

# 321

## Summer 2017

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### Submissions

The *SFRA Review* encourages submissions of reviews, review essays that cover several related texts, interviews, and feature articles. Submission guidelines are available at <http://www.sfra.org/> or by inquiry to the appropriate editor. All submitters must be current SFRA members. Contact the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.

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# SFRA Review

A publication of the Science Fiction Research Association

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**Association**

Chris Pak

THIS ISSUE of the *SFRA Review* comes shortly after the fantastic SFRA 2017 conference, which took place at the end of June and the beginning of July at Riverside, California. It was a pleasure to visit the city that hosts the largest collection of science fiction, the Eaton Collection, and it was an absolute delight to catch-up with friends and colleagues, and to meet some of you in person for the first time.

This issue of the *Review* contains the award remarks and speeches from this year's SFRA award ceremony. We shall feature an extended version of the award speech from this year's Pilgrim Award winner, Tom Moylan, in the next issue. Congratulations to all our well-deserved winners!

In addition to the annual award speeches, we have the minutes from this year's AGM as well as some proposed changes to the bylaws governing the executive committee's terms of service—please do review them ahead of our member vote later in the year.

We begin our features section with an Interview with Cory Doctorow, who I met at Liverpool Waterstones One for the launch of his new book, *Walkaway: A Novel*. We also have a Feature 101 by PG Boyer, "Supportive Interchange Rituals in the *Star Trek* Universe." Alongside these two pieces are our regular non-fiction, fiction and media reviews. I wanted to take the opportunity to reiterate the importance of reviews to our scholarly committee, a point that our winner for this year's Mary Kay Bray award, AP Cavanaugh, makes in his award speech.

If you would like to write a review of a book, film, music, game, artwork, installation or any other kind of media, please do get in touch with one of our reviews editors. Should you have any announcements—whether they are for a new research project, science fiction course or for anything else that you feel our membership would benefit from hearing about—please do get in touch with myself. Likewise, if you have an idea for a feature article, let me know!

**A Happy Balance**

Keren Omry

WHAT A PLEASURE it was seeing all those who managed to make it to our conference at Riverside last month! People came from as far as Japan, Australia, and Brazil, and as near as across the road from the Marriott to join the most recent SFRA congress. Following what's become a tradition in recent years, we began with a day on professionalization that threw light on some of the hurdles and options that lay waiting for graduate students and early career researchers. This was followed by three days of absolutely top notch scholarship that was a joy to take part in. The theme of the conference, "Unknown Pasts/Unseen Futures," seemed particularly apt, and so many of the papers addressed pointed questions raised by SF on human accountability across times.

Nnedi Okorafor gave us glimpses of her past and hints to the future of her creative processes in a keynote that beautifully linked the process of a writer to the themes of the conference, while the interview with Ted Chiang, after the screening of *Arrival*, revealed how time itself became more than form and turned into the very content of his narrative. That and how much movie-making is about waiting.

Since the conference, the EC has been working feverishly with a number of different volunteers around the world who are checking out possible venues for our next conference. As I write, this has yet to be finalized but I'm delighted to let you know that we have a number of very exciting options in the running that may bear fruit in the years to come. We are, however, always looking for possibilities so if you would be interested in hosting an SFRA conference at any time in the future please do contact one of the Executive Committee.

As we try to weigh the pros and cons of each possibility, we face an interesting dilemma that has to do with the changing face of the Association. Long grounded in a very solid US based membership, we are gradually becoming a more and more international one, with members and followers from the far corners of the Earth. This has long been an aspira-

tion but brings with it questions of mobility, accessibility, administration, and language. It also raises more abstract questions on the pragmatics and politics of a global world. Ours is a changing Association and a changing world. We face decisions and choices, small and large, on a daily basis, that affect how we read and study SF and impact the kind of world we are building. Potential oppositions between safety and freedom, personhood and community, scholarship and recreation are all dilemmas that came up in one way or another at the conference and in our current deliberations. I trust we'll strike some happy balance that meets the needs of our long-time members while attracting and maintaining new ones.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**SFRA 2017**

Gerry Canavan

I'm still recovering from the terrific conference in Riverside, a truly excellent event—and looking forward to 2018 already! Thanks to everyone whose hard work made it such a success. It was especially an honor to chair the Pioneer Award committee this year and to give the award to its very deserving recipient Dr. Lindsay Thomas (University of Miami) for her excellent essay "Forms of Duration: Preparedness, the Mars Trilogy, and the Management of Climate Change," from *American Literature* 88.1 (March 2016). Go, read it!

While it is regrettable that our original plans for the 2018 SFRA venue have fallen through, the ex-

ecutive committee is hard at work securing a backup location and will be in touch soon with details on dates, venue, themes, and (eventually) special guests. Please stay tuned. As we discussed in the business meeting, in the future we will seek to secure our venues two years in advance as opposed to just one, hopefully preventing a similar problem from happening again.

As also discussed at the business meeting, we are hoping to switch to a staggered election system so that only half the executive committee is elected in a given year. This measure, if adopted by the membership, will have the unfortunate consequence of cutting my tenure on the executive committee short by one year! But I think it is a necessary change to insure better continuity and institutional memory on the executive committee. Look for details on that proposed change to the by-laws later this fall.

In January, I will be soliciting applications for this year's new scholar award, which supports graduate students and untenured faculty with a year's membership to SFRA. Keep your eyes peeled for that! As always I am very happy to use the SFRA social media platform to promote CFPs and other sorts of announcements; please don't hesitate to pass along any material you would like promoted to me directly at [gerry.canavan@marquette.edu](mailto:gerry.canavan@marquette.edu) to ensure that I see it. I do my best, with the help of Pawel Frelik, Chris Pak, and others, to keep SFRA's social media buzzing—but we are only as good as our network!

Of course I'm always open to other concerns from the membership as well, which can be directed to that same email address... In the meantime, please enjoy what's left of the summer! It always goes much too fast.

# The Science Fiction Foundation

Paul March-Russell

THE SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION began in 1971 at the former North East London Polytechnic with the joint aim of promoting academic research into sf and greater public understanding of the genre. It has since become a UK-wide network of academics, critics and professional writers with its nominal base at the University of Liverpool, home to the largest research archive devoted to sf in Europe. We currently support or administer the following activities:

- The peer-reviewed academic journal *Foundation*
- The SFF Foundation Collection at the University of Liverpool
- The annual SFF Masterclass at the Royal Greenwich Observatory
- The annual Science for Fiction classes at Imperial College London
- The annual George Hay Lecture at Eastercon
- The prestigious Arthur C. Clarke Award (with the BSFA and Sci-Fi London)
- SFF conferences
- Bursaries for early career and independent researchers
- The book charity SF Outreach
- Major events such as the forthcoming *Into the Unknown* exhibition (The Barbican)

We are keen not only to continue these activities but also expand upon them. Increased membership will enable us to do that. If you and/or your institution become members of the SFF, you will not only be supporting us in our aims, you will also receive three copies per year of *Foundation* and have a say at our AGM. Individual membership can be as low as £22/year – full details on membership fees and how to join are available at the SF Foundation website (<https://www.sf-foundation.org/about/index.html>). The SFF is a registered charity, so if you are a UK taxpayer and you Gift Aid your fee, we will receive an extra donation at no expense to yourself. Our ambition for the SFF is to become not only a national but also a truly international research network.

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

### AGM Minutes

Jenni Halpin

MEETING CONVENED 1:05 p.m., following presentation on forthcoming SF of the Americas exhibit; approximately 25 persons present.

#### President's Report, Keren Omry

We have no venue yet for next year's conference and are looking for one in the United States, though we are also exploring the possibility of a joint conference with the Society for Utopian Studies in Hungary or the possibility of holding our conference in Warsaw. Anybody with an interest in hosting next year's conference or later conferences should let a member of the executive committee know. (Comment: SUS's planned 2019 conference in Lucca, where Darko Suvin is, may be a better collaboration for us.)

In addition to the executive committee, the SFRA has a number of other responsible positions we need to fill—most immediately a new member on each of the five awards selection committees. Please volunteer. Thanks go to all who have done this work.

We would like to further revise the terms of the executive committee members, which were extended to three years in the most recent revision of the bylaws, to stagger our terms for a greater conservation of institutional memory. Following this informal presentation of the plan, we will publish the planned revisions in the Review and hold an electronic vote opening sixty days after publication. If passed, the current terms of the treasurer and the vice president would end one year early (December 2018), and their successors would serve from January 2019 through December 2021.

#### Vice President's Report, Gerry Canavan

The SFRA would like to publicize science fiction research, so send information to Gerry for dissemination.

Additionally, we support a tenure-track young scholar and a non-tenure track or graduate student scholar by awarding complimentary membership; be mindful that applications will be coming due.

#### Treasurer's Report, David Higgins

We are close to breaking even on income and ex-

penditures. David proposes to move approximately \$30,000 into an investment (such as an interest-bearing CD), keeping back a full year of operating costs but putting the rest of our reserves to use.

### Announcement by Art Evans, of *Science Fiction Studies*

Approximately three months ago SFRA members with electronic (or electronic plus print) subscriptions were given expanded electronic access back to the start of the run. Art has also been able to keep the SFRA subscription rate from being increased for 2018, and hopes to keep it from increasing for as long as possible.

### Final Comments

The Bylaws revision might also include updates to the officers' roles, to reflect more precisely what each officer's responsibilities are.

Peter Sands volunteers to serve on one of the committees.

Meeting concluded 1:30 p.m.

## Proposed Revisions to the Bylaws

AT THE June meeting, the Executive Committee proposed to change the officers' terms of service, to prevent all four officers from being new to their offices at once. This plan would retain the three-year terms for each office, but the start dates would differ. To implement this change (if approved) the current Vice President and Treasurer have agreed to end their terms a year early, with their successors being elected to new three-year terms commencing January 2019. The current President and Secretary would end their terms as scheduled, with elections being held for new three-year terms commencing January 2020. Thereafter the SFRA would hold elections two out of every three years, for two officers to enter into new terms of three years.

To effect this change, the following revisions to the bylaws are proposed (additions underlined, deletions ~~struckthrough~~):

Article V, section 1: The officers of the association shall be chosen by the membership. There shall be

a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer. They shall take office on January 1 of the year succeeding their election. The terms of office shall be staggered, such that in any given year up to two officers may be newly elected to their positions.

Article VI, section 1: Elections shall be held ~~triennially~~ for three-year terms. The president and secretary will be elected in 2019 (to serve from January 2020 through December 2022) and every three years thereafter. The vice president and treasurer will be elected in 2018 (to serve from January 2019 through December 2021) and every three years thereafter.

Article VI, section 3: ~~In the last year of their term~~ each year in which elections are required, the Executive Committee shall establish a time and date by which ballots for the election of officers must be received, which date shall be known as the election date.

Voting will open on 4 October 2017 and will remain open until November 2. Members will receive a voting link by e-mail.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

## Treasurer's Report, 2017

David Higgins

### 2016 Final Account Balances

Checking	\$58,375.03
Savings	\$20,434.48

### 2016 Income (Journals, Memberships, Etc.)

**Total Income**      **\$28,837.55**

### 2016 Expenditures

Wild Apricot	\$756.00
Adobe Creative Cloud	\$254.27
Conference Seed	\$1,000.00
Conference Awards and Grants	\$4,274.30
Journal Subscriptions	\$22,833.10

**Total Expenditures**      **\$29,117.67**  
Difference      (- \$280.12)

PILGRIM AWARD

## Remarks for the Pilgrim Award

Mark Bould, Keren Omry and John Rieder

*For lifetime contributions to SF/F Studies*

THIS YEAR'S Pilgrim Award Committee has decided to recognize the achievements of Tom Moylan. Our decision is based primarily on the contribution Tom Moylan has made to the fields of science fiction studies and utopian studies in his two influential monographs, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*, published in 1986, and *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, published in 2000. Indeed, Moylan's elaboration of the concept of the critical utopia in *Demand the Impossible* was a breakthrough not only in understanding the form and possibilities of utopian thinking in fictional form, but also in linking science fiction studies and utopian studies to one another in historical and political as well as literary terms. His later elaboration of the critical dystopia in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* solidified the insights and expanded the scope of his earlier work, and his editorial efforts at the Ralahine Center for Utopian Studies at Limerick University have continued to encourage thinking at the intersection of literary and political practices.

EDITOR'S NOTE: An expanded version of Tom Moylan's Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech will appear in the next issue of the *SFRA Review*.

PIONEER AWARD

## Remarks for the Pioneer Award

Gerry Canavan, Siobhan Carroll and Scott Selisker

HELLO. I promise I will be brief! I'm stepping up here in the context of my service on the Pioneer Award committee, for which I was the 2017, now outgoing, chair (this is my very last duty!) Thanks so much to Siobhan Carroll and Scott Selisker for their service

on the panel this year, which is a big volunteer duty, and Godspeed for next year.

The Pioneer Award honors the best essay written in SF criticism in the last year, which means we do *a lot* of reading (though I should say I found it a very rewarding experience, all three years; if you want to be kept current on what is going on in the field, serve on the Pioneer committee...).

What defines a Pioneer Award winning essay?

The Pioneer Award is given to the writer or writers of the best critical essay-length, peer-reviewed work of the year. Essays are judged on the basis of their contribution to the field (originality, impact, scope) and their quality (style, depth of research, argument, analysis).

This year that essay is Lindsay Thomas's, from *American Literature*, Volume 88, Number 1, March 2016, which quickly rose to the top of all our shortlists. Dr. Thomas is an assistant professor of English at the University of Miami, focusing on contemporary literature, media studies, and the digital humanities.

To give you the flavor of the piece, I'll quickly read the abstract:

This essay examines two kinds of speculative fiction focused on the management of climate change: preparedness documents on climate change as a threat to national security, and Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy (1993–96), a science fiction trilogy about the terraformation and colonization of Mars. Focusing on narrative scenarios and exercises that train officials to respond to natural disasters, this essay positions these preparedness documents as part of a system of affective management. They teach participants to cultivate a feeling of neutral detachment—to stay calm and cool so that they can react automatically and repeatedly when disaster strikes. This emphasis on detachment and repetition reveals the political stakes of preparedness as a national security paradigm: to maintain the status quo by extending the always-catastrophic present into the future. The essay's second half turns to the Mars trilogy to argue that by emphasizing duration, or the heterogeneous lasting of time, the trilogy invites its readers to experience climate

change as the intersection of various scales and compositions of time, both human and nonhuman. Demonstrating that the management of climate change is inseparable from an experience of it, the Mars books challenge preparedness by emphasizing ongoing change rather than the containment of a never-ending series of disasters.

It's a great piece.

In explaining our decision, one panelist wrote:

I just think this is the perfect Pioneer essay: interdisciplinary, politically urgent, focused on a key SF text but with implications for the wider study of SF and of literature. What I like most about it I think is the way it links the temporal problem of climate change—how can you feel like it's even happening?—to the formal problem of narrative duration and literary time.

Another said:

The relationships between preparedness, speculation, duration, and narrative in Thomas's essay are really well articulated and to my understanding chart out new territory and cultural archives for the work of SF studies, and it offers an insightful and surprising way to read the major work of the Mars Trilogy.

A third panelist said:

I thought this was a well-written and thoughtful article. I liked to see Levine's argument imported into SF, and enjoyed the utility of the 'managing affect' and Thomas's attention to the actual length of both novels and paragraphs. I finished this article wanting to hear more about the particular affordances of the speculative form, which is a good advertisement for Thomas's project!

These snippets, while properly effusive, don't really give the scope of Thomas's domination of our deliberations; her essay very quickly rose to the top of the shortlist and never wavered. From the perspective of three years on the pioneer commit-

tee this was a shockingly harmonious process; we all agreed this was our winner and that was that. A clean sweep! Please, join me in welcoming Lindsay Thomas to SFRA.

## Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech

Lindsay Thomas

THANK YOU very much. It's always a little surprising for me to learn that someone has actually read something I've written, so I'm quite honored to be here and to receive this award.

I've been working on this piece in one form or another since 2011, so there are many people to thank. It started as a paper in Christopher Newfield's grad seminar at UC Santa Barbara, and I have him to thank for encouraging me to think more about science fiction and form. That seminar paper turned into a chapter in my dissertation, so many thanks, also, to my dissertation committee – Bishnupriya Ghosh, Rita Raley, Alan Liu, and Colin Milburn – for their careful attention to that chapter and for many other things. I'd also like to thank Mary Caton Lingold and Priscilla Wald for inviting me to speak in 2014 at the Americanist speaker series at Duke and UNC, where I gave a talk based on a version of this piece, as well as the audience there for their attention and helpful feedback. More thanks still go to Priscilla for encouraging me to submit the piece to *American Literature*, where I received truly excellent anonymous readers' reports that clarified the stakes of the essay and improved it immensely. Finally, I'd like to thank SFRA, especially the award committee, for their labor and for the chance to be here, and all of you here for such an invigorating and welcoming conference.

The article is taken from the book I am currently working on, tentatively titled *Training for Catastrophe*. It focuses on how US national security discourse uses speculative fiction to train its audiences, including us, to accept catastrophe as part of everyday life. In other words, the book is about how national security discourse imagines future disaster and the political stakes of this imagining.

One of the things driving my interest in speculative and science fiction, then, is how the speculative im-

pulse, or the injunction to imagine alternatives, can be used toward decidedly non-progressive ends. Another way of saying this would be to say that I am interested in how our current so-called “post-fact” era is also a “pro-fictional” one. I don’t want to equate “fiction” with “lies” here; fiction is always about something more than lying. Indeed, what those of us who read, teach, and write about science fiction know perhaps better than most is that fiction is about worldbuilding. Yes, fiction encourages skepticism and disbelief: readers of fiction know that what they read didn’t “actually” happen. But at the same time, fiction also depends on a kind of self-aware belief in the worlds it creates for its communicative, affective, and even epistemic power. In other words, people who read fiction knowingly suspend the disbelief fiction cultivates for the sake of playing along, or of imagining *as if*. It is therefore not necessarily – or not only – the case that facts are no longer important to public debate or that what a “fact” is has lost all meaning. If we look at things from the perspective of fiction readers, one way of understanding the so-called “post-factual” landscape is that facts have become relative to one’s deployment of beliefs, or to one’s willingness to play along.

