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EDITORS’ MESSAGE

Science Fiction Liverpool

Chris Pak

THE SFRA 2016 conference is just over a month away and efforts to make this meeting a memorable one are in full swing. Leading up to the conference are several sf-related events that have taken place or will be taking place in Liverpool: in March, the city hosted its first MCM Comic Con, which drew over 23,000 attendees. The Writing on the Wall Festival is taking place as we speak, and its theme this year is the future. Andy Sawyer and Pat Cadigan recently discussed the 'History of Sci-Fi in 10 Objects,' which made use of material from the Science Fiction Foundation archive to explore the significance of the holdings at The University of Liverpool. Other talks and events of interest to sf scholars include 'Future|Journeys: Afrofuturism at WoWfest,' the 'Dead Good Poets: Sci-Fi and Futures Night' and the 'Morphologies Masterclass: The Art of the Sci-Fi Short Story,' led by Stephen Baxter and Ramsey Campbell. The SFRA 2016 conference comes to a city already primed for sf.

In this issue of the Review we have two feature articles, both of which take the opportunity of the 50th anniversary year of Star Trek to explore the significance of the series. Sebastian Stoppe discusses storytelling and the holodeck in 'Getting Immersed in Star Trek: Storytelling Between "True" and "False" on the Holodeck,' while Mariella Scerri and David Zammit consider 'Mythology in Science Fiction,' in which they consider Star Trek alongside other literature and TV. In addition to these two articles are our regular series of non-fiction, fiction and media reviews.

As Craig and Keren discuss in their columns, the new SFRA website has now been up and running for several months. We would welcome any queries or ideas from our members on how to make this resource speak to your needs as researchers and teachers. I am looking forward to meeting you this year, perhaps for the first time, at the 2016 conference in Liverpool, and to take the opportunity to discuss ideas for the future of the Review, the website, and the organisation.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

A Destination for Science Fiction Scholars and Teachers

Craig Jacobsen

THE COMPLETE COLLAPSE of the SFRA website a few months ago may very well have been a blessing in disguise. It certainly didn't seem like it at the time, as we were left scrambling to rebuild a site even as membership renewals began, but the SFRA Executive Committee decided to do more than just rebuild a website. We moved to a system that, while it looks like a website on the front end, has a much more sophisticated infrastructure behind it than we have ever had available to us before. We are still learning all of the possibilities, but they mostly boil down to variations on two big advantages: better ways to communicate and to collaborate among members of SFRA. I won't go into great detail here, as these possibilities are the subject of a discussion session at our annual conference in Liverpool at the end of June. For those of you able join us there, I ask you to think a little in advance about ways that the SFRA might help to facilitate your work in the field. Do you want to connect with fellow sf scholars who are geographically close, or share research interests? Do you want quick access to curated scholarly resources? Would you be interested in working together with other members on large-scale scholarly projects? We've made good use of the communications tools of the late 20th century (the SFRA listserv has been a workhorse for decades), but it is time to think about the possibilities that current technologies offer us.

Whatever we come up with in Liverpool we will share with members who couldn’t join us, so if you can’t attend, be thinking about how might like to add to the conversation. We want to make the area behind the website’s member login a destination for science fiction scholars and teachers, and we’ll need your help to make that happen.
A Site, a Survey, and a Scholarship
Keren Omry

SO, HAVE YOU SEEN the new website?? After numerous trials and tribulations, a few practice runs, some trial-periods and beta versions, it seems we have finally found the platform that will successfully serve the needs of the organization. If you haven’t yet do check it out – it should look much like the old site but, for starters, it works. Furthermore, we are gradually modifying and updating it to make it a richer, more functional, more informative site that can we can all benefit from. Our next step is to begin identifying what the needs and desires of our SFRA community are. For this purpose, we’re putting together a survey that I will be circulating in the next month or so. In this survey, you’ll be asked questions small and large and your detailed responses will be much appreciated. Feel free to contact me, or any of the other SFRA officers, separately if you have anything in particular you wish to see on the site that isn't yet there.

