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thomas.connolly.2009@gmail.com

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SFRA Review is an open access journal published four times a year by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) since 1971. *SFRA Review* publishes scholarly articles and reviews. As the flagship journal of SFRA, the *Review* is devoted to surveying the contemporary field of SF scholarship, fiction, and media as it develops.

SUBMISSIONS

SFRA Review accepts original scholarly articles, interviews, review essays, and individual reviews of recent scholarship, fiction, and media germane to SF studies.

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All submissions should be prepared in MLA 8th ed. style. Accepted pieces are published at the discretion of the editors under the author's copyright and made available open access via a CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

SFRA REVIEW HISTORY

SFRA Review was initially titled *SFRA Newsletter* and has been published since 1971, just after the founding of SFRA in 1970. The *Newsletter* changed its name to *SFRA Review* in 1992 with issue #194 to reflect the centrality of an organ for critical reviews of both fiction and scholarship to the SF studies community. The *Newsletter* and *Review* were published 6 times a year until the early 2000s, when the *Review* switched to a quarterly schedule. Originally available only to SFRA members or sold per issue for a small fee, *SFRA Review* was made publicly available on the SFRA's website starting with issue #256. Starting with issue #326, the *Review* became an open access publication. In 2020, the *Review* switched to a volume/issue numbering scheme, beginning with 50.1 (Winter 2019). For more information about the *Review*, its history, policies, and editors, visit WWW.SFRA.ORG/SFRA-REVIEW.

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From the Editor

Sean Guynes



THIS issue brings with it a further few changes, the last for a while as we settle in to our newly redesigned and revamped era of the *Review*.

With the winter 2020 issue we welcome two new reviews editors after saying goodbye to Jeremy Brett, fiction reviews editor for the past 5 years. I want to give a hearty welcome to Jeremy M. Carnes, who is joining us as the new fiction reviews editor, and Megan N. Fontenot, the new (and first ever) fiction reviews assistant editor. I have worked with both before in different capacities and have no doubt of their abilities to bring continued quality to the fiction reviews section as part of our continuing editorial effort to grow and expand the purview and reputation of the *SFRA Review*.

The second change is superficial but nonetheless an important signal of the *Review*'s long standing in the SF research community: we have changed from the issue-only numbering system (with the most recent being fall 2019, #330) and adopted a volumnumber/number scheme. *SFRA Review* started in 1971 with volume 1, making the first issues of 2020 the first issue of volume 50. It came as a similar shock to me to discover that our humble little review has been around for half a century. We will continue to list the serialized issue number (this one being #331) in each issue at the top of the table of contents.

And to further celebrate our half-century of history, I have the sincere pleasure of thanking Hal W. Hall, a long-time SFRA member and former Pilgrim Award winner, for providing the print copies of the first thirty issues of the *Review*. While we have extensive online archives of early issues, thanks to the University of Southern Florida Libraries, the very first issues were absent our collection. With the aid of Jeremy Brett and the Texas A&M University special collections department, we were able to get all of the early issues scanned, PDF'd, and make them available to all for posterity. As Gerry notes in his letter, we are very lucky to have this added to our continued efforts to preserve the SFRA's history.

In addition to the great news above, issue 50.1 also features a symposium collecting papers from the day-long Medical Humanities and the Fantastic conference held at the University of Liverpool last July, compiled and edited by Beata Gubacsi.

Finally, I'm experimenting with the visual layout a bit more—so please provide any feedback you have about design. Also, if you catch any typos, email me so I can correct them!

That's all until next time. Be seeing you!

FROM THE SFRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

From the President

Gerry Canavan



IT'S my pleasure to write my first SFRA President's letter in the impossibly distant future of 2020, a number I don't think I'll ever get used to seeing as the actual year. I've been getting back up to speed on what's been going on with the organization since my term as VP ended and I am looking forward to some truly great years for SFRA ahead, including our upcoming conferences in Bloomington, Toronto, and Oslo. Before anything else, a few thanks are in order: thanks to Keren Omry for serving as president for the last three years and serving as immediate past president for the next three, and thank you to Jenni Halpin for her absolutely indispensable service as SFRA secretary this last term. Thanks also to Pawel Frelik, whose improbably long term as immediate past president has now finally come to an end, to our great regret! While we're at it, thanks to Sonja Fritzsche, Hugh O'Connell, Katherine Bishop, and Sean Guynes, who I'm very excited to be working with on the executive committee the next few years.

I'd also like to thank Rebekah Sheldon, Graham Murphy, and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay for all the work they have done, are doing, and will do over the next few years on behalf of the organization in hosting a conference. Having done it recently, I know it is no small thing! We are all very much in your debt.

Finally, I'd like to note the work done by Sean Guynes, Jeremy Brett, and Hal W. Hall to make the early years of the *SFRA Review* available digitally. With the help of the Cushing Library at Texas A&M, Hall's personal collection of the first thirty issues of what was then called *SFRA Newsletter* is now available at the journal's website. This is a terrific boon not only to our scholarship but to our organization's understanding of its own history, so we are incredibly grateful for those who went above and beyond to make this happen.

It's a very exciting time for SFRA, and I'm looking forward to working with you on our shared projects in the coming year. One thing we'll be looking to do is continue to grow and internationalize the membership, as well as forge new connections and partnerships with adjacent disciplinary organizations. If you have ideas about ways we might accomplish that, or would be interested in serving as a local country rep, please, contact me! I'm also always open to any ideas that you may have about making SFRA a stronger and better scholarly organization; please, send me an email, anytime...

Thanks, all! See you in the next *Review*.

From the Vice President



Sonja Fritzsche

IT is out! Check out the call for papers for the SFRA 2020 conference at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. The theme is Forms of Fabulation. Questions and abstract submissions should be sent by March 15, 2020 to SFRA2020IU@gmail.com. See the website for any questions concerning the conference, logistical or otherwise. You can also contact our intrepid conference hosts Rebekah Sheldon rsheldon@indiana.edu and De Witt Kilgore dkilgore@indiana.edu. Consider submitting a paper, or even better, organize a panel or a series of panels! Send in your abstracts!

Yes, IU will give society members a big Hoosier welcome from July 8-11, 2020 this summer! For those of you who have not spent time in this fair city, it is a beautiful drive between Indianapolis and B-town, only 1 hour south. It has developed a wonderful restaurant culture over the past twenty years. For you cycling buffs, the film *Breaking Away* was filmed here. The Memorial Union building is one of a kind in the center of a wooded campus and a winding river where many superior conversations on science fiction will be had! Make sure you take a walk and explore.

It is also exciting to say that SFRA has committed to a site for the 2021 conference at Seneca College in Toronto, Canada to be hosted by Graham Murphy. SFRA also has a location for the 2022 conference! This will be at the University of Oslo in Oslo, Norway generously to be hosted by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay. Thanks to everyone who has committed to host in such exciting locations.

We have a growing list of country reps. For more information, select the “country reps” menu on the SFRA website. I’m going to organize a get-together for country reps who are able to attend the conference, so that we can touch base on strategies, initiatives, and other ways that the SFRA can support the reps and they can support each other and the science fiction network in their countries. If you are interested in being a representative, please contact me at sfritzsc9@msu.edu

The background is a vibrant orange-red color with a textured, marbled appearance. On the left side, there are vertical, wavy bands of lighter yellow and orange, resembling the texture of aged paper or a cross-section of a mineral. Faintly visible in the background is a stylized, anatomical illustration of a human head in profile, facing right, rendered in a light, translucent orange color that blends with the background.

FEATURES



The SF in Translation Universe #7

Rachel Cordasco

WELCOME back to the SF in Translation Universe! The first third of 2020 is shaping up very nicely, with some sequels, new translations, and exciting collections.

You've probably heard by now about the ongoing translation of Jin Yong's incredibly popular *Legends of the Condor Heroes* series, which is bringing wuxia (Chinese martial arts fantasy) to a broader audience. A ton of translated wuxia is available on the internet already, and hopefully Anna Holmwood and Gigi Chang's translations will encourage readers to seek out more wuxia online. January brings us Anglophone readers the third book in Jin Yong's series—*A Snake Lies Waiting*—in which the brave and noble Guo Jing has walked into a trap (blinded by his love for Lotus Huang) and must fight for his own survival and his people's freedom.

If you're looking for German dystopian satire, look no further than Marc-Uwe Kling's *QualityLand* (tr Jamie Searle Romanelli). Here Kling sends up 21st-century consumer-driven technology-obsessed capitalism by taking such innovations as driverless cars, wireless-adapted glasses, and a gargantuan online store (TheShop) to their extremes. As this novel argues, the seemingly simple task of returning, for example, a pink, dolphin-shaped vibrator delivered to you in error is far more complicated than you might think.

Interested in a wartime love story set in 1990s Turkey and told from the perspective of a dog? Then Kemal Varol's *Wûf* (tr Dayla Rogers) is for you. Here a street dog named Mikasa, who is forced to work as a minesweeper for the Turkish army, tells his tale to other dogs at a kennel, where he finds companionship and even cigarettes. Inviting readers to look at war and brutality from a new perspective, *Wûf* is a unique book from an underrepresented source language.

But perhaps you're looking for a novel that plays with your mind even as it plays with language and your sense of reality. No, I'm not talking about a Zivkovic story, but Peter Stamm's *The Sweet Indifference of the World* (tr Michael Hofmann). When Lena and Christoph, two complete strangers, meet up in a Stockholm cemetery, they realize that, twenty years before, they each fell in love with the other's double. Is Christoph's novel (which grew out of his breakup with Magdalena) somehow influencing his new relationship with Lena? Or has he begun to confuse reality and fantasy?

If you think *January* sounds intriguing, just wait until February. We're getting Russian,

Spanish German, and Indonesian SFT then, including a new translation of an older title by the Strugatskys. Originally brought into English as *Prisoners of Power* in 1977 (based on a heavily censored version thanks to the Soviet authorities), *The Inhabited Island* (as it's now called) is the story of Maxim Kammerer, an explorer from the 22nd century, who crashes on a war-torn world and is drawn into its inhabitants' terrifying reality. The first of the Kammerer subsection of Noon universe books, this book portrays a civilization that is technologically advanced (they have atomic bombs) but socially oppressive.

Also translated from the Russian is a new psychological fantasy thriller from Marina and Sergei Dyachenko called *Daughter From the Dark* (tr Julia Meitov Hersey). You've probably been hearing about their previous brain-bending, haunting book—*Vita Nostra* (also translated by Hersey)—that fully deserves all the praise it has been given. *Daughter from the Dark* (which I am just 40 pages shy of finishing) asks us to imagine the consequences of stepping out of our comfort zone and doing a single good deed (like giving a seemingly lost little girl shelter and protection). How might it completely change a person's life, and oh yeah, what if that little girl was actually a creature from another plane of existence and your life just became a billion times more complicated? And is her little teddy bear actually a blood-thirsty beast that kills whenever the girl is threatened? Mmmmmmaybe.

From Ray Loriga comes a dystopian story about authoritarianism and the disappearance of privacy. *Surrender* (tr Carolina de Robertis) tells of the nightmarish reality that war can create, where children disappear and entire communities are forced to move to “transparent cities,” in which transparency is a literal mandate and all necessities are provided so long as the inhabitants “behave.”

We get even more German SFT in February, this time in the form of an epic fantasy by Bernd Perplies called *Black Leviathan* (tr Lucy Van Cleef). In this world where dragon-hunting is the norm, one man joins the crew of a ship that flies through the Cloudmere on a very specific mission—the pursuit and capture of a dragon known as the “Firstborn Gargantuan.” The captain's rage-driven quest echoes that depicted in *Moby-Dick*, only dragons are, well, more terrifying than whales...

Also out in February is a novel by Intan Paramaditha entitled *The Wandering* (tr Stephen J. Epstein). Paramaditha's previous book, the collection *Apple and Knife* (2018), was inspired by horror, myth, and fairy tales. *The Wandering*, too, brings together multiple subgenres in a story about what it means to wander the globe. When an English teacher in Jakarta seeks escape from a boring life, their wishes are granted in a pact with a devil, who gives them a pair of red shoes that will take them anywhere they'd like to go. But there's a warning attached to this gift...

So far, March is only bringing us a single work of SFT, but it sounds excellent. *That We*

May Live: Speculative Chinese Fiction (tr Jeremy Tiang and Natascha Bruce) expands the availability of Chinese SFT by offering us fantastic and phantasmagorical tales involving people living in giant mushrooms, twisted desires, and mysterious beverages. With stories by Dorothy Tse, Enoch Tam, Zhu Hui, Chan Chi Wa, Chen Si-an, and Yan Ge, *That We May Live* promises to enthrall.

In terms of short fiction, so far we've gotten stories about a woman absorbing alternate dimension versions of herself ("The Perfect Sail" by I-Hyeong Yun, tr from the Korean by Elisa Sinn and Justin Howe, *Clarkesworld*), a father inspiring his son to bring an ancient art into the future via virtual reality ("The Ancestral Temple" by Chen Qiufan, tr from the Chinese by Emily Jin, *Clarkesworld*), and a woman seeing her reflection in a subway window...but it isn't hers ("The Other Woman" by Bibiana Camacho, tr from the Spanish by Cecilia Weddell, *World Literature Today*).

With such an excitingly diverse array of themes, source-languages, and sub-genres, 2020 is looking like another excellent year for SFT.

Thanks for reading, and I'd love to hear what you're reading now and/or looking forward to: rachel@sfintranslation.com.

Until next time in the SFT Universe!

Editor's Note: "Meet the Future" is a regular column appearing in the Features section of SFRA Review (beginning with issue #326). It is an interview series conducted by the SFRA Review editor that highlights the work of up-and-coming SF scholars, typically graduate students, postdocs, and recent hires.



Meet the Future: An Interview with Sarah Lohmann

Sarah Lohmann

PhD Candidate, Department of English Studies
Durham University, UK

Hi, Sarah, could you tell us a bit about yourself?

Hello! I'm a final-year PhD student at Durham University in North-East England, and I've just submitted my doctoral thesis entitled 'The Edge of Time: The Critical Dynamics of Structural Chronotopes in the Utopian Novel', which I completed under the supervision of Professors Patricia Waugh and Simon James. I'll be defending my thesis in a viva in April, and then I'll be applying for academic jobs far and wide, particularly within the fields of contemporary British and American literature, speculative fiction (especially sf), women's writing, and anything related to utopianism.

I'm originally from Munich, Germany (with a bilingual German/American upbringing), and after graduating from a German high school, I moved to Scotland to study English literature and philosophy at the University of St Andrews. After that, I completed an English literature MLitt degree in 'Women, Writing and Gender' as well as an MLitt in analytic philosophy, both also at St Andrews, before moving to Durham to start my PhD. My current research is still informed to a large extent by my interest in philosophy, particularly with regard to moral philosophy and epistemology, and I would like to continue incorporating interdisciplinary approaches in my work in the future.

My PhD thesis, in fact, is fundamentally interdisciplinary in that it employs both ethics and systems theory in suggesting that examples of utopian fiction are best understood as science-fictional thought experiments whose success is determined by their dynamic structures. I argue that these structures, which I present as Bakhtinian chronotopes due to their reliance on spatiotemporal placement and movement, are in turn either functionally closed, homeostatic systems, as described in the work of Walter Cannon on homeostasis and Humberto Maturana and Francesca Varela on autopoiesis, or open systems that can be read as examples of complex adaptive systems as described by complexity theorists such as Ilya Prigogine and Paul Cilliers. Ultimately, I suggest that the utopianism of several of the novels that Tom Moylan terms 'critical utopias' – Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*,

Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* and Ursula K Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* – can therefore be understood as inherently dynamic and thus sustainable: both the utopian societies described as well as the novels' fragmented, cross-temporal narrative structures can be seen as complex systems that are self-organising and self-optimising in a sustainable manner predicated on the non-hierarchical nature and inherent dynamism of complexity. Moreover, I argue that it is these underlying complex mechanisms that render these novels truly critical of their 'zero worlds' in Moylan's terms, in that their open networks connect utopia and zero world in a transformative relationship of cognitive estrangement. By contrast, I suggest, examples of traditional utopian literature such as Plato's *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia* and fin-de-siècle novels such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and H. G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* ultimately undermine the dynamic potential of their own utopian systems through homeostatic closure, reliant on forced equilibrium – this, in turn, creates the utopian presentism and social stasis that has historically been associated to the genre. The ethics-related element of my thesis, then, is that I identify a certain 'ethics of complexity' in the critical utopias, linking the inherent features of complex systems with the feminist equity-based functioning of their societies, and contrasting this with attempts at utilitarianism or virtue ethics within the aforementioned traditional utopias, which I believe to be hindered through their homeostatic functioning.

In general, I am fascinated by the dynamic networks and organic or coercive forces that underlie all relationships, human and non-human, and of the value that lies in recognising these networks and enabling them to function in ways that allow for the organic flourishing of all participants. In fact, my final thesis chapter explores what happens when supposedly inclusive complex networks are once more imbalanced through inadvertent bias and exclusion, using the examples of Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* and Joan Slonczewski's *A Door into Ocean*; this once more highlights the intricate workings of self-organising systems as well as the ease through which their balance can be upset.

As per the prompt, I think I would therefore say that a secret of the universe that I've discovered for myself (not uncovered, sadly!) is that we are only at the very beginning of understanding the myriad ways in which we are all integrated into the constantly shifting and evolving connections between us and our human and non-human environment – one might even say that it is nonsensical to speak of individuals or even humans in general as being in any meaningful way distinct within these networks. In my future work, I would love to explore these dynamic connections further and investigate what they mean for human behaviour and social planning in the Anthropocene, as well as tracking the various ways in which they have been interpreted in literature, both speculative and traditional.

Finally, an interesting fact about me is thus perhaps that this research focus has also

changed the ways in which I move through the world – I try to tread as lightly as possible and live respectfully alongside my human and non-human neighbours, which has so far informed everything from my plant-based diet to my interest in sustainable housing and green politics in general, particularly in response to the climate crisis.

How do you describe yourself professionally?

I am a researcher at heart, driven by curiosity and the joy of discovering new patterns and connections in my research, but I also love teaching: I enjoy creating an intellectual atmosphere in which students have the support and freedom to explore their own ideas among their peers and feel excited about pursuing further research. Having previously worked to become a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), I am therefore currently completing the final stage of this programme at my university to attain the full PGCAP (Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice), a certificate in education at university level that will allow me to feel confident in my future teaching of both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

In the next few years, I hope to have the opportunity to conduct both research and teaching across a broad range of eras and genres and with interdisciplinary components. My thesis research has taken me from antiquity to the present day, while my university teaching so far has mainly focused on the history of the novel from Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* up to graphic novels such as Alan Moore's *Watchmen*; this work has allowed me to come up with various ideas for future research and teaching across historical stages and disciplines that I would love the chance to develop further at some point.

Why does sf matter to you?

Sf forms the backbone of my academic interests because of its inherent suitability for social critique through cognitive estrangement; in my opinion, no other genre is capable of holding up a mirror to our world in quite the same way, and with the same formalised imaginative rigour. Moreover, sf's generic tropes such as time travel, alternate realities and far-future settings allow for a particularly extensive development of nova that can allow us to reimagine or extrapolate on so many aspects of our current existence – the possibilities are endless! In particular, I enjoy utopian, dystopian and post-apocalyptic sf because of its large-scale capacity for social restructuring, especially in terms of social roles related to marginalised identities, but I also appreciate the more subtle estranging capacity of sf mechanisms applied to more straightforwardly mimetic fiction.

I believe that especially in the current age of rapid environmental change and technological development, sf is an institutionally under-appreciated genre despite its astonishing critical

potential, and I would love to see more extensive engagement with sf studies in university departments as well as a greater appreciation of the genre in culture-focused media.

What brought you to sf studies?

I had hardly read any sf growing up, but an undergraduate module on the topic at the University of St Andrews piqued my interest – it ended up being a fascinating course, brilliantly taught by Dr Jim Byatt, which put me on track to what will most likely be a life-long interest in the genre! As an undergraduate student undertaking a joint degree in English literature and philosophy, I had a fair amount of freedom in choosing modules in both disciplines, and I'm so glad that I ended up picking this particular one: after completing my undergraduate degree, I went on to write my first master's dissertation on feminist utopias and four-dimensionality from an sf perspective, and this later fed into my PhD on structural chronotopes in the utopian novel, again grounded in sf theory. Although I do look forward to expanding my academic repertoire, as mentioned above, I know that I will always value and return to the imaginative potential that is unique to sf, and I hope to encourage any interested students to do the same.

What project(s) are you working on now, and how did you get there? What question(s) really drive your work?

At the moment, I am beginning to prepare for my viva, as well as continuing on with my tutorial teaching, completing my PGCAP, and starting to apply for academic positions elsewhere.

In addition, I am always on the lookout for interesting conferences and projects—over the course of my PhD, I presented my work at many national and international conferences, particularly within the fields of sf and utopian studies, and I am very grateful to have become a part of a wonderful academic community in doing so. I am also always keen to take part in any promising cross-university and/or interdisciplinary projects that relate to sf or utopia: over the past few years, I have been lucky enough to participate in several interesting projects, including co-hosting the podcast 'Exploring Utopian York' with Dr Adam Stock, being interviewed for Paul Walker-Emig's podcast *Utopian Horizons*, running two interdisciplinary seminar series at Durham University (which featured influential sf scholar Mark Bould, among others), giving a keynote speech on feminist utopias for an MA graduate conference at Teesside University, and serving as Project Officer for an exhibition on time travel and narrative ('Time Machines') at Palace Green Library in Durham. I would be very happy to contribute to similar interesting projects in the future, and to collaborate with people in various fields.

This also applies to publications, of course, an area that I will be able to spend more time focussing on now that I have submitted my thesis: so far, I have begun with a published book review (of Patrick B Sharp's brilliant *Darwinian Feminism and Early Science Fiction: Angels, Amazons and Women*), and I am looking forward to the publication of my first book chapter, entitled "What isn't living dies": Utopia as Living Organism in Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, which is forthcoming as part of an edited collection in honour of Lucy Sargisson on the occasion of her retirement (edited by Lyman Tower Sargent and Raffaella Baccolini).

I have touched above on the questions that really drive my work: an interest in deeply interconnected human and non-human networks and relationships, as well as the dynamic forces that drive them; I would here add to this the more philosophical consideration of how exactly we try to find meaning in a rapidly shifting world in which subjective experiences of reality have become radically divergent, and how literature and especially sf can provide us with unique tools to work through these questions and experiences and explore them in countless thought-provoking ways.

What do you envision for the future of sf studies and sf scholars? What do you want to see us accomplish?

As mentioned above, I would love for sf studies to gain more academic clout within university departments, but I would also like to see more collaboration across disciplines that touch in various ways on human experience and cross-temporal and spatial possibilities within this world and others. Ultimately, I see the future of academia as lying in collaboration and mutual support driven by specific research questions and areas of interest, and ideally as less tied to traditional disciplines and vocation-led curricula. Of course, this vision is somewhat utopian, but as a utopian studies scholar, I do always stress the positive potential of utopian thought to create tangible change in the real world!

If you could write a dream book, or teach a dream course, what would it/they be?

At the moment, my dream book would be based on my thesis, described above – in part, the dream would lie in properly including several utopian texts that I did not have the space to discuss at length in my thesis, particularly those from more distant historical periods in which sf and utopia were approached very differently to today, as I would love to do them justice and explore their unique employment of structural dynamic chronotopes.

Moreover, regarding my dream course, I am in fact currently designing a university module as part of my PGCAP certification that could be taught at either undergraduate or master's level, and that I imagine would be quite rewarding to teach. Also loosely based

on my thesis, this course examines women's utopian writing through the ages while also expanding on this focus and using it as a 'threshold concept' (Schwartzman 2010) to discuss larger questions surrounding the canonisation of literature, genre conventions and academic gate-keeping with regard to sf, utopian literature and women's writing in particular. It thereby challenges students to develop independent critical approaches to the study of genre, historical source material and literature in general; the ultimate aim of the course is to use women's utopian writing and genre/canonisation as springboards for a 'pedagogy of uncertainty' (Shulman 2005) to help prepare students for critical and unbiased participation in a wide range of intellectual environments, giving them the tools to question received knowledge and together build better intellectual paradigms. Although the design of this particular course is intended as an intellectual exercise for my PGCAP degree, I could certainly imagine teaching this or a similar module as part of an undergraduate or master's curriculum at some point in the future. Indeed, I would particularly enjoy preparing and teaching any course that would allow me to relate the critical potential of speculative fiction, and sf or utopian literature in particular, to other literary genres, and to encourage students to critically engage with the various ways of seeing and relating to the world that characterise and sometimes cross-fertilise these approaches. However, for the time being I would be grateful for the chance to teach anything that is loosely related to sf, utopia or speculative fiction in general – in addition to my teaching on the history of the novel, I have in the past few years had the chance to design and teach a short sf course as part of a 'Supported Progression' summer school for promising Year 12 students in the North East (who are applying for undergraduate study at Durham), and I would love to expand on this material, for example.

