



Regenesis

C.J. Cherryh

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The direct sequel to the Hugo Award- winning novel "Cyteen", "Regenesis" continues the story of Ariane Emory PR, the genetic clone of one of the greatest scientists humanity has ever produced, and of her search for the murderer of her progenitor -- the original Ariane Emory. Murder, politics, deception, and genetic and psychological manipulation combine against a backdrop of interstellar human societies at odds to create a mesmerizing and major work in "Regenesis."

Who did kill the original Ariane Emory? And can her personal replicate avoid the same fate? Those questions have remained unanswered for two decades since the publication of "Cyteen." Now, in "Regenesis", those questions will finally be answered.

Regenesis Details

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retroj says

First a quick note: I started into the Unionside series not having read *Downbelow Station*, so when I saw the cover of *Regenesis* that said "sequel to ... *Cyteen* and *Downbelow Station*", I was concerned that *Regenesis* would have dependencies on *Downbelow Station*. However, I decided to chance it since *Cyteen* was fresh in my mind, rather than going back in time to a whole other story. I can now report that yes, it is safe to read *Regenesis* without having read *Downbelow Station*, but, if I had the whole thing to do over again, I would have read *Downbelow Station* before reading any Unionside books, but only because it would have set up the universe for *40,000 in Gehenna* and *Cyteen*, no bearing on *Regenesis*. Now on to the review.

A lot of science fiction — speculative fiction — is founded on speculation about the sciences of physics and technology. The sciences at the heart of the Unionside trilogy, however, are psychology and sociology, and what C.J. Cherryh does with these sciences, in a civilization 400 years in the future, is nothing short of mind-blowing. Psychology and sociology have matured to become hard sciences. Paired with mass-scale human cloning and hypno-learning, psychologies are now programmed, and societies designed. This fact has awesome implications for power and politics in interstellar society, and the question of who will wield that power, will direct the course of humanity's expansion to the stars and design the society of the future, means high stakes politics, secrets, espionage, maneuver, and counter-maneuver. The story of *Regenesis* tracks the rise to power of the inheritor of a new dynasty at the nexus of scientific power in Union-controlled space, the company that makes the clones and designs the society of the future. A clone herself, raised none too gently in her gene-mother's and guardians' attempt to create the perfect replicate, body and mind, Ari Two must consolidate power, fend off rivals, and solve the mystery surrounding her predecessor's murder. The point is not lost that the head of Science is herself a product of Science, making for a society that feels familiar in some ways, and shockingly alien in others.

The four stars I gave to *Cyteen* were somewhat tentative, owing to the slow start, but *Regenesis* was definitely a solid four stars. Having all of *Cyteen* to establish mood and setting, *Regenesis* is instantly immersive; it puts the tension on early and doesn't let up. Furthermore, it amplified and solidified *Cyteen*, and makes me hope that maybe the series isn't done yet.

Update 2012-07-09: I have now read *Downbelow Station*, and it wasn't as good as I expected, so I don't know anymore whether to recommend reading it before *Cyteen*.

Update 2012-09-29: I have now read all of the *Company Wars* books, and this is the order I recommend: *Merchanter's Luck*, *Rimrunners*, *Downbelow Station*, *Forty Thousand in Gehenna*, *Cyteen*, *Regenesis*, remaining *Company Wars* books as/if desired.

Patrick St-Denis says

When bestselling and award-winning SFF author C.J. Cherryh was named the 32nd SFWA Damon Knight Grand Master last year, I knew I had to read and review something she had written. Most of the author's fans consider *Downbelow Station* and *Cyteen* to be her best novels to date. Both have won the Hugo Award for best novel and both appear on basically every single "Best science fiction books of all time" lists out there.

I elected to go for Downbelow Station first because, even though it's part of the Alliance-Union series, the novel reads like a stand-alone. My only concern was that it might not have aged well. Originally published in 1981, the book was now 35 years old. And unlike fantasy, older scifi titles often tend to lose a lot of their luster as time goes by. Not so with Downbelow Station, I was pleasantly surprised. True, some of the technology was a bit obsolete. But it could stand on its own and give most recent space opera books a run for their money. All in all, in terms of plot and characterization, it was an excellent read!

Still, a lot of Cherryh fans opined that Cyteen was a better, more ambitious story. And it is. From the very beginning you realize that this is going to be something special. Cyteen is definitely one of the very best science fiction novels I have ever read. And yet, the closer I got to the end, the more it became evident that the author couldn't possibly close the show adequately with that dwindling pagecount. Problem is, Cyteen ends in an abrupt fashion and offers no resolution whatsoever. Little did I know then that the story continues in Regenesis, the direct sequel to Cyteen. I was shocked to discover that it took C. J. Cherryh twenty-one years to write that book! Imagine waiting for over two decades to find out how what is considered one of the best science fiction novels ever written ends. Makes you realize that George R. R. Martin and Patrick Rothfuss are not that bad, right? This lack of a genuine ending prevented Cyteen from getting a perfect score, but there was no denying that the book remained an incredible read. And like Downbelow Station, though it was twenty-nine years old, Cyteen stood head and shoulders above most scifi titles still in print today.