This situation puts those of us who believe in the transformative power of the speculative impulse in something of a bind: what to do when “alternative facts” are given the same epistemological weight as actual facts, or when the imagination of alternatives is also a form of violence or oppression? Turning back to speculative and science fiction may give us one answer. Fredric Jameson asserts that utopian fiction – and we might extend this to science fiction as well – forces us “to think the break” between our world and the alternative worlds it imagines.<sup>1</sup> What would it mean for us not only to think this break, but also to cultivate and preserve it as part of our critical practice? I’m not suggesting that we insist on a hard line between “fiction” and “reality” – we in this room know that fiction is just as real as anything else. Rather, I’m suggesting that we recognize and acknowledge the world-creating power of fiction and the modes of belief it cultivates so that we may better know it when we see it. If we are living not only in post-factual, but also in pro-fictional times, then there has never been a better time to keep thinking

the break between our world and the alternatives we can imagine. Thank you again very much.

#### CLARESON AWARD

## Remarks for the Clareson Award

Sonja Fritsche, DeWitt Kilgore and Rob Latham

I AM PLEASED to present the 21st Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service. The prize recognizes an individual or group who has done particularly significant work in building and leading the scholarly community devoted to the teaching and study of science fiction. Past honorees include James Gunn, Joan Gordon, Andy Sawyer and, most recently, Farah Mendelsohn. I’d also like to give special mention to our dear colleague Michael Levy, a past president of our Association, who received the Clareson in 2007. As you are all aware he passed recently, leaving us all the poorer.

This year’s Clareson Award goes to another past president of the SFRA, Paweł Frelik. Dr. Frelik is a professor at Maria Curie- Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. He hosted the Association’s conference there in 2011 and in the same year served on the advisory committee for the Eaton Conference here in Riverside. He is a major presence in both SF and video game studies, serving on the editorial boards of journals in both fields. As a scholar he has helped to expand the sense of scholarly connection between SF studies and gaming studies through reviews and his own published work. For *Science Fiction Studies* he recently edited a major special issue on Digital SF. He has also done signal service increasing the visibility and viability of SF studies in Poland and Central Europe. When you see what he has done it is not hard to predict there is much more to come.

It is with great pleasure that the Thomas D. Clareson Awards committee presents Paweł Frelik with this year’s Award for Distinguished Service.

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<sup>1</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. New York: Verso, 2005. p. 232.



# Clareson Award Acceptance Speech

Paweł Frelík

SINCE I LOVE video games for the narrative and aesthetic choices they throw at players (however illusive these choices may be), tonight I would like to offer three responses, three roads in the garden of forking paths. Please, do not be alarmed. I will be brief. Also, I will present them in descending order when it comes to their length, so once I'm done with the first one, you will know things are only going to get shorter.

**Path Number One:** I didn't see that one coming. What I do see is where I have come from to stand here tonight. Over the last 25 years I have moved in a number of academic fields and disciplines: Contemporary Anglophone Literature, American Studies, Visual Studies, and Game Studies. While I have met wonderful colleagues and experienced intellectual pleasures in all of them, none of them has come even remotely close to what Science Fiction Studies in general and the SFRA in particular have given me. Nowhere else have I ever felt so much at home and shared and experienced things that mean so much to me. Passion for books, films, comics (insert all possible media here). Mentorship and inspiration. Friendship and support. A sense that things we talk about are not only heady intellectual riddles and that science fiction can change how we think about the world and other people and places and things. So when I go out into the world, into these other disciplines, I don't even try to tell my colleagues in them how good we have it here. I do, though, tell my students: just do science fiction. This is going to be a ride of your life.

Although much of what we do as teachers and researchers may seem solitary, I have never felt alone, even if my friends and comrades and allies were geographically 3,000 miles away from me. I really feel honored and privileged and happy to be part of this field and this community. You have given me so much. So this here, why I am standing here now, this is not called "service." This is called "trying to pay back for at least some of the riches I have received" from so many people I can see in this room and some more that are not with us tonight. Calling out those who I have learnt from would keep us in this room for an-

other fifteen minutes, so I will not do this. However, I would like to mention three names with whom my road to this here place began. Paul Brians, in whose sf course at Washington State University I enrolled back in 1993 and who made me realize one could do science fiction academically. Elisabeth Kraus from the University of Graz, who, during an American Studies conference in her home town in 1996, told me about this association called SFRA. And Mike Levy, who welcomed me to the organization (and, effectively, the field) and patiently explained how this all worked. You know the rest of the story.

**Path Number Two:** In the rare moments of self-assured folly, I sometimes thought that, if I continued to work hard for another two decades, I might have a chance of being considered for a Clareson. Now, I have no idea what I am going to be thinking about in my rare moments of self-assured folly (although I am sure Joan Gordon will, as always, tell me "think your own thoughts"). But I have to say this: smooth move, SFRA, very smooth, because now I will work my bottoms off for the next three decades to actually feel I deserve this award. Very smooth.

**Path Number Three:** I am honored and moved. Thank you.

MARY K BRAY AWARD

## Remarks for the Mary Kay Bray Award

Isiah Lavender III, Stefan Rabitsch and  
Brittany Roberts

I WOULD LIKE to start by acknowledging that choosing just one recipient for the Mary Kay Bray Award was a very difficult challenge this year. There were many wonderful reviews in this past year's issues of the *SFRA Review*, and at one point we each had a short list of about 11 possible recipients. But, we had to choose just one recipient, and after much deliberation we noticed that one name had appeared across all of our lists. We unanimously selected A.P. Canavan's review of the Netflix original series *Daredevil* and *Jessica Jones*. A.P. Canavan is not here tonight, but I'd like to read the statement that this year's committee chair, Isiah Lavender III, wrote on behalf of our committee:

A.P. Canavan offers an intelligent reading of the moral storytelling that *Daredevil* and *Jessica Jones* represent in their adult portrayal of organized crime and psychological abuse, respectively. In truth, Canavan zeroes in on the humanity at the heart of these super-powered comic figures and we found it to be invigorating in an oversaturated genre of television. That is why he was the clear and unanimous winner over some seriously stiff competition among the many fine reviews that impressed this year's committee.

Congratulations, A.P. Canavan!

## Mary Kay Bray Award Acceptance Speech

Aidan-Paul Canavan

THE VERY FIRST THING I must do is tell you how profoundly grateful and honoured I am to receive this award, and so I offer my thanks to the SFRA and to the awards committee. The second thing I want to do is to apologise for not being there in person to receive it, and I hope that you can forgive me.

Had I been there, I would have wanted to say the following things:

One of the reasons this award means so much to me is that it comes from the SFRA—that in itself is a huge honour. But, perhaps, more importantly, is that this reward recognises a review.

As academics and critics we sometimes overlook the importance of reviews to our research. With an ever expanding corpus of texts, narratives, multimedia and transmedia forms that seem to increase exponentially year on year, we increasingly rely on reviews to signal which texts are important, which will be useful for our research, which texts offer refreshing takes on old tropes, and which are doing something new. And also, let us not forget which texts might be worth our precious free time to indulge. They are often our first step to finding a new angle of research, and help us find those narratives that inexplicably become integral to our arguments.

Reviewers winnow through the plethora of product, the mass market of media, and highlight the pre-

cious, the rare, the interesting, and the intriguing.

The importance of critical and insightful reviews grows a pace with the field, and with the glut of blogs, and paragraph 'reviews', SFRA, along with our respected sister and brother journals, provide an invaluable service by encouraging and promoting critical reviews, thoughtful reviews, engaged reviews.

So this award is important. It reminds us that so much of our research, so many of our articles, books, and class room examples, were only possible because of the collective effort of our colleagues. None of us is an island unto ourselves. We cannot know, read, and see everything. Our reading, our viewing, our insights and arguments, are all part of a greater conversation informed by our friends, our peers, our colleagues, and even those we vehemently disagree with. We stand on the shoulders of giants, and when I look at the past winners of this award, I know that I feel truly honoured, and a little awed, to be included amongst them.

So thank you again. The Mary Kay Bray Award means a tremendous amount to me and I will always be grateful and honoured to have received it.

### STUDENT PAPER AWARD

## Remarks for the Student Paper Award

Stina Attebery, Hugh Charles O'Connell and Taryne Taylor

THIS YEAR we were delighted to have the task of deciding between a record number of competitive submissions. So much so that instead of only announcing the winner, we would also like to recognize another extraordinary submission with an honorable mention: Brittany Roberts "'The Present Doesn't Exist: Music, Animation, and the Rupture of Cultural Memory in Vladimir Tarasov's *The Passage*.'" The committee was impressed with the layered close-reading of the film as well as Roberts' attention to intertextuality.

The winner of this year's SFRA Student Paper Award is Francis Gene-Rowe for "You Are The Hero: Stephen Mooney's *The Cursory Epic*." Rowe's paper impressed the committee with its deep engagement with sf theory as well as Gene-Rowe's theoretical

contribution to the conversation surrounding sf and in late capitalism.

## Student Paper Award Acceptance Speech

Francis Gene-Rowe

IT IS a great honour to receive this award, and I am enormously grateful to be so recognised at such an early stage of my academic career. My thanks go out to the committee members who selected me, as well as to the SFRA hierarchy as a whole for everything they do. I would also like to warmly acknowledge the support of my university, Royal Holloway, who helped fund my trip out to Riverside. As well as these fine institutions, thanks go out to Stephen Mooney, for presenting alongside me at last year's conference, for all the conversations we had before, during and after the writing of my paper, and for introducing me to roleplaying games when I was on the cusp of my teens. Also, of course, for the brilliant and important work he has already written and continues to produce more of. As well, my thanks to Aodán McCardle, our partner in crime at last year's conference. Aodán delivered an excellent paper at the same panel and is also an immensely gifted and creative poet, artist and performer, as well as a beautiful person. Finally, there are a couple of people in the room I would like to thank. Chris Pak is the first, as without his friendship and, more importantly, commitment to academic discourse as an open, experimental process I would probably not be here today, and certainly not in this context. Finally and most lovingly to Sing, my sharpest colleague and dearest companion.

The paper I gave more or less this time last year in Liverpool was about Stephen Mooney's 2014 book of poetry *The Cursory Epic*, which combines language taken from speeches by the United Kingdom's Coalition Government of 2010–2015 with Steve Jackson's (the British Steve Jackson) "Sorcery Epic" of Fighting Fantasy gamebooks. There's a hell of a lot going on in Stephen's text, far more than I was able to cover in the paper I gave last year and obviously far more than I'm able to discuss in this moment. There are, I think, cases where the significance of scholarship on a work can equal or outstrip the significance of the

work in and of itself as text or object, but my paper was certainly not one of those, which is why I want to make a few comments about what I think Stephen has been getting into with both that text and in subsequent writing.

At the very heart of what Stephen's writing touches is a deadly, choking impasse, that of the utter necessity of resistance to the present scheme of sociopolitical reality alongside the failure at first principles of currently available strategies or positions of resistance. It's an extremely difficult obstacle to negotiate, and I think it's one where any moment of movement or progress constitutes a crucial victory. The language of *Fighting Fantasy* is extremely violent and riven with falsehood; and yet, in Stephen's book, it appears positively delicate when compared to the terrible, bland opacity of politico-speech. For all that we might look towards speculative worlds for depictions or convocations of the Other, there are few things more terrifying or alienating than when certain politicians (I think you know who I mean) utter phrases like "of course, we value the importance of..." or "most people agree that this needs to change..." The landscape Stephen's poetry encapsulates is, like our own, a spectacular one, in which self and world, true and false have collapsed into each other. It explores the symbiotic relationship between deception and image; in other words, the fact that a culture of deceit operates at the level of the object. It's not just that truth, or news, or facts, or numbers enter a state of uncertainty, but that configurations of experience, of what "world" can be, are warped and imprisoning.

One of the interesting things arising from the game language and perspective in *The Cursory Epic* is what I somewhat glibly called in my paper the 'poetic you'; there is no "I" in the poetry, just a constantly pressured and displaced second person. The personage within the world of Stephen's poetry is a 'heroic' protagonist with no coordinates or sense of orientation, no personal agency, and yet they are constantly called upon to make choices with life or death consequences, to interpret every predicament or scenario ahead of time, and to do it perfectly—even though the world around is constituted of illusion and false signs. Possibly this is a familiar sounding predicament to the academics and students, and others besides, in the audience tonight. *The Cursory Epic* shows us game as no-game, with no possibility of "winning", as a reader is mired in a coercive

subjectivity that requires a hermeneutic evolution on their part. Essentially, you have to start cheating, much like you had to cheat your way through the old Fighting Fantasy books, fudging dice rolls and keeping your fingers in the pages.

The problem which arises at this juncture reprises the impasse I mentioned some moments back, and reminds me of a lot of the discussion that has gone on throughout the past few days at this conference about the need for new forms of narrative, or subjectivity, or storytelling (in a Benjaminian sense)—new accounts of experience to emerge that are suited to the present ongoing state of catastrophe, forestalled but always-already past the threshold of inevitability. The difficulty for a reader of Stephen's work is that a "successful" cheat cannot arise in terms of the already-is, as it has to transcend existing codifications of knowledge and reality, whilst at the same time needing to harness an intensely, painfully fo-

cus awareness of the present moment of disaster. Obviously, there is no single or simple solution to this predicament—we'd probably know by now if there was—but I feel that Stephen is one of those whose work is touching upon some instant of opening into a transformed spectrum of possibility. Of course, one of the aims of scholarship is to reach these sorts of moments, and I feel (and hope) that the paper I gave last year was able to do so to some extent.

The task ahead, as read through the lens of *The Cursory Epic*, involves the need (and here I quote Debord) to 'understand the dissolution of everything that is—and in the process to dissolve all separation.' It's a challenge that SF is uniquely equipped to respond to, and I have been deeply privileged to witness at this conference work by others which moves in such a direction.

Thank you all so very much.

## An Interview with Cory Doctorow

Chris Pak

CORY DOCTOROW is an award winning author of science fiction for both young adults and non-young adult audiences, a digital rights activist and advocate for Creative Commons, a prolific blogger and journalist, and co-editor of *Boing Boing*. His first novel, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* (2003), won the 2004 Locus Award for Best First Novel. Perhaps his most well-known novel, *Little Brother* (2008), won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, the Prometheus Award, the Sunburst Award and the White Pine Award in 2009. He also won the 2013 Prometheus award for his young adult novel *Pirate Cinema* (2012) and the 2014 Prometheus award for his sequel to *Little Brother*, *Homeland* (2013). In addition to his literary achievements, he was awarded the 2007 [Pioneer Award](#) from The Electronic Frontier Foundation, which ‘recognizes individuals and organizations that have made significant and influential contributions to the development of computer-mediated communications and to the empowerment of individuals in using computers and the Internet.’

I interviewed Doctorow at Liverpool Waterstones One on the 25th May 2017 for the release of his new book, *Walkaway: A Novel*, a non-young adult novel that imagines near-future post-scarcity societies which have rejected the ideals of a runaway neoliberalism. While not in itself a utopian or dystopian novel per se, its interrogation of both modes in the context of disaster engages with central political concerns regarding the distribution of wealth, technology and its capacity to shape and control, environmental concerns and climate change, and with posthumanity. The following interview has been edited for readability.

**CP: *Walkaway* portrays a new technological infrastructure that allows for a distributed production, a new materiality, a new energy infrastructure, and it explores how a community might coalesce around that system. Is the new technological infrastructure essential to the formation of these new communities, or do the new communities and their ideologies come first? Al-**

**ternatively, do they arise together?**

CD: I learned my theory of change at the knee of Laurence Lessig, the great cyber-lawyer and theorist, who says that our society is determined by the confluence of four factors: code, what’s technologically possible; law, what’s lawful; markets, what’s profitable; and norms, what’s socially acceptable. Although Larry is a lawyer so he puts law at the top of that list, I think of them as being co-equal, these four factors, and interdependent. They push each other. Things that are legal are easier to start a business around, although you can start your businesses around illegal things and cross your fingers—that’s what Uber and Airbnb are doing, and what all those people who are cashing in on legal marijuana around the world have done for decades. The more something is possible and widely done, the less likely it is to be made illegal, because legislatures and courts are consequentialists and you look silly when you fight King Canute and insist that the sea turn back. It brings the law and society into disrepute when you do it, and so when it’s tried it often fails. There’s this minitory effect of things being socially acceptable that they’re often not tried.

That can go very badly, right? One of the reasons it took so long to ban the enslavement of Africans in America was because it was so widely practiced that it seemed silly to the ears of a certain kind of person who benefited from it. Upton Sinclair once said it’s impossible to explain something to a man whose paycheck depends on him not understanding it. There was a certain self-interested element of maintaining the norm.

But technology, as we’ve seen in the last twenty years, can upend norms very quickly—think of all those people who have decided that sharing books is fine when you share them hand-to-hand but not when you share them byte-to-byte over email, and have decided that people who do what they did when they grew up reading—which is loan their books to their friends and borrow books from their friends—becomes theft as soon as it’s attached to a file-transfer instead of a book-transfer. So norms shift really, really quickly when we have new technology, and sometimes when norms shift our law shifts with it, and sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes you’d have the King Canute effect of Theresa May saying we’re going to ban working cryptography and somehow we’re going to make that give us the power to spy

on terrorists without giving terrorists the power to send multiple firmware updates to your pacemaker that may kill you in your boots from thirty feet away. These things, they all intertwine.