Whatever may come, however, I hope that I will be able to stay involved with the academic networks surrounding sf and utopian studies, as I have found a real home within these communities over the years. In fact, I have recently attained British citizenship (alongside my German and American nationalities) in part so that I may have a better chance of remaining part of these networks, and possibly also work at a university in either the UK or the US in the future, despite the horrible uncertainties of Brexit and US politics. In any case, I refuse to give up hope that things will eventually turn out all right, even if they are looking somewhat bleak at the moment—again, this must be the optimism of a utopian studies scholar!

Thank you! Your labor and thoughts are valued and appreciated.



SYMPOSIUM

THE MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND THE FANTASTIC

University of Liverpool Symposium • 19 July 2019



Medical Humanities and the Fantastic: Introduction to the Liverpool Symposium

Beata Gubacsi

University of Liverpool

IN the *SFRA Review*'s 2016 winter issue Anna McFarlane reports on the launch of "Science Fiction and the Medical Humanities" research project at the University of Glasgow, led by Gavin Miller, and funded by the Wellcome Trust, the largest organisation for health-related research. She notes how "in recent years academic concerns with the intersections between medical ethics and technology have particularly arisen through the field of the medical humanities" (3) and goes on to define medical humanities as "an academic field discipline [that] aims to explore the ways in which humans (or, indeed, animals) come into contact with medicine and how such encounters must change both living beings and medicine itself." (4) This is of course evidenced by the Wellcome Seed Award itself, and also reflected in the *British Medical Journal*'s (BMJ) 2016 special issue *Science Fiction and Medical Humanities*, edited by Gavin Miller and Anna McFarlane, addressing the commonplace "headline": *Science Fiction Becomes Science Fact*.

In their editorial introduction they point out the vitality of interdisciplinary research: "Research in this area challenges the limitations of disciplines such as science studies and history and philosophy of science. Lacking the analytic training and vocabulary developed in English Literature, and Film and TV studies, the sociological and historical disciplines have great difficulty in apprehending the complex social and political engagement that may be found in science fiction." (213) They explore the theoretical framework which allows a wider interpretation of science fiction as well as allowing science fiction to function as analytical tool in the wider context of humanities, utilising Jauss and Benzinger's notion of "horizon of expectations" and Darko Suvin's "cognitive estrangement." The BMJ issue itself features relevant discussions of seminal science fiction writers, such as, Stina Attebery's piece on Mira Grant's *Parasitology* trilogy, John Carlo Pasco, Camille Anderson and Sayantani DasGupta's article exploring the "visionary medicine" of Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild," Donna McCormack's work on "decolonialising transplantation" in Nalo

Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*, as well as Fran Bignani's paper "Pregnancy as protest in interwar British women's writing: an antecedent alternative to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*." The Glasgow-based "Science Fiction and Medical Humanities" Wellcome research project with its website, workshops and conferences became a platform for further discussions, culminating in the publication of a short story collection *A Practical Guide for the Resurrected*, exploring how technology has and will affect the non/human body and psyche.

The Medical Humanities and Science Fiction research project and the aforementioned anthology were also featured at the First Inaugural Congress of Medical Humanities in 2017, organized by the North West Medical Humanities Research Network. The conference series, which have been running successfully for three years now, provides examples of further engagement and entanglement between medical humanities and science fiction. As I write in my introductory blog post for the column, "Medical Humanities 2.0" at *The Polyphony*, "the first panel in 2017 was dedicated to "Medical Posthumanities," where Amelia DeFalco (University of Leeds), drawing on examples from both literature and film, discussed how companion and caregiving robots embody and possibly subvert the gender and racial inequalities surrounding the economies of care work." Later at the same event, I suggested and led a small group discussion on monstrosity in medical humanities, reflecting on topics like pregnancy, madness and disability, across eras, disciplines, and media.

The second NNMHR congress was also relevant for showcasing links between medical humanities and fantastic scholarship. The first keynote speaker was Esther L. Jones (Clark University), author of *Medicine and Ethics in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (2015), drawing attention to parallels between the biopolitics of Octavia E. Butler and the exploitation of Henrietta Lax, whose illness has led to a major scientific breakthrough. In her lecture she was talking about how speculative imagination is key to understanding biases and their consequences. The conference also had a transplantation panel featuring two distinguished scholars: Sarah Wasson (Lancaster University), leader of Translating Gothic Pain AHRC research project, whose new book, *Gothic Transplantation*, is forthcoming, and Margrit Shildrick, author of *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (2001), in which she utilises the framework of monstrosity to discuss disability.

Following and engaging with these developments with increasing interest and fascination, I was wondering how can we theorise the fantastic within medical humanities and how can the fantastic facilitate research and engagement relevant to medical humanities? Consequently, organising a conference at the intersection of these fields was long in the making and a real passion project. The Medical Humanities and the Fantastic Symposium, funded by the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Programme (NWCDTP), was

held at the University of Liverpool, on 19th July 2019. It provided an opportunity to explore these interdisciplinary challenges, and attracted so many fantastic (pun intended) scholars of different backgrounds. It was a long and exciting day with three keynote speakers, the aforementioned Amelia DeFalco, Anna McFarlane and Sara Wasson, and ten delegates across three panels (whose work with a few exceptions is published in this issue), and numerous guests.

The day began with Amelia DeFalco's keynote lecture "Robot Funerals and Clone Completions: Boundary Creature Disposal in Recent Speculative Fiction," exploring care and companionship from a critical posthumanist point of view, which introduced the "Fantastic Biases and Where to Find Them" panel. Out of the three talks three are featured in this issue: David Hartley's exploration of autism and the poetics of neurodivergence, Connor Jackson's talk on antagonistic representation of fatness in video games, and Lucia Lopez's reading of Maria Machado's "The Husband Stitch" drawing attention to oppressive gynaecological practices. Together these papers dissolve the boundaries between normal and abnormal minds and bodies, pointing out how those boundaries represent oppression. Staying with the idea of boundaries, Anna McFarlane's keynote lecture "Bleeding Genres: Pregnancy and Fantastika" bringing together Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* introduced the second panel, "Chimeras and Contamination," revolving around non-human embodiment and the entanglements of science fiction and horror with the medical. Two papers featured in the issue engage with these notions differently: Johnathan Thornton discussed fungi as a transformative agent in Tade Thompson's *Rosewater* and Aliya Whitely's *The Beauty*, followed by Lucy Nield's paper on xenotransplantation in Margaret Atwood's Maddadam trilogy. The last panel was taking us back to the Gothic origins of (modern) medicine and the fantastic as well as reminding us how incredibly relevant Gothic aesthetics (and ethics) are: Jenni Hunt explored freakshows from the perspective of museology, and Bronte Schiltz talked about queerness in Gothic narratives. Sara Wasson's keynote address, "Spectres, Strangeness and Stigmatisation: Chronic Pain and the Fantastic" pointing toward formulating answers to the symposium's main questions, closing the long day of presentations.

Finally, I am really grateful for all the speakers who took part in this initiative, and the *SFRA Review*'s editorial team for supporting this project by publishing the proceedings of the symposium.

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The Fantastic Autistic: Creating Narrative from the “Anti-Narrative” Poetics of Neurodivergence

David Hartley

University of Manchester

Introduction: Just Joking

“ARE you just joking, David?”

This is one of my autistic sister’s most common phrases which acts as a kind of verbal buffer to misunderstandings and miscommunication between our different neurotypes. She has learned that jokes are gentle disruptions to the order of things, which are usually intended to provoke positive feelings. Jokes, puns and silliness easily arise in our family unit and have persisted; thanks, perhaps, to the presence of Jenny’s autism at our core. Whenever Jenny misunderstands something, or an instruction threatens the established order, her question “are you just joking?” helps to paper over the crack. Even if the statement wasn’t a joke, her response has helped her to at least get a hand on the tiller.

As part of my PhD in Creative Writing, I am writing a fantastical novel about autism and ghosts. The main autistic character is based on Jenny. She is three years older than me, the eldest of three siblings, and she is autistic with learning difficulties. The impulse to write a novel about her has been with me for a long time. I have still never seen a cultural representation of autism which in any way accurately reflects Jenny. I’ve recognised certain traits that match up, but Jenny’s version of autism eludes (or, perhaps, is avoided by) creatives who engage with the condition in one form or another. This exclusion has never sat comfortably with me and this discomfort became the foundation for the novel.

However, there was a second impulse. I wanted to confront a tendency that I’d seen emerging in my creative practice over the last ten years. This is my continual engagement with the weird, the strange and the absurd, all of which regularly echo into my short stories, often as a core structural factor. I found I also wanted to use the novel to explore whether my deep affection and affiliation for the fantastic had arisen from the fantastical habits, behaviours and languages of Jenny. I wanted to explore if growing up alongside autism had meant I’d grown up alongside a sort of living version of “cognitive estrangement” (Suvin, 3). I don’t, however, necessarily mean cognitive estrangement in the exact way that Darko Suvin theorised it – as a categorizing framework for the science fiction genre. Rather, I

approach a sort of queered version of the theory; a neurodivergent estrangement, where the ideologically problematic concept of “cognition” (see; Mieville, 235) is replaced by the principles of what autistic activist Nick Walker has termed “the neurodiversity paradigm” (225). This latter, Walker explains, is the assertion that difference in brains and minds “is a natural, healthy, and valuable form of human diversity” (228). Furthermore, Walker argues, this fundamental element of neurodiversity establishes that “there is no ‘normal’ style of human brain or human mind, any more than there is one ‘normal’ race, ethnicity, gender, or culture” (228). Neurodivergent activists insist upon this healthy variance of human minds and argue that attempts to “normalize” are futile and violent actions.

For “cognitive estrangement,” the presence of neurodivergence fundamentally undermines the stability of the universality implied in the “cognitive” side of the taxonomic equation. And so, in my pursuit of the estrangement of autism in my own creative practice, I use the structure of Suvin’s theory but queer its content. Instead, I am looking for a form of “neurodivergent estrangement” which can better accommodate both the reality and magic of autistic people like Jenny.

The Anti-Narratives of Autism

It soon became clear that the exclusion of Jenny’s particular version of autism was partly due to the fact that it does not easily fit into typical modes of structuring narratives. Mark Osteen has charted the various clichés and stereotypes that have haunted depictions of autism in both non-fiction memoirs and popular literature. He contends that the possible reason for persistent misrepresentation is because autism itself “seems uniquely resistant to narrative” (267). He finds that in many autism stories there is a conflict between “stasis and chaos,” brought about by autism being a disruptive condition which nevertheless thrives on orders, systems and routines (268). This, he argues, appears to be too much of a challenge to translate into normative modes of narrative. This thinking leads him to pose the question: “is it possible to narrate autism authentically [...]?” (280).

This became quite the challenge—and quite the worry—for someone who very much wanted to narrate autism authentically. However, more recent writing by neurodivergent scholars have started to challenge this notion of the un-narratability of autism. Melanie Yergeau’s book *Authoring Autism* is one such example. Yergeau covers much of the same ground as Osteen but looks at autism from the position of rhetoric. She finds in medical, cultural and social rhetoric a sort of conspiracy of language that “figures autism as anything but rhetorical” (5). She contends that the seemingly arhetorical expressions of autism are in fact full of non-normative meanings which are persistently and insidiously misunderstood by non-autistic observers. She extends this further and, in a move which questions the very

basis of her own field, asks why should every expression have some sort of meaning:

I also want to put forth that, at times rhetoric is meaningless. Meaninglessness is not the pejorative so many of us would presume. I feel most autistic when I'm not making sense of anything [...] (87)

Why can't expression be actively, and rebelliously, arhetorical? Such resistance to sense-making forms the basis of her core theoretical concept of the "neuroqueer." Recognising an intertwined history of the attempted "straightening" of autistic minds with the same attempts to "straighten" the queer, Yergeau fuses the two to figure autistic people as the "ultimate asocial beings" who defy social order by failing "to acknowledge social order's very existence" (27). This subversive idea, as Justine Egner has shown, presents a new and radical way "to deconstruct identity categorisation and challenge hierarchies" (142).

Yergeau concludes her book by suggesting that autism inhabits a living "in-betweenity," a middle ground experienced as "a negotiation between rhetorical and arhetorical worlds" (205). For me, this phrase, and its "neuroqueer" underpinning, signalled the affinity between autism and the fantastic that I'd been trying to reach for. At the core of cognitive estrangement, especially when adapted towards neurodivergence and the neuroqueer, is the same negotiation between the real and the unreal, between the familiar and the uncanny, between the wonder and chaos encountered when we answer the call of Cthulu.

Neuroqueer Estrangement in Action

Osteen and Yergeau yearn for narratives and rhetoric which encounter autism on its own terms and recognise its potential. It's my contention that the fantastic has, within its unique powers, the capacity and capability to do this. This, therefore, became the challenge for my fantastical novel: aim for an authenticity of autism, both in terms of content and form, where the representation of autism is accurate, and the poetics engages in some manner with autistic "neuroqueer" expression. Before I started the first draft, I wrote out a list of principles to follow to help me avoid the clichés that Osteen outlines and enable me to lean towards the neuroqueer paradigm of Yergeau. The principle which emerged as the most important and useful was the second one: "Include more than one significant autistic character."

One of the key problems with representations of autism is that there only tends to be one significant autistic character within a text. This leads to a distillation of autism into this one character which then flattens out the complexities and depth of the spectrum. The result has been a mass of cookie-cutter autistic characters such as Raymond Babbit from *Rain Man* (1988), Christopher Boone from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Sheldon

Cooper from *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-2019), Rory McKenna from *The Predator* (2018), Sam Gardner from *Atypical* (2017-present), Dr Alfred Jones from *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011), and Adam Raki from *Adam* (2009). All the characters listed here are white, male and middle-class. Most are young, adorable, serious, detached, and non-threatening. They are good at maths and science, but bad at love, relationships and other emotional connections. While there are some emerging representations of autism which diverge from these clichés, a legitimate set of questions have arisen: where are all the stories of black autism? Female autism? Autism with other disabilities? Working class autism? Historical autism, future autism, intersectional autism—and so on.

I didn't want to disrupt the authenticity of my sister's character by changing her race or class background, but in order to encounter and apprehend this issue properly I needed a strategy that would allow me to incorporate a multitude of autistic voices and experiences. This is where Yergeau's "negotiation between rhetorical and arhetorical worlds," reorganised as a "neuroqueer estrangement," really started to help. To demonstrate this, I will now explain the core fantastical concept at the heart of the current draft of the novel.

Welcome to The Wing

Welcome to The Wing. A place of life after death. A limbo of memories and sensations; a vast solitude where you relive your fears and nostalgias until someone comes along and moves you on. But this is not the afterlife for everyone. The Wing only takes the autistic. (Blurb from current draft of the unpublished novel, 2019)

In the world of the novel, when a person dies their afterlife destination depends on whether they are autistic or non-autistic. Autistic ghosts go to "The Wing," while non-autistic ghosts go to a very different place: "Realm." Whereas The Wing is an elaborate landscape of memories, structures, and sensations, Realm is a vast, barren desert of nothingness. Each individual arrives at their own separate manifestation of either The Wing or Realm and they wander around until someone intervenes to move them on to the next phase of existence.

The protagonist of the book is Leo. He is a living, non-autistic man whose job is to enter The Wing and rescue the autistic ghosts that have become stuck there. But, as is the nature of such things, all is not quite what it seems. Further conflicts arise when, back in the land of the living, Leo must suddenly become the main carer for his autistic sister, Teresa (the character based on my sister, Jenny). Eventually, Teresa and The Wing end up coming into contact and various fantastical adventures ensue.

The conception of The Wing came from the marriage of the estranging element of autism as a state-of-being with the principle I'd laid down for myself regarding the inclusion

of multiple autistic characters. *The Wing*, and Leo's job role, give me a legitimate method of negotiating this necessity for inclusivity. Leo goes on regular missions into many different manifestations of *The Wing* and encounters autistic ghosts from across the spectrum *and* along the manifold of intersectionality. Some of these encounters are brief while others are developed into the "significant" characters my guiding principle requires. Because death is the great equaliser, and because the afterlife has such a rich fantastical heritage, *The Wing* opens up an opportunity to get at some of the complexities of autism in a broad, social sense which is often missed by other representations where the focus is too narrow. In this way, the book develops from the local, familial story between Leo and Teresa into a broader reflection on neurodiversity and the neurotype divide between autism and non-autism. This division, which is apparent in the difference between *The Wing* and *Realm*, is a deliberate provocation resolved, in the end, by cross-neurotype collaboration.

It is the nature of ghosts and spirits to be invasive, interruptive, and disorderly in much the same way that autism can be invasive, interruptive and disorderly. But instead of this being something negative that needs suppression and control, the fantastic allows a subversive space for it to be considered in a neuroqueer fashion; autistic "disturbance" as chaotic but productive, interruptive but fundamental.

UnConclusion

Following the neuroqueer approach of Julia Miele Rodas in her theorization of autism poetics, I offer an "unconclusion" in place of a traditional conclusion (Rodas, 2018 179). Rather than summarise the paper, I'm going to offer up a simple exercise for the reader. I will describe an action that my sister Jenny regularly performs, which I have incorporated into the current draft of the novel. It is an autistic gesture of sorts which is simple to teach but can feel a little weird to perform. It's something I've observed Jenny doing, but it's only when I tried it for myself that I began to understand the reasons for it.

Jenny gets a lot of sensory pleasure from certain sounds. She likes the hums and beeps of microwaves, the ignition and vrooms of car engines, the rhythms of music, and the tenor and flexibility of voices, especially her own. Through a simple habit, Jenny has discovered a way to enhance the listening experience of her own voice and I invite you, dear reader, to experience it for yourselves.

Place the bottom edge of your palms together so that your wrists meet and you create an open lotus flower shape with your hands. Now bring that edge up to your mouth so that your fingers reach back towards your ears. It will be like you are using your hands to create a surgeon's mouth-mask, or the facehugger from the *Alien* franchise. Don't press your hands against your mouth but hold them close. Now hum, or speak a phrase, into your hands and

listen to how it modulates the sound of your voice. Speaking works best; read out the last few lines of this paragraph.

Hopefully you got the sense of that. The sound intensifies as it hits your palms, travels along the insides of your fingers and reaches your ears. Jenny does this regularly for words, phrases and hums and she clearly gets a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from doing it. It's a strange thing to do, but it's also remarkably simple and effective. Here, in this natural and personal autistic movement, there is the glimpse of a fantastical negotiation "between rhetorical and arhetorical worlds." It is fantastical because it cuts against established social "norms" of how to behave and would be interpreted, from a non-autistic domain, as "weird" and aberrant: a worthless, arhetorical oddity. And yet, for Jenny, it is rich with rhetorical potential and, when we try it for ourselves, we can access a sense of it, even if we never make it a part of our own behaviours. That, in both meanings of the word, is the "fantastic" autistic I'm looking for.

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“That tub a’lard’s in our way!”: Obese Characters as Obstructive and Antagonistic in Horror-Based Digital Games



Connor Jackson

Edge Hill University

A number of horror-based digital game characters conflate notions of obesity, overeating and monstrosity. For instance there is Eddie Dombrowski from *Silent Hill 2*, an overweight man who is shown eating pizza in a bowling alley, loitering in a prison cafeteria and is later fought in a meat locker—here it is revealed that he is a sadist who killed a bully’s dog before shooting him in the knee prior to the events of the game. In addition, there are the large Twin Chefs from *Little Nightmares* who prepare food in the macabre kitchen stage of the game when they are not trying to capture the player-character. Failing to flee from them can result in the avatar being thrown into a saucepan, an oven, and even a meat grinder. However, the abovementioned conflation is more discernible in zombie-based games in particular: a subset of horror-based games that are usually concerned with the struggle for survival of one or more humans during or after a zombie outbreak. This is evidenced by the Boomer from *Left 4 Dead* and *Left 4 Dead 2*, the Whopper from *Resident Evil 6*, and the Bloater from *The Last of Us*. Each creature is significantly large (as their names imply) and signifies both overeating and monstrosity due to its condition as a zombie: a being that has come to be renowned for its insatiable appetite. What is more, they are symptomatic of a broader trend in zombie fictions which, after the turn of the century, have become increasingly preoccupied with the production and consumption of food: particularly fast and processed foods.

As a result of the contemporary zombie’s association with fast food, Michael Newbury reads zombie films as the fictional counterparts of food crisis texts: an umbrella term used to describe non-fiction books, documentaries and journalistic publications that “dwell at some length on what they understand to be an imploding system of industrial food production” (90). The goal of food crisis texts, then, is to combat the alienation of consumers from the origins and contents of the food they eat by exposing the mistreatment of animals under agribusiness, revealing the adverse effects of additives, and uncovering the risks fast food pose to consumer health. Moreover, some food crisis texts offer an alternative means of obtaining food by valorising local and organic food production. In opposition, Newbury asserts that the zombie film “extinguishes with brutal enthusiasm all aspirations to retrieving the pastoral, the natural, or alternatives to the industrial food chain” (97). Instead, these films revel in the nihilism of food consumption run amok through the cannibalistic consumption

of the undead as well as their associated landscapes, which are abound with visualisations of both real and fictional food products and brands.

Despite the associative connections between the undead in zombie films and fast food, a significant point of departure from food crisis texts in these films is that typically they do not explicitly tie their apocalyptic visions to fast food corporations. As Newbury points out, food crisis texts often link prophecies of devastating diseases and bacterial infections such as *E. coli* to the practices of agribusiness, whereas zombie films rarely implicate “food corporations as the specific catalyst for apocalyptic contagion” (100). The reluctance of zombie films to explicitly implicate agribusiness in their outbreaks is not resolved in the aforementioned zombie games; their antagonistic characters do connote rampant food consumption due to their obesity but like Newberry’s filmic examples they are not narratively bound to agribusiness. In this respect, when the Whopper receives verbal abuse for its weight—one non-playable character shouts “[t]hat tub a’lard’s in our way!” as the monster blocks their path to safety—the body shaming that this monster endures seems to exist in order to prompt a cheap laugh rather than tying into a larger critique of agribusiness. This changes in Capcom’s *Dead Rising* series, which depicts its overweight characters (both living and undead) negatively for the sake of satirising what it perceives as the gluttonous eating habits of U.S. citizens perpetuated by agribusiness.

In the first *Dead Rising* game non-playable character Isabela Keyes, sister of the terrorist who caused the zombie outbreak in the town of Willamette, reveals that the zombies originated from an American “Livestock Research Facility” built in her Central American hometown. Furthermore Dr. Russell Barnaby, the lead scientist behind the operations in this facility, expands upon the motivations of his team of researchers in his dying breaths: “We were... conducting... experiments to... reduce the costs of breeding... We... accidentally... made zombie livestock... [...] We were trying to mass produce cattle. Do you... have any... idea... how much meat... Americans consume... in a single day!?” The aim of these scientists was to produce more food for a country that was simply consuming far too much. Sustaining vast levels of consumption was their goal, and ironically was also the outcome of their work. As such, the cannibalistic nature of the undead in the *Dead Rising* series—many of which are presented with overweight character models—is not just taken as a given. Rather than simply imbuing zombies with a means of threatening the player-character’s life and consequently the player’s agency within the game, their cannibalism also functions as a satirical twist on the relentless intake of meat perpetuated and encouraged by U.S. agribusiness. Furthermore, the unquenchable appetites of *living* American citizens, which existed before (and indeed lead to) the outbreak, are maintained and explored post-outbreak.

In most zombie narratives the undead are ravenous, but they are not the only hungry consumers; humans must gather food to survive in their post-apocalyptic environments. For Newbury the food consumption of humans in zombie films functions cathartically. For example, candlelight dinners in *28 Days Later* and the *Dawn of the Dead* remake (as well as Romero's 1978 original it should be noted) serve as temporary releases from horrors of the present moment. They construct for their participants a façade of sophistication in an unbearably savage world. Cammie M. Sublette furthers Newbury's analyses of human food consumption in zombie films by investigating not just *what* these meals achieve in terms of escapism, but *how* they accomplish this. The decimation caused by zombie outbreaks often leaves survivors searching and squabbling for sustenance but Sublette points to a type of consumption distinguishable from that engaged in for necessary nourishment, one that is pursued for pleasure. This "food hedonism is nearly always linked to some variety of nostalgia, often with an idealized or revised past providing temporary psychological escape from the horrors of the zombie apocalypse" (179). No matter how fleeting the experience might be, human food consumption in zombie films enables survivors to indulge in fantasies that centre on what once was and what could have been. They alleviate tension and enable survivors to reminisce over real or imaginatively adapted past experiences, as well as forge communal bonds with one another.

