292
Spring 2010

Editors
Karen Hellekson
16 Rolling Rdg.
Jay, ME 04239
karenhellekson@karenhellekson.com
sfrareview@gmail.com

Craig Jacobsen
English Department
Mesa Community College
1833 West Southern Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202
jacobsen@mail.mc.maricopa.edu
sfrareview@gmail.com

Managing Editor
Janice M. Bogstad
McIntyre Library-CD
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
105 Garfield Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54702-5010
bogstajm@uwec.edu

Nonfiction Editor
Ed McKnight
113 Cannon Lane
Taylors, SC 29687
emcknight@andersonuniversity.edu

Fiction Editor
Edward Carmien
29 Sterling Rd.
Princeton, NJ 08540
sfrafiction@mac.com

Media Editor
Ritch Calvin
16A Erland Rd.
Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114
rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

The *SFRA Review* (ISSN 1068-395X) is published four times a year by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA), and distributed to SFRA members. Individual issues are not for sale; however, all issues after 256 are published to SFRA's Web site (http://www.sfra.org/) no fewer than 10 weeks after paper publication. For information about SFRA and membership, see the back cover. SFRA thanks the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire for its assistance in producing the *SFRA Review*.

SFRA Review

A publication of the Science Fiction Research Association

In This Issue

SFRA Review Business
Counting Down 2
SFRA Business
Statement in Response to the Arizona Immigration Bill 2
Ask not what you can do for SFRA… 2
SFRA Award Winners 3
Call for Executive Committee Candidates 4
Feature
Scholarly Research and Writing 101 4
Nonfiction Reviews
Classics and Contemporaries 8
The Universe of Oz 9
The Unknown Lovecraft 10
War of the Words: The Utopian Vision of H. G. Wells 11
Fiction Reviews
Deceiver 12
The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein: A Novel 12
Ares Express 14
Nebula Awards Showcase 2010 15
Brain Thief 16
Transition 17
Media Reviews
Avatar 18
Pumzi 20
The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus 22
Southern Portable Panic: Federico Álvarez's *Ataque de Pánico!* 23
District B13 (Banlieue 13) 24
Small Steps for Ants, a Giant Leap for Mankind: Saul Bass's *Phase IV* 24
Pushing the Wrong Buttons 25
Pandorum 26
Dans une galaxie près de chez vous 27
Shadow of the Colossus 28
Announcements
Calls for Papers 29

SUBMISSIONS

The *SFRA Review* encourages submissions of reviews, review essays that cover several related texts, interviews, and feature articles. Submission guidelines are available at http://www.sfra.org/ or by inquiry to the appropriate editor. Contact the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.

SFRA Review Business

EDITORS' MESSAGE

Counting Down

Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen

With just a few issues left to go as coeditors of *SFRA Review,* we encourage any anyone interested in taking over the reins of the editorship to contact the SFRA president, Lisa Yaszek (lisa.yaszek AT lcc.gatech.edu), laying out their ideas and explaining why they'd be the perfect choice. A comprehensive job description appeared in *SFRA Review* #291 on page 5. A new editor will be chosen from among the proposals by the SFRA Board at the SFRA annual meeting in Carefree, Arizona.

Meanwhile, we plan some great content in these pages to finish out our tenure with a bang—so keep an eye out. In this issue, Karen comprehensively analyzes tools to ease scholarship in her "Scholarly Research and Writing 101." Future issues will feature a single-author study and a 101 about SF audio dramas. If you're not careful, bumping into one of us in the bar at SFRA in Carefree, Arizona (we'll be the ones wearing protest T-shirts festooned with little SF pins), may result in your agreeing to write content for our last issue!

SFRA Business

CONFERENCE UPDATE

Statement in Response to the Arizona Immigration Bill

SFRA Executive Committee

As you all know, the Science Fiction Research Association has planned for several years to hold this year's annual international conference in Arizona. Conference Coordinator Craig Jacobsen and other members of SFRA have expended a great deal of time and energy towards making this a successful and productive meeting.

There have been questions and concerns from SFRA members regarding our 2010 meeting, because it will be held in Arizona where Governor Jan Brewer signed into law SB 1070, "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act," on April 23, 2010. This law requires any person upon request by a law enforcement officer to prove their legal residence in the United States. Barring legal challenges, the law is scheduled to go into effect by August. Therefore, SFRA conference attendees will not be required as a result of this law to carry proper identification and documentation at the time of the conference in June.

A number of cities, states, businesses, and individuals have called for an economic boycott of Arizona as a result of this new law. However, it is the opinion of the SFRA Executive Committee that we should move forward with our meeting in Arizona. It is our unanimous belief that this law is wrong, because it encourages racial profiling and harassment, and it erodes one's right against unreasonable questioning when not suspected of committing a crime. However, we are also of the opinion that we, as scholars, researchers, and teachers, can turn this deplorable situation into something worthwhile for our organization and the outreach of its members.

The SFRA Executive Committee does not believe that our organization's boycotting Arizona will achieve as much good as our continuing to hold the conference as planned. We hold our annual international conference in a different location each year for the purposes of catering to the geographical and academic affiliations of our members, engaging diverse localities, and having those places leave an indelible mark on each conference that makes each specific to a geographic and cultural context. Additionally, we are economically tied to Arizona due to expenses already incurred and our financial responsibility to the hosting resort. We feel that it would be more productive, both economically and scholastically, to seize this opportunity to engage and discuss these issues on the ground in Arizona.

It is with discussion and action in mind that the Executive Committee has decided to hold a roundtable discussion at SFRA 2010 about SB 1070. Instead of standing in silence and throwing away all of the hard work that went into planning, developing, and organizing SFRA 2010, we intend to face the issues head-on at the meeting. We do not know how this conversation will develop or what its results may be, but we do know that rational discussion and weighing our options in face-to-face conversation is a strong beginning.

We invite all SFRA members and other scholars who have not yet done so to send in your presentation and panel ideas to Craig by the new deadline of May 15. And, non-late registration has been extended to May 15, so there is still time to register for the conference and take part in the discussion of "Far Stars and Tin Stars: Science Fiction and the Frontier," which already included, but now even more so, issues of race, borders, and Otherness. We hope to see you in Arizona where we can all be a part of the science fiction vanguard against racism.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ask not what you can do for SFRA…

Lisa Yaszek

There are many reasons why Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen are excellent editors of the SFRA Review, *but first and foremost among them—at least for me—is their willingness to help a president complete her column with grace and style. Indeed, as you may remember, the ruling metaphors for my last column were inspired by Karen's desire for more talk about prancing ponies and sparkling tiaras. Now this one goes out to Craig, who suggested that I might begin by remixing one of the most famous motivational speeches in American political history.*

And so, my fellow SFRA members, ask *both* what your organization can do for you…*and* what you can do for your organization!

As always, the SFRA continues to pursue both old and new initiatives furthering the serious study of science fiction across media (yes, this is where I tell you what your organization can do for you). SFRA 2010 in Carefree, Arizona, promises to be one of our most exciting conferences ever. Thanks to Craig Jacobsen for putting together a very cool roster of guest scholars including old friends Pawel Frelik and Joan Slonczewski and our new friend Dr. Margaret Weitekamp, Curator in the Division of Space History of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum. Thanks also to Craig for organizing not just one or two but three—count 'em, three—preconference short courses on the teaching and study of SF. I am particularly excited about these short courses because they look to meet the needs of everyone from the most novice of SF scholars to the most veteran of SFRA conference attendees.

Of course, the SFRA conference isn't the only place where we can all get together to talk about science fiction. Web director Matthew Holtmeier and public relations director Jason Ellis continue their tireless efforts to improve the SFRA Web site for organizational members. As you have no doubt already noticed, over the past few months Matthew and Jason have worked with vice president Ritch Calvin to reformat the SFRA Web site so member-related news stands out prominently amongst the many other goodies offered up on our site. I encourage those of you with new books, grants, teaching gigs, and other science fiction studies-related accomplishments to pass along detailed information to Jason (dynamicsubspace AT google mail.com) for promotion on the SFRA Web site. As Jason wisely notes, "This is good for us (more terms for the search engines and visible association with the newest published works in the field) and good for authors (another billboard in cyberspace and [another way] to show off their SFRA cred)."

And while you're thinking about what news you'd like us to post to the SFRA Web site, I hope you'll check out some of our other members-only features. You might begin by commenting on JJ Pierce and Matthew Holtmeier's blogs, or perhaps even starting one of your own. If you're interested in blogging for us but aren't sure where to begin, try browsing through our discussion forums on SF Teaching, SF Scholarship, and Professional Development—surely something there will inspire you! Finally, I hope that next time you visit the SFRA Web site you'll take a few minutes to page through the syllabus project. Please keep in mind that these parts of the SFRA Web site are restricted to members only. If you've paid your membership online, then Matthew has already granted you access to all these features. If you've paid your membership dues by snail mail, just go to the contact form on the SFRA site, choose "Web site feedback," and send Matthew an e-mail with your user name and a request for members-only access. Once again, Jason reminds me—and so I remind you—that all these resources "add value to an SFRA membership, and they add something that is always present and accessible."

But of course, conferences, blogs, and discussion forums are only as valuable as we, members of the SFRA community, make them. (Yes, this is where I tell you what you can do for your organization.) I hope that as you browse through the new features on our Web site you'll consider sharing your own ideas and materials. I also hope that as you are doing this, you'll consider serving the SFRA in a more sustained manner as well. As many of you already know, this executive committee is in its final year and we will elect a new slate of officers in early fall. All positions are open and offer wonderful administrative experience—and while that might sound like an oxymoron, I am utterly sincere when I tell you that there is nothing more satisfying than working with other SFRA members to grow our organization. These are truly the smartest, nicest, and most capable people with whom you will ever have the pleasure of working.

And speaking of incredibly smart, nice, and capable people, this year also marks the end of Karen and Craig's tenure as coeditors of the *SFRA Review,* and so we are looking for one or two good people to succeed them. If you are interested in running for an SFRA officer position, please contact our Immediate Past President, Adam Frisch (Adam.Frisch AT briarcliff.edu); if you are interested in applying for the position of *SFRA Review* editor(s), please contact me (lisa.yaszek AT lcc.gatech.edu).

We look forward to hearing from you by e-mail soon and talking with you further at the SFRA conference in June!

2009 AWARDS

SFRA Award Winners

Lisa Yaszek

I'm pleased to let you know that all the SFRA award committees have made their selections in a timely fashion! Here are the winners of this year's awards:

Pilgrim Award (for lifetime contributions to SF/F studies): Eric Rabkin

Pioneer Award (for outstanding SF studies essay of the year): Allison de Fren, "The Anatomical Gaze in Tomorrow's Eve," published in *Science Fiction Studies* no. 108, vol. 36, no. 2 (July 2009): 235–265.

Clareson Award (for distinguished service): David Mead

Mary Kay Bray Award (for the best essay, interview, or extended review in the past year's *SFRA Review*): Ritch Calvin, "Mundane SF 101"

Student Paper Award: Andrew Ferguson, "Such Delight in Bloody Slaughter: R. A. Lafferty and the Dismemberment of the Body Grotesque"

All recipients have been notified of their awards. It looks like all our winners will be at SFRA, with the exception of Andrew, who is studying in Liverpool. Be sure to congratulate them in person!

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Call for Executive Committee Candidates

Adam Frisch

SFRA seeks candidates, including self-nominations, for this fall's election for the following executive committee positions, effective January 1, 2011: president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. Nominations or questions should be sent to Adam Frisch (Adam.Frisch AT briarcliff.edu), SFRA immediate past president. Job descriptions, drawn from the official duties of each officer found on page 35 of the 2009 SFRA Member Directory, are as follows:

President (term: 2 years; may not succeed themselves in office): The president shall be chief executive of the association; he/she shall preside at all meetings of the membership and the Executive Committee, have general and active management of the business of the association, and see that all orders and resolutions of the Executive Committee are carried out; the president shall have general superintendence and direction of all other officers of the association and shall see that their duties are properly performed; the president shall submit a report of the operations of the association for the fiscal year to the Executive Committee and to the membership at the annual meeting, and from time to time shall report to the Executive Committee on matters within the president's knowledge that may affect the association; the president shall be ex officio member of all standing committees and shall have the powers and duties in management usually vested in the office of president of a corporation; the president shall appoint all committees herein unless otherwise provided.

Vice president (term: 2 years; may not succeed themselves in office): The vice president shall be vested with all the powers and shall perform all the duties of the president during the absence of the latter and shall have such other duties as may, from time to time, be determined by the Executive Committee. At any meeting at which the president is to preside, but is unable, the vice president shall preside, and if neither is present or able to preside, then the secretary shall preside, and if the secretary is not present or able to preside, then the treasurer shall preside. The vice president shall have special responsibility for membership recruitment for SFRA.

Secretary (term: 2 years; may succeed themselves in office): The secretary shall attend all sessions of the Executive Committee and all meetings of the membership and record all the votes of the association and minutes of the meetings and shall perform like duties for the Executive Committee and other committees when required. The secretary shall give notice of all meetings of the membership and special meetings of the Executive Committee and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Executive Committee or the president. In the event the secretary is unable to attend such meetings as may be expected, the Executive Committee may designate some other member of the association to serve as secretary pro tern.

Treasurer (term: 2 years; may succeed themselves in office): The treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the association and have charge of all receipts and disbursements of the association and shall be the custodian of the association's funds. The treasurer shall have full authority to receive and give receipts for all monies due and payable to the association and to sign and endorse checks and drafts in its name and on its behalf. The treasurer shall deposit funds of the association in its name and such depositories as may be designated by the Executive Committee. The treasurer shall furnish the Executive Committee an annual financial report within 60 days of the fiscal year; the fiscal year shall end on December 31.

Feature

Scholarly Research and Writing 101

Karen Hellekson

Long gone are the days of laboriously handwriting outlines and crafting index cards with bibliographic information, to literally cut and paste, shuffle, and rearrange while drafting and writing. Certainly such strategies, formerly taught in high school, may still be of value for researchers who require tactile and visual cues for organization. Many researchers, myself included, enjoy handling books, choosing colors to code data, shaking White-Out correction pens, and writing on high-quality paper with carefully selected inks. Yet when it comes time to create a document, particularly a meticulously documented scholarly essay, mastering some of the new online tools may make work quicker and more accurate.

Most research and writing now begins and ends on a computer, just as, to teachers' dismay, most forays into research topics begin (but, one hopes, do not end) with Wikipedia. These tools' abilities to capture data are remarkable: imaging and filing cited Web pages can now be done with the press of a button. Most of these tools are platform independent: for the tools I outline below, unless specified otherwise, both Macs and PCs are supported. In addition, I highlight only tools that are free. Some require payment if you want extra functionality or if you want to store lots of information. Depending on your setup, data may be stored in the cloud (that is, information is stored on remote servers owned by a service, not by you, so it can be accessed from anywhere), which is convenient—but may also be a security risk.

The array of programs possible for seeing a writing project through, from brainstorming to research to writing to submission for publication, is truly dizzying. Paid programs not discussed here vie for attention among open source collaborative projects. In general, I recommend open source projects before proprietary, closed software, but because many universities provide expensive paid tools to instructors and students, it may not be practical, or even possible, to port information embedded in these proprietary programs to a more open format. If you are ready to begin a large research project—for example, you are writing your dissertation or a book—instead of using the closed tools your university might offer, consider free alternatives so

you aren't forced into a proprietary format that might lock up your information and perhaps later become a financial burden.

Before I delve into the best applications for scholarly research done on computers, a caveat: experimenting with online tools may result in initial frustration and even data loss. It's best to run a small-scale test before porting over important data. If you are syncing data across computers, run a test sync before committing valuable data.

Note: All URLs have been checked and were active as of May 1, 2010.

Mind Mapping

MindMeister (http://www.mindmeister.com/)—Simple online outlining tool; no download required. Output to text, PDF, or images. iPhone application available.

XMind (http://www.xmind.net/)—Free download; pro upgrade with extra functionality. Output to text, HTML, or images.

FreeMind (http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Download)—Java-based program. Free download. Output to HTML or PDF.

Mind mapping is directed brainstorming. Mind maps are like outlines, except they need not be linear. They show connections between nodes of information. Mind mapping is used in businesses to organize complicated projects with constantly changing objectives. In addition to the free applications listed here, well-regarded paid mind mapping tools include MindManager (http://www.mindjet.com/products/overview) and OmniOutliner (for Mac; http://www.omnigroup.com/products/omnioutliner/).

Personal Information Management

EverNote (http://www.evernote.com/)—Online dumping ground for any kind of information you can upload: photos, screen shots, text notes or Word documents. The premium version buys extra storage space, better security, and PDF searching. Use your browser, iPhone, or iPod touch to access your EverNote account; items are stored remotely.

KeepNote (http://rasm.ods.org/keepnote/)—Note-taking software geared to students. Permits outlining, drafting, full-text search. Download the program; items are stored on your computer.

Paid programs with personal information management functionality include Microsoft's OneNote (http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/onenote/default.aspx), which you can purchase as part of the Office suite, and UltraRecall (http://www.kinook.com/UltraRecall/).

Personal information management is a way to aggregate vast amounts of information and then make that information searchable. It is valuable during the early phase of research. Rather than spending time getting bogged down in proper citation and obtaining full text, information can just be captured and tossed into a giant bin for later sorting. Tagging the items in EverNote as you go may permit you to find connections between items of information that may prove fruitful. Instead of transcribing the outline that you sketched on a cocktail napkin, you can snap a picture of it and upload it to EverNote, add a few tags, and then access it later.

Data Syncing and Storage

Dropbox (https://www.dropbox.com/)—Remote backup and syncing across computers (2GB provided free; premium version buys much more space). Download the program; items stored on your computer are synced across computers and also stored remotely. iPhone/iPod touch app available.

Windows Live Sync (https://sync.live.com/)—Associated with your Windows Live ID (the same as your Hotmail account); permits automatic syncing across computers. Download the program and set it up.

Xmarks (formerly Foxmarks) (http://www.xmarks.com/)—Syncs Web browser bookmarks across computers and, optionally, across browsers on the same computer. Works with Internet Explorer, Firefox (best), Chrome, and Safari. Download as a plug-in for your browser. Stores bookmark info remotely.

Most people have access to more than one computer: a desktop at home, a laptop at the office, a netbook to carry to the coffee shop. Keeping data organized across computers is a full-time job in itself. Enter these tools, which back up and update information across multiple computers according to criteria you specify. Carbonite (http://www.carbonite.com/) and Mozy (http://mozy.com/) are two well-regarded platform-nonspecific paid autobackup programs with a Web component that let you access your data from any browser. Apple users may want to use Time Machine (http://www.apple.com/macosx/what-is-macosx/time-machine.html), perhaps with Time Capsule (http://www.apple.com/timecapsule/).

Dropbox and Windows Live Sync will automatically sync one computer with another while keeping a copy on a remote site. Xmarks will sync bookmarks across computers running the same browser; just install the Xmarks plug-in into each browser on each computer that you want synced.

Dropbox and Windows SkyDrive may be used, perhaps in conjunction with Zotero, to store and share research information because your online account can be set so that others can access it. With Dropbox and Windows Live Sync, you could set your Zotero library to back up automatically. Or you could dump project-specific PDFs and your paper draft in a special subdirectory that is automatically backed up. One big strength of Dropbox in particular: it's possible to undelete and to revert to earlier versions of data.