For me, the thing that networks do that's most exciting is lower the transaction costs of working together. I'm a devotee of this guy, Ronald Coase, who won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1937 after writing this paper called "The Nature of the Firm," <<http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~jsfeng/CPEC11.pdf>> which posits that the reason we have institutions like booksellers, terrorists, religions, governments and universities is to co-ordinate the labour of people. The way you do something that more than one human can do, the way you do something super-human, is by co-operating with someone else. And when you're co-operating with someone else there's always the danger that you're knitting one end of the scarf and they're unknitting the other end, and so you have to take some of the time you might spend knitting and use it to decide how you both are going to knit. So we give up some of our autonomy, some of our self-determination, we embrace hierarchy, and we give up some of our intelligence, some of our ability at the coal-face to make minute-to-minute decisions about what's best, because what's best for you might not be best for the system as a whole. I think that since the industrial revolution we've been contesting with this, because that was the moment when craft production was decomposed into industrial steps and became assembly production, which was great in terms of "now everybody can afford clothes," but was kind of rubbish for "now everybody has to do exactly the same thing all day every day in a minutely scripted way.

We've been trying to find ways to reduce the amount of overhead that we have to pay as tax, that we have to pay to co-ordinate ourselves, and networks have done brilliantly. Now we can build super-big complicated things—things as complicated as space programmes and skyscrapers, encyclopaedias and operating systems, and we do it with the kind of overheads that we used to have to put up with to organise a really ambitious cake sale. Which isn't to say none—anyone who's watched The Great British Bake-Off knows that a cake sale can have some pretty vicious politics, but relative to the kind of politics we used to bring to bear for operating systems—anyone who's ever worked at Microsoft, Douglas Coupland wrote one of the canonical satiri-

cal novels about working at a tech company off the back of what it was like making operating systems. *Microserfs* (1995), which is the three men in a boat of code-development. We now can do this stuff with a lot less infrastructural overhead.

One of the exercises in *Walkaway* was "what would it be like if we could build a space programme, or city, or a big ambitious building, with the kind of structures and hierarchies that are very lightweight and fluid and improvisational that we use in wikis and operating software products and so on.

**CP: You've described *Walkaway* as a utopian disaster novel. Could you explain what you mean by that, and what you think the significance of having utopias and dystopias are for our contemporary era of global turbulence?**

CD: I don't think it's dystopian to imagine that we'll have disasters, right? I think that people who design systems on the assumption that they will never fail don't build brilliant, beautiful things. They build the Titanic—a little bit of salience here in Liverpool. That planning for graceful failure is how you build things that work well, because they fail well, because things that coast to a stop that you can then restart are better than things that explode in white-hot shrapnel, even if they work really well when they're working. Think of the housing crisis of 2008. That market worked great until it didn't, and then it worked really badly. It was the unwillingness to plan for graceful failure and to take the steps that would slow down success but which would make the failure more graceful that led to this crisis, whose reverberations we're still feeling. So *Walkaway* is a disaster novel because it's a novel in which people have been trying to conduct themselves in a way that shows their destiny with other people and embraces it. As we saw in Manchester the other day, that's the lived reality of disasters. That, by and large, disasters are not the moment in which we all turn into the walking dead. Disasters are the moment in which we cover ourselves in glory: we throw our doors open to our neighbours, we go on Twitter and say whoever needs a home, here's my home. We don't go over to our neighbour's house with a shotgun, we go over to our neighbour's house with a casserole dish when a disaster strikes.

But, you know, I'm a pulp writer. Science fiction is a pulp literature, and when you do pulp, you centre

the plot. When you centre the plot you can ask your reader to suspend their disbelief for you to make the plot more exciting. So in techno-thrillers we pretend that computers do impossible things, or that they can't do things that they do routinely to make the story more exciting. And the reader comes along with us. And in disaster novels we tend to ask the reader to suspend their disbelief about how people act so that we can have the man-versus-man-versus-nature story, which is more exciting than either man-versus-man or man-versus-nature. In fact, the tsunami knocks your building down and your neighbours come and eat you story. That's a fun story. But I discovered something when I wrote *Little Brother*: that if you make the reality, the technical reality of something that people have immediate, long-term experience with, if you make that the constraint on the plot instead of the thing that you ignore in service of the plot, then the plot becomes really exciting because it feels like a science fiction novel and not like a fantasy novel. When the computers only can do things that computers can do, and yet the story always has to hew to what computers can do, the story is still exciting. That excitement feels all the more exciting. Because when the writer gets to suspend reality, a part of reality that we all live with every day, like computers, then all bets are off. Literally anything can happen. Maybe cars turn out to be flying cars at the end. Maybe it turns out that it was all a video game and everyone gets an extra life, right? Consequences cease to feel sharp when you have this fantasy stuff, so writing an optimistic disaster novel I think makes for an immediacy because instead of having the conflict arise from the fact that all of your neighbours were secretly horrible bastards, the conflict arises from the fact that all of your neighbours were, like you, flawed vessels with good points and bad points who want to help, aren't always sure what to do, and maybe have irreconcilable differences. Those irreconcilable differences with people you love and respect are intrinsically more dramatic than irreconcilable differences with people you hate. Those are the irreconcilable differences that result in not just your victory or loss, but the end of that relationship that you value, or some crisis in that relationship. So you get two for the price of one.

Now, as to why we have disaster stories and utopian stories today, you know, some of it is really easy to see. We are in crisis. Sometimes we read those for a delicious thrill, sometimes we read those scary sto-

ries because they signpost how bad things can get unless we shift them—we try to arrive at a shared vocabulary that we can use to try to describe what's wrong in the world. I mean, you know, it's not a coincidence that Slytherin and Tory have become a kind of synonym, right? It becomes a way to talk about politics by invoking other narratives that matter to us and is politically useful. For fifty, sixty years we were able to tell people who said "why shouldn't we just spy on everyone? Then we can catch all the criminals." We could tell them to shut up because they were being Orwellian, right? We had this architect's fly through of what a surveillance society might be, the emotional experience of a surveillance society might be, thanks to Eric Blair and his pen, right? I think it doesn't necessarily mean that we're despairing. It might be that we're trying to figure out how bad it can get so we can warn people off, so we can steer clear of it.

**CP: I'd like to bring this idea of networks that allow us to co-ordinate into the orbit of that question, perhaps by phrasing the following question in this provocative way: what is the economic place of stories, then? What economic value do they have?**

CD: Science fiction writers are not predictors. They're not prophets. If we were we'd be very bad at it. I also don't think that prophecy is possible because if it were then the future would be foreordained, and if the future is foreordained then you shouldn't bother to get out of bed in the morning because the world is going to happen no matter what you do. The future is contestable, and so prophecy at its best is a warning and an inspiration and not a prediction. What science fiction writers do, we flawed vessels with our lack of foreknowledge about the future, just like everybody else, is take all of our parochial fears and aspirations for technology and the future, and we tell stories about them. And those stories represent a kind of gene pool of potential fears and aspirations for the future, and the selective pressure on that gene pool are readers, editors, booksellers and people who adapt books into films and so on. They pick the stories that resonate with the moment, and so together they form a kind of oracle, not because the writers are prescient, but because the writers are prolific and they blindly write all the futures, and some of the futures are plucked out by the readers to

tell you what's on our mind at the moment.

I think that we are prone to something behavioural ecologists call the “availability heuristic.” When we're asked to evaluate the probability of something, we overweight the probability of something if we can picture it vividly, and we underweight the probability of something if we can't. So we spend a lot of time worrying about stranger danger and our kids, even though statistically it's such an outlier you might as well be worrying about comets striking your kids, right? But we don't spend a lot of time worrying about listeria and botulism, which are actual things that actually kill and sicken kids like crazy. We have all of these countermeasures against stranger danger and virtually nothing about inadequate refrigeration. That's because we can vividly imagine what happens when a kid is kidnapped by a stranger. Your kid dying of cholera is just not something we spend a lot of time imagining, partly because it would make a really gross movie, so no-one's ever made that movie, except maybe, you know, as sort of a black and white foreign film that plays in the Repertory House with subtitles.

That availability heuristic, it informs our intuition. The stories form our intuition about what is likely to happen. What is possible. What is a problem and what should be done about it. Because they unconsciously influence the way we calculate the odds. So in 1984, a young Matthew Broderick starred in a very good movie called *Wargames*, in which he played a teenager who bought a 150 acoustic coupler and nearly started World War III by hacking into government military computers. In 1986, off the back of that and after a two-year debate, the US Congress passed a law called the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act that was aimed at stopping future Matthew Brodericks from starting World War III. And it was so grossly ill-informed, so badly drafted, that it has been nothing but a source of mischief since, because any time you exceed your authorisation on a computer that doesn't belong to you, you commit a felony. This has been interpreted so that any time you violate the terms of service on a website, you commit a felony. So that any time you—all that boilerplate that you've never read, that no-one has ever read, not even the people who wrote it—you know, the first two years, Twitter's terms of service said Flickr all the way through because they hadn't done a search and replace, and no-one had read it. So violating those terms of service that no-one reads can

put you in jail. It doesn't happen often but when it does—Aaron Schwartz, you know, one of the founders of Reddit, was facing 35 years in prison for violating MIT's terms of service because he downloaded a bunch of scientific articles with a script instead of clicking on the links. So the terms of service said you may download these, but not with a script. He was facing 35 years in prison for 13 felonies when he hanged himself. So this has an enormous effect on our world, the stories we tell.

The stories we tell about disasters effect what we do in disasters. An approximate inspiration for this book is this wonderful book by Rebecca Solnit called *A Paradise Built in Hell*—Solnit is best-known for coining the term “mansplaining.” She wrote this great book that's a closely researched history of disasters and how we respond to them, and this phenomenon of elite panic, which is this conviction on the part of the authorities and the elites that when the lights go out, the poorest will go rampaging, and that the first thing you should do in disasters is not figure out how to help people, but how to stop them from going wild. She shows how through history disasters were turned into catastrophes by this elite panic. My favourite example is in 1906—San Francisco had this terrible earthquake, the great quake of 1906, and General Funston marched his troops out of the barracks in the Presidio convinced of two things that he was thoroughly wrong about: the first was that he knew how to use controlled demolitions to start a fire break that would stop the fires from spreading, and the second was that he couldn't allow people back to fight the fires he just set by accident because they would loot their neighbourhoods. Which is how he came to burn down a quarter of San Francisco. So again, the dumb stories we tell ourselves for narrative convenience about what we do in times of crisis: they do have this impact on the broadly considered question of economics, which is how we decide what to do. Good stories can make things better.

**CP: I wanted to pick up on this issue of the availability heuristic in relation to the communities you portray. *Walkaway* contains a wide variety of different communities, different Walkaway ideologies, and I'm interested in the sources for these communities; how you came to develop what they feel like, what they look like, how they operate. Are there prototypes already existing for these communities?**



CD: Yeah. They're a mish-mash of Burning Man and Occupy and hippie houses. My parents are old un-reconstructed Marxists so the places they took me around to when I was a kid, and all of the different temporary autonomous zones that have cropped up in different times. Even the Paris Commune, some of which were quite glorious and some of which were quite manky and most of which were in between high and low moments. And trying to capture the feeling of coming together with people to ask whether you are in fact living as though it were the first days of a better nation or are just arsing around eating magic mushrooms. I think that's always an open question. So you look back twenty years later.

**CP: In *Walkaway*, you portray a lot of devastated landscapes. You also portray these Walkaway communities engaging in landscape restoration. You link that up to ecological ideas, even to space colonisation—a kind of NASA approach to small self-sustaining environments. Is that something you see as a growth industry of the future? This restoration of landscapes? How important is that going forward, do you think?**

CD: I'm not ever going to pretend to predict what's going to happen, but I do think that the green-life vision, the pastoral vision of this kind of bourgeois shire where we're all smallholder farmers and craftspeople with leather aprons who live close to the land has this great elision at its head: what do you do with the five-billion people who would no longer fit in the world if that's how we lived. I'm a great believer in what Leigh Phillips, who wrote this great book, *Austerity Ecology and the Collapse-Porn Addicts*, calls the Promethean vision of the left: this idea not that every lord will live like a peasant but that every peasant will live like a lord. I like material culture, I'm not anti-consumerist. I think beautifully made things are beautiful. A lot of the things I own I don't own because they're beautifully made. I own them because they provide some minor service and the opportunity cost of not owning them, of renting one or borrowing one, is so high that I have a drawer with a really shitty drill in it for the three times a year I need to make a hole in the wall instead of figuring out who's got a really good drill a lot of the time that I need it. But I do believe that materiality, the project of Mary Condo, convincing everyone that all they re-

ally need is a single, smooth river rock that reminds them of their mother—this is not going to save the world. We have to be intelligent with our material use and mindful. But that doesn't mean eschewing it. It means finding a way to make it sustainable.

In information security, a lot of the times the answer is abstinence, and that's one of the reasons we get into such problems with information security. People say how do I do x, y and z and still be secure, and the information practitioner will say you don't really want to do x, y and z. The answer to that is not that people don't do x, y and z. They need to do it because they need to get on with their job. They just do it in this peripherally insecure way that they try to disguise from the security practitioner, which means that no-one finds out about it until the problems have gotten so wide-hoc that they're undeniable. So how do we get to a good material future? We don't do it by guilting people out about liking stuff. There's one thing all those burial grounds full of arrow-heads and jewellery teach us, it's that we like stuff. We do it by making stuff better, by making our cities better. By making them denser, by making them more intelligent, by making them more liveable, by taking the weird market failures that turn our houses into empty safe-deposit boxes for offshore criminals and turn them back into houses. But we don't do it by convincing everyone that they should live in a rambling country estate, because simple maths tells you we can't get there.

I don't believe in de-growth. I believe in growing through. I do think that if there's a future, it has to come from an intensely material relationship, and markets don't solve all of our problems, but one of the things markets are really good at is material efficiency—not because firms care about material efficiency or the environment. Firms don't care about anything because they're not people. They're at best climax colony organisms that use us as their gut-flora. Firms do care about beating other firms in profitability, and one of the ways to do that is to reduce your material input. So a building like this is a modern building, compared to a building down the road that's survived the bombings. This building will have an order of magnitude less embodied material energy and labour for the cubic metre-age that this building encloses compared to the building down the road. There's a great Bank of Canada study by two economists who are IKEA freaks. They saved all their catalogues and wanted to see what the big-

gest predictor was of a piece of furniture appearing year-on-year in the IKEA catalogue. That's if it gets lighter every year. The material inputs go down, it becomes less complex, it's made in fewer countries, it has fewer parts, and it packs into less cubic volume. In every way it becomes a more efficient thing. So you compare them to Jilly bookcases—they're the same bookcase, but they're not. One of them is like a jet-engine and the other is like a twin-prop from the Wright brothers era. They just look the same. Under the hood they're totally different.

**CP: Okay: our last question. In *Walkaway* we have a several cities towards the latter end of the narrative who begin to resist state violence. It would be remiss of me not to ask—because there is a reference to Liverpool, UK, in the book—was there a reason in particular you mentioned Liverpool rather than any other city in the UK?**

CD: Liverpool has this odd history in that it's a half-new half-old city thanks to the bombings and the systematic neglect after the bombings that allowed many buildings to fall into disrepair that would otherwise have been politically untenable to tear down. Given enough neglect then you might just as well pull it the rest of the way down. It's one of the first emblematic examples of a city left behind by post-industrialisation. It was held up around the world as what we could all end up with. One of the failure modes of globalism is that the shipyards disappear. It was in lots of books about China in the early-years. There are all these parables—there's one town in Germany where they moved the largest steel-factory to China, something like eleven thousand containers with all the nuts and bolts numbered so they could reassemble it.

But the other example is always Liverpool, right? When Michigan saw the automobile industry collapse, people said, "Oh, Detroit is like the first Liverpool of the Americas, right?" And so when you think about a city's character being in flux because of its relationship to industrial processes and global economics, Liverpool is one of those good examples, and all of those other cities in *Walkaway*, they're all rust-belt cities. They're all Midwestern rust-belt cities that have endured some form of collapse. Liverpool lived through lots of weird consequences as a result of those collapses, like that point during the housing bubble and the crisis, when you had so many empty

houses that the council said "You're not allowed to own an empty house in Liverpool anymore because they've all turned into crack-dens, and we're going to take them back from you because they're a blight, so you better come and live in this house you bought for speculation, or sell it off to someone who will, because we're just not prepared to have a city full of empty houses anymore." You know, all that stuff makes Liverpool ground-zero for what happens to the future when financial engineering, economic shifts and industrial shifts all play out on this global stage. Bradford's another city I write about for exactly the same reasons.

*[At this point, Doctorow begins to field questions from the audience].*

**Q1: A big part of what the Walkaways do is create their own identity. How important do you think it is for creating the first days of a better nation that we don't let ourselves develop organically, but we create ourselves?**

CD: That's a great question. It's certainly a very live one post-Brexit, right? Who are we? To what extent can we declare ourselves to have an identity? One of the things I immediately thought when I heard about Scottish independence referendum 2.0 was "I'm a British citizen—can I be a Scottish citizen? What does it take? I could be McDoctorow." I think that's a project that we're undergoing now. One of the best examples of how this could play out and what it means to have affinities instead of these fixed nationalities is Ada Palmer's book, *Too Like the Lightning*, where identity is multifarious and people literally wear badges that say I consider myself European and am a Brazilian football fan and also a Catholic, and those are my affinities. You are literally subject to different legal systems depending on which one's you're wearing. The proctors or authorities relate to you differently based on which contract you adopted into, based on your identity.

It's a fun idea to play with, but I also think there has always been a kind of fuzziness to our identity that we pretend isn't there because you're able to merge your ethnic identity with your national identity with your religious identity, especially in England where you have the Church of England and Englishness and Britishness and Anglo-Saxonness and we sort of make them all of a piece. Obviously that's never

been the case, right? Obviously there has always been Normans and Jews and non-conformists and Africans and Spaniards and whatever here. But we just kind of said those are outliers or edge-cases. Of course they add up to something that's much more than an edge-case and all the times that British history gets really interesting and terrible is when we ignore that stuff until we can't ignore it anymore and it's like, "Hey Jews, you're all moving to Amsterdam."

