SFRA Review

Issue #219, September/October 1995

IN THIS ISSUE:

SFRA INTERNAL AFFAIRS:
  In Memoriam: Roger Zelazny ........................................ 4
  President's Message (Sanders) ..................................... 4
  Membership Directory Additions .................................. 6
  Membership Directory Corrections .............................. 8
  Editorial (Sisson) ...................................................... 8

NEWS AND INFORMATION ............................................. 11

SELECTED CURRENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS .... 13

FEATURES
Special Feature: The 1995 SFRA Conference
Conference Report (Blackwood) .................. 15
Minutes of the SFRA Executive Committee Meeting
  (Gordon) .............................................................. 18
Minutes of the SFRA Annual Business Meeting
  (Gordon) ................................................................ 20
Annual Treasurer's Report (Ewald) .................. 22
Pioneer Award Presentation Speech (Sanders) ........ 23
Pilgrim Award Presentation Speech (Attebery) .......... 25
Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech (Sobchak) .......... 27

Feature Review: “Wonder Women” (Lindow) .......... 31

Feature Review: “Samuel R. Delany: The Theorist as Practitioner of Fiction” (Marchesani) .......... 45

REVIEWS:

Nonfiction:
  Andre-Driussi, Michael. Lexicon Urthus: A Dictionary or the Urth Cycle. (Wright) .............................. 55
  Bansak, Edmund G. Fearing the Dark: The Val Lewton Career. (Albert) .............................................. 56
  Burrows, Toby & Grant Stone (Eds). Comics in Australia and New Zealand: The Collections, the Collectors, the Creators. (Harris-Fain) ......................... 58
  Dery, Mark (Ed). Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture. (McKnight) ........................................ 59
  Franklin, H. Bruce. Future Perfect: American Science Fiction of the Nineteenth Century — An Anthology. (Levy) .......................................................... 61

SFRA Review #219, page 1
Goldberg, Lee, et al. Science Fiction Filmmaking in the 1980s: Interviews with Actors, Directors, Producers and Writers. (Klossner) ............................................................. 62
Joshi, S.T. Lord Dunsany: Master of the Anglo-Irish Imagination. (Terra) ................................................................. 63
Lynn, Ruth Nadelman. Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography, 4th Edition. (Sullivan) ................................................................. 64
Shands, Kerstin W. The Repair of the World: The Novels of Marge Piercy. (Orth) .............................................................. 65
Stuart, Roxana. Stage Blood: Vampires of the 19th-Century Stage. (Hollinger) ................................................................. 70
Sutin, Lawrence (Ed). The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings. (Umland) ................................................................. 72
Tolkien, J.R.R (Ed. by Christopher Tolkien). The War of the Jewels: The Later Silmarillion, Part Two. (Bogstad & Kaveny) ................................................................. 74

Fiction:
Ecklar, Julia. Regenesis. (Hellekson) ........................................ 77
Griffith, Nicola. Slow River. (Sisson) ....................................... 78
Ligotti, Thomas. Noctuary. (Anderson) .................................... 79
Trevino, Jesus Salvador. The Fabulous Sinkhole and Other Stories. (Heller) ................................................................. 80

Publishers' Addresses ........................................................................ 81
SFRA Membership Information & Application .......................... 83

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Continued on page 82
The Proceedings of the 1993 Science Fiction Research Association Conference is now available from Borgo Press. Learn why the Sci-Fi Channel, as well as NBC and CBS affiliates, covered part or all of the SFRA conference held in Reno, Nevada.

Featuring some of science fiction's well-known authors:

1) Frederik Pohl's "The Imaginative Future"
2) Kim Stanley Robinson's "Science Fiction as Fantasy"
3) Joan Slonczewski's "Bells and Time"
4) Poul Anderson's "Epistle to SFRAans"
5) Lisa Goldstein's "The Imaginative Future"
6) James Gunn's "Imagining the Future"

And some of science fiction's established scholars:

1) Gary Westfahl's "In Research of Wonder: The Future of Science Fiction Criticism"
2) Susan Stone-Blackburn's "Feminist Nurturers and Psychic Healers"
3) Rob Latham's "Youth Culture and Cybernetic Technologies"
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5) Anne Balsamo's "Signal to Noise: On the Meaning of Cyberpunk Subculture"
6) Mark Waldo's "Mary Shelley's Machines in the Garden"
7) Donald M. Hassler's "Machen, Williams and Autobiography: Fantasy and Decadence"

If you like HUMOR and want some good SF laughs:

1) Fiona Kelleghan's "Humor in Science Fiction" is not only excellent scholarship, but a HOWL!
2) Paul Joseph's and Sharon Carton's "Perry Mason in Space: A Call For More Inventive Lawyers in Television Science Fiction" is a provacative and highly entertaining examination by two lawyers.
3) Dr. JoAnne Pransky's "Social Adjustments to a Robotic Future" is a tongue-in-cheek tour de force by this self-styled ROBOTIC PSYCHIATRIST, ala Susan Calvin.

And if you like ART:

The text is enhanced by the works of RODNEY MARCHETTI, and a fine piece of original research by Dr. Jane P. Davidson on "A Golem of Her Own: The Fantastic Art and Literature of Leilah Wendell" — a denizen of Anne Rice's New Orleans.

ORDER FROM:
Borgo Press, Box 2845, San Bernardino CA 92406.
Price: hardcover $41, softcover $31.
Special price for SFRA members: hardcover $21, softcover $11.
SFRA INTERNAL AFFAIRS

In Memoriam:
Roger Zelazny
1937-1995

On June 14, 1995, SF author and SFRA member Roger Zelazny died in Santa Fe, New Mexico, of kidney failure caused by colon/rectal cancer. He was 58.

Roger was born on May 13, 1937 in Cleveland, Ohio. He received a BA in English from Western Reserve University as well as an MA from Columbia University. He served in the Ohio National Guard and worked as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration before becoming a full-time writer in the late 1960s.

He is perhaps most widely known for his popular Amber series, but he wrote many other books and short fiction, and was an extremely prolific author for more than three decades.

Roger is survived by his friend and companion, Jane Lindskold, as well as three children. He will be remembered by many SFRA members, readers, writers, and friends.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Those of us who made it up to Grand Forks enjoyed a very well-run conference in a relaxed, comfortable setting. Personally, I enjoy scholarly conferences for their surprising mixes of papers, juxtaposing ideas I wouldn’t otherwise have connected, and for the chance to bounce ideas off my peers. When the other people are pleasant — some of them long-time friends and others willing to be friendly — that’s a bonus. All this was true in Grand Forks, and several SFRA attendees also commented “You know, these people up here are nice.” A good conference.

Our conference next year will be at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; Jan Bogstad will be conference chair, assisted by Phil Kaveny and Mike Levy. Already, I've been impressed by the imagination and decisiveness in their preliminary plans; this should be another good conference.

It would be an even better one, however, if more members attended. Yes, I heard a lot of dumbfounded remarks before Grand Forks — “You’re going where for a conference?” Fact is, my wife and I had lived in North Dakota for four years before

SFRA Review #219, page 5
we moved down to Ohio again, so I knew what the place was like and wasn’t especially spooked by the prospect of getting there. Eau Claire also is in pretty country, etc., but the main attraction is the conference itself: Exchange of ideas, encouragement, stimulation, surprise, joy. It’ll be worth the trip.

* * *

Our new award, The Clareson Award, is described in the minutes of our business meeting in Grand Forks. It’s an excellent way to honor Tom’s memory, and it recognizes an important category of participation in SF research. Members of the first year’s award committee are Alice Clareson (chair), Jim Gunn, and Art Lewis. They’d welcome your suggestions.

* * *

Finally, one more appeal for participation. We’ve traditionally moved the annual conference at the invitation of members who are willing to volunteer as hosts. Next year’s conference will be in the Midwest again, but the year after that we will be meeting in the West. For the benefit of our widespread membership, it would be nice to have a future conference somewhere east. If you’re attracted by the idea of hosting, you can contact a recent chair to get an idea of what’s involved — or contact a member of the Executive Committee directly.

— Joe Sanders

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY ADDITIONS

The following are addresses for those who joined too late to be included in the directory, or, in a few cases (with apologies), members who were inadvertently excluded:

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Cynthia Davidson  
528 W. Surf  
Garden South  
SFRA Review #219, page 6  
Chicago IL 60657  
H: (312) 871-2983  
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E-mail: u28842@uicvm.uic.edu  
Relationship to post-modernism; role of women in SF; artificial intelligence.

Martin H. Greenberg  
PO Box 8296  
Green Bay WI 54308  
H: (414) 465-0460  
B: (414) 437-6711  
Fax: (414) 465-8239  
Genre SF; anthologies; social ideas in SF.
Philip E. Kaveny  
108 King St.  
Madison WI 53703-3314  
H: (608) 251-3854  
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Tolkien, Lovecraft; Library and Information Studies, especially automation; Comparative Literature, especially Chinese, French, Anglo-American.

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Canada B3H 2S3  
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Archetypal (Jungian) approaches to SF and modern popular fantasy.

Donna M. Revtai  
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Children’s fantasy; screen adaptations; feminist SF and fantasy.

Susan Stone-Blackburn  
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H: (403) 289-7179  
B: (403) 220-3153  
Fax: (403) 289-1123  
E-mail: sstonebl@acs.ucalgary.ca

Psi in SF; feminist SF; the intersection of science and spirituality in SF.

Batya Weinbaum  
PO Box 69  
E. Montpelier VT 05651-0069  
B: (413) 549-6063

Women-dominated or women-only existences (planets, etc.).

White Wolf Inc.  
780 Park North Blvd.  
Suite 100  
Clarkston GA 30021  
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Acadia University Library  
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GEOGRAPHICAL INDEX

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CALIFORNIA  
Larson, Ron

FLORIDA  
Revtai, Donna M.

GEORGIA  
White Wolf Inc.

ILLINOIS  
Davidson, Cynthia
SFRA MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY CORRECTIONS

One of the e-mail address for David Mead is incorrect, with the last "u" missing. The correct address is: ‘David-Mead@tamucc.edu’.

Donald Gilzinger has a new e-mail address: “gilzingr@li.net”. The America Online address shown in the directory is no longer active.

EDITORIAL

Well, it has been a long two months since the last issue of the SFRA Review. The bright spot, of course, was the conference in Grand Forks. I had a great time visiting friends I made in Grand Forks the three years I lived there, as well as at the conference itself.

The low point of this two-month period was leaving my job at Locus. I’m disappointed, since Paul and I moved out to California so I could work there, and I loved working on the magazine itself, but things don’t always work out quite the way we envision them. I don’t have any definite plans to move elsewhere at this time, but that could change any day — in which case the Executive Committee will be the first to know!

Back to the Review at the conference, Elizabeth Anne Hull suggested we institute a “research in progress” section so that members can assist each other in locating research materials and generating ideas. If you’re working on a particular project, please drop me a note or e-mail and I’ll include mention of it in the Review. Muriel Becker suggested a “retrospective” feature in which we reproduce a page or pages from the early days of the Review. If anyone has specific suggestions for something they’d like to see reproduced, I’d be happy to hear them.

Last issue there were reviews of some small-press items for which I was unable to find publisher addresses before the issue went to the printer. Therefore, you’ll find addresses for North Atlantic Books, ATC/ETC Publications, and Titan Books in this issue on the publishers’ addresses page. If you submit a review for a book from a small press, please provide the SFRA Review #219, page 8
Due to problems with the previous printer, this issue of the *Review* is being printed by Sir Speedy of Oakland. I'm also attempting to switch over to Pagemaker, so I'm not really sure what this issue will look like until it's printed. If you notice any problems, please let me know, and bear with me in the meantime.

Happy Reading,
Amy
NEWS AND INFORMATION

VIDEOTAPES AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING

At the conference in Grand Forks, Jeffrey Carver presented the videotapes of his junior high school educational series on writing SF, which has recently been renewed for a second season. If you are interested in placing your name on the list to “borrow” these tapes by mail, contact Jeffrey Carver at 102 Melrose St., Arlington MA 02174, or via e-mail at “jeff.carver@genie.geis.com”.

SILENT AUCTION ITEMS STILL AVAILABLE

Many books remain from the silent auction held at the conference in Grand Forks. For a list of the items available and their prices (roughly half of list price), send SASE to Neil Barron, 1149 Lime Place, Vista CA 92083.

— Neil Barron

CAN YOU HELP THIS RUSSIAN SCHOLAR?

Yuri Mironets is a member of the English Language Department of Far Eastern University and can be written at Oktyabrskaya st. 2, apt. 15, Vladivostok 690000, Russia. He spent a month in 1992 at Washington State University with fellow faculty improving their English. He met Paul Brians, author of the excellent study Nuclear Holocausts, as well as the now deceased daughter of E.E. Smith, who sent him some books including the 3-volume Tuck encyclopedia. He lectured earlier this year on SF to 3rd and 4th-year students in his department, most of them 19-21 year-old women, and has advised other students on their research in SF. He would welcome copies of critical works on SF, books or articles, along with reading copies of English-language SF. He said in his mid-July letter that the Latvian publisher, Polaris, specializes in translations of American SF and has already published several sets, such as Heinlein (25 volumes), Harry Harrison (12), Bester (4), Simak (16), and is now publishing a 16-volume set of the late Roger Zelazny. He notes that many translations are poor and he prefers to read the books in their original language. Any contributions or correspondence will be acknowledged.

— Neil Barron

SECONDARY SCHOOL SF ANTHOLOGY BEING PLANNED

David Mead and Muriel Becker are planning a new anthology of SF aimed at grades 6-10. They would like to know if you
have a favorite short story from your reading at ages 12-15, a story that made you want to read more SF. If you do, please tell Dave Mead, whose email address is “David-Mead@tamucc.edu” or “Davem43@aol.com”. Or send it by snail mail to David Mead, English, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412.

— David Mead

H.G. WELLS STAMPS

For stamp collectors who also happen to be SF enthusiasts, or vice versa, sets of first-day covers of the four H.G. Wells stamps issued in the UK are available from Maurice Tanner, The Maximum Original Co., 180 Whitehorse Road, West Croydon, Surrey CR0 2LA, U.K. The price is £6.99 for a set of four illustrated cards, or £8.49 for a set of cards in which each is cancelled by a different pictorial handstamp. Prices include postage; payment must be by sterling check drawn on a UK bank, or by Visa or Mastercard.

— Patrick Parrinder

INTERNATIONAL UTOPIAN CONFERENCE

The Fifth International Congress on Utopian Studies: “Passioni Caratteri e Gestualita in Utopia” was held in Italy on May 22-27 of this year, attended by SFRA members Lyman Tower Sargent and Lynn Williams, among many others. These conferences are unusual in that participants are bused to different parts of Italy. This year papers were presented in Rome, Cassino, Naples, and Macerata. Of particular interest to SFRA members was a paper by Ion Hobana on Jules Verne’s newly discovered “Paris au XXeme Siecle”, which Hobana has just translated into Romanian.

— Lynn Williams

COLLECTOR CARDS

Rodney Marchetti, whose work was featured at the Reno conference, sent me a few examples of fantastic fiction pulp covers reproduced in color on sets of 2.5 x 3.5 inch trading cards. I wrote the publisher for more details and suggest that you do the same if you’re interested. There are 55-card sets of covers by Margaret Brundage from Weird Tales, another set from ASF, plus a number of pinup sets (Vargas, Petty, Bunny Yeager), etc. Details from 21st Century Archives, Box 1927, Royal Oak MI 48068.

— Neil Barron

SFRA Review #219, page 12
SELECTED CURRENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

This list was compiled primarily from listings in Locus and assistance from Neil Barron and Michael Klossner. Addresses of many of the smaller publishers appear in the back of this issue on page 81.

ART, COMICS & ILLUSTRATION

AUTHOR STUDIES

FILM & TELEVISION

**HISTORY & CRITICISM**

**REFERENCE**

*SFRA Review #219, page 14*
SPECIAL FEATURE:
THE 1995 SFRA CONFERENCE

The 1995 Science Fiction Research Association Conference was held at the University of North Dakota, June 22-25, in Grand Forks, ND. It was a relatively small conference with 50-odd full members plus several one-day attendees. Conference Chair Diane Miller and Head of Programming Bruce Farr were assisted in organizing the event by Linda Ross-Mansfield, Brenda Hagel, Sandy Taylor, Shawn Miller, and me.

Authors and critics who attended the conference included Eleanor Arnason, Neil Barron, Albert Berger, Ben Bova, Special Guest John Brunner from England, Jeffrey Carver, James Gunn, Dr. Elizabeth Ann Hull, Sandra Lindow, Lisa Mason, Fred Pohl, Joe Sanders, Joan Slonczewski, and Amy Thomson. Robert Pasternak, 1994 Aurora Award winner, was the guest artist; a special exhibit featured his artwork, which has appeared in On Spec and other magazines as well as on book covers and CD/record jackets.

On Thursday the conference opened with Al Berger, the recipient of the 1995 Eaton Award for Best Nonfiction Book of the Year (The Magic that Works: John W. Campbell and the American Response to Technology). Berger spoke on "The Atomic Bomb and the End of WWII." Amy Thomson and Jeffrey Carver gave readings from their works. Later that evening, Diane Miller officially kicked off the conference by introducing Pat Owens (Assistant to the Mayor of Grand Forks), Kendall Baker (President of the University of North Dakota), and Dr. Charles Wood (Chair of the U.N.D Space Studies Program). John Brunner then gave a wryly humorous Guest of Honor speech. The evening concluded with remarks by Bruce Farr, Lisa Mason's talk on freedom of speech, an art slide show by Robert Pasternak, and an informal reception.