Simple Data Storage

Gladinet (http://www.gladinet.com/)—Downloadable Windows-only program that maps a remote Web site as a drive right on your computer, so you can easily drag and drop to copy files to an off-site location. Paid version has extra functionality and backup capabilities. Integrates remote storage at SkyDrive (free), Box.net (paid), Google Docs (free), Picasa (free), and more with your desktop.

Google Groups (http://groups.google.com/)—Provides 100MB of free storage in the Files section, so you can upload and store files and documents. Web-based interface works on any computer platform.

SDExplorer (formerly SkyDrive Explorer) (http://www.cloudstorageexplorer.com/)—Windows-only program that maps your Windows SkyDrive as a drive right on your computer. Paid version has extra functionality.

Windows SkyDrive (http://skydrive.live.com/)—Associated with your Windows Live ID (the same as your Hotmail account); WebDAV; permits manual backup and remote storage of up to 25GB of information. File size limit is 50MB. Web-based interface works on any computer platform, not just Windows.

If you need a scheme for free off-site storage of important documents, like your research notes or your dissertation draft, for occasional backup or for access while traveling, these tools may do the trick.

One classic method of backing up important documents is simply e-mailing them to yourself. Similarly, signing yourself up for your own personal Google Group, without any other members, and then uploading documents to its Files section is a quick and easy way to gain some data storage without sucking down your e-mail's space allotment. It's an easy storage option if you like the Google integrated suite of features. You may also find that you can use the Google Group's functionality to organize research information: notes, sources, links, and so on.

Windows SkyDrive has an astounding amount of free space, but you have to upload files laboriously by hand, file by file. It won't transfer anything automatically. Still, it may be worth it to spend some time uploading particularly valuable documents. If you're uploading by hand on a regular schedule, you may as well also upload backups by date in case you need to revert to a previous version.

If you want to get fancy, it is possible to turn SkyDrive into a space you can access like an extra hard drive right from your Windows computer (this won't work for Mac users). You can either do this via a hack (http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/upload-sync-files-skydrive-windows-explorer/), or you can do it via SDExplorer or Gladinet, both of which make your SkyDrive appear on your list of hard-drive options. But it won't automatically anything back up; you will have to drag and drop the files to copy them.

Unless you want to make neatly organized, named files available to others, as for a collaborative project, simple hand-uploaded data storage is best done with zipped versions of the files. Just ensure that the file size of the compressed file meets any limits set by the remote site—50MB for SkyDrive, for example.

The sheer hassle of remembering to back up manually, not to mention the inevitable infrequency and incompleteness of the task, may make the $60 a year for automatic backups via Carbonite or Mozy look affordable. Particularly for researchers with big databases of bibliographic information, including lots of annotated PDFs, or for people who need to back up lots of images or clips, a "set it and forget it" method of backing up combined with storage may be an elegant solution.

Bibliographic Tracking

Delicious (http://delicious.com/)—Web-based bookmark program.

CiteULike (http://www.citeulike.org/)—Web-based citation tracking program focusing on the sciences. Permits storage and searching of PDFs.

Both Delicious and CiteULike let you create tags, and both have a social networking/sharing aspect. They work well if all you want to do is keep track of pages or capture citation information while you surf, without obtaining the full text. Delicious is the less scholarly of the two tools: it permits tagging and organizing any kind of information, and it generates nice summary Web pages for your review.

CiteULike, sponsored by powerhouse multinational publisher Springer, is dedicated to the scientific academic market. Like Delicious, it permits tagging; unlike Delicious, it stores information in a bibliographic form that can be output to a reference manager like EndNote. It also lets you store and search PDFs. Although CiteULike supports only scientific journals, not journals in the humanities, it may be used for any bibliographic information. It won't autofill data for unsupported journals, so the information must be keyed in by hand. CiteULike integrates with several other bibliographic tools, such as BibMe and Mendeley.

Bibliographic Entry Generator

BibMe (http://www.bibme.org/)—Books, magazines, newspapers, Web sites, journals, films. Input partial information and fill in required fields as cued. Outputs in MLA, APA, Chicago, or Turabian style. Databases include Amazon.com, FindArticles, Yahoo! News, and CiteULike.

OttoBib (http://www.ottobib.com/)—Books only. Input the ISBN, choose a style output, and cut and paste the delivered properly formatted reference into your paper. Outputs in MLA, APA, or Chicago/Turabian style; and as cut-and-paste code for BibTeX and Wikipedia. Database is ISBN numbers.

These tools generate a properly styled bibliographic entry from partial information that is meant to be cut and pasted from your browser into your paper.

Academic Bibliographies and Paper Composition

Bibus (http://sourceforge.net/projects/bibus-biblio/)—Downloadable open source desktop program that uses a MySQL database to store references.

Mendeley (http://www.mendeley.com/)—Downloadable desktop and Web program. Imports citations from academic databases, including Google Scholar. Syncs with Zotero and CiteULike.

Synapsen (http://www.verzetteln.de/synapsen/synapsen_e.html)—Downloadable Java hypertextual card catalog that permits connections to be drawn between individual bibliographic entries, so it helps the writer find unexpected connections be-

tween ideas. Uses the card catalog metaphor; may be a good fit for old-school researchers who like index cards.

Zotero (http://www.zotero.org/)—Firefox extension that automatically captures on-screen bibliographic information. Works with library aggregating tools like JSTOR. Permits linked storage and annotation of Web pages and PDFs. Supports creation of notes. Syncs to a Web account for backup and sharing.

These programs serve a variety of useful functions: they permit organization of bibliographic material; they organize data storage, as of PDFs, Web pages, images, and films/clips; and they plug into Word or Open Office to automatically insert citations and then generate the matching bibliography. The databases created are fully searchable, and some of these programs permit grouping the items into smaller sublibraries.

Many programs in this class are geared more to the sciences. However, automatically importing a PDF via a PubMed ID, for instance, is rarely needed in the humanities, nor are scholars in the humanities likely to use LaTeX-based writing and bibliographic tools, like the paid Mac program BiblioTeX (http://www.novajo.ca/bibliotex/).

Paid programs (with free demos) include EndNote (http://www.endnote.com/), which is the granddaddy of citation management, Reference Manager (http://www.risinc.com/), and ProCite (http://www.procite.com/); all these programs are owned by Thomson Reuters and are criticized as being generally unwieldy, annoyingly proprietary, and feature poor. However, many universities purchase these programs, so lots of people end up using them. Biblioscape (http://www.biblioscape.com/) is another paid program with some attractive features, including integrated writing capabilities, but like EndNote, the hefty price tag means it is out of reach for individual users. The Open Office folks have a free standards-compliant bibliographic project in the works called Bibliographic (http://bibliographic.openoffice.org/), but it's not yet live.

Many of these programs, both paid and unpaid, have a social networking aspect: their Web component permits sharing items or entire libraries with colleagues. Usually only the bibliographic data and associated notes and comments are shared, not, for example, PDFs of the items themselves, for copyright reasons. For the Web sharing functionality, storage may become an issue: storing many PDFs will quickly gobble up the minimal free storage, and extra space must be purchased. So when thinking about backups, you ought to consider whether you want to back up an entire library, including PDFs, to the Web and pay storage fees, or whether you want to just back up the metadata to the Web site and back up the PDFs in some other manner.

Zotero is unique in that it runs as a Firefox extension, integrated into the Web browser. It permits capture of data on the screen, be it Web page, PDF, or image. Depending on the metadata provided by the item's creator, it may autofill much of the bibliographic information. Or you can create an entry within the Zotero environment and type in all the publication information by hand, as for books you own in hard copy. A stand-alone (desktop) version of Zotero is in the works.

Mendeley has much the same functionality as Zotero, except it already has a desktop component that is downloaded to your computer. Like Zotero, Mendeley has an online tool that backs up data and permits collaboration and sharing of information with colleagues. It syncs with Zotero and CiteULike.

One important caveat for these bibliography managers: the data generated are only as good as the data input. Choosing the wrong sort of source—journal article instead of chapter in a book, for instance—will result in output errors. This is definitely a case of garbage in, garbage out. Papers with in-text and end citations generated with these bibliographical managers will inevitably contain errors and will need to be corrected before submission.

Word Processors

Full-Featured Desktop-Based Office Suites

Microsoft Office (http://office.microsoft.com/)—Popular paid program that is the gold standard for productivity software.

Open Office (http://www.openoffice.org/)—Freeware suite meant to replicate the functionality of Microsoft Office. Free download.

Web-Based Office Suites with Document-Sharing Functionality

Google Documents (http://docs.google.com/)—Includes documents, presentations (like PowerPoint), and spreadsheets. Requires a Google/Open ID. Permits output of documents to a variety of formats, including RTF. File size limits vary (http://docs.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=37603).

Office Live (http://www.officelive.com/)—The Microsoft version of the better-known Google Docs. Includes Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. 5GB storage limit.

Word and Open Office are the only go-to programs for integration with bibliographic software. Word (Microsoft Office) and Writer (Open Office) are full-featured word processors. Although you could use Google Docs as a word processor, it is more useful as a collaboration tool: you can import a word-processed document, then enable other users to view and edit it. Google Docs and Office Live may not be used with the bibliographic programs I discuss above, and if your connection is slow, writing is painful. Google Docs has a brand-name edge; Office Live has the benefit of familiar functionality based on the Microsoft Office suite.

Users of Word 2007 may choose to use the software's Reference ribbon to input bibliographic data and then insert in-text citations that will automatically be used to generate a bibliography (http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/HA100674921033.aspx). Many styles are supported, including MLA. This method may work well for shorter projects, and a big benefit is that it is integrated directly into the Word environment. However, all the data must be entered by hand, and it's not possible to tag entries, attach notes, or manipulate the database. You also can't attach or view PDFs or other files.

Recommendations

For the most flexible and portable research/writing system, I recommend running Zotero, embedded within Firefox,

off a portable drive that you carry around with you on your key chain.

First purchase a high-memory (32GB minimum) USB flash drive/memory stick. Then download and install portable versions of Firefox and Open Office to this small external drive. A one-stop shop for applications optimized to run off memory sticks is the Portable Apps Suite (http://portableapps.com/). Run the portable app version of Firefox and install the Zotero extension. All your data, including Web pages and PDFs, will be saved to this small external hard drive. You can use Open Office Writer, again running it off the USB device, to write your document and embed the bibliographic information.

If you prefer not to use a small, easily lost, sometimes slow USB port but instead use your primary computer, then I suggest you use Zotero in conjunction with Dropbox or Windows Live Sync to automatically back up a Zotero database subdirectory. (I personally use Windows Live Sync, which backs up my data files from my primary desktop computer to the cloud and then to my laptop.) Be sure to follow Zotero's backup instructions to the letter (http://www.zotero.org/support/zotero_data) as you set up your sync. Otherwise you may lose data. Be sure to do a test backup and sync before you commit to this scheme.

For your account at Zotero.org, I recommend you set it up so it syncs metadata only—not the documents themselves. Your PDFs will quickly max out the 2GB of free remote storage.

For backups, I recommend purchasing Carbonite or Mozy. The fee is worth it for the peace of mind and everywhere access. If you must go free, then use Windows Live Sync to sync to the cloud, and if possible, to another computer in a remote location.

Conclusion

Online tools do not replicate the experience of writing by hand. They provide a whole new way of thinking about and manipulating information that may not be intuitive or workable for everyone. Visual thinkers may still need to scribble on a whiteboard—but now they can snap a photo of their work with their iPhone, type in a few tags, and immediately upload it to EverNote. Further, while organizing information, creating categories and tags may help you find connections between nodes of information that you had not considered, which can be helpful when brainstorming.

One big concern is the safety of data in the cloud. It's generally true that the servers that store your remote backups are less likely to fail than your computer's hard drive, but some people find it impossible to fundamentally trust the security of online data and will refuse to upload data to a remote site. That's fine—but be sure to back up your data faithfully to a hard drive or laptop that is kept in a different physical space. Most people will use the strategy of having a copy on a local hard drive plus a remote backup, instead of storing all information in the cloud. If you're worried about security of online access, generating hard-to-crack passwords via a password manager like KeePass (http://keepass.info/) or LastPass (http://lastpass.com/) may provide some peace of mind.

Many of the tools I describe above have an online component geared to social networking: you can log in and access the information via your account, plus share your information with others. It's important to carefully examine default privacy settings. It's usually possible to lock down your information so that only you can see it, but usually profiles are available to be viewed, even if the info you submit is minimal. Scholars particularly concerned about their privacy may want to choose online usernames that don't evoke their real-life names.

However, unless you are working on a project that might result in harassment, or unless your employer has concerns about national security or privacy of proprietary projects, I advocate transparency. Create a consistent online persona and maintain it carefully so you, and not a Google bot, control your presentation. Queries will then hit properly and will accurately reflect your interests. I don't think that's a bad thing—in fact, I think that's the point of discourse within a scholarly community.

Nonfiction Reviews

Classics and Contemporaries: Some Notes on Horror Fiction

Rebecca Janicker

S. T. Joshi. *Classics and Contemporaries: Some Notes on Horror Fiction*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2009. Paper, 291 pages, $20, ISBN 978-0-9814888-3-7.

This volume stands as a compilation of reviews written by S. T. Joshi, critic and scholar of horror and weird fiction, from 1980 to 2007. Following on from a preface which considers the practice and nature of the reviewing process through an autobiographical lens are the contributions themselves, which Joshi has placed into five categories: "Some Overviews," "Classics," "Contemporaries," "Scholarship" and "H. P. Lovecraft." This is a device to bring some order to what are essentially quite diverse reflections, many of which would have originally been written quite some time apart, and presumably not for the purpose of being read in conjunction with one another.

Perhaps the least rigidly defined section, "Some Overviews" offers Joshi's opinions on the fictional and editorial content of a range of anthologies, including Peter Haining's *The Mammoth Book of Haunted House Stories* (Carroll & Graf, 2000), Brad Leithauser's *The Norton Book of Ghost Stories* (W. W. Norton, 1994) and Byron Preiss *et al*'s *The Ultimate Dracula*, *The Ultimate Frankenstein* and *The Ultimate Werewolf* (Dell, 1991). It also includes discussions of genre, centring chiefly on the fields of dark suspense and weird poetry, as well as detailed considerations of the role of the minor publishing house in nurturing horror fiction. Joshi's extensive knowledge of the field makes this extremely informative reading, if a trifle encyclopaedic in places.

The discussion of "Classics" contains entries on some of the more established names in the field of horror and weird fiction. These include an effusive review of Mike Ashley's

biography *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life* (Carroll & Graf, 2001) and some discussion of work both by, and on, Arthur Machen, in addition to the Shirley Jackson anthology *Just an Ordinary Day* (Bantam, 1997) from Laurence Jackson Hyman and Sarah Hyman Stewart. Of more potential interest to scholars of science fiction is the entry on Ian Bell's *William Hope Hodgson: Voyages and Visions* (Bell, 1997), commended as a much-needed contribution to critical debates such as the status of *The House on the Borderland* (1908) as a bridge between traditional Gothic and SF.

Moving on to "Contemporaries," Joshi turns attention here primarily to the appraisal of fiction. He has considerable praise for the literary output of Les Daniels, Dennis Etchison, Ramsey Campbell and Donald R. Burleson, though he is rather more critical of such best-selling authors as Peter Straub, Clive Barker and Stephen King, deriding King's "laziness" and "ludicrous theologising" (107) in *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* (1999). Joshi's preface points to past judgments of his reviews as excessively vitriolic—latterly even by himself, as he indicates in explaining that "I have indeed amended some of my harsher reviews" (10)—and many of the contributions here might still be considered scathing. These are opinion pieces and it is reasonable to anticipate a higher degree of subjectivity in them than in more overtly scholarly treatments of such subject matter. However, his treatment of King seems particularly dismissive—comments such as "*Cujo* is also nonsupernatural: King seems to have much difficulty with this form. (He has troubles with the supernatural as well, but that's another matter)" seem to impart indiscriminate censure with no clear justification.

Many of these reviews contain arguments pertaining to the nature of genre in considering what makes for truly effective weird fiction, and the section on "Scholarship" supports this. The impact of Lovecraft on the field is thus returned to time and time again—Joshi frequently alludes to his writings and even cites him to substantiate points made about other fiction. In the category entitled "H. P. Lovecraft" Joshi offers his estimation of various editions of that author's works. There is also an amalgam of several reviews on anthologies of Cthulhu Mythos tales, in which he lists and laments some of the typical inadequacies he has discerned in such fiction over the years whilst also acknowledging the ability of some editors and contributors to usefully explore Lovecraft's renowned cosmicism. There follows a collection of pieces concerning Lovecraft scholarship from the 1970s onward, in which Joshi offers painstaking and informed reflections on the contributions of critics such as Burleson and Barton Levi St Armand.

This is a richly detailed and lively volume, yet as a compilation of reviews written by the author over three decades, the overall result here is a useful resource rather than a coherent read. The intended purpose of the book as a whole is not made entirely clear, although many of the individual entries provide rigorous and thought-provoking accounts of horror and weird fiction while engaging with critical debates on such works.

The Universe of Oz

Mike Levy

Kevin K. Durand and Mary K. Leigh, eds. *The Universe of Oz: Essays on Baum's Series and Its Progeny*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010. Paper, 252 pages, $35, ISBN 978-0-7864-5622-2.

Although it is not explicitly stated to be the case, this collection of essays appears to be an outgrowth of a conference called "OZ 2009: The Yellow Brick Road in the 21st Century," held at Henderson State University in Arkansas in June 2009. Most—perhaps all—of the contributors to the collection gave papers at that conference, and the titles of many of those papers are identical to or very similar to the titles of the essays in this book. Durand is a philosophy professor at Henderson State, and Leigh is pursuing an MA at that school. I was eager to read this book because I'm currently doing some writing on nineteenth-century American fantasy, including Baum, and I was looking forward to the many valuable insights I assumed I would find. Unfortunately, although there were a few such insights, there were not as many as I had hoped.

Durand opens the collection with a very curious Preface, in which he does something that I haven't seen done in more than a quarter of a century: he defends the legitimacy of the scholarly study of popular culture. He then describes a series of what he appears to believe are common forms of literary criticism applied to popular culture, most of which he finds sadly lacking, before going on to define what he sees as two more legitimate approaches, the Theory Exemplar model and the Critical Engagement approach. The last of these, he says, is the best form of criticism, but the "most rarely seen in contemporary popular culture scholarship." Describing Durand's various approaches in detail would take up the entire space allotted for this review, but I will say that I found them both confusing and largely divorced from the kind of popular culture scholarship practiced by, for example, members of the SFRA.

The book includes essays on not only Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and its sequels, but also on the film *The Wizard of Oz*; Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked*, its sequels, and the stage musical loosely based upon Maguire's work; the stage and film versions of *The Wiz*; Tina Landau's play *1969*; Shelley Jackson's interactive novel *The Patchwork Girl*; and the television series *Tin Man*; though, surprisingly, there is no mention of what is to my mind the finest of all the Oz-influenced works, Geoff Ryman's novel *Was*.