So we do have these multifarious contestable identities and now that we have the internet and now that it's possible to say in a semi-autonomous, relatively safe way, "Does anyone else think of themselves as non-binary?" Or "Does anyone else think of themselves as...." I keep meeting—because I once wrote a story about this—I now keep meeting atheist orthodox Jews. Which is a whole friggin' category! "I like the outfits, I enjoy the rituals, taking Saturday off is great, but the whole invisible guy in the sky thing, I'm just not that big on. I don't mind the other stuff though, don't get me wrong." It turns out that when you have a place where the love that dare not speak its name can speak its name freely, you find out that parts of your identity that you thought were unique to you are actually shared with other people.

**Q2: That theme that you were talking about, creating your own identity, I just wonder about the danger that people, when they look at the algorithms for finding new friends and they finding you, can end up just reinforcing each other's perhaps dangerous and scary points of view.**

CD: So the question is kind of like, "Do we end up in filter bubbles where we can choose our neighbours?" There's always been a danger of that partly because of homophily, so people tend to clot with people who are like them. Partly because heterodox ideas didn't have a good mechanism for spreading, so generally even if you were susceptible to heterodox ideas, you might never encounter them. So there was a kind of ideological homogeneity already in the town and the combination of that and the inability to safely whisper "Does anyone else here think that Cuomo fellow might not be the best leader we've ever had" without eventually losing your head meant that you may never know that there was someone who felt the same way as you.

I think that it giveth and it taketh away, so the

question isn't "Can it do this?" or "Can it not do this?" It's "How do we put our thumb on the scales for the thing that we want more of?" So we hear a lot about the filter bubble, and I definitely have a set of cultivated news feeds that look a lot more like my ideology than not, but I tell you what, I actually had to make an entry in my DNS, like my `f[ile] t[ransfer]` host file where domain name resolution is, to make sure I never clicked another `dailymail.co.uk` link, because the number of times a week where I accidentally clicked one and would then have to take a long shower, right? And so the reality is that I would never read *The Daily Mail* in the real world, or lots of other things that I read that aren't quite so terrible as *The Daily Mail*, but I do not have blocks on. Now I do. Now I see them. I actually see a pretty wide media diet that isn't—I think the normal media diet of someone's heterodox views is if you subscribe to *The Morning Star*, and then you see the headlines in *The Telegraph*, right? But now the heterodox person sees not just *The Telegraph* and their weird commie rag, but also *The Daily Stormer* and *Breitbart* and all kinds of other things that end up migrating across your transom. I don't know if in fact the algorithms are selecting for things that are more like what you're interested in. I think increasingly in a click-based economy the algorithms select for things that you won't like, that are way outside your comfort zone that you click on or share or publicly excoriate. There is that kind of monetarization of outrage that is another thing that media does. I don't think the story is as simple, and when it comes to algorithms I think we have a shorthand for algorithms that leads us astray. The algorithm is opaque and unknowable, and therefore it represents danger because it can go so badly off the rails that we'll never be able to interrogate it and find out why it did.

The reality is that the algorithms used in machine learning are really well understood. There's only about half a dozen of them, and they're the same ones used in every context. I published a Snowden leak that was a classified GCHQ primer on machine learning for data scientists workings with intelligence materials—intelligence datasets—that I was able to take from that archive and originally publish and report on, and one of the most interesting things about it is that it reads so much like a primer on machine learning for every other domain, because the algorithms themselves are not special. They're the same ones used by everyone. What is different

are the datasets. And the datasets are where all the mischief and potential lies, because if I generate an algorithm to predict the height of people from their weight, and I train that algorithm using nothing but datasets that I take from year three students I ask to step on the scales, that algorithm will be a critically good algorithm, and it will produce absolutely nonsensical outcomes. And then if I tell you, actually, any year three who feels uncomfortable about their weight because they feel they're too skinny or too heavy to not get on the scales? Then you can see that algorithm is going to produce really bizarre results, even though the algorithm is transparent and well-understood.

The important thing about locating the problem with algorithms in training data is just that it's sampling bias. Well, sampling bias is a thing that anyone who's ever contended with statistical data knows about. It's still a minority of the population, but you still get all the social scientists, all the biologists, all the physicists, everybody who works in the sciences at least understands it. I think part of the problem with algorithms is that even people who are quite skilled in scientific disciplines assume that when we hear data science, being a biologist doesn't qualify you to critique it. Being a biologist absolutely qualifies you to critique sampling bias. Hell, getting a doctorate in education and doing your dissertation where you'll do statistical analyses with different techniques, that qualifies you to critique sampling methodologies. So when the police say we were worried about bias in policing, so we used policing data to train an algorithmic, predictive policing system, then you should be able to say, "Tell me more about your training data. Was it like you spent twenty years asking brown people to turn their pockets inside out looking for weed? And then you took that data and you used an algorithm to tell you where the weed was and it told you brown people were the only people to have weed in their pockets? I can see your problem right here, and it's not the algorithm, right?"

The problem isn't that the algorithm predicts people just like you to be your friends. The problem is that we don't get to inspect, contest, look at and argue about the training data, because it's a trade secret. And that's the part we should be taking aim at in order to produce societies that are more pluralistic and that are more fair and transparent. At least it will make the failure modes more graceful, even if it

doesn't make success more graceful.

**Q3: To what extent do you think *Walkaway* can be imagined in the UK, where there's a lack of land, or it's owned by someone? I'm a practising civil engineer and so I'm acutely aware of how land ownership can scuttle projects. We can 3D-print stuff, we can personalise stuff—we can't print the land on which we place it. What stories can be told that deal with land ownership?**

CD: The Walkaways are already contesting land ownership because it's not like Canada is mostly terra nullius, right? Canada is mostly owned, some of it's national parkland but most of it's property. While the UK doesn't have the same ratio of per capita land as Canada does—Canada has an extraordinary per capita land ratio, and at least until climate change melts that permafrost most of it's inaccessible. If you look at the distribution of the population as the story takes place, it's mostly within seventy kilometres of the US border. Seventy per cent of Canada lives within seventy kilometres of the US border, this narrow strip, a thread. So Canada lives on the edge of its toenail. Everything else might as well not be there, and the story's set there.

When you look at the UK's population distribution, we have a few very dense cities, but it's actually really not dense outside of the cities. We don't have a crowded country, we just have a lumpily distributed country. Which you know, fair play, I'm all for leaving habitats intact and having green field sites and so on. I'm a fan of the green belt. I just think that when we say there's no room in the UK, what we mean is we have a dysfunctional planning system and a lot of NIMBYism about high-rises and a lot of property speculation. You know the south of England right now has the highest ratio of bedrooms per capita than it has ever had in its history, and half of those bedrooms in the south are empty on any given night. That's not a housing crisis. That's just a distribution crisis. And a lot of that's stuff like when you have a hyper-inflatory market and property, people don't sell until the very last instant, and so you'll have pensioners in fuel poverty living in five bedroom houses because they know that if they hold onto it long enough, maybe they'll be able to flog it for enough to pay for three garden flats for their kids. The alternative is that their kids will never be able to afford property and so they have this vast, empty house,

and while their three kids are waiting for them to die, they're all living in one and a half rooms up six flights of stairs with a leaky roof, because they can't afford anything else, right? So we have this vapour law for housing in the UK that's not really related to population density or even entirely to planning, but mostly to financial engineering, speculation and lots of other stuff. Again, Liverpool, the city where they had a crisis of empty houses, is not a city where we have a problem of inadequate housing. We have a problem of inadequately distributed housing.

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## Supportive Interchange Rituals in the *Star Trek* Universe

PG Boyer

### Introduction

IN OUR WORLD of turmoil that, for over half a century, has been growing smaller by the day, we see nations, tribes, and groups of people becoming more xenophobic. As Odo put it in “Image in the Sand,” ‘In times of trouble some people put faith in hate and fear.’ We must remember that we are interactive and we grow only through interaction with others. We therefore need to find a way to make our interactions positive and not negative. Can science fiction help us?

Yes. When reading, watching, or writing science fiction numerous factors can be brought into view. The way we are socialized, or not; the way we are accepted by society, or not; how we treat the most vulnerable in society by the way they are ostracized, or not. All these Humanities concepts, and more, are found within the framework of science fiction. The Humanities and the Sciences come alive when entwined together in science fiction. How?

For instance, *Star Trek’s Deep Space Nine (DS9)*, because it is basically stationary, is a great example. Conflicts come to the station because of its unique assemblage of characters. It is the crossroads of the Alpha Quadrant and the Gamma Quadrant because of a newly discovered wormhole. The crew of *DS9* does not go out and find a planet with a problem, solve it, and leave never having to face the consequences of their solution. The *DS9* crew find that there are consequences to their actions. There are many conflicts within the pilot.

One of the conflicts revolves around Commander Sisko. He is a single parent who does not really want his assignment to *DS9*. He is still in mourning over his wife who died three years earlier when the Borg invaded the Alpha Quadrant. This is an inner conflict he must overcome. The second conflict concerns Major Kira. She does not want the Federation in Bajoran space, let alone running the station, especially after the young Federation doctor mentions he wanted to have a frontier and an adventuresome, hero-making assignment. But it is an episode near the end of sea-

son one, where Lwaxana Troi is romantically pursuing Odo, which creates a conflict I will use in this analysis. We must start at the beginning of any conflict and its resolution – the Brain.

Our actions, and reactions, start there. According to Dr. Caroline Leaf, neuroscience is now finding our brains are wired for the positive, which means we have an “optimist bias.”<sup>1</sup> It seems that the dendrites, which make up our brain’s neurons, actually grow more connectors when we practice positive thoughts and rituals. These same dendrites actually shrink when we practice negative thoughts and rituals. But, one might ask, “What are positive or negative rituals?” And “How can we apply positive supportive rituals in order to overcome negative ones if we do not know what they are?”

*Negative rituals and supportive interchange rituals* have been around for centuries. Although both types of rituals will be described in detail below, on the surface both types of rituals can appear somewhat confusing. This article will clarify the differences between the two types of ritual that Goffman outlines in *Relations in Public*. It will also consider how *positive supportive interchange rituals (SIRs)* can overcome negative rituals and bring outsiders into a community.

The first anthology I ever read—the Bible—includes many supportive interchanges. The story of the Good Samaritan is one familiar to many. There is also the account of the Apostle Paul and his fellow prisoners and guards who were shipwrecked near an island in the Mediterranean during a severe storm. It was on the island of Malta, in Acts 28:2, that it was said that the inhabitants showed “unusual kindness” to the shipwrecked men. The islanders of Malta were performing a *supportive interchange ritual* for both the guards and prisoners when they built fires to help the waterlogged men who swam ashore.

### Erving Goffman

ERVING GOFFMAN (1922–1982) was the first to coin the phrase *supportive interchange rituals* in his book *Relations in Public* (1971). However, it was Goffman’s “depiction of the details of social life... [that] demonstrates his penetrating style of analysis and offers an insider/outsider’s angle on the social

1 There has been much research in this area. Some of the researchers are: Tali Sharot, author of the book *The Optimist Bias*, Alison Riccardi, Candace Raio, Elizabeth Phelps; Daniel Schacter, Donna Rose Addis; and Dr. Caroline Leaf.

realm” (Lemert and Branaman 2004, xlv). He described symbolic interactionism as dramaturgical. Did Goffman mean, like Shakespeare, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players...” Not quite. Dramaturgy is his way of describing how humans interact one-on-one, or in small groups. We all like to think we are unique from anyone else (and we are) but Goffman proved we are all similar when we interact with others. How? When standing with a circle of friends there will always be one that leads the conversation. Others participating might defer to that one as a leader, or one person will cross their arms and soon others will do the same.

According to Charles Lemert, Erving Goffman was a “televsual genius before the fact...” (Lemert and Branaman 2004, xxxvii). By this Lemert meant that Goffman’s sociology was televsual despite his never actually commenting on, or using, the medium of television itself. He may have gained this insight while working for the Canadian Broadcasting Company during World War II, which may have given him a better understanding of the audiovisual medium. It is almost as if he had a video recorder in his head. He could slow down, or rewind, any scene to look at each individual frame, and find the most salient information within a single frame, which allowed him to analyze that information in a unique way. This allowed him to view sociology on a microscopic level. His televsual view point of view, his dramaturgy, makes his theories a good lens through which to look at the *Star Trek* universe. Goffman built on Èmile Durkheim’s positive and negative rituals laid out in Durkheim’s book, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

### **Èmile Durkheim’s Rituals**

Durkheim is considered one of the Fathers of Sociology. In his book on religion Durkheim was looking for the reasons for, and not the origins of, religion. Unlike many of his cohort who thought religion unnecessary, Durkheim thought society proceeded from religious belief and that it was indeed the basis for all other institutions. In looking for ‘...the most essential forms of religion’s thought and practice,’ Durkheim found both positive and negative rituals. He stated: ‘... rituals are ways of acting that are generated only within assembled groups and are meant to stimulate and sustain or recreate certain mental status in these groups’ (Cosman 2008, 10, 11). Dur-

kheim explains that a person can perform positive rituals to bring an outsider into their circle. Why call them rituals? Because they are ‘formal patterns of activity that express symbolically ... shared meanings’ (Kornblum 1988, 500). This could be anything from greeting a friend on the street, going to a wedding, going to a funeral, or watching entertainment, be it sporting, theatrical, or political.

According to Durkheim, we direct rituals toward those we value highly, be it in a religious or civil setting. He proposed that we internally separate what we think of as sacred—that which we value more highly than ourselves that we “isolate by prohibitions”—and profane—that which we believe will taint us (the sacred) and make us unclean—and act accordingly (Cosman 2008, 40). Durkheim then enumerated *positive* rituals for drawing close to the sacred, and *negative* rituals for *staying away* from, or not profaning, the sacred. We practice negative rituals when we do not want to tarnish, or profane, the object or person we value; or when we do not want to be tainted by others we think less valuable than ourselves. On the other hand, we practice positive rituals when we want to ensure a person we deem sacred knows we value them.

It was Durkheim’s notions of positive and negative rituals that Goffman used as a framework for how to recognize aspects of each. As both men noted, there are many rituals we perform every day. Durkheim conducted a meta-analysis of the literature available to him on how the various Australian aboriginal tribes worshipped. Then, according to Goffman, ‘The implication is that in one sense this secular world is not so irreligious as we might think. Many gods have been done away with, but the individual himself stubbornly remains as a deity of importance. [We] walk with some dignity and [are] the recipient of many little offerings’ (Goffman 1967, 95).

### **Erving Goffman’s Rituals**

As mentioned above, there exist both negative and positive rituals, some of which we perform every day, whether knowingly or unknowingly. Negative ones require no contact with others, but positive ones do require contact. Negative rituals (which keep us away from the sacred) consist of *avoidance*, *interdictions* and just plain *staying away* from others. We can recognize negative rituals by watching someone with a large personal zone who always uses *avoidance* to ensure people are kept at, or be-

yond, arm's length. Through *interdictions* one sets rules on how others may, or may not, interact with them, whereas *staying away* consists of just making sure one does not go where others go. Such a person might be called a recluse.

You might ask, "Why would one perform such negative rituals?" The number of reasons are vast, and there is the possibility that the negative rituals are performed as an ethical imperative (to reduce contact that would threaten someone's identity or ethical stance, for example). Odo's species, The Great Link, are shape-shifters. This means they can become anything from a humanoid to fog. They have many reasons for their negative rituals in *DS9*. Fear of other species and the desire to control other species in order not to be hunted are two reasons. Some of their negative rituals include creating a planet hidden in a nebula so they will not be discovered by other species (*staying away*), taking the form of other species to discover other species weaknesses (*avoidance*), and creating two species, the Vorta and the Jem'Hadar, to be their diplomats and their army for their carrot and stick diplomacy (*interdiction*). When the Vorta cannot get a treaty of non-aggression signed with a species, the Jem'Hadar are sent in to achieve the genocide of that species.

Positive interchanges, or SIRs, require contact. Goffman states that this is because positive interchanges set up a dialogue. The first person initiates an SIR, the second one responds, and then the originator answers back and there is a back and forth dialogue, be it verbal or visual. This can be seen when one student comes to the aid of another who has been the recipient of bullying.

One SIR is a *ratification ritual* which is performed for a person who *changes their own status*. They may have gotten married, or quit an unrewarding job to seek a more rewarding one. The performer of the *ratification* is telling the person they are still valued by the performer. We can see this at a wedding when all the guests congratulate the bride and groom, and when the maid-of-honor and best man both give toasts to the happy couple.

A second is a *sympathetic ritual*. This is when the first person understands the plight of a second person *from the second person's point-of-view*. This understanding then directs the type of support the first person will render unto the second. In today's world this support can come from either the political right or the left, and it can take many forms. It

could look like someone who is helping refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa who are seeking asylum, or it could look like a group of Neo-Nazis welcoming a new member who had previously been persecuted for their beliefs.

The final type of ritual, the *assurance ritual*, is performed for a person whose status changes *through no fault of their own*. Perhaps they lost their home in a natural disaster, or were injured in a war or are escaping a war zone. The person performing the *assurance ritual* is demonstrating that, in spite of the acknowledged change, support for that person will continue, and that they are still valued as a member of humanity.

### In *DS9*'s "The Forsaken"

Although one can find many examples of positive and negative rituals and SIRs throughout the *Star Trek* franchise, "The Forsaken" is an exemplary model of what Erving Goffman termed *supportive interchange rituals*. There are three plot lines in "The Forsaken." Plot one involves an alien probe, which comes through the newly discovered wormhole from the Gamma Quadrant. It attaches itself, electronically and emotionally, to Chief O'Brien. Plot two involves Dr. Bashir, who has to keep three Federation ambassadors happy and out of Sisko's way. Plot three sees Odo being romantically pursued by Lwaxana Troi, with both becoming trapped in a turbolift during a station power outage. It is this last plot line that I will use to illustrate Goffman's interchange rituals.

