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SUBMISSIONS
The SFRAReview encourages all submis-
sions, including essays, review essays that
cover several related texts, and inter-
views. If you would like to review non-
fiction or fiction, please contact the
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News Items:

The Octavita E. Butler Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established to provide a scholarship for writers of color to attend the Clarion Writers Workshop, where Butler got her start. The scholarship will be administered by the Carl Brandon Society, which earlier this year established the Parallax Award and the Kindred Award.

Robert J. Sawyer’s Mindson is the winner of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for Best Novel of the Year, becoming one of only seven writers who have won all three of the field's top awards.

Greg Bear and Jack Williamson will receive the 2006 Robert A. Heinlein Award, to be presented at the Society's annual dinner held in conjunction with Worldcon in LA.


Editor's Message

Christine Mains

This issue of the SFRA Review is coming out a little later than the schedule would call for, but we do have a good reason: we needed to delay publication until after the July 10 deadline for late nominations for the upcoming election. However, no new candidates presented themselves for consideration, so there are no new candidates’ statements to add to those published in issue #275. Ballots for the election should be arriving in your mailboxes later this summer. The membership directory will also be out later this summer, reflecting membership registrations as of July 15, 2006.

In this issue, we have, in addition to reviews of fiction and nonfiction, the speeches of award presenters and winners from the recent awards banquet at the conference in White Plains. We’re not quite publishing the speeches in the order in which they were given, and we’re not able to provide a food course between every other speech, but you can use your imaginations to add in the carrot cake with blueberries and the glasses of wine.

We’re a little light on nonfiction reviews this issue; those of you with books to review, consider yourself gently nagged. And remember, you don’t need to wait for Ed or Phil to request reviewers for books they’ve received from publishers; if you’ve received a book that would interest SFRA members, or if you’ve heard of a forthcoming title that you’d like to review, please contact them.

President’s Message

David G. Mead

SFRA 2006 was a great success. I was delighted to see so many of our members in White Plains, to hear some terrific presentations, and to get to meet members whom I have known only as names in the Directory until now. The conference guests were terrific, and fully engaged in the program, and the program was full of interesting panels and discussions.

Thanks are owed to a great many persons for the success of this year’s meeting. First, to Tom Morrissey and Oscar De Los Santos, the conference co-chairs who made it all happen. And to their many helpers, including J.J. Sargent and Arlene Morrissey. Thanks also to Joe Berlant and Dave Hartwell for their work in the bookroom. SFRA owes all these folks a great debt of gratitude for the countless hours of work they put in!

Next year we will meet in Kansas City, July 5-8, in conjunction with the Heinlein Centennial. We are inviting guest authors now; I hope to be able to announce their names soon. The meeting will be held in the Crown Center. For more information about the venue and Centennial plans, take a look at www.heinleincentennial.com. Start planning your paper and saving your pennies.

Our officer elections for 2007-2008 will be held soon. Ballots will be mailed in August. Please look for yours, and be sure to vote. We have a wonderful slate of candidates, whose candidate statements were printed in the last SFRA Review.

I assume that I will get another chance to write a President’s Message before I go out of office. But if I don’t, I want to thank you for giving me another chance to be President of the Association. And to acknowledge Peter Briggs, Bruce Rockwood, Warren Rochelle, Mack Hassler, Chrissie Mains, Jan Bogstad, and all the awards committee members who kept me from making a complete mess of it all. They did the work.
**SFRA BUSINESS**

**Minutes: Executive Committee Meeting**

**Warren Rochelle**

Call to Order: The Meeting of the Executive Committee was convened at approximately 9:30 p.m., on June 22, 2006, in David Mead's room, the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, NY.

Present: Bruce Rockwood, Mack Hassler, Christine Mains, David Mead, Warren Rochelle.

OFFICER and **SFRA REVIEW** EDITOR REPORTS:

**PRESIDENT, DAVE MEAD**

The meeting began with the President’s report on the upcoming 2007 SFRA conference, which is to be held in Kansas City, in conjunction with the Heinlein Society Centennial.

He also discussed the membership of the various award committees. Dave noted that the Pilgrim Award Committee currently has 2 members: David Hartwell and Charles Brown (of *Locus* magazine), and that a third member was needed. He felt the third member should not be a US citizen, and suggested Pavel.

**TREASURER, MACK HASSLER:**

Mack noted the organization currently has 310 members. He added that *SF Studies* is raising its rates, due to printing costs. The actual changes should come to a $1 for individuals and $2 for institutions, and will be effective in 2007. When asked if Mack felt we should raise our dues, Mack said no. He thought the budget could handle the increase.

**SECRETARY, WARREN ROCHELLE:**

Warren sent out second and reminder to renew membership letters in February and March, and put a reminder on the listserv as well. There was a good response to the follow-up letters. Since then he has been collecting returned letters, which he is sending to Mack so that they can be purged from the database. He noted the upcoming election and that he would be sure to remind people to add extra postage as the ballots will be sent to Peter in Toronto.

**SFRA REVIEW** Editor, Christine Mains:

Christie Mains commented on the ongoing problem with the *Review* and the reason for now being off-schedule: the failure of book review writers to send in their work in a timely manner. She noted that this is a problem for both fiction and nonfiction reviews. Another concern is that some publishers do not send out review copies. There was some discussion about how to encourage more review copies from publishers and what could be done to resolve the problem of late reviews.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Conference Reports:**

2006 CONFERENCE, White Plains, NY:

DIRECTORS, OSCAR DE LOS SANTOS and TOM MORRISSEY will give a report at the business meeting.

2007: Kansas City

2008: Dublin, Ireland

2009: Atlanta, Georgia (Lisa Yaszek & Doug Davis)

2010: Phoenix, AZ (possible: Craig Jacobsen & Shelley Rodrigue)

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Mike Levy will give a report on the new Center at the University of Kansas, established by James Gunn.

A call will be made for additional nominations by July 10.


This year’s *Fountain Award* winner; given by the Speculative Literature Foundation to speculative short stories of exceptional literary quality, is Stephanie Harrell for "Girl Reporter:"

The first annual *Carl Brandon Awards* have been presented. The Parallax Award, for works of speculative fiction created by people of color, went to 47, by Walter Mosley; the Kindred Award, for works of speculative fiction dealing with issues of race and ethnicity, went to *Stormwatch*, by Susan Voight.

The first Andre Norton Award was presented to Valiant: A Modern Tale of Faerie, by Holly Black.


Jane Yolen has been awarded the 2006 Roots of Writing Award by SF-FFWs (Science Fiction and Fantasy Female Writers) for her writing and for her work as an editor.

Geoff Ryman received his second Arthur C. Clarke Award for the novel Air. The first was for his novel The Child Garden.

Business Meeting Agenda:
Officer Reports
Conference reports, including a presentation by De Los Santos and Morrissey

New and Old Business
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Warren Rochelle, Secretary, SFRA

SFRA BUSINESS
Minutes: Annual Business Meeting
Warren Rochelle

Minutes: SFRA Annual Business Meeting
9 a.m., June 25, 2006
Yorktown Room, Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, NY
Present: Members attending the 2006 SFRA Conference

Called to order at approximately 9 a.m.
Agenda accepted as presented without comment.
Special Report from Mike Levy:
As Mike reminded everyone, about a year ago, Jim Gunn helped establish a Center for SF Studies at the University of Kansas, which received direct financial support from the SFRA. The purpose of this Center is evangelical: it is meant to spread the word about SF. A website has been launched. A Speaker’s Group has been started consisting of 100 people in 35 states and overseas who have volunteered to speak at libraries, schools, and the like, on science fiction. The Center is in the process of developing HS and college curricula, and an online course, through the University of Kansas, is now available. There is a call for people to donate SF books and magazine. A Teen SF Workshop is being developed.

Leslie Swigart suggested that, since Lawrence, the home of the University of Kansas, is only 40 miles away from the 2007 conference site in Kansas City, a pre- or post, or during the conference field trip could be arranged to visit the center.

Officer Reports (in the order they were given):
Christine Main, editor, The SFRA Review
Christine again made a plea that book reviews be completed in a timely fashion, as the delays have once again put the Review behind in its publication schedule. She called the membership’s attention to her efforts to get more publishers to send review copies to her and she would like to see more reviews—especially long review or review essays, and more “Theory and Beyond” and “Approaches” articles. Members are welcome to contact Chriissie or Ed or Phil if they know of a book that they would like to review, rather than waiting to see whether or not the editors will send out a request to review a particular title, and they will try to get a review copy. It is OK to contact the editors with review suggestions. She emphasized that she is planning to get the SFRA Review back on schedule. Joan Gordon suggested that giving the reviewers very specific deadlines would help in getting the reviews in a timely fashion.

Dave Mead asked for and received a round of applause for Christine’s hard work.

Sam McDonald, the Webmester:
Sam noted the website is working, and to let him know if someone wanted something put up.
Dave Mead called for volunteers to serve on the awards selection committees, and acknowledged Brett Cox's volunteering to be a member of the Pilgrim Award committee. He noted his thanks to Oscar and Tom for their conference hard work.

Bruce Rockwood noted that SFRA at present has 310 members, a number he feels we should try to increase and, if not, definitely maintain. He wondered if video clips of speakers, interviews and sessions could be put on the SFRA website. This would be a good way to record the speaker and the following discussion. Bruce thought it was time we started archiving the conference.

David Hartwell noted that IAFA regularly puts up color photos of their conference on their website. Bruce went on to say that panels and papers on Role Playing Games (RPGs) as well as DVD's of SF films and television series and their interviews and out-takes—multiple media—and the study of computer games that develop SF and fantasy universes, should be encouraged, as they could be used as a way to snag younger members. Integration of the study of emerging media is a way to grow membership and interest in the SFRA.

Warren Rochelle, Secretary:
Warren asked that the Minutes of the last business meeting be approved and this was done quickly. Warren reported that this year, due to an error on his part, he sent out two reminders for membership renewal, in February and the other in March. He also put the March reminder on the listserv. This seems to have been helpful in getting more members to renew. Since then he has been collecting returned letters, which he is sending to Mack so that they can be purged from the database. Warren will be sending out the ballots and candidate statements in late July. He reminded everyone that extra postage would be needed, as ballots were to be returned to Peter Briggs, who lives in Toronto.

Mack Hassler, Treasurer:
Mack called the membership's attention to the handout Mack had prepared, and noted that the organization received $3000 from last year's conference in Las Vegas and continues to receive royalty income from the anthologies—most recently, approximately $500. Due to rising costs, subscription rates to the journals will have to be raised. This year's conference is more costly than Las Vegas. Mack recommended that SFRA maintain the dues schedule for the coming year. He noted that there is "pass through money" for the optional publications, such as the New York Review of Science Fiction and Foundation.

Joan Gordon commented that the various options were designed to give members a chance to support the various related organizations and publications.

Stacie Hanes suggested SFRA consider a downloadable PDF version of some of its publications to encourage wider distribution.

Leslie Swigart commented that some journals do put back issues online.

Sam McDonald responded that right now, only the SFR Review back issues are online. He felt the print version is still needed and recommended that the Review not go completely online. He didn't feel as many people would read the Review if it were just online. Dave Mead commented reading online is not the same as reading hard copy, and many prefer the latter. There was a short discussion of the possibilities of online publication. Joe Berhart felt that at least the Table of Contents online of the Review would be a service and could pull people into the discussion.

David Mead, President:
Dave reported for Peter Briggs, the past President, about the upcoming SFRA elections. He invited more nominations, noting the deadline of July 10. There was no response from those present. He added that if anyone knew some-


Forthcoming Nonfiction:
(Book, 2006)

CfPs:

WHAT: Weird Science in 19th c literature
WHO: 38th Convention Northeast Modern Language Association (NEMLA)
WHEN: March 1-4, 2007
WHERE: Baltimore, Maryland

TOPICS: significance of unconventional or non-traditional science (including medicine) in texts of the period. Examples might include, but are not limited to: phrenology, mesmerism, alchemy and homeopathy.

SUBMISSIONS: abstracts of 250 words via email
CONTACT: ksanner@mansfield.edu

WHAT: 1st Annual Award for Non-English Language Scholarly Essay on the Fantastic
WHAT: The International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts
TOPICS: Prize: $250 U.S. and one year free membership in the IAFA to be awarded at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in March 2007; Winning essay to be published online at the IAFA website. Essays may be unpublished scholarship submitted by the author, or already published work nominated either by the author or another scholar (in which case the author's permission should be obtained before submission). An abstract in English must accompany all submissions.
CONTACT: Dale Knickerbocker, knickerbocker@ecu.edu
DEADLINE: Nov 30, 2006
INFO: wiz.cath.vt.edu/mt3/IAFA/News/archives/2006_07_09.html#a000192

WHAT: Book of Essays on Firefly and Serenity
TOPICS: The short-lived series and major motion picture speak to a myriad of issues—some familial, some political, some cultural, many something in between. While on the surface the series appears to be “just a one who would like to serve to please let the Executive Committee know.