Another innovation we are finally launching is the SFRA Support a New Scholar program. We are offering two grants, one for a non-tenure-track scholar and one for graduate student for the period of two years. Selection will be based on excellence and proven interest in the field and is designed to cover membership fees for the time of the grant. As this year is our pilot program we had some kinks to unkink and so got to a late start and so membership and access will be awarded retroactively to the recipients and the grant will end December 2017. The applications for the grants can be found on our site, here, and should be submitted digitally to me. Please do consider applying and/or disseminating to any eligible candidate you feel might fit the bill.

Finally, as our annual conference approaches, SF is in the news again. While Puppygate 2.0 (to say nothing about the truly alien aspects of the run towards the U.S. General Elections) is revealing more about the political machinations of the election process than about the quality of contemporary science fiction, the newly announced Arthur C. Clarke nominations indicate that exciting new things are happening in SF. In the meantime, our notions of public and private are being revised: Zaha Hadid, the astounding architect who seemed to transform the possibilities of space in ways that seem so familiar to the world of SF has passed away, while the latest chapter of the FBI-Apple encryption dispute has raised the bar on the links between privacy, technology, security, and consumption – that stuff of so much SF. I trust you are all as excited as I am in preparation for SFRA’s UK venture and I hope to see you there.
Getting Immersed in Star Trek: Storytelling Between "True" and "False" on the Holodeck

Sebastian Stoppe

TELEVISION IS A writer’s medium. Especially in serial formats, television enables the writer to narrate large-scale stories spread over several episodes within a season. Although the plots do not need to be narrated in a linear way, watching TV is a mostly linear process. Regardless whether you watch a new episode of your favourite series week by week or rather prefer "binge-watching" an entire season, storylines evolve in a linear way meaning you still have to watch episode after episode to get the whole story presented in the way the authors intended. Gradually you will become immersed in the show, diving in the fictional world you are being told of (Rigby and Ryan 81). However, immersion is not restricted to television (Bracken and Skalski). You may become immersed into a book as well as a film. Yet still boundaries are strictly set and visible between the world of the viewer (commonly called the reality) and the imaginary world of fiction. You may travel between worlds, but as soon the lights go up in the theatre, the television set is being switched off or you close your book, you immediately return to the real world.

However, what if the level of immersion can be raised to such a high level that the boundaries between reality and fiction become invisible? Beginning with Star Trek: The Next Generation (TNG; USA 1987–1994), the multi-media franchise Star Trek introduced the holodeck. In this article, I want to examine the holodeck as storyteller in the modern world. I want to show that – aside from being a highly immersive medium – the holodeck itself can create imaginary worlds to an extent that the boundaries between reality and fiction are becoming untraceable.

1. A Perfect Simulacrum

Basically, the holodeck is an empty space with a high ceiling and no furniture at all. A yellow grid pattern covers the walls of the room and there is a large doorway with an arch that contains a control panel (fig. 1).

Figure 1: View of an idle holodeck with the arch doorway.
When not in use, the holodeck is like a dark TV screen or a blank page in a book. But once a programme is started, the holodeck comes to life. Holodecks simulate life in its lushest form. It does not matter whether you simply recreate a specific place like Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) does in TNG We'll Always Have Paris (USA 1988), you set up combat training like Lieutenant Worf (Michael Dorn) does occasionally, or you enter a narrative like the Dixon Hill detective stories or like the adventures of Sherlock Holmes throughout The Next Generation. Holodecks are perfect simulacra, to borrow a term by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. Holodecks do not pretend to be another place, they are (Stoppe, "Tee, Earl Grey, heiß" 105). Like Baudrillard points out, 'to dissipate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have' (3). When simulating, one adds something false to reality which cannot be distinguished from reality objectively. 'Pretending, or simulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false," the "real" and the "imaginary."' (Baudrillard 3). Baudrillard himself references McLuhan who considers television as a 'cold' medium which presents a simulation of reality that needs to be completed by the viewer. McLuhan sees television primarily as an amplification of touch and not of the visual, as you might think when comparing to radio and the aural (364). For McLuhan, television stresses all human senses, not only the visual one. Baudrillard takes this idea one step further, indicating that television transforms the viewer into a holographic character. 'You bend over the hologram like God over his creature: only God has this power of passing through walls, through people, and finding Himself immaterially in the beyond' (Baudrillard 105). Like God, it seems that we are not only looking into another world while watching TV. It seems as if we are really in this world. For example: While we are watching Star Trek, something miraculous does happen. We are being drawn into the story and onto the ship. We follow the narrative and at one point we feel like a crewman of the Enterprise, walking with the others through the corridors, onto the bridge and living with them in their quarters. You may object that we are still able to differentiate between reality and fiction, but are we? What is "true" and "false"? The truth is: all people in the show are actors and not Starfleet personnel, the corridor is a stage set which doubles for all corridors on the ship, no one can fire a photon torpedo by clicking on the bridge controls, and there is no warp core and no constant humming of the ship. However, we see a Starfleet captain, we see the entire crew walking through the entire ship, we hear the constant humming and we know the warp core is within normal parameters. The simulation of reality that is presented to us through television becomes reality because we are completing it. 'The hallucination is total and truly fascinating once the hologram is projected in front of the plaque, so that nothing separates you from it [...]’ (Baudrillard 105). We are becoming immersed into it, and until the show is over and the screen goes dark, the storytelling is reality to us. Without being aware of it, we are getting immersed into a simulacrum. The stories – written by authors – guide us through it. 'We become immersed and present in their worlds, emotionally experiencing them as if they were really happening to us’ (Rigby and Ryan 82).

