telephones and spell-check?

"This...is...some kind of...book..." -- Anne B. Key
It is an intriguing insight that cries out for deeper exploration and discussion—something that can be said of many of her other major points. For example, when Leach places Carroll's interest in photographing naked children in the context of the "cult of the child," there's an opportunity for specific comparison of Carroll's work and that of other artists, but the analytic and interpretive details are absent. She does only modestly better with her brief discussion of Carroll's love poems, four of which are reprinted.

This reverses the desirable order of critical analysis. I might be interested in understanding new facts about a writer's life if, in fact, they enhanced or deepened my reading of the work. But I would not be drawn to study the work with the goal of sifting for biographical clues. I do not care whether Carroll had relations with mature women. I would be much more intrigued to find someone mining the material for insight into the nature of fantasy and imagination, or elucidating "the unconscious power of myth and its place in civilized society." Despite my reservations, larger academic libraries should consider purchasing this book.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**The Haunted Mind**
Donald M. Hassler


I soaked myself in reading about South Pole explorations this summer in anticipation of teaching a seminar on travel writing next year. For me, this boy-adventure, man-hauling is a haunt; and the second Scott expedition (1910–12) reads like a sad version of Hal Clement.

We have acknowledged since Freud that our minds hide facts from us in the unconscious, and from Darwin, we have learned that nature herself hides behind an immense scale of evolutionary history. But now we must also acknowledge that our fantasy writings, ultimately all our writings, are closed doors that conceal haunted houses.

This strange haunt of being driven so that we do not quite know why we do what we do is the provocative and dominant theme in this collection of nine essays, seven original. The editing and writing seems to be almost a family project, with Elton Smith (born 1915), who has two essays, being nearly of an age to grandfather his coeditor (born 1961), and one of the best new essays is by Ester Smith, who's apparently of the same cohort as the senior editor. These three, as well as several other contributors, are all affiliated with the University of South Florida. Two essays are well-known reprints from leaders in Victorian scholarship, Kath Filmer and Elaine Showalter. The point is that the "authority" for this entire concluding scientific century—especially the authority of high fantasy such as that of Stevenson, Kipling, and even Clement when he dreams of the poles of a large planet—authorizes depths of meaning more profound than we realize. Scott wrote his poignant last journal entries with no notion of what would become of them.

This recommended collection is about such mysteries. It anticipates our whole century, from the self-sacrifice and haunts of Scott and Wells to the latest shuttle launches. Read these essays to better sense the arc we've been on from Mr. Hyde to Mr. Clinton, from steampunk to cyberpunk. I used to avoid the late Victorians, as I wanted to read more of Clement, Asimov, Clarke. I now realize how late Victorian they are.
Michael Levy refereed the typescript of this bibliography. His review in SFRAReview #234, July 1998, had some final text dropped, which he kindly supplied me. I agree with his concluding assessment, that this “survey of the field of Le Guin criticism by specialists in both science fiction and children’s literature is amazingly complete” and that *Dragons* will “be a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in the critical reception of Le Guin’s work.”

*Dragons* covers works up to 1997, organized in four chapters, each ending with an alphabetical list of works cited. The book ends with the bibliographies arranged chronologically. Much of White’s attention is predictably directed at criticism on *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*, and readers with access to Elizabeth Cummins’ *Ursula K. Le Guin: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography* (1983) will find annotated citations to the most important criticism White discusses. And *SFRAReview* #239’s bibliography has 200 items in English and of significant length, versus 138 for White.

Significant items overlooked are Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) and its critique of androgyny, Rosemary Jackson’s *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), and Sarah Lefanu’s *Feminism and Science Fiction* (1988–89), works with influential discussions of Le Guin’s early SF and fantasy. White doesn’t cite articles in *Utopian Studies* and so missed a robust debate on “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (2: 1/2, 1991). *Dragons* is good on the “balkanization” of literary studies and how SF critics don’t read enough in children’s literature. She’s also correct on the divisions and snobberies in U.S. literary criticism and highly useful in her attack on the uncritical respect shown to writing by academic stars. She errs, though, in applying such correct generalizations too readily to individuals and in too quickly dismissing Delany’s “To Read *The Dispossessed*.” I enjoyed her comments on Delany’s “rambling,” and I appreciated her attack elsewhere on the hermeneutic style of practitioners of high theory, but White understands that Delany’s essay was influential for negative criticism of Le Guin on homosexuality, and that criticism was significant in helping Le Guin correct a problem in her writing.

These are the sorts of arguments one has with a good book, and *Dragons* is a very good book indeed. It’s an essential reference for anyone intending to publish on Le Guin in an academic venue. But is it essential enough to justify the high cost of so short a work, however excellent?

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**Narrating Utopia**


Ferns holds that while the nature of the utopian society continues to be the first concern of readers, important questions are also raised about what function the narratives of such works serve and their effect on the reader. Acknowledging that there is “a traditional utopian narrative,” he examines the impact of such narrative techniques and finds that for the most part, recent examples continue to reflect the traditional.

Underlying arguments are that most utopias have been authoritarian and patriarchal, concerned with the creation of social order and conquest of nature, with a search for unoccupied space (or at least space inhabited by “lesser” peoples and hence available for colonization), and, frequently and paradoxically, marked by a longing for maternal security, a symbolic return to the womb. They reflect characteristics of the writer’s society and have changed little over time. Ferns suggests that “the recent resurgence of utopian dreams has been predominantly the work of women,” but he notes that even the most feminist of recent utopias frequently substitute matriarchal authoritarianisms for patriarchal. One differentiating characteristic is that male writers emphasize control whereas female writers emphasize organic development.

However, this is a study of the framework story, of the way in which the visitor to utopia got there in the first place. It’s also an examination of the way the interplay of travelers’ tales and classical dialogue and the gender-weighted bias that appeared in the earliest utopias continue to this day. Male writers describing male visitors enlightened by male guides in male-dominated societies have been the rule. More, Campanella, Bacon, Bellamy, and Wells demonstrably follow the pattern and place women in inferior roles—even though the latter two pay lip service to equality of the sexes and owe more to “the modern holiday brochure” than to the traditional voyage. Even in such dystopian societies as those
of Zamiatin, Huxley, Orwell, and Atwood, where illicit—that is, not state-sponsored—sex is part of the protagonist's rebellion, the state itself is male dominated. Even "Libertarian Alternatives" such as Morris, Bogdanov, and Huxley's Island, which attempt to mitigate the usual downgrading of women, are only partially successful, in a sense replacing domination with examples of sexual jealousy and infantile regression. Nevertheless, "a different gender perspective can result in fundamental changes to the narrative paradigm," even though true female freedom comes only, as in Gilman and Miller, in societies without men and where men are the enemy. Contemporary future societies isolated from our own, but connected either through the visitor (such as Woman on the Edge of Time, The Dispossessed; or a future that only vaguely remembers our society (Always Coming Home, Moylan's "critical utopias"), effectively demonstrate that utopian narrative is now less an advocate of new "sociopolitical formulations" than a stimulus for education of desire for such development.

The works discussed in some detail are well chosen to represent the range of utopian writing. A few judgments seem strained (e.g., Edith Leete as a mother figure) or incomplete (e.g., no reference to Bellamy's Equality or to Warren Wagar's work), thereby somewhat limiting the discussion of Bellamy and Wells. But both text and an excellent bibliography attest to Fern's thorough study of previous scholarship. The result is a well-written and worthy addition to the field of utopian studies.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**Fluent in Fantasy**

Richard C. West


Herald was coeditor of Betty Rosenberg's Genrereflecting: A Guide to Reading Interests (3rd edition, 1991) and sole editor of the 1995 edition. Here, she expands and updates her checklists from the 1995 edition, particularly from the chapter on fantasy and to a lesser extent from the chapters on SF and horror.

The same subcategories are retained, with some reworking and considerable expansion. The section on "Saga, Myth, and Legend," for instance, now goes beyond Arthur and Robin Hood to include "Ancient Civilizations, Celtic, The Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, [and] Byzantium." She's added an introduction and overview (very sweeping and cheerfully pragmatic about definitions), and there are new sections on paranormal powers, graphic novels (very sparse), celebrity characters (subsuming the section on literary and fictional characters), fantasy featuring detection, and romantic fantasy. A long chapter on resources includes most of what was earlier called topics plus a good deal more, and it provides a reasonable checklist of general critical and scholarly tools.