Which now brings us to Regenesis. Considering that this is the sequel to Cherryh's masterpiece, expectations were lofty indeed. Trouble is, probably due to the fact that it took so long for the author to write this novel, she was unable to recapture the magic that made Cyteen such a memorable read. Indeed, Regenesis often acts as a somewhat political epilogue riddled with info-dumps which begins right where its predecessor ended. Unfortunately, it appears that it is little more than a transition work meant to bridge the gap between Cyteen and whatever fate has in store for Ariane Emory II and Reseune and the world of Cyteen's position in the greater scheme of things as far as the Union is concerned. And though Regenesis does provide its share of answers, it's obvious that readers will have to wait for the next volume to finally get all the answers they were expecting. Here's to hoping that we won't have to wait for another two decades for whatever comes next for these characters.

Here's the blurb:

The long-awaited sequel to the Hugo award-winning novels Cyteen and Downbelow Station.

The direct sequel to Cyteen, Regenesis continues the story of Ariane Emory, Personal Replicate, the genetic clone of one of the greatest scientists humanity has ever produced, and of her search for the murderer of her progenitor—the original Ariane Emory. Murder, politics, deception, and genetic and psychological manipulation combine against a backdrop of interstellar human factions at odds to confront questions that have remained unanswered for two decades...

Who killed the original Ariane Emory?

And can her Personal Replicate avoid the same fate?

Like Downbelow Station and Cyteen, Regenesis is set in the Alliance-Union universe. For years and years, space was explored by the Earth Company, a private corporation which became extremely wealthy and powerful. What is known as the Beyond began with space stations orbiting the stars nearest Earth. And those early stations were emotionally and politically dependent on the Earth Company. A number of star systems were found to lack planets suitable for colonization, so space stations were built in orbit instead, each of

them a stepping-stone for further space exploration. Then, Pell's World was discovered to be habitable and Pell Station was built. This newly discovered planet altered the power balance of the Beyond forever, as Earth was no longer the anchor that kept this incredibly vast empire together. And Pell was just the first living planet. Then came Cyteen and others, and a new society grew in the farther reaches of space. Earth's importance continued to fade and the Earth Company's profits continued to diminish as the economic focus of space turned outward. When Earth began to lose control of its more distant stations and worlds, the Earth Company Fleet was sent to enforce its will in the Beyond. This led to a prolonged war with the breakaway Union, based at Cyteen. Caught between the two factions are the stationers and the merchandisers who crew the freighters that maintain interstellar trade between planets and stations. This conflict came to be known as the Company War.

Like Cyteen, Regenesis occurs decades following its end. Unlike its predecessor, this one is less hard science fiction and more space opera. Cyteen is home to the research facility of Reseune, which holds the monopoly on all research and development of human cloning. The Union boosts its population and its army with genetically engineered and psychologically conditioned human clones. These azi, as the clones are known, are seen as an abomination by Earth and the Alliance. This is another dense and brilliant work that explores the concepts of free will, identity, and personality, as well as the ethics surrounding human cloning, genetic manipulation, social conditioning, and the psychological and emotional repercussions associated with these things. As was the case with Cyteen, it is well nigh impossible to put a distinct label on this book. It's a richly detailed and complex novel that is not always easy to read. Cyteen was an amazing science fiction psychological thriller/political murder mystery hybrid, while Regenesis leans rather heavily on the political murder mystery side. Which wouldn't be much of a problem if it was more of a self-contained tale, the one that fans have been eagerly awaiting for many long years.

Regenesis continues to follow the evolution of Ariane Emory's clone. Like her predecessor, she is brilliant and has grown up to become a cunning and manipulative young adult. But unforeseen events caused by political powers will push her into a corner and she'll soon realize that more than her life and the fate of Reseune hang in the balance. Indeed, the political future of the entire Union is at stake. Once again, there are several POV characters, chief among them young Ariane Emory, Jordan Warrick, Justin and Grant, Florian and Catlin, and Yanni Schwartz. Witnessing the progression of the relationship between Justin and Ari was interesting. The emotional and psychological anguish experienced by Justin in the presence of the child who would become the woman who raped him was particularly well-done in the previous installment and it was nice to see how trust is gradually growing between the two. The estranged relationship between Jordan Warrick and his son and its negative repercussions on everyone around them play an important role throughout Regenesis. Justin must finally come into his own and put his foot down to put his father back in his place.