Enter the holodeck. Baudrillard argues that a three-dimensional simulacrum would be less close to the real than a two-dimensional (107). Would an added dimension unmask the simulacrum? Baudrillard refers to traditional television and thus his argument that a three-dimensional television would detract us from the real has a certain point. That is, because we are the hologram plunged into the simulacrum. By watching 3-D television you are indeed heavily reminded that this world is unreal. Remember McLuhan arguing that television is an extension of touch in terms of interplay of all senses. By watching three-dimensional pictures we are immediately reminded of touching things, of literally grasping things to understand and recognise them. But there is nothing solid to touch, we are still holograms. However, what if we are switching sides? Being the real one in a world made up of holograms that can be touched anyway? The holodeck is able not only to produce a simulated reality, a simulacrum in terms of Baudrillard. It is able to materialise all things the ‘viewer’ is interacting with. Reprising my example from above, there is not only one corridor standing in for all but there are all corridors of the ship, I encounter a Starfleet captain and not an actor pretending to be one, there is a warp core and humming throughout the ship and I can fire a photon torpedo. I am not the hologram anymore, I am a real person in a simulacrum. Like a video game, the holodeck 'seem[s] to
have the ability to not just tell us a story, but to let us actively live it' (Rigby and Ryan 2). Seen objectively, I cannot determine whether any of my actions do have an effect on reality or not because I cannot differ between the real and the simulacrum anymore. I am totally immersed into the medium which is the holodeck. Rigby and Ryan define physical presence as a state in which 'the video game player feels that they have taken a journey to the world on the screen from their actual location on the couch or wherever they may be in the molecular world' (88). In a way, the holodeck creates a world within the world that is to some degree complete and consistent (Wolf) and we actually do the before-mentioned journey: We are present in a most physical way.

However, the boundaries between the real and the simulacrum still are well-set. Whenever we walk through the holodeck door, we enter another world (as long as a programme is already running). Once inside, the door to the outer world closes and disappears (hence the holodeck places a simulation upon the doorway, too). But like in a video game, one is always able to let the doorway including an arch with a computer terminal re-appear by instructing the computer to do so (fig. 2). In the same way we escape a video game: by summoning the game menu (Stoppe, "Tee, Earl Grey, heiß" 106).

2. Games and interactive storytelling
At the beginning of this article, we assumed that television is a writer’s medium in the first place. Fictional texts commonly follow a certain narrative in which a story is presented in a certain way, thus forming a plot. As television is a linear medium, it is sometimes supposed that narratives must be presented in a linear way, too. However, this is not true at all. As with books, the plot line does not need to be strictly linear. A writer may present a story by using different techniques such as fragmented narration or flashbacks. Certain plot lines may happen at the same time. Immersion functions in either way because although the story may be non-linear itself, it is always presented linearly in the plot. But can we imagine such a story presented in a holodeck?