Old Business:
Dave reported that SF Studies is increasing its rates: $1.00 in each membership category. Mack felt this rate increase could easily be assimilated by the treasury.
Dave noted the organization’s generosity toward providing travel support.

New Business:
Leslie Swigart called for a revival of the library committee. She felt that since so many things have been archived digitally, there was a concern that collections be preserved. Kevin Mulcahy, Sam McDonald, and Andy Sawyer have expressed an interest in serving on such a committee.

Adam moved, with Bruce Rockwood seconding, that such a committee be established.

David reminded everyone that according to SFRA by-laws, a formal proposal had to be made and published in the Review.

Leslie said she would put information about a library listserv on the website. Bruce Rockwood suggested this new committee be inaugurated in Kansas City next year. Dave reminded everyone of the need to observe Article XI of the by-laws regarding an amendment of the by-laws. He then called for a vote in favor of Adam’s motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Dave asked that a formal proposal, with a mission statement be sent to the Review as soon as possible. Chris said she would try to get it in the issue after the next, if the deadline wasn’t met for the next issue.

Pavel noted again his willingness to organize a conference in Poland and said he would put together an information packet.

Dave reported on the upcoming conferences:

2007: Kansas City, MO, July 5-8, in conjunction with the Heinlein Centennial conference. This collaborative effort will produce a different format for the conference.

2008: Dublin, Ireland, sponsored by Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James
2009: Atlanta, Georgia, sponsored by Lisa Yaszek and Doug Davis

After 2010, conference sites are a bit “fuzzy,” but Dave felt Poland in 2011 was a strong possibility. He commented on the benefits of going outside the United States and North America.

Andy Sawyer, speaking for the SF Foundation in Liverpool, asked members to take a look at a new website, the SF Hub (www.sfhub.ac.uk) with a mind to offering suggestions for editing and revision. He also encouraged people to send him links that could be put on the website. He noted the website is meant to promote the Liverpool collection and to provide 1-stop shopping for people wanting direction to SF scholarship.

David Hartwell said he will post the Jameson speech, with its defense of SF, on the website.

2006 Conference Directors, Oscar de los Santos, Tom Morrissey
Tom Morrissey reporting:
Tom spoke first on financial issues. He suggested that one conference committee member should be designated to negotiate with the hotel, and he commented on the difficulties they encountered with the hotel concerning various arrangements. He said the conference generated more revenue than expected and didn’t lose any more money than was made in Las Vegas. He felt the conference proceedings, when published and sold, could help the conference to break even. The conference made money through T-shirt and baseball cap sales. He felt...
there could have been more control of travel costs for guests and said he has started video archiving conference presentations. 13 graduate students attended. Maybe NYC metro is not the best of conference sites. Tom noted that they would like to have the conference proceedings available by Kansas.

80 people attended and there were 20 walk-ins for the banquet.

David Hartwell noted he solicited books to be sold at the conference and $871 was made in book sales. The book room went really well. David noted that written contracts were needed when working with hotels.

Dave Mead said that to avoid a deficit, the difference in expenses and costs should be paid now, to as to close the books on the conference. Any overage could be sent in later.

Dave Mead referred to the conference "bible" and again emphasized the need to have written contracts with hotels. Oscar de Los Santos commented that the hotel broke its promises.

Leslie Swigart suggested that the membership be informed about the conference proceedings volume and advised each member to order one for their institution's library.

Bruce Rockwood asked about the advertisement we ran last summer in Events in Academe in the Chronicle of Higher Education (CHE). He wanted to know if the organization has concrete evidence of people who attended the SFRA because they saw the ad. No one had an answer. He noted that by identifying ourselves as an academic panel in the CHE, we might make it easier for younger faculty and grad students to get reimbursed from their institutions for the cost of attendance.

Oscar noted a similar ad in Locus worked, and that he had also put information on the UPenn listserv.

Joe Berlant, speaking as a non-academic, suggested the organization should consult with fans for help in running a conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Warren Rochelle, Secretary

SFRA BUSINESS

Treasurer's Report
Donald M. Hassler

June 19, 2005 - June 20, 2006

Income
Dues and separate subscriptions (310 members) 30,143.43
 paypal takes a small % and so amounts are not even
Remainder from the Vegas conference 3,244.82
Royalties 513.47
Scholar support gifts 700.00
Bank interest 262.55
Carryover from 6/19/05 52,810.84
Total Income 87,675.11

Expenses
Treasurer Office 135.00
Secretary Office 719.90
Travel Support (Vegas conference) 850.00
Conference seed money (Vegas) 1,170.00
Conference seed money (New York) 1,140.00
University of Kansas (Christopher Gunn Fund) 1,000.00

WHAT: Arthurian Legends
WHO: PCA
WHEN: April 4-7, 2007
WHERE: Boston, MA
TOPICS: Papers and panel proposals on all popular treatments of Arthurian Legend from any period and in any medium—print, visual, musical, commercial, electronic—are welcome.

SUBMISSIONS: 250 word abstract
CONTACT: Elizabeth Sklar, e.sklar@wayne.edu
DEADLINE: Nov 1, 2006
WHAT: Representing Self and Other: Gender and Sexuality in the Fantastic
WHO: International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts
WHEN: March 14-18, 2007
WHERE: Fort Lauderdale, FL
TOPICS: The focus of ICFA-28 is on issues of gender and sexuality, long a concern of the fantastic in literature, film, and other media. Given the oft-marginalized status of science fiction and fantasy in relation to mainstream literature and culture, it’s not surprising to see fantastic works considered in the light of queer theory and feminist approaches. The hero doesn’t have to be a guy, but it’s just as rewarding to examine the construction of the masculine hero in space opera, sword-and-sorcery, and superhero comics. In graphic novels, book cover illustrations, and art, the gendered Other is the BEM, the elf, the alien, the vampire. Awards such as the Tiptree and the Lambda, and the success of WisCon, speak to the importance of this theme to the communities of the fantastic. We look forward to papers on the work of Guest of Honor Geoff Ryman, author of the Tiptree Award-winning Air; Guest Scholar Marina Warner; and Special Guest Writer Melissa Scott, winner of the Lambda Award. As always, we also welcome proposals for individual papers and for academic sessions and panels on any aspect of the fantastic in any media.
CONTACT: The appropriate Division Head (addresses at the website)
DEADLINE: Nov 30, 2006 (earlier submissions encouraged)
INFO: www.iafa.org.

WHAT: Fantastic Genres II: SF, Fantasy, Horror, Children’s Lit
WHEN: Oct 6-8, 2006
WHERE: SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY
TOPICS: Keynote Writer, John Crowley; Keynote Critic, Joan Gordon. Following the success of the first Fantastic Genres conference in 2004, the second conference once again looks to bring together writers, editors, and scholars in dialogue.

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Ad in Chronicle of Higher Education 375.00
Bray Award 100.00
Clareson Award 82.20
Pilgrim Award 763.13
Review and Directory 3,300.00
Extrapolation (all of 2005) 4,736.00
SFS (part of 2005 and part of 2006) 4,690.50
NYRSF 2,454.00
Foundation 2,229.00
JFA 880.00
FEMSPEC 500.00
Total Expenses 25,124.73
Cash on Hand (6/20/06) 62,550.38

SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS

Grad Student Paper Award: Presenter
Ed Carmien

Good evening everyone. This year it was my pleasure to chair the Graduate Student Award committee. With the extremely able assistance of Sara Canfield-Fuller and Paul Brans we sifted through four presentations and arrived at not one but two winners, a first and a second place award. The works we received were evenly matched, and arriving at a conclusion about which to recognize today required the use of several schools of divination...though I hasten to say that no animals were harmed during the judging of this award.

Before continuing, a brief note: for those of you interested in submitting your work for consideration for next year’s award, please be sure to review the guidelines at www.sfra.org. Remember to submit the work as presented here and include your name, academic affiliation, and the customary works cited information. I’d like to thank Sara Canfield-Fuller for her assistance in revising the Graduate Student Award guidelines, a job assigned us by our taskmasters. Now, onto the papers...

Eyal Tamir of the University of Massachusetts and Brandeis University provided “The Self-Reflective Neo-Aura of the Cult Text: Philip K. Dick’s The Man in the High Castle and Popular Commodities as Religious Blobs.” Although titled in a way only an academic could love, it provided plenty of theory for us readers to chew on. Tamir notes “I believe that it is through the discussion of...artifacts and commodity culture that the novel explores the fascinating relationship of individuals and society to art....”

Ivan Wolfe offered “Storytelling at the End of Time: The Use of Created Folklore in Science Fiction and Fantasy.” It surveys McCaffrey’s Pern, Herbert’s Dune, Tolkien’s Middle Earth, and sundry others including Gene Wolfe’s Urth. In each case, Ivan Wolfe perceives that “all of the authors even if they are unaware of specific texts are aware of working within a genre that has developed certain conventions.” This essay was fresh and of good general interest.

Even so, it was “In Possession of Vital Information: Sharing Knowledge-Power in Joan Vinge’s Hegemony” by Christine Mains of the University of Calgary that landed our vote for second place. A close examination of Vinge’s work in light of Brazilian theorist and educator Paulo Freire, Mains illustrates how power is used to suppress instead of liberate, arguing that “Education in the service of Empire is knowledge bound rather than free, a resource owned rather than shared....” We found this to represent a strong reading of Vinge and an interesting introduction to Freire’s thinking about education and power.
Receiving our first place Graduate Student Award this year is Rebecca Janicker, who visits us from the University of Nottingham of the Sceptered Isle. Her “New England Narratives: Space and Place in the Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft” struck readers as original in its approach and unusual in its perspective. One of us noted “when is the last time Sarah Orne Jewett came up at SFRA?” Janicker describes how Lovecraft “transforms genuine regional topographies that incorporate real locations” into an estranged regional geography much like that of William Faulkner. A big round of applause, please, for all those who contributed work for our review, and especially for our award winners!

**SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS**

**Grad Student Paper Award**
Rebecca Janicker

Five years ago I was completing a Master’s in Psychology and a little unsure of what the future held for me. When my partner Lincoln, then a PhD student writing a thesis on Star Trek, had a paper accepted for the SFRA conference in New Lanark I was more than willing to tag along.

Having enjoyed fantasy and sf for most of my life, I was delighted to spend time in what was for me an entirely new environment—one filled with others who shared my interest. In several of the panels the name H.P. Lovecraft was mentioned, an author I’d heard of before but never actually read for myself. Speaking to panellists about this afterwards, suffice it to say that my curiosity was sufficiently piqued to make me investigate further.

Returning to university to study for a Master’s in American Studies, I wrote my thesis on regionalism in the supernatural literature of Lovecraft and Stephen King and it was from this work that last year’s conference paper was taken. This year was my fifth SFRA conference and my first as a PhD student writing a thesis on haunted spaces in amongst other authors — Lovecraft.

I can honestly say that the SFRA has been a very big influence on me and my chosen career path, not to mention my area of study. I’m really delighted to have my work recognised in this way by the Association—it’s a big honour and has greatly encouraged me. Coming to these conferences has meant the chance to hear thought-provoking papers, visit some wonderful places and meet some great people. Thank you very much.

**SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS**

**Mary Kay Bray Award: Presentation**
Christine Mains

The Mary Kay Bray Award was established a few years ago. It is given to honor the best essay, interview, or extended review published in the *SFRA Review* in the year immediately preceding the annual conference. This year’s award goes to Thomas J. Morrissey for his review-essay of Pamela Sargent’s *The Shores of Women*, reprinted by BenBella Books in 2004, which appears in issue #271.

Tom’s review-essay does everything that a good review in the SFRA Review ought to do: it provides a brief summary of the plot and major themes of the work; it discusses the quality of the writing and the use of narrative techniques; it comments on the book’s relevance to scholars and its value in the classroom. But it goes beyond the basics of situating the book in a sociohistorical context, providing some history of the women’s rights movement in early America, reminding the reader of the political situation of the 70s and 80s as regards the about science fiction, fantasy, horror, and children’s literatures. Crowley and Gordon represent the range of possibilities the Fantastic Genres offer writers and critics, and papers on any aspect of either’s work are welcome. Papers and panel proposals on any aspect of the Fantastic Genres are also welcome; the conference organizers are especially interested in presentations that address the work of such understudied writers as James Tiptree, Jr and Gene Wolfe.