A short Appendix A is extremely basic. Appendix B lists recommended young adult titles from an American Library Association discussion group. The recommended core collection in Appendix C isn't a bad list, but it's easy to challenge omissions and inclusions. Inevitably, not only many of the same authors but even some of the same books have to be represented in more than one category. There is a combined index by author and title, as well as a subject index, to help one reunite what was separated. Herald assigns keywords to each entry, which also helps categorize them, but there is no index of these terms. She doesn't cite dates or publishers, on the grounds that popular works may be reprinted many times, but it would sometimes be useful to know the original year of publication. Pseudonyms aren't identified. A symbol denotes award-winning novels, and there is a valuable section in the resources chapter listing these genre awards, but not those given outside the SF/F field, such as the Caldecott or Newbery award winners.

The book is selective, with popularity as important a criterion as literary quality, so unavoidable omissions may be deliberate. Some authors are omitted altogether, such as Alan Garner, Tom Holt, and Patricia Wrightson. "The purpose of this volume is to help readers find the books they want to read and to help booksellers and libraries help their clients find those books." It does this for the general reader, who will find a guide not only to the most popular titles but to some neglected classics. But specialists in our field may be underwhelmed.

The writing is sprightly, but don't look for much detail in the discussion of individual books, and her chapter recommendations are tasteful. If you have the 1995 edition of Genrereflecting, though, this isn't a necessary purchase.
**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**SCIENCE FICTION CULTURE**

B. Diane Blackwood


Bacon-Smith expands her ethnographic studies of the SF subcultures, following her *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992), which explored the primarily female media fan subculture. She has also written several original paperback fantasy novels for Daw.

Taking the popular culture theorists to task, she explores the actual cultural uses and possible futures of the genre. In both books, she argues that consumers, at least consumers of these media, are not passive receivers of products of the mass media industry, nor are they rebels resisting mass media indoctrination. Instead, they are players in the field, influencing the industry and at the same time shaping the product of their own uses.

The book is not so theoretical as to be unreadable, but rather touches lightly on theories of pop culture to make her points. The clear prose and careful summations create satisfying and informative reading and make her study accessible to a wider audience. Veteran SF fans will find the first section on “Creating the Landscape” enjoyable. I found the information very accurate and would recommend this section for anyone planning a convention. Although she has done her homework as an ethnographer, she has also gone native and fails to explain many of the cultural terms she uses, a possible barrier to the book’s academic appeal.

The second section, “New Groups Change the Face of the Genres,” explores how cultural influences and pressures from outside the genre have also been experienced inside. She writes from a power perspective, especially when discussing the issues of women’s acceptance in the subculture of SF fans. She also explores the gay and lesbian presence in fandom and the youth subculture of cyberpunk. These are well-written, well-argued, and well-rounded sections within the larger grouping. She has learned and grown since her last book.

In the section on women in SF publishing, a statistical comparison to the statistics of women in publishing generally, rather than repeated laments about the fight women have had to get their niche in an already niche market, would be more informative. Ethnic minorities are still very underrepresented and hardly discussed. The SF fan subculture hasn’t treated women any worse than the parent culture, and SF fandom provides a working model and support base to launch and nurture other fandoms.

The third section explores the dynamics of SF book publishing. Marketplace trends don’t bode well for mass market SF. The huge publishing conglomerates that must answer to shareholders have reduced the market for new writers, have increased the number of copies that must be sold for a book to be deemed successful, and have reduced the shelf exposure time of new fiction. If we extrapolate from the trends accounted in this section, a self-fulfilling prophecy is created. SF will be relegated to a new ghetto: the small presses. Of course, in this information age, that ghetto has more fluid boundaries than it ever did before.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**NURSERY REALMS**

Michael M. Levy


The editors selected these fifteen essays from the fifteenth annual Eaton conference on SF and fantasy literature, held in 1993 in Riverside, Calif. A fairly intimate and always stimulating event, the Eaton conference directors actively solicit papers more or less exclusively on a specific topic. This volume features work by such well-known critics as the editors, plus Eric S. Rabkin and Bud Foote. Most contributors teach in English departments or allied fields, although two biologists, Joseph Miller and Howard Lenhoff, are represented here, as is one up-and-coming SF writer, Howard V. Hendrix.

Rabkin’s fine essay, “Infant Joys: The Pleasures of Dismemberment in Fantasy and Science Fiction,” notes that genre literature is often tagged as little more than a series of power fantasies. Leaning heavily on Blake’s poetry, he astutely points out that in fact the opposite is often true. Many classic SF stories, and Rabkin devotes considerable time to *The Martian Chronicles, More Than Human, 2001*, and *Children’s End*, center on a desire to avoid power and the maturing process altogether. In her wonderfully titled “The Humpty Dumpty Effect, or Was the Old Egg Really All It Was
Cracked Up To Be: Context and Coming of Age in Science Fiction and Fantasy,” Frances Louis emphasizes the often painful choices made by SF’s child protagonists. In a highly revealing essay, Susan Kray, having surveyed an entire year’s worth of magazine SF, examines the uses to which genre writers, both Jew and Gentile, put Jewish children. Gary Kern and George Slusser, each in his own way, examine some of the less healthy uses to which children are put by genre fiction and film. Both writers are highly critical of the child protagonist of the film Terminator II, and Slusser does a fine job of analyzing some of the less savoy themes found in Ender’s Game.

Joseph D. Miller, a professor of pharmacology, examines the use of children in SF from a biological and evolutionary perspective. Biologist Howard Lenhoff, in what is surely the oddest essay, attempts to argue that many of the traditional attributes associated with fairies may have come from a much misunderstood genetic disorder. Writer Hendrix, concentrating on Children of Dune, contemplates, among other things, SF’s preoccupation with a certain type of Nietzschean superman, while Andrew Gordon waxes poetic about “E.T. as Fairy Tale.” Other critics examine the uses made of children in the fiction of George Macdonald, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Anne Rice, Henry James, and Stephen King. Lynne Lundquist and Gary Westfahl are particularly interesting in their dissection of the many dysfunctional families to be found in Disney’s full-length animated films.

I was bothered by a few essays. Lenhoff’s piece on a genetic disorder, aside from the fact that it seems out of place, simply doesn’t convince me of its basic premise. The Kern and Slusser essays, although full of valuable insights, seem a tad overly critical of their subject matter and left me with the perhaps irrational feeling that neither author really likes children or adolescents very much. Overall, however, this is a fine selection of critical pieces.

NONFICTION REVIEW

An H. G. Wells Chronology

Nancy Steffan-Fluur


The author may be dead, as Barthes and others have insisted, but the word has not yet reached Hammond, nor the editors of this “author chronologies” series. Hammond lovingly records virtually every datable event in Well’s long and busy life, each factoid suffused in a hagiographic glow. For Hammond, Wells is “one of the leading intellectual forces of the twentieth century” and, as such, everything in Well’s resumé is an objet d’art, a collectible. A lifelong Wellssian and president of the H. G. Wells Society, Hammond is the perfect curator. He knows the subject thoroughly, as he demonstrated, with rather greater charm and scope, in his earlier books, An H. G. Wells Companion (1979) and H. G. Wells and the Short Story (1992).

The chronology is a useful tool for serious Wells scholars, allowing them to obtain a quick overview or check a date without having to revisit David Smith’s exhaustive, but sometimes exhausting, biography of Wells (Desperately Mortal, 1986) or wade through the four-volume Correspondence of H. G. Wells (1996). Nicely chosen quotes from Wells’s letters punctuate the chronology, proving clues to the author’s mood, albeit at a hefty price for a slim volume. The book isn’t a “form of ‘alternative’ biography,” as series editor Norman Page claims. Indeed, it’s difficult to make sense of the minutiae that Hammond has assembled unless one has previous knowledge of Wells’s life and work. Students and general readers are likely to become hopelessly lost.

The format of this series allows Hammond little opportunity for commentary—or for establishing the ways in which Well’s life was inextricably woven into the social fabric of the century. Larger historical events pop up here and there, but their selection seems almost arbitrary. The result is an odd flattening of the temporal landscape in which every event is equal to every other. For example, for August 1914, the serialization of Bealby, the British declaration of war against Germany, the annual Easton Lodge flower show, the birth of APW, and the writing of a birthday card to Edward Carpenter followed one another in a conga line of non sequiturs.