As a hard science fiction title, Cyteen was definitely a cerebral read. The complexity of the science involved compounded by the convoluted plotlines and a century-spanning timeline forced you to concentrate and work more than a little. But the payoff was well worth the effort. Cyteen was a stunning, ambitious, and thought-provoking novel. A genius at the time of her death, rejuvenation treatments extended Ariane Emory's lifespan and allowed her to live for more than a century. And yet, there are hints that her life's work could not be completed in a single lifetime, and that perhaps this devious woman had planned for everything that would occur and may have messed with Justin and Grant's minds so they could help her pursue her quest for knowledge once her clone reached adulthood. This story was not over, not by a longshot. With Regenesis, readers were promised revelations unveiling secrets behind all those unanswered questions. Unfortunately, those answers are few and far between. Regenesis is indeed the sequel to Cyteen, but it doesn't move the story forward a whole lot. Sadly, there is very little progression as far as the plot is concerned. As I mentioned earlier, Regenesis is more of a transition work rather than a continuation of the storylines that

began in Cyteen. I'm afraid that what fans have been waiting for for more than twenty years will have to wait for the next volume. Indeed, the more you read on, the more you understand that some sort of political coup is being staged, one that could change the fate of the Union for years to come. And that's what Regenesis is all about. It takes a long time for things to finally make sense, however, as readers keep hoping for those answers they were promised.

Like its predecessor, Regenesis is another extremely slow-moving novel at times. The fact that it's more of a political murder mystery wouldn't be a problem per se if revelations and explanations were not provided through the use of massive info-dumps. Disguised as dinner dates, meetings, etc, these info-dumps mostly take the form of long discussions where the characters sit down and talk about their problems and spoon-feed readers with what they need to know. And when I say long, I mean the better part of entire chapters spent following the conversations of two or more protagonists. As a result, the pace is miserable for the better part of the novel. When the proverbial shit finally hits the fan and the coup is being staged, the rhythm quickly picks up and everything changes. The endgame and the finale are gripping, and Cherryh closes the show with style and aplomb.

Which definitely makes you eager to find out what happens next. Problem is, God knows when the next volume in the Alliance-Union series focusing on Ariane Emory will be written. As things stand, there are no news pertaining to when that forthcoming sequel could see the light. In the end, Regenesis adds very little to all the concepts and characters that were introduced in Cyteen. The political intrigue made for an interesting read and a compelling ending, but there is no denying that this is not a worthy sequel to a work that is universally considered to be one of the very best science fiction novels of all time.

For more reviews, check out www.fantasyhotlist.blogspot.com.

Yune says

I was the first person to place a hold on this book when it entered the library catalog as being on order. This made me cackle. The day it became available, I drove to the library in a sweaty tank-top and shorts and a corduroy jacket, because there were only ten minutes before closing and I had no time to change. This made me cackle more, interspersed with mutterings of "Mine!"

I don't know what you're doing with this book if you haven't read Cyteen first. This is very much a sequel; rest assured that your favorite cast is all there, though with a different dynamic. There's attention spent both on the future and the past (remember all those dangling threads?). Some of the backtracking feels like add-ons.

Way more flux-states. At a couple of points I actually found myself smiling and feeling soft-hearted, which--what? This is Cherryh! And that made it all seem a little unconvincing to me, some blurring of that edginess that made Cyteen cut so deep.

On the other hand, it feels more well-rounded. Possibly the mass of confused readership that arose from the previous book caused this one to have everything spelled out. There are four pages of Ari just thinking things through, all italicized, step-by-step, possibilities considered and discarded. I felt hand-held.

So: gentler. More conclusive. A lot more politics. Different emphases on characters. Satisfying, I'd say. But not a lightning strike.

Nathan Trachta says

Ahhhh, a new CJ Cherryh book; this means its time to sit back, relax, and enjoy a little story telling where things unfold gradually and usually superbly told. This time, I got to have Ms. Cherryh tell me a little more about Ari Emory who Cyteen focused around. Because it's been 20 years though since Cyteen, Ms. Cherryh spent a fair amount of time re-establishing the characters and their environment. For me this was good since I didn't really feel like reading Cyteen again prior to reading Regenesis (I'm sorry, Cyteen is 696 pages and I really wanted to read Regenesis). Since the first third or more of the book focuses on re-establishing the characters, the opening was a little slow. Having said that though, this is important because as with all CJ Cherryh books (or so it seems), this character development (and the motivations of these characters) is import to the conclusion of the story. Btw, as always in a CJ Cherryh book, it doesn't matter whether it's the simple desires of a critical Azi (Catlin and Florian), the spidery plot of a secondary character (Admiral Khalid), or the complex character of Ari Emory; readers need to pay attention to the characters and their motives almost like they're your friend or potential enemy.

Rating wise, this one's a solid 4 star book. While slow starting, the book picks up speed slowly but surely and closes like a freight train, hard and with lots of power. The plot twists and character development make this a worthy sequel to Cyteen and a good read as a stand alone book. There were a few moments that made me chuckle making for a more human book (watching Ari interact with John Elway really made me wonder if she'd selected that name because of the former quarterback, an interesting piece for me since I live in Colorado. I also found it interesting since this John Elway was a rather average administrator). Items that interested me included how Ms. Cherryh 'aged' the Company War by having Union people no longer remembering that they were at war with the Earth Company, but instead mistaking the Merchant Alliance for the enemy (really and excellent coup on Ms. Cherryh's behalf since her other books in the universe show the twist in this relationship). I also found the similarities between Regenesis/Cyteen and the Defender series to be scary (the prevalence/need for security/body guards in both story lines and the relationships between the guards and those they guard). While the cover ties the book to Cyteen and The Downbelow Station, I felt the stronger ties were to Cyteen and 40,000 in Gehenna (really, if you want to have a full understanding of the story you need to read these two).