At this point in the series Odo does not interact with many on the station except in the course of his security duties. One might say he keeps himself on the periphery of interpersonal interactions on the station. Being the only known shapeshifter on the station it is clear he feels he is an "outsider within" (Collins 2009, 13–15, 320). It might also be said that Odo thinks he would be affected by the humanoids on the station in a negative or profane way. Justice is all that matters to him and if he interacts with the occupants of the station it will change his view of what is, or is not, just and impartial, thus tainting, or profaning, his judgment.

Lwaxana Troi, the telepathic ambassador from Betazed, meets Odo when she is the victim of a robbery. As a Betazoid she can't "read" him and this attracts her to him. Later she pursues Odo to his office. He is a law enforcement officer and she the *Auntie Mame* of the galaxy.



Odo is seated behind his desk when Lwaxana enters his office, and he rises and backs away from her. When she has trapped him with his back against the consoles, she playfully runs her finger around his Comm badge while complimenting him and telling him of her interest in him. She is performing a *positive ritual* by being intimate with him. She is trying to show she values him because he is different and an outsider. He does not know how to respond so, practicing *avoidance*, he makes up a Comm call and leaves for the Ops department.

While in Ops, Odo consults Commander Sisko about his problem. Sisko is amused. Odo, not wanting to cause an interstellar diplomatic incident, tries to practice *interdiction* by telling Sisko to instruct Lwaxana to leave him alone. With a grin on his face, Sisko tells Odo he can't help and that Odo will have to deal with Lwaxana on his own. Odo then tries to stay away from her by performing his security duties.

As Odo goes about those duties he uses a turbolift. Prior to exiting a turbolift and trying to *stay away*, Odo looks left and right to see if Lwaxana is around. Not seeing her he exits. She sees him and greets him (a ritual of everyday life). Practicing *avoidance*, he turns to reenter the turbolift. But this time his *avoidance* tactic fails as the turbolift doors close in his face. He tells her he must check upper Pylon number three. She wants to go with him and when the turbolift doors open again she follows him in.

She is still trying to convey to Odo that she values him when she mentions she will have Quark send them their picnic basket. By this gesture Lwaxana is trying express to Odo that, although he feels (and is) different, she wants him within her circle of friends. In his attempt to use many *interdictions* with her we find out that he does not eat because he has no digestive system, and that his mouth is only the approximation of one. One could say he does not want to taint, or profane, her so he tells her his regenerative cycle is sixteen hours and he turns into his liquid state. Why would this profane her? When Odo regenerates he turns into a liquid, a state that has private associations for Odo. Things that are personal for one may profane, or be disrespectful, to another. No one wants to have someone watch them sleeping. So to *assure* him she will not be tainted or profaned by his sleep-cycle she smiles and tells him she can swim.

While the turbolift is proceeding, there is a station-

wide power outage. We know this because the lights go out and a batt-lamp is all that lights up inside the turbolift. The scene has become dark, which could represent either intimacy, fear, or both. If one is familiar with *The Next Generation*, they know Lwaxana is not comfortable with what she sees as sterile technologies and environments, or with technology that does not facilitate personal interactions. She becomes apprehensive and fearfully she asks if they are in danger.

Because they did not create their change in status, Odo uses an *assurance* interchange and tells Lwaxana that as long as they remain calm things will be alright. She wants to talk, he wants be quiet – an *interdiction*. After a few attempts at conversation and *interdictive* looks from Odo, she confesses she has to talk. She then slides down the bulkhead to sit on the deck. Since she changed her position by sliding down, Odo *ratifies* her verbally by affirming that he understands her need to talk. He then physically *ratifies* her by also sliding down to the deck. The mood now changes from one of anxiety and fear to one of intimacy.

After recounting her biography, Lwaxana asks Odo about his. He still wants to practice his *interdiction* of remaining silent. Lwaxana finally engages him in conversation. He describes his life in a lab and the circumstances of his leaving, to which Lwaxana responds sympathetically by acknowledging the loneliness of his youth. Odo further explains that he transitioned from being unable to communicate by shapeshifting and performing tricks to try to fit in. He then left the lab for the station thinking he could learn more. This is where she begins understands things from Odo's perspective and it brings her later dialogue in line with the performance of *sympathetic rituals*. While seated on the deck, Odo starts to look like he is very hot and moist. He is now in his fifteenth hour and soon will turn to his gelatinous state.

After a commercial interlude, Odo, now standing, clutches the vertical rails in the turbolift while facing away from Lwaxana and the camera. Lwaxana wants to perform an SIR but he tells her she can't, a slight *interdiction*. It is embarrassing for him because his liquid state is private and no one has ever seen him during his regenerative period. The scene cuts to a front view of Odo, who appears to be dripping. When Odo sees something to his left and questions Lwaxana as to what it is, she replies that it is her hair. He turns to see her with no wig and her hair,

a medium brown, pinned up to facilitate the wearing of her wig. Thus begins her *sympathetic ritual* when she explains that no one ever saw her without her wig and that it is ordinary and she never cared to be ordinary. She is non-verbally and verbally affirming that she understands his vulnerability and is in turn making herself vulnerable to him.

In the following exchange all three SIRs come together. When he tells her she looks fine he is *ratifying* her; she *assures* him when she tells him to let her care for him and demonstrates *sympathy* for him when she says “so you see Odo, even us non shape-shifters have to change who we are every once in a while” (“The Forsaken”); she initiates a *reassurance ritual* for him when she holds up her skirt, allowing him a place to rest in safety where she then takes care of him. His visual response to her gesticulation during her dialogue of *assurance* and *sympathy* is to *ratify* her by pouring himself into her skirt.

After the power has been restored both walk out of the turbolift, Lwaxana fixing her wig and smiling and Odo telling her he is appreciative of her (a *ratification*). Before she leaves, she lightly rubs his cheek with her fingers and says he’ll have more to appreciate next time she sees him (*reassurance*). The scene ends with Odo, ever so slightly, forgoing his negative rituals as he smiles at her parting comment. Thus, the original conflict, his being romantically pursued by someone he does not have a bond with, is resolved within the confines of the turbolift. Odo, the “outsider,” is brought into the inner circle of the boisterous, yet compassionate, Lawaxana Troi.

When one examines *DS9* in terms of positive and negative rituals, one will see that Odo does not perform positive rituals until after his encounter with Lwaxana recounted above. In season two’s episode, “Shadowplay,” Odo performs a supportive ritual for Rurigan’s granddaughter Taya. Her mother was the latest person to go missing from her village. Odo *sympathizes* with her as he also has no idea who or where his own parents are.

### Throughout the Franchise

In other *Star Trek* series there are examples of positive and negative rituals. In *The Original Series (TOS)* one need only look to Kirk helping Spock in “Amok Time.” Without thought for his own career, Kirk orders a course change to bring Spock to Vulcan because Spock is going through the “Pon Farr” stage of his reproductive cycle.

In *Star Trek: The Next Generation’s* “Loud as a Whisper,” Troi helps the arrogant mediator Riva, who has lost his chorus and can no longer communicate. Practicing *interdiction*, he wants to leave the planet and the people he was supposed to help. Practicing *assurance*, Troi wants to find a way to help Riva. As the ships counselor, she asks him how he gets two warring factions to discuss peace terms. His answer is to turn a disadvantage into an advantage. Using a *ratification* tactic, she asks why he can’t teach the two sides his sign language, thereby helping to facilitate peace. He acknowledges that she is right.

In *Enterprise*, Archer provides SIRs for the Andorian Commander, Shran, when he helps Shran retrieve his kidnapped daughter. Archer helps the Tellarite ambassador, Gral, by fighting Shran in an Andorian ritualistic fight of honor. Archer also helps investigate the bombing of the Starfleet Embassy on Vulcan. While investigating, Archer and T’Pol bring the Vulcans back to the logical roots Surak taught them 1500 years ago, using all three SIRs to do so.

### Conclusion

In this world of ever growing conflict between and within countries, we need a means of researching and teaching appropriate ways to meet such conflicts. How can we teach the skills if we cannot recognize them? As noted above, science fiction, specifically *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, has the capacity to be used as an analytical platform for conflict resolution because science fiction can teach without offending by using alien creatures/cultures to examine earthly interactions.

Of the many ways to resolve conflicts, the preceding analysis of the conflict between Odo and Lwaxana provides a model. The conflict in this episode was resolved through *supportive interchange rituals*. The other two conflicts mentioned from the *DS9* pilot concerning Sisko and Kira were resolved in other ways. Sisko is forced to re-evaluate his attitude of his wife’s death. This personal, inner conflict is resolved in the pilot when he encounters the Bajoran peoples’ religion and faced their Prophets, who showed him that he was living in the past.

Major Kira’s conflict with the Federation was resolved in a different way. It took much of the first season, but as she worked with Sisko and other Federation personnel, she saw them not as interlopers but as friends. The Federation personnel do not want to occupy Bajor like the Cardassians did, but

only want to help ensure Bajor could eventually join the Federation as an equal with all the other member planetary systems.

When watching and reading sf we can comprehend how SIRs can be used to avoid difficult situations and become useful for finding amenable solutions that save dignity and lives. In the end how does all this help one teach through science fiction? We can recognize when others are performing *negative rituals* and can use *positive supportive interchange rituals* to overcome the negative ones wherever we go, whether it is down the street or across the globe. We can also tell when others are performing SIRs for us. It teaches us psychological and emotional reciprocity: if I affirm your intelligence, you are psychologically bound to affirm mine. If I affirm your emotional wellbeing, you are impelled to affirm mine. After all, supportive interchange rituals are nothing more than emotional reciprocity. All of this can be taught through science fiction when one knows where and how to look for them.

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## Simultaneous Worlds: Global Science Fiction Cinema

Zak Bronson

Jennifer L. Feeley and Sarah Ann Wells, eds. *Simultaneous Worlds: Global Science Fiction Cinema*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Paperback, 315 pages, \$30.00, ISBN 978-0-8166-9318-4.

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JENNIFER L. FEELEY and Sarah Ann Wells' *Simultaneous Worlds: Global Science Fiction Cinema* is a fascinating and engaging collection that explores the multiple, heterogeneous proliferations of SF worldwide. Bringing together numerous standout articles from established SF scholars alongside academics trained in national cinematic traditions, *Simultaneous Worlds* provides an investigation into what the editors refer to as "an uncharted quadrant in the field of SF cinema, namely its global ubiquity" (ix). Situating itself within the fields of SF studies and national/transnational cinema, *Simultaneous Worlds* is the first edited collection to focus on the production of SF cinema worldwide, providing in-depth discussions of popular films such as *District 9* (2009) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), as well as lesser-known SF films from nations such as India, China, Russia, and North and South Korea.

The first section of essays examines SF's intersection with new mediated environments, including discussions of the genre's transformation as it is impacted by screen cultures, animation, digital cinema, and contemporary artistic practices. The authors attend to the ways that global SF reconsiders some of the definitions of the genre. For example, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s "What is Estranged in Science Fiction Animation?" explores how animated SF rethinks the relation to mimetic realism deployed by Darko Suvin's conception of "cognitive estrangement." As Csicsery-Ronay Jr. suggests, despite animation's tendency towards imaginative physical worlds, animated SF constructs an ongoing tension between SF's relation to mimesis and animation's

relation to abstraction, which "works to contain the shape-shifting energies of the medium, while it simultaneously enjoys the freedom to depict more flexible worlds than mundane physical mimesis allows" (39). Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s analysis points to the ways that global animated SF expands genre theory into new territory.

*Simultaneous World's* most valuable element lies in the way that it establishes a series of theoretical approaches that problematize the hegemony of SF as a Western genre. Rather than treating global instances of the genre as derivative of a Hollywood model, the essays here examine the ways that global SF expands the genre's dimensions. Indeed, as J.P. Telotte's essay makes clear, SF's generic flexibility enables the genre to be transformed to address national and localized concerns. Telotte analyzes *FP.1 Does Not Answer* (1932) as an early instance of global cinema. *FP.1* was a British-French-German film shot in three different languages with slightly modified scripts that were meant to speak to local interests. The film's central narrative was intended to speak the universal language of science and technology in order to bridge together continents and nationalities; however, instead of contributing to a universalized vision of futuristic progress, the divergent meanings evident in the filmic versions pinpoint the impossibility of arriving at a universalist conception of the genre: "For while in this interwar period there was a sense that science and technology might themselves constitute a new sort of language, one that could reach out to a truly international audience, the emblems of science and technology, that language's basic elements, remained inflected with what we might think of as a local dialect, one that speaks directly to a sense of national identity in this era" (115).

Telotte's exploration of SF's "local dialects" resonates with several of the essays which explore the divergent meanings that emerge from SF produced from outside the centers of globalization. Essays by Joanna Page, Everett Hamner, and Emily Maguire bridge SF with postcolonial studies to consider how films from Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba respectively reconfigure dominant SF tropes in relation to each nation's position within global capitalism. Page, for example, reads the Argentinian films *Estrellas* (2007) and *Cóndor Crux, la leyenda* (2000) as retrofuturist narratives that disrupt the homogenous temporalities of global capitalism and historical progress by revealing the degree to which modernity is predi-

cated on an unequal relation between first and third worlds. Both films are filled with temporal displacements such as junkyard spacecrafts and animated hieroglyphs that upend teleological conceptions of modernity.

Multiple essays also consider the legacies of the cyborg, a figure that, like its symbolic associations, problematizes national borders and boundaries. In much of Western SF, the cyborg has been a figure for a disembodied, hyper-masculine conception of selfhood. However, essays by Sharalyn Orbaugh, Steve Choe, and Michelle Cho offer renewed attention to the cyborg as a means of resistance to the depersonalized transactions of global capital. Orbaugh, for example, reads Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004) against dominant Western trends in which the posthuman subject is synonymous with fully technologized selfhood. In Orbaugh's reading, *Innocence* provides a cautionary tale of posthuman enhancement that simultaneously considers the body as a site of post-anthropocentric relationality. Such a figuration enables the film to effectively move away from disembodied conceptions of self and point towards the possibilities of embodied affect. Cho reads the cyborg as a nexus point for comprehending social relations within global capitalism. Examining the inflatable sex doll that sits at the center of *Air Doll* (2009) as a cyborg-like figure, Cho argues that the doll's sexualized body becomes an 'empty' signifier of projected desire that exposes the superficiality of modern consumer culture. *Air Doll* participates in a generic innovation Cho terms the "disenchanted fantastic," which "suggests not an intrusion of the fantastic into a realist world but rather a displacement of the binarized understanding of reality and fantasy into a question of the relation between interiority and exteriority" (224). The disenchanted fantastic, thereby, refuses any clear distinction between "empirical reality and social fact" (225), which enables *Air Doll* to critique "global capitalism's misogynist and exploitive social relations" (226).

The book's final section considers SF films produced by socialist and post-socialist nations that consider SF from outside capitalist frameworks. Nathan Isaacson's "Media and Messages: Blurred Visions of Nation and Science in *Death Ray on a Coral Island*" brings the collection full-circle, exploring the multiple, transmedia iterations of the first SF film produced in mainland China. For much of Chinese history, modernity was firmly rooted in tradition

privileging Western systems and models, and as a result 'Science' was closely associated with Enlightenment conceptions of progress. Isaacson examines multiple iterations of the story of the creation of a laser beam (or "death ray") by demonstrating how the story came to embody China's growing anxieties over the relationship between science and global capitalism. Isaacson's analysis demonstrates SF's enduring capacity for investigating the experiences of technological modernity.

*Simultaneous Worlds* provides far too many strong essays to discuss here. However, the collection's investigation into the ways that SF is shaped and reshaped by global artists and filmmakers to explore the range of changes effected by contemporary globalization makes sure that *Simultaneous Worlds* will sit at the center of SF discussions for the near future.

## ***Classical Traditions in Science Fiction***

Kanta Dihal

Brett M. Rogers and Benjamin Eldon Stevens, eds. *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Paperback, xiii + 380 pages, \$15.72. ISBN 978-0-19-022833-0. Kindle ISBN: 0190228334.

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IN THE PREFACE to *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction*, the editors humbly claim that this book had seemed to them "not *completely* impossible, only very, *very* unlikely" (vii). To the science fiction researcher, this sounds like false modesty: a thorough study of SF and its classical influences seems timely, if not overdue. Whereas research has covered individual works of science fiction and their classical sources, a full-length work addressing classical reception in science fiction had not been attempted before in English – in French, Melanie Bost-Fiévet and Sandra Provini published *L'Antiquité dans l'imaginaire contemporain: Fantasy, science-fiction, fantastique* in 2014.

Although thirteen of the fifteen contributors to this collection can roughly be categorised as classicists,

the work itself seems to cater mostly to science fiction scholars. However, the authors' assumptions of readers' previous knowledge about primary texts, both classics and science fiction works, strongly varies. A footnote in Jesse Weiner's chapter "Lucretius, Lucan, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," for instance, explains that "Seneca was a prominent Stoic philosopher," whereas in Chapter 5, "A Complex Oedipus: The Tragedy of Edward Morbius," Gregory S. Bucher states, "The *Oedipus* I take to be sufficiently familiar to the present audience, but a careful plot summary of *Forbidden Planet* is in order" (126).

The editors have arranged the chapters chronologically, taking each chapter's SF case study as the temporal referent. Thus, the work opens with a section called "SF's Rosy-Fingered Dawn," containing chapters on Kepler's *Somnium* (1634) and *Frankenstein* (1818), and closes with a section on "Ancient Classics for a Future Generation?" with, among others, a chapter on *The Hunger Games* series (2008–2010). This structure supports the argument that science fiction has always been, and continues to be, heavily influenced by classical motifs and sources. It is a convincing argument, yet this structure does create some continuity issues.

This book, like all other scholarly works on science fiction, struggles with the issues of origin and definition. Although by now it would be possible simply to refer the reader to the many other works which have attempted to locate the origins of science fiction, it is an important issue to address when discussing the relations between classical texts and science fiction. Are these two entirely separate categories, or is, for instance, Lucian's *True History* in fact a science fiction work in itself? Problematically, the editors seem to have allowed their authors to work with their own interpretations of origin, which differ from those of the editors and as a result there are internal contradictions in the book.

