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**New Scholarship on Early SF in France and Québec. [Review of *C'était demain: anticiper la science-fiction en France et au Québec (1880-1950)* [*It Was Tomorrow: Anticipating Science Fiction in France and Quebec, 1880-1950*], eds. Natacha Vas-Deyres, Patrick Bergeron, and Patrick Guay. Bordeaux, France: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018]**

Arthur B. Evans

DePauw University, aevans@depauw.edu

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**New Scholarship on Early SF in France and Québec.** Natacha Vas-Deyres, Patrick Bergeron, and Patrick Guay, eds. *C'était demain: anticiper la science-fiction en France et au Québec (1880-1950)* [It Was Tomorrow: Anticipating Science Fiction in France and Québec, 1880-1950]. Bordeaux, France: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, Coll. EIDOLON #123, 2018. 428 pp. €26 pbk.

First, it might be helpful to have some historical context about this book. In the July 2015 issue of *SFS*, I reviewed and recommended a similar 2014 collection of critical articles on French and Québécois science fiction called *Les Dieux cachés de la science-fiction française et francophone (1950-2010)* [The Hidden Gods of French and Francophone SF, 1950-2010]. It was edited by the same team of Vas-Deyres, Bergeron, and Guay (and two more scholars, Florence Plet-Nocolas and Danièle André), and it too was published by the same French university press in Bordeaux. I concluded my review with the following observation:

*Les Dieux cachés de la science-fiction française et francophone (1950-2010)* is a fine collection of stimulating and intelligent essays on modern French and Francophone science fiction. The quality of the scholarship is high; the price of the volume is low; and the material covered includes not only sf literature but also sf cinema, television, comics, and museum exhibits. I strongly recommend it for all university libraries. And I look forward to the publication of its sister volume, *C'était demain: anticiper la science-fiction en France et au Québec (1890-1950)*, with much anticipation. (398)

Much of what I said then about *Les Dieux cachés* can be said today about its “sister volume” *C'était demain*. Although the latter was published in 2018 rather than 2016 (as advertised), and although its title and supposed coverage has been expanded from 1890-1950 to 1880-1950 (despite the fact that some essays discuss texts from earlier in the nineteenth century), the quality of the scholarship in this chronological “prequel” does not disappoint.

The book is divided into four major sections. Part I, “Initialiser la science-fiction au Québec” [Initializing Science Fiction in Québec], is devoted to early sf in Francophone Canada, and the essays included are uniformly interesting. Sophie Beaulé analyzes a number of utopias and alternate histories published in Québec during the period 1916-1944. Renald Bérubé focuses on the well-known Québécois writer Yves Thériault and especially his short story “Angoisse-de-Dieu” [Anguish of God, 1944]. Claude Janelle, compiler of the reference tome *Le DALIAF (Dictionnaire des auteurs des littératures de l'imaginaire en Amérique française)* [Dictionary of Authors of Literatures of the Imaginary in French America, 2013], speaks about the usefulness—and limitations—of this work when searching for the origins of Québécois sf. Jean Levasseur discusses an early apocalyptic poem *La Fin du monde par un témoin oculaire* [The End of the World by an Eyewitness] published in 1889 by Pierre-Paul Paradis of Chicoutimi. Part I concludes with an excellent synoptic essay by Jean-Louis Trudel (whose own *Petit guide de la science-fiction au Québec* [Little Guide of Science Fiction in Québec] was published in 2017), who describes Francophone sf in Québec during the period of 1916-1953 as an “essor avorté” [abortive

burgeoning] that did not seem to catch on until the 1960s, notwithstanding the imaginative sf narratives of Jean-Charles Harvey, Alexandre Huot, and Emmanuel Desrosiers.