This culinary bliss is unequivocally absent from the *Dead Rising* series, in which food is consumed by non-playable characters as a result of their rapaciousness. Additionally, Newbury claims that "[t]he food one eats and the way one eats it become primary signifiers of distinction between the malevolent dead or infected and those struggling to retrieve or retain a measure of human distinction from them" (104), but this statement does not apply to the *Dead Rising* series. In these games the food intake of survivors works toward the opposite effect. Survivors demand, hoard, and gorge upon food. They also eject food from their bodies by vomiting due to overeating. Their relationship with food is one of excess, thereby positioning them parallel to the undead as satirical and condemnatory exemplifications of human gluttony perpetuated by the industrialised food chain. This is made explicit from the first game in which the terrorist behind the outbreak, Carlito Keyes, declares that "all [zombies] do is eat, and eat, and eat, growing in number... Just like [...] good red white and blue Americans"—this remark about zombies continuously eating is also repeated during the prologue of *Dead Rising 4*, thereby emphasising its relevance across the series.

The message conveyed by *Dead Rising* is clear: zombies are gluttonous monsters and so are American citizens. This is evidenced in the first game when player-character Frank West encounters fellow survivor Ronald Shiner in a restaurant. The player can recruit and

rescue this overweight survivor under one condition: they must give him a food item. These are scattered around the environments of this game (and its sequels) and are usually present within the eatery itself but become absent from this location once the side mission is triggered. The obvious implication is that despite Ronald's claim that he is "starving to death" he has gobbled up the food in this area, which usually consists of two cartons of orange juice, four baguettes and four pies. Consequently, to recruit Ronald the player must give up one of their food items should they possess one, or worse endanger their player-character by going to the trouble of finding one elsewhere and returning it to him. Through the refusal of this character to adapt his eating habits in the midst of a zombie outbreak, *Dead Rising* constructs a topical satire on the self-destructive reliance of American citizens on industrialised junk foods whilst simultaneously shaming obese individuals.

Rebecca M. Puhl and Chelsea A. Heuer produce an extensive consolidation of literature pertaining to the perceptions and treatment of obese adults. Their amalgamation of research pertaining to healthcare settings more so than that conducted with regards to employment and educational contexts emphasises perceived reasons as to why people are obese. Sources invested in a number of healthcare professionals (physicians, nurses, medical students, fitness professionals and dieticians) show a recurring commonality in their values. Generally, these people view obese individuals as "lazy, noncompliant, undisciplined, and [having] low willpower" (934); consensus among these professionals determines that obesity is a personal responsibility. Significantly, this responsibility is repeatedly linked to food consumption. Overweight people are assumed to have an excessive body mass due to "overeating" and having an "unhealthy diet" (944). Their weight is understood as a result of their "personal choices about food" and their "poor eating behaviours" as well as their intake of "too much junk food" (945). This viewpoint is perpetuated by negative portrayals of obese people in mainstream media, particularly in what Heuer calls "fattertainment" (n.p.). For instance, in filmic or televisual entertainment overweight characters are marginalised, often by relegating their inclusion to that of supporting characters or objects of ridicule (Puhl and Heuer, 951; Heuer). This is even evidenced in children's media such as cartoons and books. Here, even when larger characters are not eating, they are shown to be "thinking about [...] food" (Puhl and Heuer, 951). Of course, as the *Dead Rising* series demonstrates, film, television and children's entertainment are not the only avenues through which obese people are represented in an unsavoury fashion; parallels can be drawn between their depiction in these formats and those found in digital games.

The aforementioned character Ronald coincides with notions of sizable characters continuously thinking about food even when they are not actually eating. His description in the player-character's notebook attests to this, simply expressing that he "[t]hinks

only of eating.” However, of further significance in the *Dead Rising* series is the blending together of obesity and antagonism. Puhl and Heuer determine that overweight characters in popular culture are attributed with “physical aggression” (951) much more than their underweight counterparts. In *Dead Rising* this is especially true, as the volatility of certain hostile characters throughout the series is bound explicitly to gluttonous food consumption. Arguably the most noteworthy example of this is the antagonistic Darlene Fleischermacher from *Dead Rising 3*. Hiding out in Uncle Billy’s Buffet, she is introduced to the player during a cutscene. Here, player-character Nick Ramos ventures into the diner and sees an unnamed male survivor attempting to unlock the door to the kitchen. Unfortunately, they attract the attention of Darlene. She is severely obese and bound to a motor scooter as a result. She tears away at a large chicken thigh. Food stains cover her clothes, which consist of a bib stylised with the image of a lobster and a bright yellow dress pattered with a cupcake design that her enormous stomach has actually torn through. Everything about her exaggerated appearance signifies food in excess. When she spots Ramos and the other unnamed survivor she yells “get away from my food”—clearly, she is under the impression that the entire buffet belongs to her. Ramos asserts that the eatery contains enough food for everyone while the other man argues that Darlene could not possibly eat all of it. However, rather than being persuaded to share the buffet Darlene takes this last comment as a challenge, shovelling multiple burgers into her mouth and swallowing them whole. When the unnamed man attempts to bypass her and claim some food for his own, she grabs a large spork and stabs him to death. Once again *Dead Rising* rejects the notion of human food consumption as representing reclamations of civility as proposed by Newbury, or evoking nostalgia as argued by Sublette.

Gluttonous food consumption is not only satirised by obese characters in the *Dead Rising* series, but also through the player’s choices during gameplay. Consuming certain foods has an adverse effect on the player-character in the first three *Dead Rising* games (stomach cramps in the first and vomiting in the second and third). These outcomes can be prompted by the consumption of food that had become “spoiled” over time. This is evidenced by the transformation of “Raw Meat” to “Spoiled Meat” and “Steak” to “Spoiled Steak” for example. Tying in to the series’ satire on voracious food consumption, the player is chastised for their dubious food intake and virtual gluttony should they choose to perform such foolish consumption practices. This punishment is made clear as their agency is momentarily stripped away while the player-characters doubles over in pain. In doing so they drop whatever item they were currently holding and leave themselves open to attack. This would be particularly detrimental to the player-character’s wellbeing if it should occur as the player was aiming to navigate through a crowd of zombies.

The *Dead Rising* series connects zombies to agribusiness by revealing the origin of its zombie infection as the result of unethical research into the mass production of cattle. In this way it coincides with twenty-first century zombie films, in which Newbury asserts that the undead “seem to emerge from and are profoundly associated with the landscapes of fast and junk food” (100). However, Newbury also claims that these films rarely implicate the food industry directly as the cause of their zombie outbreaks and offer no form of redemption from current food intake practices damaging people and the ecosystem at large. Contrastingly, *Dead Rising* makes its connections between zombies and fast food explicit, satirises overeating in the United States by portraying a number of troublesome and antagonistic characters as obese, and supports a sensible approach to fast food consumption through satirical gameplay consequences that punish the player for overeating.

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Articulating the Terror of Obstetric Violence in Carmen María Machado's "The Husband Stitch"



Lucía López

University of Salamanca

EVER since I read Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) as an undergraduate student of English literature, I have been attracted to representations of the interactions of vulnerable bodies with what I call "the medical establishment" by which I mean state sanctioned clinical practice, that which follows mainstream discourse and does not consider other understandings of health but the Western one. Gilman's text firmly aligns with this examination of mainstream medicine through the lens of literature, since the author depicts a "resting cure" popularized by Silas Weir Mitchell, a famous physician at the time, which consisted in enforced seclusion and bed rest for patients diagnosed with nervous conditions such as hysteria or neurasthenia. Perkins Gilman herself had been subjected to this cure, which she believed damaging and, in an effort to warn against its dangers, she denounced the extremely oppressive and confining prescriptions patients were forced to follow. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," said prescriptions involve extreme confinement and prohibition of almost any social interaction or mental exercise, which seem to drive the protagonist to madness rather than to cure her, and the narration masterfully reflects the increasing claustrophobia and loss of touch with reality provoking an increasing unease in the reader that may well end in terror.

Although the protagonist's progressive illness is disquieting on its own, I argue that a good part of the terror that Gilman's story provokes in the reader emanates from the fact that the protagonist's husband, who is also a doctor, is the one who takes the role of care giver and enforces the limiting "resting" cure. Thus, the narrator is doubly betrayed, first by the medical establishment that pathologizes her disinterest in the domestic as a nervous condition, and second, by her husband, who prioritizes medical prescription over his partner's explicit desires.

The protagonist's betrayal by those who should have her best interests at heart may seem outdated by contemporary Western standards; after all, we live in a time where feminism has drastically changed the power dynamics of marriages and the medical institutions securely stand on scientific grounds that should not allow for abuses of power. Although the forced vulnerability of Gilman's protagonist is evocative and vaguely terrifying for a contemporary female reader, that terror should be far removed from our personal experience. However, contemporary women's writing is still very much concerned with how gender bias and

misogyny infiltrate clinical practice to the detriment of female patients: many recently published memoirs of sickness such as Abby Norman's *Ask Me About My Uterus* (2018), Sonya Huber's *Pain Woman Takes Your Keys, and Other Essays from a Nervous System* (2017) or Porochista Khakpour's *Sick: A Memoir* (2018) certainly express the many frustrations and potential pitfalls of navigating the medical system as a woman. Although these memoirs deal explicitly with the encounters of female embodiment and the medical establishment, it is again a short story—Carmen María Machado's "The Husband Stitch"—which talks back to "The Yellow Wallpaper" by covering the protagonist's medical experience with a layer of terror, highlighting the betrayal of a medical establishment that is depicted as caring more for gender performativity than the wellbeing of the patient, and a husband whose obsession with taking ownership of his wife's body leads to doom.

In "The Husband Stitch," published in her debut collection *Her Body and Other Parties*, Carmen María Machado evokes the potential dangers of the intimacy of marriage and the embodied vulnerability of giving birth and weaves a fabric of terror that speaks to its contemporary reader in the same way *The Yellow Wallpaper* does: addressing through figurative language and literary representation a fear well rooted in the readers' close reality. Ann Radcliffe's definition of terror as a feeling that expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life" (150) accompanied by "uncertainty and obscurity" (151), which is the vehicle to the sublime in its capacity to evoke danger and excite the imagination seems poignantly close to what Machado accomplishes in her writing: by highlighting the implicit threat in the commonplace, her text forces the reader to reimagine said threats upon the everyday that lies outside the pages of the book, very different from the experience of horror, described by Radcliffe as a cheaper version of the emotion, its "effect, though sudden and strong, is also transient" (150). In Laura Kremmel's comprehensive chapter on Medical Horror in the new *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, the author considers this type of literature to "provoke the fear associated with the human body and mind's vulnerabilities" (313). However, she points out that it is not only the "fears of the body as a threat to itself" that this subgenre draws from, but also and more prominently, "the fears of the larger medical institutions and authorities that claim absolute power over the body in their promise to care for and cure it" (314). That this promise goes unfulfilled is implicit, and thus "healing becomes exploitation, experimentation, and terrorization for a goal that circumvents the benefit of the individual patient" (314). This is what happens both in "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The Husband Stitch," where the medical establishment takes ownership of the female body and pathologizes what is seen as a failure to acquiesce with normative gender performance within the bounds of marriage, disregarding women's explicit decisions regarding their bodies' performances and medicalizing dissent.

In her *Survey of Medical Horror* Kremmel distinguishes between horror of “what can happen to the body (injury, illness, or death) and horror of what can be done to treat the body” (315), and I argue that is in this latter category, that the terror of the medical experience emerges from. The very real potential vulnerability to an implicit threat that the reader feels very close to their experience resonates with Radcliffe’s understanding of terror, rather than horror, and although Kremmel does not stop to make a distinction between the two, her nuanced commentary regarding the imaginative potential of the immediate experience to instill fear in the reader, certainly aligns her vision with what Radcliffe wrote about. According to Kremmel, medical terrors that promise “an inherent relevance and imminence . . . The familiarity of medical spaces and the fears that already reside in them make patients, even potential patients, vulnerable to a medical manifestation of horror tropes” (323). In the case of Machado’s short story, it is the familiar terror of obstetric violence that provokes the reader. In a complex and nuanced short story, the author evokes the absolute vulnerability in the most intimate of physical spaces and the potential for damage it posits when we are faced with an unscrupulous clinician.

Machado’s protagonist claims at the beginning of her tale that “[e]veryone knows these stories—that is, everyone tells them, even if they don’t know them—but no one ever believes them” (5). That certainly seems to be the case with the husband stitch (the procedure, not the story); as Jane Dykema states in a much-read article in *Electric Literature*, a quick internet search of the term will demonstrate that there is “no entry in Wikipedia, nothing in WebMD. Instead there are pages and pages of message board entries and forum discussions on pregnancy websites.” The existence of this procedure is rarely acknowledged by medical professionals, as seen by the absence of studies or official records. Consisting of an extra stitch given after a vaginal birth to tighten the vagina of the patient after there has been either a natural tear or an episiotomy, its objective is the increased sexual pleasure of a male partner and often carries with it the accompanying pain of the patient. Despite the lack of records, as Carrie Murphy states in another article on the topic, this time in the site *Healthline*, “the proof is in women’s words. Or sometimes, it’s sewn into their bodies.” The thousands of personal testimonies that seem to have been unearthed after the publication of the story by Machado give testament to that: the husband stitch is not a myth, but an unrecorded, unofficial and unsanctioned medical practice where stereotyped gender performativity takes precedence over the well-being of the patient. In Machado’s story, it is the protagonist’s husband who asks the doctor while she is under the haze of a powerful sedative: “How much to get that extra stitch?” . . . “You offer that, right?” (16). And despite the patient’s lack of explicit consent, or ability to consent at all, since she is under sedation, she is given the extra stitch rumored to recreate a tightness comparable to that of a virgin.

When she wakes up, the protagonist is “all sewn up” “Nice and tight, everyone’s happy . . . You’re going to need to rest for a while” (17), she is told by the doctor.

In her harrowing memoir about dealing with endometriosis, Abby Norman expresses her frustration with her doctors, who repeatedly dismiss her statements that she is absolutely decided to sacrifice her fertility if it will alleviate her pain:

I can only assume that doctors don’t feel comfortable taking a woman’s word for it when she says she’s not concerned about her fertility . . . I was slowly figuring out that not only was my pain going to be disbelieved, but it was never going to take precedence. (Norman, *Kindle Position* 690-693)

Precedence, in this case, over fertility, or over her partner’s sexual pleasure, as is the case in Machado’s story. Both Norman and Machado highlight in their writing instances where the medical establishment fails to make the female body the interested party. In Norman’s experience, as well as in Machado’s story, the performativity of the female body in accordance to stereotypical gender norms, as a mother or as a lover, takes precedence over the patient’s expressed desires. Women’s agency is overruled by the doctors’ perception of what her body ought to do.

The enforced silence of women’s voices is another topic that Machado addresses in her powerful story. In stage directions, the reader is introduced to the narrator by being told that her voice should be performed “as a child, high-pitched, forgettable; as a woman, the same. . . ALL OTHER WOMEN: interchangeable with my own” (3). Intermingled with the protagonist’s life story, Machado weaves a fabric of open-ended old wives’ tales, urban legends and folktales in which women are punished for behaving outside the norm: “I have heard all of the stories about girls like me, and I am unafraid to make more of them” (7), claims the narrator as a young woman discovering sex with her future husband. However, as in the classic horror stories that we find in the text, sins have punishments in Machado’s story. In “The Husband Stitch,” which is a rewriting of the classic horror tale “The Green Ribbon,” known by most in Alvin Schwartz’s retelling in the young readers’ collection *In a Dark, Dark Room and Other Scary Stories*, the husband is increasingly insistent and aggressive in his attempt to uncover the mystery of the green ribbon worn by his wife. Although we are first presented with an idyllic picture of the couple’s story, where they seem to fall passionately in love, their courtship, marriage and life together is marred by the husband’s continuous attempts to untangle the ribbon that his wife wears around her neck. His greed in wanting to take complete ownership and control of his wife’s body against her will, first by asking the doctor for the extra stitch, then by unraveling the ribbon, is punished with the horror of a decapitated head at the end of the story. For the unnamed narrator, who has freely rejoiced

herself in her lust, the punishment is death. As Lorna Piatti-Farnell explains in her review of children's fairytales, "bodily violence constructs the apogee of the educational lesson in the story and is seemingly justified by the receivers' previous ill conduct and greed" (99). In this case, the female protagonist's enjoyment of her lust is punished twice, first by the extra stitch, who reportedly may cause severe pain for the woman when attempting penetration, and secondly by her death at the hands of her untrusting husband, whose greed brings doom to the couple.

In conclusion, "The Husband Stitch" weaves several threads of terror by introducing storytelling as a powerful force that shapes our lives. Fantasy mediates uncertainty and allows Machado to recreate the embodied terror and intimate betrayal of obstetric violence by rewriting the threatening half whispered rumors of not consensual postpartum intervention into a gory children's story of beheading. She creates a tale where the perpetrator of such violence is not an unnamed monster but "not a bad man at all. To describe him as evil or wicked or corrupted would be a deep disservice to him" (30). "He is not a bad man, and that, I realize suddenly, is the root of my hurt," (30) the narrator says in the moments before her death. The terror of this story that we would prefer not to believe emerges from the frivolity with which the protagonist's agency over her own body is overruled by husband and doctor, otherwise caring and functional men, normal men. Casual misogyny and how it infiltrates every layer of reality, even those we believe are protected behind the walls of scientific objectivity, is the terror of this story.

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Fungi as Destructive and Transformative in *Rosewater* by Tade Thompson and *The Beauty* by Aliya Whiteley

Jonathan Thornton

University of Liverpool

In this paper I am going to explore ideas around fungi and semi-permeable bodies through the texts *Rosewater* by Tade Thompson (2016) and *The Beauty* by Aliya Whiteley (2014). To do so I'm first going to outline some theoretical/conceptual ideas that discuss bodies and matter, and how fungi, with their symbiotic and parasitic interactions with bodies, disrupt the idea of the body as discrete and inviolable. Then I'm going to explore these elements through the texts. Then I'll conclude, drawing together ideas across these two texts.

In Donna Haraway's "The Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway uses the cyborg as a metaphor to disrupt the humanist notion of the historically white male body as distinct from nature, woman, animal, and machine. She argues, "by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs." (7) I am interested in how this notion of hybridity between machine and organism extends to the biomolecular machinery of the microbiota and the symbionts and parasites that we live intimately with. The notion of the human body as a discrete, inviable self is not compatible with our knowledge of ourselves as interactions of cellular machinery and genetic coding from varied sources both prokaryotic and eukaryotic. Haraway talks about biology as "a kind of cryptography" and further explores the idea of humans as interacting biological systems with no clearly defined boundaries in *Staying with the Trouble*:

We are all lichens; so we can be scraped off the rocks by the Furies, who still erupt to avenge crimes against the earth. Alternatively, we can join in the metabolic transformations between and among rocks and critters for living and dying well. (56)

Using Haraway's question from "The Cyborg Manifesto," "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" as a jumping off point, Margrit Shildrick positions hybridity in relation to the disabled body and prostheses. Shildrick argues that prostheses, whether they be replacement limbs, behaviour altering drugs or transplanted organs, disrupt ideas about the body as a discrete entity and force us to rethink our ideas about embodiment:

They not only demonstrate the inherent plasticity of the body, but, in the very process of incorporating non-self matter, point to the multiple possibilities of co-corporeality, where bodies are not just contiguous and mutually reliant but entwined with one another. (16)

Thus, considering bodies as “contiguous, mutually reliant and entwined” disrupts hierarchies of viewing non-disabled bodies as superior to disabled bodies, and allow us to rethink what constitutes a body and what its limits are. How we view embodiment also influences our ideas around subjectivity. Annemarie Mol uses the idea of eating an apple to explore ideas around embodiment and subjectivity. Through the act of eating, the subject’s role morphs from a traditional Western active subjectivity to a more complex one, as the apple is broken down and digested across the membranes of the digestive system, an action both passive yet regulated. Mol argues, “her actorship is distributed and her boundaries are neither firm nor fixed... Neither tightly closed off, nor completely open, an eater has semi-permeable boundaries” (30).

I would like to explore how two speculative fiction texts, *Rosewater* by Tade Thompson and *The Beauty* by Aliya Whiteley, use fungi as destructive and transformative agents that challenge the humanist idea of the body as discrete and inviolable, and offer ways of rethinking the body as a complex adaptive system interacting with and within other systems. In this way the texts allow us to challenge preconceived ideas about embodiment and subjectivity.

Tade Thompson’s *Rosewater* is set in a near future Nigeria in which an alien incursion has occurred, in the form of Wormwood, which has burrowed under the ground and released fungi-like spores into Earth’s atmosphere. Wormwood is trapped under the dome of Utopicity, and the city of Rosewater has sprung up around it. The alien fungi, or xenoform, attaches itself to the natural fungi on human skin, forming a psychic network called the xenosphere which “sensitives” like protagonist Kaaro are able to access like the internet. In the virtual space of the xenosphere, sensitives are able to embody themselves in nonhuman forms—Kaaro appears as a Griffin, and inhabits such surreal places as a palace made of meat. But the xenosphere is more than just a recapitulation of the cyberpunk dream. In *Rosewater*, everyone is connected into a communal “worldmind,” the differences between discrete individual bodies called into question as consciousness extends across fungal networks and through different people’s minds.

The dome opens once a year, releasing alien fungi into the atmosphere and healing the injured and diseased. However, this process does not always work as the people who flock to visit Rosewater might wish. Whilst some are healed, others are put back together wrong—

the deformed, or mutated or remade in new and unusual ways—the remade. Even the dead are infected with xenofoms, brought back to life as soulless zombies—the reanimates. Thus, the interaction between humans and the alien fungi doesn't so much return people to an idealised complete body but remakes it in challenging new forms. This is further complicated by Kaaro's discovery that the xenofoms are slowly replacing human cells with more xenofoms whilst replicating the original body's appearance, and that eventually humanity will be entirely replaced. This causes Kaaro to question his own subjectivity:

I am not the same. I don't look at the dome in the same way. It's now a sty or a boil, swollen with purulence, waiting, biding its time. I don't know what my healing has cost me. How many native cells have the xenofoms driven out? Ten, fifteen percent? How human am I? I see the people touching me and the ones at the periphery staring as dead people. Conquered and killed by invaders, walking around carrying their death, but they don't even know it. (236)

The replacement of human cells by the alien xenofoms can be read as a metaphor for colonialism, especially as this all takes place in a Nigeria where the indigenous culture has been overwritten by the all-powerful cultural influences of the West. Thus the fungal entities in *Rosewater* force us to confront not just the way we think about human bodies but how we think about the body politic in the context of Western post-colonialism.

The Beauty by Aliya Whiteley is set after a plague has wiped out all women. The protagonist Nate lives in the Valley of Stones with a community of men who have survived the plague. In the forest where the dead women have been buried, he meets the Beauty, creatures who have grown from the mushrooms feeding on the bodies of the women, who provide the men of the community with love and sex. Eventually the men become pregnant with the offspring of the Beauty, allowing a continuation of sorts for humanity. Like Thompson's humans being slowly rewritten by xenofoms, the Beauty pose an ontological question. After two of the men murder their Beauties, the village doctor discovers that the Beauty have incorporated the bones of the women they grew from into their bodies. Nate sees the Beauty as the women returned to the community from beyond the dead; Uncle Tom and the other older men see them as a frightening and parasitic alien Other.

The Beauty disrupt the boundary between alive and dead and human and nonhuman, eliciting disgust from the older members of the community but also from Nate when he first encounters them. However they also disrupt the gender norms of the men they come in contact with. Whilst they appear in feminine shape to arouse male desire, sexual intercourse with the Beauty results in the male humans becoming pregnant with the Beauty's offspring. By putting the burden of pregnancy on the inviolable male body, and forcing it to undergo

changes in shape and appearance, Whiteley challenges ideas around gendered bodies, and the idea of bodies as unchangeable. Nate reflects on the changes his body will go through as it shifts away from sexual potency towards nurturing and caring:

The idea of this was worse when it was happening to someone else. Now it is me and it is inevitable, and nothing inevitable is ever that bad. If I have to live with it, then how can it be unbearable? Besides, bodies betray us. That is what they do. (89)

He comes to accept his body as mutable and permeable, whether through pregnancy or plague, it can be disrupted and altered. The pregnant body is another instance where the body becomes contiguous with another, in this case the foetus, as Nate realises on becoming pregnant: “We will meld to grow. Part human, part Beauty. Could anything be more wonderful, more terrifying?” (59). The survival of humanity is assured only by this melding between human and Beauty, as embodied by their children.

So, fungi in speculative fiction gives us a new way to think about the permeability of the body and the effects this has on embodiment and subjectivity. In Tade Thompson’s *Rosewater*, fungi connects humanity and its environment into a contiguous whole even as it rewrites the human body as its own. In Aliya Whiteley’s *The Beauty*, fungi disrupts preconceived notions around gendered bodies. Both books help us to rethink what the limits of the human body are.