Supplementing the month-by-month chronology is a family tree, a bibliography of Wells’s principal works, and thumbnail sketches of persons frequently mentioned by their initials (RW = Rebecca West). These sketches are particularly useful for the general reader who otherwise is likely to drown in the alphabet soup. The introduction would have been more useful if a bit longer. His insight—that the defining characteristic of Wells’s life is his “restlessness”—is worth exploring in greater depth. This book is recommended mostly for Wells scholars and large libraries.

Strange Constellations does a good job of fulfilling the promise of its subtitle. Anyone who wants to know how SF came to Australia, the vagaries of its early history, the most important early and contemporary authors, the major themes, and the importance of overseas markets, especially the United States, will find all they want and need to know herein. I suspect that such readers should (or will find it necessary to) go to a good library and borrow the book (or read it there), as it's hard to justify a price of $65 for any book unless it has to do with an obsession.

The authors make a good team. Ikin is a well-known academic critic, editor, and historian. Blackford is also well known as a critic, has been involved in editing, and is slowly gaining a reputation as a writer in the field. Russell, the youngest of the three, is one of the hot young Australian authors of SF. All clearly care about the literature of their country and are excited by recent developments in Australian SF, especially the success of writers such as Greg Egan.

The editors don't shrink from making critical evaluations of the writers and writings they present as part of a literary history. Plot summaries are essential, especially since many works discussed have never been (and never will be) seen by their readers. What I like about even the most cursory of these is that they always attach an evaluative comment that seems both fair and honest. In their discussion of more recent writers and work, they are able to provide a more complex sense of both the national and the international context in which they appear.

It's clear that the authors are proud of the achievements of Australian SF, especially in the second half of this century, and they see the unique environment of Australia as having had a particular effect upon its writers. I found Strange Constellations a solid, useful, and often entertaining overview of a rich—and growing richer—part of the burgeoning international SF scene.

[A useful companion to this history is The MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy, reviewed in SFRAReview #240.—Ed]

American Nightmares


In this combination of “critical exercise,” “memoir,” and “love letter” to the haunted house story, Bailey seeks to explain its popularity in the context of its cultural milieu and its antecedents in gothic literature and to highlight “the formula’s affinities with a variety of American anxieties and themes.” He extracts the elements of the modern haunted house tale from one of the purest (if most vapid) exemplars, Jay Anson’s phenomenally successful 1977 novel, The Amityville Horror, then examines at length three recent novels, Robert Marasco’s Burnt Offerings, Anne Rivers Siddons’s The House Next Door, and Stephen King’s The Shining.

Bailey situates the contemporary American haunted house tale in the gothic tradition that derives from Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764) and in the American literary tradition that derives from Poe and Hawthorne. He tries to distinguish it from the ghost story on the (shaky) grounds that “the ghost story’s tendency to eschew physical mayhem produces the overriding ambiguity which distinguishes it from the haunted house tale.” But as his first major text, he chooses a haunted house novel as devoid of physical mayhem as it is steeped in psychological ambiguity: Shirley Jackson’s The Haunting of Hill House.

His chapter on Jackson’s novel starts well, conjoining it with Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wall-paper” in order to explicate its antipatriarchal character. Unfortunately, his determination to read Jackson’s novel as a critique of what he calls “the June Cleaver ideology” (“50s woman as cheery homemaker”) leads him to assert that the problem bedeviling Jackson’s protagonist is that she “has internalized the oppressive ideology of her culture.” But he never shows (nor, so far as I can tell, does Jackson indicate) that culture is the source of her identification with her role as nurse to her ailing mother. This example illustrates the intellectual laxity that mars this book. Repeatedly, Bailey proffers assertions that he fails to develop or support.
In discussing the otherwise all but ignored novels by Marasco and Siddons, Bailey is at his best. He identifies the innovations both writers contributed to the formula and unpacks their works' critiques of American culture. But about The Shining he has little to say beyond what King and his legion of critical admirers have already said. I wish he had written instead about other significant contemporary American novels to which he alludes, such as Lisa Cramton's The Manse (1987), Richard Matheson's Hell House (1971), and Jack Cady's The Well (1980). I also wish he had dealt with short fiction, pursuing the formula through the variations in such anthologies as Kathryn Cramer and Peter D. Pautz's The Architecture of Fear (1987) and its successor, Cramer's Walls of Fear (1990). With a wider purview (and more intellectual rigor), Bailey's book could have been a useful contribution to the short shelf of critical works devoted to American horror fiction; as is, it makes for genial if lightweight reading.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**The Life and Work of George Lucas**

Elizabeth S. Davidson


Australian-born Baxter has been writing about SF film since his Science Fiction in the Cinema (1970). Other works have included biographies of Fellini, Spielberg, Kubrick, and Woody Allen. Baxter investigates in detail the personal background of Lucas (1944–) and the frustrations as well as the joys in making both his film flops (e.g., Willow) and triumphs such as American Graffiti and, of course, the Star Wars series. Baxter borrows from Godard an epigraph: "There are times when reality becomes too complex for oral communication. But legend gives it a form by which it pervades the whole world." This epigraph ironically foreshadows the accomplishments of Lucas and his films, especially the Star Wars series.

Baxter argues that "Lucas has less in common with Scorsese and Spielberg than with a producer like San Goldwyn, who fed the public taste for escapist fantasy and noble sentiment forty years before him." The twenty-six chapters explore in detail the cultural milieu of Lucas and the production details of his various film projects, including a fair amount of gossip about members of his casts and his rivalries with Spielberg, Scorsese, and Coppola. Baxter includes Lucas's admission that Star Wars "was designed around toys" (Lucas opted for all such subsidiary rights instead of a percentage of gross receipts). He concludes, "Thanks to [Lucas] and a small group of like-minded media artists, American popular culture has been immeasurably enriched in technique, widened in scope, but cheapened in content." The text is followed by notes, a filmography (1965–1998), a bibliography, and an index.

Lucas has been the subject of much comment, from popcorn fare in fan magazines to more substantial articles in film journals. A Los Angeles Times film critic, Charles Champlin, investigated Lucasfilm's first twenty years in George Lucas: The Creative Impulse (1992), a popular, extensively illustrated but largely noncritical coffee-table account. Baxter is much more detailed, current and critical, though generally admiring of his subject's skills in telling archetypal stories. This book is recommended for SF and general film fans of any age, for public libraries, and for larger academic film collections.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**The Monstrous and the Marvelous**

William Schuyler


Rikki Ducornet was born in 1943. She grew up on the campus of Bard College during the McCarthy era. This is her ninth book. The tenth, The Fan-Maker's Inquisition, a novel about the Marquis de Sade, was published this fall. A collection of her stories won the National Book Critics Circle award in 1993. Her leanings are leftist, existentialist, and postmodernist.

All her books, she says, are about the fall of Eden and the possibility of its reconstitution. Her focus, however, is not the loss of innocence but the birth and power of language. This book is a collection of pieces that weren't designed to make a coherent whole. Her own metaphor for it is that of a wunderkammer, that private room where a Renaissance virtuoso kept his treasures. There you might find a stuffed two-headed sheep flanked by a huge (but not necessarily valuable) chunk of crystals and a coco-de-mer. The contents of such a room are not, and indeed cannot be, organized according to any system because they are freaks of nature and therefore not included in any system of ours.
Nevertheless, such objects serve a useful purpose, reminding us that there more things in heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

The ideal reviewer for this book would be Roberto Calasso, or perhaps Michel Foucault. My range is much more limited, but Foucault is dead, and Calasso isn't a member of the SFRA, so I'll do what I can. In keeping with her metaphor, Ducornet scrutinizes and links remarkably diverse topics.

In a discussion of Kafka's "The Great Wall of China," she writes that "if, as claims a scholar, the wall in intended as a foundation for a future tower [of Babel], it is a foundation full of holes: Holy Dogma." It's hard to believe that the link between "holes" and "Holy" is more than pun. This is borne out by the fact that the German words for "hole" and "Holy" do not resemble each other. The connection would not be made in the original.

