erstwhile secretary, Auguste Comte. Stover is a clever and widely read scholar. But his fifteen-year crusade to defame H.G. Wells is a wonder for which I can contrive no explanation.—**W. Warren Wagar, SUNY Binghamton**

The Cold War and SF. Cyndy Hendershot. *Paranoia, the Bomb, and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. Bowling Green Popular Press, 1999. 163 pp. $45.95 hc; $21.95 pbk.

David Seed. *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999. vi + 216 pp. $35 hc.

Among scholars who study American thought and culture during the Cold War, science fiction is widely considered a narrative genre that reveals much about that era. Critics such as Peter Biskind, Paul Boyer, and Ronald Oakley have found science fiction texts—both fiction and film—illuminating in how they treat, or at times critique, the subjectivity of a nation that obsessively kept itself on the knife's edge of world war for nearly half a century. Whether it took the form of red scare fiction such as Robert Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* (1952), indictments of nuclear brinkmanship such as Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1963), or chastisements of McCarthyism such as Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1952), science fiction's growing ideological importance during the Cold War is indisputable. Its significance in those years is often associated with rising cultural pressure to explore the possible moral, political, or biological meanings of the bomb. Two recent books explore in considerable detail science fiction's involvement in defining the Cold War era as an atomic age.

Cyndy Hendershot's *Paranoia, the Bomb, and 1950s Science Fiction Films*, as the title suggests, maintains a tight focus. It examines only cinematic science fiction, limits its scope to one decade, and organizes its chosen texts around a very specific Cold War theme. Hendershot's book begins with the premise that the culture of the 1950s was marked by a collective paranoia that was, as she puts it, "largely triggered by the discovery and use of nuclear weapons during World War II" (1). Hendershot embraces a specifically psychoanalytic account of paranoia that she derives, curiously, from the 1903 memoirs of Daniel Paul Schreber, a patient of Sigmund Freud's. Hendershot uses Freud's analysis of Schreber, and the general theory of paranoia that he developed out of the case, to approach the psychic impact of the bomb on Cold War America. At times, Hendershot allows her psychoanalytic model to obscure the historical character of her argument. In a chapter on feminine paranoia, for example, she explains the anger toward men that women characters exhibit in the films *I Married A Monster from Outer Space* (1958) and *Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman* (1958) by invoking Freud's argument that the female subject becomes paranoid when she displaces her love for the pre-Oedipal mother. What the pre-Oedipal mother has to do with the atomic age is beyond my imagination, but at the very least one would have to read postwar ideologies of motherhood into the the film to make her a relevant figure, which Hendershot does not attempt to do. For the most part, however, Hendershot is willing to use the psychoanalytically-informed category of paranoia more loosely, as a fantasy about a totalized universe. This allows her to argue effectively that many sf films of the 1950s evince tremen-

dous anxiety about surviving the new atomic era at the same time that they invest science with the messianic ability to save the world it had placed in danger.

Hendershot begins her book by considering how sf films rework the political agenda of the scientists' movement that developed in the wake of Truman's use of the bomb against Japan in the final days of World War II. In his book *By The Bomb's Early Light* (Pantheon, 1985), Paul Boyer has described with great skill the conviction among many scientists that the invention of nuclear weapons made a rationally conceived world government into a political imperative. Hendershot mobilizes Boyer's discussion as a useful context to explore the world vision embodied in *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951), *This Island Earth* (1954), and *Killers From Space* (1954), all of which imagine imminent global disaster if scientific reason is not allowed to rule the day. For Hendershot, the culture of the Cold War is characterized by variations on this vision. Over and over again, a traumatic fear that the world has been doomed by the inventions of atomic science gets parried by a vain hope that scientific know-how can shield us from that danger.

In subsequent chapters, Hendershot explores (among other things): the trope of bodily invasion as a metaphor for the threat of radiation, the use of (d)evolutionary fantasies to describe the status of the United States and the Soviet Union (*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* [1953], *Them!* [1954], *The Incredible Shrinking Man* [1957]), and the bomb and sexuality (*Creature from the Black Lagoon* [1954]). She concludes by examining textual elisions of the nuclear threat that involve either converting it into a mythically divine gift (*Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* [1956], *The Monolith Monsters* [1957]) or reducing it to the equivalent of a powerful conventional weapon (*Invasion U.S.A.* [1952], *War of the Worlds* [1953]). Hendershot works diligently to make the case that all of these themes, and the films that exemplify them, may be understood in relation to atomic trauma.

The book's recurring problem, however, is that sometimes the evidence must be stretched quite thin to make the case. To begin with, even if one wishes to treat the Cold War era primarily as a culture of paranoia, the bomb is hardly its only important source. So, for instance, Hendershot is often reduced to arguing that a film like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) serves as a metaphor for the way that radiation can invisibly infiltrate the human body. While this is a useful decoding to keep in mind, one would hardly want to dismiss more obvious readings of the film such as the one in which the alien pods more directly represent the totalitarian threat of communism. Even more importantly, the Cold War needs to be approached as a situation that involved far more than an anti-communist, nuke-fearing streak of cultural paranoia. The 1950s, for example, were also marked by the widescale suburbanization and corporatization of everyday life. In that decade, then, hand-wringing over the term "conformity" alluded not only to the feared evils of Soviet totalitarianism but also to a perceived loss of American individualism at the hands of the new forms of mass standardization. These various anxieties clearly interacted with one another. Read against this backdrop, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

becomes a different kind of Cold War text, one in which its setting in the fictional California town of Santa Mira alludes, not so much to the proximity to nuclear testing sites, as to the Sun Belt (and Southern California in particular) as the epitome of the new suburbia.