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Xenotransplantation: The Haunting Possibilities for the Future within Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*



Lucy Nield

University of Liverpool

IN 1997, a photograph of a mouse was released with a human ear growing on its back. This caused strong reactions with the press and raised questions concerning the bio-ethical implications of xenotransplantation. Since, interest in the medical possibilities concerning xenotransplantation, have spread across various mediums, including fiction. Margaret Atwood's *MaddAdam* trilogy explores such possibilities for our future; focusing on modifying food, animals and plants all for profit and human benefit. This paper will aim to review contemporary advances of xenotransplantation as well as explore Atwood's futuristic world and the haunting medical possibilities, it feels, she is predicting.

According to the FDA, in 2019,

Xenotransplantation is any procedure that involves the transplantation, implantation or infusion into a human recipient of either:

- A) live cells, tissues or organs from a nonhuman animal source,
- B) human body fluids, cells, tissues or organs that have had *EX VIVO* contact with live nonhuman animal cells, tissues or organs. (U.S. Food and Drug Administration)

According to D.K.C. Cooper in his paper "Xenotransplantation—The Current Status and Prospects," the growing interest and increased research surrounding xenotransplantation comes from the "continuing worldwide shortage of organs from deceased human donors for transplantations into patients with organ failure." Throughout the paper, Cooper discusses these shortages and the problems that follow; "In the USA alone, in 2016, 98,000 patients started the year on the waiting list" for new kidneys, with only 20% transplanted. Since 2005, according to Cooper's research, over 9,000 wait-listed patients died or became too sick to transplant, thus causing the interest and continued efforts to make xenotransplantation a reality.

Whilst the use of xenotransplantation raises concerns regarding infections, Bio-ethical fears and the moral implications surrounding the subject, research and experiments are still going ahead. Particularly in the field of "genetically engineered pigs," which contemporary researchers, such as Cooper, imply could resolve the problems facing the medical community today. Cooper states that, today, research and experiments in "utilizing genetically modified

pig kidneys and other organs are moving towards clinical trials in humans,” revealing the rapid progression and enthusiasm in the field.

Xenotransplantation: A History

Xenotransplantation, or “clinical cross species transplantation,” has a “long history going back to blood transfusions across species in the 17th century” (Cooper). According to the Science Museum, London:

Most animals used for [early transplantation attempts] were apes (or nonhuman primates), as they are our closest animal relative. Throughout the 1960s, as organ transplants between humans became more common, the possibility of animal-to-human transplants appeared feasible. It was also seen as a way of getting around the problem of the shortage of donor organs. (“Animal-Human Transplants”)

However, numerous attempts at nonhuman primate organ transplantation in patients were carried out in the 1960s, the longest surviving patient of these attempts returned to work for 9 months on a pair of chimpanzee kidneys, before rejection began. However, with new technologies, cloning, genetic engineering and new medication it is perceived that pigs may be the animal most likely to resolve the donor organ shortage problem.

Oryx and Crake

In 2003, Margaret Atwood published the first book of her *MaddAddam* trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*. Sarah Akaws argues that “The book, preferably described by its author as being Speculative Fiction, rather than Science fiction, offers the readers an insightful review of where our world is heading,” society is separated into either “rich” or “poor” classes, corrupt governments and corporations, “and the growing, evolving branch of science,” revealing a future that we might encounter if humanity stays on its current path of scientific advances. In her article, Akaws focuses mainly on humanity’s progression in medicine, xenotransplantation, and genetic engineering. Whilst there are several examples of genetic modification, species splicing and xenotransplantation, the best example of xenotransplantation and speculations concerning such procedures within Atwood’s world, would be the Pigoons.

The Pigoons are introduced to the reader by the protagonist Jimmy (25). Jimmy grew up within large corporate compounds, including “OrganInk Farms,” which is where he first meets the Pigoons. His father works as a genographer, on “The Pigoon Project,” along with a team of “transplant experts and the microbiologists who were splicing against infections” (25). As Jimmy historicizes it, “The goal of the Pigoon project was to grow an assortment

of foolproof human-tissue organs [inside] a transgenic knockout pig host—organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, but would also be able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses” (25).

However, the team were not only using the Pigoons to grow organs, “they were [also] perfecting a Pigoon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time. Such a host animal could be reaped of its extra kidneys, then, rather than being destroyed; it could keep on living and grow more organs, much as a lobster could grow another claw to replace a missing one. That would be less wasteful, as it took a lot of food and care to grow a Pigoon” (26). As a result, “The Pigoons were much bigger and fatter than ordinary pigs, to leave room for all the extra organs” (29). The more modifications and experiments that were conducted within the text, the more examples and possibilities Atwood presents in terms of xenotransplantation. “The Pigoon organs could be customised, using cells from individual human donors, and the organs were frozen until needed. It was much cheaper than getting yourself cloned for spare parts—a few wrinkles left to be ironed out there” (27). Here Atwood not only reveals a conceivable answer for donor shortages, but she also brushes over the idea that using genetic modification and xenotransplantation are stepping stones towards cloning human beings.

Not only are the Pigoons being used to grow organs and offer those in need an opportunity to get well and live longer, but they are also used to grow new human skin. At another compound, called NooSkins, there were also Pigoons, “just as at OrganInc farms, but these were smaller and were being used to develop skin-related biotechnologies” (62). This compound appears to be working on making anti-wrinkle/anti-aging creams obsolete, “NooSkins for olds’ said the snappy logo” (62-63). “The main idea was to find a method of replacing the older epidermis with a fresh one, [...] a genuine start-over skin that would be wrinkle—and blemish—free” (62). However, even within the text this is a work in progress, as human trials have started and people came out “looking like the mold creature from outer space,” with green and peeling skin (63).

Atwood presents these possibilities in a defamiliarized and almost phantasmagorical manner, to force the reader to think about the possibilities for the future. Although the world of *Oryx and Crake* is fiction built from the assumptions surrounding certain scientific advancements and speculative theory, there is certainly contemporary truth within her work.

Skin

For the first time “xenotransplantation allows modifications of the donor and not only treatment of the recipient” (Cooper). This is viewed as positive progression in the field, as:

genetic engineering may also contribute to overcome any of the physiological barriers that might be identified as well as in reducing the risks of transfer of a potential infections within the organ [...] With the new technology now available, it is becoming quicker and cheaper to achieve multiple genetic manipulations in pigs, thus accelerating progress towards clinical implementation of the technology. (Cooper)

Whilst within Atwood's work the implication appears to be "NooSkin" for older customers, or people attempting to achieve immortality in appearance and health, there is an indication that the new pig skin could be good for those in need a skin graft—once the method has been perfected (62). In reality, obtaining sufficient autologous skin is a challenge. "Skin allografts from deceased donors, various artificial dermal substitutes, or skin xenografts may be transplanted to provide temporary coverage," but little more (Cooper). Attempts have been made to transplant genetically engineered pig skin, however this is still at the stage of failure, but does provide adequate skin covering whilst an alternative cover is found (Dooldeniya and Warrens). As in Atwood's text, in reality:

the immune response to a xenograph is generally more extreme than that seen in same species transplantation and it ultimately results in xenograph rejection, or in severe cases, recipient death. Pigs have molecules on their cell surfaces [...] that humans do not have. (Dooldeniya and Warrens)

Thus, when "pig organs are transplanted into humans, the immune system recognises these molecules as non-self and begins to attack the pig tissues, leading to immediate rejection of the organ" (Tena). The two main issues with Pig organs and xenographs are size and longevity. Atwood confronts this issue within her text by growing actual human organs within the Pigoons, whilst contemporary researchers, such as Adesa Tena, are attempting to use organic pig organs as they "are a similar size and physiology to human organs," this makes them ideal "candidates" for transplant and would be readily available when needed (Tena).

Another issue that has been encountered recently concerns the body temperature of pigs. "The body temperature of pigs is roughly 39°C, whereas human body temperature is about 37°C," the functional implications of this for the activity of certain enzymes, within organs and skin, at the lower temperature of the human body remain unclear at this time (Tena).

Making Xenotransplantation a Reality

According to a research paper published in 2015 by Aseda Tena, “if we could eliminate the pig proteins that humans don’t have and introduce necessary human proteins into the pigs via genetic engineering, the chances of rejection could be minimised. The creation of such genetically modified pigs could solve the problem of organ availability.” Here, Tena indicates that with these changes, if they were possible, risks of infection, rejection and potential issues caused by the differing body temperature would be diminished.

Since this time, according to a paper published in 2018 by Parsia Vagefi, researchers have been creating such genetically engineered pigs, concentrating on kidneys. These pigs are not quite as modified as Atwood’s Pigoons, but the modifications made include successfully replacing “pig kidney proteins with human proteins,” which has reduced the severity of immune responses and incompatibilities between the human and the pig, thus allowing humans to accept pig organs. Vagefi ends his paper: “With each advancement, researchers are approaching human trials for xenotransplantation. The ongoing research is extensive, and it is hard to predict when it will become a reality—but it appears to be coming.”

Reading the current research and progression surrounding xenotransplantation feels almost like reading Atwood’s work. Her hauntingly realistic speculations of where medicine may potentially lead are uncannily parallel with current research. Even those in the field of xenotransplantation are astounded by the progress that has been made in recent years. Whilst there are still issues to be ironed out, recent experiments have given them nothing but encouragement and enthusiasm. Muhammad Mohiuddin, a lead researcher, was quoted in a paper on the subject, amazed by how close they are to human trials and stated “this is not Science Fiction, this is really for real now.” (qtd. in Chen). Statements such as Mohiuddin’s, alongside experiments and research that are actually happening, brings humanity and modern medicine closer to the haunting and thought provoking ideas that Atwood presents within *Oryx and Crake*.

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Panel III: Medical Hauntings



Freaks and Freakery in Film and History

Jenni Hunt

University of Leicester

MY focus here is on representations of disability and freakery in the media and within history. My wider research is focused on the representation of disability and, within this paper, I will consider how museums can use the ongoing interest in stories of freaks and freakery to tackle stereotypes and stigmas surrounding disability for their audiences. Initially examining the wide range of disability stereotypes that exist within the media, I will move on to consider the history of freak shows and freakery, before ending by examining how museums can make use of this.

Images of disability are widespread within Western popular culture, but disability is often presented in such cases as a source of stereotypes or as a narrative device in which the disabled are “blessed or damned but never wholly human” (Gartner and Joe, 2). Throughout history, disabled people have been cast in various roles: often that of the villain, the object of pity, or else as an inspirational innocent, rather than a person.

Characters such as Shakespeare’s Richard III, driven by vengeance and fury, and the disfigured Batman villains Two-Face and the Joker are archetypes for Western culture. The romantic drama *Me Before You* depicts a disabled man choosing to die rather than continue with his life, whilst the *X-Files* presents disabled teenagers as “not meant to be” and deserving of mercy killing. Depictions of mental illness and physical disfigurement dominate in the horror genre. Young people growing up with disability are faced with images that present them as monsters.

With the very point of cinema being its spectacle, physically disabled bodies are often featured within film—in particular, cult films and exploitation films that use freakery to show images that are taboo, aiming to shock, horrify, and titillate audiences—and, in doing so, further marking out the disabled body as other (Church). This presentation can have harmful consequences. Much criticism of this type of film, however, like criticism of the freak show before them, centres around the idea of outraging public decency rather than concern for those who are shown. Fans of such shows can indeed find themselves accused of mental illness or insanity, separated by their interest in such “unnatural” images.

Disabled bodies can become props in fantasy settings, presenting an image of otherness, often relegated to the background, as in the recent hit *The Greatest Showman*. One fantasy

film which deals directly with the idea of disability is *Edward Scissorhands*—Tim Burton’s gothic tale in which the protagonist is an unfinished creation, who has scissors for hands. His story is one about the importance of looking past appearance, yet his disability is “symbolic of an inner emotional deficit—feelings of exclusion and an inability to be understood and loved” (Church). We see the reactions he faces as he ventures into society, with some people repulsed by him, others wanting to cure him, and others wanting to use him only as a tool. In this, he experiences a number of reactions common to people with disabilities. The story humanises the monster, but in the end it is his monstrous nature which overwhelms him as he accidentally kills someone, and he finds himself retreating back into the darkness that previously defined him. Therefore he is again removed from society, and while the narrator shows her sympathy for him, it is clear that he is neither welcome in, nor suited for, society. In this way, a film which shows a disabled individual in a mainly positive light again ends up condemning them to solitude.

Having examined the range of stereotypes that are depicted in the media and the isolation and dehumanisation that it causes, I now move on to a more historical understanding of freakery. Despite the negative connotations of the word “freak” today, freak studies scholars (Bogdan; Chemers) have argued that enfreakment was a socially constructed performance, based not on an inherent quality within the individual but on a manner of presentation. Bogdan argues, for example, that while Robert Wadlow was very tall, he wasn’t a giant, as he did not cultivate the performance and persona necessary to be considered as such (272–274). Chemers argues that freakery consists of the “intentional performance of constructed abnormality as entertainment” (24), exaggerating perceived deviance for monetary gain. Framed as “wonders” and “marvels,” the disabled performers within freak shows were seen not as objects of pity, but as entertainment. This sense of wonder can be seen within the *carte d’visites* that many performers sold—these functioned as a visual resume, highlighting their difference and advertising their performances (Garland-Thomson, “Seeing the Disable,” 351). Within the freak show, the difference of the individual is highlighted, but framed as something unique and valuable—at least within the context of the performance itself and the money it could create. Such framing also set disabled people apart, however, implying that they were better off with their own kind rather than being included within the social environment of the world as a whole (Bogdan, 279). Freak shows faded from popularity in the early 20th century, as they were targeted for outraging “social decency” (Church).

Displays of disabled bodies have not gone away, however, nor have they faded from the public consciousness, even when medicalisation has meant that any celebration of disability was viewed as “a perverse celebration of disease” (Chermers). Individuals with disabilities have responded to this lack of representation in a number of ways—with Garland Thomson

considering the work of several disabled artists who present their bodies on their own terms. Such performances are not without controversy, both within the disabled community and from outside. The statue of the artist Alison Lapper faced criticism for being a “drab monument to the backward pieties of the age” (O’Neil), with the commentator contrasting his admiration for Alison Lapper—who has “overcome great challenges”—to his revulsion at the statue itself. Here he shows a response of pity, rather than seeing the image as a celebration of disabled women’s sexuality, a topic often ignored. Similarly, the inclusion of a disabled presenter on the show *Cbeebies* led to unpleasant comments online, with the woman in question told she would give children nightmares (Dowell). However, Carrie Bernell, the woman involved, used this hatred as an opportunity to start a discussion on the media’s focus on the perfect body, and was therefore able to reclaim her image.

This reclamation of identity can also be seen within the work of historic freaks. They were people who would find themselves stared at, and who chose to use this curiosity as a way of earning a living, expressing their agency, and travelling the world. This is not to say that people who worked in freak shows were not exploited—many were, with some trapped in conditions of slavery. However, for some the ability to control their own image enabled them to live out a life that would have been unimaginable had they been non-disabled. Simply because attitudes towards acceptability have changed is no reason to ignore what was achieved by these disabled pioneers, especially when modern understandings of disabled history can often be limited.

Questions remain over the limits of acceptability, especially when it conflicts with modern sensibilities. Bogdan (279-281) examines the case of Otis Jordan, a disabled man who performed as “Otis the Frog Boy” in the 1970s. He was proud of his job, publicly saying that to him the circus showing up was “the best thing that ever happened.” However, he was temporarily put out of a job due to the complaints of another individual who felt his work was a symbol of the degradation of disabled people. He fought back against this, stating, “I can’t understand it. How can she say I’m being taken advantage of? Hell, what does she want for me—to be on welfare?” His protests were successful, and he was able to resume work until his death in 1990.

Here, conflict arises as to what is an acceptable role for a disabled person within society, and who is best placed to make such judgements. Within a modern context, such exhibition for profit is seen as distasteful and dehumanising, however this denies the historical work, and cultural impact of, those who made their living by performing as freaks.

It is clear, therefore, that our initial conceptions of freakery as exploitation are in some ways a misunderstanding. Exploitation has undeniably occurred, but it has also brought with it opportunities that would be beyond the reach of many others who lived during that

time. This is a topic that I feel museums should approach, as it shows agency in the lives of those who performed and acknowledges that they were able to make decisions rather than simply being acted upon.

Museums are seen as influential and to be treated with respect, with the messages they give out likely to be believed. When attention first turns to the concept of displaying disability, the shadow of the freak show looms large—with Sandell (161) discovering that curators “invoked the freak show, and a desire to avoid freak show-style approaches” as a reason to avoid displaying the lives of people who had disability within their collections. When people with disabilities face widespread discrimination and prejudice, however, it is important that their stories are told and that this happens with respect. Care must be taken to avoid encouraging further discrimination for disabled individuals, and to prevent dehumanising them. Whether the individuals discussed are historical or present-day, they need to be shown in a way that acknowledges their individuality and agency.

There are numerous ways that these stories could be told and objects related to these lives displayed. The method that museums choose will provide a signal of the value that they attach to disabled lives, and the meanings that they give them. Simply ignoring disabled individuals treats them as unworthy of attention. Instead, museums should present historic freaks as people, celebrating their achievements in a world that was working against them, while also acknowledging the hardships that they faced. People are interested in freaks—but beyond that, they are interested in stories. Sharing information about people who travelled the globe, putting on performances and showcasing their talents, is something that museums should see as an opportunity to increase understanding, rather than as a threat.

This can be seen in an interview conducted with David Hevey:

I want people to come away thinking “Wow. Disabled people changed the paradigm, changed the world. And have fought for kind of justice.” And not, you know, sitting in back rooms in a kind of non-agency pity way. They claimed back their agency, you know. So that’s what I want. And I... the fundament is I want people to think “Yeah, I hope they win. I hope that lot win.” Which is always the essence of a good story.

By seeking out these stories full of agency, whenever they occurred in history, new understandings can be given to audiences.

I hope that this paper has given you another way of looking at these stories, and considering how they can be told in new ways, in order to increase understanding and empathy for visitors who may have little prior knowledge of disability history. Whilst any such presentation is an oversimplification, it may enable non-disabled audiences a view of agency that they would not otherwise have considered.

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“Sick with Longing”: Sickness and Sexual Dissidence in the Victorian Gothic Imagination



Brontë Schiltz

Manchester Metropolitan University

SEXUAL transgression features so frequently and prominently in eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic fiction that William Hughes and Andrew Smith posit that “Gothic has, in a sense, always been ‘queer’” (1). Furthermore, as George Haggerty argues in *Queer Gothic*, “Gothic fiction offered the one semirespectable area of literary endeavor in which modes of sexual and social transgression were discursively addressed on a regular basis,” and, therefore, it actually “helped shape thinking about sexual matters—theories of sexuality, as it were” (3). Whether that thinking was positive or not, however, remains a contested issue. Ardel Haefele-Thomas argues that “some authors employed Gothic frameworks to defend queer and other marginalized characters in ways that were quite subversive. For other authors, Gothic as a genre allows them to express their ambivalence regarding “others” in society” (2). For Ellis Hanson, ambivalence is more typical:

the Gothic often reproduces the conventional paranoid structure of homophobia and other moral panics over sex, and yet it can also be a raucous site of sexual transgression and excess that undermines its own narrative efforts at erotic containment. (176)

Hughes and Smith agree that, while early Gothic narratives set themselves apart from other literary genres in that they regularly explored transgressive configurations of gender and sexuality,

a fearful publishing industry demand[ed] that these troubling things should be contained by the eventual triumph of a familiar morality. In consequence, the genre frequently espouse[d] a characteristically conservative morality, and frequently a conventional and rather public heterosexuality. (1)

Consequently, as Dale Townshend argues, “queerness in early Gothic is consistently bound up in the problems of negative representation,” yet “while Gothic writers, almost without exception, would recoil in horror from the queerness that their texts entertained, most, often to the point of social notoriety, were of a queer disposition themselves” (27). While this may initially seem surprising, it is surely natural that living under the oppressive conditions of criminalisation and pathologization would foster a sense of ambivalence. Such appears to be the case for both Emily Brontë and Vernon Lee, Victorian Gothic writers respectively

speculated (see Kennard) and known to have had a sexual preference for their own sex, and for whom this ambivalence takes aesthetic shape in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Lee's "A Wicked Voice" (1890) and "Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady" (1896).

In nineteenth century England, homophobia and xenophobia were closely related. As Haefele-Thomas explains, sodomites, or inverts, "were seen as 'foreign' or 'another race'" (122). In this sense, in *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's racialised body is constructed as Other in much the same way as the bodies of those who transgressed sexually, his particular nebulousness especially reflecting the liminal position of queer individuals in this period. Although he is of indeterminate ethnicity, he laments that he apparently "must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes and even forehead," to which the Earnshaws' servant, Nelly, replies: "A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad . . . if you were a regular black . . . Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen[?]" (Brontë 84). Discussing the role of physiognomy in early Gothic texts, Corinna Wagner argues that "the body demonstrates truths about the self that the individual could not—or would not—articulate" (80). However, she acknowledges that this is not always the case, and that sometimes

immorality, deviance and crime are not the result of science or social institutions failing to control or understand the body; rather immorality, deviance and crime are a result of those institutions *themselves*. (Wagner 86)

In the context of *Wuthering Heights*, it is interesting to consider how physiognomy figures within the institution of the home. From the moment he is introduced to the Earnshaw household as a young child, Heathcliff is vilified. As Sue Chaplin notes, he is "referred to repeatedly as demonic or monstrous; he is an 'evil beast,' an 'imp of satan' and 'a goblin'; his eyes are 'black fiends,' his teeth 'sharp, white'" (83). Even the benevolent Mr. Earnshaw, his ostensibly adoptive and potentially biological father, dehumanises him, describing him as "as dark almost as if *it* came from the devil" (Brontë 64, emphasis added). Likewise, upon first seeing him, Nelly "was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling *it* out of doors" (Brontë 64-5, emphasis added). Cathy's brother Hindley also immediately acquires a vehement hatred towards him. He is condemned from the outset because, before anything is known of his personality, his appearance is deemed unacceptable. He is thus shaped into the monster he later becomes, given no opportunity to become anything else. This is also principally what makes Cathy's desire for Heathcliff transgressive—as she bewails,

I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if [Hindley] had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would

degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him. (Brontë 106)

Emily Brontë does not, however, condemn Cathy and Heathcliff's desire for one another in light of its transgressive properties. Instead, her condemnation is directed at attempts to annihilate it, in radical opposition to the hegemonic discourse espoused by her contemporaries.

The nineteenth century marked a radical shift in thinking about dissident sexuality when, in 1886, the German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing popularised the term "homosexuality" in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, categorising it as a pathological condition and thus lending credence to existing widely-held beliefs about sexual transgression. In *Effeminate England*, Joseph Bristow discusses what he refers to as "Wilde's fatal effeminacy," writing that "Wilde was indisputably a pathological figure" and that, in this sense, "the sexual criminal had transformed by degrees into something of a gothic spectre" (16, 18). Significantly, Wilde's pathologization was explicitly related to physiognomic views of effeminacy—Arthur Symonds, describing Wilde in his memoirs, wrote that "no such mouth ought ever to have existed: it is a woman's that no man who is normal could ever have had," and proceeded to characterise Wilde as "[a] man with a ruined body and a ravaged mind and a senseless brain" (146-7). Wilde was aware of the manner in which he was perceived, referring to himself in a letter as "a pathological problem in the eyes of German scientists" (695). It is noteworthy, then, that he explores sickness in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and yet, in doing so, shifts its cause from internal deviance to external jurisdiction. In the novel, Lord Henry describes how the "soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful" (Wilde 74-5). Sickness, for Wilde, is not symptomatic of transgressive sexuality, but of its repression. This is likewise the position adopted by Brontë and Lee in their respective works, in which sense Lee is exceptionally modern in her thinking, and Brontë is half a century ahead of her time.