Sandi says

Don't get me wrong. Regenesis is a good book. But it is obvious now that reading this immediately after Cyteen was a mistake. The author wrote this ~20 years later and it shows in the characters. These characters read like the originals but all grown up - ten or twenty years after the events of Cyteen. That would be great if the events in this book took place ten or twenty years later but they do not. This book picks up almost immediately after the events of Cyteen and the differences in the characters is totally jarring and hard to wrap your head around - hence only three stars. I can see if I had waited a year or two between reading this and Cyteen it may not have impacted my enjoyment of the story nearly as much.

- Now on to the story. As I said above, this continues the saga of the Cyteen political battlefield. As in Cyteen, it is full of political machinations but unlike Cyteen it lacks a lot of the sociological stuff that really made the first book. I love Cherryh's writing but I feel this book could have really benefited from a outside

alpha reader and some good editing. There were a number of places in the book where information was repeated because a viewpoint character just figured it out. That's okay, but many of those paragraphs felt directly lifted from previous mentions. They could have been streamlined to give the same effect. Also, the alpha reader would definitely have pointed out the drastic character change, especially in Justin. You do not go from emotionally scared to a comfortably, confident young man in mere minutes. I was glad to see some more explanation of the events in Cyteen, those clarifications reinforced my unsubstantiated impressions and rationalizations that all was not as it was claimed and explained in the first book. The first half of the book felt Like C.J. Cherryh was trying to get back into the mindset of the Unionside universe, the second half was much improved and really started to find its feet and hit its stride (head and feet).

This is a good book; if you loved Cyteen you need to read this - but wait a little while before picking this up. I think your reading experience will be better for it.

Bradley says

I've been a life-long fan of Cherryh, first for the original Cyteen, then Downbelow Station, and then, a few novels later, Foreigner, which set me on a path where I squeed every time a new one came out.

So returning to the Union-Alliance universe and specifically with the characters from the original Cyteen now seemed like a perfect treat! What's not to like about waking up to learn you're a clone of a brilliant scientist who has left you tons of brain-engrams and a political squabble and the fact that she has been murdered? I mean, it's times like that a kid just HAS TO SCRAMBLE to catch up! I loved it.

This is her as an 18-year-old and the pieces of that old murder needed to be picked up. And solidifying the political arena, since this scientific corporation that basically runs the whole world of Cyteen seems to have a LOT of different views on how it ought to be run. And this is where we pick up. A lot of politics. A lot of everyday life getting her head together. Interpersonal quagmires. And a coup.

The basic story is pretty decent and I know from experience that Cherryh is pretty AMAZING at intricate politics on alien worlds or futuristic colonies. The latter part of this novel feels like part courtroom drama and part insurgency.

But damn. I was kinda overwhelmed, or maybe I should say, underwhelmed. There was too much that wasn't interesting and I lost interest. Many times. So much of this book could have had a very heavy haircut. The resulting story would have been exciting and fun as hell.

It's okay tho. It's not my favorite Cherryh novel, but I should mention that after reading over 25 of them, it's kinda like having a lukewarm meal at your favorite restaurant. You're disappointed, but not enough to still rave about the restaurant to your friends. :)

Anna says

Regenesis, the "long-awaited sequel" to C.J. Cherryh's Cyteen, moves at the same deliberate and complex pace as its predecessor; its climax is political more than anything else, and key nuances can be found largely in character interactions rather than pulse-pounding action sequences. However, that does not mean that it

doesn't carry an emotional heft--there may have been some suspicious moisture in my eyes when the ragged Council was finally reassembled and got down to business.

Questions posed by Regenesis include: is it responsible to colonize an "empty" planet for human use and turn it into a replica of Earth? What happens when one of the branches of government tries to take control, and it's the branch that you rely on to protect the citizenry? If we conceive of an unending line of Ariane Emory clones, at which point do they choose to clone Ari Emory II instead of Ari Emory I? Would that make a difference? And so on. Perhaps one of the problems with Regenesis is that there are too many questions, and Cherryh has to spend a significant amount of time reviewing events in Cyteen (and even events that occurred before Cyteen) to bring some closure to the characters.

Some of the questions that I wanted answers to after finishing Cyteen (see review) were almost definitively answered, including the "who killed Ariane Emory?" whodunit that has been with us for oh, 1000 pages. However, Cherryh leaves herself enough room, with Gehenna, Wintersnow, and the course of human evolution in the balance, to write a raft of sequels. I hope that it doesn't take another 20 years. Cherryh has cleared the slate to move forward into interesting and previously uncharted territory, and she has a compelling protagonist and cast of characters with which to explore some of the issues that are only touched upon in this book.