While thinking about simulacra and different types of media, McLuhan as well as Baudrillard did not take video games into account. Video games and
McLuhan considers games as a medium, 'dramatic models of our psychological lives' (McLuhan 257). 'Any game [...] is an extension of the individual or the group' (McLuhan 263). Furthermore, there are several similarities between McLuhan's definition of television as an extension of touch together with Baudrillard's idea of being transformed to a holographic character within that medium and role-playing games (RPG). RPGs 'offer the player the chance to assume or play a role' (Carr et al. 19), and they do not necessarily need to be set in fantasy worlds but can also be located in contemporary settings or 'on board a Klingon freighter' (Carr et al. 22). Furthermore, 'players make choices about how to develop their characters [...] as they progress' (Rigby and Ryan 48). Games, and RPGs in particular, consist of different elements: player, representational signs, coded rules, and a simulated environment (Calleja 11–14). While there are characters who can be played by real persons (and in the case of multiplayer games there can be a huge number of player characters), the simulated environment has to be populated by a number of non-player characters. These characters need to be determined by the computer’s artificial intelligence systems and therefore data is needed for characterisation. Like books and television, RPGs also consists of a story and a plot. "The "what" is the raw material of the story events, and the "how" is the re-presentation of these events in the narrative discourse. Story events are sequenced, arranged in time and space: plotted' (Carr et al. 35). So we have a story (that is a collection of events, actions, and characters), but unlike stories in television and literature, the actual plot line is not pre-determined in detail by the author. "Thus, the same "story" can give rise to many different narratives, each of which would accentuate, exclude or emphasize different things' (Carr et al. 35). Murray calls this type of story a multiform story. In Star Trek, we learn that even in the 24th century there are writers (and even publishers) of novels – but as from now they are writing holonovels (Stoppe, 'Unterwegs zu neuen Welten' 118). In the Star Trek: Voyager (VOY; USA 1995–2001) episode 'Author, Author' (USA 2001) the Doctor (precisely, the Emergency Medical Holographic; Robert Picardo) writes about the depressing life of a holographic medic aboard a starship. The novel called Photons Be Free is directly based upon the crew of the Voyager. The Doctor constructs a story and a rough plot line but the final narration is carried out by the one who consumes the novel: the holodeck user.

We did point out that while viewing television the viewer gets immersed into the story and its presentation. However, although television requires a comparably high amount of viewer participation, the viewer or narratee is not able to interact with the televised programme at any time. On the other hand, today’s video games allow players to interact up to a very high level. The narratee becomes his own narrator. Even within the Star Trek franchise, there is a number of video games which are directly based on the television series. For example, in Star Trek: Voyager – Elite Force (2000) the player takes the role of a security lieutenant aboard the Voyager. Aside from the fact that Elite Force is a genuine first-person shooter, the player has to follow a certain storyline but is able to vary the actual plot by walking around large parts of the ship. In a special mode, the player is actually able to walk around the ship while not being involved in any story-specific action but rather as a part of the crew during normal ship operations. This also includes a visit on the bridge and some interaction with the crew. The first-person shooter is a stand-in for the player’s vision (Stork 43). The player inevitably becomes the character because he is looking at the mise-en-scène of the game through the eyes of the character.

In a video game, there is much less of a plot that is laid out by the writers than different tasks. Within the limits of the programme the player is now able to lay out his own plot: Where do I walk? With whom am I going to talk? What is next? The less a video game is bound to a linear plot the more it is a sequence of different events which have a narrative quality (Moorstedt 200–201).

The outcome of the subjective point of view, the storytelling of television, and the designing of tasks instead of plots by game designers together with the hyper-reality of a holographic simulator is a powerful simulacrum. Instead of presenting a selection of events like in television the holodeck is able to create a more or less complete imaginary world that is able to fully interact with. The holodeck user sees an entire world just before and with his own eyes and

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1 It should still be noted that McLuhan emphasises on sports as games rather than other genres like board games or role-playing games.
up-close (Stork 44).