CONTACT: John Langan
lananj@newpaltz.edu.
DEADLINE: Aug 1, 2006

WHAT: Medieval Films Area
WHO: Film & History League
WHEN: 8-12 Nov 2006
WHERE: Dolce Conference Center, Dallas

TOPICS: To many, the Middle Ages often seems a very distant part of human history, but films and television programs set in what Kevin J. Harty has termed the “Reel” Middle Ages make this era come alive again for viewers. Potential topics include: Children’s Educational Programming and the Middle Ages; David Macaulay and the Middle Ages; The Dracula Industry; DVD Extras on Medieval Films; Medieval Films as Truth and the Middle Ages; Medieval Conspiracy Theories; Joseph Campbell and the Middle Ages; Medieval Mockumentaries; Medieval Film as Truth and the Middle Ages; Medieval Mockumentaries; Medieval Films as Propaganda; Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Newscasts from the Past; Medieval-Themed Material produced by Films for the Humanities and Sciences; Teaching with Medieval Film, Terry Jones and the Middle Ages (e.g. Crusades, Medieval Lives, Barbarians)

SUBMISSIONS: abstracts of 250 to 500 words
CONTACT: Michael A. Torregrossa
Michael.A.Torregrossa@gmail.com
INFO: http://FilmandHistory.org
DEADLINE: Aug 1, 2006
WHAT: What's a Woman to Do: Mothering in a Post-Apocalyptic World

WHO: Panel Discussion

TOPICS: By its cultural definition, motherhood is a role that requires one to act as a caretaker, to provide a safe and sustaining environment, to enable the next generation's well-being. But to live in a post-apocalyptic world suggests that the environment has become hostile to life, destroying the possibility of a future and hope of regeneration. How does post-1950s fiction present the mother figure within the conditions of a post-apocalyptic world? Potential approaches may include: Ecocritical Readings, Feminist Theory, Psychoanalytical Theory, and Cultural Studies.

CONTACT: Ilse Schrynemakers, ischrynemakers@hotmail.com

DEADLINE: Sept. 15, 2006

WHAT: Special Issue on The Animal

WHO: Science Fiction Studies

TOPICS: exploring the variety of ways that science fiction may be analysed from the perspective of animal studies. Animals are among the oldest metaphors through which humanity has defined itself. We welcome both papers that deal with representations of animals and the metaphorical use of the category of speciesism to enforce social boundaries and establish a humanist subject, and also papers that consider our changing material relationships with animals as they are mediated by changing technologies. Science fiction's long history of engaging with themes of alterity and of narrating the social consequences of technological change point to the many fruitful intersections of the genre with animal studies research. Proposals might consider, but are not limited to, some of the following conjunctions of animal studies and science fiction: Manufactured animals as commodities, workers, or tools within the sf world, including manufactured 'lab tool' animals such as Oncomouse; Animal-like aliens as companions, Equal Rights Amendment, and connecting the frustrations of women SF writers at the political situation to the publication of same-sex utopias and dystopias in that period.

In his analysis, Tom compares Sargent's work to two books often named as its companions: Joan Slonczewski's A Door into Ocean and Sheri Tepper's A Gate to Women's Country. Tom notes that "Each work is a thoughtful exploration of the psychology that leads to and sustains patriarchy, and each posits that patriarchy has been responsible for much of human suffering." Lest that sounds a tad too serious, Tom's writing also reveals a sense of humor; after explaining at length the political history of the period, he remarks, "In case you are about to stop reading, here's where I talk about sex."

This piece is a well written and thoughtful response to an important work in the field, and the Mary Kay Bray committee is pleased to present this year's award to Thomas J. Morrissey.

SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS

Mary Kay Bray Award

Thomas J. Morrissey

I feel especially honored to receive the Mary Kay Bray Award because I think that the quality of writing in the SFRA Review is so high that any number of others could be standing here tonight.

When Pam Sargent's The Shore of Women was reissued after having been out of print for too long, I was anxious to review it. I had always loved this book, and I wanted to see how it had held up over time. What I discovered is that although the book had not changed, I had. In the decade and a half since my last reading, I had occasion to share with several people very close to me, including a family member, the discomfort that can come when someone discovers that what he or she feels is normal is regarded by a significant subset of our population as perverse and sinful. Although there is hardly anyone whose sexuality perfectly matches the off-the-rack, one-size-fits-all compulsory model, gays and lesbians continue to bear the brunt of cruelty and narrow-mindedness.

I had realized from the first reading that what Pam Sargent had done was to turn the tables on heterosexuality by removing its default status. Arvil's and Briana's developing heterosexual love for one another is as transgressive and illicit in their world as homosexual love is in much of ours. On this reading, though, I was far more aware of just what a miracle their love story is. In order to be lovers and soul mates, Arvil and Briana must undo a lifetime of conditioning and recognize each other's personhood. They must be able to see one another as human beings. For Arvil, women are manifestations of the Goddess; for Briana, men are beasts. That they are able to do this in the face of social pressure and life-threatening danger is a tribute to the undeniability of the human heart. The Shore of Women is a novel that arouses compassion and empathy for those who suffer under the yoke of mandated sexuality, and that is a wonderful thing for a novel to do.

In Age of Wonder, David Hartwell writes that back in the good old days, SF was written for twelve-year-old boys. Having been a twelve-year-old boy back in the Golden Age, I can attest to the truth of that observation. But in the past half-century SF (and I, I hope) has matured. It has become expansive, inclusive, and is very much the literary form of our age. It is a serious genre, and here I mean the opposite of frivolous since there is quite a lot of funny SF. On the other hand, I suspect that everyone in this room has a bit of the twelve-year-old (let's not specify gender) lurking within. Young adolescents can shut out the world as they im-
They have immersed themselves in sports, music, dancing, video games or whatever. We do the same with SF; and, fortunately, we have each other. SFRA is the friendliest professional organization I have ever belonged to, full of remarkably smart and articulate people. Let me close by thanking you again, and by urging you to keep reading, writing, viewing, and coming together to indulge our collective passion for the geeky pleasure that is SF.

**SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS**

**Thomas D. Clareson Award**

Paul Kincaid (accepted by Andy Sawyer)

It is a matter of deep personal regret that I cannot be with you this evening to accept this award. I heard the news within hours of returning home from a holiday in America, and my first instinct was to rush straight back to Heathrow and get on the first plane across the Atlantic. Alas, sober reality has a horrible way of disrupting even the most beautiful dream.

I have been trying to come up with the right words to describe my reaction to receiving this award: surprised, delighted, gob-smacked — they all seem inadequate, somehow. I never met Thomas Clareson. I knew him only through the many examples of his writing on my bookshelves, and the stories others have told. But he seems exactly the sort of academic I like most: eclectic, enthusiastic, ignoring the narrow bounds of 'subject' to pursue any topic that engaged his interest, and unafraid of the hard, thankless grind. That's a lot to live up to.

When I first set out to pursue my own eclectic and engaged interest in science fiction I didn't have the hard, thankless grind in mind. That is something not so much pursued as thrust upon one. But you soon realise that, apart from the occasional death threat from disgruntled authors, reviewing doesn't exactly shine the limelight on the reviewer. You do it, at least I do it, because science fiction generates so many ideas I can't not write about them. Even though, much of the time, you wonder if anyone is even aware of what you write.

Then came the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and I very consciously took myself into the back room. I'd been involved in the Award ever since I helped to set it up, but I only realised the size of the task I took on as administrator when the very first letter I received was from all the main UK publishers of science fiction threatening to pull out of the Clarke Award. Ever since then I've been engaged in a battle to establish and defend the integrity and the prestige of the Clarke Award. Actually that makes it sound worse than it is, in many ways it's been an easy fight because I believe passionately in the importance of the Clarke Award, the importance of science fiction.

The fight isn't over, though now we're battling mostly for the funds we need to survive. You can help, go to the website and check out Supporters of Serendip. And while I've now stepped down as administrator I've not given up working for the Clarke Award, just taken more of a back seat. And given myself a little time to write more reviews and essays about science fiction, maybe collect a few more of those death threats.

So, at the end of all that, suddenly and astoundingly I have an award of my very own, the first I've ever received and one that means a huge amount to me personally. Thank you for proving that the hard grind isn't always thankless.
Zones Three, Four and Five.

themes.
and the novels of Canopus at Argos

TOPICS: colonial subject and exile and related

ing Home, In Pursuit of the English, and the novels of Canopus at Argos

WHO: Wilson
WHERE: Chambersburg, PA
WHEN: Feb 16-17, 2007
WHERE: Wilson College, Chambersburg, PA

TOPIES: Science and science fiction are often seen as the purview of boys' series, such as Tom Swift, Rick Brant, and even the Hardy Boys; rarely do girl sleuths venture fully into the realm of the hard sciences as the boys do. This panel looks to examine how science and/or science fiction is represented in girl sleuth fiction.

SUBMISSIONS: Michael Cornelius, mcornelius@wilson.edu
DEADLINE: Sept 1, 2006
INFO: http://www.wilson.edu/wilson/asp/content.asp?id=1916

WHAT: Fairy Tale Visions and (Re)Visions
WHO: NEMLA Conference
WHEN: March 1-4, 2007
WHERE: Baltimore, MD

TOPIES: This panel will focus on contemporary fairy tales as invented or reinvented by critically acclaimed writers of the 20th century to the present. Writers of interest include, but are not limited to, Anne Sexton, Angela Carter, Gregory Maguire, A.S. Byatt, Philip Pullman, Jane Yolen, Emma Donoghue, and others.

CONTACT: Susan R. Bobby, bobbysu@wesley.edu, summer contact d.bobby@att.net
DEADLINE: Sept 15, 2006

SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS
Pioneer Award: Presentation
Lisa Yaszek

We are delighted to name Maria DeRose as the winner of the 2005 Pioneer Award for Outstanding Scholarship. DeRose's essay, "Redefining Women's Power Through Science Fiction," provocatively combines media studies, feminist theory, and science fiction studies to illustrate what is at stake in popular representations of gender, violence, and power. DeRose specifically uses ideas drawn from these fields of inquiry to delineate two distinct types of "tough women" in popular culture. Visual media including film and television generally depict tough women as symbolic males who derive power from acts of violence (and whom often become the victims of violent masculine retribution for doing so). By way of contrast, feminist science fiction authors—those with smaller audiences but also fewer constraints on their imaginative production—provide us with alternative images of women who derive their power through a variety of non-violent sources, including the act of storytelling itself.

The committee was particularly impressed with DeRose's ability to argue in a precise but passionate manner. As one committee member put it, "this is one of those excellent essays where you finish and say, 'of course! I should have known that all along.'" The committee appreciated the careful consideration that DeRose gave to the broader geopolitical implications of her argument as well. As the author explains in the opening passage of her essay, the images of non-violent power created by feminist SF authors powerfully challenge the "might makes right" ideology characteristic of much mainstream American popular culture, especially since 9/11. "As these types of power become more recognized and more a part of people's lived realities," DeRose concludes, "maybe there will be a place for those stories in our visual media and in our cultural understandings of women and power." We wholeheartedly agree that this will be the case as long as there are feminist SF scholars such as DeRose championing the cause!

SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS
Pioneer Award
Maria DeRose (accepted by David Mead)

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the conference; I just accepted a job offer from out of state and this week is my only chance to look for housing and sign the necessary paperwork to get my contract in order. I want to express, yet again, how honored (and, frankly, surprised) I am by this Pioneer award. It's been quite lonely writing a dissertation on using SF in the college classroom; I'm often snubbed by academics and viewed with suspicion by SF fans, so to finally find a group that values the scholarly components of SF as I do is a homecoming of sorts. I look forward to getting involved with your conferences and community, as well as familiarizing myself with the additional SF journals your website mentioned.

SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS
Pilgrim Award: Presentation
Andy Sawyer

The Pilgrim Award, as we know, was named after J. O. Bailey's pioneering Pilgrims Through Space and Time: Bailey himself was the first recipient of the award in
A prodigiously energetic thinker" as the British Marxist critic Terry Eagleton calls him, Fredric Jameson is Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Duke University. Widely regarded as one of the most influential American cultural critics, he is author of a number of groundbreaking studies: *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (New Left Review, 1984 and in book form 1991).

- Adam Roberts, in his book on Jameson, says that the original article is "more often cited and probably more discussed than anything else Jameson has written" (Fredric Jameson, 111) and suggests that it is the defining statement of what the culture of the "postmodern era" actually means. His latest book, *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005) contains essays on science fiction published since 1973, frequently in *Science Fiction Studies* — Jameson's "Generic Discontinuities in Science Fiction: Brian Aldiss's Starship" was published in the second issue. He was also, for a time, an editorial consultant for *Science Fiction Studies*. While large books on science fiction are not exactly unknown, it's comparatively rare for someone with such a central position in literary and cultural studies to produce one, and rarer still that this production is evidence of a commitment to science fiction studies (in general: although the name of the journal will do as well here) for over thirty years.

Carl Freedman, in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (2000) makes the useful and interesting point that science fiction, with its "cognition" share a similar "project" of explaining or at least demystifying the world. Of course, this could be because both are despised literary modes which rely too much on jargon, but I'd like to think that there is a significance to this. Certain kinds of sf, of course, have been taken up by cultural theorists. Jean Baudrillard famously published on J. G. Ballard (*Science Fiction Studies* (November 1991), and numerous academics have discovered links between Philip K. Dick and postmodernist philosophers in his anxiety and terror over authenticity and the clash between individual and collective understandings of the world: Freedman himself, in "Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick," in *Science-Fiction Studies* (March, 1984) links Dick to Lacan. Others have noted the connection between Baudrillard's "simulacra" and "hyperreality" and Dick's ambiguity about the "human" and the "android"; the real and false worlds of our human condition and whether it is possible to distinguish between the two. (There are three essays on Dick in *Archaeologies of the Future*.)