In both *Wuthering Heights* and "A Wicked Voice," transgressive desire leads directly to sickness, yet not in the manner connoted by the work of early sexologists. Immediately after Heathcliff's departure from *Wuthering Heights* after hearing that Cathy is engaged to Edgar Linton, Cathy suffers a "commencement of delirium" and is pronounced "dangerously ill" (Brontë 113). As Jean Kennard, who reads *Wuthering Heights* as a narratological allegory for Emily Brontë's own queer sexuality, puts it, "[t]he separation of Heathcliff from Catherine makes Catherine ill" (128). When he returns, after Cathy's marriage, much to Edgar's displeasure, Cathy declares that "if I cannot keep Heathcliff for my friend—if Edgar will

be mean and jealous, I'll try to break their hearts by breaking my own" (Brontë 142). She subsequently becomes seriously ill with "a brain fever" (Brontë 157) once again, and dies soon thereafter. It is not her transgressive desire for Heathcliff that marks the destruction of her health, but her inability to indulge it—as she remarks to Nelly, "we separated! ... Not as long as I live, Ellen: for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff" (Brontë 106). Later, as she lays dying, Heathcliff chastises her:

I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. . . . You loved me—then what *right* had you to leave me? What right—answer me—for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart—you have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. (Brontë 183)

Cathy suffers not because she loves Heathcliff, but because she cannot allow herself to love him as she really wants to. If, as Kennard argues, Emily Brontë's own transgressive sexuality is encoded in *Wuthering Heights*, then the implication is that her source of torment was not that sexuality itself, but her unwillingness, or perceived inability, to indulge in it. It is notable, therefore, that Cathy and Heathcliff are eventually reunited in death: "a little boy" tells the narrator, Lockwood, that he saw "Heathcliff, and a woman" roaming the moors (Brontë 347). As Alison Milbank notes, "the most vivid materiality is accorded to the ghosts of the novel" (162)—when Lockwood encounters Cathy's ghost, she bleeds—he "pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes" (Brontë 54). The reunion of Cathy and Heathcliff is not, in this sense, only a spectral one, but a bodily one, too. Significantly, their spectrality does not evoke horror—the novel's final image is of "moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells" and "soft wind breathing through the grass" (Brontë 348). Even if the indulgence of their desire for one another is permissible only in death, it is permissible nonetheless, and not only permissible, but beautiful.

Likewise, in "A Wicked Voice," exposure to the voice of Zaffirino, the eighteenth-century Venetian singer whose voice haunts Magnus, a composer with a passionate hatred for singing, leaves Magnus "wasted by a strange and deadly disease" (Lee 158). Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham write that, for Lee, "[d]esire ... is always a risky business, all too often bringing death and destruction in its wake" (12). In fact, Lee herself referred to desire, and transgressive desire in particular, in terms of illness in a private journal in 1885:

may there not, at the bottom of this seemingly scientific, philanthropic, idealizing, decidedly noble-looking nature of mine, be something base, dangerous, disgraceful that is cozening me? ... may I be indulging a mere depraved appetite for the loathsome while I fancy that I am studying diseases and probing wounds for the sake of diminishing both? Perhaps (quoted in Psomiades 28).

Crucially, however, she goes on to ponder “which of these two, the prudes or the easy-goers, are themselves normal, *healthy*?” (qtd. in Psomiades 28, emphasis added). In her essay, “Deterioration of the Soul,” she also poses a question which is echoed in Wagner’s aforementioned commentary on the institutional production of deviance: “does society not produce its own degenerates and criminals, even as the body produces its own diseases, or at least fosters them?” (Lee 942). Like Wilde, she appears to conceive of sickness not as emerging from dissident desires, but from the societal obligation to resist them.

Intriguingly, “A Wicked Voice” was inspired by a real encounter with a portrait of an eighteenth-century composer while Lee was visiting the Bologna music school with John Singer Sargent in 1872, during which “she and Sargent had both wished that they could hear the dead singer’s voice—a voice that had historically been said to have curing properties” (Haefele-Thomas 125). The voice which inspired the story was associated not with infection, but with medicinal healing. It is notable, then, that Zaffirino is not an inherently malicious figure. Relaying the story of the death of his aunt, the Procuratessa, a Venetian nobleman, Count Alvisé, describes how, in life, Zaffirino “was in the habit of boasting that no woman had ever been able to resist his singing” (Lee 132). The Procuratessa “laughed when this story was told her, refused to go to hear this insolent dog, and added that it might be quite possible by the aid of spells and infernal pacts to kill a gentildonna, but as to making her fall in love with a lackey—never!” (Lee 132). It is not the threat of death which the Procuratessa disbelieves, but the threat of desire. Drawn to her resistance, “Zaffirino, who piqued himself upon always getting the better of any one who was wanting in deference to his voice” (Lee 132), visits the Procuratessa, and, as had been forewarned, “at the third air ... she gave a dreadful cry, and fell into the convulsions of death” (Lee 134). It is significant that exposure to Zaffirino’s charms is not intrinsically fatal—the Count states that he “*could*” kill his victims “if he only felt inclined” (Lee 132, emphasis added); it is not a foregone conclusion. The Procuratessa died not because she desired Zaffirino, but because she was resistant to that desire.

Likewise, Magnus also obviously desires Zaffirino, but fiercely resists those desires. His distaste towards singing is explicitly tied to the flesh: he describes “the voice” as “that instrument which was not invented by the human intellect, but begotten of the body, and

which, instead of moving the soul, merely stirs up the dregs of our nature!” (Lee 129). Yet, when he is about to first come into contact with Zaffirino’s voice, he feels that he “was going to meet [his] inspiration, and [he] awaited its coming as a lover awaits his beloved” (Lee 139). He comes to desire contact with Zaffirino and, in attempting to suppress this desire, he almost comes to meet the same fate as the Procuratessa. In the same manner as *Wuthering Heights*, “A Wicked Voice” is therefore radical: it is not transgressive desire itself which is associated with sickness, but attempts to resist it.

Similarly, in “Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady,” the young Prince Alberic falls ill after being told the story of his ancestral namesakes’ involvements with the Snake Lady, a beautiful and seemingly immortal woman cursed to live as a snake for all but one hour each day. Notably, the language with which this malady is described has much in common with the language typically used by religious bigots to condemn homosexuality—the priest who is sent for to attend him describes him as “just escaped from the jaws of death—and, perhaps, even from the insidious onslaught of the Evil One” (Lee 51). Yet, when Alberic learns that not only is the Snake Lady alive, but that she is the very woman he has come to know and adore as his godmother, he almost immediately recovers, and the priest remarks that “the demon has issued out of him!” (Lee 54). The following day, “his limbs seemed suddenly strong, and his mind strangely clear, as if his sickness had been but a dream” (Lee 254). Once he acknowledges his freedom to indulge his desires, even if he must keep them secret from the outside world, Alberic’s illness passes. Once again, transgressive desire is portrayed not as an illness in itself, but as a means of escape from it—a proximity to Wilde’s portrayals of illness and repression which illuminates Emma Liggins’ reading of the tale as homage to him, “published at a time when Oscar Wilde was persecuted and imprisoned, like Alberic will be, for his aesthetic and sexual beliefs and practices” (47-8). It is notable that Alberic first encounters the Snake Lady through a “tapestry of old and Gothic taste” (Lee 19-20), since Lee believed in a relationship between art and wellbeing. In Kathy Psomiades’ words, “[t]he human animal ... has a biological and a bodily need for art’s healthful effects ... [w]e become the beautiful through perceiving the beautiful, and perhaps even more importantly, we become healthy” (32-33). The Gothic, transgressive Snake Lady does not threaten Alberic’s health, she produces it.

Psomiades describes Lee as “a woman thwarted by the demands of Victorian morality from getting what she must have really wanted” (29-30)—sexual communion with other women. In light of this, “A Wicked Voice” can be read as an exploration of Lee’s ambivalent relationship towards her own desires. While she, like Brontë, if Kennard’s view is accepted as fact, appeared to view them as something to be repressed, as in much of Gothic fiction, repression is rarely successful, and attempting to maintain it can only ever be disastrous.

George Haggerty argues that “gothic fiction can be read as reinscribing the status quo. Gothic resolutions repeatedly insist on order restored and (often) on reassertion of heteronormative prerogative” (10). It is this convention which Emily Brontë and Vernon Lee appear to set out to challenge in their works. While *Wuthering Heights* does conclude with a restoration of order, that restoration involves the spectral reunion of Cathy and Heathcliff, the most transgressive characters in the novel. In “A Wicked Voice” and “Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady,” meanwhile, order is not restored at all—Magnus “can never lay hold of [his] inspiration” (Lee 158) due to his total preoccupation with Zaffirino’s voice, which he longs to hear again, and the concluding deaths of Alberic and the Snake Lady, the latter being murdered in her reptilian form by Alberic’s grandfather’s Jester and the former subsequently dying of grief, are presented as tragic, not comforting. In this sense, despite the proliferation of representations of transgressive sexuality in Gothic fiction from its inception, Brontë and Lee demonstrate not only originality, but also genuine radicalism. Despite these texts’ ambivalent treatments of transgression, they offer a glimmer of hope in a world which was deeply hostile to those marked in any way as “queer.”

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Symposium Contributors



David Hartley is a writer, performer and Creative Writing PhD student based at the University of Manchester. His critical work examines the intersection of neurodivergence and the fantastic, while his creative endeavours find him battling with a novel about autism and ghosts. His short stories have been published in numerous literary magazines including *Ambit*, *The Shadow Booth* and *Black Static*. He tweets at @DHartleyWriter and @Fantastic_Aut.

Jenni Hunt is studying for her PhD at the University of Leicester. She is interested in the relationship between museums, social justice, and inclusion. In particular, she is examining how museums present disability, and how they are working with disabled people to share these stories. Her supervisor is Professor Richard Sandell.

Connor Jackson is a PhD student in the Department of Media at Edge Hill University, where he currently works as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. His research interests include depictions of the zombie in popular culture, with a primary focus on their presence in digital games. His work can be found in *Romancing the Zombie: Essays on the Undead as Significant "Other"*—part of McFarland's ongoing Contributions to Zombie Studies publication series.

Lucía López is an MA student of the University of Salamanca, where she will begin her doctoral studies in September. She has been dedicated since her undergraduate thesis to studying the intersection of medical humanities and fantasy, science fiction and postcolonial literatures, attempting to draw attention to the behavior of the medical field towards those relegated to the fringes of society. She was awarded a prize for outstanding academic performance for her project "Marginal Bodies in Science Fiction," recently presented at the (Post)Colonial Health Conference in Leeds and is currently researching the works of Indigenous author Lee Maracle.

Lucy Nield is a PhD student in the Department of English Literature at the University of Liverpool. Her research interests include animal studies, the anthropocene, and posthumanism within science fiction. She is an organiser for the Current Research in Speculative Fiction conference at the University of Liverpool and has also had her poetry published, which can be found within the Pandora's Box series and *The Lovely Word*.

Brontë Schiltz is a Masters student with the Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies at

Manchester Metropolitan University. She previously graduated from Royal Holloway University of London with a degree in English and creative writing. Her research interests include the queer Gothic, the neoliberal Gothic and the Gothic in popular culture.

Jonathan Thornton is studying for a Masters in Science Fiction literature at the University of Liverpool. He is interested in the portrayal of insects in speculative fiction and fantastika. He has a Masters in Medical Entomology, and works as an insectary technician at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. He also writes criticism and reviews and conducts interviews for internet publications Fantasy Faction, The Fantasy Hive and Gingernuts of Horror.



NONFICTION REVIEWS

The Culture Series of Iain M. Banks: A Critical Introduction



Edward Carmien

Simone Caroti. *The Culture Series of Iain M. Banks: A Critical Introduction*. McFarland, 2015. Paperback. 252pp. \$29.95. ISBN 9780786494477.

SIMONE Caroti memorializes Iain M. Banks in his dedication to *The Culture Series of Iain M. Banks: A Critical Introduction*. “To the Memory of Iain Menzies Banks (1954-2013). Thank you for everything, Sir.” As Banks fell ill and passed away unexpectedly, Caroti did not intend for his book to bear this inscription, but this text serves as an admirable cenotaph to Banks, taken from us with books unwritten and years unlived. In its eight chapters (and preface, introduction, conclusion, chapter notes, bibliography and index) Caroti presents what he promises: a critical introduction to this important writer’s Culture series.

Like Caroti, I remember my first encounter with Iain M. Banks, if less clearly. Thirty years ago, as a graduate student in northwestern Ohio, I cracked open the first of the Culture novels, *Consider Phlebas* (1987). Caroti fell harder for Banks and his work than I did, for while I was immediately entranced by his take on space opera and aware something special was afoot in the field, Caroti decided upon his first reading of Banks to write a book. This is just that book.

Caroti comprehensively surveys the dual nature of Iain Banks and Iain M. Banks. Banks, who published novels without obvious SF content, added the ‘M’ when he published the first of the Culture series. By presenting Banks as an author who transgresses traditional categories, Caroti effectively introduces us to the narrow focus of his critical introduction. Here and elsewhere he demonstrates an excellent grasp of the existing work on Banks, especially that by John Clute, and on the directly related field of Utopian studies, the primary critical instrument he brings to bear on the Culture series.

“1. Beginnings” surveys Banks’ early life and speculates about his drive to write. Caroti shows the Culture series, despite not the first of Banks’ work to appear in print, were written early in his writing career. Having found success with *The Wasp Factory* (1984), Banks rewrote and refined the early Culture novels. To the outside world, Banks’ science fiction seemed a new turn for the author. Caroti shows the centrality of the Culture as a created entity, Banks’ fictional expression of worldview that so distinguishes his work from American space opera.

Caroti then addresses the individual works of the Culture series, starting with *Consider Phlebas* and how it helped redefine the space opera genre. He claims Banks “did reclaim the

moral high ground for the left, and he did demystify the garish glamour of space opera...he also rejuvenated the entire subgenre..." (44). He later acknowledges that other authors had started this process before *Consider Phlebas* saw print. Caroti describes the critical context that shaped the novel as well as the novel's impact on the sub-genre.

In publication order the rest of the Culture series receives the same thorough treatment, from *The Player of Games* in Chapter 3 to the double-header of Chapter 4: *The State of the Art and Use of Weapons*, linked by the utopian agent Diziet Sma, an important figure in the Culture novels and in Banks' expression of the utopian ideal. For while the people of the Culture are utopian, they have an activist branch called Contact, and a very activist group that handle Special Circumstances, or SC for short.

SC interferes. The claim is, backed by the sentient super-minds of the Culture and their statistics, that interference helps and that more good comes from their dirty deeds than would result from doing nothing. Those raised in a utopia, Banks argues throughout his Culture novels, are singularly unsuited to espionage dirty-tricks. Illustrating Diziet Sma's role as a recruiter of barbarian, non-utopian outsiders allows Caroti to observe Sma is "of the Culture, yes, but she's also a citizen of the fringe, the place where utopia meets its twin, where the morally correct choice reshapes itself after every iteration..." (104). Banks presents interference as utopian, which as one might imagine requires a singular narrative rhetoric and as it happens one of the key features of the Culture series.

Banks paused in his publication of the Culture series. The first set were rewrites of manuscripts he'd written before he broke in to the business with a "mimetic" text, *The Wasp Factory*. Prior to *Excession* (1996), addressed in Chapter 5, Banks took a six-year break in his Culture series production. It is here Caroti more fully addresses the issue of "The Culture as a Critical Utopia," the chapter's subtitle. It is here he most fully engages a critical discussion; calling some critics to task and valorizing others in how they have addressed (or failed to address) Banks and his Culture series.

Chapters 6 and 7 return to more novel-centric discussion. Caroti paints *Excession* and *Inversion* (1998) as directional mirrors, one up and out, the other down and in, and he provides what a reader has come to expect in thoroughness and critical perspective as he does so. The following chapter focuses upon *Look to Windward* (2000), a title that references the same Eliot poem as *Consider Phlebas*. This novel's publication date, subject matter, and the 9/11 attacks in the United States coincide closely enough to enable interesting commentary alongside Caroti's continuing and highly effective analysis of the series in the context of critical utopia. Titled "The Encroachment of Reality," this chapter ties to an additional layer of material, while remaining introductory in nature.

The bookending of Eliot quotes might have served Banks as signposts where the Culture

series begins and ends, but after a break of some years he produced three more novels: *Matter* (2008), *Surface Detail* (2010), and *The Hydrogen Sonata* (2012). Discussion of these final Culture novels rounds out the book's eighth chapter, with each receiving a thorough going-over that both contextualizes them and analyzes content. If a reader of the Culture series ever wondered why it never devolved into a "more of the same" exercise of mere formula, the answer is here: Banks always had literary purpose, and he did not repeat that purpose, or ask the same question twice. This made for readers always hankering for the next "M." novel frustrating waits--once of six years, once of eight--but very rewarding reads.

For the critic, new or otherwise, *The Culture Series of Iain M. Banks* serves as an excellent foundation, an introduction indeed. From it one finds numerous ways to travel further into not just utopian studies, but space opera. Very few readers of Banks' Culture novels will leave without some new insight.

Simone Caroti's smoothly written, thoroughly researched and documented book serves as a monument to Banks and his Culture series. As a cenotaph it does not contain the mortal remains of Iain M. Banks, but expresses critical appreciation of his work, of the Culture, of artistic transgression that livens and renews a genre and subgenre. I recommend it both as a resource on Banks and as a model for others to follow, should they be taken, upon reading an author for the first time, with the urge to write a book.

I Am Legend as American Myth: Race and Masculinity in the Novel and Its Film Adaptations



J.R. Colmenero

Amy J. Ransom. *I Am Legend as American Myth: Race and Masculinity in the Novel and Its Film Adaptations*. McFarland, 2018. Paperback. 231 pp. \$45.00. ISBN 9781476668338.

ALTHOUGH it misses some opportunities to engage more rigorously with theories of race and masculinity, Amy J. Ransom's comprehensive book about Richard Matheson's horror/sf novel *I Am Legend* and its many screen adaptations is an eminently readable and useful addition to critical literature on the horror/science fiction genre, studies of Richard Matheson's oeuvre, and the intertwined histories of literature, film, and mass media in twentieth and early twenty-first century texts. Before reading this book, I was mostly ignorant about the pervasive nature of Matheson's 1954 text in structuring horror/sci-fi conventions of the late twentieth century. After finishing this book, I'm convinced that *I Am Legend* deserves an exceptional position as a reflecting pool for social concerns about masculinity as well as race and race-mixing in a United States context.

The best part of *American Myth* is in its lucid treatment of the historical and cultural context for the series. Ransom is thorough in discussing literary and filmic antecedents for the "last man" apocalyptic narrative (such as M. P. Shiel's novel *The Purple Cloud* [1901] and *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* [1959], written and directed by Randal MacDougall). Historical details -- of production and direction of the adaptations, as well as of Matheson's response to those adaptations -- are interestingly and usefully explained in an accessible way. Finally, Ransom's overall argument about the most recent iterations of *I Am Legend* as conjecturing a "post-white" United States is persuasive (181).

The first chapter, "The Trauma of World War II and the Decline of Western 'Right,'" includes a thorough critical summary of the originary novel, situating Matheson's work both historically -- as a response to post-WW2 and Cold War fears -- and generically, as the vampire novel Matheson intended it to be. Thematically, Ransom is most concerned with the figure of the protagonist and the different interpretations of the Robert Neville character. Even in the 1954 original text, Matheson's Neville "problematizes the white male's role as arbiter of right" with his erratic behavior and symbolic castration (being the only surviving human foreclosing possibilities for reproduction) (56). One of the interventions of the original narrative is its illustration of the "Last Man" post-apocalyptic narrative,

one that is “symptomatic of the gravity of the national crisis in white masculinity and its traditionally perceived prerogatives” (82). Ransom’s use of “star” theory guides the second and third chapters, in which she analyzes the first filmic adaptations of Matheson’s book, the 1964 film *The Last Man on Earth* and 1971’s *The Omega Man*.

Chapter 2 is a well-reasoned argument that reads Matheson’s two novels *The Shrinking Man* (1956) and *IAL* in order to establish Matheson’s thematic interest with depicting a “crisis of masculinity” (112). This claim is then used to examine the casting and performance of Vincent Price as the protagonist in the first film adaptation of *IAL* and how Price’s interpretation of the character makes clearer the more submissive and perhaps queered role of a bachelor being pursued by “lustful” vampires and locked in a passionate relationship with his vampire suitor, neighbor and friend-in-a-former-life Ben Cortman. The third chapter, “The Last White Man on Earth: Charlton Heston in *The Omega Man*,” intervenes in critical conversations about the film that have overly relied on the “star persona” (12) of Charlton Heston and his reinforcement of a strong, masculine protagonist (in contrast to the earlier film starring Price) to define their interpretation of the film. Indeed, Ransom comes to show that *Omega*’s messages regarding race and masculinity are more ambivalent than critics have historically argued, and that the film “retained the subversive core of Matheson’s novel and its interrogation of its white hero and his moral imperative” (127).

While *The Last Man on Earth* and *The Omega Man* register cultural fears about the Cold War and Vietnam respectively, Ransom situates the two most recent adaptations of Matheson’s text -- two films produced in 2007, Francis Lawrence’s *I Am Legend* and Griff Furst’s *I Am Omega* -- in their position as post 9/11 U.S. cultural productions. The section on Lawrence’s *I Am Legend* takes up the question of “what it means when the last man on earth is black” (160). Although it is Lawrence’s film that has garnered the most critical and popular attention in recent years, I also appreciated Ransom’s exegesis of its straight-to-DVD homologue, a more flashy interpretation of the original text -- this time featuring cannibalistic zombies and martial arts -- that nevertheless raises interesting questions about the future of an increasingly multiracial U.S.

While it’s a given that there is no single totalizing mythos that defines the history of the United States, reading race and gender at the center of U.S. horror/science fiction endeavors is a sound place to start. If anything, I wish that Ransom had engaged more with foundational theory about race and feminist theories of masculinity. Since the book already utilizes critical terms such as “star” theory and adaptation to inform the argument, I think a deeper engagement with critical race theory as well as theories about masculinity to inform her reading of the protagonists’ various identities throughout the adaptations would have been helpful.

Ultimately, Amy J. Ransom's book is clever, well-argued, and accessible to lay readers interested in the horror/science fiction genre, movie adaptations, and 20th century film and "star" histories. Because of the nature of the subject matter (using a variety of theoretical lenses to study a text and its adaptations by different people at different times), it is also an ideal book for undergraduates to learn how to usefully compare and close-read texts and their adaptations. For the more serious scholar of Matheson, Ransom offers both a comprehensive introduction to literary criticism about *I Am Legend*, as well as lucid new readings of the significance of the text, reminding us that the barriers between "literature" and "mass media" are increasingly permeable, and best understood as the inextricable realities that they represent.

Science Fiction Circuits of the South and East



Virginia L. Conn

Anindita Banerjee and Sonja Fritzsche, editors. *Science Fiction Circuits of the South and East*. Peter Lang, 2018. World Science Fiction Studies 2. Paperback. 258 pp. \$67.95. ISBN 9781787075931.

SITUATING this project in the trajectories and “dizzying arcs of migration” (2) that have co-constituted the vast constellation of science fiction produced across the world—as numerous as stars in the sky and much of it equally unexplored—*Science Fiction Circuits of the South and East* opens with a beautiful personal account of the trajectories that brought the editors to their respective orientations to and within science fiction. As Banerjee points out, within her real lived experience, much of science fiction was more familiar to her, more comprehensible and close, than stories from the English canon. Using the daffodil as an image of alienation, for example, ties this collection to many other notable authors—Chinua Achebe, Jamaica Kincaid, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie—who have similarly staked their work in a recognition of the inapplicability of writing imposed from outside their lived experiences. Despite its radical recontextualizing of translation and transmission, however, this collection does not strike an essentialist argument; rather, it recognizes that the intertextuality of much “semi-peripher[al] and peripher[al]” (6) SF has been shaped by and often in response to stories already received as deeply alien. At the same time, it recognizes that the dual impulses at work in much contemporary SF theorizing—to historicize traditions outside of the historical centers of Western power while simultaneously seeking to deconstruct the center/periphery binary—tend to not be in dialogue with each other. This anthology, then, offers a unique contribution to contemporary SF studies by focusing on circulation, through which literature transforms and is transformed.

The collection traces the circulations of socialist and postsocialist SF in Europe and Asia alongside examinations of the materio-cultural productions of the global South in Asia and the Americas, a shift in contextual perspective that is mirrored in the collection’s layout. Shifting the impetus from space and location to movement and adaptation allows for fascinating juxtapositions, such as the association in the first section, “An Other Transatlantic,” of Transatlantic writings and their receptions and adaptations across socialist Russia, 1919 Mexico, and through the Soviet-Cuban imaginary of the Cold War period. Race and socialist revolution are the hallmarks of these essays, which uniformly offer unorthodox and exciting new ways of reading. The very first chapter, for example,

analyzes Zemyatin's seminal *We* (1924) as a radical Afrofuturist text—an unconventional reading that is meticulously researched, elegantly argued, and works specifically because of its unique perspective.

Part two, “Transnationalism behind the Iron Curtain,” focuses on East-East circulations between the Soviet Union and associated satellite states. The focus here is on the shared ethos of communist science pedagogy and humanistic grappling with what it means to confront the Other and, in doing so, how we establish our place in the universe. These essays, too, tackle who “we” are, primarily in the context of displaced contemporary anxieties mapped onto a future that has become largely homogeneous under socialism. While all the essays contained herein are geographically situated in Eastern Europe, the content they address is very different—from the dialectical materialism of Carl Gelderloos’ approach to Eastern European science fiction texts to Sonja Fritzsche’s East German cinema to Sibelan Forrester’s “elite literary science fiction” (165) and its translations.