Part II and Part III of *C'était demain* feature essays on early sf in France and Belgium. They constitute the largest portion of the book (nine articles each) and are, as one might expect, the most topically diverse. Part II is titled "Anticiper la science-fiction en France" [Anticipating Science Fiction in France] and Part III is called "Figures et genres de la conjecture" [Figures and Genres of Conjecture]. It is unclear why the editors chose to organize these eighteen articles into two separate sections; no explanation is offered in the editorial introduction to the volume. For readers on the lookout for top-notch criticism on early French sf from the nineteenth century to post-World War II, however, the essays in these two sections are a wonderful *trouvaille* [find]. Several take the form of monographic studies, including those by Patrizia d'Andrea on the novels of André Couvreur and Maurcie Renard; Daniel David on the voluminous militaristic sf of Émile Driat (aka le Capitaine Danrit); Roger Bozzetto and Patrick Guay on the works of Jacques Spitz; François Ouellet on the sf novels of René Barjavel from the 1940s; Valérie Stiénon on "catastrophe sf" of the 1920s by writers such as Claude Farrère, Léon Daudet, José Moselli, and Léon Groc; Arnaud Huftier on Belgian sf writer Henri-Jacques Proumen; Alexandre Marcinkowski on Moselli and his visionary sf novel *La fin d'Illa* [The End of Illa, 1925]; Samuel Minne and Aurélie Villers on Camille Flammarion's fictional speculations about life on Mars; and Marie Palewska on the Verne-inspired *Voyages excentriques* of Paul d'Ivoi. Essays with a more diachronic and/or thematic focus include Jean-Luc Boutel's overview of the rise in France of *la littérature d'imagination scientifique* [literature of the scientific imagination]; Paul Kawczak on the relationship between sf novels and adventure novels from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century; Jean-Guillaume Lanuque on the portrayal of revolutionary socialism in the *première science-fiction française* [first French sf] of the 1920s; Jean-Loup Héraud about altered causality in Spitz, Renard, and Barjavel; Fleur Hopkins on the metamorphoses of the term *le merveilleux scientifique* [the scientific-marvelous] during the period 1875-1930; Élisabeth Stojanov on early time machines; and Natacha Vas-Deyres and Patrick Bergeron's fascinating study, "Les fourmis et les hommes: voyage entomologique au coeur de la proto-science-fiction" [Ants and Men: An Entomological Journey to the Heart of Proto-Science Fiction].

Part IV, titled simply "Journaux, revues et cinéma" [Newspapers, Journals, and Cinema], is by far the shortest section of the book, with three essays about sf in the three media listed. Jean-Luc Buard discusses the often unremarked sf published in *feuilleton* [serial] format in newspapers and magazines from the 1820s to the 1950s, calling it *la science-fiction invisible* [invisible sf]. Claire Barel-Moisán examines the *romans d'anticipation* [anticipation novels] and other sf stories by authors such as Jules Verne, Henri de Parville, Louis Boussenard, and Albert Robida that appeared in the weekly periodical journal *La Science illustrée* from 1887 to 1905. In the book's last essay, Patricia Crouan-Véron explicitly links this collection to its predecessor by explaining how the fantastic

cinéma of Georges Méliès—and especially his iconic *Voyage à la lune* [Trip to the Moon, 1902]—identifies him as another “dieu caché de la science-fiction” [hidden god of sf, 391]. Finally, similar to its “sister volume,” the appendix of *C’était demain* also offers a selected primary and secondary bibliography and two handy indexes, an index *nominum* (of proper names) and an index *rerum* (of things).

Readers who are newcomers to the study of French sf may be puzzled by the variety of terms used in this collection to identify pre-modern works in the genre: e.g., *littérature d’imagination scientifique*, *romans d’anticipation*, *le merveilleux-scientifique*, *la première science-fiction*, etc. The useful catch-all acronym “SF” or “sf” has not (yet) caught on with any consistency in France; but, thankfully, neither has the atrocious “sci-fi.” And even the hyphenated version *la science-fiction*—once championed by prominent Francophone sf historians such as Pierre Versins, Jacques van Herp, and Jacques Sadoul—has now been increasingly limited by younger French scholars to refer to those sf texts published only after 1945. For better or for worse, the expression *la proto-science-fiction* appears destined to replace all the others. Although inherently biased, implying that no *true* sf existed in the US before the pulp era or in France before the end of World War II, *la proto-science-fiction* has the indisputable advantage of simplicity.—**Arthur B. Evans, DePauw University**