Friday morning's sessions opened with the presentation grouping on Women's Issues, Part 1, with Carol Stevens, Joan Gordon, Sandra Lindow, and Batya Weinbaum presenting opinions on feminist issues such as heroines, feminist writers, and "bad girls" in SF. Neil Barron gave an informal talk, and Richard Erlich made some sparks in deconstructing the supermacho ideal with examples from film.

Part 2 of the Women's Issues grouping included Margaret McBride giving the first academic presentation on Amy Thomson's Virtual Girl. Thomson commented, "It was nice for me, because in seeing what she got out of the book, I was able to go back and think about what I was doing — in my unconscious." Janice Bogstad dealt with images of women in cyberspace, and Sherry Stoskopf with the fiction of Katherine Kurtz and

SFRA Review #219, page 15
Katherine Kerr. Fittingly, Lisa Mason moderated the discussion “Are Women Taking over SF, and Why Would They Want to?” At another session, Joan Slonczewski read from a work in progress.

Following lunch, which was provided on campus, most of the conference members took a short shuttle bus ride to the other end of campus to attend an Atmospherium show (distinguished from a planetarium by its use of a different technology). U.N.D. is one of only three sites in the US to have these facilities. The 15-minute Digistar demonstration, which followed the main show, was a big hit.

Friday afternoon, Christian Morau, Joe Sanders, and Cynthia Davidson commented on “Man through Mankind’s Eyes” with specific remarks on “Mark Leyner’s Et Tu, Babe”, “Zelazny’s 24 Views of Mt. Fuji by Hokusi” and “Reading Neuromancer as Baudrillard’s Simulation of the Crisis”, respectively.

James Gunn’s reading was fine, but his comments on the current state of SF were even better: “There is no common background among science fiction readers of short stories today.” As Gunn noted, in the past, commentary on short stories in SF magazines often created a dialogue among the readers. Asimov’s Three Laws of Robotics, for example, came out of this sort of dialogue. Gunn also noted that SF is no longer reader-driven, but is today, rather, market-driven. In 1991, 2,000 SF books and even more fantasy titles were published. The result of these changes is that good fiction, though more prevalent, is harder to find today. Gunn concluded that sometimes science fiction questions the nature of reality itself. “The revolution is over. It either succeeded, or it is over. But other new revelations may be coming.”

The session on “The State of International SF” was a hit. Ariane von Orlow from the Free University of Berlin, Janice Bogstad, and Arthur B. Evans were well received. One of the more talked about presentations, Andrea Bell’s “Some Notes on 120 Years of Latin American SF”, generated a great deal of discussion.

From 6:30-9:00 p.m., conference members relaxed during dinner on the Dakota Queen Riverboat. We followed the winding “Red River of the North”, viewing Canadian geese and relaxing in the pleasant evening weather. The outing was such a hit that at Sunday’s SFRA meeting, everyone who was making a bid for a future SFRA meeting mentioned they “had a river.”

Saturday morning opened with three solid sessions. Utopian Issues featured Lynn Williams on “Utopia the Numb” and John Blaikie on “Dystopic Science Fiction.” On another track, Jeffrey Carver moderated Eleanor Arnason, Sandra Lindow, Mar-
garet McBride and Amy Thomson on “Sex and SF”, discussing “moral decay.” Not surprisingly, the panel drew a good crowd.

Another good crowd appeared in the Lecture Bowl for my presentation on teaching literature through films, specifically War of the Worlds, Blade Runner, and Dune. Peter Brigg and Richard Erlich also drew an audience for comments on Ursula K. Le Guin’s work.

During lunch on Saturday, Neil Barron hosted a lively trivia contest and announced that Bob Ewald had won the “Second Hugo Gernsback Contest” by coming up with the worst first line to a story: “Come back to the space station, Buck, honey.”

Later that afternoon, in a session titled “Studies of Peoples in SF Literature,” Edra Bogle gave an encyclopedic presentation on the use of dogs in SF, Frances Louis’s comments on the “Lils and Bigs” took Jonathan Swift's Gulliver’s Travels and its metaphors of giants and little people into a number of twentieth-century examples, and Connie Schenkelberg’s “The Fremen of Dune” drew a strong comparison between the Arabs and the Fremen which Herbert apparently intended. Meanwhile, Ariane von Orlow gave a presentation on Francis Godwin’s The Man in the Moon, an English novel of 1638 depicting a voyage to the moon, arguing the novel was science fiction despite its early publication date. As respondent, I supported her position, noting the dependence on such scientific data as weightlessness in the outer atmosphere, Copernicus’s theory on the rotation of the earth, heavy and gravity, and other SF concepts.

The Saturday evening Awards dinner at the River Bend Restaurant in neighboring Minnesota was well attended. Jeremy Bloom provided both a literary and a sometimes light touch by reading Rudyard Kipling poetry throughout the evening. Albert Berger and Frederik Pohl were both honored for their Eaton awards received earlier this year (Pohl’s award was for Lifetime Achievement as a Science Fiction Editor). SFRA President Joe Sanders presented the Pioneer Award to Roger Luckhurst for his essay “The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic”; the award was accepted for Luckhurst by Arthur B. Evans, publisher of Science-Fiction Studies. Susan Stone-Blackburn, reading the words of Brian Attebery, then presented the Pilgrim Award to Vivian Sobchack, author of Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film, for her lifetime work on SF and other film genres. A good time was had by all, and Diane Miller graciously presented gifts ranging from stuffed toy buffalos to pen and pencil sets to the people who made the 1995 SFRA possible.

At the SFRA Business Meeting on Sunday morning, Janice Bogstad and Phil Kaveny tentatively offered to host next year’s

SFRA Review #219, page 17
SFRA conference at Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Peter Brigg also said that he would consider the University of Guelph near Toronto as a fallback for the 1996 SFRA Conference. Diane Miller and Bruce Farr indicated they might be interested in doing another SFRA in Phoenix in two or three years.

The conference ended with everyone in good spirits, particularly me.

— Dr. Bob Blackwood

MINUTES OF THE SFRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

June 22, 1995, Grand Forks, ND.

Present: Joe Sanders, president; Milt Wolf, vice president; Joan Gordon, secretary; Bob Ewald, treasurer; Amy Sisson, SFRA Review editor; Diane Miller, conference chair.

President Sanders called the meeting to order at 5:55 p.m. with his report. The IAFA executive committee followed up our Florida meeting and wants to proceed with the joint electronic journal with Len Hatfield at the helm. The secretary of each organization will send copies of the directory to the executive committee of the other. Sanders next turned to the issue of our future conferences. Susan Baugh has withdrawn her offer to host next year's conference in Louisville, but Phil Kaveny and Janice Bogstad have offered a venue at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. Future possibilities include John Mansfield for the University of Manitoba, Bruce Farr in Phoenix, Arizona, and Joan Gordon in New York. Westercon in Portland, Oregon, is interested in a piggyback conference with Milt Wolf as Liaison with a one-and-a-half year lead time.

Milt Wolf gave the vice president's report next. He will meet with Tom Doherty of Tor about high school and junior high SFRA anthologies. Tor believes a short story collection would be more practical than a collection of novels and would like an anthology with teacher's guides and lesson plans by December 1. Miller suggested Jeffrey Carver as a source, and Gordon suggested Muriel Becker. Ewald closed the first portion of the meeting by suggesting that Wolf be in charge of sending thank-you notes to new members, a task formerly done by the secretary.

The meeting adjourned for conference activities from 6:45 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. and then resumed with the same people present.

Wolf continued his report on Tor anthology possibilities. It was decided that the executive committee would need more information before making a final commitment. Mead will
make contact with Tor for such information and suggested organizing a small group to take on the project. At Wolf’s request, Sanders will investigate delays in the Pilgrim project with Rob Reginald. Wolf further stated that, of the publications committee, of which he is a member, only one other member, Janice Bogstad, was present at the conference, with Sisson also there as an ex-officio member; this committee will need a staggered membership to work smoothly.

Gordon gave an extremely brief secretary’s report. She happily turned over thank-you letters to Wolf and will send directories to the IAFA executive committee. All mailings went out apace.

Ewald then gave the treasurer’s report. The anthology royalties procedure is in place, the Review is on budget, and there is no need to raise dues. A full accounting is attached. The executive committee decided to send out dues notices earlier, with the first notice in November and the second in February.

Mead gave the past president’s report. He handed the committee a summary of the Clareson Award Committee report. The committee recommended an award for distinguished service to the SF community. The executive committee unanimously voted to present this proposal to the general business meeting. A plaque was suggested, and the president can ask members to make donations to a fund for the award.

Old business followed. First was discussion of the Pilgrim Award Committee. Susan Stone-Blackburn and Steve Lehman will both be on this year’s committee and Lynn Williams was suggested as a third member. The Pioneer Committee consists of Joe Sanders and Diana Pharaoh Francis so far. Rob Latham was suggested as a third member. James Gunn has passed the carrying of the Pilgrim Award statue to whoever is president of the SFRA. Therefore, it has been passed on to Sanders. Mead pointed out that we will soon need more plaques and he will research this. Ewald announced that we are now incorporated as a non-profit organization in Ohio. He also announced the recipients of scholar support for 1995: Wu Dingbo, Guo Jianzhong, Mircea Naidin, and Larisa Mihaylova. Gordon announced the paltry response to submissions for the narrowly focused 1994 conference proceedings and received approval from the executive committee to broaden its scope. She will announce this at the business meeting and talk to Betty Hull. Wolf requested that marginal papers be sent on to the publications committee for help.

Sisson then gave the editor’s report. The present printer is significantly cheaper than others ($400) but has some problems; she may have to change printers if problems continue and will keep Sanders informed.


dated 05/16/06 11:56 PM
This meeting closed at 9:50 p.m. with Ewald's praise of Evans of *S-F Studies* and Clark of *Extrapolation* as wonderful to work with.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Gordon, secretary, SFRA

MINTUES OF THE SFRA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

June 25, 1995, Grand Forks, ND

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. with the full executive committee and a room of SFRA's hardiest members. The first item on the agenda was officers' reports.

President Sanders reported on the contact between SFRA and IAFA and asked members for suggestions of projects of mutual benefit. He will announce the venue for next year's meeting as soon as he can in the Review [see President's message — Ed.].

Vice President Wolf was not present but sent along a report. The SFRA anthology is still in the works, and he is working to speed its completion. We are still getting royalties from the earlier anthology from Harper-Collins. He asked for those members interested in the junior and senior high school anthology project to contact him.

Secretary Gordon pled for papers from last year's SFRA conference and announced the new dates for dues notices: November and February.

Treasurer Ewald announced that we are solvent with a balance a little lower than last year because funds encumbered for royalties have been paid. The Reno proceedings publication is another expense we hope to recoup. The membership is stable, and no increase in dues is necessary. Sisson's editorship of the Review was applauded for its smooth running. Communications with *Foundation* have improved with the advent of e-mail.

Past President Mead announced on behalf of Robert Reginald at Borgo that Borgo will now begin producing volumes bought from Starmont House. He asked for volunteers to run for the SFRA offices. He then thanked the Clareson Award Committee — Alice Clareson, Dave Mead, Art Lewis, Veronica Hollinger, and Mack Hassler — who developed the proposal to be discussed at this meeting.

Editor Sisson reported that she can now take both IBM (files saved as text-only or ASCII) and Mac disks (Microsoft Word or *SFRA Review* #219, page 20
Works, text-only, or ASCII) as well as e-mail, so please submit on disk or via e-mail if possible. She suggested the possibility of moving on to a new printer as was discussed in the executive meeting. Barron asked her to announce that he has book auction guidelines to pass on to the chair of the next conference.

Old business followed. Mead, as chair of the Clareson Award Committee, moved that its recommendation be approved, Hull seconded, and, after discussion, the recommendation was passed with a friendly amendment offered by Muriel Becker, to strike item #6 from the proposal. The amended proposal then passed unanimously as follows:

1. An award to honor the memory of Dr. Thomas D. Clareson should be established by the SFRA.
2. It should be called the Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service.
3. It would honor a career of distinguished service to the study of science fiction and fantasy and to the community of SF/fantasy scholarship.
4. It would be given upon the recommendation of a committee of three SFRA members appointed by the President of SFRA. The committee would be appointed annually, but the award might not be given annually.
5. The award would be given for outstanding service activities — promotion of SF teaching and study, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, leadership in SF/fantasy organizations (such as SFRA, World SF, etc.), and so forth. Scholarly achievements (books, essays) will be considered as secondary for the purposes of selection.

Mead then requested suggestions for plaque design, and Hull will speak to Alex Eisenstein about it. Sanders sought volunteers for the committee, with Alice Clareson first to volunteer. Hull suggested Pilgrim winners as committee members.

A brief discussion followed of the possibility of an officer slate with single candidates (Lynn Williams pro/Betty Hull con). The suggestion was shelved.

New business was next. Bogstad and Kaveny made a tentative offer to host next year’s conference in Eau Claire, WI. Peter Brigg at Guelph near Toronto was also willing but would prefer more lead time. Sanders offered Cleveland. Sisson, speaking for Barron, pointed out that university affiliation was not necessary. We are also negotiating for a west coast conference in association with the Eaton conference, and Diane Miller offered a ’97 or ’98 venue in Phoenix.

Miller followed with a conference report. Preliminary figures show 53 full memberships and 7 one-day memberships,
where the break-even point was 47. She will prepare a full financial report. The executive committee praised the smoothness and pleasure of this conference — it was a job very well done.

Lynn Williams spoke for Carol Stevens who plans to undertake an SFRA oral history project. Alice Clareson suggested early *Extrapolation* issues as a source and Lewis suggested Gunn’s archives at Kansas. Muriel Becker suggested a reminiscence feature in the *Review*.

Sisson pled for any announcements for the *Review*.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Gordon, Secretary, SFRA

SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
TREASURER’S REPORT
As of June 16, 1995

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*SFRA Review* #219, page 22
Encumbered Income:
Harper Royalties 814.02
Pilgrim Awards Grant 3,362.86
Total Encumbered Income $4,176.88

Scholar Support Fund
Receipts 353.00
Scholarships Paid 280.00
Balance 73.00

Where does your SFRA dollar go? Of the average membership fee, $60, here’s what you get for your dues:

Science Fiction Studies $10 (A real bargain!)
Extrapolation $14
SFRA Review $30 for six issues
Organizational Expense $6

PIONEER AWARD PRESENTATION SPEECH

This year’s Pioneer Award goes to an essay that might be said to span the conceptual distance between two jokes. The first joke reminds us of the mordant tombstone that triumphantly proclaimed: “I told you I was sick!” The second joke, most recently invoked and applied to SF by David Hartwell, is Mark Twain’s dryly understated “Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated.” Between the extremes of those two well-known one-liners lies the territory mapped out by Roger Luckhurst in his March 1994 Science-Fiction Studies article, “The Many Death of Science Fiction: A Polemic.” But, as the ominous post-colonic-surge, “a polemic,” is no doubt meant to suggest, Luckhurst isn’t kidding around.

A revisitation and significant expansion of some of the concerns in Luckhurst’s earlier SFS article on SF and postmodernism, this meta-critical essay provides a radically new way of thinking and talking about SF’s ambivalent and ambiguous struggle for legitimation. The way Luckhurst sees it, almost all histories of SF bog down at some point in trying to erect or to erase borders that mark a distinction between high and low literature, between mainstream and genre, or — within the genre — between “proper” and “improper” articulations (pulp and “literary” SF, hard and soft SF, cyberpunk and non-cyberpunk, Golden Age and New Wave, etc.). Moreover, Luckhurst argues, in trying to erect or erase these bor-
ders, commentators on SF return again and again to the rhetoric of death of one phase, aspect, stage, or movement — if only to prepare the way for the rebirth of another. As he puts it, “for the genre as a whole to become legitimate paradoxically involves the very destruction of the genre.” Histories and theories of SF, he explains, no matter how divergent their surfaces may seem, tend to be united by some form of desire to return to the mainstream, whether to the mainstream of literature, or to the mainstream of some Platonic form of SF. In this view:

The history of SF is a history of ambivalent deaths. The many movements within the genre — the New Wave, feminist SF, cyberpunk — are marked as both transcendent death-as-births, finally demolishing the “ghetto” walls, and as degenerescent birth-as-deaths, perverting the specificity of the genre. To be elevated above the genre is transcendent death and the birth of Literature, but as these movements harden, coalesce, are named, they fall back as subgeneric moments of SF. They become detours on the road to the proper death of SF.

J.G. Ballard’s fiction, Luckhurst suggests, emblematically performs this longing within SF criticism for some form of generic death as a prelude to transcendent resurrection, while Freud theorizes the process of the death instinct as a desire to restore an earlier stage of things.

Previous Pioneer Award winners H. Bruce Franklin and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay have suggested ways in which SF has disappeared into, respectively, foreign policy and critical theory, while last year’s winners Larry McCaffery and Takayuki Tatsumi see SF disappearing into postmodernism and avant pop. What Luckhurst would have us do is to link these and other views of borders between SF and everything else to a longstanding critical tendency to view the genre apocalyptically — either mourning its imminent demise or celebrating its death into new life beyond the confining or protective borders of the genre ghetto. Luckhurst’s essay, then, is ultimately not concerned with the death or the survival of SF, but with the ways in which SF criticism repeatedly invokes the rhetoric of death in its efforts to retard, celebrate, or just to recognize changes within the “literature of change” itself. More controversially, Luckhurst calls attention to the ways in which manically disparate and frequently opposed critical efforts to valorize SF rest on the shared assumption that for SF to be recognized as a significant and valuable literature it must first die — or be killed — as a popular genre and/or publishing category. “That death is so central to the history of SF, that death propels the genre is,” Luckhurst insists, “the effect of the structure of legitimation: SF is a genre seeking to bury the generic, attempting to transcend so as to destroy itself as the degraded ‘low.’” And even in those histories that valorize SF for its scientific rather
than literary import another kind of death always lurks, as fact threatens to overtake fiction, as science fiction disappears or dies into scientific progress.