My ultimate conclusion: If you read Cyteen, you should read Regenesis.

Mark says

The trend toward longer and longer SF/F books and series reminds me of the 19th-Century French tradition of *romans fleuves* -- books that went on and on. The notion at the time was that readers wanted more and that the more-was-more paradigm was a good thing. No author or literary aficionado would ever consider less as more!

I guess I march to a relatively minimalist beat these days. While I really liked this book, its 800 pages pace a mere eight narrative days. The result (and I find this true of many bookshelf-buster books) is a plot that slows too much in the middle -- or at least gives me a "more" that I don't want or need.

Still, once you commit to the first volume in the series, *Cyteen*, you have to go on to the sequel because the first book stops on an important plot point but not on the larger resolution of the whole story. In fact, this second book solves the next important plot point but *still* doesn't resolve the story.

Since a decade passed between the release of the first and second books in the Cyteen saga, I'm hoping Cherryh gets around to writing (and resolving) the story before another decade passes!

Okay, that's the vinegar (and the discounted fifth star).

The sugar is that this is still every bit a four-star read, and in the context of an available forthcoming third (and final?) volume, maybe a restored five stars.

Cherryh has created a multi-generational tale with a wide range of engaging and memorable characters that continue to haunt me. They're multi-faceted, complex, and not easily categorized as good or evil; they all follow conflicting agendas that sometimes lead good people to do unconscionable things, at other times seemingly despicable people to do brave or even admirable things.

I love that.

It's also space opera at its zenith. The off-world worlds of the plot are complex socially and humanly believable (well, for a projected far-future humanity). An added bonus is dialog that hits just the right tenor for each character. In fact, each speaks with such a distinct voice that speech tag attribution is effectively superfluous.

I was sorry to see the first book end, and why I gave it five stars. I can't say quite the same for the second in the saga -- even though I nonetheless enjoyed it very much.

I still recommend the book highly, but you'll have to start with the first book in order to reach the 1,500 or so pages that this tale achieves by the end of Book Two.

Salimbul says

4.5 stars

Terence says

Regenesis – 2.5-6 stars.

Two words: too long.

At least for me. Let's step back and provide a little background: I like C.J. Cherryh. The first book of hers I read was *Downbelow Station* and it blew me away. On my list of favorite SF novels, at least four Cherryhs would make the cut: *Downbelow Station*, *The Pride of Chanur* (et al.), *Gate of Ivrel* (et al.), and *Paladin*. But she and I don't always connect. With the exception of Morgaine and Vanye, I've never found her fantasy all that compelling. I managed to get through the first two *Foreigner* novels before I gave up on them. And the rest of her works are hit-or-miss affairs: *Serpent's Reach*, pretty good; *Cuckoo's Egg*, not so good.

Chiefly, there are two reasons I continue to return to Cherryh even though I don't always enjoy a particular novel. The first is that when she creates a character that resonates with me, it's a powerful resonance. Cases in point are Norway's captain Signy Mallory from *Downbelow* (Sigourney Weaver would be perfect in the movie version), Pyanfar Chanur from *Pride*, Morgaine and Vanye from *Ivrel*, or Taizu and Saukendar from *Paladin*. The second reason is the believably complex worlds and people she creates for all of her work. Union/Alliance is one of the best future histories out there, and the various worlds Morgaine finds herself in are satisfactorily fleshed out. A strength of the Chanur novels is the truly alien motivations of the disparate races of the Compact (especially the kif). One of the current novel's particular strengths is how the psychology of the Union's azi impacts the course of the novel; major events revolve around how they react

differently from born-men. And, while it doesn't always work, I generally like Cherryh's clipped, rat-a-tat prose style.

So what's "wrong" with *Regenesis*?

First: I didn't respond to any of the characters. It was a problem with the first book, *Cyteen*. I didn't find Ariane Emory, in either of her incarnations, a particularly interesting person. Perhaps it's because I've seen the type before and Cherryh hasn't been able to differentiate her enough for me. The other main character in this book, Justin Warrick, is fairly colorless and unmemorable and his storyline never went anywhere for me. Consequently, there were long stretches in the novel that dragged (it's never a good sign when you keep leafing ahead to see where the current chapter ends). There's little character development. Both Ari's and Justin's motivations and personalities were well established in *Cyteen*, and there's little compensation in terms of plot or danger in their lives, or in simple, straight-out action. What narrative there is takes place in the characters' heads or on a computer screen. Things only pick up in the last 100-150 pages.

Second: In *Regenesis*, Cherryh is inordinately fascinated with the minutiae of political intrigue, or the domesticities of setting up a household staff. It is a truism of creative-writing classes that it's better to show than to tell but there's a balance to be maintained and sometimes it is just better to tell us that something's happened – like describing in excruciating detail the ins and outs of tracking down the conspiracy that killed the original Ariane. I'm reminded here of Glen Cook who also writes about political intrigues and the complex machinations of the powerful. He usually pulls off similar things with much more economy – he gives you enough info to grasp the "what" and "how" but not so much that it's like watching a videotape of a police investigation without a fast-forward option. (And it's a skill Cherryh's capable of; witness *Downbelow Station* or the Chanur series for Cherryh at her best.)