The book is also divided into three sections: Oz and Literary Criticism, Oz and Philosophy, and Oz and Social Critique. The first section is, I'm afraid, by far the weakest in the book. In "The Emerald Canon" Durand attempts to define a canon for the various Oz-related works, but he spends most of his time dithering over whether or not Baum's novel or the 1939 movie should be given primacy in said canon. In a somewhat more serious essay, "Dorothy and Cinderella," Agnes B. Curry and Josef Velazquez compare the film to the classic fairytale with some purpose, but then drag in what they call "other modern fairytales," including *Star Wars*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Batman*, stretching the term "fairytale" to the point where, if

it has any meaning at all, it may be seen as essentially and not very usefully synonymous with the term "fantasy."

A number of essays in this part of the collection (and elsewhere) take a well-known critical or philosophical theory and run one version or the other of Oz through it, sometimes to good effect, but sometimes in a very mechanical, early graduate school sort of way. The first of these is Jené Gutierrez's rather basic "Psychospiritual Wizdom: Dorothy's Monomyth in *The Wizard of Oz*." Better done are Ronald Zank's intelligent and straightforward queer reading (no pun intended) of Tina Landau's play *1969*, a work I have to admit I'd never heard of before, and Emily A. Mattingly's equally queer reading of Shelley Jackson's hypertext novel *Patchwork Girl*. Kristin Noone then does a solid, straightforward job of analyzing hybridity in *Tin Man*. Finally, Charity Gibson's look at the film version of *The Wizard of Oz* as a modernist work makes some interesting points but is very badly in need of editing for basic language problems (she even misspells Brian Attebery's last name).

The Oz as Philosophy essays in general impress me more than the literary criticism pieces. Perhaps this is because I know less about philosophy, or perhaps it is because the editor, being a philosopher, was better able to assess the quality of the essays in this section. Randall Auxier, who gave the keynote speech at OZ 2009, writes intelligently on the concept of time in Gregory Maquire's novels, with an emphasis on the author's use of Nietzsche, Bergson and Whitehead; Gail Linsenbard discusses the nature of good and evil in the Judy Garland film with specific reference to the teachings of St. Augustine; coeditor Mary K. Leigh writes about inauthenticity in "Wicked: A New Musical"; Anne Collins Smith discusses memory and identity in *Tin Man* as seen through the theories of John Locke; Kevin K. Durand argues with much more success than in his earlier pieces that the Wizard of Oz gets off too easily in most commentaries and is indeed a very wicked man; and Paula Kent once again takes us through the monomyth, this time from a specifically feminist perspective.

Part Three, Oz and Social Critique, begins with Rhonda William's very brief lauding of the Sidney Lumet film version of *The Wiz* as successful social criticism, followed by Claudia A. Beach's equally brief shredding of the stage version of *The Wiz* as failed social criticism. These essays make for an interesting pairing and one wonders what each critic would make of the other's chosen version of the musical. Historian Kevin Tanner then follows with perhaps the most exuberant essay in the book, in which, after outlining and dismissing out of hand the several theories (expounded since the 1960s) that Baum's novel is intended as various flavors of populist allegory (the cowardly lion is William Jennings Bryan, the silver slippers and the yellow brick road represent the turn-of-the-century bimetallism debate), argues at length that the book instead contains a complex religious allegory, based on Baum's involvement in theosophy and spiritualism. In a final essay, Jason M. Bell and Jessica Bell argue with equal fervor that a close study of all the Baum novels shows that the only interpretation of the books that makes sense is that they are instead disguised abolitionist works. The volume ends with biographies of the contributors and a brief, entirely inadequate index.

To summarize, the most lasting impression that this book gives is that, much like the Bible or Shakespeare (to both of which the editor initially compares the Oz canon), Baum's novel and its progeny can be all things to all people. There are some decent essays here, particularly in the second half of the book, but there are also too many decidedly weak or at best mediocre entries, essays that would never be considered by a seriously scholarly journal. There have been numerous important studies of both *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *The Wizard of Oz* over the years, and new criticism is being published of Maguire's work as well. *The Universe of Oz*, though not without value, is hardly the place to start a study of Baum and those who came after him, unless the reader is looking for material on some of the more obscure parts of the canon.

The Unknown Lovecraft

Justin Everett

Kenneth W. Faig. *The Unknown Lovecraft*. Hippocampus Press: New York, 2008. Paper, 256 pages, $20, ISBN 978-0981488875.

As a longtime fan of H. P. Lovecraft and the literary production of many of the *Weird Tales* writers, it is with great anticipation that I look forward to reading and reviewing a book concerning one of my favorite writers. The Hippocampus Press, once largely looked upon as an amateur press, has over the years turned out many fine volumes. Indeed, their very recent *A Means to Freedom: The Letters of H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard* is a valuable and much-needed scholarly work. Their recent offering, *The Unknown Lovecraft* by Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., contains much previously unpublished marginalia about the father of weird fiction. However, the essays within its pages read as a haphazard collection of manuscripts rather than as the unified work it might otherwise have been.

Before proceeding with a discussion of the book I would like to acknowledge Faig's tireless work in collecting his material. This book is unquestionably a labor of love, and the many years the author spent carefully compiling the material is evident. Indeed, the scholarly community owes a great debt to the part-time scholars who have preserved both the literary and biographical material of the *Weird Tales* writers.

As the book's title promises, its pages reveal much material previously unavailable to most scholars. The book is mostly biographical in nature, covering topics ranging from Lovecraft's ancestors to his lesser-known friends, though a few of the chapters offer reflections on Lovecraft's stories. Following a brief introduction, the second chapter consists of a discussion of Lovecraft's ancestry. The author's research on this topic is quite extensive and well documented, and he makes a mildly convincing argument that Lovecraft may have intentionally misrepresented his ancestry. However, some evidence he cites seems to suggest that these claims may have resulted instead from mistakes made by family members as opposed to intentional misrepresentations by Lovecraft himself. This chapter, with its careful documentation of Lovecraft's ancestors, is perhaps one of the most useful sections of this book.

This discussion is followed by a short chapter detailing the business failures of his grandfather Whipple Phillips, his

family's loss of the ancestral home, and the house he shared with his elderly aunt. He follows this with an essay chronicling more of Lovecraft's ancestry. It is this sequence—moving from Lovecraft's ancestry, to his grandfather's failure in business, and back to ancestry again—that reveals a fundamental weakness of the book. Though the author has clearly attempted to arrange his chapters in clusters (family earlier in the book and friends later on) no significant attempt was made to build a more comprehensive picture out of these separate essays. While I recognize the significant biographical research done by the author, the book does not hold together well and reads as a collection of related, but mismatched pieces.

The middle part of the book becomes yet more fractured with a chapter dealing with Lovecraft's involvement with the National Amateur Press Association; a brief discussion of the story "He"; a long discussion of the influence of Lovecraft's childhood on "The Silver Key"; and a curious reflection on the author's discovery of Lovecraft's fiction through a reading of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. All of these seemed to me to be strangely positioned in the book. The personal reflection would have served better as introductory material, with the chapter on "The Silver Key" after the discussion of Lovecraft's parents and ancestors. In terms of the literary criticism that appears in the book, the discussion of "The Silver Key" is perhaps the most sophisticated. The author argues that the setting for this story "owes much of its background to the Place-Phillips farm, a remote Rhode Island region that Lovecraft apparently visited only four times in his life" (151). Faig cites descriptions of this farm from several of Lovecraft's letters, and indeed it is clear that Lovecraft was very fond of this piece of real estate. Further, Faig cites passages in "The Silver Key," and the notoriously bad "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," which are suggestive of Lovecraft's recollection of the Place-Phillips property.

In the final chapters, Faig briefly discusses Lovecraft's friend Dudley Charles Newton, followed by three more extensive essays regarding his friend R. H. Barlow, who would eventually become the fantasist's literary executor. The information on Newton is fairly insubstantial, but the chapters covering Barlow are significant from the standpoint that they explain how he managed to gain possession of many of Lovecraft's manuscripts in exchange for typed copies. This section of the book was perhaps the most interesting to read not only because of its valuable discussion of Lovecraft's manuscripts, but also because of the personal drama revealed in the Lovecraft/Barlow relationship.

In sum, parts of *The Unknown Lovecraft* are valuable for their historical information, but as a whole the book fails to bring these materials together as a comprehensive whole. With careful research and analysis, several of the essays could probably be developed into books in their own right. As presented, the book is fractured and poorly organized. This does not, however, discredit the value of much of the information the book contains, which cannot be easily found in other works.

War of the Words: The Utopian Vision of H. G. Wells

Christopher Basnett

Justin E. A. Busch. *The Utopian Vision of H. G. Wells.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. Paper, 204 pages, $35, ISBN 978-0-7864-4605-6.

This is a difficult book to adequately describe. After being completely put off by the introduction, I became rather enthralled by some the later discussions. Before embarking upon a journey through this book, I recommend obtaining a good academic dictionary—you will need it. The text of the Introduction is thicker than foliage in the densest jungle, and the reader is left to hack his way through the verbiage whilst attempting to follow the path of the presentation, which is easily lost as it meanders its way through to the first clearing: Chapter 1. Once the body of the book is reached, the way is not nearly so arduous, but many readers will give up and turn back before they reach it. (If the reader has ever wished to see words such as *jejune, congeries, gravamen, desuetude*, or *yclept* [!] used in a sentence, they are in for a treat.) For those who persevere, there are some interesting and even some brilliant insights to be found herein.

Wells's ideas of what constitutes a utopia and the process of its establishment evolved through time, affected by reactions to his many writings and his interaction with readers, audiences of his lectures, and correspondence with other writers and thinkers of his day. Busch attempts to follow this progression, comparing and contrasting it with the writings of Plato, Huxley, Sartre and other utopian thinkers, classical, modern, and postmodern.

The first chapter explores the place of "The Individual" in utopian thought and the differences between "those living now . . . and those living in the imaginary then" (20). Wells divided society into four human types: the Poietic, the Kinetic, the Dull, and the Base" (29), each of which played a part in the process. Wells' view was that utopia was the endpoint of a series of social adjustments, each one working out some issue which stood in the way of progress: bigotry, injustice, education, crime and punishment. (His idea of the use of exile to isolated islands instead of prisons calls to mind the use of the Isle of Man as a prison in P. D. James's *The Children of Men*.)

The second chapter is a discussion of "The Role of the Novel," explaining how the ideal means of initiating and influencing the process of development of a utopia is the literary novel, a form that is able to reach a larger audience in more appropriate ways, Wells would argue, than other media, including film. "Storytelling helped make us who we are, but who we have to become has allowed the extension of storytelling into new and extremely complex forms such as the novel" (57). Wells obviously assumed that literacy would not become an obstacle to progress. (He would have to rethink such a position today.) This is a valuable and thought-provoking read.

Once humanity decided to work toward utopia, some thought would have to be given to the form of government and authority, a topic developed further in the third chapter, "The State." Wells's conception of the "Open Conspiracy" is

discussed, as well as ideas from Plato's *Republic* and Hayek's "Rule of Law." Of particular concern would be the nature of Power and its tendency to corruption, leading instead to *dys*topia as portrayed in Orwell's *1984*.

The fourth chapter, "Freedom and Social Patterns," considers the meaning of freedom: "Utopia requires freedom, but a freedom which is not based on inherently destructive competitiveness" (142). Education as a form of indoctrination is discussed as a path to freedom, as is Marxism, class struggle, and sexual politics.

The last chapter appropriately wrestles with "The Problem of Death," ever-present even in the most utopian of societies, despite the best of intentions, and posing a challenge to social continuity. Interestingly, it is here that Busch chooses to discuss Love and the question of Happiness in the utopia envisioned, leading to further speculation on the Meaning of Life and Death. Busch concludes that "Wells' path leads into a mist: the future. . . . The task of the utopian process, for Wells, is the continual unveiling of those things as yet unimagined" (171–72).

The extensive notes refer to much more than page numbers, offering additional material or alternative views, making for interesting reading in themselves. The bibliography is well chosen and wide-ranging. The index is fairly comprehensive and user-friendly.

This book is definitely recommended for a university research library. This is not an easy read, nor is it an inexpensive one. Perhaps it should be thought of like a rather old-fashioned dessert, a bit richer than you're used to nowadays, but worth the extra expense for all that went into its preparation. Just be aware that it may be a little too rich for easy digestion. Bon appétit!

Fiction Reviews

Deceiver

Ed Carmien

C. J. Cherryh. *Deciever.* New York: DAW Books. May 2010. ISBN 978-0-7564-0601-1.

In this eleventh Foreigner series novel, Cherryh continues a well-established formula: human translator to the Atevi Bren Cameron keeps the peace with the help of his associates.

All are present and accounted for in this installment. Even the Aiji, leader of the Atevi Western Association, makes a brief appearance. Having kept the peace in the previous installment, the action picks up with the malefactor locked in a cellar and Bren's country house under siege by unknown elements. He is in crowded circumstances, what with the dowager-aiji and her staff in residence, and Cajeiri, Tabini's son and heir apparent, with his small staff—including two hotheaded (for Atevi) Assassin's Guild bodyguards—along with Bren's staff, sundry servants, and occasional local visitors.

Tabini's brief appearance serves to give a tacit stamp of approval to a political reorganization of the local area (sadly, readers will have to go online or check a previous volume in the series to look at a map, as DAW has apparently decided to make cuts, including the usual language and character guide). The villain in the basement, focus of *Conspirator,* turns out to be a cat's-paw, and in time another villain is revealed (there always seems to be one more, lurking in the shadows). Of course, the solution required for the larger problem does not only require eliminating the immediate villain but in Bren's superior ability to perceive what's going on in Atevi politics and to make a rash, dangerous move—with his capable staff, of course—in order to strike a deal that will bring even more peace to the region.

Readers of the series will continue to be satisfied: Bren and Jago continue their comfortable, undemanding relationship. Bren's brother, endangered, does not perish. His former paramour, now his brother's live-in girlfriend, survives being kidnapped and is rescued to boot—but those who are not fans of Barbara will cheer when she is clotheslined by one of Bren's guard when she behaves in a very human way. Cajeri plays his part, along with his new guards, who behave in an apparently un-Atevi way (but perhaps not *all* members of the Assassin's Guild are cool, competent, and professional to a fault) and help move the plot along nicely as a result. The twists and turns of the Atevi mind continue to unfold in an intriguing way.

Possibly unsatisfying: the continued script immunity enjoyed by all major players. The aging dowager, Bren's family and staff, Cajeri, Tabini, Geigi . . . all untouched or at least never in any credible danger. Even Cajeiri's new guards, eminently red shirtable, prove to be immune—not only to serious injury or death but also to serving as the deceiver of the title. Fans of the series won't care; new readers won't notice, but should not start the series with this novel; while Cherryh provides well-crafted info dump on the overall situation, the better start is all the way back at book 1 *Foreigner*.

For the last half-dozen books (at least), the best way to view these installments is as chapters in a larger, ongoing story of the accommodation of Atevi society to the return of *Phoenix,* the human starship that, upon it's return after a centuries-long absence, caused trouble for Bren way back in the first novel of the series. Bren and his cast of companions have staved off countless challenges to Tabini's rule and even resolved touchy matters of interstellar politics many light-years from home. It will be interesting to see where Cherryh takes these staples of her creative output in the next iteration of the serial.

The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein: A Novel

Bruce A. Beatie

Peter Ackroyd. *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein: A Novel.* New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2009. Hardcover, x + 353 pages, $26.95, ISBN 978-0-385-53084-2.

Before reviewing Ackroyd's new Frankenstein novel, I thought I should reread Mary Shelley's original, but when I began, I discovered that in fact I had never read it before; all my knowledge of the story came from the films and from reading

about her 1818 novel. On the assumption that others are in the same situation, let me begin with a summary of the original.

Shelley's story is told as a series of concentric frames. Robert Walton, an amateur explorer, writes a series of letters to his sister, merging into a diary, describing his quest for a presumably Edenic North Pole; they are dated from December 11 to the following September 12, in "17—" (her designation, doubtless sometime in the late eighteenth century). On August 5, near the ice, his crew sees a strange figure sledding across the ice; the next day they pick up a man near death on a sledge riding an ice floe. On August 20 Victor Frankenstein (whose name we don't learn till later) begins telling his story: his birth and childhood, his love for his father's ward, Elizabeth, and his studies in Ingolstadt. The creation of the "creature" is told in only two pages in chapter 5 (50–51 in the 1991 Everyman's Library edition). After returning to his home in Geneva, Frankenstein meets the creature on a mountain peak. In chapters 11–16, the creature tells his own story, including his murders and the way he was treated by the people he had tried to befriend. Frankenstein continues his own narration, telling of the creature's request that he create a female counterpart, to which he reluctantly agrees. He goes to England to undertake the task; but when the creature follows and presses him, he refuses. Furious, the creature says: "I will be with you on your wedding night." (172) After a period of illness, his father persuades him, using a letter from Elizabeth, to return and marry her—but on their wedding night the creature kills her. Frankenstein's narration concludes with his pursuit of the creature, which has brought him to the place where Walton found him. In the middle of the final chapter, Walton's diary resumes on August 26. On September 12 he records Frankenstein's death, and how the creature appears at the death bed, foretells his own death, leaps onto the ice raft that brought him and "was lost in darkness and distance" (231).

Ackroyd's *Casebook* is not, properly speaking, a retelling or a version of Shelley's tale, but rather a kind of alternate reality, perhaps Regency steampunk—in the sense that ten chapters, rather than Shelley's two pages, are devoted mostly to the technical process by which the monster is created. Its "alternate reality" aspect lies in Ackroyd's resetting of the narrative's time and place. Frankenstein goes to Oxford rather than to Ingolstadt to study and create; there he meets and becomes an intimate of Percy Bysshe Shelley; and thereby, though Ackroyd gives no dates in the narrative proper, the reader can deduce that the internal chronology of the novel runs from April 10, 1810 (when Frankenstein meets Bysshe, as the poet asks to be called) until shortly before November 15, 1822 (the date of the final note, about which more later).

But many of the incidents in Shelley's life that Frankenstein narrates are an "alternate reality." He invents Daniel Westbrook, through whom Shelley meets Harriet, who becomes in fact his first wife, and says that Harriet was found strangled in the Serpentine in November of 1812; historically she committed suicide by drowning in the Serpentine at the end of 1816, after Shelley had left her for Mary Godwin. Shelley's trips to Geneva with Byron (1814 and 1816) and to Italy (1818) are compressed into a single trip; Frankenstein accompanies them to Geneva, but returns to London before the Shelleys leave for Italy. Frankenstein recounts briefly the episode in Geneva in 1816 when Mary Shelley conceives what will become her novel—she, Shelley, Byron, and Polidori are each to invent a tale of horror—but her story is only hinted at, while Polidori does tell part of his story, which he says he will call "The Vampire." What he actually tells, however, is part of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—the ghost ship arriving in Whitby. (John William Polidori, 1795–1821, actually published "The Vampyre," called the first vampire story in English.)

Other than the fact that Ackroyd's Frankenstein is born in Geneva, learns to and does create the creature, the only segment of the novel that follows Shelley fairly closely is the creature's narrative of his experiences since his reanimation (chapter 14—but it is only 19 pages, compared to the 146 pages of the original); and even that is different because the creature has a name; Frankenstein had reanimated a freshly dead young man named Jack Keat (perhaps a name derived from the infamous seventeenth-century executioner Jack Ketch), and the creature describes how even his sister flees from him and drowns. Shelley's hero works alone, but Ackroyd's narrative adds an assistant for his work, a young man named Fred Shoeberry—very different from the crude Igor of the films.