The important thing here is not whether we agree that SF criticism perennially constructs the genre as on the verge of death or in the apocalyptic throes of new birth, but that we understand how our critical rhetoric has inexorably settled into a view of SF somewhat reminiscent of a US army officer's Orwellian explanation of a Vietnam fire mission: "In order to save the village it became necessary to destroy the village." What Luckhurst finally challenges us with is the need to preserve the village of SF history and theory by some other means:

We have grown used to the language of "crises" in relation to SF — but the term, as in so many other disciplines, has had its urgency, its punctual (and punctural) immediacy eroded. SF moves from crisis to crisis, but it is not clear that such crises come from outside to threaten a once-stable and coherent entity. SF is produced from crisis, from its intense self-reflexive anxiety over its status as literature... If the death-wish is to be avoided, we need to install a crisis in "crisis," question the way in which strategies of legitimation induce it. The panic narrative of degeneration might then cease its tediously repetitive appearance, and its intervention, the longing for ecstatic death, might be channeled into more productive writings.

Precisely because Roger Luckhurst's "The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic" points the way toward more productive writing about the relationship of SF to other discourses, our committee of Diana Francis, Joe Sanders, and Brooks Landon has selected it for the Pioneer Award for best critical essay of 1994.

— Joe Sanders

[Roger Luckhurst was not in attendance at the conference; the award was accepted on his behalf by Arthur B. Evans, publisher of Science-Fiction Studies, where the winning essay was published.]

PILGRIM AWARD PRESENTATION SPEECH

There is a common belief among science fiction scholars that science fiction cinema is the ignorant and embarrassing younger sibling of the written form. However, the fact that when we talk about movies we sound a lot like mainstream literary critics talking about science fiction should make us a little uneasy. As a past Pilgrim winner, Joanna Russ, once pointed out, the aesthetics of SF need not be the same as for
realistic fiction — other, more important things may be going on that the wrong set of expectations simply doesn’t allow us to see. This year’s Pilgrim has done more than anyone else to point us toward an aesthetic of SF on film, showing that the movies can create their own distinctive pattern of meaning through images and sounds and the “special” effects that foreground the mechanisms of filmmaking.

Vivian Sobchak’s *The Limits of Infinity* was a breakthrough study. Unlike the typical annotated catalog of SF movies, Sobchak’s book examined the genre as a whole, analyzing the various elements of film narrative and the ways each element contributes to the construction of a science fictional idea. Her sensible, clear, and enthusiastic approach helped show how a triumph like *2001: A Space Odyssey* is related to a howler like *The Deadly Mantis*, and how both can teach us about the possibilities of the form. A quotation from her discussion of movie soundtracks indicates exactly what she achieved in her study: “No amount of critical discussion should or can change a lousy film into a good one... On the other hand, a critical analysis can serve to illuminate and describe prevalent... patterns and tendencies in the genre and point out particular aesthetic problems unique to that genre.”

Having virtually invented the serious study of SF film in 1980, Sobchak came back almost a decade later to re-examine the genre from the perspective of a changing American culture, in which SF movies had become a major locus for the formation on a postmodern sensibility. Building on the work of Fredric Jameson, Walter Benjamin, Teresa DeLauretis, and others, Sobchak investigated the movies’ turn toward self-reference, flattened but glittering spaces, and domesticated aliens. The resulting long essay, called “Postfuturism”, not only argues for the centrality of cinematic SF in contemporary American culture but also demonstrates interpretive techniques that can be applied to written SF as well as film. The new essay was published in 1987 together with a revised version of the earlier book, now under the title *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*. In its new form, the book is a remarkably rich store of insights that have been embraced by such critics as Scott Bukatman, Damien Broderick, Brooks Landon, and Donna Haraway.

Vivian Sobchack has pursued her interest in science fiction and related genres in a number of uncollected articles dealing with such subjects as New Age Mutant Ninja Hackers, decor as theme in *A Clockwork Orange*, genre films as modern rituals, and the sexuality (or lack of it) of movie astronauts. She has also incorporated her ideas on SF, film, and culture in her teaching at the University of California at Santa Cruz and her current position at UCLA as Professor of Critical Studies in the Department of Film and Television and Dean of the School of
Theatre, Film, and Television. Donna Haraway, a former colleague, describes her as an important mentor for a number of promising scholars of SF film as well as a "supple, witty, scholarly theorist" whose "multi-sided approach to sf film has fundamental importance for feminist film theory in particular and feminist studies in general."

Even in her other work — for she has to justify herself to her department with some serious scholarship — she brings in science fiction and its unique perspectives. Her recent book *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* ends with a quotation from *Blade Runner*’s replicant Roy Baty: "If you could only see what I’ve seen with your eyes." We honor Vivian Sobchak with this year’s Pilgrim award for allowing us to see an important form of science fiction through her eyes.
— Brian Attebery (presented by Susan Stone-Blackburn)

**PILGRIM AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

Thank you very, very much for this great honor. I must say, standing here tonight, fifty-four years old, in North Dakota, I feel not only honored, but vindicated. I tell you my age because I grew up during the Cold War, in Brooklyn, going to the movies to see *The Day the Earth Stood Still, The Incredible Shrinking Man,* and atomic mutations like *Them!* or that "howler" *The Deadly Mantis.* Even the silliest SF films didn’t seem all that hilarious then — although, admittedly, when I did see *Attack of the Crab Monsters* and recognized the villains were actual Maine lobsters, my credulity was severely strained. Overall, however, my adolescent imagination was fired by the SF films I saw during the 1950s. More eager than anxious about the future, aware — like any kid — of the stars and planets in the night sky, of the possibility of otherness and of extinction (best figured by dinosaurs and primal creatures), I wondered at the universe and the strange things in it. And, while written SF (which I began to read as a teenager) spoke to me through its deeply considered ideas and characters and cultures, cinematic SF sang to me through its visual images. The dried and cracked lunar surface in *Destination Moon,* the alienated desert landscapes of *It Came From Outer Space,* the approaching comet in *When Worlds Collide,* the strange, Orientalized, and disembodied alien head in *Invaders from Mars,* the hissing warships gliding through the cityscape in *War of the Worlds,* irradiated and insecticided Scott Carey drinking coffee from a giant cup in *The Incredible Shrinking Man.* Whether big or low budget (indeed, mostly low budget), these films were truly and sensually visionary: opening up the quotidian world I lived in; expanding the possibilities of my sight; developing in me an appreciation not only of the scientifically viable, but also of the magic that informs the very desire that creates viable science and technology.

*SFRA Review #219, page 27*
Years later, working in the still-young discipline of film studies, I began writing *The Limits of Infinity* — not merely to celebrate these images that still stayed with me, but also to understand the basis of their aesthetic achievement and cultural power. At that time, my colleagues (who were tentatively exploring the iconography and narrative structures of such film genres as the western and the gangster film) could not understand why I would want to study SF film, some literally raising both their eyebrows and their noses when I tried to explain, “It’s a serious book. The genre is important.”

Now, of course, it’s obvious that SF film is important — and, among my colleagues, I am considered to have been prescient. Indeed, by the time I expanded *The Limits of Infinity* into *Screening Space*, SF film had become a significant object of study, a form of late capitalist realism. Certainly, in many ways, the films were still silly, but their visual power and cultural significance spoke not only to American audiences in an unprecedented way, but spoke also to critics trying to understand contemporary culture. Thus, my mapping of the genre’s vision, its spatial and temporal imagination, its dramatization of contemporary social relations, was now taken seriously. Instead of being marginalized as an intellectual eccentric, I found myself in the respectable center.

This transformation has been both funny and satisfying. Funny, because, at least to me, the move of SF film from margin to center was inevitable and hardly sudden. The genre’s function of poetically mapping our contemporaneous relations to science and technology, to the military-industrial complex, to other cultures, to the ways in which these engagements threaten the fixity of our own embodiment and subjectivity has, from the first, made it “the” genre most responsive to contemporary American culture. The recent respectability of SF film as an object of study, in this regard, has also been satisfying. Scholars now recognize the genre’s descriptive power, its exploration and objectification of cultural desire. Silly or improbable, there is much to be learned from considering the difference between the sleek and glittering spaceship of *Destination Moon* and the chandelier light and music-show of the mothership in *Close Encounters*, in the difference between the high-foreheaded alien Metalunans in *This Island Earth* and the born-again sensitive male alien of *Starman*, in the difference between the barren wastes of desert which admitted the fantastic in *Them!* and the commodity-crammed closet in a child’s bedroom which admitted the fantastic in *E.T.*

Thus, I — and the genre that was dismissed out of hand by SF writers and by film scholars alike — am vindicated by this award. And so, in some ways, is the cinema itself — a science fictional apparatus if there ever was one in its ability to trans-
port us to alternative spaces, times, situations. The cinema is by its very nature *speculative*. The science fiction film both allegorizes and sensuously foregrounds the essential qualities of the medium and its essential function. Thus, it is entirely apposite that you honor me and the science fiction film in this particular year, the hundredth birthday of the cinema. I extend to you my deepest gratitude.

— Vivian Sobchak
FEATURE REVIEW

WONDER WOMEN


Feminist science fiction is fit and fifty. To prove it, acclaimed writer/editor Pamela Sargent has continued the excellent work of her 1970s *Women of Wonder* anthologies (*Women of Wonder*, 1975; *More Women of Wonder*, 1976; and *The New Women of Wonder*, 1978). *The Classic Years* presents eighteen of the original authors, some represented by new selections. Joining them are Lisa Tuttle, Zenna Henderson, and Margaret St. Clair, one of SF's most neglected writers. *The Contemporary Years* collects work from twenty-one of the most important science fiction writers today. To read these stories is to realize how influential women have been in defining and sharpening the cutting edge of speculative thought. Anyone who cooks should know how to use a cutting edge, and these stories do indeed cook, sizzle, simmer, sear, and stew; the final recipe is one that is just as delicious today as it was fifty years ago.

Writers like C.L. Moore, Judith Merril, Kit Reed, Joanna Russ, Kate Wilhelm, Vonda McIntyre, James Tiptree, Jr., Ursula Le Guin, Eleanor Arnason, Lisa Tuttle, Tanith Lee, Octavia Butler, Pat Cadigan, Pat Murphy, Connie Willis, Lisa Goldstein, Nancy Kress, Judith Moffett and Sargent herself are not simply women who fit in and copy the thematic tropes of more influential male writers. Rather, it is their thought that has revitalized science fiction by moving away from the male-dominated, large equipment, hard SF interplanetary adventures so common in the golden age. Although their fiction was originally castigated as "wet diaper" or "fantasy wearing a tight girdle," these authors may have, in fact, heroically rescued the genre from stagnation by beginning to use the "softer" sciences, those sciences that require a fair amount of human interpretation — sociology, anthropology, psychology, archeology, primatology, and others. Although Sargent tells us these stories were not necessarily selected to be feminist per se, they were written by and about women and were intended to be representative of various important themes in speculative fiction. Sargent writes in her introduction to *The Contemporary Years*: "no ideological ruler was used to measure them for selection. One of my
goals is to present stories that reflect the variety of different literary paths women have taken in writing science fiction and the varied imaginary worlds they have created." The result is a continuum, an evolution of feminist thought regarding the important issues of the times.

THE CLASSIC YEARS

Before Sargent published her original Women of Wonder anthologies, much of the early SF by and about women was in danger of being lost forever. Women SF writers had been sadly underrepresented in anthologies edited by men. Many readers did not even realize that writers like C.L. Moore, Andre Norton, and Leigh Brackett were women. Although it may not have been a conscious attempt at editorial suppression, the result was a kind of censorship based on a discounting of the value of the contributions women made. Joanna Russ writes in her excellent essay, "How to Suppress Women's Writing" (1983):

When the memory of one's predecessors is buried, the assumption persists that there were none and each generation of women believes itself to be faced with the burden of doing everything for the first time. And if no one ever did it before... why do we think we can succeed now?

Largely due to Sargent's work and that of a few other editors, the evolution of feminist SF has been preserved. New writers coming into the field today no longer have to reinvent the recipe every time they want to write a story from a woman's point of view. There is a body of literature available. Thus, what is written today may, in fact, be a more mature fiction whatever the age of the author.

Psychologists like Nancy Chodorow describe child development in terms of differentiation from the care-giving parent. A child eventually moves from the total identification and dependence of infancy to the relative independence and interdependence of adulthood. The process is one that can be measured in terms of physical and psychological distance. The more secure a toddler is, the more comfortable she is in being away from her parent. A "good enough" parent is one who is able to allow early experiments with distance while still protecting the child from danger. The child's self-confidence that is developed through successful experimentation becomes the basis of a mature differentiated adult personality.

Likewise, the maturity of a body of literature may be measured by the distance it has gone from its literary parent. If the pulp magazine SF of the '30s can be seen as parent to the speculative fiction written today, then much is owed to early SF editors for being "good enough" parents to allow experimental differentiation to occur. At first, experimentation by

SFRA Review #219, page 32
women tended to be limited to speculations about the effects of technology on human beings. Story structure, gender roles, and even style were rigidly confined by the traditions of genre fiction. For the most part, they had to write like men.

**Challenging Viewpoint: The Freedom to Write as a Woman**

The evolution of feminist thought through science fiction may be seen as a process wherein an attitude or stereotype was challenged and a freedom was won. The first freedom may well have been the freedom to write as a woman. When Andre Norton began publishing in the early '30s ("The Prince Commands", 1934), the perception was that pulp SF was read by adolescent boys of all ages. Stories by women were not welcomed. So Norton chose a pen name that could be either masculine or feminine. This was also true of C.L. Moore and Leigh Brackett. Even within the rather rigid confines of genre acceptance, however, some stories by women did stand out by loosening the girdle and focusing on contemporary problems. The result was a more human and believable fiction. Although at first it was not acceptable to write through a woman's point of view, some writers like Moore and Judith Merril were able to begin to approach important gender and social issues by developing sympathetic male viewpoint characters.

By the late '40s, when Merril began publishing, an androgynous pen name was no longer necessary in SF although other genres like mystery or western pulps still required it. In Merril's memorable story "That Only a Mother" (1948), the viewpoint switches between Margaret and Hank, a happily married couple, as the unsettling truth of their firstborn child is slowly revealed. Although the marital relationship is traditional, the characterization has unusual depth. The theme is the effect of technology on human relationships, in this case the unsafe use of radioactive materials. Merril's purpose is to warn us that some steps that are taken are not easily retraced.

The perception that SF was read entirely by boys disappeared gradually as more and more women readers entered the field as writers. Still, women like Merril, Katherine MacLean and Zenna Henderson tended to depict women in fairly traditional roles and relationships. Sargent writes,

The 1950s saw another development in science fiction that reflected the attitudes of the time. A fair amount of science fiction written by women centered on domestic affairs. Some of these stories featured homemaker heroines, who were often depicted as passive or addle brained and who solved problems inadvertently, through ineptitude.

This development could be labelled the "I Love Lucy" school of feminine heroism. Despite our awareness today that writ-

*SFRA Review #219, page 33*
ers created stereotypically weak and irrational female characters as foils for their more rational, intelligent, and scientific husbands and children, there is something important going on here. The male viewpoint characters of the time tended to be perfect physical specimens out conquering the universe. The few female heroes in SF, like C.L. Moore’s Jirel of Jory, tended to be fairly male-identified, swashbuckling their way through typical genre adventures. To create an imperfect character who succeeds despite her imperfections is to give others permission to create more competent and more realistic female characters. Certainly this is true of Zenna Henderson’s competent but emotionally conflicted teacher/narrator in “The Anything Box” (1956). Henderson writes that her characters tended to be “unusual people in ordinary circumstances or ordinary people in unusual circumstances,” and her protagonist in this story is one of the ordinary kind. Her heroism tends to be defined through her willingness to struggle to expand her personal reality in order to save an abused and neglected child. It is the small-scale, but crucially important heroism of everyday life. Such stories were often discounted as sentimental by male editors and readers. Strong, believably female viewpoint characters continued to be rare in the genre until the women’s movement of the late ’60s. Sargent writes, “But for the most part, women characters in science fiction before the ’60s were conspicuous chiefly for their absence.” Nevertheless, some writers like Marion Zimmer Bradley and Anne McCaffrey stand out for their creation of strong female characters who transcend the stereotypical gimmickry of their computerized kitchens to have adventures.

Challenging Technology: Humanity, Community and the Machine

Although the women who wrote SF for the pulps may have had to disguise their gender, they still wanted to explore their humanity. One way to do this was to reduce humanity to its most common denominator through cybernetic enhancement. Where does human end and machine begin? Moore’s “No Woman Born” (1944) is one of the earliest and best-known stories to ask this question. Her cyborg, a woman — powerful, talented, confident and unashamed — is a triumph for feminist fiction and a precursor of television’s Bionic Woman. By 1961 Anne McCaffrey had the freedom to speculate on the nature of human bonding in “The Ship Who Sang” via a viewpoint character who is the emotionally female cyborged brain of a spaceship. In the ’90s contemporary writer and biochemist Joan Slonczewski speculated on the legal rights of sentient machines in Daughter of Elysium (1993). Many women clearly believe that human is as human does.

Early SF writers were fascinated by machines. Ever bigger and fancier machines contributed to the sense of wonder that
engendered the popular belief that the future would be made blissful through technology. Women were some of the first to challenge this belief, perhaps through the gut level realization that community with machines could not take the place of community with people. Writers like Margaret St. Clair ("Short in the Chest", 1954) and Kit Reed ("The Food Farm", 1966) were remarkable in their foresight concerning the dangers of an unhealthy attachment to technology.