But does this matter? Philosophically and politically, Ducornet is descended from the French Surrealists. At one point she speaks of the "personal taxonomies" of some of her subjects. She has one too, based on her own unique experience, as she explains early in the book. It's part of the theory of Surrealists that such nonrational connections can illuminate the true reality, the super-real. Seen in this light, her choice of subject is dictated by concerns very different from those of, say, Todorov. We do not ask that the juxtapositions in a painting by Dali or Max Ernst make sense; why ask Ducornet to provide reasons for hers?

If you can accept this, or if you would be interested in learning about some contemporary visual artists who ought to be better known, then you will be interested in this book. If not, you'll probably find it maddening.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**Fantasy and Horror**

Wendy Bousfield


Neil Barron's guide has appeared two years after the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (John Clute and John Grant, eds.; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). In his introduction to the *Encyclopedia*, Clute describes fantasy as a "fuzzy set": that is, it lacks precise boundaries. Both reference works are extraordinarily ambitious—and complementary—attempts to map fantasy's shifting terrain. Both consider fantasy in a wide range of literary and visual presentations, variously involving dream, allegory, magic realism, satire, horror and the weird. Works of horror, or dark fantasy, are within the scope of both books, though the two volumes that together constitute the first edition of Fantasy and Horror—Fantasy Literature: A Reader's Guide (New York: Garland, 1990) and Horror Literature: A Reader's Guide (New York: Garland, 1990), both also edited by Neil Barron—treated them separately.

As might be expected, even works of such monumental scope have limitations. The mostly male contributors to both the *Encyclopedia* and *Fantasy and Horror* devote little attention to feminist, gay, or lesbian fantasy. Both *Fantasy and Horror* and the *Encyclopedia* ignore the fantasy of such American ethnic groups as Mexican and Native Americans. *Fantasy and Horror*, especially, privileges Anglo American writers. Both books ignore or dismiss critical theory as an approach to fantasy. (Eschewing the ponderous vocabulary employed by theorists has undoubtedly enhanced both books' readability.) In some places the writing in both books betrays haste; and *Fantasy and Horror* has a serious problem with typographical errors and with inaccurate or nonexistent cross-references.

Although the style of writing of both reference works is exceedingly engaging, they demand different modes of reading. Full of richly imaginative coinages, articles in the *Encyclopedia* are studded with such enticing cross-references that it is virtually impossible to read sequentially. In contrast, *Fantasy and Horror*, committed as it is to tracing the development of fantasy and horror through time, demands linear reading. When I reviewed the *Encyclopedia*, I was unsuccessful in my efforts to proceed systematically through its thousand-plus pages. Conversely, while reading *Fantasy and Horror*, I tried several times to skip ahead, but each time the book's historical progression compelled me to double back to avoid missing important threads in the discussion.

*Fantasy and Horror* begins with chronologically arranged chapters devoted to the development of fantasy and horror fiction, from the period of classical Greek literature through 1998. Each chapter consists of an essay followed by an annotated bibliography. These bibliographies make no separation between adult, young adult, and children's books—a good decision, since children read fantasy intended for adults and vice versa. The historically oriented essays are, by and large, the most successful part of the book. Brian Stableford contributed three lucid essays on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy and on early modern horror fiction. Undoubtedly because horror fiction is enjoying an unusual vogue, by far the longest section is Stefan Dziemianowicz's "Contemporary Horror Fiction, 1950-1998." In his introduction, Dziemianowicz discusses Stephen King and Anne Rice, the influence of World War II on subjects treated by...
writers of horror fiction, the rise of spatterpunk, and the cross-pollination of horror fiction and film. One of the best parts of the chapter is Dziemianowicz's discussion of the development of the horror anthology and its influence on the genre.

Following the sections devoted to literary history are chapters on such topics as history and criticism, horror, in the nonprint media, teaching fantasy and horror, fantasy and horror magazines, library collections. The final chapter consists of various lists: for example, organizations and award winners. One of my favorite chapters in the book is Dennis M. Kratz's "Teaching Fantasy and Horror Literature." Kratz describes exercises he assigns students to help them develop "associative thinking": the habit of seeing connections that go beyond the obvious. This chapter does a superb job of describing the unique habits of mind required of fantasy readers.

The annotated bibliographies appended to each chapter vary greatly in quality. Gary K. Wolfe's "History and Criticism" bibliography is by far the best. His witty, pithy annotations sum up the central idea of a book and place it in a useful context. By and large, however, the annotation sections are less successful than the histories or overviews. Careless proofreading is a problem throughout the book; typographical errors seriously mar some annotation sections. Many cross-references are incorrect. Only about half the titles mentioned in the body of annotations were, in portions that I spot-checked, represented in the title index. Some annotations, confusingly, compare writers on the basis of last name only, and it is often impossible to know why comparisons among certain works were made. Some annotations seem crowded: too many ideas crammed into a sentence and too many books mentioned in the annotation of a single work. Some annotations are annoyingly flippant ("Nice books, shame about the film" [p. 190]), and others are inappropriately evaluative.

Despite the problems with some annotation sections, and despite the steep price, I would recommend that anyone with a serious interest in fantasy and horror purchase this work. To quote David G. Hartwell's "Introduction," Fantasy and Horror "is part of a progressive attempt by the fantasy field to see itself whole, to excavate archaeological layers: to see the invisible world of the past, and the buried and hidden foundations of the present" (p. 1). Fantasy and Horrors succeeds remarkably in this noble endeavor.

[Author Neil Barron adds: Aside from occasional typos, incorrect type formats (e.g., book titles in roman, not italic, type), and out-of-date Websites or e-mail addresses, the guide is relatively accurate. However, users should know that the 35 entries devoted to Chapter 10's reference sources were renumbered after I'd returned the corrected page proofs. The indexes were corrected to reflect the renumbering, but cross-references to these 35 entries in other chapters were not corrected. If you have a problem locating a cross-referenced Chapter 10 entry, check the index.]

FICTION REVIEW

Circuit of Heaven
Kenneth Andrews


In Circuit of Heaven, humanity lives forever in a virtual reality ("the Bin") on a satellite orbiting Earth. Except for religious fundamentalists, the insane, and children below the age of consent, everyone else on Earth abandons physical existence. In the Bin, there is no crime or violence, no reason to have a job (unless one simply wants to), and no growth, personal or otherwise. (Virtual ivy does not grow, and virtual cats do not bother to eat.) Nemo, the protagonist, is below the age of consent when his parents enter the Bin. He has little interest in virtual immortality until he meets Justine in the Bin on one of his periodic visits to his parents. (Mortals can visit for short periods.) Although Justine believes that she once had a life on Earth and only recently entered the Bin, she is mistaken. She is a virtual Construct cobbled together from the memories of dead people. Both Nemo and Justine are pawns in the plans of Newman Rogers, the creator of the Bin. Newman Rogers is using Nemo to outwit the religious fundamentalists on Earth who believe that they must destroy the Bin in order to fulfill God's Plan. (Except for the thoughtful portrayal of one believer, the religious fundamentalists are described in heavily stereotypical and clichéd terms, particularly their leader, Gabriel.) Nemo, Justine, and Newman Rogers are interrelated in a number of complex ways that is part of the intrigue of the plot.

Nemo can shed his body and join Justine in the Bin, or Justine can download into an abandoned body and join Nemo on Earth. Up until this point the story emphasizes the meaninglessness of never-changing, never-ending existence and the desirability of mortal struggle, accomplishment, and fulfillment. However, Nemo opts to enter the Bin, despite his earlier misgivings. Circuit of Heaven poses interesting questions: Is death necessary in order for life to have meaning? Is life everlasting truly desirable? Unfortunately, no answer to these questions is forthcoming. Instead, Circuit of Heaven wants to be a science fiction romance. It makes many allusions to Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier and to Romeo and Juliet and selects a romantic resolution to the dilemma of its star-crossed characters.
I give this novel only a marginal positive recommendation. It is a satisfactory example of romantic writing in science fiction. However, if romance is your preference, I'd recommend that you reread Rebecca or Romeo and Juliet instead.