The most striking departure from Shelley's version is the ending. Frankenstein has refused outright the creature's request that he create a female counterpart, and studies to develop a method of reversing the process of animation; before he can do so, the creature returns and *asks* to be destroyed. When Frankenstein's preparations are complete, Polidori turns up, asks to be present, and is told to return at midnight. The creature appears and submits to the process, but it fails to work. Creator and created sit together; Polidori arrives and, when told "Behold the creature," sees no one but Frankenstein. "You have lived in your imagination. Victor," he says. "You have dreamed all this. Invented it." (352). And when Polidori asks Frankenstein if he has also killed Fred (who has been missing for weeks), Frankenstein concludes: "I sprang at him. I lunged forward and destroyed him. No, not I. The creature tore him to pieces with his bare hands. Then we wandered out, the creature and I, into the world where we were taken up by the watchmen" (353). So ends Frankenstein's narrative.

Any reader who knows the poet Shelley's biography may already have doubts about the reliability of Frankenstein's narrative; the conclusion suggests that the creature, like Mr. Hyde, has no existence separate from Frankenstein himself. The final note, in italics, not only further invalidates the narrative, but recursively sets it in a frame: "Given to me by the patient, Victor Frankenstein, on Wednesday, November 15, 1822. Signed by Frederick Newman, Superintendent of the Hoxton Mental Asylum for Incurables" (353). Like so many (but not all) of the details of the story, that asylum is historical: "By the early eighteenth century, nearly all of London's private lunatics were accommodated in Hoxton. In 1819, of 1551 certified lunatics in private housing, Hoxton House held 348, and the two other major asylums in Hoxton (Whitmore House and Bethnal Green House) held much of the remainder" (http://www.realhoxton.co.uk/history.htm).

Mary Shelley, only nineteen when she conceived the story and twenty-one when it was published, does not manage separate styles for her three narrative voices. Ackroyd, who is sixty and has published a dozen works of fiction since *The Great Fire*

of London in 1982—one cannot call them all "novels" in the usual senses of that term (cf. my review of his 1999 *The Plato Papers* in *SFRA Review* 248)—is a master of style; Victor's narrative includes long dialogues with historical figures (Percy and Mary Shelley, Byron, Polidori) as well as speakers of local dialects, and they use appropriately different styles. Victor's own first-person narrative style is similar to Mary Shelley's, while the creature's narrative is more simple and direct in style.

In her introduction to the Everyman edition of *Frankenstein*, Wendy Lesser notes that "the doubtfulness of all the information we receive" in Shelley's novel "is set against the pressure on us to respond to the characters emotionally" (xvii). It is much harder to react emotionally to Ackroyd's characters; Victor himself as self-portrayed, and his portrayals of Shelley and Byron, are anything but sympathetic—rightly so for the two poets, as nearly as a quick review of the literature suggests. Mary Shelley wants her readers to empathize, paradoxically, with both Frankenstein and the creature; Ackroyd seems to present only the creature (and, more briefly, Mary and Harriet) as sympathetic figures.

Generically, though *Frankenstein* is often discussed as one of the early examples of proto-SF, it is properly speaking Gothic fantasy with overtures to current scientific ideas. Ackroyd's novel deals more specifically with scientific and philosophic notions but, as noted, in a generic context of "alternate reality." As a version of the "Frankenstein" story, it is interesting but, at least to me, disappointing; the involvement of Frankenstein with the Romantic poets distracts from, rather than deepens, the core of the story. For more about the background of the "Frankenstein" story, see my review of two recent nonfiction studies in this journal: *From Wollstonecraft to Stoker. Essays on Gothic and Victorian Sensation Fiction*, edited by Marilyn Brock, and Audrey A. Fisch's *Frankenstein: Icon of Modern Culture*.

Ares Express

Patrick Casey

Ian McDonald. *Ares Express.* New York: Pyr Science Fiction and Fantasy, 2010. Paper, 388 pages, $16, ISBN 978-1-61614-197-4.

In this story, Sweetness Octave goes across the desert and has lots of big adventures before she tracks down Devastation Harx and his Church boys, rescues Our Lady of Tharsis, saves the world, and, hopefully, somewhere in all that, gives Serpio a kicking. (151)

That, in a nutshell, is the plot of Ian McDonald's novel *Ares Express* as summarized by the "Feisty and Resourceful (But Cute With It) Heroine" herself: Sweetness Octave Glorious Honeybun Asiim Engineer 12th. *Ares Express* is set in the same terraformed far-future Mars of McDonald's 1988 debut *Desolation Road*. Like *Desolation Road, Ares Express* blends hard science fiction with magical realism and a healthy helping of humor. McDonald's Mars (which is always referred to as Ares) shares more in common with the fantastical world of Ray Bradbury (and maybe even Edgar Rice Burroughs) than the hard science fiction world of Kim Stanley Robinson. However, McDonald does a good job blending moments of scientific theory with the feel of magical realism. Throughout it all, he writes with a sense of humor that sets *Ares* apart from most depictions of the red planet.

The heroine, Sweetness, is one of the "track people," a group of interdependent, tradition bound clans who live their entire lives on massive trains carting goods and passengers across vast Martian expanses. Her adventures begin soon after a mysterious, green-skinned man suggests that she is part of an epic story while also refusing "to give the story away." Sweetness latches on to the notion that she is a "narrative construction, the dramatic energy, the confluence of incident, desire and coincident that are the elements of story" (31–32). McDonald returns to this trope throughout the story to explain the string of coincidences that lead Sweetness away from an arranged marriage (and its dream crushing promise of a stainless steel kitchen) and into a series of adventures across the Martian desert in the company of a young religious acolyte, Serpio. Along the way her doppelganger (Little Pretty One/St. Catherine of Tharsis) is kidnapped by Devastation Harx, an itinerant preacher set on sparking an Armageddon between man and machine. Sweetness, of course, must save her doppelganger and the world. She is aided by a time/dimension traveling doctor whose probability of existing is limited by his proximity to the town he founded, wind surfing performance artists set on creating giant icons of domesticity in the desert and then destroying them, a tribe of lost children, a group of absurdist secret agents from the Synod of Anarchs of Wisdom, a dead uncle who is now a neon sign post in another dimension, and her mystical grandmother, who can influence anything brown by stitching a word into her flesh.

Though the conceit that Sweetness is a story can make sections of the novel a little too pat, McDonald largely succeeds in roping narrative theory to the many worlds implications of string theory. The universe, like a story, has "the potential to be in any of a number of uncollapsed states" (95), and, in a moment of coherence, "whole chunks of the big universe [can switch] from one world to another, like magic" (95). This is a world where quantum machines shape reality and even humans are capable of seeing and manipulating quantum states. The key distinction between the quantum machines and humans is that the machines inherently operate at the quantum mechanical level. They can't help but view the universe as a string of probabilities. Humans, on the other hand, must approach the quantum realm circuitously, through reflections, mechanical inventions, or mystic rituals.

The relationship between man, machine, and reality is further complicated by a theology that has developed around the quantum machines. Long ago, these machines became self aware. This development inevitably led them into conflict with their human creators. Partly through the intercession of an incorporeal human, a détente was established that left most of the artificial intelligences in permanent orbit around Ares where they act as "angels" ensuring the continuing habitability of the planet below. Most humans, including Sweetness, accept the AIs as angels while simultaneously recognizing some distant

mechanical origin. Devastation Harx and his acolytes, on the other hand, seek to strip the machines of their supernatural status and reaffirm the primacy of man. McDonald uses this tension to examine the relation between man and machine and between body and spirit. The novel ends with an affirmation that each is inextricably dependent upon the other.

Though there is much more worth investigating in *Ares Express* (gender roles, the nature of art, etc.), it is slightly less fulfilling than its precursor *Desolation Road.* It remains, nonetheless, a significant addition to the Martian mythos. Pyr Science Fiction should be thanked for making it available in this, its first U.S. publication.

Nebula Awards Showcase 2010

Larisa Mikhaylova

Bill Fawcett, editor. *Nebula Awards Showcase, 2010*. New York: ROC, 2010. Trade paper, 420 pages, $16, ISBN 978-0-451-46316-6.

The pulse of modern science fiction, as the *New York Times Book Review* calls the anthology of the year's best SF and Fantasy chosen by the members of the SFWA, not only beats strong and steady—we also have a chance to glimpse some medical history preceding its present state.

Besides prize-winning stories and novelettes there are about a dozen pieces of literary reminiscence registering the most memorable characteristics of SF publishing scene done by decades starting from the 1920s up to the end of the twentieth century. Not all of them belong to the critics, but all project the view of the practitioners, sometimes as distinguished as Frederik Pohl, Robert Silverberg and Mike Resnick. It gives the readers a way to position the present day winning narratives against a background of science fiction evolution almost a century long. It is fascinating—I remember looking specially for collections back in the 1970s called *Decade*, trying to trace that evolution thematically and stylistically, and now everybody admits the fact that it really evolved along many lines.

The range of prizes reflected in the collection includes along with regular prose entries poetry (Rhysling and Dwarf Star awards) and scenarios, an excerpt from the Andre Norton Award–winning young adult novel plus pieces by the Solstice award winners for exceptional contributions to SF publishing (Algis Budrys, Martin Harry Greenberg and Kate Wilhelm) and by Harry Harrison, chosen to be the grand master of 2009. Joss Whedon riffed for a moment on the screen before the public at Nebula banquet where he was given Ray Bradbury award for excellence in screenwriting and his acknowledgements, though short and somewhat jocular, are to the humaneness of Bradbury whom he called "our forefather." As usual the book contains a list of former Nebula winners.

The interspersed essays on achievements within the field are written mainly for those already enamored with SF and allow to catch glimpses of trends in the making, this creating a light network, mental map of most noticeable magnets of attention, without specific connection to the award-winning items themselves. Only a few pieces—namely the 1950s by Robert Silverberg and 1960s by Frederik Pohl and Elizabeth Hull—stand out as both personal and critically well-rounded articles. But all have an additional focus on ways science fiction and fantasy books and stories reached the audience thus providing a concise overview of this connection through various developing means of distribution: magazines, pocketbooks, fanzines, large publishing lines, films, tv, including such subtleties as creation of Master Agreements for shared worlds and characters.

Among novels Nebula went to Ursula Le Guin for *Powers,* balancing inbetween SF and fantasy, where masters hold their slaves by magical powers, bending their will and bones. The chapters 8–9 chosen for publication show us a part of the world where runaway slaves forge new lives in the forest. The novel grapples with the perennial problem of freedom, empowering a person in more than one way. Viewed in the context of other Le Guin's works, especially *The Dispossessed, A Day after the Revolution, Always Coming Home, Solitude,* the book makes clearer evolution of her attitude towards social ties, balance of knowledge and action, self-realization among other concepts. Clear correlations with Abbey of Thélème of Rabelais and Robin Hood's Forest Brothers of the excerpt included into the collection can provoke significant discussion in class.

In the novella category the Nebula was awarded to Catherine Asaro for "The Spacetime Pool," printed in full. As in many previous works the author applies both her gift to portray worlds reminiscent of ours but different sufficiently to intrigue the reader and her knowledge of mathematical concepts, when we follow a heroine captured by an intruder from a parallel world. Instead of a research institute a freshly minted PhD from MIT finds herself in a role of a woman destined to become a cause of discord between rulers in a world which is both behind and ahead of ours. Possession of knowledge in sciences often serves to her rescue, and Janelle Aulair becomes one more female protagonist to be remembered for her prowess in that sphere. Here again we see a combination of SF and fantasy tropes, though the latter prevail.

It is a wonderful occasion to congratulate Nina Kiriki Hoffman, a writer with a style like no one else, for getting a long deserved Nebula for one of her novelettes, though the novelette in question—*Trophy Wives*—is hardly her best. Interplanetary trading of wives for money is too space-operatic and would have been inconsequential unless it was not written by Hoffman. She is the strongest when weaving a complex net of interpersonal relations, enriched by perceptions through inanimate objects of the most humane emotions, weaving in of musical tunes and vibrations into the plot and emotional texture. Wives-rescuers relations and the way we see everything through shifting sets of eyes of two women connected by "bondfruit" presents the most unique experience here. The psychological vein gets constantly stronger in Hoffman's works, but not convoluted. The closest three writers for comparison, also each of them unique, but sharing something in the structure of interaction of their characters might be Linda Nagata, Carolyn Ives Gilman and L.Timmel-Duchamp.

"Pride and Prometheus" by John Kessel reflects modern fascination with the well-frequented world of Georgian England as described by Jane Austen, whose characters this time meet

the no less famous and troubled creations of her compatriot Mary Shelley—Victor Frankenstein and his monster. It may serve as an excellent short text for discussion of modern appreciation of Shelley's classic story from the gender perspective, as the Monster's desire for a wife is clashed here with the idea of incompatibility so often demonstrated throughout human history and hinted at by a natural philosophy lover Mary Bennett.

Hilarious miniature "Talking about Fangs" by author emerita M. J. Engh reminded me of a science fantasy story about a vampire who died from rhesus conflict I read in a magazine of the 1950s, and written in 1995, reads especially soberly given the background of modern infatuation with vampires in fiction.

"Medium with a Message" by Jody Lynn Nye touches upon history of SF cinema warning humanity against irreparable social and ecological downslides and introduces the next winner—*WALLe* by Andrew Stanton and Jim Reardon. Though three very short excerpts from the script (each additionally protected from theft by copyright warnings) won't unfortunately display in the least the beauty of the film, and just flag the fact of appearance in 2008 of this moving, ironic and kind animated story of human aspirations embodied in a knight of a trash-removing robot WALLe and audacious streamlined scout Eva. It could definitely use more space, maybe at expense of the young adult novel excerpt (35 pages), the philosophy of which was hidden too deep under the piles of slime, tentacles coming from the toilet and the like, the closest thing to compare—watching GWAR group performance.

Poetry display in the book is, on the contrary, very persuasive—all the three winners are presented by the poems hard to forget. Sparkling wit of Greg Beatty in "Place Mat by Moebius" (Dwarf Star), multiple flavors of radiant universe reflected by F. J. Bergmann in "Eating Light" and epic span of frontier history in "Seven Devils of Central California" by Catherine Valente make this mini-collection a real showcase for anyone willing to delve into the wonderful inventive world of SF poetry still waiting its researchers.

Harry Harrison is introduced by Tom Doherty as a grand master and represented by his 1962 story "The Streets of Ashkelon" about the irony of converting the uninitiated to faith which may lead not to salvation but to violence. Striving to know and demands of faith on the example of intelligent amphibious creatures cause real agony, and the story belongs to a mighty trend in science fiction of the twentieth century exploring the core values of our beliefs.

All in all the present volume can serve as a single source for a mini course on history of SF&F publishing in the United States of the twentieth century with examples of present-day prose, poetry and drama.

Brain Thief

Janice Bogstad

Alexander Jablokov. *Brain Thief.* New York: Tor, 2010. Hardcover, 384 pages, $24.99, ISBN 978-0765322005.

There is a wonderful quote on page 373, very near the end of this novel, that pretty much sums up the plot—a plot constructed of weird characters, unlikely organizations, and mysterious events involving heads, artificial intelligence and space travel. But I will leave the delight of sorting it out to those who decide to read this novel.

This most recent story by an author known for his deep space adventure is very down to earth, you could even say, down and dirty. Decidedly unusual characters range from Bernan Haydon-Rumi, former social malcontent rescued to be assistant to Muriel, an odd woman with too much money (she married it), to a woman with a brain injury who is both loveable and deadly. This is a mystery novel with a scientific core, and Jablokov is famous for his science. Here he has turned his attention to the brain and forms of its perpetuation. Heads, brains, brain injuries and cryogenics are all central to the plot. For example, while Bernan is researching the disappearance of his boss, one of the characters, Yolanda, is researching the disappearance of her uncle's head from a cryogenic lab gone bad. And another kind of brain, an AI in the form of a fugitive machine, complicates the mystery revolving around whether it is mechanical or biological, and whether it will achieve its aim of space travel.

While Bernan is initially confronted with these interlocking mysteries, one finds his past is also full of them. He researches extremely peculiar problems for his boss, Muriel, who funds them. This adventure begins as he returns from one of her junkets to catch a glimpse of her fleeing in a pink nightgown (16). He catches another glimpse as she steals a car but never sees her in the flesh again. Yet he pursues her through encounters with all sorts of trouble, lead by bizarre clues fed to him indirectly by his boss from that point on. The first clue is in a cowboy boot in her bedroom and eventually leads him to a huge cowboy boot on the top of a diner, Near Earth Orbit, and but even before that, the first adventure is a sharp chop to his own head with an iron dog by a thief who takes his car to replace the one Muriel has just stolen. Hence his welcome home from South Dakota where he's been trying to settle the controversy caused by another of her projects, an attempt to create mammoths out of the wombs of elephants to repopulate the great plains (22).

From this point on, heads dominate. Without giving away any more of this convoluted and delightfully bizarre plot (if that's possible), I can reveal that the intertwining of deeds produced by mildly dysfunctional minds is central. What happened to heads stolen from a failed cryogenic facility, asks Yolanda? What about heads missing from bodies found in car trunks or not found at all, ask the authorities? What is this big machine that seems to have only very rudimentary mechanical parts yet is able to outwit drug dealers, murderous junkyard owners, Muriel, Bernan and even Patricia, the brain-damaged woman who is inadvertently trying to help it, asks Bernan, among others. And why does Bernan continue to get Muriel's messages through unexpected sources such as outdated fax machines long after he suspects Muriel must be dead?

Indeed by halfway through the book, neither he nor his reader knows why he continues to work on the mystery of Muriel's disappearance as well the nature of and reason for her last known project. Perhaps he too enjoys mysteries as he pursues a supposedly sophisticated AI device developed by Madeleine

Ungaro, whom Muriel has reason to hate. At first he suspects she is taking some sort of revenge on its inventor, a younger woman whom he discovers was the same age as and complicit in the death of Muriel's son many years in the past. This little revelation is only one of many bits that Bernan must put together from what seem like an almost random collection of investigations into the doings of a cast of generally spooky characters all living in and around a small town somewhere in New England, in the very near, but still very familiar, future.

It's a tribute to Jablokov's skill that heads and brains are both the key to the several mysteries and at other times red herrings. But they continue to penetrate a text that is as amusing as it is unlikely. For example, how likely is it that rocket ship sat upon by a cowgirl on the roof a diner is operational? Or that the AI constructed by Madeleine knows of it? How likely is it that this sentient(s) is championed by, Patricia, a brain-damaged female mechanic with a homicidal boyfriend, three characters, Len, Magnusen and Oleana from Wisconsin (anyone from Wisconsin will immediately think: Len and Ole jokes) who belong to a group called Enigmatic Ascent, or two aging women, Prelate and Vervain, or that Ignacio, Patricia's boyfriend will be killed by his own junkyard robots, or that the Kennedy assassination will come up (229)? Or the dog's heads experiments in Russia in the 1950s (148)? These are just a few examples of the unlikely conjunction of clues focusing on brains and AI that Jablokov weaves together to transform this novel from a standard SF mystery to a feast of surprises. I've already read this novel twice, and you should too.