Green Feminism: The Terrors of Technology Run Amok

Many pulp writers extoled space travel as the solution to every conceivable problem. Women were some of the first to reject the popular misconception that if we fouled our earthly nests, we, like interplanetary cuckoos, could find an infinite number of available planets for further indiscriminate egg laying. Katherine MacLean's "Contagion" (1950) was one of the first hard-SF stories to recognize that the universe may not be compatible with human biology. An alien planet would undoubtedly have an alien biochemical basis for life. Colonists would be poisoned or starved if they tried to live on native food. Terraforming the planet by destroying the ecosystem and replacing it with Earth's might well prove impractical or impossible, if not immoral. The alternative, then, would be to adapt human biochemistry to fit the alien ecosystem, a change that might very well include a change of physical appearance as well as digestive enzymes. Despite the stereotypical belief that women in general are vain about their appearances, women have experienced their bodies changing radically during pregnancy and therefore might prove more accepting of this alternative. Slonczewski has explored the morality of terraforming as well as the problems of genetic adaptation.

First Encounters: The Affinity Between Woman and Alien

The purpose of the alien in pulp SF was to provide a way for the hero to be heroic, whether it be through exploding, conquering, or taming. Women writers were not all that interested in this topic — maybe because they had had experience with men who had tried to explode, conquer, or tame them. Instead, they regarded stories about aliens as a way of speculating about the nature of humanity, bigotry, abuse, and second class citizenship. C.L. Moore's "Shambleau" (1933) was one of the first to deal with realistic aliens and the complexities of human sexuality. Bradley's heroine in "Death Between the Stars" (1956) was one of the first believably female characters to combat sexism and xenophobia in space.

Leigh Brackett ("The Woman from Altair", 1951) and Sonya Dorman ("When I Was Miss Dow", 1966) created complex, genuinely alien aliens and used them as thematic vehicles for exploring human problems like sexism and racism. Later writers
like Vonda McIntyre, Lisa Tuttle and Octavia Butler were able to explore these problems in greater depth. McIntyre ("Of Mist and Grass and Sand", 1973), has a B.S. and graduate work in biology and was one of the first to apply modern ecological concerns in describing complex extraterrestrial ecosystems and alien biologies.

Tuttle’s beautifully written story, “The Family Monkey”, was one of the first to combine Southern Gothic and SF traditions to follow an alien’s effect on three generations of a Texas family. Here is one of the most believable and earliest accounts of sexual intercourse between human and alien. Tuttle’s gentle, compassionate alien reaches out to his human friend’s emotional neediness but fails, as often happens in human relationships:

Fear had no place in lovemaking, and although with the room dim and his vision relaxed, she might almost have been one of his own kind, her fear incapacitated him. Yet she still desired him. She needed him — he could feel that — and when she reached out for him he tried, limbs trembling with confusion, to ignore her fear. He tried to give her what she wanted. And then he hurt her, and the pain and fear undid him completely.

The Freedom to Describe Sexual Pain and Suffering

During the late ’60s and early ’70s, women began to recognize the value of science fiction in describing the horror of physical and sexual abuse. Writers like Chelsea Quinn Yarbro began to include explicit descriptions of torture, rape, and murder. Her powerful post-holocaust story, “False Dawn” (1972), describes the grim compromises people must sometimes make in order to survive. Another writer who dealt straightforwardly with grim compromises was James Tiptree, Jr. (Alice Sheldon). In her science fiction, the battle of the sexes loses its metaphorical nature to become reality. Tiptree, an incisive writer stylistically similar to Ernest Hemingway, was one of the first to combine sensitive characterizations of men and women caught in horrifying realities for which there are no easy solutions. Her stories “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?” (1976) and “The Women Men Don’t See” (1973) are classics.

The Freedom to Challenge the Establishment

In the ’60s the classy British magazine New Worlds began to publish a different, more literary kind of science fiction. Writers like Pamela Zoline, Josephine Saxton, and Eleanor Arnason were identified as New Wave writers based on their publication in New Worlds. Countercultural themes, attitudes, and language were apparent. Zoline’s first published short story, “The Heat Death of the Universe” (1967), brilliantly combines
scientific information and what we now recognize as the tropes of magic realism in a metafictional format. Here the entropic decline of the universe becomes a metaphor for the state of a woman's mind. Her story features daringly explicit sexual language and a willingness to explore previously unexamined taboos, as evidenced by the following passages:

Sarah Boyle imagines a whole world which has become like California, all topographical imperfections sanded away with the sweet-smelling burr of the plastic surgeon's cosmetic polisher; a world populace dieting, leisured, similar in pink and mauve hair, and rhinestone shades. A land Cunt Pink and Avocado Green, brassiered and girdled by monstrous complexities of Super Highways, a California endless and unceasing, embracing and transforming the entire globe, California, California.

...All well-fed, naked children appear edible. Sarah's teeth hum in her head with memory of bloody feastings, prehistory.

Saxton's "The Power of Time" (1971), is an ironic misuse-of-technology story wherein a future Manhattan is dismantled brick by brick and reproduced in East Leake, England with horrifying results, the moral being, "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should." Arnason's "The Warlord of Saturn's Moons" (1974) is a metafictional, near-future tale about an unmarried hack SF writer living in Detroit. Writing allows Arnason's protagonist to escape her emotionally barren and confined daily life where time is measured in cups of Earl Grey tea and high pollution air alerts. As the story progresses, Arnason's rather passive writer becomes emotionally involved with her heroic characters to the point that they begin to have a stronger reality than their creator. Arnason describes her pulp heroine with a delightful, ironic humor:

A deadly shot, she has learned strange psychic arts from Hindu mystics, which give her great strength, endurance, mental alertness, and a naturally pleasant body odor. I wipe my hands and look at them, noticing the bitten fingernails, the torn cuticles. My heroine's long, slender, strong hands have two-inch nails filed to a point and covered with a plastic paint that makes them virtually unbreakable. When necessary, she uses them as claws. Her cuticles, of course, are in perfect condition.

A literary tradition has to have reached a certain level of maturity before it can be successfully satirized. Certainly, many of the science fictional tropes of the pulps had become laughable by the early '70s. Nevertheless, science fiction did not die of intellectual decay. In the '70s, writers like Arnason, Kate Wilhelm, Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and Joan Vinge
continued to write SF and to expand the envelope of what could be thought, written, and discussed, a process that began to be called speculative fiction. These writers continue to be influential today. Arnason’s fine novel *A Woman of the Iron People* (1991) shared the first Tiptree Award for gender-bending fiction with Gwyneth Jones’s intriguing *White Queen*. The award, which included a life-sized, chocolate typewriter, was founded by writers Pat Murphy and Karen Joy Fowler, and was funded through bake sales, t-shirts, quilt raffles, unsolicited cash, and cookbooks. Certainly the Tiptree Award, named after James Tiptree Jr., is proof that women readers and writers have become a powerful influence within the SF community.

**The Freedom to Write Women as Heroes and to Challenge Sex Role Stereotypes**

Joanna Russ is often credited with being the first SF writer to feature, in her Alyx stories of the middle and late ’60s, a strong female and feminist character in the heroic sort of role previously reserved for men. She was also one of the first authors to deal openly with lesbianism. In 1972 she won a Nebula for her story “When it Changed”, which concerns an all-female society where women get along very well without men, much to the chagrin of the male space explorers who land on their planet. Russ, however, was not the first to write about all-female societies. There had been a long literary tradition of feminist utopias. Within the feminist community, segregation of the sexes had long seemed to be a solution to what Octavia Butler calls “the knot of territoriality and aggression.” Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* was published in 1890; Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* appeared in 1915. Sexuality, however, was absent from these early utopias, and it remained to later writers like Russ to deal sympathetically with homosexuality. Cultural acceptance of bisexuality is the basis of her story “Nobody’s Home” (1972).

Along with utopias, feminist dystopias were also becoming common in the SF of the 1970s. Kate Wilhelm, whose work has been enormously influential, is known for her strong female viewpoint characters who struggle against great odds to maintain self-esteem and survive at the same time. Sometimes self-esteem is chosen over survival, as in “The Funeral” (1972), which portrays the suffering of young women within a harsh, misogynistic culture.

Ursula K. Le Guin, whose brilliant, genderbending novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* was published in 1969, continued to be enormously influential throughout the ’70s. Her short story “The Day Before the Revolution” (1974) falls within a tradition that might be called semi-utopian, and follows an elderly but still politically influential woman through the last day of her life. The plot of the story, in which all action and violence

*SFRA Review* #219, page 38
are flashback memories, is typical of Le Guin's literary preference for character development over fast action and glitzy technology. Le Guin writes in her fine essay, "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown:"

The character is primary... The writer's interest is no longer really in the gadget, or the size of the universe, or the laws of robotics, or the destiny of social classes, or anything describable in quantitative, or objective terms.

In the '70s, competent women scientists began appearing more often as viewpoint characters in science fiction. Joan Vinge's astronomer, Emmylou, in "View from a Height" (1978), is such a character. Emmylou, a bubble child who has had an auto-immune system disorder from birth, becomes the first to make a one-way scientific mission out of our solar system. It is only when she reaches a point of no return that a cure is found.

**The Freedom to be Serious About Science Fiction**

Another indication of the maturity of a literary tradition is that it begins to develop a body of literary criticism. The Science Fiction Research Association was founded in 1971 in part to give academic legitimacy to a genre that had begun to have an enormous effect on popular culture. Feminist criticism formed a significant part of that research from the very first. Le Guin, Russ and Sargent began to be recognized as excellent critics as well as writers.

**THE CONTEMPORARY YEARS**

Contemporary speculative fiction is a literature that has come of age. The best that is written today combines solid storytelling with mainstream literary techniques. When women write it, plot structure tends to be a bit loose, what Le Guin calls "a carrier bag," a vehicle for describing life experiences rather than forcing the intersection of memory and experience into what may feel like an unnatural form. Characterization has depth. Characters change and grow as a result of their experiences. Stereotypes are challenged. Modern problems like AIDs are examined. The use of scientific discovery is also less corseted by the pulp tradition. Sometimes sciences like paleontology and quantum physics are used metaphorically to describe human behavior and relationships, as in Connie Willis's work. The sense of wonder that was the triumph of golden age SF is no longer limited to the awe inspired by enormous death machines and infinite stellar distances. Today, the wonder of elegant ideas and meticulously researched and described human and alien cultures and ecosystems is just as important, for both the best female and male writers. Science fiction stories often intersect with mythology (C.J. Cherryh,
Women who write SF often seem particularly comfortable with these intersections. It is as if they have slipped out of their girdles and hose and are writing barefoot into the unknown. Tanith Lee is particularly adept at combining SF with horror in “The Thaw” (1979), an unsettling tale about the theological implications of cryogenic sleep. In Connie Willis’s delightful, Nebula Award-winning short story, “At the Rialto” (1989), romance intersects with the uncertainty principle of quantum physics. When Dr. Ruth Baringer attends a quantum physicists’ convention in Hollywood, California, romance is neither alive nor dead, like Schrodinger’s cat, until she gives up trying to figure out the universe, goes to the movies, and opens a box of Raisinet.

The passage of time provides a wealth of possibilities. Historical fantasy sometimes intersects with fanciful history, as in Angela Carter’s “The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe” (1982), a retelling of Poe’s life. “Alexia and Graham Bell” (1986), by Australian writer Rosaleen Love, is a comedic, alternative history in which the telephone is not invented until the late-20th century, but inventing it changes the history that led up to it. In “Reichs-Peace” (1986) by Sheila Finch, Germany has won WWII and Hitler’s son is lost on the moon. Dr. Greta Bradford is a Jewish genetic researcher at Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Co. in a religiously fundamental and repressive US. When Bradford tries to sell her secrets and becomes entrapped in German ESP research, she is rescued by Eva Braun Hitler, now the highly respected widow of the Fuhrer. “And Wild for to Hold” (1990) by Nancy Kress concerns a far future religious sect of time travellers who try to stop past wars by taking key persons hostage. When Anne Boleyn is taken, she is revealed to be a difficult person to deal with in any century.

Human themes like the plight of the elderly are important. Mary Gentle’s “The Harvest of Wolves” (1984) is about a near-future world in perpetual economic depression. “The wallpaper was covered by posters, garish with the slogans of the halcyon ’90s (that final, brief economic flowering) when protest was easy.” In Lisa Goldstein’s “Midnight News” (1990), aliens give Helena Johnson, an elderly abused nursing home resident, the right to decide the fate of humanity.

Gender issues continue to be thematically important. Suzi McKee Charnas’s “Scorched Supper on New Niger” (1980) explores the value of a homosexual marriage for a heterosexual woman. Carol Emshwiller’s “Abominable” (1980) is a hilarious, social satire about the women men literally cannot see. A troop of seven “manly” men dressed as marines go out look-
ing for women who seem to have all disappeared. One of them is "a psychoanalyst of long experience, a specialist in hysteria and masochism." They decide to put out a trail of bananas in the snow so that the women will leave their oven-warmed, gingerbread-smelling lairs to get them: "our camera crew will be ready to get their first reactions to us for TV. They'll like being followed. They always have."

Pamela Sargent's "Fears" (1984) is about the extremes to which a lesbian must go to protect her lifestyle in a grim near future where healthy young women are rare and legally restricted from doing anything but having and raising children until very late in life. Karen Joy Fowler's "Game Night at the Fox and Goose" (1989) is an alternative history story about the social and emotional games men and women play. Alison, the protagonist, is unmarried, pregnant and feeling sorry for herself. When she goes to the Fox and Goose Bar seeking escape or perhaps rescue, she finds out that appearances are not always what they seem.

One way to explore human relationships is to create stories where humans become intimate with aliens so that certain gender attitudes can be isolated. Sydney J. Van Scyoc's protagonist in "Bluewater Dreams" (1981) is a young woman who goes against the values of her community and risks her life to save her alien friend. Perhaps Van Scyoc is really describing the fulfillment of the love women feel for each other but often have difficulty expressing within our culture. Octavia Butler's award-winning "Bloodchild" (1984) is about a young man who decides to bear the offspring of his beloved, alien guardian. What follows is both horrifying and beautifully tender. "Angel" (1987) by Pat Cadigan is a tragedy about those who don't fit normal gender categories. The genetically androgynous protagonist temporarily rescues a condemned, angel-like alien and receives a very precious gift.

Perhaps the most powerful stories are those that examine the intersection of identity, morality, and technology. Storm Constantine's "Immaculate" explores technology, sexuality, morality, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Reeb, the protagonist, enters virtual reality with Donna, a teenage sexual surrogate, to heal the emotional pain of losing half his body in an accident. In cyber-space he is able to act out things that he would not be able to do or permit himself to do elsewhere. Pat Murphy's Nebula Award-winning novelette "Rachel in Love" (1987) is about a genetically-enhanced chimpanzee imprinted with the memories of a researcher's teenage daughter who has been killed in a car accident. Although the researcher raises Rachel as his own daughter, the morality of this is put into question when the researcher dies and leaves Rachel to fend for herself. The typical problems teenagers have with gender and identity become complex indeed since Rachel remembers...
herself as a blond human teenager as well as a young chimpanzee.

Rebecca Ore is known for her poignant portrayal of aliens. “Farming in Virginia” (1993) is about Su’ranchingal, an extraterrestrial, drug-addicted orphan who gets drunk on Dr. Pepper and finds meaning and purpose growing vegetables. When the human powers-that-be decide to send him back to a home he cannot remember and another alien race that abused and addicted him, Su’ranchingal does not want to go: “I'm mentally humanized, he thought as he walked down the hot asphalt and rock that keep brush from blocking people and cars. He wondered again why he and Hu’rekhi were sent here, why the humans wanted to send them back.”

The challenge for feminist SF now is to speculate on solving the most serious issues of the time by balancing community and technology. Careless scientific and industrial progress has left the Earth wobbling on the verge of ecological collapse. Technology like automobiles and television has worked to isolate individuals and break down community. Judith Moffet’s novella, “Tiny Tango” (1989) became part of her 1991 novel The Ragged World: A Novel of the Hefn on Earth, in which Moffet’s aliens, the Hefn (sounds like Heaven), attempt to mitigate the disastrous effects of a nuclear reactor meltdown and institute changes to force humanity to begin to clean up its own nest. Eventually, Earth’s future may be saved by the nice people at Rodale’s Research Gardening Center where Moffet’s heroine now works. Although Moffett realizes that Heaven on Earth is not possible, it is possible to move toward the Hefn solution of viewing the rights of a healthy Earth ecology as more important than any individual’s rights. The most important work of feminist SF writers will be to create methods for ecologically and humanly healthy change.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that speculative fiction by and about women is not intended just for women. The writers and stories described here should be valued by all readers for their sensitivity in exploring human issues. Although research psychologists have recently been able to identify small but real neurological differences between men and women, we are and will continue to be more alike than different. It is rigid gender stereotyping that makes the sexes seem alien to each other. Difference psychology is only valuable if it helps us to understand and reach out to each other across the barriers of gender stereotyping by establishing a common language for describing shared experience. Stories like these are successful because they are able to do this and tell a wonderful story at the same time.

Psychologists tell us that behavior changes as a result of life experiences. No one can face the abyss without coming home.
unchanged. We live in a world where the abyss often seems imminent and change is occurring at an exponential pace. The best of speculative fiction prepares us for the future by extrapolating on the nature of those changes. It needs to be written by both men and women. The healthier the genre, the more freedom and variety it allows. At the 1995 SFRA Conference in Grand Forks, North Dakota, critic Joan Gordon offered "A Bill of Rights for Feminist Science Fiction" which could well be embraced by the genre as a whole:

1. The freedom of the broken law, including the freedom to err and the freedom to misbehave
2. The freedom to enjoy the body
3. The freedom to travel to the underworld, to have adventures, and to face one's dark side, which leads directly to
4. The freedom to dissolve boundaries, which is postmodernism's project: that is, freedom from binary distinctions, not yin or yang, passive or aggressive, good or bad, dark or light
5. The freedom to enjoy technology
6. The freedom to explore the near-future
7. The freedom from the tyranny of models

The best of future speculative fiction will be that which continues to cherish freedom and define humanity by expanding boundaries and challenging models. A significant portion of it will be written by women.