It is possible to consider the work of Jameson in some depth and not come across science fiction. Even Adam Roberts's *Fredric Jameson*, quoted from above, a book written by a science fiction writer and historian of sf, mentions sf only briefly (the term "science fiction" does not appear in the book's index). The reference, however, is important: 'A Commitment to 'Utopia'" (Roberts writes) "explains why, for instance, Jameson is always coming back to analyses of science fiction, that mode of writing in which the everyday is most obviously 'gone beyond'." (106)

While sf is only (as I understand it) a part of Jameson's project to understand the world, it's an important, even a vital part. There's a genuine sense that sf means something to him and that he thinks that it's an important part of culture.
a way of describing the world in a way that other literary models can't do. He treats sf, and the ideas in it, and what he thinks he can bring from these ideas to a consideration of the world in which such fiction is written, with great seriousness. In short, you don't get the impression that he's apologising for his interest in sf. He's a major world figure in cultural theory, arguing that science fiction is important to a sense of what's going on in the world and that this importance (and this distinction is crucial) is more than as a pop-culture, mass-market set of easily-understood images.

In the book form of Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Jameson cites sf works like Dick's Time Out of Joint but tends to note sf's absence in the book. He footnotes a reference to William Gibson "This is the place to regret the absence from this book of a chapter on cyberpunk, henceforth, for many of us, the supreme literary expression if not of corporate realities as it is of global paranoia itself. William Gibson's representational innovations, indeed, mark his work as an exceptional literary realization within a predominantly visual or aural postmodern production." (Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism)

He makes up for this in "Fear and Loathing in Globalization" (New Left Review 23, September-October 2003) where he reflects on Gibson's Pattern Recognition.

"the representational apparatus of Science Fiction, having gone through innumerable generations of technological development and well-nigh viral mutation since the onset of that movement, is sending back more reliable information about the contemporary world than an exhausted realism (or an exhausted modemism either)."

People have been saying that for years, we reflect. Yes: in the fanzines, in the discourses of "keep sf out of the academy and back in the gutter where it belongs", or reactionary old dogs like CS Lewis and Kingsley Amis who loved sf for its colour and energy and certainly distrusted modernism but not in the name of a call for an invigorated progressivism. Certainly not in the pages of New Left Review. (It would of course be a mistake to consider NLR as any sort of bastion of respectability or summit in the power-struggle, but it's nice to know that someone there is on our side.) Reading those words, you get the sense that science fiction is still part of the world, of the flow and argument of ideas. Again in New Left Review 25, January-February 2004 "The Politics of Utopia" on the common emblem of "City and Country" opposition, he asks: "Are such oppositions to be taken as mere differences of opinion, characterological symptoms, or do they betray some more fundamental dynamic in the utopian process? A few years ago... one of the most durable oppositions in utopian projection (and Science-Fiction writing) was that between country and city: Did your fantasies revolve around a return to the countryside and the rural commune, or were they on the other hand incorrigibly urban, unwilling and unable to do without the excitement of the great metropolis, with its crowds and its multiple offerings, from sexuality and consumer goods to culture? It is an opposition one could emblemize with many names: Heidegger versus Sartre, for example, or in SF LeGuin versus Delany."

Of course NLR readers recognise Heidegger and Sartre. But there's an assumption here that they recognise (or at least should recognise) Le Guin and Delany. I know that I am ignorant in not having read Heidegger and not having read Sartre since I was 19. It would be nice to think that some NLR reader feels the same about these examples which Jameson is putting forward as automatic instances of an assumed shared culture. It would be even nicer to think that his readers have got the point, although where that would leave me I'm not sure.

This cultural-theory approach provides a context in which you can talk about sf and more to the point in which an sf writer such as Dick or Stapledon can mean a great deal. I think he's far more accessible than some people think (although there's a great deal of his more specialised theoretical stuff I haven't read). I find (without any evidence other than having read most of his writing on sf at some time or another) that he's not so much using sf to "prove" what he thinks as discovering what he thinks through reading sf (although he's also doing this through studying a lot of other material as well).

We nominate Jameson on the grounds that he is not only a major critic in sf, he has presented this criticism in a context which he is talking about sf and its writers such as Dick or Stapledon or Gibson as important parts of culture to an audience which would not necessarily come across them; yet he is suggesting that sf is a way of describing the world in a way that other literary models can't do. He is a theorist of the global, and in this debate about what the world is and how it works he has placed sf, as one of the theorist's essential tools, building upon the work of others and considering sf as, simply, important. He is involved in the field's own debates and it is this, as much as his commentary upon them to a non-specialist audience, which makes him a worthy winner of the award. To revise Terry Eagleton's phrase, Jameson is certainly a prodigiously energetic Pilgrim.
Dear colleagues and friends,

I am very grateful for the honor you have awarded me, particularly since my book only deals with Science Fiction through the more specialized framework of Utopias and does not pretend to be a general approach. But the Utopian fiction of Science Fiction - to imagine radical difference, to construct radical alternatives to our own only-too-familiar reality - seems to me an essential one. This function is in my opinion all the more vital and necessary in a period in which we are told over and over again that there is no alternative to our current social system and in which the imagination of political and social difference has become increasingly enfeebled. As for Science Fiction in general, and whatever popularity it has lost recently to the production of fantasy novels, I have been delighted to discover that a whole younger generation of SF writers have emerged (after the generation of cyberpunk) and that they are no less inventive and creative than their predecessors; and so I conclude that whatever the appearances, SF is today very much alive and well. Its literary status has always seemed to me very important and well worth defending. I believe that as a new genre, emerging in the late 19th century with the historical novel itself, which emerged a century earlier, and which marked the dawning awareness of society that it had a past and that it was historical through and through.

Fredric Jameson Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1992)

SFRA 2006 WHITE PLAINS
Pilgrim Award
Fredric Jameson (accepted by David Hartwell)


Standish, who teaches in Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, asks this question: “What do Sir Edmond Halley, Cotton Mather, Edgar Allen Poe, Jules Verne, L. Frank Baum, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Adolph Hitler, Admiral Byrd, flying saucers, Superman, Mount Shasta, and Pat Boone all have in common?” The answer is that they’re all linked, sometimes very strangely, with the idea of a hollow earth.

His story begins with Edmond Halley of comet fame reading three papers in 1691 to the Royal Society, all proposing that the earth is hollow, a hypothesis he derived from Newton’s ideas and also from a German Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher, whose books, scientific and pseudoscientific, were influential in that period. Halley’s papers were published in 1692 in the Society’s Philosophical Transactions.

Fast forward to 1818 in St. Louis, when Captain John Cleves Symmes (1780-1829) began to popularize the idea of
large holes at the poles leading to inner worlds, deriving some of his notions from Cotton Mather. Standish says Symmes published his nutty ideas as by Adam Seaborn in Symphonia, A Voyage of Discovery, 1820, which set the pattern for many similar works that followed. (Everett Bleiler and others have persuasively questioned whether Symmes was Seaborn.) Symmes twice petitioned Congress to fund an expedition to the poles but failed.

A booster of Symmes' ideas was J.N. Reynolds, who influenced Poe's writings, notably "A Descent Into the Maelstrom" (1841) and The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838). Baudelaire memorably translated Poe into French, and Jules Verne, a literary magpie, drew from him and other sources to create A Journey to the Center of the Earth (1863, ineptly translated like much of early Verne), one of the better examples of the hollow earth theme.

Standish devotes a chapter to the eccentric notions of Cyrus Reed Teed, who established a colony in Florida, now a state historic site. The Koreshan Cosmogony (Koresh was Teed's colony nickname) assumes we live inside a hollow earth; the rear jacket reproduces the brochure of the Koreshan System.

By the end of the 19th century hollow earth stories became more common, and Verne's novel became a bestseller. Utopias, sometimes dystopias, were set there. (The fourth Oz book, Baum's Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz, 1908, is set in a hollow earth.) Bulwer-Lytton's The Coming Race appeared in 1871. Mary Bradley Lane (Princess Vera Zaronovich) wrote the feminist utopia, Mizora in 1890. A two-page list of hollow earth novels is included, and a few are discussed, such as Bradshaw's The Goddess of Attaubacer (1892), a map of which is reproduced on the front cover. John Uri Lloyd's Ectoderm (1895) "is easily the weariest hollow earth novel of all," and Standish's comments abundantly confirm that.

Hollow earth novels dropped off drastically after polar exploration revealed no Symmes holes. But facts were no obstacle for E.R. Burroughs, who set six novels and several shorter stories in Pellucidar, beginning with a 1914 serial, written when Tarzan of the Apes was still seeking a publisher. A chapter is devoted to Pellucidar, along with many illustrations.

Standish concludes with a chapter devoted to the Shaver stories in Amazing in the 1940s and 1950s, the early flying saucer myths, with Rudy Rucker's Hollow Earth (1990) praised. Websites appealing to the faithful are examined. Although well-written, Standish is likely to be a bit much for most readers, who probably judge all hollow earth fiction more than a little eccentric. Standish adds that his book "traces the cultural history of an idea that was wrong and changed nothing—but which has nevertheless had an ongoing appeal," which is documented by the useful primary and secondary bibliography and the many illustrations. If the appeal is slight, read Ev Bleiler's one page entry, "Hollow Earth," in the second edition of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction.

NONFICTION REVIEW

H. P. Lovecraft in Popular Culture
Rebecca Janicker


Beginning with an overview of the corpus of Lovecraft's fictional prose, this text outlines the key themes of his work and endeavours to trace both its continued presence and its influence in a variety of popular cultural forms. With an extensive range of lively plot synopses and a selected bibliography to point the reader towards further works, Smith's book serves as an entertaining and accessible introduction to H. P. Lovecraft.

Moving on from the first chapter, which details the plots and publication details of the short stories, the author continues with an examination of Lovecraft's wider impact on popular weird fiction in the form of the Cthulhu Mythos, separating Lovecraft's own contributions from those made by his friends and those who took inspiration from him in later years. Although (as the author acknowledges) this list is far from exhaustive, it nonetheless provides a useful overview and point of access into this long-lived and extensive shared literary world. The chapters concerned with the various filmic depictions of Lovecraft's work strive to give detailed accounts of all genuinely faithful adaptations as well as those films such as Alien (dir. Ridley Scott, 1979) which can arguably be said to have been influenced by his trademark anti-humanist, cosmic world-view. Similarly, the chapter on television tackles both programmes directly taken from his fiction and also examines the Lovecraftian references in more mainstream programming, such as Star Trek. The later chapters, encompassing such diverse topics as comic books, music and role-playing games, serve further to bolster Smith's portrayal of Lovecraft as an author whose characters and ideas have become deeply ensconced in popular culture.
Each chapter progresses with a brief overview of its aims, sometimes clarifying the author's intention to remain focused on Lovecraft himself, rather than on detailing all the possible references which could be made to other authors. By its very nature, this work is narrative and descriptive rather than critical; it provides summaries rather than offering fresh insights. The chapters on film do offer some evaluative reflection, for instance offering ratings of each of the films at the end of the summaries. It would perhaps have been useful to have a key provided here, e.g. 1 out of 5, as without this it is difficult to get a clear idea of what the ratings actually indicate until the end of the chapter. For scholarly purposes, it would have been very interesting if Smith had been able to include a chapter on critical works. There are, of course, a range of books, journal articles and critical pieces that have been published both on Lovecraft himself and on his fiction over the years. More extensive inclusion of these works in some fashion, even if simply as a bibliography, would round the book out as even more of a valuable research tool than it is in its current form.

Overall, this text clearly achieves the goals laid out in its title by providing descriptions of Lovecraft's original fiction and insights into its continuing legacy for popular culture. When read straight through from cover to cover it makes a lively and informative introduction to a key figure in twentieth-century horror fiction: Smith's case for the significance of Lovecraft in this field comes through well this way, particularly in the final chapter on "The Lovecraft Legacy". Scholars of the subject may find it chiefly useful as a fact-filled overview of his writings. Overall, most readers will probably find this works best as a reference tool; useful for dipping in and out of to check Lovecraftian facts and look for Lovecraftian influences.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Prehistoric Humans in Film and TV
Benedict Jones


At one point in this substantial reference, Klossner remarks, "I feel that the public and critics have always been cool to caveman films" (28). I have no doubt that he is correct, yet his book attests to a surprising number of films and television programs containing prehistoric humans. To be sure, some only allow such characters a few minutes of screen time, but the sheer quantity of offerings is, to me, evidence of our fascination with our human ancestors and relatives. Hence the need for this book.

Although dinosaur movie guides do include films in which prehistoric people coexist with dinosaurs, this book is the first guide devoted exclusively to prehistoric humans. Among dinosaur film guides, I know of only one that mentions films with prehistoric humans only: Stephen Jones' misleadingly titled Illustrated Dinosaur Movie Book (1993). However, the entries are limited to capsule summaries, and Jones has the temerity to give ratings to films he hasn't even watched.