As a result, it takes far too long (400 pages) to get to a point where the plot starts moving. If this were my first Cherryh novel, I might have given up around page 200. I seriously contemplated it.

When it does get moving, though, Cherryh's strengths as a writer shine through, the pace is brisk and all the pieces fall together.

If you're a Cherryh fan, you'll probably enjoy it well enough; I did. If you liked *Cyteen* more than I did, you'll probably enjoy *Regenesis* just as much (and more than I could). If you're considering this as your first Cherryh novel, I'd reconsider. Start with one of the four books I've mentioned above.

Geoff says

Regenesis pushed all the same buttons for me as *Cyteen* did, both positive and negative. The high points were superb, but the feeling of the first half was, "Just, really, enough of this freaking card." Don't get me wrong - I like the politics, I like the intrigue, and I absolutely love the fact that Cherryh deals with sociodynamics in fiction.

Regenesis was a bit over 500 pages in hardcover; if it had been around 300 and cut most of the meandering of the first part I would have significantly upped my score. Far too many pages were spent early on with things that wound up being irrelevant to the conclusion of the book, and weighed down the parts - specifically the end - that were fantastic. Ultimately, I got the feeling that Cherryh wasn't quite sure where the story should go until the last third or so, but once she did figure out where she wanted to take it,

Regenesis shone.

Casey says

Regenesis is a frustrating book. It is painfully slow in the middle. By the end it's exciting and full of intrigue, but then it's all immediately over.

It's necessary to read Cyteen before this. Forty Thousand in Gehenna is optional. The events on the planet of Gehenna are mentioned in Regenesis, but Cyteen goes over that territory and its related problems in more detail than Gehenna ever does.

In Regenesis, Ari II is now 18 years old. She's been studying psychsets with Justin, attempting to make friends with Jordan, and being a relatively well-behaved young lady for her guardian Yanni. She is painfully aware of how she is a target for assassination, and the want of the world to manipulate her for the sake of Union. If she messes up, a well-aimed bullet will end her, and Ari III will start up.

The Eversnow project, the secretive terraforming of a planet encased in ice, creates problems for Ari II and company.

The biggest distinction between Ari I and II, is that Ari II surrounds herself with friends, when Ari I isolated herself. It's difficult to know at this point if that distinction is going to serve Ari II better. Considering Ari I was murdered, maybe it will. (view spoiler)

A large point of internal discussion with Ari II is the way her life is diverging from Ari I. Will Ari II have any sort of legacy for an Ari III or IV? Or is it always going to be the template of Ari I controlling forever?

Ari II has plenty of information about Ari I, but she doesn't really know how Ari I actually acted. There are times when Ari II is acting just like Ari I, and she doesn't know it. It's weird to think that if you were a clone of someone, you would still think you had a lot of autonomy, except your genetic make-up and the psychological manipulation they did on you as a kid makes you act like the original, even though you are trying to be your own independent individual.

Like Cyteen, Regenesis has a lot of great ideas. The second time around, it's not as striking as Cyteen was, but still intriguing.

The pace of the plot is maddening. That stupid card that comes into Jordan's possession is circled around and around again. And it was infuriating at the end of the book (view spoiler)

Also, Justin seemed more composed than he was in the previous book. Some time has passed, but not that much. I was surprised about that. The other characters all seemed continuous from the last book, with the exception of Ari who's now an adult.

By the end of Regenesis, there's a logical assumption about who physically killed Ari I. The mystery remains around who exactly came up with the plot and put it in motion. I guess there will be a book 3 at some point.

(view spoiler)

Michael Battaglia says

Writing sequels to beloved and perhaps career defining books is not a thing done easily. You have to recapture the magic that made the first one so renowned while not giving people an exact retread but not make it so different that all the readers who loved the original wonder why you even bothered in the first place. For me, a lot of the best books in SF don't need sequels because they create their own new worlds inside the book and leave you satisfied that you've seen enough but that the potential for an infinite amount of stories is there.

On some level CJ Cherryh either writes nothing but sequels or rarely writes any. She has two fairly detailed SF universes and while the "Foreigner" books all seem to follow each other in arcs, the Alliance-Union books take place at different parts in history, rarely starring the same characters although the same big names keep popping up again and again. There's a certain chronological order they can be read in depending on where they fall in the timeline but it's never required and only two ("Heavy Time" and "Hellburner") are actually direct sequels featuring most of the same characters.