In the introduction, the editors refuse to engage with the definition debate, but they do make an origin claim: "thinking of *Frankenstein* as a starting point helps us keep somewhat open the definition of 'modern science fiction'" (4). However, various essays in the book argue for different origins. In "The Lunar Setting of Johannes Kepler's *Somnium*, Science Fiction's Missing Link," Dean Swinford mentions that the fact that Kepler's *Somnium* "should be regarded as the first work of SF is no surprise" (29). The placement of this essay as the opening chapter strength-

ens his claim. Chapter 4, "Mr. Lucian in Suburbia: Links Between the *True History* and *The First Men in the Moon*," by Antony Keen, contains a more in-depth discussion of the origins of science fiction, including the place of Lucian's *True History* as (proto-)SF. Interestingly, in his own chapter, "Hybrids and Homecomings in the *Odyssey* and *Alien Resurrection*," Brett M. Rogers adheres to the idea of *True History* as the "arguable origins" of SF (218), contradicting the claim in the introduction he co-authored.

The chapters can be roughly divided into two categories: those that point out general parallels, and those that trace direct influences of one writer or work on another. A very interesting approach to the first category can be found in chapter 7, "Time and Self-Referentiality in the *Iliad* and Frank Herbert's *Dune*," by Joel P. Christensen, which gives a broader overview of the similarities between myth and science fiction while using the *Iliad* and *Dune* as reference points. Here it shows that the choice of structuring the book in chronological order of the SF works is not necessarily the most helpful option: this chapter would have worked well earlier on, as an introduction to the broadest sense in which classical myth influenced science fiction. George Kovacs's chapter, "Moral and Mortal in *Star Trek: The Original Series*," takes the same broad approach, comparing the development of the Star Trek mythology surrounding the 'Prime Directive' to the development of Greek mythology: episodic stories are pieced together as writers and bards take what they need for their narratives.

In the second category, several chapters explore direct links between individual classical and science fiction works, often in the form of a close reading. A fascinating essay in this category is Marian Makins's "Refiguring the Roman Empire in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy" (Chapter 13), which is particularly successful at pointing out direct influences that have been overlooked in other critical work. Where much has been made of the parallels between the first book and the Theseus myth or *Battle Royale*, Makins addresses the structure, rather than the storyline, of the dystopia. Through pointing out the apparent 'classical' tropes about the Roman empire, she convincingly argues that Collins in fact presents a misrepresentation of antiquity, which is mostly informed by popular modern US interpretations. The volume finishes appropriately with C.W. Marshall's chapter on Jonathan Hickman's *Pax Romana*, the 2007–2008 science

fiction comic which gives the reader “classics and SF, and nothing in between” (309).

Whereas a classics scholar may be confused by the different approaches to defining and originating science fiction, *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction* is a particularly helpful work in orienting science fiction scholars toward a more historical approach to the genre. The work shows that even the most advanced and surreal worlds of science fiction hark back to classical origins in their reflections on humanity, knowledge, and ethics.

## **Quando la fantascienza è donna: Dalle utopie femminili del secolo XIX all'età contemporanea**

Giulia Iannuzzi

Eleonora Federici. *Quando la fantascienza è donna: Dalle utopie femminili del secolo XIX all'età contemporanea*. Rome, Italy: Carocci editore, December 2015. Paperback, 190 pages, € 19.00. ISBN: 9788843077953.

UNFORTUNATELY, there is no science fiction studies undergraduate or postgraduate course in Italy, but students interested in writing their thesis on sf related topics, in American, English or Comparative Studies, will thank Eleonora Federici for this solid study of women's sf in English.

*When Science Fiction is a She: From XIX Century Feminine Utopias to Contemporary Age* [translations from the Italian are mine] offers a synthetic but comprehensive historical and critical profile of sf written by women, and of feminist utopian and sf texts. The matter is organized in a roughly chronological macro-structure (with moments of overlap accounting for the co-existence of different coeval tendencies in various decades).

The six main chapters are preceded by an introduction which answers the question “Why a female sf?” defining the object of study. Following the footsteps of scholars such as Jenny Wolmark (1994) and Marleen Barr (1992), Federici argues that sf written by women has offered, throughout the decades, a new relevance and characterization of female figures, as

well as alternative—*alien* in some respects—points of view, able to subvert consolidated social and cultural categories.

Despite sf being traditionally perceived as a male-dominated area of literary production and circulation, since the nineteenth-century women writers have found in utopian and science fictional tropes exceptional tools to deconstruct gender relations and the normative power of dominant discourses.

In fact, the subject matter of sf written by women—and in which the *alterity* of feminine writing is thematized—calls for a delimitation to be fit into a volume, which is established and justified with clarity in the introduction, and which passes the test of subsequent chapters. Federici's study is focused on English-language authors (given the centrality of the Anglo-Saxon cultural area in the trans-national genre field, but also the author's own competencies and interests, for Federici is Professor of English language and translation in Naples) and proceeds through selections—though extensive—of exemplary authors and works.

The first chapter is dedicated to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, examined as a cornerstone of (not only women's) sf, and a seminal work in exploring conventions of women's genre writing, such as the relationship between the feminine and monstrosity, and the problematization of techno-science's influence on the body. In this chapter the treatment of the secondary bibliography is exemplary: Federici's history of women's sf also includes a history of feminist sf criticism and, in many instances, of feminist thought. Through each chapter, footnotes and references point readers to seminal non-sf-oriented critical works such as Gilbert and Gubar or Cixous as well as to an impressive array of secondary sources (in which emerges Federici's long-lasting familiarity with issues of feminisms in genre literature), making this volume a crowning achievement for Federici's long writing career.

The second chapter, devoted to utopian narrations between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, includes useful comparisons between the British and the American contexts and authors (many of whom have never been translated into Italian).

The subsequent chapter explores the female presence in the genre between the 1920s and the 1960s, including early pulps, dystopias written between the two World Wars, and authors quite different from

each other, such as C. L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, and Judith Merril, the latter also discussed in relation to her participation with the Futurians (again, through the looking glass of women's sf, the reader is able to retrace a broader history of the genre and of historical shifts in culture and society at large). The third chapter concludes with the astronauts and space-ships of Naomi Mitchison and Anne McCaffrey, on the verge of the feminist utopias of the Seventies, to which the next chapter is devoted.

Here, the recognition of thought experiments offset in primitive and separatist utopias takes into account the new role that a harmonic relationship with nature and a spiritual dimension play in narratives such as Sally Miller Gearhart's novels, and the critical role of reflections on language and memory, and the body, in Marge Piercy *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976). In the same chapter, after discussion of the amazons and travelers of Joanna Russ' *Picnic on Paradise* (1968) and Suzy McKee Charnas' *Holdfast Chronicles* series (1974–1999), some pages dwell upon Ursula K. Le Guin's work before closing the chapter with one of the most interesting sections of the book, devoted to liminality and language, which includes brief analyses of Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* trilogy (1984–1994) and Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), among others.

An ample fifth chapter accounts for technology, cyborgs, and cyberfeminism, outlining two main approaches of women sf writers to technology, seen as an instrument of emancipation from the biological constraints of the maternal role, or, critically, as a tool that allows for an unwanted manipulation of the body. From Alice Sheldon and Tanith Lee, to Donna Haraway and Marge Piercy, cyborgs and cyberspaces have offered new occasions to rethink gender identities and roles. Before concentrating on Pat Cadigan's work, Federici's overall critical assessment of the cyberpunk movement points out that the sub-genre canon is quite male-oriented (e.g. in the average choice and construction of main characters) and usually fails to exploit the sub-genre's potential for the subversion of traditional gender roles (following the critical steps of Fred Pfeil and Andrew Ross).

The sixth and final chapter offers original reflections on authors such as Connie Willis—who Federici reads with reference to 1980s–1990s Women's History and as a forerunner, in many respects, of New Historicism approaches—and Octavia E. Butler. Brief notes are then devoted to the deconstruction

of androcentric and heteronormative perspectives in lesbian and queer authors such as Camarin Grae, Jean Stewart, Judith Katz, Nicola Griffith, and to anglophone diasporic authors including Nalo Hopkinson and Andrea Hairston.

In conclusion, Federici manages to provide an extensive overview and a very synthetic yet very rich critical appraisal through close attention to common threads in women's sf: the centrality of the body and its relationships with technology, the power of language and narrations of history, and the deconstruction of hegemonic cultures and gender roles via a multitude of narrative devices.

The book fills a specific gap on the Italian market, updating a critical tradition established by scholars such as Antonio Caronia, Vita Fortunati, Carlo Pagetti, and Oriana Palusci among others. And the Italian reader will be pleased to find the systematic indication of (usually invisible) translators of the Italian editions of works cited, while she/he may be surprised by the publisher's choice of the cover image—a half-dressed yellow-blond woman, handcuffed and being dragged away by a macho military-like astronaut, while two other women are tied to a couple of columns or rockets in the background (the illustration is uncredited, but looks like a detail from a typical pulp magazine illustration). But, of course, one may read this as an intentional ironic visual counter melody to the book.

After the extensive works cited lists of primary and secondary sources, an index would have been useful (and was expected, as the publisher, Carocci, is renowned in Italy for its scholarly editions in the humanities). This, however, is an editorial detail that doesn't diminish the interest and quite exclusive position of Federici's work in the Italian market and scholarly field.



# ***Distopie, viaggi spaziali, allucinazioni. Fantascienza italiana contemporanea***

Jana Vizmuller-Zocco

Giulia Iannuzzi. *Distopie, viaggi spaziali, allucinazioni. Fantascienza italiana contemporanea*. Milano–Udine: MIMESIS Edizioni, 2015. Paperback, 363 Pages, Euros 28.00, ISBN 978-88-5752-765-9.

**Order option(s):** [Kindle](#)

THAT the Italian literary canon has not been kind to science fiction works written by Italians is well known. This volume by Giulia Iannuzzi therefore carries double importance: it not only offers a thorough description of those forces which shaped the development of Italian science fiction between the 1960s and the early 2000s, but it also focuses on the production of four of the most noteworthy authors and defenders of the genre in those years. The work builds on the preceding *Fantascienza italiana: Riviste, autori, dibattiti dagli anni cinquanta agli anni Settanta* (see *SFRA Review* 310 (Fall 2014), pp. 42–43).

The volume opens with Pierpaolo Antonello's *Prefazione. Archeologie del futuro* (Foreword. Archeologies of the future, pp. 7–16) in which Iannuzzi's book is contextualized given the ostracism the Italian literary elites and publishers have shown this genre. The thorny and complex relationship between fandom and academia clearly indicates the lines of inquiry followed by *Distopie, viaggi spaziali, allucinazioni*. Antonello touches upon the Italian readers' supposed preference for "the marvellous" (fairy tales, fantasy, horror, rather than SF), and the literary critics' difficulties with critical apparatus with which to measure the dawn of Italian science fiction. To group authors into spurious slots is to do them injustice, and a real critical work relies on foundational works dealing with significant authors, as illustrated by Iannuzzi's book.

In a *Nota introduttiva* (Introductory note, pp. 19–20), Iannuzzi states that her purpose in writing the book is to critically reread four authors to lift them from the ghetto and oblivion to which they have been relegated so that SF is finally raised from the marginal status it has been occupying in the Italian

literary canon.

Chapter 1 (*Fantascienza italiana contemporanea: il quadro storico e critico* [Contemporary Italian science fiction: historical and critical perspectives], pp. 21–98) deals with a number of critical issues. Iannuzzi agrees with the approaches to science fiction illustrated by the Cambridge and Routledge encyclopaedias in treating science fiction as a fluid genre, susceptible of withstanding a variety of approaches and multiplicity of descriptions. There are early ancestors of Italian science fiction (e.g., Dante Alighieri, Ariosto, Giacomo Casanova, Giacomo Leopardi) but they do not have droves of disciples who embark on similar literary journeys. Furthermore, after WWII, publication series flooded the Italian market with translations of science fiction works from English, a trend which continues to this day. The reasons for this hegemony include the late and slow industrial development in Italy, the heavy weight of humanistic disciplines, the obstructed publication of books and journals given the post-war economic situation, as well as the cultural, economic, and political domination of the USA. The situation improved in the 1970s when Italian authors were translated abroad, Italian literary journals (e.g. *Robot* and *Nova SF*) also became well-known outside of Italy, and the first European SF convention was held in Trieste in 1972. In the 1950s, specialized journals and periodicals (even if short-lived) created the foundations on which Italian science fiction fandom was built. In the 1970s, a trend began of a type of ghettoization of the genre as there was almost no dialogue between those who published in the periodicals and possible external critics: those who were responsible for professional science fiction publications came from the fandom base. The first scholarly account of Italian science fiction was published in 1978 (Vittorio Curtoni's *Le frontiere dell'ignoto* [Frontiers of the unknown]). In the third millennium, Internet and digital printing on demand offer a way out to sustain the demand of a limited public. Web initiatives (e.g. Valerio Evangelisti's *Carmilla*), literary prizes (Urania), the group *Connettivisti* (trans-media, authors publishing in anthologies, fanzines, organized events), all point to the fact that the SF world in Italy is in ferment, even if critical studies are not abundant. Still, this lack of proper standing of science fiction literature in the Italian canon has never discouraged the production of varied science fiction works.

The next four chapters are dedicated each to a do-

en of Italian science fiction: Lino Aldani, Gilda Musa, Vittorio Curtoni, Vittorio Catani. A selection of their works undergoes a thematic and content account, rather than a critical literary analysis. Each work examined is connected to possible Anglo-American models, and is placed into a thematic category preferred by the author. Where applicable, narrative techniques, linguistic inventions, and interesting settings receive a thorough description.

*Note conclusive* (Concluding remarks, pp. 327–330) summarizes the main thrust of the four authors' works as vehicles of reflection on the ingrained experience of the contemporary Italian industrial and post-industrial world. Aldani's dystopia, Musa's and Catani's gloomy urban scenes, and Curtoni's media manipulation of reality manifest the hardship and uneasiness brought on by automation and changes of paradigms of reality, supported by techno-science.

The volume closes with an extensive bibliography (pp. 331–354), Acknowledgments, and Index of Names (pp. 357–363).

There is no doubt that Iannuzzi's book contains a great wealth of information about Italian science fic-

tion works written between the 1960s and the early 2000s. It reflects patient archival work to track down hard-to find sources, delves at length into the intricate relationships between fans and scholars, connects the developments in Italy to the thematic and formal experiences of English and American writers, and provides information on the editorial decisions which shape the construction of cultural material.

Although "anglomania" and "anglofilia" are constants in Italian cultural history of the last 200 years, the dependence on the Anglo influence in Italian SF literature needs to be explained, especially since the concept of "assimilation" of themes from English science fiction into Italian works is mentioned frequently, and yet does not receive a thorough treatment. This would clarify the challenging notion of national SF literatures.

Nonetheless, the volume has all the prerequisites to become a solid source of information for students and scholars alike, whose interests lie in the development of national literatures as seen through the lens of the editorial history of Italian science fiction as well as the SF production of four major authors.

## ***Mapping the Interior***

Michelle Yost

Stephen Graham Jones. *Mapping the Interior*. New York: Tor, 2017. 112 pp. \$10.99 pb. ISBN 9780765395108.

**Order option(s):** [Paper](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Audio](#)

WITH NOVELS and short stories that cover the gamut of traditional, speculative, and weird fictions, Stephen Graham Jones cannot be easily pinned or categorized. But as an author who happens to be of Blackfeet extraction, that cultural heritage informs elements of his writing. Whether a reader recognizes those tropes as distinctive of Plains Indian custom, or simply enjoys the narrative as a unique piece of the Modern Gothic, there is much in *Mapping the Interior* to entertain and, to some degree, educate about the intersections of Native American and Gothic literature.

Junior (who claims that every fourth boy on the reservation bears the same name) is our narrator, living far from his tribe and an outcast at his school, and closest to his little brother Dino, whom he protects from the bullies that surround them. Dino suffers from developmental delays and frequent seizures, while Junior is prone to sleepwalking (or “dead-footing”). Only Junior can see his father’s ghost—at first only when Junior deadfoots, but as his father’s ghost grows stronger, his physical presence becomes firmer in the world. Where others would find fear in apparitions of the dead (certainly in the tradition of horror à la Stephen King or Susan Hill) Junior admits to feeling hope (17).

Junior is at first thrilled to have his father coming back into the world, the oft-absent parent who drowned (or was intentionally drowned?) when he was still very young, and of whom he has only fond memories. The father is returning as a “fancydancer,” becoming in death ‘what he never could in life’ (17). Junior “maps” the interior of the family’s modular home to find any physical trace of his father, only to realize that he needs to look deeper, under the house. This is where Junior finds the ‘burst-open chrysalis’ (46) in the earth that has provided the

space for his father’s return to life. Junior posits that a dying animal sought a grave under the house, only to provide an opening for the ghost to creep in, conjured by the memories of an unhappy son. However, while trapped under the house by vicious dogs, Junior is suddenly rescued by an unseen force outside the house that rips the animals in half.

Jones’s recipe for resurrecting the Blackfeet dead is very specific; first, one needs an animal (not-quite-dead) to take itself someplace private, where something once dead can creep back into the world. Then it needs a superhero action figure and the life energy of a human to sip from like a soda, which will give it the power to then kill four animals. The final ingredient is a human life. This absurd formula for the uncanny is a distinctly modern twist on ‘eye of newt, and toe of frog’ to invoke dark powers, and not one that could be mistaken for magical realism. For Junior’s father, the neighbour’s four vicious dogs, and the vindictive neighbour himself, complete the process. Dino, though, is the life-drink for his father: ‘Dad—my years-dead father—he was leaned over Dino, had maybe been listening to his heart or whispering into his mouth. [...] And he was looking across the room like an animal, right into my soul’ (70).