Transition

Jude Roberts

Iain Banks. *Transition.* London: Little, Brown, 2009 (UK edition). Hardcover, 404 pages, £18, ISBN 978-0-316-73107-2.

One of the problems that faces any reviewer of Iain (M.) Banks's work is where to place it in relation to the infamous "M." This problem is multiplied in the case of *Transition*, as it has been published in the United States with the "M" and in the UK without. The distinction between those books with and those without the "M" is ostensibly based on the presence or absence of SF in the book in question. On this basis, *Transition* is clearly an "M." Set across multiple universes, we follow a cast of characters who transition between them, into the bodies of the unsuspecting. Think a conspiracy thriller *Quantum Leap*. That *Transition* has been marketed in the UK without an "M" is to do with the rise in "Mainstream" novels making use of science fictional elements and devices, and those sections of the book itself that deal with the banking crisis. At his most strident, Banks rails, using his characters as mouthpieces, against the solipsism and greed that precipitated the fall of the banks. It is possible that the U.S. publishers felt that their readers would see this too as science fictional.

The main thrust of the narrative is a schism within a multi-universal organisation called The Concern. Madame d'Ortolan, leader of The Concern's council and self-declared "human racist" is using The Concern's agents to intervene in the technological development of multiple Earths and Mrs. Mulverhill, a philosophically inclined rebel leader is attempting to stop her. Caught in the middle of these two is Temudjin Oh, assassin and transitionary for The Concern, but becoming increasingly disillusioned with his work. In addition to these three, there are sections narrated by The Philosopher, a state-torturer on an Earth threatened by Christian terrorists, Adrian Cubbish, a stockbroker on our Earth and the mysterious Patient 8262. As readers of Banks's previous work will anticipate, each of these narratives interweaves with the others, and as the novel progresses the picture becomes more, not less complicated. The spectacular finale, precipitated by the extraordinary Bisquitine, who speaks in misquotations from a variety of canonical texts—'Ill met by sunlight, my good fellow'—creates more questions than it answers, but does just fulfil the promise of the long build-up.

Prior to publication, Banks said that *Transition* would be a return to the style of *The Bridge*. While this book certainly does blur genre boundaries, it reads more like space opera turned through 90 degrees. It has the same scope, and the same need for further editing, as Banks's more recent SF novels. Oh's narrative includes extended philosophical musings from Mrs. Mulverhill, punctuated and perhaps undermined by Oh's flashbacks of their sexual encounters. It is this constant boundary-crossing between the philosophical and the physical that marks *Transition* most clearly as a novel of the British Boom. In its themes, tone and multiperspectivity it is particularly close to China Miéville's *The City and the City*. Both novels demonstrate an awareness and concern with the permeability of boundaries as complex and unavoidable that is definitively twenty-first century.

In the sections narrated by The Philosopher and Adrian we get the same violence and anticapitalist ranting that made *Complicity* and *Dead Air* so controversial. These sections also clearly connect this novel to others, both SF and postmodern. The Philosopher clearly recalls Gene Wolf's Severian in *The Books of the New Sun*; his conversation with Jay, the first man to torture for the state, is particularly interesting. When faced with the ticking bomb scenario, Jay tortured a suspect for information and immediately afterwards demanded to be arrested. His explanation for this is that torture, along with other extremely violent acts should be absolutely illegal, so that those who commit them are aware of the extremity of what they do, otherwise, he argues, you end up with state-sponsored torture, in short, you end up with The Philosopher. *Transition*'s engagement with the question of torture is both an explicit comment on some of the methods used in the war on terror and on the role of the law in society. The law does not stop all murders, Jay argues, but it does "make sure people don't even think about it unless it's a desperate situation."

The risk posed to humanity by solipsism, on both a personal and a species level, is the central theme of *Transition*. Adrian's journey from small-time drug dealer to stockmarket trader, by means of exploiting the vulnerable, condemns the banking industry and the Capitalist system that supports it in a way that is reminiscent of Martin Amis's *Money*. It is also part of the novel's larger narrative, replicating on a small-scale the

xenophobia and selfishness that d'Ortolan enacts through her manipulation of The Concern. Adrian is so wrapped up in his view of the world that he is blind to his own vulnerabilities. This makes him particularly useful to Mrs. Mulverhill and key to the final twist of the novel, as he can be used in ways that would be impossible with someone less self-centred. As Mulverhill explains to Oh, the work of the transitionary requires an enhanced level of selfishness to cope with the chaos of the multiverse. This may be a comment on the need for a strong sense of self in the globalized postmodernity of the 21st century, but it is also a clear critique of the liberal humanist subject.

Other markers of this novel's playful engagement with postmodernism include the comment on the title page, "based on a false story" and the opening line of the prologue: "Apparently I am what is known as an Unreliable Narrator." Ultimately, it is in its play between multiple narrators and universes that *Transition* is at its most interesting. Each of the characters and worlds we encounter speaks of the need for multiperspectivity, and in its constant transition between them the novel reminds us that taken in isolation all stories are necessarily false, but that this does not make them any less powerful or less able to change or maintain a world.

Media Reviews

Avatar [film]

Ed Carmien, Amy Ransom, Grace Dillon, and Matthew Snyder

Avatar. Dir. James Cameron. Perf. Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang. Twentieth Century Fox, 2009.

Ed Carmien: In 1957, Poul Anderson published "Call Me Joe." In it, an effort to explore Jupiter is being carried out using psionically controlled bodies genetically designed to survive on a then-imaginable Jovian surface. The first of these, Joe, is the avatar of a cripple in a wheelchair orbiting the planet in a space station.

Yes, that's right: I used the word cripple. That politically incorrect term was generally accepted during the 1950's in the United States. To use it today in serious conversation is to mark one as a bigot, someone who needs to be taught the more correct term: handicapped.

Wait. That's also not well liked by those who are disabled—or, taken to the contemporary extreme, differently abled. Whatever else these various terms do, they also mark a level of acceptance of physical impairment as representing roadblocks to equality. "Call Me Joe's" cripple is an angry man, one who finds his limited movement and physical capacity maddening, so much so that the equipment used to transmit his consciousness to Joe on Jupiter breaks repeatedly, until an expert is brought in to examine the situation. Of course the problem is not technical but psychological, and in what to today's reading audience is the obvious turn of events, the cripple abandons his wheelchair-bound human body in preference to the enormously strong and capable form—seen at the very beginning of the story in thrilling combat with some lower-life forms out scrounging for a meal—who is by chance and Anderson's pen also about to receive a shipload of female counterparts. . . .

The parallel to *Avatar*, blockbuster movie, technological marvel, Oscar-winning film is obvious: the disabled marine with a twin who was slated to work on Pandora through an avatar cloned from his tissues has to take his brother's place. Transported to the planet and hooked into a machine that transmits his consciousness into the hybrid Pandoran and finds, to no one's surprise but the eggheads who plugged him in, that he so enjoys being able to walk again he immediately steers his new body out into the wildly 3-D world the humans are busily exploiting for unobtanium.

Unlike "Call Me Joe" where the cripple has a simple binary choice—awkward, limiting wheelchair vs. strong pioneer (would "colonialist" be too strong?), our disabled marine has a trinary choice: he can do his job and remain in the chair, he can do his job *and* fink on the eggheads for the military and receive the very expensive treatment that will restore his body to full working order . . . or, as *Avatar* inevitably reveals, he can take up permanent residence in the avatar he has so gleefully inhabited while working his double mission.

What's all this mean? The culturally sensible choice of 1957—cripple or pioneering colonialist?—morphs through a half century of cultural evolution to the currently sensible choice of imperialist running dog or gaia-saving nature warrior. The righteous ass-kicking Joe dishes out to the lower-life forms on Jupiter changes to the marine-survivalist-chopping up Pandoran scavengers as *hideous mistake*, marking the starting point of our marine friend's journey to ecological enlightenment. Should we be concerned about these apparent correlations to Anderson's "Call Me Joe" and Cameron's *Avatar*?

No. While Shakespeare didn't tell this tale—exactly—the fact that Anderson parsed the mind/body identity tale before Cameron did should not concern us. We can enjoy both, accept a certain amount of transference and borrowing in our popular culture (hey, happens in the "high" culture, too), and get on with the important things in life . . . such as wondering how a guy can spend half a billion bucks making a movie but use a script . . . oh, that's another essay.

Amy Ransom: Popular culture texts are ambivalent texts, and *Avatar* is no exception. To be sure, it draws on many familiar narratives from *Pocahontas* to *Dances with Wolves*, and it cannot fully escape the various criticisms that have been attached to it, from the stereotypical representation of the indigenous Na'vi to the fact that the white male is represented as their savior. It, nonetheless, works toward reconciliation through its blatant critiques of such basic precepts of Western culture as the mind/body split and such recent socio-political developments as the "War on Terror." Indeed, it may be argued that the white male must be the savior in order fully to "be a traitor to [his] race" in the positive sense of fully rejecting the values of the society for which he has become, rightfully or not, the symbol and working actively toward positive change for the future.

Avatar has been critiqued, of course, for its depiction of the Na'vi as an essentialized Other, a blend of African, South American and North American traditional peoples and various ideologies associated with indigenous groups, such as human solidarity with nature, the stewardship of resources, and acceptance of the spiritual and physical interconnectedness of all life. Director and writer John Cameron clearly appropriates such belief systems opposing the "indigenous ways of knowing" (Dillon) of the Na'vi to the dominant Earth ideology, in which Western techno-science serves the aims of capitalism. The film clearly condemns corporate executive Parker Selfridge's (Giovanni Ribisi) willingness to destroy ecosystems and kill families of sentient beings for profit ("killing the indigenous looks bad [. . . but] there's only one thing shareholders like less than bad press—that's a bad quarterly statement"). That he has been manipulated into this decision by Colonel Quaritch (Stephen Lang) reveals the film's critique of the United States's historical inability to disentangle capitalism from militarism, including the most recent "War on Terror." While the film fails to escape the questionable position of rendering military encounter as sublime, it, nonetheless, places the words "We'll fight terror with terror" in the mouth of its villain.

The film's pivotal moment, for me, occurs when Quaritch asks Sully, "How does it feel to betray your race?" *Avatar* has been critiqued because of its desire to redeem the cowboy. Clearly the film rehearses the old colonial story, which it interpellates its mass audience to reexamine in a new light. Rewriting the Battle of Little Big Horn (or the My Lai massacre as the jungle terrain and incendiary weapons suggest Vietnam), in this story, General Custer turns coat to fight the 7th Cavalry on the side of the Lakota. The film's use of stereotypes (for example, the Na'vi are expert arrow shooters and thank the game that they kill for what they provide), allows for readings which rethink the paradigms of the past. This film is ultimately about the fact that race does not determine affinity, or even right. It states that we have the right to choose sides based on values.

Although set on the utopian world of Pandora, through both its storyline and its aesthetics, *Avatar* clearly interrogates the future of Earth. In contrast with the dark, gothic, grotesque of the intricately transformable machines of the techonology-dominated futures of most recent SF films, *Avatar* offers a richly tapestried biological universe, full of diversity and bioluminescence. While it admittedly falls prey to the longstanding critique of all SF—that true Otherness is simply unrepresentable—it still offers viewers a "sense of wonder," while it seeks to open their minds. As a popular text, it must do so in a language that viewers can understand, and that language is often one of clichés (is there a single line of dialogue that is not a cliché?). Yet, in spite of its many flaws, it both warns against our current trajectory of capitalist-induced environmental destruction and racist rejections of others, suggesting an, albeit conventional and idealistic, alternative in the Na'vi's respect for their planet and Jake's respect for the Na'vi.

Grace Dillon: *Avatar* literalizes the metaphor of "going Native," a phrase that refers to captivity narratives in which an abducted white person is assimilated into tribal culture. The perspective reverses the spin on what we think of as colonization and plays out its themes on an individual and personalized scale.

When the abducted is a woman, John Wayne thinks she's better off dead, because, after all, the thought of what might happen to a white woman in the clutches of the heathen Other is horrific, and any white woman who survives the unimaginable depravity of a walk on the indigenous wild side would, if she were still in her right mind, prefer death to the *thing-she-has-become*. When the abducted is a man, we get more nuanced variations—from the hedonism of Fletcher Christian to the self-actualization of Lieutenant John Dunbar, with the homespun remorseful nostalgia of Jack Crabb sprinkled in here and there to prick our collective conscience. What usually happens to a white man amidst Natives is perfectly understandable. They make him King. That's a lot of pressure, and often things don't end well. My favorite cliff-hanger, though, happens when the indigenized Kevin Costner leaves his red brothers as the tribe journeys to its winter camp. Heavy horses of U. S. cavalry pound the ground in cut-aways that prophesy the fate of the Great Plains Buffalo Culture. "Hey, maybe it's a good time for me to go back now and explain things to the white folks? You guys sit tight, and I'll have my people call your people."

Mutiny on the Bounty (1935), *The Seekers* (1956), *Little Big Man* (1970), *A Man Called Horse* (1970) and his dubious return (1976), *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Farewell to the King* (1989), *Dances with Wolves* (1990). There's a lot of tradition to consider when you're making an SF "going Native" movie into the top grossing box-office blockbuster of all time. And plausible technology enables science fiction to transcend the constraints of the past in the service of the imagination. On Pandora, going native with the Na'vi isn't just a figure of speech. By film's end, our white soldier hero doesn't blend in because he's wearing a bone-vest and some feathers. He's nine-foot tall and blue, for gosh sakes, and has thoroughly shed his old colonizing self like a new butterfly shakes off the husk of its outworn cocoon.

If we focus on certain lines of literary and cinematic appropriation, we might decide that Cameron creates nothing new, and we might remain content with the ferment that debates about marginalization produce. But *Avatar* also is a film about forgiveness. The cliché of simple, good Natives forgiving stupid white people is nothing new, either, so what is promising here is not that Neytiri and the Na'vi forgive Jake Sully but that Jake Sully forgives himself, and that the former is a condition for the latter to happen, to be meaningful, and to lead to any real change. If the film is not about saving the planet or indicting militaristic corporatization and greed alone but about forgiveness, then the metaphor of going native shifts, too. The difference between this broken, white soldier who changes into a Na'vi and Costner's Jack Dunbar is that this one cannot go back. In *Avatar*, assimilation ultimately moves from being experimental to irrevocable and utterly rejects the fail-safe of white privilege. This reality of no-return drives an entirely different future that the film's final scene makes clear through a simple metaphor of promise and fear. Open your eyes.

Matthew Snyder: Like a tadpole caught in the shadowed insides of Campbell's soup-can, the brilliance of David Lynch's dark art comes from the way he allows animal birth and decay

to ripple fiercely amidst all of the sunlight. Just imagine: he shows us a child kneeling over a pond with a tadpole pumping its tale inside the cupped and rotted tin-ware, leaving us to wonder if the boy will shake the soup-can to reveal its integration, its entropy, its secret birth-matter. The boy might kill it; he might let it live. Regardless of such decisions, David Lynch will show us the beauty of a maple in the valley, but not before exposing us to the festooned creatures eating and breeding upon its bark. In contrast, much of the work of James Cameron's gothic sensibilities showcase the unmitigated bravery of his protagonists to defeat the darkness that threatens the sovereignty of self-identity, whether it be in works as belabored as *Titanic* or as luminescent as *The Abyss*. Cameron wants to show us the gothic, the diseased, the Queen Alien, but he also wants to drop Sigourney Weaver in a cargo-loading exosuit. Even in his most recent epic, *Avatar*, the crippled marine can become the fearsome messiah, who, in search and in struggle, finds a way to transcend his biology.

In concert with *Avatar*, while much has been written about the illicit fascination or the abhorrent disgust of James Cameron's deployment of Terminal Pocahontas Syndrome (TPS), very little concern has been given to his fantastically similar borrowing of David Lynch's *Dune*. The former film comes from a director famous for his outsized budgets, action sets and even more outsized ego, the latter film comes from a director bent on the experimental, the difficult, the personal nightmares found in our innerworlds. Avatar was a fantastic gamble of fantastic commercial success; Dune was a fantastic gamble and a fantastic box-office failure (even though it happened to have a much better script). Above and beyond all of these comparisons is the fact that the enduring mythology and trope of the messiah continues on and above the more trivial attacks of the "white savior" and TPS critiques. In the postcolonial age of the global subject, the messiah continues to crouch astride his animal-avatar with the same fearsome gaze. We wait for him after the songs of September. We look outward, above and below us. The Epic of Gilgamesh endures.

Pumzi [film]

Ritch Calvin

Pumzi. Dir. Wanuri Kahiu. Perf. Kudzani Moswela, Chantelle Burger. Inspired Minority, 2009.

A number of complete coincidences converged that brought me to the short film, *Pumzi* (from the Kiswahili word for "breath") (Pollock, Lockhart). First, I had read a brief mention of it in a blog entry about the Sundance Film Festival, where the film had its U.S. premiere. Initial reviews seemed positive. Second, the theme of the IAFA annual conference in Orlando was "Race in the Fantastic." In the opening panel discussion on the question of race in the fantastic, several commentators and authors discussed the current limitations of treating race and racial, ethnic, and national otherness within the fantastic genres, including regional and/or national limitations. Third, one attendee (Michael Levy) then sent a link to the IAFA listserv for an article by Nnedi Okorafor that questions the possibilities of an African science fiction.

As Nick Wood points out, South Africa has, in fact, had a long history of science fiction writers, and he dates South African SF to two years before the emergence of Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*. On the other hand, Okorafor suggests that the need for, the possibilities of, and the aims of an African SF would be quite different. For one, she suggests that, in a place where technology works only intermittently, the people are less likely to imagine a technological future or a technological solution to their problems. Similar arguments have been made concerning the lack of a technological modernity in Latin America. Nevertheless, Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu, whose previous films have been rooted in a social realist mode, utilizes science fiction in her new film. Indeed, on the *Pumzi* blog, she becomes frustrated when viewers and critics question her choice of the genre to tell her tale. "Another interview I did a while back in South Africa asked why I would chose to do a Sci-Fi film when there were so many other stories to tell. What? How does that make sense? First, the genre does not dictate the story. Second, (I can feel myself getting hot at the memory) who decides the limitations of imagination? What story am I supposed to tell? Is there a formula that I have to follow because I was born Kenyan? Really? Really???? Aurghhhhhhhhhhh" (Kahiu).

According to an interview director Wanuri Kahiu gave to *Wired* magazine, she and a friend jokingly began with the premise of a world in which we would have to buy air. Once the project was realized, though, the plot shifted to the scarcity of water. Furthermore, to design the look and feel of the film, Kahiu researched 1950s films and compared many of the techniques used in those films with indigenous Kenyan techniques (Seibel).

Since very few people have seen *Pumzi*, I will give a bit more plot summary than is customary in a review such as this. The film, which runs approximately twenty-three minutes, begins with a tele-type caption that places the film spatially in the Maitu Community of the East African Territory and temporally thirty-five years after World War III—The Water War. Although the availability and access to water does not often enter in the consciousness of citizens of the United States and Europe—save, perhaps, when they have to conserve during a summer drought—anyone who understands South America or Africa knows that access to water is more vital than access to electricity or petroleum.