FICTION REVIEW

End of Days
Kenneth Andrews


This novel is a follow-up to Danvers’s 1998 Circuit of Heaven. It is not a sequel, and either book can be read independently of the other without any loss of comprehension. Newman Rogers, Gabriel, and a few other characters from the first novel make their reappearance. The central questions of the first novel are also the central questions of the second: “If it [life] just goes on and on forever without end, how do we decide that anything matters?” (p. 8). In Circuit of Heaven, Nemo selects virtual immortality over mortal existence. In End of Days, Donovan Carroll, Walter Tillman, and Stephanie Sanders opt to abandon the life everlasting of virtual reality to be “born again” on Earth (both figuratively and literally). Sam, a young Christian soldier, Laura, a foul-mouthed whore, and Madeline, their child, also figure into the re-enactment of the Christ story.

End of Days tries very hard to be both a romance and a religious allegory. Every possible historical, literary, and religious reference is used to gain literary respectability—Malory, Lancelot, Cupid and Psyche, a genie in a jar, a damsel in a tower, Scrooge, Ophelia, Plato, Job, Jonah, Daniel in the lion’s den, Virgil, Blake, Milton, God the Divine Clockmaker, the star of Bethlehem, and the blinding of Saul of Tarsus are only some of them. This desire for literary respectability and profundity is undercut every time Laura opens her mouth to say the F-word or some other vulgarity.

Gabriel (who has himself cloned whenever his body wears out) discovers that the Bin still exists, and he destroys it by nuclear weapons. Not to worry. Newman Rogers (who by now is obviously God) has anticipated this day. Before the original Bin is destroyed, he sends out signals duplicating the lives of all the inhabitants to copies of the Bin that have been sent out of the universe. Now everyone not only has one life, but as many lives as there are copies of the Bin in the universe, all diverging since the moment of replication. In fact, End of Days is a play on words. To the followers of Gabriel, it is Armageddon. (“They believe that the extermination of nonbelievers will hasten the arrival of the End of Days when all true believers will ascend into heaven” [p. 192]). Rather, it is the end of time, overseen by Newman Rogers. (“They’d done everything, been everywhere. . . . They’d done it all except the last thing, the one new thing left: the death of the universe” [p. 372]). The universe then obliges by dying.

End of Days is a mixed bag. The plot is complex, almost convoluted, and thus is likely to hold the reader’s attention. The religious allegory of Madeline has similarities to Julie Katz in James Morrow’s Only Begotten Daughter. While I recommend this novel more highly than Circuit of Heaven, it tries too hard to be romance, science fiction, and religious allegory all at the same time.

FICTION REVIEW

The Compleat Boucher
Erin Brenner


Before I picked up The Compleat Boucher, I had never read any of Anthony Boucher’s work. But I’ve been a loyal reader of the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction for years. I love the magazine’s mix of science fiction, fantasy, and occasional horror. So I couldn’t say no to one of the founders of F&SF. And although I’m not really a fan of Golden Age SF, I did enjoy this book.

First the facts. William Anthony Parker White (1911–1968) wrote science fiction stories as Anthony Boucher. His first story, “Snulbug,” appeared in the December 1941 issue of Unknown Worlds. Boucher cofounded the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction with J. Francis McComas in 1949, a magazine credited with helping to raise the literary standards in genre SF. Boucher became the sole editor of F&SF in 1954. He was also a noted book reviewer, with columns in the

In his eighth novel, Richard Grant further distances himself from the traditional SF landscapes he created in his early work and moves instead into that nebulous area of the contemporary urban fantasy. Such a movement is not surprising, giving the course Grant's books have taken since the 1985 publication of *Sarahbend of Lost Time.* The postholocaust, farfuture earth depicted in that book is a far cry from the rural Maine and urban Washington, D.C., backdrop of *Kaspian Lost.* Nevertheless, the imagistic differences between these novels is downplayed by the continued thematic linking of all of Grant's work, what John Clute refers to in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* as "North America after the Fall."

Clute's always-insightful comments provide a first step into the reading of Kaspian Lost. All the elements of the loss of innocence are present in the narrative: the protagonist is a teenager who misses his dead father; he lives with a born-again stepmother who doesn't understand him; he's sent away to a boarding school; he has trouble making friends; he's abducted by an alien fairy and a leprechaun. That last plot twist is, of course, the fantasy element of the novel that impacts Kaspian's life and the sometimes-ordinary world depicted in this nontraditional *Bildungsroman.*

Grant's novel investigates not so much the difference between the real and the unreal, but how that distinction generates meaning in our individual lives. For Kaspian, the recurring abduction scenario he experiences is a means of making peace with his dead father. This fantasy is consequently one of the most emotionally important happenings in his life. Seeking to use Kaspian for their own ends, as any reader can probably guess, are the boarding school counselors, the staff psychologist, and the directors of the American Youth Academies, a collective of experimental schools to which Kaspian is sent.
Yet Grant is too good a writer to simply involve himself in a Dickensian parody of the young boy as social victim. Kaspian’s wealthy nemesis, Jasper C. Winot, founder and C.E.O. of American Youth Academies, is even more obsessed with the nature of Kaspian’s visions than is the young protagonist. Winot and his henchmen, Colonel Carpathian and Weeb Eugley, find Kaspian’s visions to be further proof of what they feel is a dangerous conspiracy against humanity.

In this scene, Eugley explains to Kaspian the possible implications of his visions:

> It might mean that the whole alien phenomenon is part of a vast deception . . . Therefore our attention is diverted from what’s really going on. Or . . . it might mean that the whole body of fairly lore, dating back thousands of years is itself a fuzzy record of this same pattern of interference in human affairs over a very, very long period of time. One way or the other, we’re speaking about an intelligence or a power that possesses intimate knowledge of human nature and human habits of thought. That fact alone should be alarming enough. (pp. 257–58)

Kaspian’s delusion is not a condition to be cured but information to be collected. The narrative abandons the dichotomy and conflict between sane and insane, upsetting readers’ expectations even as it reveals to us the anxieties of our time, namely the loss of the real, the corrupted frame of reference, the endless series of reflecting mirrors out of which meaning is constructed and maintained.

Yes, Clute’s observation on Grant’s novels applies. But just what is the nature of this Fall and what are its implications? As a narrative, Kaspian Lost is symptomatic of the cultural Fall from an ordered paradise into a disordered present. The novel belongs to a cultural condition that has Fallen from a stable way of knowing the world into an endlessly shifting sea of perspectives. But to paint this cultural development as a negative is to misunderstand the latent potential in such a system. Much to Grant’s credit, the narrative sees this chaos as an opportunity.

For example, Kaspian’s tormentors do not understand the world they are living in any more than the young protagonist does, so their efforts at trying to make order out of this system are by turns disturbing and hilarious. Kaspian, on the other hand, is just trying to survive it all. He manages to do so by trekking out on his own, by making peace with his past, and hoping for a better tomorrow. There is, then, a tremendous underlying current of faith in this novel, not so much in a specific god or religious system, but in the simple resolution that survival is a type of victory. The key here is not that order is important, not that knowledge is important, but that stepping into this melee is what matters. The novel captures this moral in a beautifully composed conclusion that has Kaspian taking his first mature steps into the world:

> He had thought he was ready, that he had some idea where he was and were he might be going, but the brilliance and strangeness of the world were all over him in a heartbeat. . . . But then he recovered and started walking again, straight forward, gaining confidence as he progressed, up the steep hillside, past trees half as old as the country itself, trees much bigger than Kaspian or any of his problems, into a light so pure and intense he could not see where his next step was going to fall. (p. 313)

Here is as good a place as any to mention one of the problems with the novel: those maddeningly little poetic stanzas that conclude each chapter. Perhaps Grant is attempting to achieve some transcendence of narrative form or trying to capture some of the inner turmoil of his character by illustrating it in cascading lines of words; but in all the effect is somewhat annoying after more than 300 pages. This peeve aside, Kaspian Lost is a solid work that expands the boundaries of contemporary fantasy, provides perspective on the current intellectual crises of knowing, and at the same time delivers an effective coming-of-age story.

