

examples, such as Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* and Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis*. In Chapter Three he analyzes Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and the utopian works of H. G. Wells. Dystopia is the subject of Chapter Four, in particular the three classics of the form—Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—as well as Margaret Atwood's more-recent *The Handmaid's Tale*. Chapter Five, titled "Libertarian Alternatives," focuses on works in which the utopian society described deviates from the more-conventional authoritarianism of most utopian works—specifically, William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Alexander Bogdanov's *Red Star*, and Huxley's *Island*. Similarly, Chapter Six deals with feminist utopias, especially two with a separatist bent, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* and Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground*. Ferns concludes his study with a discussion of three works that in his estimation most successfully challenge the conventions of utopian narrative and its attendant limitations and contradictions, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* and *The Dispossessed*.

Throughout these chapters, Ferns successfully demonstrates his thesis, how the narrative conventions of utopian literature can serve to confound the intentions even of authors whose ambitions would seem to defy the authoritarian worldviews these conventions imply. His comments are consistently interesting, and he offers many convincing interpretations of particular details. In addition, a secondary thread runs throughout his analysis of these individual works, focusing on how the narrative conventions of utopian literature generally carry with them a patriarchal worldview, even if this worldview is questioned in a particular utopia. Thus his treatment of gender issues in utopian literature is intriguing. Also interesting is his discussion of the ways in which many utopias are regressive in nature despite their apparent progressiveness, again due in large part to their narrative structures and their ideological implications. Finally, his concluding remarks on the status of utopian literature today and its relationship to contemporary concerns are worth reading for anyone interested in the study of speculative fiction.

David Lavery and Rhonda V. Wilcox, eds, *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Lanham, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002. 320 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Dorothy Kuykendal

Once again, pop culture meets the parenthetical in this compilation of critical studies focusing on the popular television show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. In

bringing together a collection of scholarly essays that minutely examine a show many watch for pure entertainment, editors Wilcox and Lavery have opened an intriguing doorway to fans of the show, giving us opportunities to reflect on aspects of the show we have never examined before. In what ways could *Buffy* be construed as racist, and how does the show, as a whole, deal with the question of "Otherness"? *How involved can fans be in its production? How relevant could a show about kids fighting vampires be to the real world?* Very relevant, as some of these extremely well thought out essays demonstrate. The studies range from examinations of the various social commentaries *Buffy* offers, to *Buffy's* literary antecedents (for the English geek in all of us), to the extratextual itself—the direct impact *Buffy's* cult following of fans has on the direction of the series.

Buffy has often been touted as a vehicle of liberation for young women, showing a slight, blonde girl with the power to turn hulking vampires into dust and to tear down heavy doors with her bare hands. In a provocative essay entitled "My Emotions Give Me Power: The Containment of Girls' Anger in *Buffy*," Elyce Rae Helford turns that assumption on its head and points out that while yes, *Buffy* does often contain positive messages of empowerment intended for young girls, it tends to limit itself in what *kinds* of power young women are expected to have in our society. While invariably portrayed as "the outcast," Helford points out that *Buffy* occasionally conforms to society's expectations to an almost alarming degree, and her points are worthy of further study by any serious *Buffy* enthusiast.

For those less interested in socio-psychology and more intrigued by *Buffy's* near-limitless literary debts, Anita Rose offers "Of Creatures and Creators: *Buffy* Does *Frankenstein*," which acknowledges the debt *Buffy* owes to Mary Shelley's 19th century tale of horror. While Rose focuses mainly on a few episodes in *Buffy's* fourth season, comparing the Initiative's cyberdemon Adam to Frankenstein's Creature, she does raise some interesting parallels between *Buffy* and the traditional lonely, misunderstood Romantic male hero. Being female, *Buffy* is, of course, a reinterpretation of this ideal, and one that connects less to her own feelings of solitude—bear in mind this collection of essays was published prior to Season Six!—and connects in a more healthy way to her network of friends and family to help her overcome the dangers of a Slayer's life.

Also fascinating are the essays that go beyond the show itself and bring in the very element that keeps that show alive: the fans. Unlike many popular series, *Buffy* and its creators frequently acknowledge the connection between the show and its following, and Justine Larbalestier's essay "*Buffy's* Mary Sue is Jonathan: *Buffy* acknowledges the Fans" is thoroughly delightful in its exploration, especially as it examines the widespread proliferation of *Buffy*-related websites on the Internet. While the essay does contain some technical errors—Larbalestier, for example, frequently refers to "slash fan fiction" as any fan fiction (i.e., stories written by fans independently of the show's actual events, and

usually “published” on the Internet, a very popular pastime for *Buffy* fans) that pairs two characters together, when in reality slash fan fiction centers on mainly homoerotic pairings—it is on the whole a bow to the fans who keep *Buffy* alive, and an intriguing exploration of the interdependence between the show’s creators and its main supporters.

These are only three essays out of a wonderful collection, of course. *Fighting the Forces* addresses queer issues, in exploring why a *Buffy*/Willow homoerotic relationship (true slash, there) would be implausible, as well as postmodern politics, the psychological impact of death and suffering as presented by the show, and the rhetoric of music—appropriate, as a song of some kind is played in nearly every episode and *Buffy* has its own soundtrack available for purchase. The style of these essays is overall quite accessible, and the reader’s interest is sure to be caught by the piquant feel of the collection itself. Have a look. And don’t walk the streets alone after dark in Sunnydale.

Justine Larbalestier. *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002. 310 pp. \$50 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Javier A. Martinez

In the Introduction to her study *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*, Justine Larbalestier writes, “The period from 1926 to 1973 is absolutely crucial to the formation of contemporary feminist science fiction, and yet very little critical work has been undertaken on the period. For example, almost all feminist accounts of the field concentrate on the period from the 1970s onward. The importance of the seventies to feminist science fiction has been convincingly demonstrated. . . but the importance of the earlier period needs explication” (2). This book is a major exercise in just such an endeavor.

For Larbalestier, science fiction is not only a body of literature but a network of relationships between authors, readers, critics, and editors. Her focus is on the clash between men and women, or the battle-of-the-sexes, as it is played out against this landscape. Over the course of seven chapters (each of which is named after a short story by James Tiptree, Jr.) Larbalestier discusses how the battle-of-the-sexes has defined science fiction since the early days of pulp sf. More importantly, Larbalestier casts light on the historical role women have played in the genre. Others have traveled this path before, albeit in small numbers, but Larbalestier’s study stands out because of her focus not only on individual texts, but on the community which generates them.

The work’s greatest strength is its tracing of the dialogue between male editors, readers, and writers and female readers that occurred in the letter columns