The opening shot is taken from high above the largely underground compound of the Maitu Community. As the shot bores down into the compound, we see an old newspaper, dedicated to "The Greenhouse Effect." The front-page headline reads, "The Earth Is Changing Already." The camera quickly jumps to a number of other items in the Virtual Natural History Museum, items from the past, from life on the planet surface. As the camera focuses in on one of the tags below an exhibit, we learn that "Maitu" is from the Kikuyu language. In its etymology, the term stems from "truth" and "our," but has since taken on the significance of "mother." The placard marks a seed pod of the Mother Tree, contained in a glass jar.

We then see the protagonist, Asha, asleep at her desk within the museum. She is a curator, a keeper of the relics of the past. Asleep at her desk, she wakes into a dream and sees a large green tree in the desert. As she reaches out to touch the tree, she is awakened by a computer voice: "Dream detected. Take your dream suppressants." She quickly obliges. As she walks from her office to the bathroom, she passes by windows with vast cityscapes, through hallways that are well maintained and lit, and past workers who manually power energy-production machines—treadmills and rowing machines. The voice on the public announcement celebrates the fact that they are one hundred percent self-sufficient and produce no pollution.

As in the book and film, *Dune*, where water is at a premium, the citizens of Maitu are meticulous in their conservation of water. In the bathroom, following micturation, both her urine and her sweat are recycled and kept in her personal water bottle. In addition, each citizen is allotted a small amount of water. After a bar code reader scans the bar code on her forearm, Asha receives her allotment.

Later, Asha receives a package with no return address that contains a small soil sample. She tests the soil and finds no radiation and a high level of moisture. Although she tests the sample both with technological instruments, she also uses her own senses. When she takes a deep breath and inhales the smell of the soil, she is plunged into a vision, into a deep pool of water. Following the vision, Asha decides to add the seeds from the Mother Tree to the soil. She petitions for an "exit visa," because she believes it might be a sign that life has returned to the outside.

Asha "meets" virtually with the Maitu Council—a body of three women. They deny that life is possible outside; to prove them wrong, Asha places her hand on a scanner, which then projects her dream of the green tree and the pool of water on the screen. They dismiss the visions as "dreams" and deny the visa, and the Council immediately sends in security to destroy all evidence. Asha is hauled from the lab and compelled to produce energy on one of the machines.

Interestingly, none of the characters actually speak any lines. The lines that are delivered are typed into a computer (using a very cool, flexible keyboard), and the computer voice speaks the typed text. On the one hand, the citizens feel as though they have no voice. The authoritarian government silences all dissenters. On the other hand, technology is represented as an oppressive force. In this case, the lack of speaking suggests that all voices are mediated by technological intervention. Although the technology has kept them alive after WWIII, it simultaneously has separated them from their connections with the natural world.

With the help of a bathroom attendant, Asha breaks out of the underground compound and emerges into the sunlight. Even though she has never seen the outside world, Asha, as if channeling an ancestral memory, stops and makes coverings for her feet out of refuse and a head scarf to block the sun, sand, and wind. She struggles through the harsh elements toward the compass coordinates of the soil sample. She sees the tree of her dream, though it is only a mirage. Finding nothing alive, Asha digs a hole in the sand and plants the Mother Tree. As she pours the last of her water and sweat onto the small plant, she lies down to protect and nurture the bud.

In a reverse of the opening scene, the camera pulls up. As the shot widens, we see the tree growing rapidly, apparently right out of Asha's body. But the effect is interesting. Just as the beginning of the films fixes the time and location of the film, the ending of the film refuses to fix the time. We do not know if the tree is growing in real time or elapsed time. As the camera shot widens even more, we see an entire expanse of green. Has the forest been there all along? Has it erupted spontaneously? Has an indeterminate amount of time passed? The closing credits roll over the peals of thunder.

Although the ending could be explained by rational, scientific means, Asha's visions and the magical growth of the tree out of Asha's body suggest something else. They suggest that technology has separated the citizens of the Maitu Community from their own past, from their own connections with the soil. In addition, as Jennifer Henton suggests, we need to expand the definitions of science and science fiction to include other concepts of "the 'real'" (101). Kahiu has suggested that one of the themes of the film is about self-sacrifice, about being a mother to the environment. In this sense, she suggests that it not specifically Kenyan but universal (Pollock). Given the current environmental degradation and given the potential hardships, we must all be mothers to the planet.

Although a short film, *Pumzi* has enormous potential as a teaching tool. For one, it does not fill up an entire class period; it can be shown and still leave time for discussion. For another, it drives home the point for students that very exciting cultural work is being done globally. In addition, while *Pumzi* does offer some specifically Kenyan and African ideas and images, it also offers universal ideas regarding both human nature and the environment. Thematically, the film illustrates (some of the) ways in which technology mediates our experiences with the world around us and with one another. It demonstrates the ways in which a crisis situation often produces a totalitarian government. And, perhaps most importantly, it fits into a growing body of environmentally concerned work (fiction and film); it illustrates all-too well a consequence of the scarcity of natural resource such as water.

Despite the small budget and despite the relative lack of support for the film industry in Kenya, Kahiu has created a technologically, visually, and thematically rich film. Although current distribution of the film is uncertain, she does hope to expand the film to a feature length. We can only hope. .

Works Cited

Alusa-Brown, Shirlene. "Wanuri Kahiu: A Visionary Director." Jamati.com. 28 April 2010. Web. <http://www.jamati.com/online/film/wanuri-kahiu-a-visionary-director/>. 31 March 2010.

Henton, Jennifer. "Close Encounters between Traditional and Nontraditional Science Fiction: Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* and Gayl Jones's *Corregidora Sing the Time Travel Blues.*" *Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science Fiction's Newest New-Wave Trajectory.* Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008. 100–18.

Kahiu, Wanuri. "Pumzi." 31 March 2010. Web. < http://www.pumzithefilm.com/blog/>.

Lockhart, Darryl. “Wanuri Kahiu’s Pumzi: A Return to African Sci-Fi.” *The Black Box Office.* 24 Dec. 2009. Web. 31 March 2010.

Okorafor, Nnedi. “Can You Define African Science Fiction?” SFWA: Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. 16 March 2010. Web. <http://www.sfwa.org/2010/03/can-you-define-african-science-fiction/> 31 March 2010.

Pollock, Rachel. “Africa: Screening of Film at Sundance Spotlights African Film Industry.” allAfrica.com. 25 March 2010. Web. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201003260630.html>. 31 March 2010.

Seibel, Brendan. “Kenyan Sci-Fi Short Pumzi Hits Sundance with Dystopia.” Wired.com. 22 Jan. 2010. Web. 31. March 2010.

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus [film]

Dominick Grace

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus. Dir. Terry Gilliam. Perf. Christopher Plummer, Heath Ledger. Infinity, 2009.

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus a Terry Gilliam film—and a real one, not one of the projects on which he is merely a hired director. It’s a Gilliam concept, cowritten with Charles McKeown, a Gilliam collaborator on *Brazil* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen,* films with which this one has affinities, both visual and thematic. Therefore, this is a dense, complex film, almost impossible to absorb fully without several viewings, in part because Gilliam’s own proclivities lend to his work a scattered, happenstance quality, but even more because the film deeply explores profound and complex questions about the human imagination and the power of storytelling. It offers no easy answers or conclusions, almost reveling in its ambivalence.

The film invokes a grab bag of familiar fantasy tropes. A traveling show that is more than it seems (*Something Wicked This Way Comes*, among others). A deal/bet with the devil (pick your own example). A magic mirror allowing travel into a fantasy land (*Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* etc.) The transformative power of the imagination (again, pick your favorite example). And ultimately, a fairy tale story of a young girl saved (perhaps) from the twin threats of the devil and seduction by the handsome but dangerous stranger—though whether her fate constitutes a fairy-tale happy ending remains one of the film’s many tantalizing uncertainties.

Dr. Parnassus was, a thousand years ago, a monk whose sect (believed they) created the world by telling the never-ending story of reality. When Old Nick (possibly the devil) stops them and reality continues to exist, Parnassus concludes that this is because others are still telling stories. He and Nick engage in a series of bets, the upshot of which is that, now, Parnassus, immortal but an old man and broken-down drunk, runs a carnival side show offering to those who enter its magic mirror (which we are told takes them inside Parnassus’s mind) a magical choice between fantasy desires, one of which assigns them to Nick, the other of which . . . well, that’s not clear. His last deal with Nick led to his promise to surrender his child, Valentina, to him on her sixteenth birthday, now only days away. Nick arrives and offers a new deal, freeing her if Parnassus can win five souls in the imaginarium before Nick does. Meanwhile, the troupe rescues a hanged man, Tony, who joins the show and helps them drum up business but who (of course) is not what he seems. (And yes, the Hanged Man Tarot card is explicitly invoked.)

The film is bewildering, with Gilliam eschewing linear narrative and often including key information almost in passing (the revelation of Tony’s real character could easily be missed, for instance), which works well in relation to the film’s thematic interests in how reality is built out of the stories we tell, but how those stories are always partial and provisional, and sometimes are not even the stories we think they are, and in the film’s interest in recursion and in repetitive and binary patterns. The film refuses to settle down either tonally or ideologically. While one might expect the narrative to offer a simple contrast between the mundanity of “reality” as most people experience it and the liberating power of the imagination, or between the positive and negative aspects of the human imagination (a reading which would seem to be invited by the contrast between Parnassus and Nick and the contrasting choices visitors to the imaginarium make), anyone familiar with Gilliam’s earlier explorations of similar territory will recognize that the obvious possibilities are only a small part of the picture.

For instance, Tony is obviously contrasted with Anton, the long-time member of the troupe and Tony’s rival for Valentina’s heart; even their similar names invite us to see them as mirror images. However, Tony is *also* a reflection of Parnassus *and* of Nick; he is a devilish tempter, like Nick, and he is also an inveterate story-teller (or a liar), like Parnassus. He becomes Parnassus’s analogue in the soul contest, attracting audience members to enter the imaginarium, but he is also the devilish tempter, despite his superficial opposition to Nick. The film suggests less an either/or binarism than an interpenetration of the positive and negative aspects (if such they indeed are) of human imagination.

The point is furthered when we see the sorts of fantasies the imaginarium offers. Nick’s attractions are presumably negative and Parnassus’s therefore presumably positive, at least as is suggested by the first instance: a sot’s choice between climbing the long, steep stairway to heaven or entering a tavern. However, other of the contrasting options are less simplistic, such as the choice between returning to the womb or joining the police to indulge in fantasies of fascistic power offered to Russian mobsters; which of these, exactly, is the “good” choice? I’m skeptical of the idea that Nick should even be read as the devil, despite the common assumption in the film that he is. If he is the devil, he has a different agenda than we might expect, since it becomes clear that he in fact does *not* want to win his wagers with Parnassus.

Furthermore, central to the film is Valentina’s desire to escape from her father, not into one of the fantasies offered by the imaginarium but into life in the mundane world, represented by the house and home design magazines she reads. She does so by passing through the “Nick” option in her father’s imaginarium—is her subsequent appearance in the real world, apparently happy with Anton, to be read as damnation? I think not. This

film does not celebrate the realm of the mind or the imagination as superior to the realm of the real but instead acknowledges that fantasy itself is multifarious and relative. The death of Heath Ledger during filming actually benefits the film, since the protean nature the recasting of the part grants Tony fits surprisingly well with the film's thematic questions.

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus is to a considerable extent a return to form for Gilliam. It is arguably the best film he has made since *Brazil* and offers much food for productive thought and discussion in courses in fantasy or with a significant fantasy component.

Southern Portable Panic: Federico Álvarez's *Ataque de Pánico!* [film]

Alfredo Suppia

Ataque de Pânico! Dir. Federico Álvarez. Murdoc Films. 2009.

Ataque de Pánico! (*Panic Attack!,* 2009) features the invasion of Montevideo, capital of Uruguay, by a mechanical army. The film brings Susan Sontag's "imagination of disaster" to Latin American settings. Federico Álvarez (aka Fede Álvarez), the director, produced this short film along with Emiliano Mazza and Snake. Álvarez was also responsible for the post-production and visual effects. The animation of the robots and spaceships was created by Álvarez and Mauro Rondan.

The film opens with video noise and an out of focus long shot of a child playing with toy robots on a misty quayside. The shots come into focus and video noise is added marking the *raccords* (transitions from one shot to another). The opening credits appear over these initial images. Shortly after, the child stops playing with his robots and turns to the bridge in the background. He feels something strange, a tremor, and then sees a giant machine behind the bridge. A long shot reveals gigantic robot silhouettes in motion. Stunned, the child runs towards the machines, which are partially obscured by mist (a device that disguises any limitation of the visual effects, maintaining the illusion at a satisfactory level). Under the bridge, the child contemplates the robots and spaceships en route to Montevideo. The film's title appears on a noisy video screen. The giant humanoid robots leave wreckage in their wake as they approach the city limits. People in the streets take videos and news reporters cover the strange events. Close to Montevideo's landmarks, the robots stop walking, raise their arms and fire missiles from their wrists. They target the congress, the Salvo Palace, the City Hall and Antel Tower, headquarters of the National Telecommunications Agency. People in the streets run in panic. Numerous spaceships cover the sky, while fire and black smoke fill the streets. The spaceships start shooting at people and the camera lens is splattered with blood. Catholic icons are attacked: a bomb hits the base of a cross which is covered in black smoke. The air force is brought into action, but the aircraft seem to be easily overwhelmed by the alien (?) airships. A missile or plane hits the top of El Salvo, as chaos increases in the streets. Some robots move closer to one another and, similar to Transformers, merge in a kind of mechanical fortress, and finally detonate a nuclear bomb. Flames engulf the buildings and the shockwave throws vehicles into the air. Video noise returns to the screen and the end credits appear.

The score employed by Fede Álvarez in *Panic Attack!* is an instrumental piece by John Murphy, originally composed for Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002). Shot on the streets of Montevideo in 2009, Álvarez's short film took six months to make and was allegedly produced with only US$300. With more than 1.5 million views on Youtube, *Panic Attack!* attracted the attention of Hollywood studios. Ghost House Pictures offered the Uruguaian director the opportunity to develop a feature film, produced by Sam Raimi (*Evil Dead*, the Spiderman series) and Robert Tapert. Very probably, Álvarez's feature will be a science fiction film shot in Uruguay and Argentina.

Immediately linked to American SF film tradition, the invasion of Montevideo featured by *Panic Attack!* addresses Wellsian imagery first expressed by a Brazilian artist. The giant robots and alien airships clearly evoke the iconography of the 1906 Belgian edition of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, illustrated by Henrique Alvim Corrêa. Therefore, although indirectly, *Ataque de Pánico!* reminds us about the universal and cosmopolitan aspect of science fiction, reinserting its visual motifs in a multicultural framework.

Ataque de Pánico! has been saluted as a great achievement in terms of independent filmmaking, also a demonstration of Internet's role and power in the context of contemporary film industry. Indeed, the short movie is a fine product that competently brings SF imagery into Latin American cultural and geographical landscapes. Quite eloquent in this regard is the single shot of a cross surrounded by flames and smoke, however simple or predictable it may be. On the other hand, *Panic Attack!* is also a short simulacra of American science fiction blockbusters made with the finest digital technology available to independent filmmakers. Although a *tour de force* compressed into a sequence, the short film lacks further interest regarding script, performance, *montage*, etc. The burden is almost entirely born by Computer Generated Image (CGI) and good digital camera setup. Thus, *Panic Attack!* sides with other Latin American recent short films such as Márcio Napoli's *Céus de Fuligem* (2006) [*Skies of Soot*], another independent digital SF adventure, from Brazil.

Certainly, films like *Ataque de Pánico!* and *Céus de Fuligem* help stimulate SF in the nonmainstream, bringing the genre closer to audiences in Latin America. In addition, these works open the way for new blood in Hollywood production. However, it is worth remembering that SF is more than just spectacular imagery. One might ask whether this is the SF film pattern we want to maintain for years to come. In "'Sensuous Elaboration': reason and the visible in the science-fiction film," Barry Keith Grant addresses this issue through his analysis of contemporary SF cinema, its "return to spectacle" and supposedly childish overemphasis on visual astonishment (In: Annette Kuhn [ed.] *Alien Zone II*. London/New York: Verso, 1999, 16–30). "Off-Hollywood" films such as Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) [*The Jetty*], Eliseo Subiela's *Hombre Mirando al Sudeste* (1986) [*Man Facing Southeast*] and Alejandro Amenábar's *Abre los Ojos* (1997) [*Open Your Eyes*] hint towards a differ-

ent direction. Many other ways of SF (independent) cinema can be found in American productions, such as the works of M. Night Shyamalan (*The Village*, 2004; *The Happening*, 2008) or Darren Aronofsky (*Pi*, 1998). So, to what extent do efforts such as *Panic Attack!* or *Skies of Soot* contribute to SF film as a thought-provoking, challenging genre, and not only to million-dollar contracts and Hollywood "pasteurized" multicultural productions? No matter how delicate and inconvenient, this question must be asked.

District B13 (Banlieue 13) [film]

Nolan Belk

District B13. Prod. Luc Besson and Bernard Grenet. Dir. Pierre Morel. ScrWr. Luc Besson and Bibi Naceri. Perf. David Belle and Cyril Raffaelli. EuropaCorp, 2004.

District B13 (*Banlieue 13*) is a French-language near-future urban action film focused on societal breakdown and emphasizing the new sport of *parkour.* Cowritten and produced by Luc Besson, the film has the backing of his EuropaCorp production company that allows for the funds necessary to create a polished and well-made film. According to director Pierre Morel, "DISTRICT B13 is first and foremost a pure action film which takes place in a suburb, set a few years into the future. The initial screenplay pitch was a 'political fiction' about what the suburbs might be in a few years if we don't change things and make the wrong decisions." The key to the creation of the film is the "few years" angle. In fact, the film is set in October 2010, but in a 2010 where the previous six years have seen a degradation of French urban society so that what were once public housing centers have now become walled-off districts void of police, schools, and other forms of governmental support.

By making a clear delineation between those in the ghetto districts and those outside, *District B13* draws the viewer's attention to the widening gap of economic disparity in which some rulers, using perhaps the aftermath of the 9-11 terrorist attacks as reason, have found ways to literally wall off those undesirable elements of society. In the case of *District B13*, the undesirable elements are urban youth who work as proactive rescuers of their city from the clutches of a power-hungry elite. After spending years wrongly imprisoned, Leïto, played by David Belle, battles a gang in order to rescue his sister Lola, but then with the help of policeman Damien, played by Cyril Raffaelli, ends up taking control of a nuclear bomb and using it to blackmail the leaders of France into opening the walls of the ghetto. The bomb was originally meant to destroy the ghetto of District B13 as well as to give the leaders an excuse to cleanse all urban areas of such ghettos. In many ways this plot hearkens to those conspiracy theories that involved President Bush and others in the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

Besson is no stranger to SF. His *The Fifth Element* is an important addition to the SF film canon, especially when considering its visual representation of alien-others and of a galaxy-spanning plot along with its extravagant set design and costuming. And Morel, after directing the action films *Taken* and *From Paris with Love*, is scheduled to helm the revamped *Dune* in 2012. Still, *District B13* is not galaxy-spanning SF. The film does, however, fit Besson's oeuvre in that it uses governmental corruption as a major plot backdrop. Crooked cops and politicians abound in Besson's best work such as *La Femme Nikita* and *Léon*, and distrust of political machinations is central to *The Fifth Element* and *The Messenger*. Such distrust can, of course, be found in a range of SF films such as *Serenity*, *The Island*, and *V for Vendetta*.