Klossner only rates films that he has personally viewed. When applied to fictional films, his ten-point scale reflects pure entertainment value, not scientific accuracy. This is a wise move; as he observes in his preface, most caveman movies, even those that take their subject seriously, contain inaccuracies. If some of Klossner's ratings seem a bit inflated, that is to be expected from a self-described fan of the genre. Purists can gauge the scientific precision of a substantial number of shows by reading the comments. In any event, a book like this is most useful for its information and analysis, not its ratings.

The book is divided into three sections. Parts I and III are devoted to fictional works; the former comprises shows set in prehistoric times in real terrestrial locations, while the latter covers prehistoric people in just about any other time and place, including extraterrestrial settings. These sections have a wealth of entries from the silent era to the present and describe full-length features, shorts, TV shows, foreign films, animated features, and even a few pornographic movies.

Each entry contains the usual essential information such as running time, variant titles, and the like. Only the most obscure entries lack a cast list. Whenever possible, Klossner provides a plot summary, and many films also receive extensive commentary and analysis. Most entries include valuable references from other sources. Major works, such as One Million Years B.C. and Quest for Fire, have several pages of detailed plot summary and engaging commentary. When a film started out life as a book, Klossner discusses both.

Part II contains well over two hundred documentaries rated on the "importance and accuracy" of their information (6). Given our entertainment-happy society, it would have been easy for Klossner to overlook the documentaries, but
the book would have been much the poorer for such an omission. I found this segment at least as absorbing as the other two, and quite informative as well. Although I suspect that most readers are likely to ignore Part II, I urge them not to. A warning, though: many of these documentaries are unrated, and the older ones are in any case outdated and extremely difficult to find.

The book includes a bibliography and an extensive index. There are appendices listing unfinished projects, post-apocalyptic stories, and noteworthy performances by actors playing prehistoric characters. The fourth and final appendix is a fascinating and all-too-short discussion of “young-earth” creationist projects, the Scopes trial, and Inherit the Wind.

I do have a few quibbles. It seems odd that cinematographers are listed as photographers. There are some annoying typos and mechanical errors. None are catastrophic, but, for instance, Homo sapiens is consistently rendered, incorrectly, as Homo Sapien. The bibliography does not list entries for every single reference, so (as an example) the many reviews from Variety that Klossner excerpts are not indexed all in one place. The book is illustrated with black-and-white photographs; a few color photos might have spiced things up a little.

However, despite these minor detractions, this book is a remarkable achievement and an essential reference for all but the smallest college libraries. The book is literate, detailed, and frequently entertaining. Academics will appreciate the wealth of information about films both prominent and obscure. It is unfortunate that the book is not available in hardcover, but the softcover is reasonably priced. If you are looking for a Maltin-style guide that gives one paragraph and a numerical rating to every film, then Prehistoric Humans in Film and Television is not the book for you. However, I highly recommend it for anyone interested in caveman movies, prehistoric fiction, or paleoanthropology in popular culture.

NONFICTION REVIEW

The Star Wars Poster Book

Ed McKnight


The earliest posters—before the film was actually released—featured only simple white-on-black text reading “COMING TO YOUR GALAXY THIS SUMMER. STAR WARS.” But following that minimalist opening announcement came nearly thirty years of colorful and imaginative advertising posters for half a dozen films as well as books, video games, soundtrack albums, concerts, museum exhibits, immunizations, drinking cups and even shoes. Sansweet and Vilmur have collected an incredible variety of Star Wars posters from around the world. Some of them will evoke warm feelings of nostalgia for splendid summer afternoons spent in dark movie theaters a quarter of a century ago, but many (and easily the most interesting) will serve instead to illustrate the fact the Star Wars experience was wildly different from one part of the world to another, and even from one generation to the next.

The famous Hildebrandt poster (included here, of course), with a bare-chested Luke wielding a light saber over his head and Princess Leia revealing considerably more leg than she ever did in the film, conveys a slightly different sense of the film than I ever experienced. But the earliest Russian poster for the saga suggests something utterly alien. It depicts a figure clearly inspired by Darth Vader, but with lion-like paws and wearing a bullet-shaped helmet with multi-colored light sabers sprouting from the top. Another Russian poster depicts the film as a futuristic western by putting various pieces of electronic equipment together to form the image of a cowboy on horseback firing a laser pistol. An Italian poster for Guerre Stellari features some of the familiar characters from the film, but in a style that makes Luke and Leia look better prepared for a day at the beach than for combating galactic evil. And an unusual Polish poster for The Empire Strikes Back features an enigmatic figure that the editors describe as “most likely a stylized Rebel Hothe trooper . . . or an X-wing pilot . . . or Luke Skywalker . . . or . . .”

Star Wars fans will greatly enjoy this book, not only for the beautiful artwork, but for the opportunity to see in visual form how other Star Wars fans around the world—and throughout the decades—have interpreted the film (and had it interpreted for them) in a variety of different ways.
NONFICTION REVIEW

Science Fiction Quotations
Neil Barron


There has certainly been enough SF published to compile a collection of quotations on various topics. The first such collection I know of was Gently Beyond Belief, compiled by Neil Gaiman and Kim Newman, an original British Paperback (Arrow, 1985). As the title suggests, the quotes were drawn from the worst SF; fantasy and horror fiction and films, often so bad they provoke laughter more than embarrassment.

Gary Westfahl is an academic and may have wanted to counter the disdain often felt for bad SF—or SF generally. He read or reread a lot of SF to compile Science Fiction Quotations: From the Inner Mind to the Outer Limits, whose subtitle is a trifle hyperbolic. The 2,900 quotations come from fiction, films, TV and even some criticism. They're grouped under 129 headings, then usually arranged chronologically within each group. The headings range from the science-fictional like alien worlds and time travel to traditional headings you'd find in a Bartlett's dictionary of quotations, such as courage and cowardice, religion, and food and drink. Westfahl found that there was "not necessarily a correlation between quotability and literary value" for a variety of reasons. You can confirm this by searching the author index. Most of the authors write SF mostly or exclusively, but there are many writers of general fiction as well, such as Aldiss, Atwood, J.M. Barrie of Peter Pan fame, Aldous Huxley, even Wells. Authors with the most entries include Douglas Adams, Bradbury, Arthur Clarke (who contributed an introduction), Dick, Heinlein (possibly the most quotations), Le Guin (ditto), Terry Pratchett (predictably, many of the funniest quotations), Verne and Wells.

There's a catch-all heading, "The Laws of Science Fiction," which includes Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, Star Trek's Prime Directive (but not, oddly, Williamson's sinister Prime Directive in The Humanoids). There are three quotes from the film Spaceballs by Mel Brooks and colleagues but nothing from his brilliant comedy, Young Frankenstein, which deserves at least one quote. There are many quotes on religion, some of them quite good, but not "I'm a born-again atheist" by Gore Vidal, who has six other quotes, none of them as good. The cover is a black and white photo from The Day the Earth Stood Still, with Gort standing by the spaceship. The famous quote, known to all dedicated fans, appears on page 316.

Westfahl readily admits he had to omit a lot—he says 70,000 words, which is about 15,000 words less than the 419 pages of included quotations. His selection is sensible, well-chosen and appears to be balanced, showing that SF writers are about as thoughtful and literate as their more varied counterparts in Bartlett's. That's an unsurprising conclusion, but the evidence for it is varied and persuasive. Not an essential work but mildly recommended.

FICTION REVIEW

Can't Catch Me
Bruce A. Beatie


As I write this (June 21, 2006), the New York Times has a review of the performance of an in-progress opera, Alice in Wonderland, by Peter Westergard. Next Sunday my wife and I will see Wicked, the musical based on Gregory Maguire's novel of the same name, based in turn on L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. More than fifty years ago, Northrop Frye wrote: "Poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels. Literature shapes itself, and is not shaped externally: the forms of literature can no more exist outside literature than the forms of sonata and fugue and rondo can exist outside music." (Anatomy of Criticism, 1957—emphasis his) Nowhere is this more true than in the field of traditional narrative—and even stories created by a single author at a particular point in time can become traditional, as have the tales of Wonderland and Oz.

A search for the subject-heading "Fairy-tales—Adaptations" in the OhioLink catalog of academic libraries yields over fifty entries, ranging from the narrowly traditional (Robert Coover's 1996 Brian Rose or The Poets' Grimm: 20th Century Poems...
from Grimm’s Fairy Tales (2003), to Orson Scott Card’s Enchantment (1999), Peter Cashorali’s Fairy Tales: Traditional Tales Retold for Grown Men (1995), a collection of the “Fractured Fairy Tales” from the old Rocky and Bullwinkle show, and Gregory Maguire’s strange novels. It includes a series of anthologies edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling, beginning with their Black Thorn, White Rose (1994)—significant because eight of Michael Cadnum’s eighteen tales appeared first in these collections. But the Ohio list is far from complete; it does not include, for example, the tales of Angela Carter or any of the 26 books that Cadnum has published.

Only four of these “twice-told tales” (some of which have been retold far more than twice) are new to this collection; six indicate in a subtitle a particular fairy tale as their models. While most take off from traditional European folk or fairy tales, five have classical motifs as their sources, and one, the last of the collection, is based on no specific tale: “Gravity” (159-181, previously unpublished). Since it is one of the longer tales, a description of “Gravity” will give some idea of Cadnum’s approach. The narrator is Milton Collins, a science popularizer whose latest book about famous scientists, Naked Science, has won an award. On a book-signing tour he is stabbed and nearly killed by an anti-science fanatic (Cadnum carefully avoids calling him a Creationist). As his tour comes to an end and he is recovering, his old friend Eileen Threlkill of the National Academy of Sciences arranges for the two of them to visit London: a “whiz kid” scientist Harold Hare, Lord Muchly, has brought Isaac Newton back to life in the hope that he will provide “new sources of energy, new defense technology” (169), but all the revived genius does is weep and mourn. Collins, asked to mediate with his knowledge of Newton’s language and period, is able to bring Sir Isaac into conversation and, through administration of a pill (“monkey thyroid,” 163) he had gotten in Mexico, Collins recalls Sir Isaac to something like normal life and becomes his “guardian and companion” (180) in an easy and solicitous life supported by the British government.

That bare summary gives no sense of the richness and uniqueness of Cadnum’s style which, in each story, both proceeds from and defines the character of the storyteller; for all of these tales are told, in quite nontraditional fashion, by a first-person narrator. “Bear It Away” (3-9) is told by Goldilocks, in a drastic revision of the old story involving sentient bears interacting with humans. “Can’t Catch Me” (11-18) is narrated by the gingerbread man who survives being eaten by the fox. In “Hungry” (19-43), one of the newly-published stories, the scientist narrator goes to San Pedro, one of the Channel Islands off Los Angeles, to visit his old mentor, a zoologist who has captured (and married) a sphinx (“excessive carbon dioxide in the air was driving lost species out of hiding,” 21). “Mrs. Big” (45-51) is the wife of the giant Jack kills, who then herself captures the peddler with the magic beans. Both “Give Him the Eye” (53-60) and “Medusa” (61-66, a new story) revise segments of the Perseus myth, with one of the Graiae and Medusa herself as narrators. A Bakersfield turkey-grower in “P-Bird” (67-76, new), his flock destroyed by a storm, hopes to save his livelihood by packaging and freezing the flesh of a giant bird the storm has dropped in his farm—but it turns out to have been a phoenix, and reincarnates in the refrigerator trucks carrying the flesh to market. In “Or Be or Not” (77-86), the ghost of Ophelia tells a modern spiritualist how she had murdered Hamlet’s father.

“Ella and the Canary Prince” (87-91) was separately published in 1999 as a large-type 48-page hardcover with illustrations by Keith Minion; since the present version is only five pages, the illustrations must have been extensive. This tale is told by one of the ugly stepsisters who, after the traditional tale is done, sets her cap at the king: “I work with pleasure toward a throne as Ella’s mother, superior in my mercy, her Queen” (91). Short as it is, the tale reminds me of the 1998 Andy Tennant film Ever After, in the time of Leonardo da Vinci (who appears) but framed by the Brothers Grimm visiting Cinderella’s’s descendant, played by Jeanne Moreau; Drew Barrymore plays Danielle de Barbarac, the name given to the Cinderella role.

Charles Perrault’s “The Fairy Gifts” is the model for “Toad-Rich” (93-98), told by the sister for whom the curse of uttering a certain word when she speaks becomes a blessing. In Cadnum’s “The Flounder’s Kiss” (99-105), the narrating fisherman uses his last wish to silence his ambitious wife. “Bite the Land” (107-112), “Daphne” (113-118), and “Arrival” (141-157, first published here) are the remaining three stories with classical sources: Daphne tells poetically of Apollo’s attempted rape and her transformation, an unidentified narrator tells of a bitting baby centaur, and a San Francisco lawyer in trouble is helped by a tiny statue of Hermes. In “Naked Little Men” (119-125) the shoemaker’s wife tells of the helpful elves, while “Elf Trap” (127-133) pushes that same tale farther: a wife (again) tells of her husband Norman the voice-over actor, a doer of good deeds who plays a Disney Wise Elf, who sets out to eliminate a plague of rats and traps an elf; in revenge, another elf stritches his mouth shut. And in the penultimate story, “Together Again” (135-140), a very British and very vocal Lord Dumpty falls and is put together again—but without his mouth.