3. Simulacrum I: Encountering Oneself
In Star Trek: Voyager's third season episode 'Worst Case Scenario' (USA 1997) Chief Engineer B'Elanna Torres (Roxann Dawson) discovers a hidden holonovel by accident. She activates the programme and learns that it is a kind of mutiny story aboard the Voyager. Former Maquis chief Chakotay (Robert Beltran) recruits Torres for his secret plan to get in command of the ship while Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) and Lieutenant Paris (Robert Duncan McNeill) are on an away mission. Torres accepts the offer and the former Maquis crew manage to get the ship under their control. The senior officers are under arrest in the brig while the other crew members are imprisoned in a cargo bay. Here, Chakotay offers them to be part of the mutineers: 'So I'm giving you a choice: you can be put off the ship with your superiors or... you can do what Neelix and some of your other crew members have already done, and join me. If you do, you'll be part of the crew and it’s going to do whatever it takes to get us home as fast as possible. Under my command, we won't let almighty Federation principles get in the way of opportunities the way Janeway did when she destroyed the array that could have gotten us home. And we won't be wasting precious time stopping to investigate every insignificant anomaly that we come across. What we will do is use any means necessary to acquire technology that can shorten our journey. To hell with Starfleet regulations. You have fifteen minutes to make up your minds.'

This episode is interesting for the fact that the audience does not know at the beginning of the show that we are in a holofiction. Although there is a little clue (right away in the first shot Torres wears a Starfleet uniform with a regular rank pip instead of the provisional one that the former Maquis crew has), the viewer is not able to distinguish between "true" (the "real" Voyager) and "false" (the holofiction). Right from the start we are placed into a simulacrum.

As shown in figure 3, almost the entire first act is completely set in the simulation. It is not until Lieutenant Paris enters the holodeck (because Torres missed an appointment with him) that the illusion is broken. In the second act, the programme is now replayed by Paris. It is worth noting that Paris is slighting altering the plot line:
Original dialogue in act 1
[Walking in corridor.]
Chakotay: Where are you headed?
Torres: The bridge.
Chakotay: Mind if I walk with you?
Torres: Not at all.
Chakotay: So, how’s it going?
Torres: Not bad, I guess.
Chakotay: Tuvok still giving you a hard time?
Torres: No more than usual.
Chakotay: I don’t know about you, but when I think about spending seventy years on the same ship with that guy, it gives me a headache. I get the impression a lot of the crew agrees with me. Maquis and Starfleet.

[Entering the turbolift.]
Chakotay: Bridge. So, what do you think?
Torres: About what?
Chakotay: About what I’ve been saying. That a lot of the crew aren’t too happy with our Chief of Security. And for that matter, I don’t think Captain Janeway’s winning any popularity contests either. Don’t you agree?
Torres: Why do I get the feeling that you’re testing me?
Chakotay: Let’s just say I’m interested in your opinion.
Torres: Why?
Chakotay: You’re a good officer. I like you. And I wouldn’t want to see you get hurt.
Torres: Computer, halt turbolift. Look, what’s this all about?

Chakotay: There are going to be some changes around here. All of the Maquis are in line, and about twenty five of the Starfleet crew are with us.
Torres: Are you saying there’s going to be a mutiny?
Chakotay: And when the shooting starts, I’m going to need to know which side you’re on.

Dialogue in Paris re-play in act 2
[Walking in corridor.]
Chakotay: Where are you headed?
Paris: The bridge.
Chakotay: Mind if I walk with you?
Paris: I was kind of hoping you would.
Chakotay: So, how’s it going?
Paris: I couldn’t be better.
Chakotay: Tuvok still giving you a hard time?
Paris: Oh, doesn’t he always?
Chakotay: I don’t know about you, but when I think about spending seventy years on the same ship with that guy, it gives me a headache.

Paris: Not to mention an upset stomach.
[Entering the turbolift.]
Chakotay: Bridge.
Paris: I hear you’re planning a mutiny.

Chakotay: Computer, halt turbolift. Who told you that?
Paris: Let’s just say there are rumours.
Chakotay: Yeah, well, don’t believe everything you hear.
Paris: Of course not. I just wanted you to know that whatever happens, I’m with you.
Chakotay: Computer, resume turbolift.
Paris: I’m serious. Just tell me what you want me to do.

Chakotay: All right, Ensign, here it is. As soon as the Captain leaves to meet the Rukani, I want you to put all crew quarters on lock-down. I’ll ask you if you’ve finished upgrading the internal sensors. If you say yes, I’ll know we’re ready to go.
Paris: I understand.
Chakotay: I’m watching you. No tricks.