What does *District B13* offer the viewer beyond a warning away from a not-quite dystopic near-future of social degradation? *Parkour*. In effect, *District B13* is a martial arts film set in the near future. *Parkour* is a European martial art focused on freedom of movement and practiced professionally—Hugh Schofield says founded—by the star of *District B13*, Belle. Belle's work, along with that of costar/stuntman/choreographer Raffaelli, makes *parkour* the central theme of the film. The fluidity and speed with which these men move through the urban landscape bring the philosophy of *parkour* to life. Although *District B13* is not the first Besson-Belle film that focuses on *parkour* (that position belongs to 2001's *Yamakasi: Les samouraïs des temps modernes*), it is the film that introduced this art to most viewers.

The newness of *parkour* and its noncompetitive, group-oriented philosophy provide material for academic work focusing on human adaptation to constrictive urban environments. And when those environments include the near-future ghettos found in *District B13* and its sequel *District B13 Ultimatum*, the research itself can focus on the future of the urban human. In many ways, such work acts as a counter to the cyber-environment as well as to the focus on ecological environmental concerns that have a well-deserved place in SF studies. However, excepting the philosophy of *parkour*, *District B13* adds little more to the study of SF films beyond a picture of a dangerous middle ground between current urban slum creation and Orwellian dystopia.

Works Cited

"Interview with Pierre Morel, Director of District B13." Interview. SFF World. 8 Sept. 2006. Web. 30 Mar. 2010.

Schofield, Hugh. "The Art of Le Parkour." BBC News: Entertainment. BBC, 19 Feb. 2002. Web. 30 Mar. 2010.

Small Steps for Ants, a Giant Leap for Mankind: Saul Bass's *Phase IV* [film]

Alfredo Suppia

Phase IV. Dir. Saul Bass. Perf. Nigel Davenport, Lynne Frederick, Michael Murphy. Paramount, 1973.

Originally released in 1973, but only recently available in DVD (2008), Saul Bass's *Phase IV* can be regarded as an example of the 1970s "revenge of nature" films such as Al-

fred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) and Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), among many others. However, beautiful cinematography, especially micro-cinematography borrowed from the documentary images of ants shot by Ken Middleton (who later did the same for *Bug*, 1975), add special interest to Bass's film. Middleton's documentary footage is interwoven throughout the whole film, which decisively helps *Phase IV* to be put in the category of what I would call "documentary-like SF films." Documentary rhetoric has had a curious role throughout the history of SF cinema, with films that resort to documentary strategies in narratives addressing fantastic themes.

From the movie synopsis, *Phase IV* could be considered a revival of Gordon Douglas's *Them!* (1954), in the footsteps of the "antfobia" or "bugs-go-home" tradition. But in fact Bass's is a rather different movie. The fable of *Phase IV* commences when an unknown power (likely an alien power) provokes changes in a species of ants in the desert of Arizona. The animals acquired astonishing intelligence and start a plan that forces human beings to abandon the area. Two scientists, Dr. Ernest Hubbs (Michael Davenport) and his assistant, James Lesko (Michael Murphy) set up a lab in the desert, in order to study the phenomenon, so soon a mind battle begins, with added physical pain imposed on both contestants. Kendra Eldridge (Lynne Frederick), a young survivor, is collected by the two scientists after her grandparents die in the middle of a war between the ants and the lab. From this moment on, Frederick's character provides the romantic interest to the "cold" SF narrative.

In 1973, Saul Bass was already famous for his work on shooting credit sequences, such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and *Vertigo* (1958), Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) or Edward Dmytryk's *Walk on the Wild Side* (1962). The beginning of *Phase IV* makes clear reference to the animal documentary tradition (Discovery Channel viewers would know this tradition very well), with the voiceover narration from a near future point of view, relating the strange phenomenon alongside scientific-like imagery. In this regard, *Phase IV* also recalls films such as Chris Marker's experimental *La Jetée* (1962) and even the initial scenes of Jack Arnold's *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), films that take advantage of documentary rhetoric in order to "warrant" their fables. No human being appears in the first montage sequence of *Phase IV*, only ants, as the fable has been "science-fictionalized" by the editing and soundtrack. Documentary-like, the beginning of *Phase IV* is dominated by the scientific tone of the narrator's speech and the supposedly "afilmic" footage of the insects. This mode of narration seems to rule at least two thirds of the whole film. Notwithstanding, some surrealistic images sometimes simply invade the rather "cold-blooded" narrative, like one in which ants emerge from the holes of the hand of an old man (Eldridge's grandfather) preyed upon by the insects. The sequence clearly recalls Luís Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) at this moment.

Toward the end, *Phase IV* adopts quite a radical shift in tone, from the documentary-like, scientific journal mode of exposition to quasi-mystical, lysergic dream-like scenes, much in the way of the final images of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The ants (and the alien power behind them) are finally successful in their plans, promoting what can be understood as a step further in the evolution of mankind, through the interbreeding of James Lesko and Kendra Eldridge. These characters (played by Michael Murphy and Lynne Frederick, both in a poor performance) are portrayed as "sensible, sincere" and "pure, innocent" respectively, not yet thoroughly corrupted by human science and technology and the power it can wield. This original four-minute long ending sequence, a montage of surreal imagery, was cut by the distributor when the film premiered, and it is now restored in the 2008 DVD version.

Critics such as John Brosnan considered *Phase IV* very confusing, and many other reviewers criticized its plot, as well. According to Brosnan, "it's not surprising the movie is visually impressive (the art director was John Barry, who later designed the sets for the first two *Star Wars* movies)," but the script by Mayo Simon "is a disaster." Too radically, Brosnan concludes stating that "*Phase IV* is one of those science fiction movies, of which there are too many examples, made by people who know nothing about science or SF—the result is a kind of mock-up of a science fiction movie" (*The Primal Screen*, London: Orbit, 1991, p. 166). No matter how weak its plot might be, *Phase IV* presents an interesting strategy of merging SF motifs and documentary style. This narrative strategy or aesthetics has been explored once again in creative pieces of contemporary SF cinema, such as Alex Rivera's *Why Cybraceros?* (1997) and Neill Blomkamp's *Alive in Joburg* (2005) or *District 9* (2009). This trend (documentary-like SF films) should not be ignored.

The *Phase IV* DVD released by Legend Films offers good quality image and sound, although it has no extras. Prior to the release, it was very difficult to find—I myself had only a German dubbed version downloaded from e-mule.

Pushing the Wrong Buttons [film]

Ritch Calvin

Matheson, Richard. "Button, Button." *The Box: Uncanny Stories*. Richard Matheson. New York: Tor, 2008. 3–15.

"Button, Button." *Twilight Zone*. Dir. Peter Medak. Teleplay Logan Swanson. Perf. Mare Winningham, Basil Hoffman, and Brad Davis. 7 Mar. 1986. Atlantis Films.

The Box. Dir. Kvon Chen. Screenplay Kvon Chen. Perf. Gordon Tsai and Fantanely Wong. 2006.

The Box. Dir. Richard Kelly. Screenplay Richard Kelly. Perf. Cameron Diaz, James Marsden, Frank Langella, and Basil Hoffman. Darko Entertainment, 2009.

The 2009 film *The Box* is based on the short story "Button, Button" by Richard Matheson (*I Am Legend*)—though, to be fair, it is best noted that the film is only very loosely, in a galaxy far, far away, based on the Matheson story.

The short story has seen multiple iterations. In the original short story (1970), Norma and Arthur Lewis live in New York City. A mysterious package arrives with a note that Mr. Steward will call at 8 p.m. Mr. Steward arrives and makes his offer of $50,000 if they will push the button, killing a stranger. While they initially reject the idea outright and send Mr. Steward away with his box, they continue to debate the morality of the propo-

sition. While Norma adopts a relativist's justification that the death of a stranger is of no import to her, Arthur categorically states that murder equals murder. Norma reconsiders and calls Mr. Steward, and she eventually, and rather casually, presses the button. Almost immediately, she receives a phone call that her husband has been killed, and she recalls the insurance policy, which will amount to $50,000. When Norma calls to protest that the death was supposed to be someone she didn't know, Mr. Steward responds, "Did you really think you knew your husband?"

Perhaps the most famous filmic iteration of the story was as a 1986 episode of *Twilight Zone*. In this version, Norma (Winningham) and Arthur Lewis (Davis) live an extremely modest life in California. Arthur works the night shift and struggles to piece together their broken down car; Norma sits at home, sulks, and chain smokes. Arthur is at work when Mr. Steward (Hoffman) arrives, but after Arthur's shift, he and Norma discuss the offer. As in the story, Norma equivocates and Arthur categorically refuses. Norma eventually pushes the button, and Mr. Steward delivers a briefcase full of money. As he leaves, he informs them that the "button unit" will be reprogrammed, and "I assure you it will be offered to someone you don't know." The episode ends, and Seward clearly implies that they might well be the victim of someone whom they don't know pushing the button.

The next iteration of the story appears in a short film entitled *The Box* (2006). Based upon the Matheson story, the movie was adapted and directed by Kvon Chen. A low-budget, minimal film, this film version updates the setting and story, but retains certain aspects of the angst of the story. In this version, an unnamed Hobo (Tsai) rummages through dumpsters in Washington state, looking for food. Nearly half the film depicts the Hobo dumpster diving or trying to get into locked dumpsters. Eventually, he finds a walkman-like recorder, but once he locates a pewter container, a voice on the recorder (Wong) asks if he would like to open the box. The voice assures him that, if he opens the box, he will become "rich" and that "someone you don't know will die." In this version, however, the protagonist suffers none of the anguish about the fate of this unknown individual. He quickly responds, "Sure, why not?" As he enjoys his new life of fancy cars, booze, and women, he witnesses another hobo in a dumpster. Here, the Hobo shows the first sign of contemplation, as he looks to the sky. As he turns to walk away, offering no help to the hungry man, he hears the familiar voice making this second hobo the same offer. As in the *Twilight Zone* episode, the implication that he might be next is clear.

The most recent version of the story, also called *The Box* (2009), bears only a slight resemblance to the previous iterations. The kernel is the same though the setting is shifted to Richmond, Virginia so that Arthur Lewis (Marsden) can work for NASA at the Langley Research Center, and Norma (Diaz) teaches Sartre to private school kids—once the wheels are in motion, "no exit" appears over and over. Nevertheless, mystery and intrigue dominate the plot. In place of the simple moral quandary, viewers are confronted with a bloated thriller. For example, the NSA is trying to take over the NASA facility, and they are hiding the truth about Mr. Steward (Langella). In this version, Steward was once an employee of the NSA, who had worked on the Mars mission, and who had been hit by lighting and "killed." But he rose from the dead, severely disfigured and no longer human, exactly. He now works for "someone," with the intimation that he's working for an alien being, probably Martian. According to Steward, the boxes that he distributes are a test of humanity. If humanity cannot pass the test, that is, stop pushing the damned buttons, humanity will not be allowed to survive.

Each of these versions has, to one degree or another, the central question of greed or of need. Each one also questions the ways in which money, or the possibility of money, affects one's principles. Despite financial need, none of these individuals would have considered killing someone before the dollar signs were dangling in front of her or his eyes. Yet, it is interesting that in every version except the 2006 film, the individual who pushes the button is female. In the 2009 film, all three times the button is pushed (two on camera and one described), it is by a female. In each of the instances in which a female presses the button, she is the one who rationalizes and justifies her action, and the males are all steadfast in their objection. Do they agree with Sigmund Freud and Arthur Schopenhauer that women have less sense of justice than men? Do they agree with Carol Gilligan that men are rule-bound and rights-based thinkers while women are emotion-bound and relation-based thinkers?

All of these works pose a moral dilemma. "Button, Button" delves into the morality most deeply. *The Box* (2006), though pared down like the original story, avoids much of the moral quandary; instead, the relative ease with which the Hobo makes the decision becomes a central question. *The Box* (2009) also contains the original dilemma, but one third of the way into the film, it veers into thriller mode. It obfuscates and then reveals back story far too easily through the NASA Director. Furthermore, it adds an additional moral dilemma when the husbands are forced to choose between wives and children, but by then the film has pushed too many wrong buttons.

***Pandorum* [film]**

Lyndsey Raney

Pandorum. Dir. Christian Alvart, Travis Milloy, Dennis Quaid, Ben Foster, Cam Gigandet, Antje Traue, Cung Le, Eddie Rouse, Norman Reedus, Andre Hennicke. Overture Films, 2009.

Pandorum is a film that wavers between what it wants to do, what it meant to do, and how viewers respond to it. Cultivating mixed and mostly negative reviews, the film seems to flirt with the idea of being a classic horror set in space, to science fiction B movie, and finally a mildly clever science fiction thriller. Depending on how in love with one incarnation you became, the switches came off as jarring, clumsy, and could easily ruin the entire experience for you. However, while the film has its flaws, *Pandorum* manages to succeed in some story and character elements.

Pandorum opens in an understated fashion. The main character, Corporal Bower, awakens from suspended animation aboard a ship named the *Elysium*, disoriented. He quickly dis-

covers he cannot recall anything about his life, and deduces his name from the label on his stasis chamber. The room he slept in is small, with a few lockers, a deactivated control panel, and another man in stasis. The other man, Lieutenant Payton, rises shortly after, equally confused. They introduce themselves, and try to piece together what they remember of the *Elysium*'s mission. What they recall is the ship is an ark, headed for an Earth-like planet named Tanis to start a new settlement for the human race. The two also quickly assess there is trouble on the vessel. The main power grid suffers rolling blackouts, and the crew preceding Bower and Payton are nowhere to be found. There is a set of doors connecting their room to the main deck, but they are locked. The men activate their control panel via a generator, and attempt to hail the main deck with a radio. Their efforts result in static.

With their suspicions growing, Bower and Payton decide to investigate the situation. Bower crawls out through an airduct with a portable communication link, while Payton mans the control panel, guiding him through the myriad of air vents. The movie uses this time wisely for both character development and tension. Bower and Payton communicate professionally, but also encourage each other. When Bower experiences fear or worry, Payton uses humor to lighten the mood. As the elder, he also provides the voice of reason, despite their lack of memory. While both men speculate on their respective pasts, neither dwell or obsess over the truth. They both recognize the ship's power failure as more important, and I appreciated their priorities. The movie then introduces its namesake to the mix. We find out Pandorum is a layman's name for a crewman's psychotic break; the most famous example of this condition occurred aboard one of *Elysium*'s sister ships, where a crewman ejected himself and 60,000 other people into deep space to their deaths. The disease is difficult to diagnose. It has vague symptoms, and everybody aboard is susceptible to it. Bower exhibits signs of affliction, with Payton dismissing his fears as tension over the reactor. Not my favorite choice, but considering their circumstances I understood why Payton made it.

I considered abandoning *Pandorum* when it commits the worst crime for a suspense movie; it shows the monster. All this great build-up, and *Pandorum* wrecks it with luminously pale humanoids. Their design reeks of Joss Whedon's Reavers. They augment spare ship's parts to their bodies. They are aggressive, hunt in packs, and of course, devour human flesh. I am uncertain if they truly added to the overall plot. They also reveal a new character; Nadia, who never settles on being either the warrior woman, intelligent scientist, or viable love interest for Bower. In contrast, another character, a stoic fellow named Manh, shows more depth. I felt sad to see him die when someone annoying survived to the end. What made Nadia harder to bear was her status as the one female character of the cast; we discover Bower has a wife, but she appears only in flashbacks. While this helps flesh out Bower, Nadia's existence feels wedged into the story. There's too many roles she has to fill, so there's no time to give her clear definition.

By now I had a bad B movie, but then *Pandorum* switches again, turning its focus to Payton. While Bower heads to the bowels of the ship, Payton discovers another survivor in the vents; a panicked young man named Gallo. Gallo and a monolog by a crazed hermit impact the third act of the film the most with their revelations. The climax engaged me thoroughly. Bower and Payton both seemingly succumbed and also accused one another of Pandorum. Gallo reveals his true nature, and we discover why a ship full of passengers became a ship full of Reaver-clones. For all that I hated the cannibals in the beginning, the ending of the film made up for them.

I am still torn between liking and hating *Pandorum*, because there was true potential in the ideas. The casting was great; Dennis Quaid makes a strong performance, and Ben Foster has a talent for inhabiting fractured characters. I like to think if Antje Traue had a better character to work with, she would have been a lot better to watch. I adored Cung Le. I think what this film really needed was Christian Alvart to toss out the more overused scifi tropes. Ditch the Reaver-clones, and this could have been a very tidy thriller. The idea of the crisis being two men having psychotic breaks intrigued me a lot more than cannibal mutants. It could have been a neat hybrid of *Session 9* and *Event Horizon,* minus the hell dimension. Instead, *Pandorum* is a mess, and I was glad I rented it rather than paid theater ticket price. However, unlike *The Wicker Man* remake, I am still glad I saw it.

Dans une galaxie près de chez vous [TV series]

Amy J. Ransom

Dans une galaxie près de chez vous. Dir. Claude Desrosiers. Perf. Guy Jodoin, Sylvie Moreau. 2004.

Dans une galaxie près de chez vous represents the first science fiction visual media franchise produced in Québec. The popularity of the original television series running from 1998 to 2001 led to the production of the 2004 eponymous film (reviewed here), with a sequel following in 2008. Translated as *In a Galaxy Near You*, the title of this space adventure parody openly signals its mediated vision of space exploration with the word play on the French phrase equivalent to "In a Theatre Near You." While *Dans une galaxie* irreverently parodies *Star Trek* and other such series,[1] it nonetheless offers Linda Hutcheon's idea of the pastiche, or, the loving parody (6). Although its humor relies in part on notions of a "literature of recognition" in national or regional cultural products, namely, that Québécois and Canadians will recognize themselves in the many cultural references, it also draws on a shared base of reference to the science-fiction film and television genre dominated by the United States. For this reason, an Anglo-American SF savvy audience will also find humor in most of the film's gags. Because it is produced outside of the Hollywood entertainment system, however, *Dans une galaxie* also offers a distanced, outsider's revision of the ultimate trope of the space adventure series: the exploration and, ultimately, colonization of space.

Canadian members of SFRA will appreciate the film's self-deprecatory humour (yes, let's spell in Canadian here), beginning with the premise that in 2034 the space vessel *Romano Fafard*, whose mission is to find a habitable planet to ensure

humanity's future survival, hails from the leading world power of the near future: Canada! While they clearly sport the maple leaf on their uniforms, many of the crew's gags revolve around Québec-specific references. For example, the opening sequence reveals two crew members who have descended to the surface of a promising planet; while it meets all necessary atmospheric conditions, the astronauts are swarmed by black flies so thick they can carry off a deer. They name the planet Abitibi 2 in reference to a northern, backwoods region of Québec, but conclude that these conditions render it uninhabitable. Later in the film, the adventurers are allowed to pose one question to the local seer. They hope, of course, to ask for the location of a world capable of holding the four billion inhabitants of earth (the extrapolated earth population has declined, of course, because of environmental catastrophes). They, of course, phrase their question in a vague and problematic fashion, allowing for a reference to the notoriously confusing format of the 1995 Referendum on Quebec sovereignty.