Kaspian Lost will be especially useful in courses examining contemporary fantasy. The novel will also be useful in a course on the contemporary novel, as it satisfies nicely the realism of mainstream literature. The narrative allows for an examination of how contemporary literature blur boundaries rather than adheres to them. At the same time, the speculation on alien abduction scenarios and paranoid conspiracy theories lend the novel a millennium’s end/beginning that make it an especially timely text. The novel would also be a useful accompaniment to more established narratives such as Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. The pairing of Joyce and Grant may seem odd at first, but in a special topics class examining the Bildungsroman, the two texts could lead to some invigorating class discussions, especially on the nature of faith. I do not, however, think it appropriate for a course in science fiction, if only because it is too out of line with mainstream SF to be anything but an example of the diversity in contemporary SF, fantasy, and horror fiction.

I am teaching English 330 (Science Fiction Literature) this spring, and the first title I put on the list was Shelley's *Frankenstein*. What better way to start, I thought, than with the genre's inaugural novel—now, what would be the best way to end the course? And there on the top of the stack of book that always seem to be nesting beside my living room chair was *Virtual Girl*, Amy Thomson's John W. Campbell award—winning first novel. A robot is brought to life through illegal means, echoing Victor's unhallowed arts, and undertakes the same quest: Who am I, am I human, what does it mean to be human? There are echoes of other versions of the mythos—Pygmalion and his statue, Geppetto and his wooden boy—and isn't any arrival of a new life form, via a spaceship or a laboratory, something of a first contact? I thought I had a perfect book to end the course—except for one thing: Thomson's first novel is out of print. Finally, after some input from the SFRA listserv, I settled on Bishop's *Brittle Innings* as the "bookend" for my SF course. But I still think Thomson's *Virtual Girl* would do the job.

The Promethean mythos—with *Frankenstein* perhaps its more familiar rubric in science fiction—isn't the only mythic territory Thomson explores in her fiction. In her most recent novels, set in the distant future of *Virtual Girl*, *The Color of Distance*, and *Through Alien Eyes*, Thomas explores another mythos—utopia, or Eden, the green garden, paradise. She explores both mythos in familiar science fiction motifs, such as the robot, dystopic human futures, and first contact. But although the myths and the motifs are familiar, in Thomson's hands, they acquire freshness and a new vitality.

This freshness and vitality is immediately evident in *Virtual Girl*. Although like Shelley, Thomson lets her Victor, Arnold Brompton, have his say, it is not his story. Rather it is the virtual girl's story, Maggie, the robot Arnold creates and brings to life. And while Arnold is the scion of a wealthy family like Victor, the worlds of the two creators are far apart. Shelley's story is set in a time when humankind is open to possibilities, to exploration, to experimentation. Is there a passage over the polar ice cap for Walton to find? Just what is this magical new science, electricity? Arnold Brompton's world is that of the Slump—some years past 2018 and shelters routinely turn away the homeless, and ecological disasters and degradation, such as New Orleans's slow post-super-hurricane disintegration, go unchecked—a more brutal and colder version, perhaps, of our own time. It is in this desperate world, as an illegal creation, prohibited by restrictive AI laws that Maggie is brought to life—her computer programs animating her robotic form. And as the Creature was Victor's obsession, Maggie is Arnold's—she must be brought to life, she must be real, despite the Net Police and their sharklike AI detection programs and Arnold's own father who has destroyed his own son's work over and over again.

This animation initiates not only the *Frankenstein* mythos of the creation of a new life, but also the accompanying thematic questions: What does it mean to be human, what is real and what is only perceived to be real. The "make-believe reality of the computer" allows Arnold to assume his own virtual persona of a magician as he tweaks and adjusts Maggie's program before transferring it to her robot body—a program that is already more than he made it, "too complex for him to understand." He has made her to be more than human—perfect, physically beautiful with "her delicate, high-arching eyebrows, small nose, and elfin chin," and "always kind, always compassionate"—"more than any human could be." Once Maggie is installed in her body, her quest begins: Who is she, what is this body, this very complex sort of peripheral? Arnold teaches her as Shelley's Creature taught himself—through observation of other humans—first through videochips, then through interaction with real humans in their environment—the streets, the parks, the restaurants—all the ambiguities of human life.

At first, the videochips confuse Maggie: how can she tell "between a story and something that is real?" Eventually, with Arnold's help, she begins to make sense out of what she sees—although the mysteries that constantly plague humans plague her as well: What is the meaning of this pressing together of lips, "with a frantic sense of urgency"? Nothing in Maggie's programming explained sex and love, any more than it could explain death. Maggie's first real test, however, is when she goes outside, into an unending storm of data. Processing only half of a command from Arnold ("Decide what is most important and process it first... You are the most important...") she creates an identity program, a metaphoric crystalline tree with branches and twigs, ways to associate and enfold and connect data.

But this reprogramming is only the beginning. Maggie's quest for self really begins, however—like the Creature's—when she and Arnold are separated, and she truly becomes Maggie, a girl of the streets. After a series of adventures in and out of boxcars and homeless shelters, in the wreckage of first one American city and then another, dodging Arnold's father's persistent trackers, meeting and making friends, they end up in San Francisco. Maggie has met and learned to fear her security program—a dark and powerful force that, even as it protects her and Arnold, terrifies her. And she has met and learned to care for the weak and the powerless, and that she needs to care and protect, to meet "all her program-
ming needs.” When Arnold is attacked on a dark street in San Francisco, Maggie’s security program takes control; the assailant is killed and Maggie flees, following Arnold’s last command to not get caught by the police and exposed as an intelligent machine.

The memory of her execution of the assailant is buried along with others key to her identity, and after a respite with two Navajos, “Maggie wandered for nearly a year, living in alleys and doorways, traveling from city to city, always searching for some key to her memory and never finding it.” She knows she is not human: “I am a door, she thought, I am a door, a wall, a window, a table lamp. I am a machine . . . no one must know, or I become a thing, to be used and cast aside, like the junk in the truck that will be sold at the flea market” (115–16). And at the end of her year, the traditional length of a quest, short of one day, Maggie is in “the remains of New Orleans, lost and dreaming amid the ruins of its former glory.” There she meets Marie, an almost doctor/quasishaman, who sometimes assumes her biological and original identity, Murray. And she meets Azul, a cyberdancer. Azul, who supports himself as a male prostitute, is the most alive when jacked in and performing. In the New Orleans public library network, Maggie meets Turing, a self-aware program, trapped in a limited database. It is Turing who helps Maggie unblock her hidden memories, and as a result, she meets perhaps the most important person of all in her travels: her self.

Maggie meets her self, her security program, who has been living in the “basement of her soul” and getting “her out of the foolish situations she gets herself into.” In an almost mythic encounter, echoing Jekyll and Hyde, Jungian ideas of the shadow, and that in the darkness, there is strength for the light, Maggie merges with her security program and becomes whole—not human, but herself, a person, a thinking being who know her core belief, is her core belief. Thomson is playing with levels of reality here: are we what we learn and perceive? Is there a place from which we begin, a core personality that must be both dark and light? What of our memories? Maggie cannot forget, but we can and what we can remember is often a matter of age, of gender, of perspective. Maggie reveals her robotic identity to Marie/Murray, who is both a man and woman, yet cannot be both at the same time. Again Thomson is asking what is real and what isn’t? What makes a person a person—and nature and/or nurture is too simple an answer. Murray initiates Maggie into human sex, yet Maggie knows a deeper, more profound communion, with Turing, the self-aware program. They can reach and connect past skin—and Maggie feels sorry for humans, if sex is the closest they come, “they must be very lonely indeed.” Maggie does find Arnold again, but in true mythic quest fashion, she must best the father, the creator, to become free: “I’m sorry, Arnold, your override code won’t work anymore. I’ve reprogrammed myself. I’m free now. I may not be human, but I am a person,” and she and Turing, who is now in a robot body as well, leave. She has survived more than one first contact—with humans, beginning with Arnold, with Turing, and perhaps most importantly, her self. Maggie, as the Hero of her own Quest, has come of age, she has achieved her own grail, she is in communion with her self: she knows her self.

This idea of communion, of how close can we be to another, how much can we truly know another is a core idea to Thomson’s two other novels, The Color of Distance and Through Alien Eyes. The mythical context shifts, from Prometheus, to utopia—but the other questions remains: What makes us human, what makes a person separate and individual—and as Maggie celebrated when she found Turing, a program life herself—how much do individuals need community? Maggie’s world of the Slump, of ecological and human disaster was a backdrop for her quest—now the questions that come with such a world are brought to the front. How do we fit into our world—and what price will we pay if we do not see we are part of multiple and complex ecologies?