Figure 4: Comparison of the beginning of “Worst Case Scenario.”
When we compare the original dialogue with the re-play we notice that the simulation reacts to Paris’ different approach (fig. 4). The first part is almost verbatim except for the fact that Chakotay does not mention the Maquis. Apparently, the simulation is aware that Paris is not part of the former Maquis crew. As Paris knows already about the upcoming mutiny (as well as the viewer), he is confronting Chakotay with his knowledge in a very direct way. It is now Chakotay instead of the player who halts the turbolift. As the simulation realises that the player knows already about the secret plan, it adjusts to this new situation. Chakotay does not make any hints as he did with Torres but speaks openly about his plan. On the bridge, the simulation also differs from the first run. In contrast to Torres, who went along with Chakotay during the action on the bridge, Paris tries to warn the other officers. His attempt is unsuccessful and Paris is subsequently arrested with the senior officers in the brig. Afterwards, he is released by Chakotay and has to go to the cargo bay. Chakotay then renews his offer: 'And we won’t be wasting precious time stopping to investigate every insignificant anomaly we come across. What we will do is use any means necessary to acquire technology that can shorten our journey. To hell with Starfleet regulations. You have fifteen minutes to make up your minds.' Whereas Paris answers: 'I don’t need fifteen minutes. I’m with you right now'.

At this point, the different plot lines converge again. So the simulation does not follow a narrow plot line but adjusts every time the player interacts within the story. However, the real-time events of play unfold act by act as the player is manipulating the programme (Carr et al. 43). The holonovel combines a traditional narrative we know from television with the benefits and flexibility of a role-playing game. The possibility of different plot experiences within one story is now discussed in reality2 by the characters in the episode. Torres advises Paris to go along with the mutineers right from the start because ‘it’s much more fun.’ It turns out that the programme is already the talk of the ship. Neelix (Ethan Phillips) approaches both of them and tells about a third possible plot line: 'I tried sending an encoded message to Captain Janeway’s shuttle to warn her about the mutiny. But Chakotay caught me, phasered me, and the programme reset. Next time, I’m going to pretend to go along with the conspirators and then stage a counterstrike.' Note that Neelix mentions the programme reset after he got phasered which seems to be equivalent to a game over situation in video games. Paris then plays the programme again and this time he goes along with Chakotay. It is now that the story is expanded further: Janeway and the simulated Paris try to recapture the ship and beam onto the Voyager. The holographic and the real Paris suddenly have each other at gun point (fig. 5).

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2 In this and the following context, the term "reality" refers to the television reality of the Star Trek universe, not to our "real" reality.
Encountering oneself is a startling moment here because it is not like a mirror image that mimics the "real" Paris. Instead, the real Paris (who plays a mutineer right now) faces a holographic self that is loyal to the ship's captain. The moment lasts only for some seconds as the programme ends suddenly. But imagine the programme would go on. Who is the "true" and who is the "false" one? What may be distinguishable at the start would become indistinct the more the story unfolds. However, when Paris instructs the computer to resume the programme, he is notified by the computer that there is no such story: 'Additional narrative parameters have not been programmed.'

Having reached the middle of the episode, let us review the previous story. We have seen that a holonovel can react to the interaction of the player. Therefore, we can assume that a holonovel is a possible future elaboration of today’s video games by combining elements of television viewing and game interaction. Player’s immersion is total and from the outside (that is, the television viewer) it is impossible to tell whether we are in a simulacrum or reality unless we are explicitly told about. With this episode as an example, the Star Trek writers set up a two-fold narrative. First, there is the television layer in which a story is being narrated about the "real life" on Voyager. While the audience is immersed in the story, we imagine ourselves to be there and follow the story about an impending mutiny. For the first act, we do not know that this is a holonovel. However, when Paris breaks the illusion at the end of act one we instantly get expelled from two immersions at once, holographic simulacrum and "reality".

It is obvious that the programme is incomplete because of its abrupt ending. Beginning with act three of the episode, the true author is now revealed both to the characters and the audience. The programme turns out to be rather a combat training than a fictional story, written by security officer Tuvok (Tim Russ) who was not sure about the loyalty of the Maquis crew. However, the entire senior staff enjoyed the programme and it is decided to expand it. This episode reflects television writing: like in a writer’s room, the crew meets in the ship’s mess hall discussing story ideas and plot twists. Eventually, Tuvok and Paris go to the holodeck for editing the programme. When they re-activate the programme and enter the edit mode, something unplanned happens. It turns out that Seska (Martha Hackett), a former Maquis crew member of Cardassian origin who has betrayed the entire Voyager crew and was killed in action in the past, has booby-trapped the programme. Her holographic alter ego appears, explaining 'I finished writing it for you, with a few revisions of my own. [...] To start with, the holodeck is now sealed. Your friends will find it very difficult to get you out of here. And the safety protocols are off, which means if I shoot you, and I am going to shoot you, you’ll die. But not just yet. You’ve got ten seconds to run.' Here, Seska is breaking the fourth wall within the holodeck programme. Her holographic alter ego is aware of the situation and suddenly speaks off the stage.