The final section, “Asymptotic Easts and Subterranean Souths,” deals with East-South and East-East circulations. Unlike the first two sections, which each contained three essays, this segment includes only two—a real pity, given the potential richness of the umbrella topic. As it stands, it’s perhaps not surprising that for a collection so focused on the workings of comparative literary studies outside of the imperialist center, a member of the Warwick Research Collective, Pablo Mukherjee, would be included here with an essay on race, science, and the spirit of Bandung. A wonderful distinction about this essay in particular is that it privileges the role of science in science fiction and what that means when “science” is removed from its Western epistemological dialectics and considered in a specific and localized spatio-temporal register for assessing lived, material conditions, rather than as a “mere” narrative device. This discussion of “non-aligned science” (193) and local adaptation leads seamlessly to the next essay, which focuses on the reception of a Russian writer in China and the impact his work had on reassessing the memory of revolution through non-state-sanctioned mediations.

This collection offers a meticulously-researched, compelling approach to an aspect of global science fiction that is at once constantly mutable and yet tied to specific sites of production. Both Fritzsche and Banerjee are renowned scholars in their own areas of expertise, and together they make a formidable pair of editors. The essays collected here are significantly more polished and subtle than many similar attempts at anthologies, in no small part—as many of the authors explicitly acknowledge—thanks to the incisive eye for detail Banerjee and Fritzsche have brought as editors.

Not only are the essays excellent taken individually—each one deserves its own response essay—but the collection as a whole works beautifully to illustrate its overall theme of

transmission and adaptation. The rhizomatic scaling of topics contained in this collection illustrates the complexity of working with multiple sites of production as located in specific geographic milieus while simultaneously connecting and branching to numerous other material productions; there is no one canon of “world SF” in much the same way that we cannot speak of one internet. This rhizomatic internet analogy is made explicitly at the conclusion of the introduction and finds a fascinating mirror complement in the final essay by Jinyi Chu, which touches on unofficial internet translations and their role in shaping and disseminating information. So, then, even in layout and flow the collection serves to illustrate its own theme. Ultimately, while this groundbreaking anthology might be most warmly received by those working outside the Western Anglophone canon, its unique approach to the assessment of literature in circulation makes it a critical addition to any SF scholar’s library.

Iron Man vs. Captain America and Philosophy: Give Me Liberty or Keep Me Safe



Michael J. Hancock

Nicholas Michaud and Jessica Watkins, editors. *Iron Man vs. Captain America and Philosophy: Give Me Liberty or Keep Me Safe*. Open Court, 2018. Paperback. 288 pp. \$13.56. ISBN 9780812699760.

IN May 2019, the release of *Avengers: Endgame* served as the culmination of the Marvel Cinematic Universe thus far, a franchise of twenty-two films released over eleven years. This essay collection, *Iron Man vs. Captain America and Philosophy: Give Me Liberty or Keep Me Safe*, edited by Nicholas Michaud and Jessica Watkins, focuses on a key installment in that franchise, *Captain America: Civil War* (2016). In the film, Avengers Iron Man (aka Tony Stark) and Captain America (aka Steve Rogers) have a falling out over ceding the Avengers' authority to a governing body and the fate of Bucky Barnes, Cap's brainwashed former best friend. Each of the twenty-four chapters in the collection considers the characters' respective cases, resulting in a book that uses philosophy to evaluate the superhero genre, and vice versa.

The first section of the book features six essays that favor Iron Man's perspective, that superheroes need to be regulated for the greater good, and more generally, Iron Man is the better hero. Three particularly stand out. Daniel Malloy argues that Tony is ultimately a better hero because he is more flawed but struggles against those flaws. This argument reflects a popular framing of the difference between Marvel and DC superheroes, that DC's are more iconic, but Marvel's, through their flaws and insecurities, are more relatable. Heidi Samuelson maintains that despite Captain America's overt patriotism, it is billionaire entrepreneur Tony Stark who better represents the values of the United States. The argument is perhaps pessimistic, but it does very well in tracing the ideas of Locke and Smith into contemporary neoliberalism. Finally, Cole Bowman closes the section with an examination of friendship from Aristotle to Derrida, arguing that while Cap shows great loyalty to a single friend, Bucky Barnes, he endangers his other friends, whereas Iron Man acts for the greatest benefit of all.

The second section takes the opposite approach, with nine essays in favor of Captain America and his insistence on remaining free from regulatory power. Many of these arguments focus on Captain America's relation to universality: for example, Rob Luzzey and Charlene Elsby argue that Cap recognizes Camus' paradox of humanity, striving

for a universal good while remaining rooted in the particular: he neither surrenders to circumstances nor, as Tony does, maintains an idealized principle over the people around him. Nathan Bosma and Adam Barkman use Kant to argue that Cap's ideals make for a better universal principle than Iron Man's, explaining Kant's categorical imperatives in an accessible manner. Last, Maxwell Henderson argues in a dialogue with an imaginary idealized comics fan that, via analogy to Bertrand Russell's set theory paradox, Iron Man's entire premise is flawed—choosing regulation endangers those close to them, but defying it, according to Iron Man, places people in danger. Thus, even framing the question places superheroes in an unsolvable paradox.

The third and fourth sections are framed around the notion of a tie between the two and a focus on the war itself, respectively; in practice, that means illustrating that Tony's and Cap's arguments are equal or equally flawed, and questioning the entire premise of superheroes. For example, Christophe Porot argues that both heroes concentrate on extending their capacities: Tony extends himself through technology and Steve through people, convincing others to join his cause. However, Cap then takes responsibility for the actions performed by people acting as his extension, which sounds noble, but Porot makes the case that in doing so, he dismisses their emotional response to those actions, thus moving against the personal autonomy he seems to champion. In one of the most interesting essays of the collection, Jeffrey A. Ewing argues that the Civil War event, in both its comic book and film forms, draws out the challenge superheroes pose to nation-states. As forces that operate within a nation-state's border but outside of its monopoly of force within those borders, superheroes, through their existence as independent agents, challenge the nation-state's claim to sovereignty; like Henderson, Ewing draws out how *Civil War* speaks to the tensions at the core of the genre.

This collection seems intended primarily for an audience of interested lay people already interested in superheroes and curious about philosophy. But with some guidance from the instructor, it is also well-suited for use in the classroom, as I can attest; while I was reading it, I somewhat serendipitously had a student who chose to write their final paper on *Captain America: Civil War*, and reference to the ideas in this book made it much easier for the student and myself to clarify what ideas from the film they wanted to address. This instance demonstrates the book's value: that its topic is one students are already willing to engage. However, as the 115th book in the Popular Culture and Philosophy series, *Iron Man vs. Captain America* faces a challenge its compatriots do not: by centering itself on this particular conflict between heroes, the collection limits its potential scope. It does so more gracefully than a similar, earlier book in the series (*Batman, Superman, and Philosophy*) but there is still a sense of repetition, as the reader is told yet again the events of *Civil War*. I

greatly appreciate that many authors do go a bit beyond the film's boundaries to incorporate the comics, though it's a shame the comics are omitted from the references list.

In the aftermath of *End Game*, it is tempting to read that film as erasing the consequences of *Civil War*, that Tony and Steve set aside their differences figuratively and literally, each explicitly adopting advice given by the other. However, to do so would also be to erase the questions the film raises about the superhero genre, questions of having authority to act and responsibilities toward others. The most common superhero question always seems to be who would win in a fight; by transitioning that question into a fight of ideas, *Iron Man vs. Captain America* illustrates how the questions of fans and the questions of philosophers are already in conversation.

Arabic Science Fiction



Steven Holmes

Ian Campbell. *Arabic Science Fiction*. Palgrave, 2018. Studies in Global Science Fiction. Hardcover. 322 pp. \$89.99. ISBN 9783319914329.

Editor's note: Ian Campbell is the managing editor of SFRA Review. I confirm as editor that he had no involvement in the preparation of this review for publication.

SF scholars who are interested in how SF in Arabic may differ from or critique Anglophone SF may at first wonder why Ian Campbell has such a sustained emphasis on Darko Suvin throughout *Arabic Science Fiction*. Suvin certainly is a formative figure in genre theory discussions about science fiction, although he is not quite as in vogue in contemporary science fiction studies as he once was. Nonetheless, Campbell sees Suvin's conception of cognitive estrangement as significant for understanding Arabic SF and for Arabic-language SF scholars. As a result, Campbell's project is an examination of the manifestations of cognitive estrangement in Arabic Science Fiction (ASF), and one of his central arguments builds off of Suvin directly.

Campbell presents his conception of ASF as working off "double estrangement," which reflects the "total lack of legal protections for freedom of expression in the modern Arabic world" (6-7) and that consequently "Arab writers in all genres, especially the canonical literary fiction to which ASF aspires, have learned to conceal their critique under layers of story in order to provide plausible deniability in the face of scrutiny by the regime" (7). ASF aims toward social criticism in order to be taken seriously as art. The "double" in "double estrangement" deals with the perception of science and technology; that is, ASF "draws attention to the drop-off in scientific and technological innovation in the Arab world since the glory days of Arab/Muslim dominance" (10). ASF stories may critique the state from a post-colonial perspective, but they critique the culture for reliance on mysticism. Campbell presents this concept as a way of signaling that readers may struggle to understand the intended critique of ASF works due to the works' critiquing multiple vectors of society simultaneously, so that there may not be one central point but several. Likewise, ASF will not tend to have analogues to Golden Age SF works, given the differences in production and audience.

The book is divided into eleven chapters. The introduction sets up the considerations of Suvin and "Double Estrangement" that shape the rest of the volume. Chapter 2, "Postcolonial Literature and Arabic SF," outlines why ASF may be understood as "manifestly a postcolonial

literature: it is produced in formerly colonized states, for readers in and from these states” (21) and thus is distinct from many works of postcolonial literature written in English by authors living in diaspora. In chapter 3, “Arabic SF: Definitions and Origins,” Campbell draws from Ada Barbaro’s work to discuss four genres of classical Arabic literature that serve as proto-SF: philosophical works that use voyages to pose arguments, adventure voyages, the utopian tradition, and *mirabilia*, which is a genre that focuses on real or imaginary places or events that challenge human understanding. Chapter 4, “Criticism and Theory of Arabic SF,” tries to establish a coherent framework for the relatively minimal amount of Arabic SF criticism. Partly this involves dealing with the issue of diglossia, the consequence of which is that most ASF, since it is written in the Modern Standard Arabic used for literature, is rendered “the nearly exclusive province of a small class of highly educated people” (79). That is, instead of being built on a pulp background, Arabic SF has as its audience primarily an educated and elite audience. These first four chapters do a great job of setting up the myriad ways in which ASF operates in an entirely different rhetorical and literary situation from commercial western SF.

The remaining chapters each focus on case studies. As has been the case throughout Campbell’s study, for several of these works, there is no English translation. This makes Campbell’s study essential for the scholar but somewhat less accessible for a teacher who might be thinking about texts to include in a syllabus. Chapter 5 returns to the central concept of “double estrangement” regarding Egyptian author Nihād Sharīf’s *The Conqueror of Time* (1972). It is a political allegory that also estranges “Egyptian society as stagnant, figuratively frozen in its obsession with the past” (119) through the novum of cryogenics. Chapter 6 focuses on two novels by Egyptian scholar Mustafā Mahmūd and the exploitation of the peasantry by urban elites. Unfortunately, even Mahmūd’s *The Spider* (1965), which is regarded as the first ASF novel, is hard to get access to in Western markets. Chapter 7 presents Sabrī Mūsā’s *The Gentleman from the Spinach Field* (1987) as comparable to Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), in depicting a character trying to escape a dystopian reality and failing to find a sustainable alternative. Chapter 8 discusses Ahmad ‘Abd al-Salām al-Baqqālī’s *The Blue Flood* (1976). Campbell argues that al-Baqqālī uses some of the same themes as Mahmūd, but places Western culture as an additional point of view, allowing him to critique reformers “for their inability or refusal to question their patriarchal assumptions” (219). Chapter 9 focuses on Tālib ‘Umrān’s *Beyond the Veil of Time* (1985), which, unlike many of the aforementioned works of science fiction, takes place on a foreign planet. Here Campbell argues that although the novel is superficially trite, it works as particularly effective estrangement for the educated elite readership of ASF, especially their belief that an alternative to despotism can emerge without violence. Chapter 10 focuses on

a three-novel series by Kuwaiti author Tiba ‘Ahmad Ibrāhīm, characterized by Campbell as the only notable female writer of ASF before the 2000s. Campbell argues that Ibrāhīm’s novels serve to show a transition in ASF, where narratives about the effect of technology, modernity, and colonialism do not need to be “cordoned off from everyday life” (278); that is, ASF is starting to become slightly more direct.

For the scholar, Campbell’s study does an excellent job of exploring how works of ASF from a range of different countries (Kuwait, Egypt, Syria) have approached the literary demands and political risks of writing speculative fiction meant to critique the existing regimes and cultural programs. The primary frustration for the reader is likely not to be with Campbell’s analysis, but with the reality that many of these novels will remain largely inaccessible to the west. Nonetheless, scholars who want to understand the specific challenges of the emergence of science fiction in postcolonial settings would do well to explore Campbell’s volume.

A Dune Companion: Characters, Places and Terms in Frank Herbert's Original Six Novels



Kara Kennedy

Donald E. Palumbo. *A Dune Companion: Characters, Places and Terms in Frank Herbert's Original Six Novels*. McFarland, 2018. Paperback. 189 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 9781476669601.

DONALD E. Palumbo's *A Dune Companion: Characters, Places and Terms in Frank Herbert's Original Six Novels* is number 62 in the *Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy* series, of which Palumbo is a co-editor. The book offers less of a new critical commentary on the *Dune* series and more of an updated version of Palumbo's arguments from two previous articles published in 1997 and 1998 and a book published in 2002, followed by a compilation of information from the series in an encyclopedic format.

The book is divided into two sections: a long introduction on ecology, chaos-theory concepts and structures, and the monomyth and their presence in the series, and a companion of characters, places, and terms. Both sections achieve their aim: the former to prove the existence of aesthetic integrity through consideration of chaos-theory concepts and structures present in the novels, and the latter to remind readers of characters and events. However, the two parts lack cohesion, which perhaps is unavoidable when including a type of glossary that is not intended to offer commentary or analysis.

For the reader wondering about the mention in the title of the original six novels, the introduction immediately addresses the reason for this focus: they have an "extremely-high level of aesthetic integrity" and an "unusually deep interrelationship between form and content" derived from the relationship between the ecological theme and fractal structure that other texts based in the same universe do not (1). The introduction proceeds to present a persuasive argument with ample evidence, examples, and direct quotations to show how these novels contain myriad elements of chaos theory and the monomyth. It is divided into two sections, the first on the ecological theme and chaos theory, and the second on the monomyth as fractal pattern, with a short conclusion that brings all of the arguments together.

Although the introduction explains key terminology and theories before showing how the series aligns with them, some of the concepts could have been made more accessible to readers. Chaos theory is presented as the idea that, despite real-world systems being irregular and complex, there are laws that govern phenomena like populations, weather,

and biological systems, and that complex dynamical—or nonlinear—systems are made up of interlocking feedback loops. Feedback loops are explained as a process in which the behavior of one element affects the behavior of others, such that when part of the system's output returns as input, this then affects the output, and the process keeps continuing. Palumbo offers fractal geometry as the best-known manifestation of chaos theory, wherein a geometric procedure can be used to generate images that replicate similar structures but are not necessarily identical. The use of examples such as snowflakes—which may look identical but have tiny differences—and the branching that occurs in nature—which can be found in circulatory and bronchial systems as well as in plants—helps make the ideas more understandable, but it would have been helpful to have further explanation of them. Having introduced these concepts, Palumbo then states that the *Dune* series contains a fractal architecture and a fractal reiteration of plot structure, themes, and motifs, which ultimately serves to represent its universe as a dynamical system. Through this, Palumbo argues, the series' key theme of ecology and its core concept of chaos theory are then reinforced. Palumbo makes an important note that Herbert published his first *Dune* novels before chaos theory was identified in the 1970s and 1980s. This shows not only that Herbert was ahead of his time, but also that science fiction authors can extrapolate scientific concepts before they are formally articulated by scientists.

The introduction then proceeds to analyze the many variations of the fractal structure or images in the series, which readers can see signaled by the repetition of the fractal metaphor in phrases like “plans within plans,” “tricks within tricks,” “wheels within wheels,” and others (8). It examines the occurrence of this structure in the series as a whole, in each of the novels individually, and in characters, and how this structure reiterates Joseph Campbell's theory of the monomyth. It also discusses how the repetition of themes such as metamorphosis into the Other, secrecy and disguise, and death and rebirth are subsumed into the monomyth structure and further reinforce the fractal structure. Each aspect of the argument contains numerous examples from the series and interweaves concepts from chaos theory and ecology for additional support. There is also attention and detail provided for lesser-studied characters like the Tleilaxu, which makes for a balanced discussion.

The section on the monomyth examines the recurring elements of the monomythic hero as evidence of the existence of a clear fractal structure. It provides a brief overview of Campbell's monomyth and the stages of the archetypal hero's adventure, and then traces their appearance in the series. It notes some of Herbert's unusual choices, including at times having the monomythic hero be a secondary character rather than the protagonist, and enabling female characters to share in the hero's role. Palumbo's attention to female characters again shows an ability to create a balanced discussion inclusive of a variety of

characters and groups. Overall, although an analysis of fractal structures may be a dry topic, readers interested in the series can expect to find a new appreciation for Herbert's writing craft based on Palumbo's insights and extensive use of detail.

The companion / encyclopedia section of the book provides a useful reference guide to the series. It does the at-times challenging work of compiling the few details or clues Herbert gives, which offers a helpful consolidation of information as well as a reminder of characters and terms the reader may have forgotten about. Particularly valuable is the note about which book the information is derived from for each entry. An unfortunate issue is the presence of dozens of typos and other errors in spelling and tense consistencies in the entries. In addition, some entries seem overly brief in relation to their importance; for example, the entry for Voice consists of only 22 words, while the entry for krimshell fiber consists of 38 words. Reading it straight through shows the repetitive nature of some entries, but it is unlikely to be read this way when consulted as a reference work. It would be good as a reference source for researchers, especially those without access to digital copies of the texts.

Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility



Kristen Koopman

Alexis Lothian. *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility*. New York UP, 2018. Paperback. 352 pp. \$30.00. ISBN 9781479825851.

IT would be easy for *Old Futures* to feel scattered, covering as it does a century's worth of source material, three different forms of media, and theory ranging from traditional SF criticism to fan studies. Yet somehow Lothian not only pulls it off, but makes it seem effortless.

Lothian's framing argument is that futures in science fiction have historically written out queerness in favor of timelines depending on implicit heterosexual reproduction, and that queer counterfuturisms instead nurture visions of new possibilities for science, technology, gender, and race. This argument is broken down into a series of roughly chronological case studies, following an introduction that covers the theoretical basis of the book: a chapter on eugenics and reproduction in feminist utopias, a chapter on gender's relationship with violence and fascism in dystopias written between the two World Wars, a chapter on Afrofuturistic writings in response to eugenics, a chapter linking speculative pleasures to modes of estrangement, a chapter on the (sadly few) queer SF films that create new ways of engaging with the world, and a chapter on fanvidding and remix culture as responses to visions of the future. These chapters are interspersed with three shorter digressions that show how the theories and insights of the previous chapters may be applied to other works.

While *Old Futures* of course draws upon traditional SF criticism (including the obligatory explanation of why the author chose to use "speculative fiction," its associated critiques, an expression of hope that the work won't get pigeonholed into genre-studies, and so on), the breadth of its engagements is truly impressive, as is its depth. Each chapter provides precisely the background needed to understand the particular case studies without becoming repetitive, and so each chapter could easily stand alone. Nevertheless, the chronological organization and consistent throughline of queer futurity keeps the book as a whole from feeling disjointed.

The standout chapters are the first, "Utopian Interventions to the Reproduction of Empire," and the last, "How to Remix the Future." The first chapter deftly unpacks the implicit reliance of most futurisms on heterosexual reproduction, noting that visions of futures are frequently visions of worlds for future children. Although the utopias studied in the chapter are feminist, Lothian points out that feminism at the time was deeply tied to other political

projects: definitions of scientific and technological progress with undercurrents of eugenics, colonial visions of European futures, and the relationship between the rhetoric of futurity and contemplation of the present. These themes set up a status quo that is then critiqued in the third chapter, although both chapters stand alone well. “Utopian Interventions to the Reproduction of Empire” may be of particular interest to scholars in the medical humanities or science studies, due to its careful illustration of the eugenic values embedded in its cases.

The sixth chapter, “How to Remix the Future,” discusses the role of remix culture in refashioning narratives in mass media to present alternative visions of queer futures and to critique implicitly regressive creative decisions by makers of media. Lothian suggests that fan remix practices (such as the case study of fanvidding) may constitute (or at least contribute to) *critical fandom*, which counters the view of fandom as unquestioning consumption of media in favor of resistive readings and refiguring narratives. Lothian's case study of the Firefly fanvid “How Much Is that Geisha in the Window?” is a particularly well-done analysis that is a welcome addition to fan studies.

Yet Lothian takes this engagement with fan studies a step further and describes her own process taking up the practice of fanvidding in order to make critical contributions to fandom (in this case, *Battlestar Galactica*). This not only shows that Lothian takes fandom seriously as a means of critically engaging with media, but hopefully marks a path for other scholars to follow in her footsteps. As Lothian notes, fan remix practices such as vidding may provide avenues for scholars to better articulate theories and criticism of media, particularly for marginalized people; this can be seen both in the critiques of gender and heteronormative desire that Lothian describes in her own work and the racial critique of Firefly that she analyzes.

Old Futures is not without its weaknesses. The introduction, by doing much of the theoretical work of the entire text, is dense and abstract compared to seeing the theory in practice in the following chapters. The good news is that in sequestering it all in one place, it frees the other chapters to read much more easily; however, when reading the whole book through, it may be disproportionately slow going. Many of the concepts highlighted in the introduction also simply make more sense when utilized in more concrete analysis later on, which may be an artifact of the book seemingly being the author's dissertation adapted into a monograph.

Additionally, the chapter on SF film lacks the thematic cohesion of previous chapters. This may be because the films, in Lothian's analysis, are more focused on futurity, speculation, and politics than the traditional tropes of science fiction. While I have no objection to an expansive definition of SF, it is telling that Lothian's analysis largely hinges on the depictions of the future in its two case studies (*Jubilee* and *Born in Flames*). The analysis is insightful in

unpacking the futures depicted on-screen, but the tools of SF criticism that have been used in previous chapters are absent here, and I remain unconvinced that this analysis looks at these films *as SF*. Lothian does note that there is not exactly an abundance of queer SF film, but nevertheless, this is likely to be the chapter that is least useful to those looking for SF criticism.

Overall, Lothian has constructed an admirable volume that I have already begun recommending to colleagues. This is her first book, and it bodes well; I look forward to seeing what Lothian does next.

Set Phasers to Teach: Star Trek in Research and Teaching



Bruce Lindsley Rockwood

Stefan Rabitsch, Martin Gabriel, Wilfried Elmenreich, and John N.A. Brown, editors. *Set Phasers to Teach: Star Trek in Research and Teaching*. Springer, 2018. Paperback. 236 pp. \$39.99. ISBN 9783319737751.

THE four co-editors of *Set Phasers to Teach* include three Austrian academics specializing in American Studies, History, and Computer Science, respectively, and one independent scholar and consultant (John N. A. Brown) specializing in UX (User) Research. All appear to be enthusiastic supporters of the feedback between *Star Trek* in all its iterations and the scientific and academic communities. This enthusiasm is reflected in the heading of their Preface: "Engage! Science Fiction and Science Inspire Each Other and Move Society Forward" (ix). Their fifteen contributors lay out in fifteen distinct and concise essays the variety of ways in which specific episodes, events and characters, and the overall themes and trajectory of the franchise facilitate this positive feedback loop.

The format and layout for each essay in the book includes original illustrative cartoons highlighting the theme of each essay, an abstract with keywords, a brief "Editors Log" summarizing the thesis of the essay, and illustrative quotations from specific episodes of one or more *Star Trek* episodes. Essays are broken down with informative subtitles, and contain Works Cited (Endnotes) and sometimes additional Recommended Readings and in-text footnotes.

The appendices are comprehensive lists of every *Star Trek* episode (through *Discovery*, Season 1) and film, listing them by Season, Episode, Title, Stardate, Director, Credited Writers, and Original air date, all derived from Wikipedia and the Memory Alpha Wiki, <https://memory-alpha.fandom.com/wiki/Portal:Main>. This information will enable a reader interested in following up specific themes and episodes mentioned in the essays to track them down and facilitate streaming them (or excerpts) for use in teaching and research.