While most national references are strongly Canadian and apparently federalist, the crew reflects only limited ethnic diversity, favoring the traditional French-Canadian. Apart from her name, the token Slav, Petrolia Staneslavsky (Mélanie Ménard), appears fully Québécised; the black character, who is often the butt of jokes because of his weight and appetite-control problems, has a Haitian-sterotyped name: "Bob" Dieudonné Marcellin (Didier Lucien). The team is led by French Canadians, Captain Charles Patenaude (Guy Jodoin) and Psychiatric Officer Valence Leclerc (Sylvie Moreau), while the final member is half alien, half-Québécois with telepathic abilities, Flavien Bouchard (Claude Legault; the film's co-scenarist). Interestingly, the clear representative of Anglophone culture, Brad Spitfire (Stéphane Crête), is a "Dr. Smith" character: the cowardly, self-serving individual who puts each mission at risk and often flirts with treachery found in the Irwin Allen television series, *Lost in Space* (1965–1968); he speaks fluent, unaccented French, however.

Generic references and gags will be obvious, however, to anglophone viewers as they draw largely on Anglo-American cultural products. For example, in the film's preface a voice-off narrator establishes the situation, describing the crew's mission to go "Where the hand of man has never set foot," lampooning both Gene Roddenberry's introduction to the original *Star Trek* series and the "One small step for mankind" of U.S. space conquest of the moon. However, the author of the Wikipedia entry for the franchise also attributes it with a reference to the French comic album series Tintin (Anonymous).

This Quebec live action film goes farther than a number of recent animated SF films[2] which have questioned some of the basic principles of the original *Star Trek* series, such as the superiority of Earth civilization and the destiny of humankind to explore the universe. The captain of the *Romano Fafard* ultimately decides *not* to colonize what might be the only appropriate planet because of the damage humans would do to the civilization currently living there. Instead, he and the crew choose to continue their mission, to "be patient" and to find an uninhabited planet before they report success back to an earth that is rapidly dying because humanity has destroyed its ecosystem. The DVD is available with subtitles and so could be used for courses in SF film to help students examine the tropes of mainstream U.S./Hollywood media visions of space exploration from an outsider's perspective. Similarly, it might be useful for them to step outside of their own national and linguistic viewpoint. Frankly, just the fact that the film's astronauts wear uniforms bearing the maple leaf rather than the stars and bars might offer an estrangement leading to enlightenment—the very point of science fiction, if we believe Darko Suvin.

Notes

1. Quebecers' familiarity with that series is well documented by Caroline-Isabelle Caron.

2. There are critical elements in *WALL-E* (2008), *Space Chimps* (2008), *Monsters vs. Aliens* (2008), and *Planet 51* (2009), for example.

Works Cited

Anonymous. "*Dans une galaxie près de chez vous*." *Wikipedia*. Web. 27 Nov 2009.

Caron, Caroline-Isabelle. "Translating Trek: Rewriting an American Icon in a Francophone Context." *Journal of American Culture* 26.3 (2004): 329–55. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. Urbana/Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2000. Print.

Suvin, Darko. *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979. Print.

Shadow of the Colossus [video game]

Lyndsey Raney

Shadow of the Colossus. Sony Computer Entertainment, October 2005.

One part puzzle game, one part action-adventure, with a fantasy tone for setting, *Shadow of the Colossus* is the second game released by the same development team who produced cult-hit *Ico* in 2001. Titled *Wander and the Colossus* in Japan, the game tells the story of a young man named Wander, and his single-minded mission of battling and killing sixteen colossi to revive Mono, a woman he loves whom has died recently. Armed with only an ancient sword and bow, Wander must track down each of the colossi one at a time and defeat them, releasing the power of Dormin, an entity who has promised to revive Mono from death. A movie based on the game's story was announced to be in the works in April of 2009.

The game's story tells a tragic tale of love and unholy bargains. Fairly classic, but the story manages to heighten the tension and dread at the coming climax. Every colossi's death feels more like a prelude to disaster than a victory. Wander's quest to revive Mono is a romantic tragedy; Dormin's motives are clearly selfish and will cost Wander greatly, his love dooms him to undertake the cause anyway. It's a low-fantasy setting,

with minimal dialog; the game prefers to visually communicate the revelations. The price Wander pays is manifested by subtle changes in his appearance. With the death of each colossus, his hair darkens while his skin and eyes pale. Eventually, a small pair of horns appear on his head, and dark streaks on his face. A side character, Lord Emon, heads a small supporting cast out to thwart Wander, in fear of the consequences of the restoration of Dormin. By the death of the twelfth colossus, the game reveals Emon and his men are actively pursuing Wander, racing against him to the Shrine of Worship, where Mono lies in wait. When the sixteenth colossus dies, Wander becomes possessed by Dormin, and dies at the hands of Emon and his men. However, Dormin does act true to its word, and revives Mono, who discovers an infant with horns in the spot where Wander perished. Taking the infant in her arms, Mono follows Agro to a higher level in Shrine of Worship to a hidden garden.

Through an intricate weave of gameplay, strong story and intense relationships between the small cast of characters, *Shadow of the Colossus* manages to blow your mind while it breaks your heart. It presents a unique take on the action-adventure genre by having a straightforward agenda, limited cast of characters, and aside from the sixteen colossi, no other enemies. Wander begins each quest to find a colossus in the center of a field. The locations for each vary; some colossi live in purely natural settings, others abandoned structures. There are no towns to visit, no items to buy. The only other objects that effect gameplay are lizards that increase Wander's weapon grip, and fruit to increase his health. Aside from these, Wander's only other tools for success are the player's wits.

The key to defeating the colossi is also the same. The colossi all have sigils on their bodies, and if Wander succeeds in attacking it, the monster dies. Methods Wander loses health are either a colossus' attack or a fall from a great height. While such a simple concept sounds repetitive, the combat is one of the game's most innovative points; the puzzle is not in finding the colossi, but figuring out access to their weak points. It's a welcome change from action titles like *Ecco the Dolphin* or *Prince of Persia,* where the puzzle is in the terrain. In *Persia,* the physical terrain is a puzzle the player must crack to advance. The change in terrain, the colossi's shape, and temperaments mean every battle has to be approached with a new strategy. At times, the player has to abandon Agro, or use the bow rather than the sword. The player may have to climb the mountains, or the massive colossus. Other adventure games offer a plethora of monsters and weapons; *Colossus* takes a minimalistic approach, and gives the player an immersible terrain they learn to use to their advantage.

It's a revolution in its emphasis on creating a variety of unique environments the player must navigate and use, lest they be used against them. While the 1990s brought games encouraging players to get creative with weapons (such as the *Silent Hill* franchise), *Colossus* reverse engineers the concept, creating a more realistic world. Newer games like the 2008 *Prince of Persia* and Nintendo's *Legend of Zelda: The Twilight Princess* have followed in *Colossus*' stead; both have darker storylines, and heavily hint at a poor end for the main character or his love interest. *Persia* taunts players by developing a romance between the Prince and Elika, only to have the success of their mission require Elika to sacrifice her life to seal an ancient evil. *Twilight Princess* offers a Hyrule engulfed by another kingdom with Link cursed to a wolf form, Zelda again imprisoned, but with a potentially powerful ally in Midna, the eponymous Twilight Princess. The game also encourages developers to experiment with darker stories and themes. While first person shooters and strategy routinely delve into tense situations, the rest of the gaming world until recent years has usually opted for lighter endings. Franchises like *Super Mario Bros., Ecco the Dolphin, Legend of Zelda* have all kept out of the melodrama. That was considered RPG fodder, more in line with Square-Enix's *Final Fantasy* series. Naughty Dog Studios took their *Jak and Daxter* series to the dark side, but hero Jak is later purged of this influence.

By taking putting its own spin on game design and engineering, *Shadow of the Colossus* takes a classic story and genre into a new direction. As a result, this little game casts a rather large shadow of acclaim and influence of its own.

Announcements

Calls for Papers

Call for Papers—Journal

Title: *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture,* special issue on Avatar and Nature Spirituality

Topic: Situated in the mythical planet Pandora, James Cameron's motion picture *Avatar* is a metaphor for the relationships between human beings and their affective and religious (or if one prefers, their spiritual) relationships to the earth. It expresses a view commonly found among those in the environmental milieu, including grassroots environmentalists, sustainability practitioners, indigenous activists, and academicians analyzing the centuries-long erosion of Earth's biocultural diversity. The movie takes a strong stand in favor of such diversity, and for the animistic and pantheistic spiritualities long considered beneficent by many environmentalists. It has triggered a hostile reaction by many from religious traditions who consider the worldview expressed in *Avatar* a threat to their own beliefs and understandings, and to religious truth itself. It has left some viewers deeply depressed, feeling that there is no place left on earth where they can connect to nature and to each other, as did the Na'vi. Yet it has also evoked a highly positive response, which is not only reflected in terms of record attendance, but in widespread confessions of how the movie moved people to tears, in some cases, inspiring or rekindling environmental activism. Early journalistic reports even indicate some indigenous people have had a positive reaction to the film, finding affinities between their own spiritualities and struggles and those of the Na'vi.

Due date: 200–500-word prospectus by July 1, 2010.

Contact: Bron Taylor (bron AT brontaylor.com)

URL: http://www.religionandnature.com/journal/Avatar_cfp.htm

Call for Papers—Journal

Title: *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* [journal relaunch; formerly *Academic Study of Magic*]

Topic: *Preternature* publishes original scholarship and texts in edition/translation on magics, miracle, the occult, spiritualism, demonology, monstrophy, and the "preternatural" in all its cultural, historical, anthropological, artistic, literary, and folkloric iterations. Submissions pertaining to any time period and to any geographic area are welcome, though the language of publication is English.

Contributions: 8,000–12,000 words, including all documentation and critical apparatus.

Contact: Peter Dendle (pjd11 AT psu.edu); Kirsten C. Uszkalo (circe AT ufies.org); Richard Raiswell (rraiswell AT upei.ca)

URL: http://www.preternature.org/

Call for Papers—Graduate Journal

Title: *Philament Online Journal of Arts and Culture*

Topic: *Philament,* the peer-reviewed online journal of the arts and culture affiliated with the University of Sydney, invites postgraduate students and early-career scholars to submit academic papers and creative works for our next issue upon the theme of Monstrosity. Possible topics include, but are not limited to: monsters; transgression; the uncanny ; abjection; fear; the other; myth; abnormality; the grotesque; hybridity; brutality; altered states; the imaginary; bodies; alienation; subhuman; superhuman; inhuman; the macabre; morbidity; horror; heroes; villains; the dead/undead; legends; folklore; evil; fantasy; deviance. *Philament* accepts submissions from current postgraduate students and early-career scholars (less than five years' postqualification).

Due date: Academic papers: up to 8,000 words; opinion pieces: reviews (book, stage, screen, etc.), conference reports, short essays, responses to papers previously published in *Philament,* up to 1,000 words; creative works: writing, images, sounds or mixed media (limit three pieces), along with submission form available at Web site, by June 30, 2010.

Contact: philament AT arts.usyd.edu.au

URL: http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/philament/submissions.htm

Call for Papers—Conference

Title: Changing the Climate: Utopia, Dystopia, and Catastrophe: The Fourth Australian Conference on Utopia, Dystopia, and Science Fiction

Conference date: August 30–September 1, 2010

Conference site: Monash University Conference Centre, 30 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia

Topic: This fourth conference will directly address the questions of dystopia and catastrophe with special reference to a problem that increasingly haunts our imaginings of the future, that of actual or possible environmental catastrophe. As Jameson himself wrote in *The Seeds of Time:* "It seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations." Hopefully, this conference will play some small part in changing that particular climate of opinion. The conference invites papers from scholars, writers, and others interested in the interplay between ecology and ecocriticism, utopia, dystopia, and science fiction.

Due date: 100–150-word abstracts by June 30, 2010.

Contact: Utopias AT arts.monash.edu.au

URL: http://arts.monash.edu.au/ecps/conferences/utopias/

Call for Papers--Conference

Title: "Lust in Space: Love in Science Fiction Film and Television," 2010 Film & History Conference: Representations of Love in Film and Television

Conference Date: November 11–14, 2010

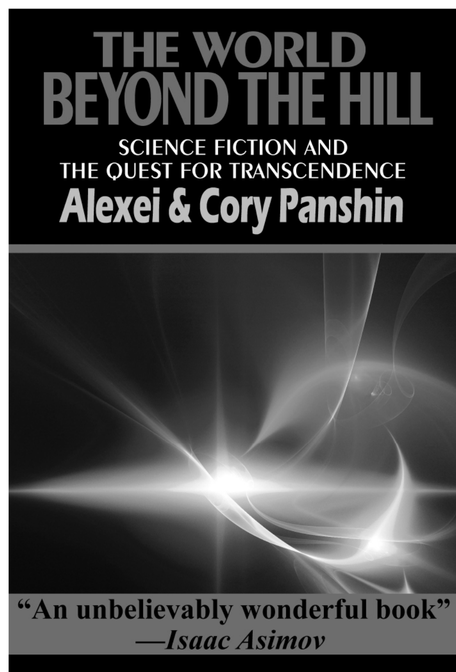
Conference Site: Hyatt Regency Milwaukee

Topic: Science fiction typically relegates matters of the heart to perfunctory sub-plots. As Dale Arden says in the 1980 remake of Flash Gordon: "Flash, I love you, but we only have fourteen hours to save the Earth!" Yet science fiction also places love, sex, and reproduction in provocative new contexts. What are the stakes in a "mixed marriage" when the partnership crosses species, not just races or religions? How does love or family thrive in a utopian (or dystopian) future defined by sleek machines and hyper-efficiency? Does sentience in a computer or robot entail the capacity to love? How do cinematic stories of time travel challenge the ethics of cultural, sexual, or technological interference? Why are scientists, engineers, and astronauts so often sexless in film, and what happens when they do fall in love (or in lust)? From the high seriousness of George Lucas' *THX-1138* (in which love is the ultimate act of defiance in a totalitarian future) to the low comedy of *Back to the Future* (in which a teenaged time-traveler fends off the advances of his teenaged mother), this area will treat all cinematic and televisual forms—adventure, drama, farce, social commentary, allegory, and more—as it explores the role of love inside the boundless space of science fiction.

Due date: 200-word proposal by e-mail by August 1, 2010

Contact: A. Bowdoin Van Riper (bvanriper AT bellsouth.net)

URL: http://www.uwosh.edu/filmandhistory



One of the most critically acclaimed studies of Science Fiction has been republished by Phoenix Pick.

This overarching study of the genre from Shelley to Asimov won the non-fiction Hugo when originally published (in competition with works by Arthur C. Clarke, Harlan Ellison, Ursula LeGuin and Robert Heinlein).

Hardcover, Index/Bibliography, 676 pages
www.PhoenixPick.com

"This **IS** the history of science fiction...My only real complaint is that it ended too soon"—***Science Fiction Chronicle***

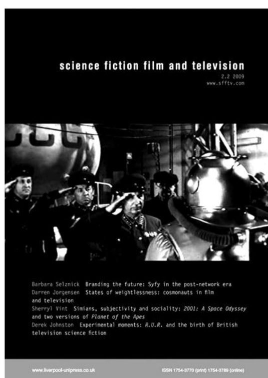
"Painstaking research & wealth of fascinating detail."—***The Washington Post***

"I learned a great deal from reading The World Beyond the Hill. It is an authentic history, unified by a controlling vision, rather than a simple chronicle of names, dates and events."—***Northrop Frye***

"The best, THE BEST, history of science fiction I have ever read...I expect to read The World Beyond the Hill over and over for the rest of my life. It is an unbelievably wonderful book."—*Isaac Asimov*

science fiction film and television

Editors Mark Bould (UWE) and Sherryl Vint (Brock University)



Science Fiction Film and Television is a biannual, peer-reviewed journal that encourages dialogue among the scholarly and intellectual communities of film studies, sf studies and television studies.

We invite submissions on all areas of sf film and television, from Hollywood productions to Korean sf film, from Sci-Fi Channel productions to the origins of sf tv. We encourage papers which consider neglected texts, propose innovative ways of looking at canonical texts, or explore the tensions and synergies that emerge from the interaction of genre and medium.

We publish articles, book and DVD reviews, as well as archive entries on theorists (which introduce the work of key figures in sf studies, television studies, or film studies) and texts (which describe and analyse unduly neglected films or television series).

2 issues per year
Institutions: £95.00 (EEA/ROW) $155.00 (USA & Canada)
Individuals: £36.00 / $62.50
Print ISSN 1754-3770 Online ISSN 1754-3789

To subscribe to *Science Fiction Film and Television*:
Email: subscriptions@marston.co.uk
Telephone Marston Book Services on +44 [0] 1235 465
Or visit the journal website:
http://liverpool.metapress.com/content/121631

www.liverpool-unipress.co.uk

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

The Science Fiction Research Association is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, booksellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership. Visit the SFRA Web site at http://www.sfra.org. For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the Web site.

SFRA Executive Committee

President

Lisa Yaszek
Literature, Communication, and Culture
Georgie Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0165
lisa.yaszek@lcc.gatech.edu

Vice President

Ritch Calvin
16A Erland Rd.
Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114
rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

Secretary

Dr. Patrick B. Sharp
Department of Liberal Studies
California State University, Los Angeles
5151 State University Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90032-8113

Treasurer

Donald M. Hassler
1226 Woodhill Dr.
Kent, OH 44240
extrap@kent.edu

Immediate Past President

Adam Frisch
343 Lakeshore Dr.
McCook Lake, SD 57049-4002
adam.frisch@briarcliff.edu

SFRA Standard Membership Benefits

SFRA Review

Four issues per year. This newsletter/journal surveys the field of science fiction scholarship, including extensive reviews of fiction and nonfiction books and media, review articles, and listings of new and forthcoming books. The *Review* also prints news about SFRA internal affairs, calls for papers, and updates on works in progress.

SFRA Annual Directory

One issue per year. Members' names, contact information, and areas of interest.

SFRA Listserv

Ongoing. The SFRA listserv allows members to discuss topics and news of interest to the SF community, and to query the collective knowledge of the membership. To join the listserv or obtain further information, visit the listserv information page: http://wiz.cath.vt.edu/mailman/listinfo/sfra-l

Extrapolation

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

Science Fiction Studies

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

SFRA Optional Membership Benefits

(Discounted subscription rates for members)

Foundation

Three issues per year. British scholarly journal, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, reviews, and letters. Add to dues: $33 seamail; $40 airmail.

The New York Review of Science Fiction

Twelve issues per year. Reviews and features. Add to dues: $28 domestic; $30 domestic institutional; $34 Canada; $40 UK and Europe; $42 Pacific and Australia.

Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts

Four issues per year. Scholarly journal, with critical and bibliographical articles and reviews. Add to dues: $40/1 year; $100/3 years.

Femspec

Critical and creative works. Add to dues: $40 domestic individual; $96 domestic institutional; $50 international individual; $105 international institutional.