Michael Cadnum is a baby-boomer, born in 1949 in southern California; he has migrated north to the San Francisco
Bay area, where a number of his young-adult novels are set. He has worked as digger for the York Archaeological Trust in England (hence, perhaps, the settings for "Together Again" and "Gravity"), and as a substitute teacher. As a published writer he began as a poet; several chapbook collections appeared in the 1980s and won awards. His first novel (of 25 to date) was a mystery, Nightlight (St. Martin's Press, 1990); two of his early mysteries were nominated for the Mystery Writers of America E. A. Poe award. His young-adult novels include two based on the Robin Hood legend, and a trilogy (The Book of the Lion) set at the time of the Crusades. A recent novel, Starfall (2004), like some of the stories in Catch me If You Can, has a classical source, the Phaeston legend, and a forthcoming novel tells the story of Jason and Medea. He seems not to have begun publishing his fantasy short stories until the 1990s. The elegant style and terseness of the stories in this collection seem to reflect his qualities as a poet rather than as a novelist.

Since beginning this review, I have seen the musical Wicked, and it reinforces the point with which I began: while the characters and the overall narrative are the same as in Maguire's novel (in which Baum's story is alluded to only in the final chapters), the musical shifts the focus. Where the book had concentrated on the psychological development of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West (with extensive sub-plots), the core of the musical is the love-triangle relationship (not present in the book) between Elphaba, Fiyero (a prince from the western Winkie land), and Glinda, and especially the serious friendship that grows between Elphaba and Glinda. A neo-traditional tale has again been transformed in the retelling, and doubtless not for the last time. It would be interesting to see what Cadnum could do with the stories of Alice or Dorothy.

FICTION REVIEW

Glasshouse

Neil Easterbrook


Though not as memorable as "A screaming comes across the sky" or "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel," or even "It is a truth universally acknowledged," the opening sentence of Charles Stross's Glasshouse certainly has its charms: "A dark-skinned woman with four arms walks toward me across the floor of the club, clad only in a belt strung with human skulls." It's love at first sight for our protagonist Robin, and though the couple will end up together, it's not before the woman becomes a man (with only two arms, and no decorative skulls) and Robin becomes a woman. Although weirder still, Robin used to be a tank (not in a tank: he used to be a tank). We're certainly not in Kansas anymore.

While the book does contain several nods in that direction (not toward Kansas, but toward its baroquely gothic narrative opposite), we're not in the "New Weird" either. Perhaps one of the most interesting and satisfying features of Stross's work is the way he creates fiction from multiple generic strands, interweaving them freely, and this new novel continues the pattern. A new weird novel becomes a space opera becomes a social satire becomes a spy thriller before ending as a melodrama. Sorta. In his web blog, Stross described "Glasshouse [as] a claustrophobic far-future helter-skelter ride through an experimental archaeology project gone horribly wrong." (Except for the "far-future" part, readers of What's the Matter with Kansas? might experience uncanny flashbacks.)

Set in the same universe as the interlinked stories that comprise Accelerando, Glasshouse tells the tale of a future some 500-odd years on when human society, both ortho-human and post-human, is recovering from a vicious civil war. The "Censorship War" concerned a mysterious cabal's attempt to build a universal cognitive dictatorship, controlling all human thought by introducing a software worm called "Curious Yellow," spread through infected wormhole transit gates that connect a post-singularity human civilization now reaching out across the stars. Rather than bludgeoning people into ideological submission through hectoring repetition and required recitation, as we now do through religion or school, perhaps best represented by the religious schools (madrasahs) in south Asia, why not simply reprogram people to think homogeneously, then edit their memories accordingly? Such redaction is made possible by the nanomaterial and transport gates that de- and then re-assemble post-singularity humans daily.

But when Robin volunteers to join a sociological experiment, he discovers that the war may not be over. The trial will place a number of people into a "glasshouse" to replicate pre-singularity human experience; in this way, scientists hope to recover some of the "dark age" history lost through ideological redaction. Lost memories cannot be recovered through
historical surgery, but perhaps they can be recreated. Robin signs on for three years, and joins a community that in most respects resembles a 1950s middle-class middle America. Kansas, say. Well, ok, Kansas with scientist-hierophants nurturing sleeper cells of a newly improved Curious Yellow among incarcerated volunteers. Eventually suspicions are aroused. Discoveries are made. Revolution is fomented. Weapons are found and tactics are formed. Mayhem ensues until a classical narrative closure.

Enclosing humans in a terrarium is a common trope in SF. Generally this device places an enlightened denizen of the distant future into a petri dish of our recent past to observe—variously with amusement and disgust—social values, practices, and technologies: the odd and the quaint, the idiotic and the perverse: church rituals, making dinner, physical exhaustion, social-sexual codes. The future reflects on its past to comment on our present. Recently in Century Rain, Alastair Reynolds did something similar, though without Stross's comic banter and wit (though certainly with stronger emotion and subtlety). The formal technique is to establish the condition, then pile on the detail. Stross is “dizzingly profligate with ideas” (29c), as Graham Sleight remarks about Alfred Bester. Indeed, the dizzying density of ideas and conceits and sharply etched details is perhaps Stross's most identifying characteristic, something he inherits from the cyberpunks, which in turn they took from writers like Bester. The most rewarding part of his work is his oblique, unexpected twists on familiar forms—the intricately contingent dance of technology, the politics of speciation, the sexual economy of memory: that's Stross's strikingly extrapolative approach. For Stross, it's not one idea every 800 words, as for Van Vogt; it sometimes seems one idea every eight or so words. He is especially good just as things go orthogonal.

There are other characteristic gestures, such as the generic slippage and innovation. He can be LOL funny and his satire can bite exceptionally hard. Dedicated readers of SF will appreciate the sometimes subtle and sometimes blatantly explicit intertextual quotations. The allusions are occasionally situational (The Stepford Wives, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Day of the Triffids, We) and occasionally verbal—Robin’s rank regiment is part of the “Linebarger Cats” (Linebarger was better known under his penname “Cordwainer Smith”) and Curious Yellow comes from Jeff Noon's Vurt (though its intermediary is a white paper by the programmer Brandon Wiley). And he knows how to pander pleasantly to his core audience. For instance, many members of SFRA will be extraordinarily gratified to discover that the most dangerous and inventive covert military operatives are actually small-town librarians. (The next-most-effective operatives are the pregnant women of suburban sewing circles.)

But there are also disappointments. The generic mélange occasionally produces jarring shifts of tone; especially where one narrative code collapses into another, characters shift characteristics, which may provide clever twists but also seems awkwardly contrived. Women are presented as powerfully independent and those odious leaders who would limit their agency are sharply rebuked, but people of color are rare (appearing only to color the banter). Homosexuals don’t exist. And while the central thrust of this novel and the earlier, superior Accelerando is to map the topography of a post-singularity humanity, its “Cartesian theater” reduces to a disturbingly nostalgic desire for recovering lost wholeness of the pre-singularity singular self. While such nested romanticism is not uncommon in SF, it’s disconcerting in one of our most innovative writers. Since the classical formal structure of Accelerando is comedy, it can survive these shifts and fissures, whereas Glasshouse, primarily a romance, cannot.

Take, for instance, the motifs suggested by their titles. “Accelerando” is an imperative in the notation of classical music—“with gradually increasing tempo.” But the stories don’t gradually increase. Instead, after moving in fits and starts, sometimes with breathtaking speed but usually by leaping over the change to then render long expository passages describing the immediate past (a technique we could attribute to Olaf Stapleton and Arthur C. Clarke), they end in stasis, with the Manx clan sanguine about domestic tranquility, comfortably ensconced in a cultural and technological backwater, blissfully privileging meatspace to memespace. But that’s ok, since Accelerando is comedy: what begins in absurd chaos ironically ends in sly order.

“Glasshouse,” on the other hand, suggests one of three things: a hothouse for growing flowers, the Philip Johnson home wherein one ought not throw stones, or the fabled panopticon first discussed by Jeremy Bentham. (I think it’s reasonable to exclude the Tom Baker Doctor Who episode where the panopticon is the central node of the Time Lords’ matrix thingy.) The novel exploits all three resonances, but primarily the third. In a 1787 essay, Bentham envisioned the perfect prison where individual cells would be constantly illuminated, their walls transparent, and their jailers, like James Joyce’s ideal critics, perpetually and eternally awake. Bentham actually proposed such a building, going so far as to sink his fortune into architectural drawings and models. He quit trying in 1811, was partially reimbursed by the British Parliament, then got on with all that philosophizing for which he became famous, though you should really look up what became of his embalmed body: you’ll never again think of an academic committee meeting in the same way. The panopticon was revived, conceptually, by Michel
precisely the way that Stross invokes the cause purports to ask serious produce precisely—wait for it—‘the universal reign of the normative.’ In other words, Foucault defines the panopticon in precisely the way that Stross invokes the cause and function of Curious Yellow. Foucault is quite serious. Meanwhile, Stross is on a lark, engaged with the structure of romance. What is blissfully privileged in romance is, well, romance: but Glasshouse purports to ask serious questions about serious conditions. It doesn’t: instead, it simply reinscribes the traditional conventions of opaque narrative closure. We congratulate ourselves as the forces of individual liberty triumph over fascism: great entertainment.

But there’s another sense of the panopticon that’s especially important to SF history: the ethical implications of this transparency/opacity binary. Of course the key in literature’s panopticon is never the protagonist or the author: it’s the reader. Two of the more astonishing literary examples of this are Zamyatin’s We, where readers are aliens which the rationalist OneState hopes to convect, and Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, where readers are transformed into the oppressive regime itself; in both cases, the use of the panopticon structurally parallels the reader’s position, to engage or to implicate. But in Glasshouse, the reader remains separated, watching from afar the joke and horrors of another age.

Glasshouse does contain a cluster of serious current concerns—tropes of memory, nostalgia, paranoia, modernity, the starkly contingent consequences of incessant and ineluctable and unpredictable change. I suspect that once a few years go by, Stross’s books will become the focus of considerable academic interest. I’d like to see what Richard Terdiman and Sylviane Agacinski. Early reviews have suggested Glasshouse is Stross’s best book so far—and while it is well worth reading, surely it isn’t as telling, smart, witty or well-crafted as either of the Eschaton books (Singularity Sky and Iron Sunrise), The Airtight Archives, or Accelerando. Portions of the book seem rushed, unedited, and bloated: first drafts that needed to be written at the time but also needed to be wanneed down. Perhaps, however, such baggage is to be expected from a writer who has been prodigiously productive in the last few years. Since 2002, when his first book appeared in print (the collection of short fiction called Toast), Stross has published, written, and/or sold twelve SF titles and a fantasy trilogy. So between 2002 and 2008 he will have averaged two books a year—as well as maintaining a lengthy blog, with acerbic and acute commentary on his fiction as well as on the eclectic topics that obsess him, from recent innovations in programming and consumer technology to cats that look like Hitler. Stross has offered much of his work, including last year’s Locus-award winning novel Accelerando (likely also the Hugo winner by the time this is published), available on the web, where it can be read or downloaded for free under a “Creative Commons” license.

Complaints aside, Glasshouse remains entertaining and occasionally quite thoughtful; it moves briskly, and if the result is rather too predictable than ‘helter-skelter’ then at least the ride is worth the price. Personally I plan to keep clicking my heels until his next novel arrives, a book I’ve already pre-ordered from Amazon.

Works Cited


FICTION REVIEW

A Game of Perfection
Amy J. Ransom


Two hundred years after Earth has colonized a planet in the Altair system, a genetic mutation endows a minority of the settlers' descendants with various forms of extrasensory perception. An underground network develops to rescue "sensitive" children from abusive parents as well as from government- and corporate-sponsored research entities who covet this gift's power. The struggle for freedom, not only for the mutants themselves, but eventually for the colony from Earth's control, drives Élisabeth Vonarburg's *A Game of Perfection*, the second volume in her *Tyrael* pentalogy.

In addition to dealing with this evolution in humanity, somehow related to the planet dubbed Virginia, the colonists must also come to terms not with the presence of the "native Ancients" of Tyrael, but with their very absence. The "Virginian syndrome" consists of the colonial neurosis derived from inhabiting a literal ghost town. For while the indigenous Ranao have left behind no biological trace, they abandoned intact homes, public buildings, roads, canals, and a massive system of dikes erected to protect their cities from a strange and destructive Sea of energy.