Junior’s sudden realization that his father is feeding off Dino—causing his little brother’s disabilities—turns his hope to horror. When he tries to shoot his father’s ghost, he shoots instead the irate neighbour creeping through the back door. Junior hatches a plan to “kill” his father again, by drowning the action figure he found under the house: Dino’s action figure. Immersing the toy, Junior deadfoots back in time, inhabiting the body of a man, watching his father on the banks of a river, listening to his father repeat his name, ‘Junior,’ four times. Then Junior punches his father, driving him back into the river, drowning him, as people had rumoured. Junior realizes he, in fact, was his father’s killer, which brought his father’s ghost to the present, and in killing the ghost, he kills his father: death has come full circle, like a time-travel paradox.

*Mapping the Interior* blends the modern Gothic with traditional Blackfeet storytelling. The cyclical narrative, the repetition of the number four, sleepwalking as an oculus to the otherworld, and the lyrical first-person narrative synthesize Jones’s knowledge of Blackfeet tales with the recognizable ghost story. Junior appears to be a more reliable narrator than the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (and

more physical evidence seems apparent in Jones's tale), though an argument could be made that his unstable upbringing led to an unstable mind. With his own upbringing of poverty, frequent moves, no other Blackfeet tribal members, and a distinct lack of interest in school (something he frequently mentions in interviews) Jones is channelling his own childhood into Junior, as he has done with several other characters in his novels: Doby Saxon in *Led-feather* (2008), Jim Doe in *All the Beautiful Sinners* (2003), and Pidgin in *The Fast Red Road* (2000), to name a few.

The novella ends with the death of an older Junior's son, Collin—but Junior knows the cure. He takes Dino to the ruins of their former modular house, along with roadkill, four cats, an old action figure, and a gun. Junior knows how to resurrect the dead, and where he once saved Dino, now his brother will be sacrificed, as will Junior and the cats, to bring back 'Collin, Collin Collin Collin' (107). Another cycle completed; but Collin is not Junior, and Collin may not grow up to be his father's son. Junior became the fancydancer his father never did, and now Junior wants to restore Collin's potential to attain more in the world: 'That's how you talk about dead people...especially dead Indians. It's all about squandered potential, not actual accomplishments' (16). Jones is lending his own life experience to other Native American voices in modern America, an experience of isolation, disadvantage, and frustration with life's outcomes in a country that forced their ancestors onto undesirable tracts of land. Here there is no noble savage, no mystical shaman: just a child who loses his father, and a father who loses his child, coping in the only way he knows.

When I was twelve years old, I mapped the interior of our home.  
Now, sitting across from my little brother,

I'm sketching out a map of the human heart,  
I guess.  
There's more dark hallways than I knew.  
Rooms I thought I'd never have to enter. (108)

The story moves from exterior forces to interior ones; Junior's heart is bringing about a new story, one that will begin for Collin as Collin's own story ends. Junior starts the novella as the hero battling the evil that his father represents; in the end, what he becomes is far more nebulous in its morality, but the process of maturing shows Junior that life's map is far more complex than it was at the age of twelve.

Jones's dark aesthetic, isolation, loss of bodily autonomy, and supernatural elements make it an excellent example both of 21st century Gothic fiction and the uncompromising Native American narrative that refuses to play into stereotype. *Mapping the Interior* lends itself to several literary topics for instruction, not the least of which is this Native American narrative. Its Gothic tone stands in contrast to the magical realism of Louise Erdrich's work, such as *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Jones not only utilizes the tropes of Blackfeet narrative, but he is very frank about the anxieties of an American Indian—the loss of adequate housing or reliable employment, substance abuse, and the collisions of cultures. The study of contemporary Gothic fiction will also find a place for Jones on the syllabus (utilizing the framework of Freud's "The Uncanny" and Todorov's *The Fantastic*) as a modern ghost story. Though not an example of psychological or sexual horror, it is instead the rarer Gothic *bildungsroman*, illustrating a twelve-year-old's spiritual development and reconciliation with his heritage and his role in the world. To my mind, though, these two literary subjects should not be taught independently of each other, given how deeply the Blackfeet narrative coalesces with recognizable forms of Gothic practice.

## Class

Molly Cobb

Patrick Ness, creator. *Class*. BBC, 2016.

THOUGH there is no shortage of television shows set in a school, shows about teenagers finding themselves, shows about saving the world from monsters, or even shows which combine the three, BBC 3's *Doctor Who* spin-off *Class* (2016–TBC) is a welcome addition. With a darker tone not afraid of death, *Class* fits easily into the trend of young adult fiction which aims to focus on the 'adult' rather than the 'young.' After their world is destroyed by the Shadow Kin (a race of aliens which can exist only in shadows), Charlie Smith, Prince of Rhodia, and Andrea Quill, leader of the Quill, escape to Earth with the help of the Twelfth Doctor. They are each the last of their species, Rhodian and Quill respectively. Finding themselves at Coal Hill Academy, the series revolves around them and four human students who become the only line of defense against creatures breaking through cracks in time and space. In between saving the world, the series examines the everyday stresses of growing up, such as relationships, sex, family, and loss.

There are two things which *Class* excels at: examining relationships between humans and aliens and the concept of alien morality. With a strong focus on diversity in its characters, the series already examines sexuality, race, disability, gender, and age without even beginning to touch upon how bringing aliens into the mix would alter the discussion. The addition of aliens attempting to integrate into human society serves to advance these discussions of teenage relationships and reframe them alongside more standard sf discussions of alien invasion or the stereotypical alien which fails to understand human pop culture. The relationship between Charlie Smith and one of the students, Matteusz Andrzejewski, doubles as a reference point for discussions of both homosexuality and the implications of a sexual relationship between an alien and a human. These implications further lead to an examination of alien biology and the issues associated with Charlie's physical human form only being a disguise for his

alien self. Interestingly, other characters only ever enquire about Charlie and Matteusz's relationship in terms of its status as between a human and an alien, and never as being between two men. Thus, questions about homosexuality are superseded by questions about the nature of alien sexuality.

In addition, events within the series result in the king of the Shadow Kin, Corakinus, and one of the main characters, April MacLean, sharing a heart. Unfortunately, the series fails to examine how exactly this would work and whether the human heart of a teenage girl would actually sustain an alien, let alone resemble what Corakinus' heart used to be. Discussions of this would be a worthwhile consideration and help encourage and further understanding of the possible complexities of alien biology and potentially move away from the standard trope of humanoid aliens who are humanoid for the sake of ease rather than from a thorough consideration of the alien self. Texts such as *What Does a Martian Look Like: The Science of Extraterrestrial Life* would be an excellent resource for considering the academic potential of such discussions.

Examinations of alien relationships within the show is coupled with consistent undertones of what morality is and how it differs not only person to person, but species to species. The often incongruous nature of personal morality feeds back into how the characters form relationships with each other and how those relationships threaten to fall apart based on individual conceptions of 'right' and 'wrong.' Prior to the destruction of their planet, the Rhodians and the Quill were at war with one another. Both Charlie and Andrea Quill (simply referred to as Quill) insist that their species was the moral one and the other the aggressor. Raising interesting questions regarding the linguistic implications of concepts such as 'freedom fighter,' 'terrorist' or 'revolutionary,' the series only vaguely explains to the viewer the cause of the war between Rhodian and Quill, thus forcing the viewer to align with the character whose morality best matches their own rather than being told who was 'right.' Quill is forced to protect and follow the orders of Charlie as a punishment for her actions in the war. This punishment is enforced by the insertion of an Arn (a small rodent-like alien) into Quill's brain whose function is to cause pain or even death should she fail to comply with Charlie's orders, protect him from harm or attempt to use any form of weapon other than her bare hands. Examined more

through other characters' reactions to this form of punishment rather than through the punishment itself, the nature of this servitude highlights each characters' moral reaction to the concept and demonstrates the difference between punishment and cruelty, servant and slave.

Both alien biology and alien morality are not new concepts within the academic study of science fiction but *Class* does well to examine them both separately and in conjunction with each other, as well as in conjunction with how they complement or allow a reexamination of these concepts in terms of interactions with humans. What the series demonstrates is the ability of sf to examine diversity beyond the everyday while reinforcing discussions of the real-world implications of the difficulty of understanding the 'other.' Overall, the series initiates discussions which can be further advanced in scholarly forums by raising philosophical questions about free will and morality and also engages with existing academic study by utilising contemporary approaches to diversity in sf and allowing a reexamination of how these themes and tropes are demonstrated in sf television.

## ***Horizon Zero Dawn***

Steve Nash

*Horizon Zero Dawn*. Dev. Guerrilla Games. Pub. Sony Interactive Entertainment. Playstation 4. 2017.

**Order option(s):** [PS4](#)

YOU, the player, crouch in the high grass, waiting, listening. You have been tracking your prey for so long that the in-game day/night cycle has circled back around and the sunrise means that you are becoming more visible with each step. Your primitive weapons—a spear, a bow, and a sling—are pretty effective when used at the right moment, in the right spot, on an unsuspecting opponent, but they are of rather less use if the thing you hunt spots you first.

This is the surface view of *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017); you are a hunter in a primitive world reminiscent of *Far Cry Primal's* (2016) tale of warring Neanderthals and, as such, not an immediately obvious candidate for critique regarding science fiction

narrative, except for one significant factor. The thing you are hunting, the great mystery and question at the heart of the game is “why are there robot dinosaurs in what appears to be a primitive world from a bygone era?”

Guerrilla Games' *Horizon Zero Dawn* is a third-person, action game, not dissimilar to the aforementioned *Far Cry* series, that utilises some familiar mechanics from other open-world games, whilst adding an innovative approach to combat, to tell a surprisingly complex (though linear) post-apocalyptic tale. It is to game writer John Gonzalez's credit that the most obvious plot for the post-apocalyptic primitive—the story of the entity that humans enslave, control, or subjugate in some way, rises up and turns the tables—seen in *La Planet Des Singes* (1963) (and its more famous reimaginings) and Fredric Brown's 'Answer' (1954), is eschewed for something with greater texture and implications for critical reading and interpretation. Beyond the initial suspicion of a world in which machines have unburdened themselves of human subservience, there is a philosophically engaged narrative regarding the end of human life and an artificial intelligence built to rebirth it. Even when this story narrows to a duel between two systems with very different moral views regarding humanity—one seeking to annihilate, the other to nurture—the narrative is never as simple as two distinct artificial intelligences at war, such as the battle between 'the Machine' and 'Samaritan' in *Person of Interest* (2011). Here the conflict is between systems within systems, and while there is never any convincing doubt cast upon the player/protagonist's motivations, the potential for debate is certainly evident.

Considering Gonzalez's previous writing in *Fall Out: New Vegas* (2010), it is surprising that the plot of *Horizon Zero Dawn* is almost entirely linear. With the exception of certain characters joining you for your final fight, depending upon your dedication, or inclination, to complete the multiple side quests in the game, there is only one way this narrative concludes. That lack of rhizomatic potential is used positively here though, as the lack of possible variation leads to a more tightly written story and a central cast of largely three-dimensional characters. Aloy, voiced by Ashley Burch, is a headstrong and highly capable female protagonist who is very rarely marked out for her gender, and she is just one of a series of powerful women in the game. In a medium that is still domi-

nated by generic masculine NPCs and avatars, this diversity is refreshing.

There is however a mechanical mammoth in the room that it is important to address: the issue of cultural appropriation. While the game has sidestepped the all-too-regular white-populated cast list in favour of a culturally diverse array of characters (all of whom genuinely overlap and comingle since there is no sectioning off of villages or peoples through the distinction of skin colour), questions have been raised regarding the appropriation of Native American culture and stereotypes. This is made even more pronounced by the fact that it is the main protagonist (the extremely fair-skinned and red-haired) Aloy whose 'tribe,' the Nora, adopt this stereotyping most clearly. While Gonzalez responded to this criticism by emphasising that it is not one culture, but many aspects of various cultural histories that have been used as inspiration for the game's representation of human heritage, the use of certain terms as a reductive means to notify the player which characters are allies or enemies does seem excessively simplistic in a world that is otherwise fairly immersive and compelling. If someone refers to you as a 'savage' for example, then they are most likely an antagonist. If a character acknowledges you as a 'brave' then the game does not want you to put an arrow in his/her face.

An overriding sensation, having completed the game's major and side quests, is that *Horizon Zero Dawn* is not necessarily an original addition to sf videogame storytelling, but rather it is a highly effective example of a game built by iteration. The story seems familiar, but it mines a deeper vein philosophically than the medium often seems willing to do. The combat is reminiscent of the vast majority of large budget third-person action games, but the emphasis on observing and researching your opponent

to attack specific areas, tear off weapons and create weak spots introduces a tactical element which adds a methodical layer to the game that distinguishes it from the games it takes inspiration from.

Even the (jokingly monikered) Ubisoft towers (the structures you must climb repeatedly to open new areas on the game map) are here, but rather than the static towers players are accustomed to, they are enormous, moving dinosaurs with multiple possible approaches and potential risks. Fittingly, for its cinematic approach to storytelling, Guerrilla Games ensures that *Horizon Zero Dawn* includes a Marvel-esque post-credits sequence which suggests a sequel is likely. *Horizon Zero Dawn* presents questions regarding moral reasoning and muses on the potential outcomes of a world in which humans are no longer the dominant species. There is certainly enough meat on these robot dinosaur bones to cause intrigue regarding where Aloy's story might push those questions next.

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### Call for Papers—Conference

**Title:** *Suvin Today?*

**Deadline:** 11th August 2017

**Contact:** Gerry Canavan ([gerrycanavan@gmail.com](mailto:gerrycanavan@gmail.com))  
and Hugh O'Connell ([hugh.oconnell@umb.edu](mailto:hugh.oconnell@umb.edu))

**Dates:** 9–12 November 2017

Nearly 45 years ago in December 1972, Darko Suvin published the signal sf studies text, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre.” It was this article that (in)famously introduced “SF as the literature of cognitive estrangement,” and which was later expanded for the equally trailblazing *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979). Writing in the introduction to the recent Ralahine Classics edition of *Metamorphoses*, Gerry Canavan notes that although sf studies certainly predated this text, its publication was a watershed moment, delimiting a foundational discourse for science fiction studies. Indeed, whether in agreement or in strict opposition to Suvin’s work, it is still rare to find sf criticism that does not set out from Suvin. However, in recent years, the “Suvin Event,” as it has come to be known, seems increasingly to garner detractors with ever more calls to dislodge the Suvinian paradigm from the heart of sf studies. These works often proceed in the name of a more nuanced attention to the socio-historical function of genre studies, as a dismissal of the hierarchical ordering of speculative forms, or as an end to sf as a particular form with a particular vocation altogether. Yet Suvin did more than offer a formal definition of sf. While much has been written, particularly in relation to the notion of “cognition” and the formal gatekeeping rigidity of Suvin’s work, the utopian and radical historical materialist aspects of Suvin’s work are often lost or submerged by a long critical commentary that has fixated on its structural weaknesses (whether real or perceived). And this occlusion perhaps goes doubly so for his work in the historicization and internationalization of sf studies.

Therefore, with the 45th anniversary of “On the Poetics” upon us, not to mention the recent republication of the long out of print *Metamorphoses* in 2016, this informal roundtable discussion invites contributors to re-engage with the Suvin Event.

- In the words of Rhys Williams, how can we continue to break down the walls that Suvin’s “paradigm threw up” and that keep its still vital “living concepts petrified,” in order to free them for contemporary sf criticism?
- Or, following Patrick Parrinder, if the utility of the Suvin moment was already exhausted by 2000, not to mention the more recent withering critique by fellow marxist China Miéville, what is left to salvage from the Suvin Event?
- At the proposed end of the Suvin Event, what surprisingly new utopian anticipations await us?
- What aspects re-emerge—whether in new or altered form—after the updating, alterations, and critiques?
- What parts of Suvin’s work have been under-attended?
- What has been left undiscovered—or is left to rediscover—at this late moment of zombie neoliberalism and the slow violence of its concomitant environmental apocalypse?
- How—or even, can—we conceive of sf’s utopian impulse in the post-Suvinian critical zeitgeist?
- Alternately, have the critics got it wrong?

We invite participants that take up these or any other aspects of Suvin’s work and the debates over the Suvin Event.

A note about the format: this session is being proposed as an informal roundtable discussion. Rather than the usual 20 minute, written presentations, contributors will be asked to keep their opening comments to a brief 5 minutes. Gerry Canavan, editor of the 2016 Ralahine Classics edition of *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, will then act as a respondent. Our intent is to provide more time for panelists to interact and discuss ideas with one another as well as with audience members than in the usual conference panel setting.

**Submission:** Please email Gerry Canavan ([gerrycanavan@gmail.com](mailto:gerrycanavan@gmail.com)) and Hugh O’Connell ([hugh.oconnell@umb.edu](mailto:hugh.oconnell@umb.edu)) with a brief (250 words) synopsis or proposal for participation in the roundtable by August 11, 2017.



**Title:** *Cardiff University's ScienceHumanities Research Group Summer School*

**Deadline:** 29th September 2017

**Contact:** Martin Willis ([willism8@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:willism8@cardiff.ac.uk))

**Dates:** 30 April–4 May 2018

In 2018 Cardiff University's ScienceHumanities research group will host a week-long International Summer School dedicated to the examination of the relations between the humanities and the sciences.

The Summer School programme features workshops from leading scholars in literature and science, the histories of science and medicine, and the philosophy of science from across the UK and Europe. It is designed to give you access to significant researchers in the field, and professional development opportunities on publishing, public engagement, and archival research.

In addition, you will have the opportunity to share ideas, concepts and methods with other doctoral students and begin to build a network of global contacts.

The Summer School also incorporates a cultural programme focussed on the rich heritage of Cardiff as both a Welsh and British city.

The Summer School is open only to doctoral students located in universities and research centres outside the UK. There are only 12 places available.

It is free to attend, but participants must be able to meet the cost of their own transport, accommodation and part of their subsistence during their stay in Cardiff. Advice will be given on accommodation and transport and some meals will be included during the Summer School.

Two bursaries of £400 are available for students from nations with limited resources.

**Submission:** To express initial interest and receive an application form please email Professor Martin Willis on [willism8@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:willism8@cardiff.ac.uk). Further information can be found on the ScienceHumanities website at: <https://cardiffsciencehumanities.org>.