I find myself wishing Hendershot had widened the scope of her argument somewhat, allowing collective fears of and hopes for the bomb to meet with other fears and hopes that also shaped the times. An engagement with other analyses of this era, including those by Alan Nadel, Robert Corber, and Mark Janovich, all of which take a broader approach to Cold War culture, might have greatly benefited Hendershot's study. Nevertheless, while she must sometimes stretch far in order to convert the figures and events of 1950s sf films into atomic metaphors, Hendershot does an excellent job of suggesting how the delusory fantasies of self-rescue in so many of these films grew out of a sense of deep doubt and unease, if not trauma. Though they provided metaphors for much more than nuclear bombs, it is undeniable that these films offered highly condensed figures for popular anxiety.

David Seed's *American Science Fiction and the Cold War* casts a wider net than Hendershot's book. Seed focuses primarily on literature but also includes film. His study ranges from the 1940s right through the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. While he uses the nuclear age as a rubric for his book, he does not limit his understanding of the Cold War to it. Using Derrida's notion of nuclear criticism as his starting point, Seed suggests that the threat of worldwide nuclear conflagration, an event that never actually occurred, allowed science fiction to become the speculative terrain upon which various imaginative outcomes of the Cold War might be played out. Less the effect of the bomb on the populace, as in Hendershot, it is the imaginative reshaping of the world's future by nuclear technology that serves as the central concern for Seed. The book, in Seed's words, deals with "the overlapping issues of nuclear war, the rise of totalitarianism and fears of invasion" (11). A somewhat longer study, Seed's book is comprised of a series of short chapters typically focused on one or two sf authors who imaginatively play out a Cold War or post-Cold War future. Early chapters include discussions of Philip Wylie's jeremiads concerning nuclear catastrophe, Robert Heinlein's patriotic imperatives, and Judith Merril's adoption of the bomb-sheltered housewife's perspective following an atomic war. In later chapters, Seed considers postwar themes of surveillance in sf texts influenced by Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1948), such as Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952). He also considers more left-wing narratives attacking postwar consumer capitalism, such as Frederik Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants* (1952). Finally, Seed moves into conspiracy narratives (Philip K. Dick, Thomas M. Disch), Strangelovean absurdism, and even the Star Wars debate.

One gets the sense that Seed wishes to include in his discussion any sort of sf that can be associated with the Cold War rubric in any way. While this is a laudable ambition, he quickly gives up on the attempt to hold the book together with a specific thesis concerning the character of Cold War culture. Each chapter takes up one kind of narrative thematic (surveillance, domestic space,

computers, conspiracy), and then provides a short plot synopsis of the relevant novels, surrounded by some useful discourse on that theme expressed by politicians or intellectuals of the day. No particular thesis or argument ever reconnects these narratives or their thematics to a larger understanding of either the Cold War or science fiction's role within it. As a result, Seed's book ends up becoming more of a reference volume than anything else, a very useful but argumentatively limited compendium of the various sf novels and stories that were written in some kind of relation to the Cold War. The book ends without any general conclusion for the understandable reason that it was not moving towards one. Nevertheless, the amount of scholarly research and the display of historical knowledge in the book is impressive and useful. If Hendershot's is a slender study with a pointed thesis on a handful of sf films, Seed's is a sprawling index of half-a-century of Cold War sf, with many details and ideas to mine for teaching and further criticism.—**Leerom Medovoi, Portland State University**

Theoretical Vagaries and Compelling Readings. Brian Jarvis. *Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture.* St. Martin's, 1998. 208 pp. $19.95 pbk.

While very little of Jarvis's thoughtful, stimulating book directly treats sf, almost the entire text would interest readers concerned with slipstream writing, or film, or postmodern cultural studies, since it addresses the reciprocal dynamic of the utopian impulse and its dystopian underbelly. Beginning with short surveys of several key cultural critics, including Daniel Bell, Marshall McLuhan, Jean Baudrillard, and Fredric Jameson, Jarvis quickly turns to a series of chapters reading individual writers and films: Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, Toni Morrison, and Jayne Anne Phillips; *Blade Runner* (1982), *Alien* (1979), *The Terminator* (1985), and *Blue Velvet* (1986). Most of this ground has been covered before. Indeed, *Postmodern Cartographies* will most interest those not already familiar with the secondary scholarship. The chapter on Morrison's "counter-hegemonic" encounter with "sociospatial apartheid" (113), for example, is beautifully executed but says little new. Morrison isn't interrogated, just summarized and affirmed, her authority and authenticity unquestioned; nor, at least to my mind, is Morrison's central brilliance ever laid bare—the way she forces careful readings to engage their own ethical assumptions. Nevertheless, Jarvis cleverly isolates the fiction's political cruxes in its tropes and topoi, its rhetorical arrangements of space, and does so with a sober nod toward the extant secondary literature.

Of the title's opening terms, "cartography" is simpler if less common in literary studies. Cartography is the science of inscribing cards or charts or maps—not merely their drawing but their theory, as historiography is both the mechanics of doing history and also its philosophy drawn out. Over the last few years, there's been considerable scholarly interest in cartography, most notably a series of volumes from the University of Chicago Press (e.g., Norman Thrower's *Maps and Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society* [2nd ed.;1999]). In literary studies, the metaphor of the map has been increasingly