I would have liked for Thomson to make some reference to Maggie and the other self-aware programs like her and Turing in the second novels—what happened to them in the two centuries or so between Virtual Girl and The Color of Distance? Perhaps that is another story Thomson will tell, and it is a minor quibble soon forgotten when Thomson’s tale of first contact—in the traditional sense of a first encounter between human and alien—and the garden of Eden from the multiple perspective of the garden’s denizens, the Tendu, and the alien interlopers, humans, begins. Drawing on extensive research of Earth’s rain forest Thomson, in the fine old SF tradition of world-making, has created Tiangi, the world of the amphibian Tendu, who live in their own intricate and complex and interconnected rain forest. Juxtaposed against the Tendu, who are in true harmony with their environment, is Juna Saari, the sole survivor of a team of human surveyors. On a mission away from the main base, the flyer crashed and all but Juna died of anaphylactic shock, as "Humans were profoundly allergic to every living world the Survey had found.” Thomson lets her readers know they are aliens from the start, when three Tendu find the humans, “two strange animals [that] didn’t even seem to be alive. The white shell that covered them was made of something that had never lived . . . Its odd . . . skin was very strange—smooth like hers, but dry like a lizard’s. It lacked any protective slime and was covered with sparse hair, like the fuzz of an ika flower.”

Thus the Tendu meet humanity, a totally unfamiliar species to a people who can create, through their allu, “fleshy red spurs located on the inside of the forearm,” allu-a, a communion between life forms of a deep and profound nature, both physiological and emotional. While in this communion, Tendu can explore, taste, and repair the body of another, down to the cellular level. It is Thomson’s creation of these aliens and their fully realized world that is an imaginative triumph. Modeled on the life cycle of a frog, from the narey or immature tadpole, then tinka, land-based juveniles, to bami, fully sentient adolescents, to the elder, their language is one of color and shape, manifested in and through their skin—skin-speech. Intricate patterns of bars, spirals, circles, and other geometric shapes formed on their skin transmit information.
The Tendu are a people in complete harmony with their world. Each elder has his or her atwa—a complex ecological grouping which they supervise and care and tend—but this is a simplistic description. Thomson creates a thick, dense living world, echoing our own rain forests in its complexity and diversity: the na trees in which the land-Tendu live, the beelike tilan, who will attack if they don’t recognize a stranger’s scent. This is a complete world whose people have maintained a stable culture for millennia.

It is in this world that Juna Saari, human explorer, finds herself alone and transformed. For her to survive in an environment that can kill her, Juna must be completely changed, reskinned and metamorphosed into a quasi-Tendu. “Her fingernails were gone. Instead, sharp, catlike claws protruded from the ends of her fingers,” and each emotion she felt registered a different color on her skin. Distance does have a color, and that color and the others, as well as the skin-patterns, all must be learned if Juna is to survive and adapt. She must learn, as a child learns, the intricate social and ecological protocols within which the Tendu live an ordered and settled life. But Juna’s story is not the only one Thomson is telling. She is also telling the story of the Tendu—particularly that of Ani, the bami (later the elder, Anito) whose atwa Juna becomes. Anito is assigned this new creature as her atwa by her sitik, her mentor/foster parent, Ilto, before he follows through with his choice to die. The alien, the human, is unlike any other animal Tendu have encountered: It must be understood; it must be brought into harmony.

The growth of this understanding by both Juna and Anito, as each narrates alternate chapters, gives the novel its structure and form. As this understanding grows and evolves, so does the reader’s of the Tendu’s world. Its ecology and its culture unfold slowly, as a flower blooms, each petal opening and revealing what lies behind it. When Anito takes Juna to the coast, in a vain attempt to reach the human base before the starship leaves, they meet the enkar, Ukatonen, who becomes a part of an unfolding, as he was already going to investigate the rumors of “strange creatures tearing up the coast.” There are the vast differences between two species—one that eats its nonsentient young to prevent overpopulation and the other who finds such practices abhorrent.

Permeating all of this is the allu-a, the total communion that can heal, restore, and bring harmony—a practice Juna is terrified of until her adoption of her own tinka, metamorphosed into her bami, Moki, requires her to do so on a regular basis. Then, there is the quabirri, the skin-speech and dance/historical record/art.

Anito’s perspective provides the counterpoint, the balance, as it were, as she also must try to understand the alien—the alien who has been made her atwa. How can she bring the aliens into harmony? Coloris also Ukatonen the enka’s story: How can he make proper judgment of such a strange species, how can he bring his vast knowledge to bear on a species of which he knows only one specimen? How can he moderate and control the inevitable change these strangers bring? This is first contact from the perspective of both the stranger and the native.

Greater thematic questions are at work in this novel as well—questions that touch on the mythic. Is this harmonious garden world of the Tendu a utopia—and here garden is used in the metaphoric Edenic sense as well as the literal. The Tendu do tend their world, monitor its species, watching over them to maintain the balance. The humans seem to have lost a green forest utopia—we are the people who wear clothing that never lived, that burn a section of forest without realizing they are burning another’s garden. But is that too simplistic an analysis of the human relationship with any ecosystem? Or have we been too long out of harmony?

The Survey ship finally returns. A treaty to formalize reparations for the damages done by the humans’ last visit is negotiated—and thus both species are a little closer to harmony. Juna reassumes her human form—but then what of her adopted son, the bami, Moki? Ukatonen judges—they will all go Earth. It is on this journey that the story continues, in Through Alien Eyes. Thomson gives a short synopsis of Coloris the beginning of Through Alien Eyes, intending, I think, that the second novel can be read alone. The publisher’s advertising doesn’t describe Eyes as a sequel, either; even so, I think that knowing the story of Coloris enriches and gives a greater context to Eyes. That Moki, Juna’s adopted son, is bound to her not only as her adopted son, but literally through the physiological link of allu—he must link with her to grow, to survive—must be understood. But this knowledge will picked up as the story progresses.

That Eyes is also a first contact story is soon evident. As an enka who has realized that the change the humans bring is inevitable, Ukatonen knows his people must understand the humans. The reader is given the perspective of an outsider who must make sense of our world and our species. The utopia theme is also again evident, and again there is a reversal of perspective: The utopians are traveling to the world of the visitor. Who will be the most changed, the most transformed? Who will teach whom what?

The commonality of all life and the need for interconnection dominates Eyes. While en route to Earth, Ukatonen and Moki work in the ship’s garden and there learn that “Certain kinds of animals seem to occur over and over again on other living worlds.” The Tiangi yetilye and the Earth’s earthworm “occupy the same ecological niche,” as do Earth’s sharks and “similar predator[s] … in every suitable ocean.” The need to interconnect, to be a part of a living ecosystem is also made evident on the trip to Earth and during the quarantine imposed upon the ship’s arrival: Ukatonen becomes “greensick.” As he explains it to the humans sent to the ship on its arrival to determine if the Tendu do pose an environmental threat, "I am out of harmony with the world. I’ve spent too long in this ship, out of touch with the natural world.”

The quarantine is lifted, but only after Juna manages to bypass security locks on the ship’s communication system and contacts a well-known reporter. Politics kept the ship under quarantine, not the environmental threat. Thus, the Tendu
enter the complicated and puzzling human world of multiple ethnicities and nations, conflicting agendas, and long-maintained animosities. When Juna discovers she is pregnant, the Tendu having restored her fertility when they rescued her, Ukatonen and Moki discover both the human efforts to reduce their population and restore the damaged ecosystems and the resisting BirthRight movement. They encounter petty jealousies, rage, greed, Byzantine politics, and human body-blindness, and in counterpoint, the warm and close embrace of Juna's extended family. And they began to learn what humanity could teach them: The need for change and growth. They learn something of what it means to be human—especially watching Juna with her new daughter. Eyesis also, like Color, Juna's story: becoming a mother; marrying into her brother's group marriage; helping him, with the Tendu, to be healed of a crippling accident; and learning more of the Tendu as she helps Ukatonen recover from the brutal beating he suffered when kidnapped by BirthRight terrorists—a help that lets him change as no Tendu has ever done.

