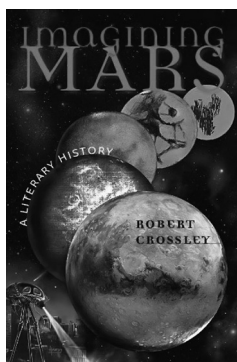


Buffy in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching with the Vampire Slayer, edited by Jodie A. Kreider and Meghan K. Winchell (221 pages, September 2010), brings together 17 essays by teachers and scholars from both secondary schools and universities who use Joss Whedon's TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a text for lessons, seminars, or entire courses in media studies, literature, composition, religious studies, gender studies, and communication. Though the show ended nearly eight years ago (not counting its ongoing "eighth season" as a comic book series), it resonates with some academics who feel that its complex use of metaphor, history, myth, and ethics make it an ideal pedagogic tool. \$35.00. McFarland. 978-0-7864-6214-8.

In case you missed it, *Buffy Meets the Academy*, edited by Kevin J. Durand (224 pages, May 2009), also explores using the series as text, though a bit more analytically, and it presents some themes that could be used in teaching—among them failed feminism, the tragic hero, the quest for anti-self-consciousness, and apocalyptic revisionism. \$35.00. McFarland. 978-0-7864-4355-0.

Imagining Mars, by Robert Crossley (384 pages, January 2011), examines the interplay between speculative fiction and

scientific knowledge about Mars throughout history, from the age of the earliest telescopes to NASA's recent orbiters and rovers. Crossley identifies several key eras in Martian literature: a spate of forgotten romances in the



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wake of Schiaparelli's observation of *canali* in 1877; the Mars mania of the 1890s, culminating in H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* and astronomer Percival Lowell's pursuit of the "canals" as evidence of Martian life; utopian reformist polemics, mediumistic fantasies, and the masculinist adventure tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs in the early 20th century; the emerging realism of science fiction at the dawn of the Space Age, exemplified by Ray Bradbury and Arthur C. Clarke; and Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy of the 1990s, which blends all of the earlier themes into a hard-science saga of terraforming and colonization. \$40.00. Wesleyan University. 978-0-8195-6927-1.

A perfect companion to this literary history is *Trailblazing Mars: NASA's Next Giant Leap*, by Pat Duggins (242 pages, September 2010), which summarizes the history of Mars exploration from the Mariner and Viking missions to the surface explorations of the 21st century and looks at the risks and practical challenges that Martian astronauts (the new "right stuff") will face during a manned expedition to the red planet. \$24.95. University Press of Florida. 978-0-8130-3518-5.

The Murder of King Tut, a graphic novel based on the 2009 nonfiction book by James Patterson and Martin Dugard, adapted by Alexander Irvine with artwork by Ron Randall and Christopher Mitten (112 pages, November 2010), makes the case for the assassination of Pharaoh Tutankhamen by his successor, the Grand Vizier Ay. Although by 2010, the murder theory has been diluted by DNA evidence that Tut's death was likely caused by infection from a broken leg, malaria, and even sickle-cell anemia, Patterson's thesis has abundant historical precedent, including Bob Brier's *The Murder of Tutankhamen* (Putnam, 1998) and Michael R. King and Gregory M. Cooper's *Who Killed King Tut?* (Prometheus, 2004), not to mention the excellent 1945 novel by Mika Waltari, *The*

Egyptian. This edition has the added value of luring undergraduates into historical forensics and archaeology through its graphical format. \$24.99. IDW. 978-1-60010-780-1.

The Myth and Mystery of UFOs, by Thomas E. Bullard (417 pages, October 2010), tackles a complex and controversial subject from a scholarly, analytical, and cultural standpoint. Bullard admits at the outset that “enough threads of coherent experience exist [within the UFO phenomenon] to reject cultural explanations as less than the whole story.” However, his academic training as a folklorist enables him to treat the human experience with UFOs as a “mystery of mythic proportions,” with parallels in the motif of otherworldly journeys, religious experience, magical forces, Jungian archetypes, and even Indian captivity narratives (when compared to UFO abduction tales). Bullard outlines the history of UFOs with an emphasis on how a body of seemingly veridical testimony can evolve into a mythos. Then he examines the prehistory of strange sights in the sky; the tradition of otherworldly journeys and extra-terrestrial visitation; the role of human children as alien victims, hybrids, or harbingers of future harmony; the extremes of fear and hope that an alien invasion might inspire; the conflict between nature and apparently alien technology; the limitations of a psychosocial explanation for UFO reports; and the value of an experience-centered approach to understanding the anomalous claims of experiencers. This is an extremely well-documented, cultural approach to a phenomenon that deserves to be embraced, rather than summarily ignored, by at least a few branches of science. \$34.95. University Press of Kansas. 978-0-7006-1729-6.

For those who prefer their aliens remote and less mythical, *The Eerie Silence: Reviewing Our Search for Alien Intelligence*, by Paul Davies (242 pages, April 2010), should do the trick. Davies evaluates the past 50 years of SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) projects and calls for a major rethink of the strategy proposed by Frank Drake in 1960—

looking for discrete alien signals—by shifting to a search for general footprints of ETI. One would think that UFO activity would constitute such a footprint but, although he is much more sympathetic to the UFO phenomenon than most SETI researchers, Davies succumbs to the all noise—no signal approach deconstructed by Bullard. Nevertheless, Davies provides a lucid, well-informed update on the search, including a section on the arsenic-based microbes of Mono Lake, California, that were the subject of a much-hyped December 2010 NASA press conference. \$27.00. Houghton Mifflin. 978-0-547-13324-9.

The Northside: African Americans and the Creation of Atlantic City, by Nelson Johnson (337 pages, November 2010), offers an

in-depth look at the flip side of *Boardwalk Empire*, the author’s 2002 history of Atlantic City, New Jersey, that was turned into a popular HBO television series. The vibrant African-American enclave that developed on the north side of the railroad tracks was an essential part of the city’s heyday as a seaside resort in 1885–1935, primarily because it was the black workforce that provided the hotels with service laborers. The popular musical clubs that lined Kentucky Avenue rivaled Harlem for entertainment and drew many white visitors from the Boardwalk area. Johnson profiles more than a dozen of the Northside leaders who helped create this self-contained community and how they dealt with the rampant racism of the times. Ironically, it was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and legalized casino gambling that caused the “unraveling of the black community’s tightly woven social structure,” as Johnson puts it, prompting many to move away from a city in decline. \$24.95. Plexus Publishing. 978-0-937548-73-8. *z*