— Sandra J. Lindow
FEATURE REVIEW

SAMUEL R. DELANY:
THE THEORIST AS PRACTITIONER OF FICTION


You can read Samuel R. Delany's fiction, like the revised version of They Fly at Cirion, without having considered his theoretical work, but you would probably miss the point of much that he is doing. Among science fiction writers, Delany has distinguished himself by informing his fictional narratives with a theoretical understanding that is intricate, subtle, often counter-intuitive, and inextricably post-modern.

Like his previous theoretical work in The Jewel-Hinged Jaw or Starboard Wine, Silent Interviews offers us the principal concepts of this theory. In this instance, the pieces which do so are mostly interviews that were conducted or refined through written correspondence, a format that allows Delany to work up responses that are more enriched rhetorically and conceptually more exacting.

For readers less informed than Delany himself about post-modern critical theory and fiction, his theoretical pronouncements can seem formidably unintelligible rather than intelligently informative. And his fiction since the start of the series, Return to Neveryon, has seemed more studied but less appealing to many readers who once delighted in the verbally precocious surfaces of his earlier work.

In responding to such attitudes, Delany mounts a defense in Silent Interviews of complex rhetoric and difficult language, asserting that such discourse avoids the over-simplification inherent in a plainer style, elicits a level of suspicion that is a prerequisite for critical analysis, attracts more judicious readers, and provides a greater level of pleasure as it is apprehended. (In the same piece, he also advises us to be alert for the comic moments in Derrida and Focault.)

All right, what can an application of Delany's post-modern theories do for our reading of his fiction? In addressing this question, we need to consider what Silent Interviews tells us about Delany's theoretical system. For starters, we can ask,
“What makes it post-modern?” Happily, *Silent Interviews* offers several features that Delany uses to characterize a post-modern sensibility: a decentered sense of self; a skeptical disregard toward fixed grounds for being; a corresponding appreciation for margins as the locus for subversive interpretation; and an insistence that texts are arenas of semantic tension. To Delany, these features oppose the sensibility that has characterized much of the work in the modernist literary canon.

Within *Silent Interviews*, these features establish an implicit ground for Delany’s discussions of reading, discourse, and marginality that provide the book’s more overt topics. Asserting that the sentence, not the word, is the basic unit of discourse, Delany asks us to consider reading codes, the protocols that we use to interpret the meaning of sentences. These reading codes become the defining feature in a system of genres, distinctions among kinds of texts that overlap, but still enable us to read a science fiction text differently than we read a poem’s text or a literary novel’s text.

With these codes, says Delany, we are disposed to read the same sentence (such as “Her world exploded.”) differently in a science fiction work than in literary fiction. Moreover, these reading codes allow for the interpretation of some sentences within one genre that would be unintelligible in another — he refers to the “monopole magnet mining” example that he has cited in previous work.

In genres distinguished by such reading codes, the texts can be interpreted, but the genre itself cannot be defined. A definition would require a set of sufficient and necessary conditions to produce whatever is being defined. For any genre, including science fiction, Delany points out that such conditions cannot be specified. Definition also aims to make the genre a fixed entity. It says, “Either this work is science fiction, or it is not.” Genres derived through reading codes are more fluid. Throughout *Silent Interviews*, however, Delany insists that significant reading codes for science fiction differ from those for literature, just as some for sword and sorcery differ from others for science fiction. As a result, trying to read science fiction as if it were literature is inappropriate, a self-confounding enterprise that garbles the interpretation of sentences in one genre by trying to apply the reading protocols of another.

Unfortunately, Delany notes, too many would-be readers of science fiction within academia confound their reading. Coming to science fiction through an educational enterprise that has privileged the reading codes for literary texts, such readers would evaluate the value of science fiction by interpreting it through those same codes. Although Delany himself has been employed at the University of Massachusetts since 1988,
he regards such a disposition for reading science fiction as suspect — informed by modernist, middle-class attributions of fixed values, a centered self, a rigidly hierarchal world-view, and a literature that reflects them all canonically.

Given this root skepticism toward misreading science fiction as literature, we might find Delany's sense of aesthetics surprisingly conservative, positing, as it does, an aesthetic sense that is a "register for form," an appetitive desire for patterns in space and time. This desire is to be satisfied by apprehending contrast and similarity, presence and absence, regularity and irregularity. At the same time, though, Delany warns readers against the conflation of aesthetics and moral values, especially when these patterns are embodied in narrative. As Wilde's Miss Prism simplifies the dictum regarding her lost novel: fiction means the good end happily and the bad do not — although Wilde, of course, is subverting Prism's dictum even as she expresses it. Even here, Delany's critical impulses move against fixing values as hierarchical entities.

This contrarian impulse emerges strongly from Delany's theory of "inadequation," one of the knottier terms in his critical lexicon, a term that eludes simplified interpretation. Delany uses inadequation to describe the relationships among the members of a triad: language, desire, and "what happens." Within his theory, this triad provides his closest approximation to an ontological ground, a platform for being, a root premise from which the complex branches of the theory ramify.

The terms of the triad are not to be understood as self-sufficient entities set together, for such an interpretation would make any of them a privileged register that would stabilize the existence of the other two. Instead, we are asked to consider each member as if it were constituted only through the mutual inadequacies of the other pair, so that language, say, is constituted out of the discrepancies between desire and "what happens." In turn, these terms generate categories such as class, gender, genre, or meaning that are themselves contingent.

These contingent categories develop into a branch of Delany's theory that deals with marginality. Repeatedly throughout the interviews, Delany is asked about the consequences for his work of his identity as a black writer of science fiction, and he repeatedly reminds his interviewers (and us readers) that he is also gay and a writer of sword-and-sorcery — a genre with its own reading codes to distinguish it from science fiction.

Although Delany refuses any interpretation that would claim his work reflects fixed identities, such as black or gay, he likes conceptual sites for his analysis that are marginalized, sites within the contingent categories of identity or textuality, sites from which assertions of centrality, hierarchy, or ontological
fixity can be challenged and subverted. Whereas the view from self-styled centers and fixed grounds of being tries to elevate itself relative to the marginalized sites, Delany rejects their hierarchical structuring in favor of parallel mapping: neither inferior nor superior races (or sexualities); neither low nor high textual categories, but para-literatures or para-genres.

At such sites, Delany elaborates on the reading codes that distinguish literature from science fiction and science fiction from sword-and-sorcery. For literature, these codes foreground a modernist myth, "the priority of the self," defining narrative point-of-view through a centralized subject and developing narrative action through the dynamics of motive. In contrast, science fiction's codes foreground "the conditions of the possibility for change," that is, what must differ in the science fiction text's world for a given sentence to be uttered normally.

Delany illustrates this contrast with an example from Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." The literary reader who encounters the sentence in which a man wakes up as a cockroach is disposed to see the sentence as a metaphor for psychological alienation and devaluation of the self. The science fiction reader who encounters this sentence, however, is disposed to consider what conditions made it possible for such a transformation to occur. As readers of both literature and science fiction, we are less inclined to accept the second response as appropriate, another way of saying that "The Metamorphosis" does not read as science fiction.

In distinguishing between science fiction and sword-and-sorcery, Delany focuses upon economic codes: the world in science fiction is changing from a money to a credit economy; that of sword-and-sorcery from a barter to a money economy; codes of change that are themselves about exchange. Although Silent Interviews does not return to this code in science fiction, it does elaborate on the code in sword-and-sorcery, perhaps because many of these pieces originated while Delany worked on Return to Neveryon. By extension, his elaboration of this code should be helpful for readers of the revised They Fly at Çiron.

For starters, Delany expands the meaning of economy when he asserts that the shift from a barter to a money economy provides a "lexicon" from which all the images in sword-and-sorcery are drawn. In this regard, the "old" and "new" markets in Neveryon become nodal sites for textual interpretation. There, the root triad ("what happens," language, and desire) is refigured in images not only of the market, but of textuality and sexuality as well.

Thus, the shift from an old market using barter to a new one using money — both of which figure desire as exchange — gen-

SFRA Review #219, page 48
erates our reading of these markets as figurative texts. In this reading, the old market is “innocent,” a figure of unmediated exchange that Delany compares to analysis done as representation; the text offers it as descriptive details meant to feel verifiable and adequate to the reader. We read the details, and we “see” the market. For the new market, however, the reading is mediated; instead of descriptive details, the text gives us a document, a plan for the institution of the market that “self-consciously” theorizes it at a remove from the more direct, descriptive experience.

When we turn from this consideration of figurative textuality generated through market and exchange to the figurative sexuality generated through market and textuality, we find Delany contrasting sword-and sorcery with the law as they figure the erotics of class and economy. In this view, the law enacts a genre of discourse that legitimizes a full range of desire, so long as the desires enacted remain within the bounds of socially accepted practices. The law, like the social discourse it distills, provides no vocabulary for assimilating practices such as sado-masochism within its normative model.

Against the law’s discourse, Delany’s sword-and-sorcery sets an alternative discourse that can figure the excluded practices and silenced desires. Within Neveryon or Čiron, masters and slaves, aristocrats and laborers, artisans and apprentices can name their erotic longings and enact their transactions of the flesh.

When we shift to figurative transaction, the market term in the triad, we find a parallel concept generated out of sexuality and language. Here, Delany distinguishes between language as speaking and language as listening. In this instance, to speak establishes the desired object, to listen the desiring subject. The transaction occurs across inequalities of class and status; as such, it would be unnamed and suppressed in canonic literature and the world it reflects. The ability to figure such transactions in genres like sword-and-sorcery (or more pornographically-styled texts like The Mad Man) helps to explain some of their appeal for a writer with Delany’s theoretical interests.

Having mapped some of the principal features in Delany’s theory, we can see what happens as we apply them to the revised They Fly at Čiron — on its surface, a straightforward story about a peaceful community successfully countering a violent assault. Read through the theory, the story becomes more richly textured and thematically layered.

Read as literature, They Fly at Čiron tells how the violent Myetrans are repelled by the peaceful Čironians with the help of the mostly peaceful, definitely winged folk of Hi-Vator. Read
as literature, it emphasizes the stories of strong, good-hearted Rahm; clever Qualt, the garbageman; and Naa, the travelling bard, as they catalyze the Çironians’ alliance with Hi-Vator and the resistance to the Myetrans. Read as literature, it reminds us of a moral in Romeo and Juliet: “These violent delights have violent ends.” Read as literature, They Fly at Çiron seems, in fact, like a much less ambitious text from the hand that gave us Babel-17, The Einstein Intersection, Dhalgren, and Return to Neveryon.

If instead we read They Fly at Çiron not as literature but as sword-and-sorcery, it lights up in unexpected ways. A genre often dismissed by serious critics takes on post-modern nuances. Its seemingly straightforward plot becomes an axis branching into queries about fixed categories as impossible constructs, marginal positions as agents of change, violence as a transaction that transforms cultures, differential power as an erotic charge, and non-congruent communication as a driving force in narrative.

As sword-and-sorcery, They Fly at Çiron is not a story about individual characters like Rahm or Qualt or Naa, but one about distinctive cultures: the Myetran, the Çironian, and the Hi-Vatorian. The text is less interested in the quirks of its characters’ psyches than in their communal status as the physical, the intellectual, and the artistic hero. And (as we should expect from a writer who believes that economic transitions form a ground for the reading codes needed in science fiction and in sword-and-sorcery) its three cultures imply distinct operations for their economies, just as the economies, in turn, have generated distinctive operations for class, gender, and communications.

Whereas the “old” and “new” markets that serve as figures for the economic transition in Neveryon are shown through descriptive detail or their documentation, those for the three cultures here are implied through passing allusions. Thus the Myetran military expedition is explained as an imperialistic effort to expand the resource base for a growing, urbanized population. That of Çiron retains the innocence of barter associated with a smaller rural village. More tantalizing is that of Hi-Vator, where money was used formerly, but is no longer, and the community has returned to barter. The historical stability of this reversal remains ambiguous.

At a deeper level, the reading codes of They Fly at Çiron are themselves ambiguous: while the Myetran and Çironian peoples seem to be ordinary humans, the Hi-Vatorians, with their bat-like wings, seem to be the product of some divergent biological path. The text invites us to ask how they came to be, but is not forthcoming about their origins. Similarly, the Myetrans carry a limited supply of power guns, a technology
not available to the Çironians or Hi-Vatorians. Not only are the guns more advanced than the weapons of the other peoples, the level of technology they represent seems improbable relative to the rest. Here too, the text invites us to ask how this great difference came to be without suggesting satisfactory answers.

Such disjunctions seem to characterize a text that is straddling distinctions between sword-and-sorcery and science fiction. It may be that they are a residue of the earlier version of the text, written before Delany had worked out a more consistent sense of the reading codes appropriate to each genre. Or it may be that he is genre-bending, self-consciously blurring distinctions that he would elsewhere maintain more consistently.

Besides such destabilized categories, They Fly at Çiron uses marginalized characters as agents of change. The most obvious examples are Qualt, the garbage collector of Çiron, and the unnamed Hi-Vatorian who works with him. As garbage collector, Qualt lives at the geographic fringes of Çiron, isolated by necessary work that accords him no great status among the Çironians. His Hi-Vatorian ally, more emphatically an outsider, describes himself as less than welcome in his community for habitually transgressing its standards of acceptable behavior.

When the Myetrans attack Çiron, however, Qualt and his ally are the first to devise and execute counter-measures that catalyze the resistance. Flying over the occupied village, they get an accurate count of the Myetran numbers. Using his familiarity with noisome materials, Qualt poisons the Myetrans' water supply. Together, he and the Hi-Vatorian provide water for captured Çironians and travel to Hi-Vator to establish an alliance between the two communities, an alliance that enables them to counter-attack the Myetrans effectively. After the Myetrans have been driven out of Çiron, Qualt is recognized as a leader of heroic proportions. His ally, however, is re-scripted as an outsider for flying off with a Myetran prisoner and dropping him from a fatal height.

The refusal to establish a fixed moral status for this Hi-Vatorian is inscribed more broadly in the book's representation of violence. Read as science fiction or as sword-and-sorcery, the violence in They Fly at Çiron is not a moral register for depicting actions that are then rejected but an agent of change driven by economic differentials. Within the text, it shapes a dialogue of statement of response that is acted out at Çiron. Relentless but dispassionate, the Myetrans deploy psychological and physical violence to build the imperial base for their economy. Less self-consciously or analytically, the Çironians and Hi-Vatorians respond with a violence that is
nonetheless an effective counter-statement to that of the Myetrans. In effect, the styles with which the violence is depicted on each side of the dialogue is the equivalent of the styles with which the new and old markets are depicted in Return to Neveryon.

The differences in these styles are also given the erotic charge that Delany cites in Silent Interviews. For the most part, the Čironians and the Hi-Vatorians wear no clothes, a point emphasized in Delany’s descriptions of Rahm in his encounters with the Myetrans and the Hi-Vatorians. Rahm’s nudity underscores his status as the Čironian’s physical hero. (Nudity is not emphasized for Qualt, their intellectual hero, nor for Naa, their artistic hero.) Introduced through the gaze of a Myetran officer, Rahm is buck naked and bare-handedly fending off the attack of a mountain lion. The officer, Lieutenant Kire, is wearing “black undergarments, black jerkin with black leggings over them, black harness webbing hips and chest, black hood,” and “an officer’s night-colored cape” — attire that sounds distinctively fetishistic, like that of a “master” leatherman. The capes are described more fully as heavy, unable to billow or flutter, even when the wearers are riding rapidly on horseback; with the hood, the cape would give Kire a distinctively phallic silhouette.

The phallic association also extends to the weapon Kire carries, a Myetran “powergun,” permitted only to officers. Qualt later reports that “after they fire them twenty or thirty times they have to let them rest a while, so they’ll regain their fire... I heard them joking about them.” With the powergun, Kire shoots the mountain lion, leaving “the naked man” rocking “on all fours by the beast.” Rahm gives Kire the mountain lion, whose skin the Myetran wears over his officer’s attire.

After the Myetran attack on Čiron, Rahm rescues a Hi-Vatorian, Vortcir, from a monstrous web. Gratefully, Vortcir permits Rahm to climb on his back and flies him to Hi-Vator, so they can describe the attack to the Hi-Vatorians and develop an alliance against it. While there, Rahm recognizes that Vortcir’s people, like most Čironians, go naked, although distinctions between male and female in their external genitals are not evident to him at first. Later, several Hi-Vatorian youths seduce Rahm into a game of sexual foreplay, in which they fly him, successively, from one location to another. Near the end of the novel, when the Myetrans have been defeated and disarmed, Kire reports his own experience with this game, played more intensely and to completion with a set of aerial transfers, after which the Hi-Vatorians strip off his clothes and all involved achieve sexual climax.

Like the depiction of violence, these erotic encounters form a kind of enacted dialogue, transactions of differential power,
that play out the shifting economic differentials in the book’s three cultures. We can also read this differential in the modes of communication Delany establishes for the three cultures. In Silent Interviews, he attributes an erotic differential to listening and speaking that seems counter-intuitive. In this differential, he associates listening with desire and speaking with being desired, a distinction he extends to listening as masochistic subordination and speaking as sadistic dominance.

In They Fly at Ciron, this differential helps to categorize the three cultures across a spectrum of listening/speaking capabilities. In keeping with their other bat-like qualities, the Hi-Vatorians are hyper-sensitive listeners, able to hear sounds well below the threshold of perception for the human Cironians or Myetrans. If this ability intensifies their status as erotic desirers, it renders their initiation of the sexual games with Rahm and Kire all the more appropriate.