The closing date for expressions of interest is 29 September, 2017. Applications must be submitted by 30 November, 2017 and decisions will be communicated by 31 December, 2017. Participating doctoral students must be able to commit to the full 5 days of the Summer School.

**Title:** *A Clockwork Green: Ecomedia in the Anthropocene*

**Deadline:** 1st December 2017

**Contact:** Christy Tidwell ([christy.tidwell@gmail.com](mailto:christy.tidwell@gmail.com))

**Dates:** 14–30 June 2018

A troubling paradox lies at the heart of ecomedia studies: those of us who study and teach about the intersection of ecological issues and non-print media also recognize that the production, consumption, and circulation of media texts take a massive toll on the Earth's environment, an issue well documented by media scholars. In other words, as ecomedia scholars and environmental filmmakers, we must admit that our own media production, consumption, and research practices—which are felt disproportionately across communities and cultures—make us complicit in the ever-escalating global environmental crisis. Yet if we are to better understand the vital role that film and media play in reflecting, responding to, and shaping public attitudes about the relationships between the human and non-human worlds, as well as different human communities, we must embrace this paradox. In this first-ever ASLE online symposium, we will collectively situate and define ecomedia studies and its relationship to environmental humanities, film and media studies, and cultural studies through a series of virtual presentations and conversations. While ecomedia will be our buzzword for the event, proposals on all aspects of environmental criticism are welcome.

In a May 2014 interview, deep-green activist Dan Bloom—arguably the first to use the term cli-fi for climate fiction and film—asserts, “I believe that cli fi novels and movies can serve to wake up readers and viewers to the reality of the Climapocalypse that awaits humankind if we do nothing to stop it” (Vemuri). Bloom's claims echo those of Rahman Badalov, who declares of the Lumiere Brothers' Oil Wells of Baku, “Blazing oil gushers make marvelous cinematographic material... Only cinema can capture the thick oil bursting forth like a fiery monster.” But Badalov not only views these oil gushers as monstrous nature; he also notes the dual message of the view: to both condemn environmental degradation and entertain with spectacle. Perhaps acknowledging this dual message is a way of “dwelling in the dissolve” or “performing exposure,” as Stacy Alaimo

puts it. Alaimo asserts “performing exposure as an ethical and political act means to reckon with—rather than disavow—such horrific events and to grapple with the particular entanglements of vulnerability and complicity that radiate from disasters and their terribly disjunctive connection to everyday life in the industrialized world.” Environmental justice issues of gender, race, ability, class, and ethnicity are invariably exposed as part and parcel of the material networks of media. In the provocative essay “Ecocriticism and Ideology: Do Ecocritics Dream of a Clockwork Green?”, Andrew Hageman calls for “a practice of dialectical critique to read films for what they reveal to us about the contradictions within the culture, society, and ourselves that we readily recognize in such films.” We invite you to answer that call by examining any text or context broadly related to our symposium and join us for what we hope to be a unique, timely, and thoroughly enjoyable digital event.

Hageman asks, “What can film, given its ideological constraints, do to advance ecological knowledge, attitudes, and behavior?” In your presentations, we invite you to consider this and other questions, such as the following:

- How is ecomedia deployed by communities at the margins of traditional media practice and at the frontlines of environmental disaster?
- How are mainstream econarratives of gender, sexuality, race, etc. resisted and re-inscribed?
- How does the material impact of ecomedia (film, television, gaming, etc.) undermine or emphasize its message?
- How can ecomedia be useful in persuading resistant audiences?
- What strategies have worked (or not worked) in teaching ecomedia?
- What impact have comics, gaming, habitat dioramas, and other forms of ecomedia had on the field?
- What broad definitions of ecomedia can account for the wide range of forms it entails (more than just cinematic)?
- What broad definitions of ecomedia can account for a wide range of ecological alternatives, ideologies, or perspectives?
- How does ecohorror inform our under-

standing of ecomedia in this era of climate apocalypse?

- How can re-reading historical ecomedia inform our understanding of past and/or current cultural climate?
- What cinematic strategies and practices best reflect various ecological ideologies?
- Can or should the focus be shifted away from the human in ecomedia?

Though the focus of the conference is ecomedia, ASLE and ASLE affiliate members will be welcome to present on a range of topics. We also encourage U.S. and international filmmakers and scholars to participate and encourage participants to meet together through local viewing/discussion groups on their home campuses.

Beyond a drastically lower carbon footprint, the nearly carbon neutral conference approach also is more inclusive of international scholars who may have funding or travel issues for a U.S.-based conference, is more inclusive of differently abled scholars who may have difficulty with physical accessibility and who may need closed captioning and/or audio screen readers, is open access after the conference window, can be used in classrooms, and has been proven to elicit more discussion than a traditional conference format. The conference is formatted as follows:

- Speakers record their own talks. This is typically A) a video of them speaking, generally filmed with a webcam or smartphone, B) a screen recording of a presentation, such as a PowerPoint, or C) a hybrid of the two, with speaker and presentation alternately or simultaneously onscreen
- Talks are uploaded to the conference website where they can be viewed at any time during the conference timeframe. Talks are organized into panels (i.e. individual web pages) that generally have three speakers each and a shared Q&A session
- Participants and panelists contribute to online Q&A sessions, which are similar to online forums, by posing and responding to written questions and comments

We eagerly welcome international submissions, but please keep in mind the presentations should be in

English or subtitled in English, and the Q&A will be in English. Also, please note that all talks will become part of a permanent conference archive open to the public.

**Submission:** Please submit abstracts of 300 words by December 1 to Christy Tidwell ([christy.tidwell@gmail.com](mailto:christy.tidwell@gmail.com)). Contact Christy Tidwell with questions about submissions and Bridgitte Barclay ([bbarclay@aurora.edu](mailto:bbarclay@aurora.edu)) and/or Shannon Davies Mancus ([shannonmancus@gmail.com](mailto:shannonmancus@gmail.com)) with questions about the conference more broadly.

**Title:** *The George Slusser Conference on Science Fiction and Fantasy*

**Deadline:** 31st December 2017

**Contact:** Jon Alexander ([jfalexan@uci.edu](mailto:jfalexan@uci.edu)), Gregory Benford ([xbenford@gmail.com](mailto:xbenford@gmail.com)), Howard V. Hendrix ([howardh@csufresno.edu](mailto:howardh@csufresno.edu)), or Gary Westfahl ([Gwestfahl@yahoo.com](mailto:Gwestfahl@yahoo.com))

**Dates:** 26–29 April 2018

Although the late George Slusser (1939–2014) was best known for coordinating academic conferences on science fiction and editing volumes of essays on science fiction, he was also a prolific scholar in his own right, publishing several books about major science fiction writers and numerous articles in scholarly journals and anthologies. His vast body of work touched upon virtually all aspects of science fiction and fantasy. In articles like “The Origins of Science Fiction” (2005), he explored how the conditions necessary for the emergence of science fiction first materialized in France and later in England and elsewhere. Seeking early texts that influenced and illuminate science fiction, he focused not only on major writers like Mary Shelley, Jules Verne, and H. G. Wells but also on usually overlooked figures like E.T.A. Hoffmann, Benjamin Constant, Thomas De Quincey, Honoré de Balzac, Guy de Maupassant, J.-H. Rosny aîné, and J.D. Bernal. His examinations of twentieth-century science fiction regularly established connections between a wide range of international authors, as suggested by the title of his 1989 essay “Structures of Apprehension: Lem, Heinlein, and the Strugatskys,” and he fruitfully scrutinized

both classic novels by writers like Arthur C. Clarke and Ursula K. Le Guin and the formulaic ephemera of the contemporary science fiction marketplace. A few specific topics repeatedly drew his interest, such as the mechanisms of time travel in science fiction and the “Frankenstein barrier” that writers encounter when they face the seemingly impossible task of describing beings that are more advanced than humanity. And he aroused controversies by criticizing other scholars in provocative essays like “Who’s Afraid of Science Fiction?” (1988) and “The Politically Correct Book of Science Fiction” (1994). No single paragraph can possibly summarize the full extent of his remarkably adventurous scholarship.

The George Slusser Conference on Science Fiction and Fantasy seeks to pay tribute to his remarkable career by inviting science fiction scholars, commentators, and writers to contribute papers that employ, and build upon, some of his many groundbreaking ideas; we also welcome suggestions for panels that would address Slusser and his legacy. To assist potential participants in locating and studying Slusser’s works, a conference website will include a comprehensive bibliography of his books, essays, reviews, and introductions. This selective conference will follow the format that Slusser preferred, a single track that allows all attendees to listen to every paper and participate in lively discussions about them. It is hoped that the best conference papers can be assembled in one volume and published as a formal or informal festschrift to George Slusser.

**Submission:** Potential contributors are asked to submit by email a 250-word paper abstract and a brief curriculum vitae to any of the four conference coordinators: Jon Alexander ([jfalexan@uci.edu](mailto:jfalexan@uci.edu)), Gregory Benford ([xbenford@gmail.com](mailto:xbenford@gmail.com)), Howard V. Hendrix ([howardh@csufresno.edu](mailto:howardh@csufresno.edu)), or Gary Westfahl ([Gwestfahl@yahoo.com](mailto:Gwestfahl@yahoo.com)). The deadline for submissions is December 31, 2017, and decisions will be provided by mid-January, 2018. Further information about the conference schedule, fee, location, accommodations, and distinguished guests will be provided at the conference website. The conference will be held at the University of California, Irvine.

## Call for Papers—Articles

**Title:** *SFFTV Special Issue CFP: “When the Astronaut is a Woman” and Open Call for Submissions*

**Proposal Deadline:** 30th September 2017

**Contact:** Lorrie Palmer ([lpalmer@towson.edu](mailto:lpalmer@towson.edu)) and Lisa Purse ([l.v.purse@reading.ac.uk](mailto:l.v.purse@reading.ac.uk))

With the release of *Hidden Figures* (Melfi, 2016), public perception of the iconic era of the space race was reconfigured. The central image of the white male astronaut was replaced by one in which women of color dominated mathematics, science, and technology, thereby prompting a new cultural conversation. Indeed, this narrative of science fact signals another significant re-embodiment in our science fictions: the female astronaut.

Spaceflight and the astronauts who embark on mythic journeys of exploration have long been in the shadow of the macho military test pilots of the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions. These men evoke nostalgia through their Right Stuff swagger, their personae as space race Cold Warriors, and as a collective Kennedy-esque metaphor for the American frontier. In the postwar decades of space travel, “the body of the astronaut [was] increasingly used as a projection screen for anxieties concerning the stability of gender categories” (Brandt 2006), so it is significant that recent iterations are moving beyond the traditional white male astronaut. We see this in the diversification of representations of space travelers in television and fiction film, particularly along the lines of gender, race and sexuality, as corporations race to Mars with crowd-sourced crews, and entertainment media revise cultural narratives about space exploration.

This special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television*, therefore, seeks to integrate this contemporary moment of challenge to the hegemonic imagery of space travel by examining the genre’s aesthetic and representational characteristics and their relation to wider cultural discourses around gender, race, technology and ecology, and to theoretical debates about the body, technoscience and the post-human.

Along these lines, contributors may wish to re-evaluate depictions of female astronauts in films like *Contact* (1997), *Solaris* (2002), *Event Horizon* (1997), or *Supernova* (2000), or to map more contemporary representational trends in films such as

*Interstellar* (2014), *The Martian* (2015), the *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* reboots, or Ripley’s legacy in the recent installments of the *Aliens* franchise. Television series like *Dark Matter* (2015–), *Ascension* (2014), *The Expanse* (2015–), or the new *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017–) would be of particular interest to this special issue. At the heart of these texts are female astronaut-protagonists who must negotiate their relationship to the legacy of existing depictions of space exploration, while also speaking to their contemporary context. Ultimately then, we ask how the reconfiguration of space race history—now made visible in *Hidden Figures*—broadens the frontier of science fiction scholarship.

**Submission:** Please send proposals by 30 September 2017 to Lorrie Palmer, [lpalmer@towson.edu](mailto:lpalmer@towson.edu) and to Lisa Purse, [l.v.purse@reading.ac.uk](mailto:l.v.purse@reading.ac.uk) with an author’s bio and a short (5–7 entries) bibliography.

*Science Fiction Film and Television* also has a year-round open reading period. Preferred length for articles is approximately 7000–9000 words; all topics related to science fiction film, television, and related media will be considered. Typical response time is within three months. Check the journal website at Liverpool University Press for full guidelines for contributors; please direct any individualized queries to the editors, Gerry Canavan ([gerry.canavan@marquette.edu](mailto:gerry.canavan@marquette.edu)) and Dan Hassler-Forest ([dhassler-forest@gmail.com](mailto:dhassler-forest@gmail.com)).

**Title:** *Breaking out of the Box: Critical Essays on the Cult TV Show Supernatural*

**Proposal Deadline:** 1st October 2017

**Contact:** Lisa Macklem ([lmacklem1@gmail.com](mailto:lmacklem1@gmail.com)) or Dominick Grace ([dgrace2@uwo.ca](mailto:dgrace2@uwo.ca))

“What’s in the box?” Dean Winchester asks in “The Magnificent Seven,” episode one of the third season of *Supernatural*, to the befuddlement of his brother Sam and their avuncular mentor Bobby Singer, but to the delight of fans who revel in the show’s wry meta elements. Dean is of course quoting Detective Mills, Brad Pitt’s character in the thriller *Se7en* (1995), directed by David Fincher. Throughout its twelve-year run (to date), *Supernatural* has revelled in breaking out of the limitations usually implied by a television show, breaking out of the box in numerous ways. Ac-

knowledging the popularity of the meta-play in the show, current showrunner Andrew Dabb promised the most meta-finale ever for the season twelve finale. One of the most noteworthy examples of this predilection is the extensively meta elements of the season five apocalypse plotline, which featured the character Carver Edlund (his name derived from series writers Jeremy Carver and Ben Edlund) in several episodes. Edlund is a novelist who has written supposed works of fiction that in fact document Sam and Dean Winchester's lives, thoroughly breaking the fourth wall. Edlund is the pseudonym of Chuck Shurley—who turns out to be God, making one of his rare mainstream television appearances. However, this meta plot element represents only one of the myriad ways *Supernatural* has broken out of the box. Season five, episode eight (“Changing Channels”), transports Sam and Dean into the worlds of several television shows, while season six, episode fifteen, “The French Mistake,” carried the conceit further, having Sam and Dean visit the “real” world, in which they are characters in the TV show *Supernatural*. Season eight and nine feature as main villain the appropriately-named Metatron, the scribe of God trying to write himself into the position of God—in effect plotting in both senses of the word. Season eight also featured, in episode 8 (“Hunteri Heroici”), Warner Brothers style cartoon gimmickry, and the upcoming season thirteen promises an animated crossover episode with Scooby Doo. Season ten's 200th episode is yet another recursive metanarrative, featuring a highschool student trying to mount a musical adaptation of the Carver Edlund novels. In short, despite its horror trappings, *Supernatural*

has been decidedly postmodern in its liberal use of pastiche, meta, intertextuality, and generic slippage. This collection is interested in exploring the ways *Supernatural* breaks boundaries. Topics of potential interest include but are not limited to

- Explicitly meta elements in *Supernatural*
- Supernatural and fandom: interpenetrations
- God, Metatron, and other Supernatural authors
- Role and role-playing
- Generic slippage (comedy; found footage; the musical episode)
- Allusion and intertext in *Supernatural*
- Canonicity
- Non-Supernatural (e.g. the episodes with no fantasy elements)
- Supernatural and genre TV
- Reality and retcon: how the show has shifted and redefined its own rules
- Casting and self-consciousness (e.g. the use of celebrity guest stars such as Linda Blair, Rick Springfield, etc.)
- Importance of music throughout the show

**Submission:** Proposals of 300–500 words should be submitted to Lisa Macklem ([lmacklem1@gmail.com](mailto:lmacklem1@gmail.com)) or Dominick Grace ([dgrace2@uwo.ca](mailto:dgrace2@uwo.ca)) by October 1 2017. Final papers should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words long and written in conformity with MLA style and will be due by May 1 2018. McFarland has expressed interest in this collection, with a contract forthcoming.

# Science Fiction Research Association

[www.sfra.org](http://www.sfra.org)

The Science Fiction Research Association is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, booksellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership. Visit the SFRA Website at [www.sfra.org](http://www.sfra.org). For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the Website.

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## **SFRA Standard Membership Benefits**

### *SFRA Review*

Four issues per year. This newsletter/journal surveys the field of science fiction scholarship, including extensive reviews of fiction and nonfiction books and media, review articles, and listings of new and forthcoming books. The *Review* also posts news about SFRA internal affairs, calls for papers, and updates on works in progress.

### *SFRA Annual Directory*

One issue per year. Members' names, contact information, and areas of interest.

### *SFRA Listserv*

Ongoing. The SFRA listserv allows members to discuss topics and news of interest to the SF community, and to query the collective knowledge of the membership. To join the listserv or obtain further information, visit [wiz.cath.vt.edu/mailman/listinfo/sfra-l](http://wiz.cath.vt.edu/mailman/listinfo/sfra-l).

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Three issues per year. The oldest scholarly journal in the field, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, book reviews, letters, occasional special topic issues, and annual index.

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Three issues per year. This scholarly journal includes critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, review articles, reviews, notes, letters, international coverage, and annual index.

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(Discounted subscription rates for members)  
Three issues per year. British scholarly journal, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, reviews, and letters. Add to dues: \$36 (seamail); \$43 (airmail).

### *Science Fiction Film and Television*

Three issues per year. Critical works and reviews. Add to dues: \$59 (e-issue only); \$73 (airmail).

### *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*

Four issues per year. Scholarly journal, with critical and bibliographical articles and reviews. Add to dues: \$40/1 year (US); \$50/1 year (international); \$100/3 years.

### *Femspec*

Critical and creative works. Add to dues: \$50 (US); \$95 (US institutional); \$60 (international); \$105 (international institutional).