Cherryh is one of those writers like Lois Bujold where if you put a bunch of people in the same room to figure out which of her books is the "Best" you're probably going to get a wide variety of answers and maybe some fistfights if things really go south. But on the Alliance-Union side of things, a lot of people would cite "Cyteen" as the go-to masterpiece (and just to show you how complicated this can get, a good amount of people can make a frighteningly persuasive case that "Downbelow Station" is the real masterpiece . . . she's had that kind of career). One of the few stories taking place purely on the Union side of things, it basically proved what you might have thought with those glimpses of Union personnel in the Merchanter books . . . they're kind of strange.

A breakaway colony of uppity scientists who, thanks to the planet Cyteen and some brilliant members, have managed to extend the human lifespan through the use of rejuv and the human population through the azi, basically vat grown clones that are psychologically conditioned to be bodyguards or companions or both. The first time out we watched as powerful Council member Ariane Emory proceeded to do pretty much whatever the heck she wanted (which included some unpleasant acts) before getting murdered. Unfortunately for whatever passes for a police force on Cyteen, she was so disliked that a theoretical suspect list would essentially be the results of the last census, including the infants.

But like any egomaniacal genius, she had a Plan B, which consisted of an exact clone of herself. And by "exact" I mean treating her biography the same way that directors of "Harry Potter" films treat the books . . . as hallowed texts that cannot be altered or abridged in any way. Thus the second Ariane, in attempt to make someone exactly like the first one, was subjected to the same ups and downs that formed the first version. And, surprisingly, it kind of worked. Add in a whole host of infighting, intrigue and murder and you have much of what made "Cyteen" so highly regarded by lots of people.

Still, it wasn't exactly a book that demanded a sequel beyond Cherryh's usual dipping into her Alliance-Union timeline. And considering that this was published a good twenty years after the first book you had to wonder if she could bring back enough of the old magic for longtime fans and attract a new set of readers to her universe.

And, frankly, the answer is mixed. We pick up with New Ari, now eighteen years old and apparently not

long after "Cyteen" wrapped up. She mostly spends her time at the heart of Reseune Base with her loyal azi bodyguards Florian and Catlin, she gets her lessons from Justin Warrick (the clone son of first Ari nemesis Jordan Warrick, who was accused of murdering her predecessor . . . it looks like he didn't do it but he's plenty mad that no one wants to go on the record and say that) and she gets info on Cyteen politics from Reseune director Yanni Schwartz. Yanni has been setting up a terraforming operation that had been put on the backburner and not exactly broadcasting it to the public.

Meanwhile things just . . . happen. And I don't mean randomly but just with a gradual day-to-day unfolding of events as the various characters interact with each other. Ari with her bodyguards, with Justin, with Yanni, Justin with Jordan, Justin with his azi companion/lover Grant. Jordan seems to be the biggest point of contention due to the fact that he's so irrationally angry all the time but the plot doesn't really center around him.

In fact, it doesn't center around much of anything. We get word about the various political struggles on the Cyteen Council, we get Ari trying to be her own person, we get Justin trying to have a relationship with a father that he's angry he's being nice to New Ari . . . and in between we have the events of "Cyteen" rehashed almost obsessively, with nearly every paragraph referring to the now deceased Nye brothers and their various machinations . . . while it's a nice refresher for those of us haven't read the book in fifteen years it makes the book nearly impenetrable for new readers by bringing it up over and over again. Some of it has to do with trying to figure out who really killed the first Ariane but even that really isn't a driving force to the novel.

Honestly, it seems like nothing is. The pace is so casual that you start to wonder if a plot is ever going to kick in or if it's happening somewhere else on Cyteen. Coming from Cherryh this is surprisingly, as her writing typically can make navigating bureaucratic morasses seem like dancing with live electrical wires. In many of her Merchant novels, the tensest moments hinged not on going in with guns blazing but the verbal sparring of two characters trying to use regulations to their advantage. Here we don't have that same sense of blistering urgency that made the various Fleet departmental struggles in "Hellburner" so exhilarating. In those novels you knew that if someone put a foot wrong it meant people died and it turned those debates into breathless highwire acts. Here, it's just another hour in the day.

Things do start to pick up halfway through when we start getting a body count but even then matters never start to get truly tense. Everyone's trying to get an advantage but it's never clear if you should root for someone or stand back and watch it all go down. In the first book the struggle was for Ari to become her own person and stay alive in the process while here she never seems in real danger and the big drama involves . . . council voting? It's more naturalistic perhaps but not exactly sexy.

The bigger problem is that the laid back attitude to the story only highlights how weirdly unsettling Cyteen is as a place, especially Reseune. The azi are always around, specially bred clones that are contracted to supervisors and trained via conditioning. You can ignore how creepy this is most of the time and not think about how even the most outwardly freewilled azi are still subject to the deepsets of their tapes. Grant has to be loyal to Justin, Florian and Catlin are best friends to Ari but none of them have any real choice in the matter (and in the case of two of them, have sexual relationships with their supervisors, calling into question what "consent" actually means on Cyteen). Everyone at Cyteen accepts this as normal and for them it is but this time out it left me with more of an uneasy feeling than fifteen years ago. Cherryh has done excellent work in the past depicting alien cultures through the eyes of someone not part of that culture (and vice versa) and maybe a little of that friction was needed here. It's not the kind of novel where people are going to start questioning the culture they were born and raised in but when you start wishing it would turn into that kind of novel then maybe all the political maneuvering she normally excels at isn't quite as gripping as usual.