At the spectrum’s other end, the Myetran force initiates its attack on Ciron with a system of intense artificial amplification that stuns the Cironians into passivity and facilitates their subordination. (It is even more disabling for the Hi-Vatorians who happen to be nearby.) Unmistakably, this aural violence complements the bodily violence inflicted by the powerguns that the Myetrans bear. During the counter-attack, Naa takes control of the amplification system and uses it to direct the Cironians and Hi-Vatorians against the Myetrans. Once the attack has succeeded, however, she rejects such amplification as an inappropriate device for the singing and harp-playing that are her art.

In concluding, we might note that the mutual interactions of the violence, sexuality, and aurality in They Fly at Ciron also embody the root triad of “what happens”, desire, and language that are fundamental in Delany’s literary theory. That they should do so is no accident, for Delany as a theorist is deeply embedded in Delany as a practicener of fiction. Relative to the still-developing series, Return to Neveryon, They Fly at Ciron is more modestly scaled. Even so, a reading that applies Delany’s theory to this text can be more richly rewarding. As Delany argues the point in Silent Interviews, “Where simple language is the privileged rhetoric of the everyday, complex rhetoric will attract people who (one) by temperament tend to think against the grain and who (two) are smart enough to deal with the rhetorical difficulties.” Gentle readers, be advised.

— Joe Marchesani

SFRA Review #219, page 53

Given the complexities of what Andre-Driussi dubs "The Urth Cycle" (a collective term embracing Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*, *The Urth of the New Sun*, and several associated short stories), any new critical material on the subject deserves attention, and the *Lexicon Urthus* is no exception. In fact, this well-researched labour of love is probably the most significant piece of Wolfe-related criticism to appear since Serconia Press reprinted John Clute's articles on Wolfe in *Strokes: Essays and Reviews 1966-1986* in 1988.

The lexicon is, without doubt, a foundation work, a response to John Clute's argument that "Making sense of Gene Wolfe... is initially a job of decipherment. Interpretation of the text must follow its decipherment..." Since Andre-Driussi's research is directed towards decipherment rather than interpretation, the lexicon is refreshingly free of the wayward claims that have bedeviled a number of earlier analyses of the Urth Cycle. Hence, a part of its value lies in what it does not offer. There are no lengthy conjectures concerning who Severian's mother/sister/brother/great aunt may be, no bizarre allegorical or metaphorical readings, and certainly no overt appeals for Wolfe's canonization for services to twentieth-century literature. What Andre-Driussi provides is a refreshingly judicious approach to the Urth Cycle which reveals Wolfe's literary-historical sources, defines a great many of his esoteric nouns and pronouns, and, most importantly, opens the way for a more informed and less discursive interpretation of the pentalogy.

Wolfe himself opens the lexicon with a typically whimsical foreword before Andre-Driussi (who, by osmosis, collaboration, or instinct has absorbed a part of Wolfe's impish sense of humour) begins the lexicon proper with an impractically long subtitle typeset in the form of a keyhole. In this way, he emphasizes that his lexicon is a metaphorical pathway into the Urth Cycle's labyrinthine puzzle rather than a key to its solution.

Each definition in the lexicon includes the location of the word under consideration in Wolfe's texts and, where applicable, short discussions of its literary, mythic, historic, and linguistic resonances. These well-researched, comprehensive entries range from discussions of such esoteric delights as *algophilist*, *cothurni*, *idanthrene*, and *xenagie* to descriptions of the rather more mundane *barbicans*, *crenelations*, *drays*, and *magistrates*.
Interspersed with these descriptions are examinations of Wolfe’s appropriations from the Kabbalah, Gnosticism, and the Tarot; listings of the tales in The Book of the Wonders of Urth and Sky; and a calendar of events from the beginning of The Shadow of the Torturer to the conclusion of The Citadel of the Autarch. In addition, Andre-Driussi provides his reader with a (sketchy) map of the Commonwealth, a diagram of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, a cutaway plan of the Matachin Tower, and a detailed map of the Citadel in Nessus. Of particular interest is the short article on the “History of Urth”, which begins in the Age of Myth, from where Apu Punchau and the missionaries in the Jungle Garden originate, moves through the Age of the Monarch, during which Typhon rules Urth and launches The Whorl into The Book of the Long Sun, and the Age of the Autarch, which covers the period from Ymar’s reign to the blossoming of the New Sun, to arrive at the Age of Ushas.

While Andre-Driussi has reduced the sense of estrangement the reader experiences upon entering Wolfe’s fictional environment, he has also managed to preserve, and even borrow, the otherworldly feel of the Urth Cycle. Like The Book of the New Sun, the Lexicon Urthus would sit quite comfortably alongside The Book of the Wonders of Urth and Sky in old Master Ultan’s Borgesian library.

Despite this, and its other laudable achievements, the lexicon is not entirely comprehensive, and there are points where the book would have benefitted from the introduction of some additional, uncontentious interpretative material. To indicate where such additions would be suitable would, however, be pedantic in the extreme when Andre-Driussi’s work deserves to be acclaimed for its conception and execution (a loaded word in this context) and for the insights it provides. The way is finally clear for a comprehensive analysis of the Urth Cycle; if would-be Wolfe critics fail to respond to Andre-Driussi’s efforts, they will be failing themselves and their discipline. Buy this book and meet the challenge.

— Peter Wright


Val Lewton (1904-1951) worked in the film industry from 1926, when he was hired as a publicity writer in Metro’s New York office, until his death at 46 shortly after Stanley Kramer engaged him to work under his supervision as a producer. However, his most important work was at RKO in the 1940s where he produced nine films that revitalized the exhausted horror cycle of the 1930s. Lewton put together an efficient, talented team whose films emphasized “darkness, the unseen, the un-

SFRA Review #219, page 56
stated” rather than laboratory-created monsters and creatures of legend like the vampire and werewolf. His immediate financial success with *Cat People* (1942) was soon accompanied by increasing critical acclaim for successive productions such as *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), *The Seventh Victim* (1943), and *The Body Snatcher* (1945). The studio-selected titles were chosen to capitalize on the audience’s taste for horror and the supernatural, but the films themselves were stylish and intelligent, drawn more from psychological than supernatural terrors. Lewton’s directors — Jacques Tourneur, Robert Wise, and Mark Robson — all went on to successful careers in A-budget films, a transition that Lewton himself never succeeded in making.

Bansak interviewed surviving family members, friends, and associates of Lewton, and he is obviously both a tireless researcher and an avid movie fan. (The original subject was suggested to Bansak by Gary Svelha, editor and publisher of *Midnight Marquee*, a long-running fan publication devoted to horror films, and the title of the book was also the title of the article that resulted from the suggestion.) Lewton’s career, however, often drops from sight as Bansak detours for discussions of any filmmaker he feels is important for an understanding of Lewton’s career. Then, after the depressing and sad charting of Lewton’s final years in Chapter 17, Bansak traces the careers of Tourneur, Wise, and Robson (much of whose work bears little relationship to their work with Lewton) in separate chapters. He concludes with “Dark Legacy”, in which he tries to demonstrate Lewton’s influence on the films of the four decades since his death, a mind-numbing discussion that invites readers to “unearth some Lewtonesque films we have overlooked.”

Joel E. Siegel’s *Val Lewton: The Reality of Terror* (Viking, 1973) is a concise survey that covers much of the same ground as *Fearing the Dark*, and Bansak acknowledges Siegel’s work as providing the “backbone” for his own book. Siegel’s choice of production stills is superior to Bansak’s and to the selection in J.P. Telotte’s *Dreams of Darkness: Fantasy and the Films of Val Lewton* (University of Illinois Press, 1985), a theoretical and academic study. Bansak is particularly good on the pre-RKO years and on Lewton’s career as a fiction writer. He discusses “The Bagheeta”, a short story by Lewton published in the July 1930 issue of *Weird Tales*, that prefigures both the subject and tone of *Cat People* and shows that Lewton was successful because he was given the chance to work with material for which he already had a demonstrable talent. It is Bansak’s thoroughness that makes this kind of revelatory documentation possible, and it is difficult to imagine that Bansak’s detailed record of Lewton’s career will be superseded.

— Walter Albert

*SFRA Review* #219, page 57
By several accounts in *Comics in Australia and New Zealand: The Collections, the Collectors, the Creators*, the definitive book on comic books and strips Down Under is John T. Ryan's *Panel by Panel: A History of Australian Comics* (1979), and anyone needing an introduction to the subject — that is to say, most people outside Australia and New Zealand — would probably do best to begin there. This collection of essays, however, broadens the story and brings it up to date.

The title is somewhat misleading, since all but one of the ten essays deals exclusively with Australian comics. Australian comic books and strips began appearing shortly after their counterparts in the United States, but aggressive American marketing combined with low payments and native censorship laws (unfortunately not specified here) have resulted in Australian comics being largely overshadowed by both American and British imports for most of their history. Nonetheless, the country has managed to produce an extensive body of work in this genre, and it is interesting to learn here of its nature and scope, even if the essays give fragmentary glimpses rather than a complete picture of the field.

The book's fragmentary nature is not helped by the fact that the first two essays ("The Comic Book Industry in Australia" by collector and entrepreneur Richard Rae, which discusses the market since the 1960s, and Ryan's 1964 "With the Comics — Down Under") appear in exactly the opposite order they should to provide a clear introduction to the topic beyond Burrows's lucid but brief comments. These initial essays are also marred by an extremely fannish tone. As Burrows notes, "The study of comics in Australia and New Zealand was, for many years, the province of fans and collectors" (p. 2), and fans have essentially built the comics collections at Australian research libraries, but combined with these contributors' gushing enthusiasm is a disregard for hard facts (admittedly unobtainable in some cases) that renders them of less use to scholars and critics than they could be. In particular, the Ryan essay is little more than a series of names, titles, and vague qualitative judgments. Nonetheless, the first two essays provide a good sense of the growth and decline of Australian comics, and Rae offers an astute analysis of market forces and strategies, in the process supplying a view of the American comic-book industry beyond its domestic activities.

In contrast, Terry King's "Coming to Terms with Tightrope Tim: Three Decades of Heroes and Villains in the Australian SFRA Review #219, page 58
Comic Strip” is both more focused and more useful as a scholarly essay, providing an excellent analysis and description of adventure strips. Similarly, Peter Jeffrey’s “The Humour of the Outback: Eric Jolliffe’s More About Andy” provides a good look at a specific topic, in this case a World War II comic-strip compilation. Of equal value are Richard Stone’s description of the comics collection at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, which includes a concise history of Australian comics and fandom that is in some ways more useful than the overviews given by Rae and Ryan, and Pauline Dickinson’s description of the comics collection at the University of Sydney Library, which is part of its substantial science fiction and fantasy holdings. Their essays about the importance of libraries collecting comics and the problems involved are quite relevant to American libraries as well. Other essays in the book include one by a prominent fan, Graham McGee, who briefly discusses important Australian comic book; David Lee-Smith’s “Kiwis and Comics: A Glimpse”, about comics in New Zealand; and a bibliography compiled by Burrows.

Despite its limitations in content and form — the volume is poorly edited, lacks an index, and would benefit from more illustrations — *Comics in Australia and New Zealand* would make a worthwhile library acquisition. Though many of the essays lack enough contextual information for readers outside Australia and New Zealand, those looking into the comics of those countries may find useful material here.

— Darren Harris-Fain


Why is the “virtual culture” being created by modern information processing technology so often depicted as dark, violent... and seductive? Why do those who embrace the cultural transformations they see as the inevitable product of this technology choose to portray those transformations as traumatic and even terrifying? Why does a selection of essays on “the discourse of cyberculture,” originally appearing in the scholarly *South Atlantic Quarterly* and published by a highly respected academic press, share the misleadingly hyperbolic name applied to the electronic exchange of petty insults? These are some of the questions that arise from a reading of *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, edited by Mark Dery and published by Duke University Press.

One possible set of answers is suggested by Dery’s introductory essay, in which he writes that “the wraithlike nature of electronic communication — the flesh become word, the sender
reincarnated as letters floating on a terminal screen — accelerates the escalation of hostilities when tempers flare; disembodied, sometimes pseudonymous combatants tend to feel that they can hurl insults with impunity" (p. 1). Perhaps the intensity of the language and imagery frequently associated with cyberculture is simply compensation for the inherent limitations of the words and images through which this culture manifests itself. If fictional and journalistic representations of virtual reality are darker and more sinister than those of, say, the automobile in a similar state of development, perhaps that is because it is more dangerous to be struck by a Model T than by a pair of VR goggles.

Nevertheless, the premise of Flame Wars — that the electronic medium through which these words and images are conveyed influences our culture through its effect on both the form and content of communication — is abundantly demonstrated by the essays it contains. Some of them, such as Peter Schwenger's "Agrippa, or The Apocalyptic Book" and Gareth Branwyn's "Compu-Sex: Erotica for Cybernauts", seek only to describe cybercultural artifacts or phenomena to an audience that is presumed to be unfamiliar with them; but others, such as Vivian Sobchack's "New Age Mutant Ninja Hackers: Reading Mondo 2000" and Marc Laidlaw's "Virtual Surreality: Our New Romance with Plot Devices", offer a deeper analysis of their subjects. Sobchack reveals the "privileged, selfish, consumer-oriented and technically dependent libertarianism" (p. 18) underlying the populist/anarchist pose of at least one element of the cybercultural community, while Laidlaw offers an author's insight into the use of virtual reality in fiction, not as a subject, but as a literary device.

Flame Wars regards cyberculture neither as a contemporary fringe movement nor as the playground of the technocultural elite, but instead places it within the widest possible context. Erik Davis provides a strong historical background to cyberculture with an essay focusing on the curious parallels between medieval memory techniques, gnostic cosmology and cyberspace, while Scott Bukatman does the same with a meditation on the cultural impact of the computer's predecessor in "Gibson's Typewriter." Anne Balsamo and Claudia Springer confront cyberculture's supposed desire for escape from the body with a pair of articles entitled "Feminism for the Incurably Informed" and "Sex, Memories, and Angry Women", while Pat Cadigan offers an excerpt from her feminist cyberpunk novel, Synners. Mark Dery's interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose occasionally lose focus, but also broaden the scope of the book still further, taking it beyond the limits of the white male world of which cyberculture is generally assumed to be a part.

While Flame Wars is not intended as a guide to "netiquette,"
Emily White's brief glossary provides definitions for a few of the more colorful expressions used in the book, such as "F2F" (face-to-face), "snailmail" (the postal service) and "train wreck" (look it up). None of the essays require the reader to be a "cyberdrooler" (technoweenie/wirehead) to understand them, nor is the book encumbered by many passages of dense scholarly prose. In fact, Julian Dibbell's "A Rape in Cyberspace" is one of the most compelling pieces of journalistic writing I've read in some time. No reader will find all of the essays to be of equal interest, but anyone concerned about the future of our increasingly computer-mediated culture will find something of profound interest in Flame Wars.

— Ed McKnight


When Future Perfect appeared in 1966, it was immediately hailed as a major achievement for several reasons. Franklin was perhaps the first critic to clearly define Nathaniel Hawthorne's connection to science fiction, and his essay on that author's work, updated in this new edition, seems as perceptive today as it did nearly thirty years ago. Secondly, the anthology made available to the general reading public excellent fiction by such writers as Fitz-James O'Brien, Edward Bellamy, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson that had heretofore been difficult if not impossible to find. Most importantly, however, Franklin defined an essentially American tradition in nineteenth-century science fiction, something related to but clearly independent from the tradition of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells.

The current volume includes stories by Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Frederic Jessup Stimson, J.D. Whelpley, Higginson, Washington Irving, Ambrose Bierce, Bellamy, O'Brien, Arthur E. Bostwick, Jack London, Stanley Waterloo, Mark Twain, and William Harben, all of which appeared in one or both of the book's earlier editions. The stories are grouped under the topics Automata, Marvelous Inventions, Medicine Men, Into the Psyche, Space Travel, and Time Travel. Besides Franklin's classic discussion of Hawthorne's science fiction, there are shorter essays on many of the writers and topics listed above, and each essay appears to have been updated for this volume. Franklin has cut stories by Bellamy and Bierce, however, in order to make room for a new section titled Women's Work. This section begins with a brief essay on nineteenth-century science fiction by women and includes excerpts from two interesting book-length works, Annie Denton Cridge's study in

SFRA Review #219, page 61
role reversal, *Man’s Rights; Or, How Would You Like It?*, and Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora: A Prophecy*. The latter features dazzling technological inventiveness and a critique of patriarchal society which is both radical and invigorating. On the other hand, *Mizora* is also blatantly racist. The women who run Lane’s society have not only chosen to eliminate all men but also all women of color because these groups have been found to be both superfluous and morally inferior.

The addition of approximately fifty pages of material devoted to science fiction by nineteenth-century women is welcome, of course, but otherwise this “revised and expanded” edition of *Future Perfect* differs only slightly from its 1966 and 1978 incarnations. The book can thus be strongly recommended only to libraries or scholars of nineteenth-century literature who are not already in possession of an earlier edition.

— Michael M. Levy


McFarland will soon have six volumes of interviews with genre filmmakers on its list. Tom Weaver’s *Interviews with B Science Fiction and Horror Movie Makers* (1988), *Science Fiction Stars and Horror Heroes* (1991), and *Attack of the Monster Movie Makers* (1994, reviewed in SFRA Review #215) will soon be followed by his *They Fought in the Creature Features* (1995). McFarland promises *Fantasy Filmmaking in the 1980s* for 1995 as a companion to this compilation of interviews by Goldberg, Randy and Jean-Marc L’Officer, and William Rabkin, previously printed in fan magazines, mainly *Starlog*.