The editors and authors make good use of available primary sources (the episodes and films) as well as commentary by contributors to their creation, and scientists, astronauts, and others who have commented upon the influence of *Star Trek* on their own lives and work. The emphasis is on the power of narrative to, as they quote Gene Rodenberry remarking in the *Introduction to Star Trek: The Next Generation Technical Manual*, "show humans as we really are. We are capable of extraordinary things" (xi).

The essays cover a wide range of topics, including using *Star Trek* to teach literature by

highlighting its frequent uses of and references to classical literature, and the ways episodes can be used to bring out themes such as self-sacrifice, revenge, and pride (Elizabeth B. Hardy, at 9). Erin K. Horáková provides an illuminating essay and critique of how the series engages "with Post-war American Jewish Identity" (13-27). Stefan Rabitsch explores the role of the original series in translating American culture to tell "modern morality plays" in the historical period of the Cold War when America was replacing Britain in a "benevolent" role as "protector and defender of the western world" (29-43). He notes, "Even though the original run ended in 1969, the *Star Trek* formula was such that it could easily be adapted to changing contexts by virtue of the frontier's inherent metaphorical characteristics while supported by a stable utopian world of scientific progress and discovery" (39).

"How to Name a Starship: Starfleet between Anglo-American Bias and the Ideals of Humanism," by Martin Gabriel (43-50), argues that the dominance of Anglophone names of Starships "shows us that the ethnocentric traditions of the twentieth century, maybe even an imperialist approach to cultural history, were vivid throughout the production of the franchise" (49).

"The Computer of the Twenty-Third Century: Real-World HCI Based on Star Trek," by Gerhard Leitner and John N. A. Brown (51- 61), explores how the Human-Computer Interface (HCI) was portrayed in the original series, how it inspired further developments, and what remains to be done to address reliability, security and privacy concerns, and ease of use, concluding "despite the many examples of advanced HCI that already exist in the home, we are still very far from the twenty-third century. . . That said, one of the next steps has already been taken. It is now possible to have reliable and secure voice-based interaction that seems natural and intuitive to the user, provided designers and developers are willing to take the time needed to build it" (60). In the context of the challenge to aircraft safety posed by the recent crashes of the Boeing 737 Max attributed at least in part to software updates, loss of pilot control over aircraft computer systems, and training failures, this essay is a particularly interesting contribution to the collection.

Other essays explore the energy system that propels the *Enterprise* and other Starships, comparing the required power to the available power on Earth itself (63-70); the relationship of Starfleet to pre-modern societies and the role of the prime directive (71-81); and the way *Star Trek* has inspired innovations in science and technology, citing the 2017 Qualcomm Tricorder XPrize and the close relationship of the franchise to NASA (83-93). Carey Millsap-Spears presents an exploration of the use of *Star Trek* in teaching rhetoric and process writing while addressing the concerns and issues facing the LGBTQ+ Community in the context of a college composition course, developing research and critical thinking skills (95-105).

Additional essays address "Using the Borg to Teach Collective Computing Systems"

(107-115); "Telepathic Pathology in *Star Trek*" (117-124); and an intriguing proposal for a better designed Video Game based on *Star Trek* after an assessment and critique of the games previously released since 2000 (125-135). Vivian Fumiko Chin presents a thorough review of the critical literature and interesting discussion of "Cognitive Science and Ways of Thinking About Narrative, Theory of Mind, and Difference" that explores the use of examples from *Star Trek* to introduce students to these concepts and ways of thinking about empathy and respect for difference, using Spock's mind meld with the Horta in the original series (TOS) episode "The Devil in the Dark" as one example (1371-47).

In "La Forge's VISOR and the Pictures in Our Heads," Nathaniel Bassett gives a review of the critical literature and an explanation of the role of media studies and how socio-technical systems help mediate our experiences (149-160). In a concluding essay, John N. A. Brown discusses anthropology-based computing (ABC), cognitive bias, and the use of *Star Trek* to teach about scientific thinking (161-172). He observes, "A scientific thinker separates their personal perception of their own self-worth from their faith in what they think they know. They do this by assuming they are wrong and asking others to check their work. . . And that is the purpose of teamwork in *Star Trek*: using many minds to improve ideas. In this way they show us how to seek new facts and new information; to boldly disprove ideas that everyone has believed before" (171).

Together these essays make an entertaining and rewarding overview of the many ways one can employ *Star Trek* in teaching and research. They can be deployed at all levels of education, regardless of discipline or areas of expertise. The book is printed on acid free paper, is well designed, and presents its materials in a manner accessible to a general reader while giving guidance for further research to faculty and students alike. It deserves to be widely read.

One omission from my perspective is any discussion of the use of *Star Trek* in teaching about legal issues, which has been explored on a number of occasions, e.g., Paul Joseph and Sharon Carton, "The Law of the Federation: Images of Law, Lawyers and the Legal System in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*," 24 *U. Tol. L. Rev.* 43 (1992); Michael P. Scharf and Lawrence D. Roberts, "The Interstellar Relations of the Federation: International Law and 'Star Trek: The Next Generation,'" 25 *U. Tol. L. Rev.* 577 (1994); "Law, Literature and Science Fiction: A Symposium," Bruce L. Rockwood, editor, 13 *Legal Studies Forum* 267 (1999). Perhaps the editors will bear this in mind if they pursue a follow-up collection, since the subject will continue to attract fans and scholars alike.

Bridges to Science Fiction and Fantasy: Outstanding Essays from the J. Lloyd Eaton Conferences



David N. Samuelson

Gregory Benford, Gary Westfahl, Howard V. Hendrix and Joseph D. Miller, editors.
Bridges to Science Fiction and Fantasy: Outstanding Essays from the J. Lloyd Eaton Conferences. McFarland, 2018. Paperback, 263 pp, \$49.95. ISBN 9781476669281.

IN 1979, scholars and authors of science fiction and fantasy literature first met in Riverside, California, for a conference sponsored by the University library's enormous collection of speculative literature. Hosted by George Slusser and others, each three-day affair typically focussed on one broad aspect of the field and led to a volume of papers. Annual at first, it later became more sporadic and peripatetic, ending in 2017.

Scholarship in this area is hampered by a vast creative landscape and the largely imitative nature of its creations, which many social and literary scholars dismiss. Exceptions always plague generalizations about science fiction ("sf") and fantasy, a problem exacerbated by their spread beyond the U.S. and growing popularity on film and streaming tv. The core of all literature, fantasy was not recognized as a distinct literary genre until the rise of realism, and did not produce much commentary before the 1960s. A subset of fantasy, sf is Eaton's usual focus, excluding future studies, technological forecasting, urban planning, and a variety of "topias," let alone sword-and-sorcery, ghost stories, and other recyclings of the supernatural. Often renovated by new scientific discoveries and dismissals of old ones, sf sometimes revives its own lost dreams, and the spectre of deconstruction hovers over the entire enterprise of the humanities, reminding us that the ultimate value of literature and criticism may lie more in questions raised than arguments settled. Omitting essay titles and chronological order, what follows on a thematic spectrum summarizes principle arguments, adding some personal reactions, comparisons, and evaluations.

Genre

Patrick Parrinder locates sf's parentage in the literary epic vs. the "costume dramas" of romance typical of fantasy. Noting the anti-humanism of Wells' "scientific romances," he sees both speculation and prophecy in *The Time Machine* (1895), his prime example. Broadening the scope, Eric S. Rabkin sources fantasy in the human need to use words and tell stories to understand virtually anything (including science). Given the fallibility of our senses, language, and cultures, fantasy is an inevitable admixture of everything we think

we know. Probing even more deeply, Stephen Potts shows Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1961) positing that nothing can be known for certain about that alien planet's global life form, implying the same limits apply to us and our world. Even empirical evidence is interpreted variably across cultures and over time.

Science and Aliens

David Brin's wandering essay recognizes that mastering new science is difficult but privileges science (searching for what may be) over engineering (how to deal with it). Asking if we are running out of subject matter for "hard" (science-based) sf, he claims that "what if" stories may prepare us for future reality, which I think it is minimally adumbrated in, and seldom invented for the fiction itself.

For Gregory Benford the alien or strangeness is sf's primary theme. Reliance on comparisons and metaphors assimilates it to the familiar, or uses Modernist "trapdoors" like those of Philip K. Dick, and *Star Trek* reduces it to engineering problems. The truly alien in *Solaris*, however, challenges humanistic conceptions of reality. Depending on conventional scales relying on sense impressions, science may never be certain, but sound extrapolation placed in context relies also on data, i.e. objects, causes, qualities, and especially math.. Benford's afterword says new forms of beacons help us seek aliens, and recognizes the effects of economic limits, ours and theirs.

Poul Anderson shows how he builds an alien world and how setting impacts the nature and actions of characters. Fantasy worlds also need cohesion, but they are less inventive than historical, ahistorical, even playful, with exceptions for mental worlds like those of Phillip K. Dick and private myths exemplified by Ursula K. Le Guin and Lewis Carroll. John Huntington sees sympathizing with aliens as all but impossible; our inherent hostility to the other makes a benign alien a contradiction in terms. Aliens may be too different to conceptualize, like Tweel in Stanley Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey (1934)." My sense is that Tweels's apparent trouble expressing emotions may reflect our social and psychological perception.

Human Limitations

"Nonsense" terms (as in Lewis Carroll) illustrate for Joseph D. Miller fun for its own sake but also the necessary ambiguity of description. In another slight piece, Gary Westfahl finds food distasteful in many sf futures, which approximate a "hospital" environment. Taking a different angle on food, Paul Alkon finds cannibalism in sf and fantasy distinctly estranging and grotesque. Class-determined, it suggests tribal or even alien behavior, from Swift's "A Modest Proposal" (1729) to vampires and Wells's Morlocks, and several works by

Robert A. Heinlein. Extremely rare, tales of self-consumption usually involve deprivation, but in Komatsu's "The Savage Mouth" (1968) future science shows it as deliberate and almost complete.

Before the contemporary rise of sf and modern medicine, H. Bruce Franklin shows how women had been largely superior healers, their herbal skills leading incompetent male medics and Church officials to brand them as witches. The deaths of Mary Shelley's mother and children may have led to her killing off both "mothers" of Elizabeth Frankenstein, and the whole human race in *The Last Man* (1826). Real science effects medical cures today, but sf mostly blames technology for apocalyptic plagues, with the exception of AIDS. Franklin's afterword recognizes that post-mortal characters today as in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017; manga 1989), recall Frankenstein, and names only warfare and climate change as today's manmade plagues, not acknowledging the rise of Ebola and germs' increasing resistance to antibiotics.

Mediating between human lifespans and the scope of the universe, Robert Crossley finds a minimal attempt to overcome mortality in museums, libraries, cathedrals and even the city of Rome (in *The Last Man*). Like the Palace of Green Porcelain in *The Time Machine*, reliquaries in *Last and First Men* (1930), *Earth Abides* (1949) and *Riddley Walker* (1980) (1980) both reveal and deprecate human vanity. *Childhood's End* (1953) and *The Drowned World* (1962) enlarge and deepen the perspective beyond Earth as we know it. His afterword cites more recent books portraying sf's museum function, and points out that even sf itself now has a place in museums.

N. Kathleen Hayles finds immortality narratives embody their opposite, but cyber immortality opens new vistas and questions. "Embodied virtuality" provides continuity with an on/off switch and variable memory (comparable to time travel alterations). William Gibson's cyberspace is crowded, and its point of view literally creates characters. Cyber immortality even inverts biological gender: immersion is treated as female, male as escape. Her afterword sees today's cyber reality as more implausible and interesting than even sophisticated fiction depicts.

As in Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* (1922) Frederic Jameson's turgid and verbose essay inevitably finds in longevity a metaphor for class struggle. Extended life recasts morality and forecasts ultimate boredom, for which death is a solution. Frank McConnell sees little interest in the failures of technological and theological immortality. Remembered speech, story promises a kind of immortality, but even stories require closure. Dave Bowman becomes Starchild, but *2001* (1968), *Dune* (1965), and *Blade Runner* (1982) all face mortality. Sf stories present a gnostic and pastoral phase before the "homecoming" of death.

Visual SF

Vivian Sobchack says American sf films typically address, displace or condense male fear and desire in action and dreams, despite some counter examples. In a technological world the U.S. treats as masculine, biological sex is rare, distracting, or displaced racially or mechanically. Ships penetrate space and alien takeover is rape; even Ripley in *Alien* (1979) is masculine in ship routine and battle scenes, though she is stripped at the end.. Her lengthy afterword argues that after 9/11 (America's castration) abnegation replaced repression, while perpetual danger, ambiguity, weakness, time travel do-overs, and selfies increase as in *The Edge of Tomorrow* (2014). Reaction to disaster is muted, males more nurturing, and women more prominent although "othered." Teenage disaster flicks feature female protagonists, albeit with repressive older females, while abjection is clearly denied in *The Martian* (2015) with its helpful female administrator.

In their discussion of comic books and "bandes dessinees," Danielle Chatelain and George Slusser compare French and American treatments of space travel. French illustrations once treated rockets as trains, and their juvenile comics follow Verne's emphasis on nuts-and-bolts. American comic books retain flying man characters, while spaceships in French cover art are often metaphors for regressive and inward-looking adult stories using space as a mental image.

Kirk Hampton and Carol MacKay praise the late Richard Powers's paperback cover art, typically fusing flesh and technology, progressing toward abstraction and surrealism comparable to that of Yves Tanguy. Much of it treats sf as reaching toward the unknowable or the end of time. His portfolio *Spacetimewarp* (1983) also sparkles with witty commentary. Afterword: The internet and numerous blogs have increaaed wider sharing of his work which includes larger canvasses and has had wide-ranging influences. [Why cut this?]

Howard Hendrix shows *Omni* magazine gentrifying sf fiction publications in the 1960s. Slick in size and material, it was more general, sexy, and expensive, aimed at an older, wealthier and more cosmopolitan audience. Reflecting late capitalism and the global economy, its postmodern posturing merged fiction with other elements, but its proportion of content focusing on science and the future gradually shrank. Cyberpunks were its stepchildren, apolitical, amoral, valorizing the status quo, while digest magazines preserved traditional sf and its warnings and social criticism. His afterword reaffirms that conclusion without mentioning other slicks that have surfaced, mostly emphasizing fantasy and cinema.

Canonical Issues

Rebuked for teaching and writing about sf, and even for departing from the sf canon, Marlene

Barr argues that reading sf, especially women authors, challenges the feminist dystopia of the patriarchal world. Pointing to Donald Trump, her afterword reaffirms her feminist argument, but has little to do with sf. The perpetual hostility to sf of the academic canon is ironic for Thomas Shippey. Its inherent novelty challenges conservatism, yet Modernist academia loves other kinds of novelty. Darwinism in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) inverts Odysseus' encounter with Circe, discounting significant differences between man and beast. *The Time Machine* also forecasts a blasphemous upending like that of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), dismissing predecessors, challenging authority (i.e., imperialism), and promoting the authority of science. While Postmodern theory rejects all authority, engineer elevated sf is intertextual, building on other sf and on science.

I agree with Carl Freedman that the "Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution" (1959) pales next to the 19th century debate between Thomas Henry Huxley and Matthew Arnold. He shows that F.R. Leavis and C. P. Snow understood little of each other's positions, although both showed a preference for Tolstoy and 19th century realism. Both physics and Modernism were already inaccessible to lay audiences, and sf's attempt to mediate between the "two cultures" was itself estranging. His afterword: finds Leavis's reputation higher and Snow's lower, while mutual incomprehension remains. He does not acknowledge that sf and fantasy may have become more popular and understood since midcentury.

This collection is not a "best of," but it documents the spectrum of scholarship and analysis of sf and fantasy as it became a cottage industry. Few of these articles were groundbreaking even when first presented, but this volume collects in one place the growth of scholarship and criticism in the field, which should be of interest to libraries, scholars, teachers and even some fans whose curiosity runs in that direction.

Landscape and the Science Fiction Imaginary



Patrick Whitmarsh

Timberlake, John. *Landscape and the Science Fiction Imaginary*. Intellect, 2018.
Paperback. 250 pp. \$28.50. ISBN 9781783208609.

IF readers were to judge John Timberlake's *Landscape and the Science Fiction Imaginary* by its title before cracking the book open, they would be in for a pleasant surprise. One may anticipate accounts of environments and settings in various works of science fiction, and although Timberlake does take such elements into consideration, his primary argument concerns neither environment, setting, nor landscape per se, but vision. More specifically, he examines the ways that both sf and non-sf works construct visual relationships with their diegetic environments, or landscapes. Timberlake refers to this relationship as "ocularity," which connotes a historical dimension as much as a physical, or spatial, one: "it is shaped by a futurism based on the extrapolation of emergent technological tropes, grounded in historically extant forms" (4-5). This ocular relationship emerges, according to Timberlake, by way of what W. J. T. Mitchell calls "landscaping," or the assimilation of anachronistic or futuristic images into one's historical perspective, and Timberlake effectively connects Mitchell's term to William Gibson's famous, quasi-apocryphal suggestion that the "future is already here, it is just not evenly distributed" (qtd. in Timberlake 4). One almost wishes Timberlake's book was titled *Landscaping the Science Fiction Imaginary*, if such phrasing didn't give the impression of a how-to book about maintaining lawns on alien planets.

Indeed, Timberlake's chapters focus less on the particulars of landscape aesthetics than on perceptual discrepancies of scale, as in the first chapter, "Land of the Giants." Moving easily from ancient mythology to postmodern cinema, Timberlake examines how fluctuations in physical size influence social relations, yielding a tragic framework in which physical environments exhibit an "elemental indifference" to human presence (47). He performs a similar temporal leap in chapter two, building a conceptual bridge between Francisco Goya's *The Game of Pelota* (1779) and contemporary digital gaming. Timberlake makes the compelling claim that Goya's decision to place modern players within ancient ruins "can be read as a form of virtual projection," effectively anticipating the contained temporalities of late-twentieth-century gaming media (58). Such moves reveal the nuanced, and occasionally understated, methodology of *Landscape and the Science Fiction Imaginary*. Less a study of sf per se, it rather illuminates in sf a visual imperative that Timberlake argues is at work "across the centuries," connecting works as diverse as Goya's painting and video

games such as *Metal Gear Solid* (73).

The remaining chapters examine ocularity in post-1945 visual media: specifically, the drawings of Chris Foss, photographs by Yosuke Yamahata, and Pavel Klushantzev's and Chesley Bonestell's "fictions of science" (123). It's in these chapters that the book's methodology shines, as Timberlake explores the science-fictional dynamics of artistic impressions, photography, and film sets. Of the figures listed above, the one closest to science fiction is Foss, whose drawings and book jacket designs draw explicitly on sf iconography. Timberlake argues that Foss's work exhibits an accelerationist vision of the technological present, depicting vaguely familiar objects as though they occupy a decrepit, decaying future. In his treatment of Foss's drawings and Yamahata's horrific photographs of post-detonation Nagasaki, Timberlake uncovers a key strategy of uncanny futurity: "all the commonplaces of science fiction," he writes, "but rendered with a curious familiarity" (80). The estranging experience of the Japanese survivors photographed by Yamahata derives from "the destruction and horror visited upon them in their regular haunts and domiciles" (104). For Timberlake, the import of such ocular extrapolation lies in its capacity for unfolding present material conditions into potential realities.

In this respect, images act as a way for these artists to schematize cultural attitudes about history and the world, and the recurring attitude that Timberlake returns to is the one we experience toward our place in the cosmos, culminating in his final chapter's discussion of spatial expanse in works ranging from Frederick Sommer's *Arizona Landscape, 1943* to Sebastian Cordero's film *Europa Report* (2013). According to Timberlake, the ocularity of such works allows spectators to experience the scale variance that occurs between, for example, human political conflicts and the awareness of our insignificance in the cosmos, embodied in the juxtaposition of human subjects against desert vistas and interstellar gulfs. He elucidates this science-fictional dimension through discussions of numerous examples, from the fiction of Philip K. Dick to works of contemporary sf cinema. The structure of Timberlake's approach may be a caveat for readers seeking an in-depth and focused study of sf as a genre, whether in literature or film. It certainly attends to numerous sf texts, yet *Landscape and the Science Fiction Imaginary* is more interested in what might be called the science-fictional dynamic of visual media, and although its approach can be (and often is) directed toward works of sf, they aren't the author's central focus.

Perhaps understandably, given Timberlake's frequent pinballing between various works, it can sometimes feel as though certain examples are treated too briefly, or abandoned too hastily. Yet the connections between sf and non-sf texts feel justified and often prove illuminating when considering the author's emphasis on landscaping and ocularity. They would be even more effective, however, with a bit more attention to the critical discourse

surrounding visuality and its relationship to science and observational media. One noticeable omission is Martin Willis's *Vision, Science, and Literature, 1870-1920: Ocular Horizons* (2011). Although focused on literature, Willis's discussions of ocular media and their impressions of scale are certainly relevant for Timberlake's ambitious study. Also noticeable are the book's many unfortunate typographical errors, some of which interfere with sentence-level meaning. These errors range from missing or incorrect words (*of* in place of *as*, for example) to long sentence fragments that inevitably draw the reader's pace to a halt. Admittedly, these can't be blamed entirely on the author, but one wishes that a bit more time had been spent proofreading the manuscript.

These small quibbles notwithstanding, the conceptual gravity of Timberlake's study is undeniable, and his compelling readings make *Landscape and the Science Fiction Imaginary* a valuable contribution to the field of sf criticism and visual media theory.

A surreal illustration of a room with green walls and large windows. A young boy in a blue shirt and dark pants sits on the edge of a bed, looking out the window. In the upper part of the room, a man in a blue suit hangs upside down from the ceiling. The room contains a desk with a lamp, a chair, and a bed. The scene is framed by a dark, metallic structure on the left and right sides.

FICTION REVIEWS

The Institute



Dominick Grace

Stephen King. *The Institute*. Scribner, 2019. Hardback. 576 pp. \$30.00. ISBN 9781982110567.

THE Institute, Stephen King's most recent novel, is one of his few books that might arguably be regarded as SF, or at least SF-adjacent. King's work usually falls squarely into the horror category, but SF tropes occasionally assume central roles in his books (e.g. though clearly horror, *The Tommyknockers*' monsters are the aliens—or the ghosts of aliens—associated with a spacecraft that has been buried for millennia, a plot device many will recognize). Of these, the most frequent are paranormal abilities such as telepathy, telekinesis, precognition, and other powers of the mind, which are usually permitted in SF despite having little in the way of scientific justification. Indeed, King's career began with *Carrie* (1974), ostensibly horror but focusing on a teen-aged girl with telekinetic powers, rather than on fantastical creatures or monsters. *The Institute* is another such novel, this time focusing on children possessed of telekinetic or telepathic power who are being kidnapped and dragooned into the service of a shadowy organization for ends that remain obscure until well into the book, providing a modicum of expense. Surprisingly, the organization in question is not The Shop, as long-time readers might have anticipated, since it was The Shop who came after pyrokinetic Charlie McGee in *Firestarter* (1980) and who turned up to mop up at the end of *The Tommyknockers*.

Thematically, though, the novel most clearly hearkens back to *The Dead Zone* (1979). Johnny Smith, that novel's protagonist, acquires a precognitive ability that allows him a glimpse onto a potentially apocalyptic future, one that he decides to prevent by assassinating Greg Stilson before he can become President and begin a nuclear war. Smith's solo mission is institutionalized in this latest novel, as the unnamed Institute kidnaps children with paranormal abilities and experiments on them (in ways that effectively amount to torture) in order to use their precognitive abilities to foresee potential future catastrophes and then their telepathic and telekinetic abilities to kill those who will cause said catastrophes. Doing so quickly uses up these children, effectively destroying their conscious minds, leaving behind only shells whose remaining mental powers serve as the battery for weaponized telepathy and telekinesis.

The idea of using precognitive abilities (or of other ways of gathering information, such as time travel) to engage in first-strike prevention is far from new in SF. Nor is the

idea of children with special abilities being used (whether with their consent or without) being trained to intervene in world events—Marvel’s X-Men perhaps being the pre-eminent example. King’s take on these ideas is perhaps less original than it is a synthesis of possibilities. He uses it to comment on the extent to which ostensibly good ends can be used to justify increasingly horrifying means. The argument Institute leader Mrs Sigsby, among others, makes, is that the work they do has saved the world multiple times, because by combining the knowledge they glean from precognitives with the powers they can exploit and enhance in the telepathic/telekinetic children, they can use those mental powers to kill those who would create disasters.