The Virginians face Otherness in a range of ways, and the mutation, the absent indigene, and the Sea serve as enigmas to be solved. Indeed, while social, political and interpersonal conflicts fuel the story's forward momentum, the reader participates in the protagonists' epistemological quests concerning the planet and its mysteries. Foremost among these characters is a powerful telepath, the exceptionally long-lived Simon Rossem who mentors a group of young mutants. We also experience Simon's horror as he relives his father's memory of a tragic attempt to cage the planet's unicorn-like species. We share the 'normal' Virginian spectators' sense of wonder at the group's animal circus, which features up-close contact with the planet's elusive fauna. We feel with the young mutants as they view the scars of a fallen companion inflicted by his abusive father because of his difference. Vonarburg's storytelling has the power to manipulate her reader's emotions and, indeed, the series' obsession with manipulation acts precisely as a figure for the narrative act and its implication in the creation of reality.

As Earth manipulates its colony planet, the colonial government manipulates the "normal" majority's knowledge of the mutation and the Ranao, while the telepaths secretly manipulate normals to support the independence movement, and Simon suspects it all to be manipulated by a higher, outside power.

The entire *Tyrael* pentalogy's publication in Québec (1996-1997), where it reached the best-seller list, represented the culmination of a thirty-year long obsession for its author who first dreamed of an engulfing sea as an adolescent in France. Allowing such a considerable length of time for the story to mature and to work out the complexities of its universe (including consultation of an ecosystematician) has clearly paid off. For Vonarburg undertook an ambitious project in her postcolonial revision of the space colonization epic. Interweaving the threads of past and present through frames and flashbacks, Vonarburg crosses not only time but also space, taking the Ranao to a parallel world. The work exploits the full range of SF tropes, including space travel, extraterrestrial beings, parallel universes, cyborgs, alternate/future technology and development of human powers beyond those currently known. Yet, it also deals with the problems of our own world: immigration, human rights, tolerance versus oppression of difference, exploitation of one visible minority by another hidden, power-wielding minority; and the settler colony's coming to terms with the indigenous. Vonarburg's work is of considerable scholarly interest, not only for its revisionist approach to the tropes of classic genre SF, but particularly for the nascent field of "postcolonial science fiction." Vonarburg's socially conscious, exciting, yet thoughtful depiction of Earth's colonization of another planet rivals Kim Stanley Robinson's treatment of this theme in the *Mars* trilogy.

My concern for this translation's success (upon which production of the remainder of the series may rest) in reaching the popular and critical audiences it merits resides in its publication by a small Canadian press. Vonarburg's reputation is firmly established in Canada and France, while a handful of articles and dissertations (here and in the U.S.) recognize the scholarly significance of her three earlier novels (all available in translation). While the complexity of its narrative structure and the nuanced unfolding of the multiple plot elements it consistently juggles (precisely those elements which enhance its academic interest) may put off casual readers, taken as a whole *Tyrael* has many of the elements necessary for generating a popular following. Like Hébert's *Donaud* or Aliss's *Heliumia* series, the pentalogy offers a fully developed, other universe, populated with compelling characters, multiple ethnic groups, languages and telekinetic powers to catalogue and compare, all rolled out over
centuries on Virginia and including millennia of Rani legend. Unfortunately, U. S. readers are not going to find A Game of Perfection (or Dreams of the Sea, the series' first volume) at either of our bookstore/coffeehouse chains. Happily, the internet gives us access to such works at the click of a mouse.

Like the diligent reviewer, I tried to find some points for criticism. I wondered about a few minor aspects of the translation, but who am I to question the author's choices? (In general, her close collaboration with Howard Scott ensures that none of the work's depth, poetry or humor is lost in translation.) Although each novel can stand on its own—the background material is skillfully worked in—the major enigmas remain unsolved until the final volume, an element which may leave some readers dissatisfied at this book's closure. Looking back, I realize that this review reads more like that of a fan than that of a scholar. That is exactly how good Vonarburg's work is; it can make the jaded academic feel like a fan again, yet, it should inspire an important body of scholarly work.

FICTION REVIEW

Numbers Don't Lie
Edward Carmien


In this slim novel Terry Bisson brings together three shorter works originally published in Asimov's in 1994, 1996, and 1998. A reprint of an electronic version of all three under one virtual cover, Numbers Don't Lie tells the over-arching tale of Wilson Wu and his Watson-like friend Irving. Irving's story is one of losing and then gaining a spouse; Wu's tale involves the moon and a few pages of formulae that Rudy Rucker checked for accuracy and elegance, finding "one is more important than the other."

Bisson, a deft hand with short prose, is both charming and gritty in these pages. He has a knack for presenting mundane mechanical detail in a way that makes it arcane yet important. The humor here is undeniable, as Irving by turns introduces the reader to Wilson Wu, an irrepressible genius fond of career hopping, yet devoted always to the chase of mystery when one presents itself.

"Everyone should have a friend like Wilson Wu," Irving explains, "just to keep them guessing." Wu is said to have worked his way through high school as a pastry chef before dropping out to form a rock band, then earning a scholarship to Princeton (maybe) in math (perhaps), moving on to being an engineer, going half-way through medical school, and becoming a lawyer, which is where our Watson, Irving met him.

Though the characters here are consistent, it is undeniable that Numbers Don't Lie is episodic. One is just as apt to enjoy this book in thirds as one is to enjoy it in one gulp. Its only weakness as prose fiction is a result of its episodic nature—by the third movement, a reader will sense the structure of what is coming and be a bit less surprised by the unfolding of the plot.

Even so, this is a great dose of Bisson, one I highly recommend for those teaching the short fiction form as well as those teaching science fiction. Readers who enjoy short fiction will appreciate this "novel" the most, but even readers devoted to the long fiction form can enjoy Irving's path to joy in Numbers Don't Lie. This Tachyon Publications edition (dedicated "To my reviewers: Smart, good-looking, and generous, every one"—were truer words ever written?) is steeply priced for the length of the text, but such is the economic reality of smaller presses like Tachyon, who are "saving the world...one good book at a time."

Do the math, learn a little about Volvos, and enjoy Numbers Don't Lie.
FICTION REVIEW

WebMage
Michael Levy


Roger Zelazny has been gone for more than a decade, but his legacy lives on. While everyone is aware of the extent of Tolkien's influence on contemporary genre fantasy, Zelazny's effect on younger writers might well be a close second; I'm thinking particularly of his trademark juxtaposition of significant mythological content with soap opera-like family drama, and the pleasure he took in alternating between high diction and Heinleinesque (or perhaps noir-like) tough guy colloquialism. WebMage, Kelly McCullough's first novel, could easily be by Zelazny, if the master were still alive and fluent in the language of contemporary computer programming and hacking. I'm not talking about the Zelazny of Lord of Light or This Immortal, mind you—McCullough isn't quite there yet—but perhaps the Zelazny of the Amber novels.

I should admit that I'm predisposed towards this novel for a couple of reasons. First, I know and like the author, whose wife is a colleague of mine. Second, large parts of the story are set at my alma mater, the University of Minnesota. I'm sure other readers have had the experience of enjoying a scene in which the author trashes somewhere they've actually been.

In McCullough's world, we soon discover, working spells isn't all that different from writing code (in hex of course). Raivrn, McCullough's protagonist, is a student at the U of M, majoring in Classics with a minor in Computer Science. He's a first-rate hacker and, like many folks of that sort, a major smart ass as well, the kind of guy who turns everything he says into a witty comeback and doesn't get along well with the powers that be. WebMage, however, is fantasy rather than science fiction because Raivrn is also the many times great-grandson of Lachesis, one of the three Fates of Greek mythology. Although still young, he qualifies as a demigod in his own right, with superhuman strength and agility, not to mention pointed ears and slit pupils which he keeps disguised by magic while on campus.

In McCullough's world, we soon discover, working spells isn't all that different from writing code (in hex of course). Raivrn's familiar, a webgoblin named Melchior, transforms into a really souped-up laptop on command and all of Raivrn's spells are worked in some approximation of programming language. As the novel opens, our hero is about to get himself in serious hot water with his aunt Atropos, the Fate who cuts the threads of human life, by getting caught while attempting to steal Puppeteer, one of her more sophisticated spells. Atropos is having trouble with the spell, however, and tries to force Raivrn to help her debug it and he soon discovers, Atropos's dirty secret. The spell is designed to destroy human free will, turn everyone, in effect, into puppets dancing on the threads of Fate. Raivrn, being an idealistic sort, not to mention, like many hackers, oppositional to the point of being near-suicidal, decides that it's his job to stop her.

What follows is a brilliant free for all, a running battle between Raivrn (aided by his demigod girlfriend Cerice) and various minions of the Fates. I particularly liked the scenes set at the Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota, the chase scene through a Minnesota snowstorm replete with Harpies, and the episode in the castle of Discord, set in the middle of Chaos, where the stars are actually tiny golden apples, each one a computer. If everyone else in and around Olympus runs on Windows, it makes perfect sense for the Goddess of Discord to prefer Macs, doesn't it?

This is a fun book. Although WebMage isn't lacking in darkness and dramatic tension, it also demonstrates its fair share of generosity of spirit. Virtue triumphs and true love is rewarded. McCullough is an able stylist and his broadly drawn characters are complex enough to successfully carry the load he puts upon them. Raivrn himself is an engaging rogue who reminds me a lot of the author. If you were a fan of the Amber books, I can pretty much guarantee that you'll enjoy WebMage.

FICTION REVIEW

Old Twentieth
Joan Gordon


Joe Haldeman, often associated with themes of violence and war because of his now-canonical The Forever War (1975), is also a great chronicler of sexuality and, perhaps surprising until you think about it for a moment, romantic love. The Forever War had frank discussions of sexuality and the love between Mandella and Marygay spanned time and space. Much of
Haldeman’s fiction since then has explored love and sexuality, including his 2004 novel _Camouflage_, which won the 2004 Tiptree Award and the 2005 Nebula, with its fabulously romantic interspecies romantic ending. Now comes _Old Twentieth_, again examining love and sexuality in a science-fictional setting. Like _The Hemingway Hive_ (1990), it is concerned with time travel, although here the travel is purely virtual. Like the _Worlds_ series (1981, 1983, 1992), it uses the travelogue as one of its techniques. And like all of his fiction, this novel is cleanly written, beautifully structured, making important points beneath a fast-paced surface.

In this future, humans have, after a devastating war, conquered space travel and mortality and seem to have come close to a sustainable utopia. But, as with all utopias, it is a bit dull, and people have devised two ways to escape: first, through VR trips to the past of war, death, and excitement; second, on a generation trip to Beta Hydri. Among the (sometimes grim) pleasures of the novel are the very vivid descriptions of VR trips to Galipoli, the 1939 World’s Fair, 1968 Viet Nam, and so on. Those, as it turns out, are not gratuitous but resonate with the novel’s themes. Our hero, Jacob Brewer, a virtual reality engineer for the ship, tells us, in his wry voice, about the future in which he lives, and the virtual pasts to which he travels as he attempts to repair certain discrepancies in the illusions—missing smells, historical anomalies, anachronisms—and discover their causes. As people begin to die while in the virtual reality apparatus, his work becomes more vital, and the mystery of this problem is the driver of the novel’s plot. Meanwhile, Haldeman takes time to develop Brewer’s emotional and sexual relationship with Kate Larsen, another traveler on the generation ship, and it’s a nice change to read about the ups and downs of an intelligent and mature couple: that part of the novel reflects what “for mature audiences only” should really mean. There’s even a strand of the plot that follows Brewer’s relationship with his mother, again refreshingly mature in its treatment. Indeed, one of the triumphs of _Old Twentieth_ is its ability to create and explore emotionally powerful relationships while absolutely avoiding sentiment—romance without corniness.

As one would expect, also very striking are the novel’s science-fictional elements. Because the novel has a bang-up surprise ending that manages to unite its many speculations and plot strands, I apologize for some coyness in my discussion. Among its sf speculations are explorations of life-extension, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and generation ships, all familiar subjects in sf, all handled with thoughtfulness and innovation.

Further, these discussions are inextricably linked to his thematic concerns. Haldeman examines the complex networks among love, sexuality, creativity, materiality, historicity, authenticity, and death in a remarkably economical and effective way, through the use of his sf speculation and character development. To give one small example, Brewer and an artificial intelligence have a discussion about their differing modes of awareness (they’re in a Skyline Chili parlor in 1957 Cincinnati at the time): they compare when they became self-aware, the extent to which they are evolving, how their differing materiality affects the ways they think, and the whole discussion resonates with what we are gradually learning of the unfolding mystery of the relationship between Brewer and Larsen, of the nature of the generation ship, and of all those thematic concerns (Chapter Seventeen).