Weaver’s books chronicle the B films of the 1930s through the 1960s; Goldberg’s the expensive A films of the 1980s. The interviews were conducted during filming and are predictably full of hype and big claims. Pieces on flops like *Enemy Mine* (1985), *2010* (1984), and *Dune* (1984) have a distinct air of whistling through a graveyard. Short chapters on *Aliens* (1986), *Blue Thunder* (1983), *Cocoon* (1985), *Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Robocop* (1987), 2010, and *War Games* (1983) are generally thin, as are longer sections on *Dune, Enemy Mine*, and *Star Trek II* through *IV* (1980-1988). The interviewers ask fannish questions like “Nicholas Meyer, how and why did you decide to do *Star Trek II*?” and get back pure Hollywood boosterism, such as “I met Harve and Bill and I thought they were wonderful and I haven’t changed my opinion since.” The only discordant note in this chorus of mutual admiration is sounded by *Blue Thunder* screenwriter Dan O’Bannon, who calls direc-

*SFRA Review* #219, page 62
tor John Badham a "hack" and a "mediocrity." David Lynch's "The visual side of the film is super-important to me" may be a clue as to what went wrong with Dune. Lynch bubbles with enthusiasm about Dune here; later he claimed he was never happy with the project.

The two most valuable sections are thirty-five pages on Blade Runner (1982) and forty on the Mad Max trilogy (1979-1985). Except for Mad Max 3, these are the best films covered in the book, and the L'Officiers ask intelligent questions of Blade Runner screenwriters Hampton Fancher and David Peeples, director Ridley Scott, producer Michael Deeley, art designer Syd Mead, and production designer Lawrence Paull, as well as Mad Max directors George Miller and George Ogilvie, producer-writer Terry Hayes, and star Mel Gibson. The Blade Runner material supplements that found in Retrofitting Blade Runner (1991), edited by Judith B. Kerman. The Mad Max interviews are a starting point for the study of films unjustly neglected by critics and scholars. This volume, like all of McFarland's interview books, belongs in large film collections.

— Michael Klossner


This is, and is likely to remain for some time, the definitive modern overview of Dunsany’s life and literary works. Though by no means exhaustive, Joshi’s examination of the writings of Baron Dunsany is in both breadth and depth far superior to anything previously attempted.

The most important aspect of Joshi’s study is that it offers full context for Dunsany’s work. Most of the previous critical work on Dunsany has been done within the fantastic/weird fiction community, and has therefore focused almost exclusively on the short fantasies — almost all written prior to 1920 — and fantasy novels written before 1930. It is this early work that had such a profound influence on later writers, and on the development of fantasy literature as a whole.

Yet Dunsany lived until 1957, and wrote prolifically throughout his life — stories and novels, plays, memoirs, travelogues, and much more. The bulk of this work has been forgotten and remains sorely neglected by both readers and scholars, and yet it is of a whole with the early fantasy.

Joshi’s book is an admirable first step in remedying this neglect. Primarily a literary study, he brings in just enough biographical information to help us see Dunsany at work, and to
understand Dunsany's interests and motivations. Psychological speculation is kept to a minimum. Joshi, a careful scholar, speculates on Dunsany's inner life only when there is external supporting evidence.

Joshi published a shorter study of Dunsany in *The Weird Tale* (University of Texas Press, 1990) which touched upon a few of the broader themes developed in the present work in much greater depth and detail. But he goes beyond that earlier work to offer us an engaging portrait of the fullness of Dunsany's career. We discover how Dunsany's philosophy about the place of human beings in the natural world, his attitudes toward society and organized religion, his travels throughout the world — indeed, how his entire life has left its trace in his writings.

As the title indicates, Joshi also examines Dunsany's place in the milieux of British, Irish and broader English-language literary circles, and the societies that gave rise to them. Dunsany, an Irishman who nevertheless moved at ease among the upper levels of British society, belonged to both countries, and yet in the end was claimed by neither. Joshi’s examination of Dunsany's relationships to his social environment offers at least a partial explanation why a writer who achieved such consistent notoriety and popularity would later fall into near-oblivion.

With an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources, Joshi's study of Lord Dunsany represents the best single examination of this important, influential, but poorly understood master of the fantastic that is currently available.

— Richard Terra


The fourth edition of Ruth Nadelman Lynn’s *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography* is every bit as good as the previous volumes, and having been updated, is the latest and most complete annotated bibliography focusing on this area of fantasy literature.

Given the choice of the title and the announced scope of the topic, two clarifications need to be made. Lynn uses the term “fantasy” in its broadest sense. This book includes ten sections: Allegorical Fantasy and Literary Fairy Tales, Animal Fantasy, Fantasy Collections, Ghost Fantasy, High Fantasy (Heroic or Secondary World Fantasy — including Alternate Worlds or Histories, Myth Fantasy, and Travel to Other Worlds), Humorous Fantasy, Magic Adventure Fantasy, Time Travel Fan-
tasy, Toy Fantasy, and Witchcraft and Sorcery Fantasy. Lynn does not separate out such genres or subgenres as horror or science fiction, but includes some entries from those categories as kinds of fantasy, making the book much more inclusive than its title might at first suggest. She does make some choices here, though; there are no entries in hard science fiction — no Asimov or Heinlein, for example — and only some entries for Stephen King.

The second clarification involves the concepts of literature for children and young adults. Regardless of authorial intent and/or marketing strategies, children and, more especially, young adults who read fantasy are notoriously indiscriminate in the choice of books according to reading level or intended audience. Thus, Lynn not only includes Richard Adams’s Watership Down, which is only marginally in these age categories, but also his Shardik, which many would consider an adult novel, and the same is true for several authors from Andersen to Zelazny. Again, the inclusion of “adult” titles makes the volume much more inclusive than one might expect.

In addition to the 550-page annotated bibliography, there is an introduction discussing the history and nature of fantasy literature, lists of “outstanding” titles from each section, and list of award-winning fantasy books. Following the annotated bibliography, there is an almost 400-page Research Guide divided into four sections: Bibliographical and Reference Sources on Fantasy Literature, Critical and Historical Studies of Fantasy Literature, Educational Resources on Fantasy Literature, and Fantasy Literature Author Studies. The Research Guide is followed by three indices: Author and Illustrator, Title, and Subject.

Anyone interested in any aspect of fantasy literature and/or criticism should have access to this volume — have the university library order a copy immediately — and anyone working more or less exclusively in fantastic literature for children and young adults should have their own copy. This work is an excellent resource and is highly recommended.

— C.W. Sullivan III


Marge Piercy is a novelist and poet most readers of SFR will recognize first for her classic utopian novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* and next for her powerful robot love story *He, She, and It.* For thirty years now, Piercy has used her fiction as a vehicle for leftist/feminist protest, attacking patriarchal values and establishment authorities, calling for “a redressing of
social grievances” and “vindication of the rights of all oppressed.” She is an able writer; with a dozen novels and as many books of poetry, she is still developing. Shands quotes a critic who wrote that “Ms. Piercy seems to have recognized that her timeworn polemic can’t enter the ’90s blowing the same old steam,” and when Piercy lets her characters act for themselves rather than insisting they march around her stage in political postures, she is an honest-to-Goddess novelist of ideas.

In this book, Kerstin Shands has written a study of all Piercy’s novels, though I will focus on her two “science fiction” books. Shands’s book is not thick, though it is moderately heavy — words like “immanence” and “sparagamos” (a word worth looking up) are common, and phrases like “invisible conflictual ideological constructs” which “render sites of alterity within a dominant discourse” too often appear in sentences loaded with parentheses and qualifiers. I do not point to this as bad writing, especially for someone from a Swedish academic tradition, but it is academic prose. Her editors, Peter Coveny and Wanda Giles, might have helped her more. But it is easy enough to see what Shands means, even if sometimes a word substitutes for an idea, and most of Shands’s analysis should be accessible to an intelligent undergraduate interested in Marge Piercy.

Overall, Shands proposes a “cultural-ideological” study of Piercy’s fiction, focusing especially on feminist issues, and she gives it to us. The book follows a straightforward plan. Shands offers an introduction first, reviewing Piercy’s critical reputation — mostly among feminists — and claiming in the end that Piercy is much more than a left-wing social realist. This is followed by twelve chapters (one for each Piercy novel), after which appears a sensible conclusion, in which Shands claims that Piercy’s fundamental impulse is to explore the dialectic between separation and connection.

Each of the twelve chapters is a sort of bibliographic and descriptive essay for its novel, and each can be read independently of the rest of the book. They might all be papers from a superior sort of graduate seminar. The essays take a familiar form (the review of reviews): a survey of reviews and criticism of each novel, then some pages of literary analysis (mostly of narrative structure and spatial imagery), concluding with a consideration of the particular way the novel dramatizes the unfortunate fate of women in patriarchal society and the degree to which the novel either displays particular feminist critical concerns or ignores them.

Although this organization is clear, Shands gives us no strong critical center overall beyond a determination to see Piercy as artist as well as political feminist. She does offer acute close
readings of each novel, with valuable analysis of imagery and settings. Some of Shands's best points are summarized from other critics, but just as often they are original. We can see the pile of notecards behind the pages, but they are good notes, judiciously arranged.

I will focus on the chapters on Woman on the Edge of Time and He, She, and It, since these are Piercy's "science fiction" novels. All Shands's chapters are organized the same, so what we read about these two works will also be true for the chapters on Piercy's other ten novels. Still, some chapters are better than others. Those on Summer People and The Longings of Women were particularly useful in revealing Piercy's development of narrative architectures from Updike and Tolstoy, respectively. Unhappily, Shands does not show her critical intelligence to best advantage in her chapters on the SF novels. In fact, she seems uncertain how to account for Piercy's departure from socialist realism in these two books.

Woman on the Edge of Time was Piercy's first venture into the future, her first "science fiction" novel. It has become a classic. Shands claims that in Woman on the Edge of Time Piercy aimed at a "compelling realistic novel, with utopian interludes," but for most readers the realism is forgotten and the utopia gets all the attention. As in the other chapters, Shands reviews the reviews and the critics, and then explore the various feminist issues in the novel. When Shands gets back to literary analysis, she is helpful, pointing out that Piercy's dialectic among the three worlds in the novel (Connie's, Luciente's, and Gildina's) successfully establishes narrative tensions for the utopian proposals, and thus helps make utopian fiction better storytelling.

Woman on the Edge of Time was published in 1976, at the peak of the Great Decade of feminist utopia. Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and several other women writers wrote utopias at the same time, and they too found ways out of the straitjacket of didactic utopias. Shands does not seem aware of Piercy's role in this contemporary utopian tradition. This is one of the weaker chapters in the book, and Shands does not contribute much in the way of new insights into this classic.

Fifteen years after Woman on the Edge of Time, in 1991, Piercy again tried a "science fiction" setting and utopian theme, with He, She, and It. This is the story of a humanoid robot created to defend a utopian commune being challenged by a multi-national boogyman. Just as in Woman on the Edge of Time, there is a parallel plot set in the past, with frequent reflections between the two stories. In between the two books, Piercy had made even more articulate her concern with tikkun olam, or repairing the world, and He, She, and It extends the struggle between patriarchal (as defined by feminists) and
matriarchal values into the old territory of Frankenstein (Piercy reminds us that "the fans think Frankenstein is the monster. Isn't he?").

Like Woman on the Edge of Time, He, She, and It is a "political novel of anarcho- or ecofeminist persuasion," but its political agenda is less striking in the 1990s than the earlier novel was in the 1970s. Shands adequately outlines the plot and issues of He, She, and It. These are large: the nature of life, and especially of human life, the conflict between individual and social rights, and, most obviously, the nature of gender. Yod, the heroic robot of the story, is more human than some of Piercy's other characters, but her (?) gender is arbitrary, and this allows exploration of some new constructions of gender. He, She, and It is definitely a novel of ideas, and Shands points to most of them. However, just as with Woman on the Edge of Time, she seems unaware of the science fiction tradition to which Piercy responds, and uncertain what to do with the utopian elements in the story. Piercy does more than protest; the tale offers positive models for human conduct. Shands leaves them largely mysterious.

Although there is no grand critical leap in this book, Shands offers some helpful original readings. For Woman on the Edge of Time and He, She, and It, as well as for the other ten novels, Shands is particularly good at analyzing the narrative architecture and the imagery. She pointed me at the elegant architecture of all Piercy's novels, and particularly of Piercy's use of musical forms. I had not recognized that Piercy weaves webs as intricate as those of Kim Stanley Robinson, her co-conspirator in utopian dreaming. Here is an opportunity for a wide-read and thoughtful critic to study the formal inventions of contemporary utopias.

Of course, the major concern in The Repair of the World is not science fiction or utopian thought, but feminism. Shands's study is part of a long (100+ volumes) series in women's studies from Greenwood Press. I think that the best parts of this book come when she leaves these tribal issues and "reads" specific literary elements in Piercy's novels for us. Piercy herself gives all critics advice about this: "Now I get coarse when the abstract nouns start flashing./ I go out to the kitchen to talk cabbages and habits" (Circles on the Water).

Everywhere in her book, Shands offers useful surveys of feminist critics as they respond to Piercy. From Shands I learned many useful ideas about narratology as feminist critics have seen it, and if I chose I could ignore the more parochial feminist issues. Piercy herself has "satirized phallic critics' reviewing of texts by women," so be warned when I review Shands's book that I am an old white male, with the bad-temper characteristic of Pongos. But Piercy knows what such a critic might
say about her; she recognizes:

I lack a light touch.
I step on my own words,
a garden rake in the weeds.
I sweat and heave when I should slip away.
I am earnest into sermons when I should shrug.
(“The Homely War”)

I wish Shands has listened to her author more often, and to her author's critics less.

Finally, I want to pick a small fight with Shands. She begins by claiming that Piercy has been marginalized and ignored, kept in the ghetto reserved for leftist feminist writers. It is almost obligatory for anyone writing about new or duetero-canonical writers to complain that her subject is neglected. Shands does her duty here, stating that “dull WASP critics” overlook Piercy in favor of a literary “parochial fatalism” favored by the establishment. I do not find this to be true. A look at the MLA database of parochial fundamentalists shows 54 articles and 25 books for popular Larry McMurtry and only a few books and 30 articles for Ann Beattie — the competitive “fatalist” Shands mentions. Marge Piercy, the “marginalized,” was the main subject of 71 articles and 20 books. Looks about equal to me.

Overall, this is an excellent and useful study of Piercy’s fiction. Some of the credit should go to Piercy herself, since well-chosen quotations from her letters, stories, novels, and particularly her poems lace every page. Piercy is always provocative and often elegant, so the stanzas and sentences selected from her author reflect to Shands’s credit. And when Shands explores Piercy’s images of space in the feminist tradition, then it is very good — particularly in exploring images of enclosure, protective or imprisoning houses, hospitals, jails, and boundaries sexual, legal, and personal. Only when she labors to fit Piercy into one or another feminist enclosure does the study lose energy.

I’m glad I read this book. I know more — not just about Marge Piercy’s novels, not just about feminism, but about literature and its dialectical connection with life. Good science fiction can be (though doesn’t have to be) a literature of ideas. Piercy’s fiction certainly is that, and I think Piercy will like the intelligent analysis Shands has provided. If Shands does not venture as high as a critic of Piercy might, neither does she fall very far. This is a good and useful book.

— Michael Orth

SFRA Review #219, page 69
It is difficult for movie-and-TV buffs to appreciate the impact of the stage on the popular imagination before the advent of the cinema. Film is, for us, the representational form par excellence, at least insofar as “realistic” depiction is concerned (computers are in the process of challenging this, of course, but that’s another story). This helps explain why there are far more vampire movies today than there are vampire plays. The situation was very much other, however, in the days when people went to the theater as casually and as often as we now frequent the movies.

Although versions of Hamilton Deane and John Balderston’s 1927 stage adaptation of Dracula play almost constantly in small local theaters, the only recent production to achieve anything like critical as well as popular attention was the 1977 revival which starred Frank Langella. Not surprisingly, many more people saw the 1979 film version than saw the original New York stage production. Hugely popular films like Francis Ford Coppola’s 1992 Bram Stoker’s Dracula and Neil Jordan’s 1994 Interview with the Vampire serve to demonstrate that the vampire is now most thoroughly at home in the cinema, having abandoned the proscenium for the silver screen.

Roxana Stuart’s aptly titled Stage Blood is the history of the vampire on stage during the decades before cinema surpassed the theater’s ability to respond to our desire for and horror of the undead. Indeed, as Stuart’s detailed study demonstrates, this peculiarly hypnotic figure enjoyed a hold on the imagination of the nineteenth-century theatrical audience to an extent that we might find unprecedented. Eric Bentley has observed that “Physical presence on the stage makes an essential difference here. It is not in the quiet of libraries, bedrooms or kitchens that devotees of... bloodsucking swoon. It is in the theater” (quoted, Stuart, p. 1). British, European, and American devotees of bloodsucking swooned for most of the 19th century.

Stuart develops a broad introduction to her subject in two overview chapters which list well-known vampire novels and stories, review popular superstitions, and identify traditional characteristics of the vampire. She then examines the “evolution” of the Romantic/Gothic vampire under the auspices of Lord Byron and his unfortunate physician, John Polidori, author of the very influential “The Vampyre” (1819), which Stuart describes as “the source for nearly every vampire play through the century in England and France until the advent of Dracula in 1897” (35). In all, Stuart’s discussion ranges over approxi-
mately 35 British, French, and American plays, the earliest of which is Charles Nodier's *Le Vampire*, first produced in Paris in 1820 and directly based on Polidori's short story. Among my own favorite adaptations is Heinrich Marschner's 1828 opera, *Der Vampyr*, which was given new life in a 1992 BBC production as *The Vampyre: A Soap Opera*, complete with an updated libretto in English.