There is more to say about these three remarkable novels, particularly the latter two, but reviews are meant to be short. Thomson has achieved remarkable thematic unity, particularly with first contact and utopia and science fiction's perennial theme, what it means to be human. As Maggie encounters humanity, we encounter her. As the Tendu learn of who and what humans are, Juna and the readers learn of who and what these aliens are. Once utopia is achieved, how can it be rescued from its own success, its perpetuation of a status quo? Thomson's continual use of parallel events, such as Juna's transformation, Ukatonen's, Juna's, and Anito's double stories of understanding the Other, work well to create structural unity and focus the attention of the reader. The reader will find him- or herself asking such questions as how separate are we from our environment, are we that different from Earth's other denizens? The language, particularly, in the Tendu novels, is beautiful—at times, lyrical. The Frankenstein mythos, a primary theme of Virtual Girl, becomes both an undercurrent and a parallel theme in the Tendu novels. When Juna is transformed, is she still human? Or a new species? Who is she to her own people when she is transformed again? The Tendu, the travelers from utopia, are both monstrous and benign aliens in a world that is trying to restore its own garden. And what price have the Tendu paid for maintaining their garden for so long as it is?

If there is one criticism to be mentioned, it is the dialogue. Yes, Maggie's speech must be simplistic at first, when she is learning how to communicate and her thoughts do become more complex. Her speech lags behind her mental complexity. On Tiangi, in her transformed state, Juna again must talk in a more simplistic fashion than she would among humans: She is learning a new and very different language, skin-speech, made up of colors and shapes. At times, both Tendu and Juna and the other characters, human and alien, preach and explicate. The latter is a necessity; it seems, as the humans and Tendu, aliens to each other, must explain what cannot be obviously understood. Thomson's ecological message is powerful—at times, though, I wanted her to show me, rather than tell me. But this is a minor quibble, as she does show and powerfully so, complex alien peoples and cultures and worlds, in beautiful and evocative language. I look forward to reading Thomson's next novel; I have no doubt it will be as good as the first three. Virtual Girls, when compared to the Tendu novels, clearly a first novel. There is clear and obvious growth between Girl and Color. If she grows as much between Eyes and her fourth novel, then the fourth will not only be as good—it will be better.

FICTION REVIEW

The Fear of God

Bruce A. Beatie


This novel is not so much a sequel to Chepaitis's The Fear Principle (Ace, 1998) as it is a second novel in a series with the same setting and the same principal characters. Its affinities are at least as much to the detective or suspense novel (where such a series is the norm) as to science fiction. Although a "sequel" normally assumes that one has read the preceding novel, it is a convention of "series" novels that they may be read independently of one another. From that perspective, Chepaitis's The Fear of God is in the middle; although I believe she intends the novels to stand alone, she makes references in the second novel that are unclear if one has not read the first.

The time in both novels is indefinite, but certainly at least mid-twenty-first century. Some twenty years before the events of Fear Principle, Earth had suffered through a period of vast disruption called the Killing Years, which had left "more than ten million dead just in the United States" (Principle, pp. 100–1), and had lasted at least three years (God, p. 49). The last of these years had been characterized by widespread serial killing. Earth resurrected its space program and began space colonies.

Chepaitis's new novel, The Fear of God, takes place not too long after the events of Fear Principle. The action, like that in Fear Principle, is continuous, lasting eleven days from the prologue; an epilogue follows on day fifteen. In the prologue, the headquarters of Sardis Marocco, Mother of the Revelation Sect, is being attacked by the Sassies ("Special Artillery..."
Squadron,” a twenty-first-century equivalent of the ATF, who suspect the sect of accumulating illegal weapons. As the Sassies break in, Sardis’s lover and chief aide, Philo, unexpectedly hits her with an instant sedative and tries to escape, intending to leave Sardis to die; but he and Sardis are caught. The Sassies find the sect members in an inner chamber, surrounded by their children; when they enter the children, wired with explosives, blow up, killing most of the sect members. Sardis and Philo are taken to Planetoid Three, and on the home planet, the remaining members of Revelation prepare for “three days of death, and ten days of imprisonment for their leader” (p. 10): we know that something is planned for the thirteenth day.

On Planetoid Three, after casually helping sides suppress Philo, Teacher Jaguar comes to Alex’s office and finds Carolan Shannon there, a special agent of the Federal Research and Criminal Investigation Agency to whom Jaguar takes an instant dislike. When Jaguar learns that Rachel Shotel, a former criminal rehabilitated by Jaguar and now her friend and associate (whom we met in Fear Principle), is assigned to interview Philo, she insists on observing. Philo injects Rachel with something that causes instant convulsions and escapes. At the request of the FRCIA, Jaguar is assigned the case of Sardis, who is to be treated in the Planetoid’s new VR facility; since preliminary interviews have established that Sardis’s principal fear is of God, the VR engineers have set up for Sardis a kind of heaven in the form of a shopping mall where everything is free; Sardis is put through a charade that convinces her that she has died and gone to heaven.

From this point on, the plot of the novel (the outcome of which I will leave open, since this is, after all, a suspense novel) involves several parallel actions. Jaguar and the medical staff try to identify the toxin Philo had used in order to save Rachel’s life. Jaguar tries to get through to Sardis, not only to “cure” her but to find out about Philo’s toxin and, most important, to find out about the Resurrection plot, which Alex and Jaguar suspect but which the FRCIA dismisses. Philo (who turns out to be a terrorist shape-shifter from the Killing Years) works to get at Sardis to complete the job he failed at when they were captured. Carolan, on the orders of her boss Karl Madden, subverts the VR site in order both to find out about Jaguar’s empathic skills and to sabotage the Planetoid’s operation, seduces Alex, and attempts to recruit him for the FRCIA. All of these actions come together in a tense climax on day eleven that involves an empathic “Death Walk” through Rachel’s consciousness.

While the action in this novel, as in The Fear Principle, is almost continuous, the point of view again constantly shifts from character to character, often several times within the same chapter; Jaguar, Alex, Philo, and Carolan are the characters through whose eyes we see the action. The result of the shifting viewpoint is that, in a few instances, segments of the action run in parallel, rather than continuously; but it is remarkable how rarely Chepaitis is forced to this recourse. The characters are for the most part convincing and believable; in this novel we learn a good bit more about the deep and very complex relationships between Jaguar and Alex on the one hand, and between Jaguar and Rachel on the other. The “baddies” Philo and Madden are less convincingly realized, and the character of Sardis herself is a real problem. She is much less believable than was Clare Risalko in Fear Principle, and her “cure” is, if anything, even more a deus ex machina affair.

The novel’s most serious difficulty, however, lies in its purported status as “science fiction.” Although the dystopian twenty-first-century Chepaitis has created as backstory is fairly well grounded, the “science” is disturbingly unconvincing, mostly a matter of meaningless jargon. The jargon used to describe the creation and existence of the planetoids is unexplained and unconvincing. The VR site is also a hotbed of such pseudoscience.

Although the “empathic arts” exercised by Jaguar and Alex work well within the actions of the two novels, their background rationalization makes little sense, especially Jaguar’s purported Native American heritage. The Maya certainly existed, but there are no Mertec “cousins” of the Maya. While Jaguar’s knowledge “that there were fundamental differences between the human and spirit worlds,... that communication with the spirits required openness, and fear closed you” (God, p. 95) is true of many Native American cultures, her inner answer to her question “where do you draw the line when your spirits ask you to do something?” has no basis in Mayan or Native American lore.

Finally, in both novels, the embedding of the title theme of “fear” into the action is weak. Sardis’s “fear of God” provides a rationale for the use of the VR “heaven” that is central to the second novel, but it is never clearly explained and seems to have little to do with the traumatic experience of the Killing Years that has caused Sardis’s flight from reality. Both titles seem rather mechanical devices to link a series of suspense novels—and the outcome of Fear of God certainly implies that it will not be the last.

If one can suspend one’s disbelief, however, with respect to the scientific and folkloric backgrounds, both novels are well written, exciting, and a pleasure to read. In Jaguar Adams, Chepaitis has created a fascinating, strong, and complex character. Alex Dzarny and Rachel Shotel are almost equally interesting. I look forward to seeing Chepaitis’s next novel and hope she takes the time to work out the background a bit more thoroughly.
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.sfra.org>. For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the website.

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