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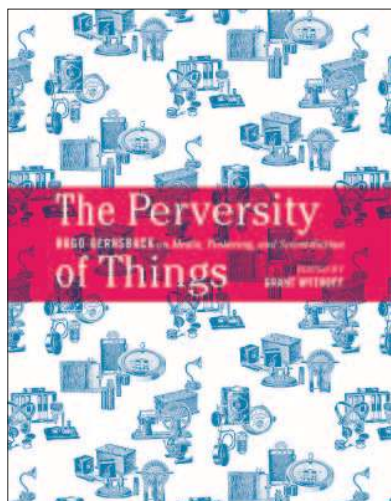
Leonardo Reviews Online

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key importance of the role of the amateur in cultural and technological change. In that sense, the Gernsback *universum*—by which I mean both the *writings* by this famous editor or those simply inspired by the example of his magazines and the large but amorphous *community* of all those who participated in the social life of the technological and cultural inventions of his time—can easily be compared with phenomena such as the open source movement in software development, alternative forms of working such as peer-to-peer economy, fan fiction or many other forms of collective intelligence.

Wythoff recovers this lost history in two ways. First of all, by gathering a large sample of Gernsback's writings from the decades before *Amazing Stories* (which ends the chrono-

logical survey one finds here in this book), he offers direct insight into what anticipated as well as prepared the emergence of science fiction (to use the modern term). What these articles on all aspects of modern technology (but this is a contemporary term as well) make very clear is the complete merger of aspects and issues that are now clearly separated: techniques and media, fiction and fiction, content and materiality, form and function, private and public, meaning and use, etc. Second, by contextualizing as well as close-reading this truly amazing body of work and stressing the intricate relationships between editor and tinkering community, he also elucidates the social environment that animates the technological craze of these years: the desire for upward mobility and job security thanks to technology among new immigrants; the link between feminism and the participation in technological culture in the domestic sphere (women readers of *Amazing Stories* expressed for instance their dislike of the romance aspects of the SF short stories, which they judged discriminating); the multiple connections between the ideas that burgeoned in the amateur sphere and the industrial patents that were the subject of fierce battles; and above all the universally shared belief in the benefits of progress (which translated in the Depression Era into a clear but cautiously formulated sympathy for “technocracy” in politics).

The quality of Wythoff's editorial

work is outstanding and is served well by its clever typography. It is also pleasant to read, well indexed, and nicely illustrated. Thanks to this work, it should be possible to reframe the figure of Gernsback, whose role cannot be reduced to that of a somewhat old-fashioned forerunner of a literary genre that has moved eventually away from the “hard technology” side it had in the beginning, when one of the aims of the stories was not to create new story worlds but to fictionally demonstrate how certain things actually worked. There is a lot of McLuhan in Gernsback, and it is to media studies and media archeology that his life and work really belong.

But what about the “perversity of things,” finally? It is the title of a 1916 article by Gernsback in *The Electrical Experimenter* (here pp. 165–167). In this text, he addresses an old subject: “the recalcitrant behavior of things in general toward us humans,” which he reads as an invitation to all tinkerers to remediate their “lack of knowledge” and through study, research, work and trial and error to get a better “intimate knowledge” of the things in order to better subject them to make them do what we want them to do. His conclusion: “If people would only stop to think how infinitely little we know about everything about us, and how thoughtless we are in our relations to all inanimate things, we would not be so apt to complain about the fabled Perversity of Things.”

LEONARDO REVIEWS ONLINE

MAY 2017

Lewis Carroll Society of North America: Spring Meeting, San Francisco Public Library. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

For Folk's Sake. Art and Economy in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia by Erin Morton. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

Curated Decay: Heritage beyond Saving by Caitlin DeSilvey. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

Peters' Music Therapy: An Introduction, 3rd Edition, by Wanda Lathom-Radocy. Reviewed by Richard Kade.

Future of the Brain: Essays by the World's Leading Neuroscientists, edited by Gary Marcus and Jeremy Freeman. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

To See without Being Seen: Contemporary Art and Drone Warfare by

Svea Bräunert and Meredith Malone. Reviewed by Jane Hutchinson.

Essentials for Composers: Creative Process by Design by Jonathan Middleton. Reviewed by Richard Kade.

The Ancient Origins of Consciousness: How the Brain Created Experience by Todd E. Feinberg and Jon M. Mallatt. Reviewed by Craig Hilton.

APRIL 2017

Impersonal Enunciation, or the Place of Film by Christian Metz; translated

by Cormac Deane. Reviewed by Ian Verstegen.

Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species by Ursula K. Heise. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945–1976 by John Harwood. Reviewed by Michael Mosher.

Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016, edited by Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein. Reviewed by Jonathan Zilberg.

Giambattista and Domenico Tiepolo: Master Drawings from the Anthony J. Moravec Collection by Adelheid M.

Gealt, with contributions by George Knox. Reviewed by Michael Mosher.

Fantasies of the Library, edited by Anna-Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin. Reviewed by Jussi Parikka.

MARCH 2017

Art Nouveau in Buenos Aires: A Love Story by Anat Meidan. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

The Camera Does the Rest: How Polaroid Changed Photography by Peter Buse. Reviewed by Ana Peraica.

FEBRUARY 2017

Conjugal Visit by Charles Krafft. Reviewed by Richard Kade.

Philosophy of Language by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes. Reviewed by Ana Peraica.

Vision: How It Works and What Can Go Wrong by John E. Dowling and Joseph L. Dowling, Jr. Reviewed by George Shortess.

JANUARY 2017

The Intermediality of Narrative Literature by Jørgen Bruhn. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

Pirate Philosophy: For a Digital Post-humanities by Gary Hall. Reviewed by Rob Harle.

Control—Digitality as Cultural Logic by Seb Franklin. Reviewed by Ana Peraica.

ANNOUNCING

Leonardo Art Science Evening Rendezvous (LASER)

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