*Stage Blood* appeals to my taste for vampire culture and very successfully fills a long-standing gap in its history. It reminds us, for example, that Bram Stoker worked in the theater and suggests that he based Dracula at least in part on his employer, the Victorian actor Henry Irving. In fact, there is evidence that Stoker originally planned his vampire novel as a play. *Stage Blood* also appeals to my interest in the theater; it is particularly informative in its treatment of the 19th-century popular theater as well as the development of the often-maligned and just-as-often-ignored genre of melodrama, that theater of horrific chills and spectacular thrills.

Although Stuart ends her study with a very intelligent look at the vampire's trajectory through the cinema, *Stage Blood* is at its most interesting when it concentrates on the productions which predate the appearance of Stoker's *Dracula*; it is this stage history which is so little known today and to which the bulk of her study is devoted. Because of the relative obscurity of so much of her material, Stuart is very generous in her use of original texts; she quotes extensively from libretti, scripts, and reviews, for example. She also includes numerous illustrations, such as reproductions of playbills, photographs of actors and sets, illustrations from novels like *Varney the Vampire*, and the title pages of several vampire productions.

Finally, there are five appendices following the body of her study, which, taken together, make this one of the most thorough documents in the history of the popular stage which I have ever read. These appendices include: a) a list of dramatizations from 1820 to 1985; b) plot outlines and excerpted scenes related to the materials discussed in each of the various chapters (this material is wonderful, giving as it does some idea of the flavor of the productions in all their overwrought splendour); c) biographical information about many of the writers, actors, and producers involved in these performances; d) cast lists for many of the productions discussed; and e) a selected filmography which serves a useful comparative function.

This is the study for which the term "comprehensive" was coined. If you have no interest in the subject matter, or if you consider such a subject worthy of only a minor note in the history of either European theater or vampire literature or both, such attention to historical detail, such listings of original
materials, such provisions of names and dates might seem both
overdone and irrelevant. But *Stage Blood* takes itself and its
subject matter seriously, passing on to its readers the infor-
mation necessary to demonstrate its richness and complexity.
Perhaps I should add, since this is never a matter of course,
that the scope of Stuart's scholarship is as satisfying as her
commentary is intelligent.

Stuart quotes William Axton's contention that the 19th cen-
tury produced "so little great drama and so much delightful
theater" (quoted, Stuart, p. 91). Here is the history of one
strand of that delightful theater. I recommend it highly.
— Veronica Hollinger

*Sutin, Lawrence (Ed).* *The Shifting Realities of Philip K.
Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings.* New York:
0-679-42644-2.

Lawrence Sutin's edition of Philip K. Dick's "literary and philo-
sophical writings" is an excellent collection of material, val-
urable both to scholars and to a general readership. Sutin has
done a great job of assembling a superb collection of some of
Dick's most interesting papers, many of them previously un-
available or available only in hard-to-find or out-of-print pub-
lications. The book consists of essays, journal entries, plot
scenarios, speeches, and interviews which span Dick's writing
career, and also includes short excerpts from Dick's two mil-
lion word *Exegesis*. There is some sterling material available
here, and for this editor Lawrence Sutin is to be commended.

Following his Introduction, Sutin has grouped the selected
writings into six loosely related areas: autobiographical writ-
ings; "Writings on Science Fiction and Related Ideas"; material
"related" to *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and its "pro-
posed sequel" (about which more later); "Plot Proposals and
Outlines" (the "Plot Idea for Mission: Impossible (1967)" is
fascinating and quintessential Dick); "Essays and Speeches";
and finally, some all-too-brief passages from the *Exegesis* (cov-

There are, however, a couple of factual errors worth men-
tioning in Sutin's dating and description of the material. Per-
haps to a non-Dickian audience these errors may seem trivial,
but since this collection is likely to be a standard reference
book for many years to come, the errors should be identified
now.

One of the errors is of considerable significance. In Part
Three of the book, called "Works Related to *The Man in the
High Castle* and Its Proposed Sequel," Sutin has included "The

*SFRA Review* #219, page 72
Two Completed Chapters of a Proposed Sequel to *The Man in the High Castle*, which he has dated 1974. This dating cannot be correct; the more accurate time frame is the 1963–65 period, most likely 1964. According to Ray Nelson, Dick expressed an interest in late 1964 or early 1965 in writing a sequel to the book. Moreover, these chapters are contained in manuscript form in the Cal State–Fullerton library among Dick’s papers, lent by Dick himself to that institution in 1972. That collection contains no writings dated after that year. Sutin’s dating of these chapters as 1974 even contradicts what he himself has written. In his biography, *Divine Invasions* (1989), Sutin mentions Dick’s proposed sequel, saying “Back in 1964 he made a start at it (two chapters, twenty-two pages total, survive...)” (p. 117), correctly going on to relate the chapters to the notes for a sequel Dick made in 1974 which were dictated onto cassette tape. Sutin, inexplicably, does not offer a reason for revising the date of composition of these chapters. If he has new information behind his re-dating of these chapters, he does not provide it.

The other error is a misdated and misidentified document indicated as a so-called *Exegesis* passage from “c. 1977” on pages 328–29 of the book. Here, Dick begins, “I almost became a sincere tool of a conspiracy consisting of myself,” and goes on to accuse himself of the infamous November 1971 break-in of his home in San Rafael, California. According to information provided by Gregg Rickman in his forthcoming book *Variable Man: The Lives of Philip K. Dick* (which I have read in draft form), it would seem that Sutin has misdated this fascinating text, which was written in late November or possibly early December of 1972, approximately on the one-year anniversary of the break-in (which no doubt prompted these musings). According to Rickman, this document was not written as part of the *Exegesis*, but actually originated as a letter by Dick to Tessa Busby, who was soon to become Dick’s fifth wife. The document first bore the title, “With love to Tessa from Phil: The #3 Apology,” and was part of a series of “apologies” Dick wrote Tessa at the end of that month. Again, if Sutin has information which would clarify this situation, he fails to offer it.

Finally, I think it is unfortunate that the *Exegesis* is trickling into publication in such a fragmented form. While I treasure Sutin’s own earlier edition *In Pursuit of Valis* (1991), a great selection of *Exegesis* material, I have grave reservations about the way in which this material is appearing. The prodigious body of writing we now refer to as the *Exegesis* consumed much of Dick’s time and energy over the last eight years of his life, and still remains largely unexplored and uncharted. It’s likely that the *Exegesis* is one of the best books Philip K. Dick ever wrote (even if it was never intended to be published in book form), but there is no sense of that, or only inklings of that, as
a few pages, now and again, of that massive manuscript are published (with dates only approximate, and the pages themselves removed from their original context). It seems a shame for work so definitive of a major writer to appear in such haphazard fashion. No doubt this is related to the economics of the publishing industry, but I'm beginning to have doubts that I'll see even the majority of the *Exegesis* in my lifetime. Nonetheless, I must reiterate my initial remarks: I think this is an excellent collection of Dick's literary and philosophical writings, and Sutin needs to be commended. Make no mistake about it: no serious Dick scholar can do without it. However, I can recommend it to a general readership as well, one who may be only slightly familiar with Dick's work through a few novels and/or short stories. Sutin provides enough information for the uninitiated reader to understand the origin and context of the writings; moreover, Dick himself more often than not was self-effacing enough to assume his audience was unfamiliar with his thought and work, and therefore provides sufficient exposition of the issues.

— Sam Umland


Since J.R.R. Tolkien's death in 1973, a substantial effort has been made, first by Guy Gavriel Kay working with Christopher Tolkien, then by Christopher Tolkien alone, but also by a host of only marginally acknowledged Tolkien scholars such as Taum Santoski, John Rateliff, Doug Anderson, Richard C. West, and possibly others unknown to us, to make the body of J.R.R. Tolkien's lifework available to those of us wishing to watch the creative process of Tolkien's world-architecture.

Early on in the process, there was a parting of the ways between Guy Gavriel Kay and J.R.R. Tolkien's son, Christopher, over the form that J.R.R. Tolkien's posthumously-published lifework would be presented. Kay opted for a posthumous collaborative format which would allow for the presentation of much of the work in a finished form. Christopher Tolkien chose a more scholarly option. Each approach has its advantages and audiences. While "The History of Middle Earth", in its current eleven volumes (projected for twelve), is perhaps a unique event in publishing history, useful to the scholar but also prized by a wider group of readers, one wonders what the effect might have been of presenting this body of work as fiction. It is possible that it might have supplanted a whole generation of bad imitators of the works, style, and subject matter of Tolkien, especially if the themes were handled at a level of

*SFRA Review* #219, page 74
artfulness consistent with that of J.R.R. Tolkien. We can only speculate whether that would even be possible without Tolkien's own hand — a core question in any discussion of individual creativity. However, since J.R.R. Tolkien thought of himself as a chronicler rather than a creator, it might be argued that a writer such as Kay, who has so effectively used other historical sources as themes for his own work (e.g., *A Song for Arbonne*), could have achieved results that even the master would have approved.

This particular volume of the History also includes the second part of a set of Tolkien's notes and commentary on the Later or Quenta Silmarillion, an unfinished manuscript that appears in Volume V of the History (*The Lost Road and Other Writings*, 1987, p. 199-338) as well as J.R.R.'s background notes and annotations on *The Lays of Beleriand* (Volume III, 1985) and a few other similar texts from J.R.R.'s papers, with contextual commentary by Christopher Tolkien. As with most of the other works in the History, this one requires a good memory and/or a good library of Tolkien. Nevertheless, the scholar or the Tolkien enthusiast will want to own the book, complete with its typically excellent indexes, to help establish both the illusion that Middle Earth has an intense level of validity (almost reality) and to trace the complexities of Tolkien's creative process. The history in its entirety is a demonstration of both J.R.R. and Christopher Tolkien's textual/scholarly training in language and literature, translation and Anglo-Saxon textual studies, and the wonderful sense of play with these topics that could give rise to the entirety of Middle Earth in fictional and "historical" detail.

— Janice M. Bogstad and Philip E. Kaveny

*SFRA Review #219, page 75*

*Regenesis*, Julia Ecklar's first book, isn't really a novel. Rather, it's a collection of four novellas or novelettes that feature the same character, Rahel Tovin. The front matter indicates the sections were previously published in *Analog* in 1992 and 1995 and have been revised for this volume. The four sections are linked not only by the use of the same prickly, unlikable protagonist but also by similar plot circumstances: Tovin works for Noah's Ark, a company that owns the sole rights to Earth animals' genetic structures. Tovin clearly prefers animals to people, but in each section, she has to deal with a pesky individual out to interfere with Tovin's work or to infringe on Noah's Ark's "property." Tovin, naturally, must save the day.

At a time when world courts hotly debate the ethics of owning or claiming patent rights on particular genetic structures, the basic premise of *Regenesis* appears timely, but Ecklar does not query this (though one story features a human animal). Instead, she writes a persuasively environmental series of stories that questions human (or alien) intervention in ecosystems. In a note at the end of the book, Ecklar hints at the inspiration for these stories' premise: the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species has frozen "semen, embryos, and other living cells and tissues from hundreds of severely threatened species." Ecklar moves this conservation effort into a future where science can reproduce and reseed these living creatures, and Rahel Tovin works to make sure all this is done in good faith and to troubleshoot when it's not.

Each section stands alone, and though each is set on a different planet, Ecklar has created a coherent, consistent universe. I particularly enjoyed the first section, "Blood Relations," in part because of its satisfyingly unsatisfying ending. In this story, Tovin must deal with an alien predator that learns from the victims it eats, which include some human colonists as well as her own dog. Another section, "The Human Animal," features a feral child, apparently created in a lab from human DNA some 750,000 years old. This story is notable for some intriguing aliens, the tlict.

Perhaps most unsatisfying about *Regenesis* as a whole is Tovin herself. Relentlessly difficult and angry, Tovin fails to change in this work, despite gaining an apprentice; further, her actions are sometimes inexplicable. I would have welcomed hints about Tovin as a person — why does she prefer animals to people? What about her past? Why does she respond to so many situations with sometimes incomprehensible rage? I felt
that a fundamental key to Tovin was withheld. *Regenesis* has a great premise and the stories certainly entertain, but read this one for plot, not character.

— Karen Hellekson


Ever since I received a copy of *Ammonite* as a “banquet favor” at the 1994 SFRA Conference in Chicago (and read it on the plane home), I have been looking forward to Nicola Griffith’s next book. *Ammonite* was her first novel, published as a Del Rey “Discovery” paperback, and it immediately gained attention by winning the 1993 Tiptree and Lambda Awards. In fact, due to popular demand, *Ammonite* is soon to be reissued in a hardcover format.

With *Slow River*, Griffith’s second novel, I have not been disappointed, and I find it particularly refreshing that this novel is in no way a sequel to the first. While *Ammonite* took place in an unspecified but presumably distant future, *Slow River* takes place closer to home in a nearish and sometimes nightmarish future, where managing industrial waste has become such big business that Frances Lorien van de Oest, or Lore, is heiress to a family empire created by that industry. In spite of her wealth and position, however, the book mysteriously begins with Lore naked and alone, unable and unwilling to call on her family for help. With the help of a woman who takes her in, Lore turns to an underworld of drugs and prostitution before she finally “steals” herself a more legitimate job in waste treatment, the only field she really knows.

This novel is a mature, thorough, and complete work. The writing style, more base and earthy than in *Ammonite*, is smooth and compelling. The plotting is well-paced, with three narrative strands depicting different time periods and the corresponding stratum of society occupied by Lore during each time. At the SFRA Conference in Grand Forks, Bud Foote described *Slow River* as having a “Dickensian feel,” with a sluggish river moving through a gritty, industrial, urbanized landscape. I found I agreed with his assessment.

Finally, there is the issue of homosexuality — or non-issue, actually, for it never occurs to Lore to tell the reader she is lesbian, any more than it would occur to a person to proclaim their heterosexuality upon meeting strangers for the first time. As in Mary Rosenblum’s *The Stone Garden*, characters love whom they love, with no apologies or explanations. It’s a very grown-up attitude, one I’d like to see more widely adopted.

If *Slow River* is any indication, we have a lot to look forward

Thomas Ligotti has been publishing his unique and unsettling short stories since 1981. Many of these appeared in small press magazines, but more recently they have also been appearing in original anthologies and in the major magazines of the field, like *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Weird Tales* (recently retitled *Worlds of Fantasy and Horror*). Three major collections of his stories have been compiled: *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (small press limited edition, 1986; revised and expanded, 1989), *Grimscribe: His Lives and Works* (1991), and the present volume, *Noctuary*. (A fourth collection of very ephemeral pieces was published by a small press in 1994, *The Agonizing Resurrection of Victor Frankenstein and Other Gothic Tales*.)

In my opinion, Ligotti's stories have been the best things to come out of the horror field in many years. They are baroquely written, oblique in subject, surreal and introspective. In some senses they are neo-Lovecraftian tales as filtered through the world-views of the likes of William S. Burroughs or Jorge Luis Borges. Most of the stories are excursions into the nature of what is real, and the nature of horror itself — they are describable as postmodern in the best sense of the term.

*Noctuary* contains eight full-length stories, nineteen vignettes or sketches (ranging from only two to four pages each), and an illuminating foreword, "In the Night, In the Dark: A Note on the Appreciation of Weird Fiction". The eight stories fill up nearly three-quarters of the book; the vignettes account for the remaining quarter. Appropriately, the volume takes its title from a rarely encountered word that is the converse of "diary"; a "noctuary" is an account of what passes in the night, while a "diary" accounts for what happens during the day.

A notable omission from this book is a listing of the previous appearances of the stories. With a bit of digging elsewhere, I can say that only one story ("The Tsalal") is published for the first time in this volume. Of the other seven, one first appeared in 1986, four in 1989, and two in 1991. Of the nineteen vignettes, I have been able to trace seventeen to small press publications, where they appeared under different titles between 1984 and 1989. Even the foreword was previously published, again under a different title, as a column in the premiere issue of *Necrofile* (1991). The conclusion one is forced to make is that this volume is basically made up of stories that...
have been passed over for previous collections, making this a catch-up volume filled, by implication, with second rate mate-
rial.

The pleasant surprise is that this is not the case. The major-
ity of the stories in this volume are first-rate. True, the nine-
teen vignettes (they could almost be called prose poems) could be considered by some to be padding, but even they are in-
triguing bit-parts, trial-runs at different effects elicited from short materials. They are certainly worth reading, as well as worth resurrecting from their earlier incarnations in the small press.

Still, readers encountering Ligotti for the first time may be better off starting with either of his first two collections, sim-
ply because they are larger. With a greater number of stories, Ligotti is better able to exercise and flex his considerable imagi-
nation and talent. Nevertheless, Noctuary remains a worthy entry-point, and an important addition to the small but growing body of work by the best and most original writer of con-
temporary horror fiction.

— Douglas A. Anderson


Though primarily a collection of contemporary stories, this collection contains elements of fantasy and magic realism that may be of interest. Even without the fantastic elements, how-
ever, Trevino’s stories are fresh, witty, and imbued with a dis-
tinctive style and narrative voice. Set in modern day Hispanic communities (mostly in greater Los Angeles), they offer a seam-
less mixture of the carefully observed lifes of ordinary people, fantastic or magical events that bring these people together, and a gentle sense of humor that occasionally passes over into farce. Many of the stories, such as “The Attack of the Lowrider Zombies”, poke fun at various stereotypes of Hispanics, par-
ticularly cinematic ones. This should come as no surprise to those who are familiar with Trevino’s work as a film writer and director.

From a scholarly viewpoint, The Fabulous Sinkhole will pri-
marily interest those looking into magic realism, and the eth-
nic variations of modern urban fantasy. For everyone else, this collections offers some light, witty, well-written humor and social satire.

— Richard Terra

SFRA Review #219, page 80
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SFRA Review #219, page 81
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SFRA Review #219, page 83
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*SFRA Review* #219, page 84