Throughout everything feels offhand and its unclear what the stakes really are and why we should be invested in them. Even the big mystery of who killed the first Ariane isn't quite the revelation it perhaps should be, especially as it pivots on an obscure aspect of "Cyteen". Its just one more development we absorb and move on from, which makes the book a bit of a strange experience. We expect some kind of narrative and emotional arc from the characters in the novels we read but when we're finished there's very little sense that the characters have grown or changed or learned anything, except how to better stay alive. It comes across as just another couple months in the life of Ariane Emory the Second, which is realistic at the very least (and Cherryh is a good enough writer that I have a feeling this is exactly what she intended) but makes for a strange beast to deal with. Fans of her older style are going to miss the intensity and newcomers are going to be confused by all the references to "Cyteen". Union is a fascinating enough setting that it can succeed almost on its own merits but people coming to a sequel to a book over twenty years old may have been expecting a new perspective or further revelations. Instead we get a book that could have been published two years after the original, for better or for worse.

Vanessa says

I still really want another sequel.

Maybe I'll manage to write a review this time..

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

I first read this when it was originally published; then I let it "set" for a while to sort of digest it (finished a re-read 23 August 2009). It would be difficult to overestimate how much I appreciated this book's prequel, Cyteen, on both an intellectual and an emotional level.

So, when this sequel was announced, I was quite excited. I waited patiently and I bought this the first day it was available.

I'm going to cut to the point here: this is a somewhat lackluster followup to a brilliant book. Part of the problem is that Cyteen was a generational book, in both senses: it was really unique and innovative at the time it was published, and the events in it took place over about 20 years. The events of Regenesis take place over about a nine month period. So, a lot of the interesting macro view aspects are lost.

This feels more like a coda to its prequel. And when it ends, it (the overarching story) still isn't done in any meaningful way. :(And there is no sequel in sight. [Edit: in the comments here, Cherryh says on 20 May 2012 that "Likely there will be another Cyteen: DAW does want that.")

There are some mild to moderate/large continuity problems. One involves the main character forgetting a semi-major fact that she most definitely knew in the prequel; another involves revision of the relative ages of two characters. There are also some mildly irritating typos: "pyschset" instead of "psychset" occurs fairly frequently.

26 July 2012: So, I just re-read this. I'm re-reading all the core Alliance/Union books and figured I would give this one a shot to see if I still thought what I did the first time. Short answer: yes.

Longer answer: [book:Cyteen|834518] (as I recall it; maybe it's due for a re-read also, even though I feel like I almost have it memorized) simply felt more natural when it came to character interactions, conversations, and interior monologues. Cherryh is usually very good at showing us what's going on simply by having the characters go about their business and think normally. Here, it feels like she is constantly telling us things, and it's kind of irritating. [2 August 2012: I will say that, having just finished re-reading Cyteen, this does explain a few niggling things. But it takes far too long to do so.]

This book needed better proofreading. In addition to the psych/psych typos, there's an instance of their/there confusion which made me twitch. Given that Cherryh has complained repeatedly on her blog about proofreaders messing up her books, and her "proofreader messed it up, or tried to" is usually better than most people's "proofreader did their job" ... well, I was expecting better.

It feels like Cherryh tried to write short, direct sentences to make it seem like there was frenetic action going on or people were being decisive. Unfortunately, they just feel unfinished and unpolished in many cases. If you look at her web site section on writing, she does endorse short sentences for reasons that make sense. Here, though, it didn't work for me.

Part of me wonders if she has gotten used to writing the short-term books of the Foreigner series, and out of touch with the long-term outlook. Here my hope/expectation of a twenty-year-timespan book like Cyteen probably bit me. Regenesis covers a timespan of about eight months, and the interaction of the characters is introduced with progress reports on characters from the last novel who've been (essentially) cloned and are being reproduced in artificial wombs. They read like mashups of an obstetrics textbook and one of those online pregnancy week by week guides (like this). Not fun reading. Example: "His intestines were growing, and began to fill his abdomen. His nerve cells were proliferating, synapses getting organized enough to react to stimuli, but unaware at any higher level — the nerves had no myelin sheath as yet, and that limited their function considerably. Consciousness was nowhere in the picture. His cells all had other jobs to do, mostly that of dividing like mad, according to the map in their nuclei. If it said cooperate, they cooperated. If it said make skin, they made skin, in its varied layers and detail. If it said make nerves, they made more nerves. There was no higher authority."

The one thing I did like: we get an interesting reverse-angle view of the situation with military azi during the war. Jordan isn't old enough to have seen that personally, but he knows that they were essentially producing cookie-cutter personalities for many of those azi. So maybe Ayres wasn't just being a bigot about the apparent sameness of those azi in Downbelow Station.