While there were still boundaries between "reality" and simulacrum (because the programme could be stopped at any time and eventually ended itself), these boundaries have now vanished. From an inside view, at this moment the simulacrum turns into reality for Paris and Tuvok. They are still on Voyager, but although it is a simulated reality, they are neither able to stop it nor to escape it. With no safety protocol, the simulacrum becomes as dangerous as reality. At this point, the term immersion obtains a new meaning. When we talked about immersion into a medium like television or even video game, it was perfectly safe for the viewer/player to emerge again. But in the holodeck, we are the real and the simulacrum suddenly turns into a state of hyperperfection. It becomes more real than intended, more so even than when there are no safety protocols in place.

The remaining Voyager crew outside the holodeck becomes aware of the situation but cannot help immediately. Because the safety protocols are off-line and Seska introduced some precautions no one is able to break into the holodeck. In the middle of act four, Janeway and her crewmates try to help Tuvok and Paris by literally re-writing the narrative. Like a casual attendee, they are able to watch the holodeck events on screen. It is as if they are watching TV. From now on, this episode leads to the quite strange situation that the TV audience is watching the Voyager crew watching the holodeck. Thus, Star Trek plays a double game on its audience with this episode. Tuvok and Paris are trapped in a thriller-like narrative in which their actual lives are threatened. Acting like a proxy, Janeway now constantly re-writes the programme to help the protagonists as she gets as well immersed into the programme as the TV viewer is into the episode. There is an extensive cross-cutting
montage between the holodeck and the Voyager ship. Janeway has to learn that while she is able to place some information into the programme (like a computer display message), the simulacrum is also counteracting against the new narrative from the outside. For example, Janeway modifies the characterisation of the holographic Chakotay so he objects to the execution of both Tuvok and Paris in the simulacrum:

Seska: Fire on my order.
Chakotay: Belay that.
Seska: What are you doing? We planned this.
Chakotay: I'm not sure it's necessary to kill them.
Tuvok: If I'm not mistaken, the Chakotay hologram is undergoing some sort of character change.
Paris: Do you think they're trying to help us again?
Seska: These two rodents betrayed us. They deserve to die.
Tuvok: Don't listen to her, Commander. You've taken the ship. There is no need to add murder to your list of offences.
Seska: Quiet! [...] You're not going to lose your nerve, are you?
Chakotay: We have what we want. There's no reason to kill them.
Seska: Prepare to fire on my order!

The holographic Chakotay has been altered by Janeway so that he is unwilling to execute both Tuvok and Paris. However, Seska's programming is able to adjust the programme to this new task: she simply kills the character to eliminate the obstacle:

Chakotay: Seska! I'm in command of this operation.
Seska: Not anymore.
[Seska kills Chakotay.]

4. Simulacrum II: Ship in a Bottle
Another example for how a real person can become completely immersed into a simulacrum is TNG season six episode 'Ship in a Bottle' (USA 1993). In the opening teaser, Lieutenant Commander Data (Brent Spiner) and Chief Engineer Geordi LaForge (LeVar Burton) reprise their roles as Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, respectively, while enjoying another holonovel of Holmes’ adventures. As Data is near to the conclusion of a murder case, he notices a malfunction of the holodeck systems: a holo character is supposed to be left-handed in the story, but, however, catches a box of matches with his right hand. Lieutenant Barclay (Dwight Schultz) runs a diagnostic check and recalls the character of Dr. Moriarty (Daniel Davis) by accident. To Barclay's surprise, Moriarty is aware of being a holographic character created by the computer and complains about being stored in the ship's memory banks for over four years – in other words, he appears to be a sentient being.³

Barclay: You know... you know what you are?
Moriarty: A holodeck character? A fictional man? Yes, yes, I know all about your marvellous inventions. I was created as a plaything, so that your Commander Data could masquerade as Sherlock Holmes. But they made me too well, and I became more than a character in a story. I became self-aware. I am alive.
Barclay: That's not possible.
Moriarty: But here I am.