However, King’s focus is on children who have been kidnapped, and who have also usually also had their families murdered during the kidnapping—protagonist Luke Ellis has been represented in the media as a runaway who slew his family, as a way not only of eliminating parents who would look for a lost child but also as a way of tainting Luke should he ever escape. Their training is often indistinguishable from torture. As a result, readerly sympathy is clearly aligned with them, to make the figures running the Institute (and, we can assume, those running the numerous other facilities around the world, that we learn about later in the book) come across as monstrous. And since for much of the book, we do not know why these children are being used the way they, we as readers are further encouraged to side with the children. Furthermore, all the characters on the side of the Institute, with one exception, are depicted, to a greater or lesser extent, as sociopathic or otherwise morally corrupt. That their essentially evil (for want of a better word) behavior may itself be caused by or at least enhanced by toxic psychic contamination bleeding into their own heads as a side effect of the experimentation and exploitation they inflict on the children may be read as a metaphor for how power corrupts.

King therefore largely games the system, leaving little room to consider whether the ends do indeed justify the means. Here, they clearly do not. In the current world of rising nationalism and authoritarianism (and King is vocally anti-Trump) this is not necessarily a bad message. It’s just not a very subtle one. But then, King has never been renowned for his subtlety.

Twelve Tomorrows



Dominick Grace

Wade Roush, editor. *Twelve Tomorrows*. MIT Press, 2018. Paperback. 276 pp.
\$19.95. ISBN 9780262535427.

TWELVE Tomorrows is volume five in a series begun in 2011 with *TRSF*, and the first to be published in book form rather than as an issue of *Technology Review* magazine. A more accurate if less streamlined title might be *Eleven Tomorrows and One Yesterday*, as the book includes only eleven new stories, and a new retrospective on the life and career of Samuel R. Delany. The remit of the series, as explained on the series website is to offer “original stories that explore the role and potential impact of developing technologies in the near, and not-so-near future.” A Delany retrospective might not seem to be the ideal fit for that remit, since Delany’s importance is arguably more for his innovations in style and in social extrapolation, rather than specifically in speculation about scientific innovation, but on the other hand, he is one of SF’s major figures, and more can always be said about him. The eleven stories come from diverse hands, including several well-known SF names (e.g. Elizabeth Bear, Liu Cixin, Paul McAuley, Nnedi Okorafor, and Alastair Reynolds) as well as from upcoming figures and writers not usually associated with SF. The overall quality of the anthology is consistent, but perhaps more narrow in focus than its stated goal would suggest. While it is unsurprising that implications of computer technology innovations should loom large, the anthology would be more diverse and more fully meet its aim of speculation about developing technologies if the stories tackled a more broad range of topics. Roush indicates in his introduction that he generally banned dystopian stories because he likes his “SF with a dose of hopefulness. [...] Pessimists don’t invent vaccines or build moon rockets [ix]; however, several of the stories here are more cautionary than celebratory, and a few are outright dystopian.

Several are about AI, or variations thereof, again unsurprising at this juncture. One of the few overtly dystopian tales here, McAuley’s “Chine Life,” offers a far future in which AI has mostly supplanted humanity and has split into factions, one of which wants humanity eradicated and the other of which ostensibly wants to help, but literally colonizes the bodies of human beings in order to do so. McAuley here offers a neat sort of twist on invasion/colonization. Somewhat differently, Clifford V. Johnson’s “Resolution” (told in comics format, a welcome innovation, though John’s style is functional) offers something of a variation, imagining a future in which an alien invasion goes unnoticed because the

aliens (who are apparently incorporeal) have passed themselves off as the AI the protagonist thought she had developed. Bear's story, "Okay, Glory," is about a wealthy recluse whose AI is hacked into believing there has been a catastrophe in the outside world, so confines him to his impregnable fortress of a house, until he pays the hacker/extortionists \$150,000,000. The cautionary tale about the susceptibility of computer tech to hacking is competently enough handled, if not new, but the story suffers from a major plot hole: if one expects to be paid a huge pile of money, one must leave the person they are extorting a way actually to get to the money. Sarah Pinsker's "Caring Seasons" also involves smart tech (whether actually AI or not is not spelled out) run amok, as it presents a retirement facility in which the medical protocols designed to protect residents instead become the tools that imprison them. J. M. Ledgard's "Vespers" imagines the first interstellar spaceship, run by an AI that spends the story ruminating about its situation. Almost half the stories here, therefore, are essentially variations on a theme. As such, this group represents a suite of stories that might be considered in tandem in a classroom to discuss how SF deals with AI.

Most of the rest of the stories also play on the implications of computer tech, in one way or another. Ken Liu's "Byzantine Empathy" presents an intriguing story about attempts to co-opt cryptocurrencies to serve charitable ends—or, conversely, to allow one charitable organization to become the most powerful charitable organization in the world—by melding social media and giving. Liu Cixin's "Fields of Gold" (which might also be connected to the AI stories) posits that the accidental launch of a woman into space on a doomed voyage may become something that would unite the world in an attempt to reach the stars, but we ultimately learn that the real woman is long dead and replaced by a computer simulation, when the rest of Earth catches up and sends out a ship that can catch up to hers. Reynolds's "Different Seas" carries remote control to an extreme by positing humanoid helpers that can be inhabited remotely to aid people in crisis. The story includes an ironic twist that is perhaps unnecessary. Malka Older's "Disaster Tourism" might be seen as a complementary piece, as it involves the use of drones in rescue work, when an inexplicable infection breaks out.

Only the remaining two stories carry us any distance from computer tech, S. L. Huang's "The Woman Who Destroyed Us," and Okorafor's punningly titled "The Heart of the Matter." The former deals with a medical innovation that allows for the tweaking of brains, which can allow for the cure of mental conditions, or simply for self-improvement. Whether such tech makes one more truly oneself or whether it transforms people into something else—whether this is an advance created by a Frankenstein, or a genuine boon to humanity—is treated with some nuance. The story is neither a stereotypical warning about science daring to tread where it ought not, nor a paean to advancement, though it perhaps skews in the

latter direction, as it is narrated from the point of view of a woman who initially views it as the former and hopes to destroy its creator but who comes ultimately to see value in the procedure. “The Heart of the Matter” explores age-old fear of scientific advancement by representing the replacement of a Nigerian President’s heart with an artificial one as something that inspires superstitious fear in some—a fear exploited by a would-be usurper, who takes advantage of credulous equations of new technology with witchcraft.

Overall, then, this is a strong volume that does indeed offer speculations about new and emerging technology. The stories are all solid, if thematically and stylistically for the most part fairly staid (I imagine many readers will have recognized familiar themes and plot points in the brief precis above). The book is possibly useful for a course on SF and tech, or on contemporary trends in SF.



MEDIA REVIEWS

Bacurau

Joe Brace



Bacurau. Dir. Juliano Dornelles, Kleber Mendonça Filho, 2019

SET “a few years from now” in the *sertão* or *caatinga*, an arid region in Brazil’s northeast of xeric shrubland and thorn forests, *Bacurau* is a lush, hyperreal sci-fi Western about a community under siege. In the eponymous village of the title, named after the nightjar, a community has drawn together to mourn the loss of its matriarch and wise woman Carmelita. Some, like granddaughter Teresa, have travelled a long way to be there. Her journey through the surrounding outback demonstrates the extent to which her home has been isolated, the dirt roads lead past rusted police cars and collapsed school buildings. In Bacurau itself however the inhabitants are thriving, a well-attended school and bustling market defy the attempts of the state to strangle the settlement by cutting off its water supply. The arrival of a vote-hunting local politician, Tony Jr, demonstrates the immutable contempt of the inhabitants for their would-be leaders. Forewarned of the encroaching caravan of political lackeys and bodyguards, the inhabitants go to ground, hiding anything worth stealing and transforming their vibrant town-centre into a ghost town. Worse is to come however when a group of heavily armed Americans arrive and begin picking off the villagers. To face this existential threat, they are forced to turn to Lunga, a heavily made-up, androgyne bandit and his gang of outcasts to help defend their home.

In setting up the conflict between this homogenous, white, heterosexual kill-team of Americans and the racially, sexually and gender diverse inhabitants of Bacurau the film evokes the battle-lines drawn up in Jair Bolsonaro’s Brazil, which has seen the wealth and privilege of the coastal cities explicitly pitted against minorities and the interior of the country. The assassinations, which are performed with the state’s collusion (the Americans’ local fixers turn out to be Assistant Federal Judges) immediately recall the 2018 murder of gay, black politician Marielle Franco as well as the worst excesses of the military dictatorship. The “day after tomorrow” setting of the film suggests less a worsening of the social contract in Brazil and more of an uninterrupted continuation of the power relations that have existed since colonial times. Bacurau’s museum contains weapons and photographs from the time of the *cangaceiros*, autonomous bandits from the early 20th century who, for a time, defied the government and affected a violent and carnivalesque form of wealth distribution in the *sertão*. A photograph of the severed heads of *cangaceiro* folk heroes Lampião and Maria Bonita presages the revenge that their spiritual heir, Lunga, will take on the Americans

in the museum itself. Afterwards, as the blood is mopped out the front door, the curator instructs the cleaning team to leave the bloodied handprints on the walls and they become part of the permanent display, the museum is an active site able to assimilate and process new history, recalling Michael Taussig's ideal of a museum that "combine[s] a history of things with a history of people forced by slavery to find their way through these things," in total contrast to the "dead and even hostile places, created for a bored bourgeoisie."

The appearance of a flying saucer, the casual dream-like way the villagers come together in sexual congress and the wild alien landscape of the *caatinga* might, in another film, suggest the exoticizing lens of a "magical realism," an absurdist "New World" fantasy-land where anything is possible and where, to quote Robert Kolker, the viewer is "assur[ed] that meaning need not upset assumptions or endanger tranquillity." This illusion is thrust aside by the film's desire to communicate the practicalities of how Bacurau survives, how it gets its water and the dismissal of the UFO by the gardener Damiano as a drone in disguise. In fact, the inhabitants are hyper alert to the reality of their situation. The Americans by contrast, are disturbed by the bloodstained clothes of villagers they have already killed hung prominently on a washing line, they shake their heads at this vulgar allusion to the violence that has gone before and brand them "savages."

The Americans have in fact misunderstood the situation, perceiving the withering away of the state from the village as a situation passively accepted by the villagers rather than one they actively connive in. Like the Malagasy "almost rebellion" described by David Graeber in *Lost People*, the community has simply become self-sufficient and ignores all but the most invasive attempts from the state to make contact. The Americans are so complacent about the ease with which they will extirpate their "prey" that they have devised a point-system just to keep the killing interesting. On the other hand, the villagers, though distraught, are quickly able to assimilate events into their understanding of the world. The mass taking of psychotropic seeds (presumably morning glory) before the final showdown, allows them to circumvent the externally imposed "logic" of the state and the Americans and defy the presupposed outcome of the encounter. When the cringing Tony Jr. is captured, he tries to appeal to reason, telling them that now they have "got themselves into deep trouble." "We have taken a powerful psychotropic drug," replies the schoolteacher, "and you are going to die."

The violence in the film, sanguinary but never sadistic, links the narrative both to the mass state reprisals of the 19th century in Brazil (including the punitive expeditions against escaped slave settlements, or *mocambos*, and the utter destruction of egalitarian, separatist communities like Canudos) and to the contemporary cohesion of state and organised criminal violence, described by Sayak Valencia in *Gore Capitalism* as "necroempowerment."

The film offers a cathartic imaginary counterpoint to this violence in the form of the bawdy, horizontalist and autonomous community in Bacurau. Other than this it offers no direct political message, where one might expect an evocative textual postscript describing the current situation in Brazil the merely notes that, “this production created 800 jobs.”

By deliberately unrooting the story temporally (whenever the film is watched, it will always be set “a few years from now”) the film speaks to a continuing set of conditions in Brazil rather than simply projecting a critique of today’s politics into tomorrow’s world. This detemporality allows the film to offer a vision of radical resistance that is not tied to a specific set of conditions. *Bacurau* is not about Bolsonaro’s Brazil, or it is but only as much as it is about Lampião’s Brazil, the Brazil of the runaway slaves, or the Brazil of the coming water crisis. Setting a piece of science fiction in a specific future is the surest way to defang its message and turn it into a wry milestone for nostalgic audiences. *Bacurau*, by contrast, is forever possible, forever just around the corner.

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Bezimena

Dominick Grace



Bunjevaca, Nina. *Bezimena*. Fantagraphics, 2019.

BEFORE I get to specifics, readers should be warned that this graphic novel includes explicit sexual imagery and disturbing themes: it focuses on issues of sexual violence and consent. It tells the story of a young man who follows a woman home after finding her lost sketch book. When he discovers that the sketchbook includes graphic depictions of him engaging in sex with her and with others, he enacts the scenarios. By the end of the book, we are told that, in fact, the sketchbook belonged to a young girl who was sexually assaulted and murdered, along with two other girls, apparently by our protagonist. Readers who find this subject matter distressing should beware, and anyone should think carefully about whether this is an appropriate book for classroom use.

Bezimena, Nina Bunjevaca's third graphic novel, is an extended surreal narrative in which the line between reality and fantasy is not so much blurred as obliterated. Bunjevaca identifies the myth of Artemis and Sipriotes, the gender-bending tale of Sipriotes being punished for an attempted rape by being transformed into a woman, as an inspiration. The book also echoes the myth of Diana and Actaeon, the voyeur transformed into a stag and torn apart by his own hunting dogs after seeing the naked Diana bathing in a pool. The fable of the king who puts his face into a bowl of water, finds himself in another world and another body, living another life until he removes his face from the water and is restored to himself, is also a clear inspiration. Fairy tales, especially ones such as Little Red Riding Hood, also inform the action. The work is dense, complex, and allusive—as well as elusive—requiring readers to try to make sense of the story themselves, rather than spelling it out.

The work's obliqueness is evident from the beginning, in the frame device of two disembodied voices—the only voices to speak in the entire text—whose dialogue consists of the story we read as told by one to the other. The voices manifest as word balloons on black pages, one speaking from “below” the page (the tale-teller) and “above” the page (the auditor). We know almost nothing about who they are or what their relative locations mean. The tale teller recounts the story of a priestess who indulges in the habit of “perpetual and needless suffering” until *Bezimena* thrusts her face into the pool (or perhaps river—again, readers are left to judge, and how one interprets the moment may vary depending on what sort of body of water one assumes this is) by which she has prostrated herself. This act causes her spirit to separate from her body and to be reborn into a male infant

in an entirely different environment, an uncannily detailed yet unidentified European city in what appears to be the early twentieth century. The boy, Benny, is an obsessive voyeur and masturbator whose childish fixation with fellow classmate “White Becky” re-emerges when, as a young man working at the zoo, he sees a woman he is sure is “White Becky.” The similarity of the names Benny and Becky, and the overt symbolic implications of the epithet “White,” are among the many ambiguities of this text that invite readerly. It is her notebook that “Becky” perhaps loses (or perhaps deliberately abandons) that serves as the catalyst for the tale. Impossibly, the sketchbook depicts events before they have happened—sexual fantasies involving voyeurism, bondage and arguably non-consensual sex—that Benny feels compelled to act out exactly as they are illustrated.

Here, perhaps, is the book’s most overtly metafictional and fantastical conceit. Bunjevac’s art is meticulously detailed, using heavy stippling to create an almost photographic effect. Most of the pages feature single images, and all the pages with pictures are devoid of words: the narrative voice occupies the verso pages, otherwise black, while the accompanying pictures appear on the recto pages, though there are occasional wordless, two-page spreads. The illustrations also frequently frame or enclose the figures, foregrounding our recognition that they are pictures, even as they depict events. Though the pictures depict actions, they are also frequently designed to appear staged and static—as drawings, rather than as depictions of life. The line between the sketchbook Benny finds and the story we are reading largely vanishes as we read.

Even the blurred reality thereby created is further compromised with the narrative twist that occurs when Benny is arrested on suspicion of murder, and the sketchbook suddenly transforms into one filled with a child’s drawings, not with the explicit sexual images Benny has seen and used to enact his fantasies. All evidence to support Benny’s version of events disappears, in effect, and readers are left to determine whether he has fantasized the whole thing, rationalizing his murders with his elaborate scenario, or whether he has been victimized by some inexplicable force. The frame narrative of the priestess apparently being punished for her self-inflicted needless suffering, the unidentifiable disembodied voices sharing the tale, and the various myth and folk echoes certainly invite readerly speculation.

Indeed, the most intriguing thing about this book, perhaps, is its interpretive openness—though that is arguably also its most disturbing characteristic. In an afterword, Bunjevac offers a personal account of two sexual assaults she suffered, inviting readers to contextualize what they have read in light of real-world sex crimes. However, the book is far from a dogmatic or polemical critique of rape culture. Instead, it raises troubling questions about desire and gender. What one is to make of the fact that the putative rapist/murderer is represented as being the spirit of a female in a male body remains open. How one is to read

White Betty—a virginal victim, a temptress who takes pleasure in the transgressive sex imaged in her sketchbook, a femme fatal who leads Benny to his doom—remains open. How we are to read Benny—victim of primal urges he cannot control, monster, victim of external manipulation and scapegoat for crimes he has not really committed (facing certain conviction for his crimes, Benny hangs himself and finds himself back in the priestess's body)—remains open. The book is simultaneously intriguing and disturbing. It is an exceptional achievement, refusing to offer pat or even palatable answers to the questions it raises. It could engender fruitful discussions about several different discussions, but students would need to be warned in advance about what they were being asked to read.

The OA, Season 2



Carmen Victor

The OA. Season 2, produced by Brit Marling and Zal Batmanglij, Plan B Entertainment and Anonymous Content, 2019.

THE second season of *The OA* picks up exactly where the first one left, and both continues and, arguably, doubles down on its strange allegorical and metaphysical take on science fiction and transdimensionality. To recap, the first season centers around a young woman named Prairie Johnson (Brit Marling) who returns to her adoptive family after disappearing under mysterious circumstances seven years earlier. Now preferring to go by “The OA”, Prairie, who had been blind for most of her life, assembles a misfit group of four local high-school students and one teacher (called the Crestwood Five) for the purposes of travelling to another dimension, utilizing a method she and another four other people developed during their time in captivity, as revealed in the first season.. Season 2 of *The OA* is set in the second dimension. We are introduced to a private eye named Karim Washington (Kingsley Ben-Adir), who has been hired to investigate the disappearance of a young teenage girl named Michelle. In this dimension, the captives (Homer, Rachel, Scott, Renata) as well as Hap and OA have jumped into different versions of themselves. Hap is now Dr. Percy, the director of a large psychiatric institution where Homer works as a resident psychiatrist. Rachel, who had a beautiful singing voice in Season 1, is mute in Season 2 and OA has jumped into a version of herself that did not have a car accident as a child, thus she never had a near death experience so she never lost her sight, was never adopted, and instead led a life of luxury and privilege with her biological father who was alive and present throughout most of her life. Despite her being thrust into this new dimension, OA remembers her seven-year captivity, she remembers her friends, the movements, and the Crestwood Five, as well as everything else from the dimension whence she came. The entirety of Season 2 weaves an endlessly intriguing narrative of how Karim Washington’s search for a missing teenager interconnects with the people and events surrounding the OA and the mysteries of interdimensional travel.

Whereas the first season of *The OA* is told like an ordinary drama, recounting an emotional tale of narrative fiction while hinting at the trappings of science fictionality, the second season is more akin to a neo-noir thriller, told particularly effectively visually through the use of unbalanced camera angles. In addition, the narrative at times blurs the lines between good and bad, right and wrong and employs thematic motifs that include

revenge, paranoia, and alienation.

Admirers of allegorical science fiction television and film such as *The Prisoner* (McGoohan, 1967), mystery horror drama such as *Twin Peaks* (Lynch, 1990-2017), supernatural drama *Lost* (Lindelof, 2004-10), supernatural mystery drama *The Leftovers* (Lindelof, 2014-17) or German science fiction drama thriller *Dark* (bo Odar and Friese, 2017-20) will appreciate *The OA*. Like these various examples of allegorical science fiction television and film, *The OA* engages audiences that revel most in unravelling the mysteries of decoding a myriad of literary and historical references and associations, while seeking the sophisticated underlying and cosmic meanings embedded within the show that slowly reveal themselves on multiple narrative, visual and metaphorical levels.

However, while *The OA* occasionally uses science fiction tropes, it does so without deploying the hard mechanics of sci-fi. For example, while interdimensional travel is a key narrative device in *The OA*, it generally does not use technology as a means to travel, unlike recent science-fiction films *Inception* (Nolan, 2010) or *Interstellar* (Nolan, 2014) which do employ technology as a means to enter metaphysical worlds. When science fiction technological devices become divulged towards the end of the second season of *The OA*, they are as a revelation because the audience has grown accustomed to the idea of achieving interdimensional travel through choreographed movements, as entirely plausible. That *The OA* is wholly convincing about interdimensional travel as an analogue activity, arrived at through a series of physical movements executed in unison and with perfect feeling, differentiates this series from other science fiction narratives that deal with interdimensional travel. The second season of *The OA* ends climactically with characters in dual dimensions jumping together to a third dimension whose conditions are immediately apparent as meta-narrative. The season-ending cliff-hanger is maddeningly self-referential, drawing to attention the idea of its own artificiality while tangibly questioning the very medium through which *The OA* is being told.

According to the show-runners, the entirety of the narrative arc of *The OA* was meant to be told over five seasons and it had all been mapped out before production began. In an allegorical work such as this, the number five is in itself significant because it is one of many emblems that is repeated throughout the series. Five seasons, presumably five dimensions, told in five distinct genres, corresponding to the five Crestwood characters, the five captives, the five connected glass chambers in which they were imprisoned, Hap's name short for 'haptic' meaning the five senses, and the five movements which enable interdimensional travel.

Scholars and researchers interested in televisual works invoking intertextuality as an aesthetic strategy will recognize *The OA* as a profoundly postmodern media text. though

not in the way Frederic Jameson defines postmodernism, which in Jameson's view, relies too heavily on nostalgia for a past that never existed. Rather, the postmodernism expressed in *The OA* is more analogous to the way Linda Hutcheon describes it: "that which paradoxically wants to challenge the outer borders of cinema and wants to ask questions (though rarely offer[s] answers)" (117). Further in line with Hutcheon's theorizing, *The OA* leaves behind unresolved tensions, challenges spectators expectations, and allows contradictions to deliberately manifest. *The OA* is shaped by adjunct literary references that elaborate a narrative which reveals clues pointing to a series of mysteries which are never entirely articulated, self-reflexively. *The OA* is meta-cinema. Some of the literary references in *The OA* are overt and others are covert. For example, Karim Washington gives Octavia Butler's novel *The Parable of the Sower* (1993) as a gift to another character in Season 2. *The Parable of the Sower* is a sci-fi novel featuring a character with hyper-empathy following the collapse of society due to climate change. During experiments, Hap fixates on the audio recordings captured during near death experiences, which he then situates as occurring among Saturn's Rings. That immediately calls to mind W.E. Sebald's 1995 novel *The Rings of Saturn*, a hybrid work of history, myth and memoir in which themes of time, memory and identity feature prominently. Interdimensional travel and communication (not limited to human communication but interspecies communication as well) is a central focus of *The OA*. Prairie/Nina/The OA uses the term an 'invisible river' as a poetic description of interdimensional travel achieved by executing the five movements. This reference to an invisible river in *The OA* recalls German poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin's influential hymn *The Ister* (1803) which, briefly, is a poem about the Danube River concerned with cyclical history while unpacking concepts of space and time. A documentary was made of *The Ister* (Barison and Ross, 2004) where well known philosophers including Bernard Stiegler, Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe discuss myriad, interconnected relations and, of particular significance here, the film is divided into five chapters that end as the river reaches its source, seeming only to claim the failure of its own project.

Despite the highly enigmatic ending of Season 2, Netflix unceremoniously cancelled *The OA* shortly after the second season aired, citing that it didn't generate enough new subscriptions, which is one of the key metrics that Netflix uses to measure the success of its productions. The fandom of *The OA* was in an uproar, and conspiracy theories abounded about the characters having jumped into our present dimension as well as theories circulating about supposedly innovative marketing plans for subsequent seasons by faking out the audience about the show's cancellation. A fan went on a weeks-long hunger strike at Netflix headquarters and fans raised money to install digital billboards in New York's Times Square in protest of the cancellation. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the series remains

cancelled. The showrunners, however, stand by their 16 hours of unfettered television, which shares narrative and conceptual elements with other examples of independent, speculative fiction as exemplified in films by Benson and Moorhead: *Resolution* (2012), *Spring* (2014), *The Endless* (2017). As well, *The OA* shares conceptual commonalities with works such as *Coherence* (Byrkit, 2013), *Arrival* (Villeneuve, 2016), films written by Alex Garland *28 Days Later* and *Sunshine* (both 2002), *Never Let Me Go* (2010), and *Annihilation* (2018) and similar radically sincere (Gilbert), independent works such as *Primer* (Carruth, 2004), *Upstream Color* (2013) and the German sci-fi *Dark* (bo Odar and Friese, 2017-20).

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