For much of the novel, I believed I was reading a minor work of Haldeman’s, entertaining, smart, fast-paced, but not particularly deep. When I finished, I realized that all the romance, all the travelogue, all the VR games that I found so entertaining, were part of a much deeper, more thoughtful whole. I always forget, while I’m reading his work, about the care with which he structures his novels; here that structure is integral with its facade and the result is a much stronger book than it looks at first. Highly recommended.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**Solstice Wood**

Christine Mains


Patricia McKillip’s most recent novel, _Solstice Wood_, is something of a departure for the author in more ways than one. For one thing, it’s a sequel to her 1996 novel _Winter Rose_, a fairy tale fantasy with echoes of the Scots ballad _Tam Lin_ and Hans Christian Andersen’s _"Snow Queen."_ _Winter Rose_ tells of a wild young woman named Rois Melior who falls in love with Corbet Lynn, a young man of mysterious origins who claims to be the heir of the dilapidated and scandal-ridden Lynn Hall. Corbet sets about repairing his ancestral home, a task complicated by Rois’s feelings for him, his feelings for her
betrothed sister Laurel, and the intervention of the coldhearted Queen of Faerie, who rules the immortal world hidden within the woods behind Lynn Hall. In the end, Rois, struggling against her desires and her fear that her own mother betrayed her marriage vows with a fairy lover, manages to save both Corbet and her sister from the Queen. The novel ends ambiguously, with the hint, not quite enough to be a promise, of an eventual wedding between Corbet and Rois. *Solstice Wood* is the story of their descendants, answering definitively the question left open at the end of the first volume.

So far, so much the usual for fantasy, one might think, particularly romantic fantasy; the field is overflowing with sequels and prequels and multi-volume sagas. But for the most part McKillip has resisted that trend; aside from the Riddlemaster trilogy, written early in her career, and a couple of duologies, McKillip’s novels have all been stand-alone works. So the very existence of a McKillip sequel is an anomaly. And where sequels often follow the continuing life story of the original tale’s protagonists, or perhaps their immediate descendants when those descendants reach the narratively interesting age of puberty, McKillip has chosen to set her sequel so far in Rois and Corbet’s future that they have become legends, appearing only as characters in the story written down by Rois after her marriage and passed down through the generations of the Lynn family as a warning against what lingers in the woods. Sylvia, the main protagonist of the sequel, thinks of Rois as her “great-great-great-grandmother. Maybe another great or two” (11). So many generations have passed, in fact, that Sylvia’s time is our own time, and the contemporary setting is yet another departure for McKillip, whose work has been almost always set in the timeless fairyland of secondary world fantasy, in the idealized past.

This isn’t an example of urban fantasy, however, or even of magic realism, two subgenres of fantasy in which magic breaks through into a world otherwise known and familiar to the reader; in those types of stories, the environment is named, specified, settled in time and space. In Emma Bull’s *War for the Oaks* and Charles de Lint’s *Moonheart*, for instance, the cities of Minneapolis and Ottawa play an important role in the story. Even de Lint’s imaginary city of Newford is “real” in that it is particular and concrete, part of our here and now in a way that the locations of secondary world fantasy often are not. The change in setting, from the fairy tale village and woods of *Winter Rose* to the modern North American world of *Solstice Wood*, is intriguing but also more than a little jarring precisely because Sylvia’s world is clearly intended to be our own yet still belongs in that misty timeless space. For one thing, there is a dislocation, in a literal sense; although no geographical location is ever specified for the village of Lynnwood, in either volume, the original tale certainly has that Old World European atmosphere while *Solstice Wood* seems to take place on the east coast of America, in Maine, perhaps, or upstate New York. In urban fantasy and magic realism, the setting contributes not only a firm sense of place but also a localized mythology which often contributes to the magical disruption of that place; the inability to more concretely situate Lynnwood and Lynn Hall in the Catskills, say, or the Appalachians, means that it’s also difficult to pinpoint more precisely what folktales McKillip might be drawing on in her creation of the Fiber Guild or the backwoods Rowan family, “self-sufficient and solitary” living “in hollows, down back roads, along the banks of creeks” outside what seems to be an English country village and manor house (49).

The ancient village of Lynnwood is modernized, to a point: the apothecary’s shop has become a pizza parlor, the inn a bed-and-breakfast with handicapped access, but Sylvia can only get decent cellphone reception by crouching under a bush in a parking lot. In Lynn Hall, just outside the village, time has moved even more slowly, but the telephone (albeit with a rotary dial) and television have reached even here, and the kitchen is floored with linoleum. Sylvia left Lynnwood as soon as she was old enough, and in the beginning of the book she is living in an unnamed big city, thousands of miles away on the other coast (Los Angeles?), with a job in a bookstore and a lover named Madison. She’s kept her new life separate from the old, so anxious to keep the boundaries between past and present sharp and distinct that she refuses to let Madison accompany her to her grandfather’s funeral. She intends only to stay a few days, long enough to see him buried, but he has left the ancestral home to her, and her grandmother, Iris, has her own reasons for wanting Sylvia to stay in Lynn Hall and assume responsibility for guarding the village against the ancient dangers described in Rois McIvor’s journal.

The contemporary setting raises the possibility of exploring the standard opposition of country and city, with its concomitant arguments about tradition and progress, nature and technology, the older generation’s sense of duty pitted against the younger’s desire for freedom. And certainly this is a prominent theme, as Sylvia resists Iris’s attempts to make her part of the Fiber Guild, the ages-old sewing circle or coven that uses needlework magic to bind and control the untamed natural magic of the Queen in the woods. Their embroidery magic, the spells they stitch into table runners and handkerchiefs, imposes a sense of order on the wilderness no less than that of the city streets and buildings, “everything blocked, gridded, measured, planned, the earth so hewn that nothing could bloom in secret” (6). Iris hasn’t kept up the brick and wood structure of Lynn Hall, allowing weather and woodland creatures to enter and make a mess of the Fiber Guild’s precious patterns, and in the end the wild magic of the woods is allowed to break free and reinvigorate the landscape, as might be
expected.

But these more conventional explorations of high magic versus wild, civilization versus nature, the traditions of the old versus the rebelliousness of the young, are secondary to McKillip's primary concern with the nature of storytelling and the power of the world of fairy tale and legend to change the real world, when stories are not categorized and controlled and bound. Everything comes down to the blurring and bridging of borders, and Sylvia is by no means the only character with a foot in both worlds, like her ancestor Rois the product of a union between fairy and mortal. The power of Story to influence the world and the need to break down boundaries is a recurring theme in McKillip's work, and Solstice Wood is an intriguing and unsettling addition to her oeuvre. McKillip is an author whose work should have a more central place in the classroom and on the minds of scholars of the fantastic, and this book demonstrates some of the reasons why.

FICTION REVIEW

Red Lightning

Doug Davis


Red Lightning is the sequel to Red Thunder, John Varley's self-styled Heibleinesque juvee of 2003 about an interracial mixed-class group of spirited teenagers who, along with a drunken former astronaut and his likeable mad scientist cousin named Jubal, build a spaceship out of used train parts, outrun the red Chinese in the space race to Mars, drive a monster truck all over the face of the red planet, and solve the world's energy crisis along the way. Red Thunder took place around 2013. It's a somewhat optimistic near future where Lockheed Martin's VentureStars have replaced the space shuttle, cars ride automated highways, the internet has become a viable source for education, NASA remains a viable agency, and Britney Spears remains a hot babe. That Varley pulled this story off in an entertaining and even plausible fashion is much to his credit as a writer of young-adult SF (albeit a young-adult writer with a child-of-the-sixties mentality, meaning that his teenage characters engage in sex and light drug use without peril to their immortal souls). Indeed, as a work of young-adult SF, Red Thunder was something of a departure for Varley, who had previously written a great deal of adult-themed SF in the 1970s and early 80s as the genre's pre-cyberpunk wunderkind. In this earlier phase he built his plots around sex swaps, kinky space stations, post-human love-ins and nude space people galore, spicing his oeuvre with a little horror while setting it all against dark vistas of space-operative tragedy.

Red Lightning takes place a generation after Red Thunder. It is also a Heibleinesque juvee featuring an interracial mixed-class group of spirited teenagers who, along with their families, have an interplanetary adventure. Beside that, though, it is completely different from its predecessor in tone, voice and subject matter. Horror and tragedy have returned to Varley's writing—but in an immediate rather than an operatic way because in this second book their source is not futuristic at all. Red Thunder was a breezy read, dealing lightly with dangerous issues of space travel and big government and featuring lots of close escapes and righteous comeuppances; this second book is, to coin a phrase, a long, hard slog, dealing not-so-lightly with real pain and suffering. It is also a demonstration of what happens to science fiction when it is set in the near future. Sometimes real-world events can catch up with our imaginations and cast an inescapable pall upon our once-bright futures.

In Red Lightning Varley extrapolates from a problem he left readers with at the end of Red Thunder. The plot of the first book hinges on a super technology called the squeezer, a gizmo that compresses vast amounts of matter into perfectly safe bubbles that can then be tapped as limitless, pollutionless energy sources. Sounds awesome, right? The trouble is that only one person on Earth has a mind suited to create these things, the likeable mad scientist Jubal; and the additional trouble is that squeezer bubbles are absolute weapons as well, capable of destroying the Earth in a number of ways. At the first book's end Jubal was left in self-imposed exile on a fortified island controlled by an International Power Administration, dealing out the gift of free power bubbles whilst snacking on Krispy Kremes. An initial set of safeguards had been developed to keep the squeezer out of harmful hands. And that was that. Varley did not go beyond this ending to consider what would actually happen to the world when its energy economy was stood on its head. His characters had had their adventure and now they were home.

It is not an overstatement to claim that Red Lightning contains the answers to pretty much all of the thorny questions that Red Thunder left readers with. They are not comforting. What is especially surprising is how much those answers reside not in super-sciences or the gulf of interstellar space but in the grit of our present-day geopolitical situation. Yet perhaps this
shouldn't be a surprise because Varley's near-future world is for all intents and purposes our world. One of the narrative strengths of *Red Thunder* was Varley's realist attention to the details of living in a near-future Florida on the skids, with its aging spaceport and industrial relics, bloated developments and overdriven beaches, party people and hotel staff and serious Christians and aimless car-culture kids, its mildewed homes and muggy, swampy swamps (if you have ever lived in the south you will understand why swamps there can really only be described as "swampy"). Varley then folded reference to our present-day world into this future, making it seem even more like an extension of today.

The initial setting for *Red Lightning* is Mars around 2036, and Mars's details are nicely rendered in realist fashion too. The squeezer has enabled a Renaissance in space travel; nutty groups have left earth for stars beyond while normal people like to take vacations on Mars, which has become a tippy-tacky Las Vegas-like destination. Space ships look like what people think space ships should look like: Disneyfied golden winged craft run by cruise ship lines (with Celine Dion performing nightly!). In place of the Sian-like utopian experiments of, say, Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy, in Varley's hands Mars is pretty much like what any big-box tourist destination is like: more of the same money-making artifact, just with less atmospheric pressure. In fact, Mars is an independent businessperson's dream planet with minimal government and maximal profit. That is, until the politics of the squeezer lead to war.

The story is narrated by Ray, the wealthy slacker teenage son of the first novel's narrator, Manny, who is now the overweight and balding owner of the first hotel on Mars. A creature of privilege, all Ray wants out of life is to surf the thin atmosphere of Mars, chase the help's daughters, and smoke pot in his Phobos hideaway. Full of syrupy, half-baked, high-minded opinions and little else, he is, frankly, not nearly as likeable a narrator as his pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps father Manny was in *Red Thunder*. He's not a bad person, just a rich boy in the solar boondocks who lets his parents do all the hard work in his life.

Things get deadly serious for Ray as he is forced to personally deal with a sudden onslaught of humanity's tragedies, and in the process learns about his family and friends and their unique place in—and grip on—human history. The most poignant character in *Red Lightning* turns out to be Ray's father Manny, the brave narrator of *Red Thunder*, who Ray learns has been worn down by the weight of his heroic personal history. To develop his plot Varley draws heavily upon current events. *Red Lightning* is a book written in the twin shadows of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the war in Iraq along with some other terrible events from recent Earth and American history that I will leave the reader to recognize. But I will spoil one plot point: Ray is tortured by nameless operatives of an illegal invading army untrained in the folkways of Mars that clumsily imposes its will upon the destiny of the Martian people; his torturers even attach electrodes to his testicles, Abu-Ghraib style.

So, is this a science fiction book at all or a thinly veiled metaphoric critique of the failures of our world? In an author's note Varley explains that not all of this verisimilitude is his fault. While he based the surprising cataclysmic event that catalyzes *Red Lightning* on the 9/11 attacks, many other events in his book that resemble recent disasters are not copied at all. He thought of them first—and then they had the audacity to really happen! The true tragedy, he tells us, is that the reality of these disasters is even worse than his fictional representations. Nevertheless, whether Varley intended it or not, reading the first half of *Red Lightning* is like taking a tour of the last three years' worst headlines. The interplanetary adventure doesn't really get going until the book's second half, and even then its tone is more grim and desperate than adventurous.

When I signed on to this review I wanted a bit of light, escapist summer reading from one of my favorite writers—not to mention a free hardcover book. But as Robert Heinlein would say, there ain't no such thing as a free lunch. *Red Lightning* was not the breezy summer escape I expected but a sobering plunge into current events. Shame on me for wanting to get away from it all and take a vacation in the Martian sands. In this heavy sequel to the airy *Red Thunder*, John Varley reminds us that science fiction offers not an escape from the real world but, always, a new way to see it.
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