Like the audience and the Star Trek characters, the holographic Moriarty can have a look from the outside. 'He sees past the masks: he knows that Data isn't "really" Holmes' (Graham 25), thus becoming conscious. Like in Worst Case Scenario, Moriarty also breaks the fourth wall by speaking off the stage. He demands to be freed from the simulacrum.

³ The story of becoming an apparently sentient being is told in TNG 'Elementary, Dear Data' (USA 1988) in which – also by accident – LaForge instructs the computer to create a character capable of outthinking Data – and not Holmes (Stoppe, 'Tee, Earl Grey, heif.' 105–107).
Unlike *Worst Case Scenario*, the audience is aware of being in a simulacrum at the start (fig. 6). This is more than obvious as Data and LaForge are in period costumes. After Barclay has finished his diagnosis, Captain Picard, Data, and Barclay visit Moriarty on the holodeck. Picard tries to explain while Moriarty has been kept in the ship’s memory for such a long time but Moriarty does not believe him: ‘I have consciousness. Conscious beings have will. The mind endows them with powers that are not necessarily understood – even by you. If my will is strong enough, perhaps I can exist outside this room. Perhaps I can walk into your world right now.’ He repeats his demand to be freed from the holodeck as being as sentient as any other lifeform.\(^4\) Picard shows him the boundaries between the real world (the Enterprise) and the holodeck simulacrum. He calls for the holodeck’s exit (which appears literally as a pathway between reality and simulacrum as we discussed above) and tosses a holographic book through the doorstep. The book vanishes and Picard predicts the same for Moriarty: that he will simply cease to exist when stepping outside. Moriarty, however, proves him wrong. He steps outside the holodeck and does not vanish because ‘I think, therefore I am’ (Moriarty). At this point, the borders between reality and simulacrum seem to melt away. A holodeck character is getting immersed into the real world. Yet unbeknownst to Picard, Data, Barclay, and the audience, this is not the case. We are still in simulation. No one has left the holodeck so far. Instead, Moriarty plays a trick on everyone. Being sentient, he creates a simulation of the real within the holodeck that extends his own holonovel to the outer world. In a sense, he re-created a reality that is practically indistinguishable from the "real" reality. Everyone takes this real for granted including Picard, Data, and Barclay – and the television audience as well. Instead of being misled right from the beginning of the episode like in *Worst Case Scenario*, the writer tricks the audience in a simulacrum now. From now on we are not able to differentiate between reality and simulacrum.\(^5\)

Communication with the real world is being

\(^4\) In *The Next Generation*, the question whether an artificial being can be considered sentient has been discussed in 'The Measure of a Man’ using the example of the android Data. Ironically, the concept of a sentient holographic character was resumed in *Voyager* with the Emergency Medical Holographic.

\(^5\) However, if we have a closer look on the episode we discover a slight hint: there is no exterior shot of the Enterprise between scenes until Moriarty gets into contact with the "real" bridge. That means that the audience is actually confined within the limits of the holodeck like Picard, Data, and Barclay and thus literally not able to have a look from the outside.
blocked (because Moriarty got the command codes from Picard), the safety protocols are off-line, and Picard, Data, and Barclay are being held as hostages inside the simulacrum. However, the simulated reality is faulty (as Barclay has not solved the computer problem from the story’s beginning yet) and Data eventually notices that they must be still inside the holodeck. Data notices that LaForge is catching objects with his left hand although he is right-handed. It is the same glitch that occurred at the beginning of the episode during the Holmes story. Data deduces that because LaForge behaves like this, he cannot be real and therefore it is still a simulacrum. So, Moriarty never did leave the holodeck (he is still unable to do so). Yet being in the possession of Picard’s command codes, Moriarty is now able to threaten the real world to get out of the holodeck. It is until here, about half an hour into the episode, that the audience learns about their own deception (fig. 6). From now on the television viewer is able again to tell the simulacrum apart from reality. Like in Worst Case Scenario, Picard tries to communicate with the outside by telling Moriarty through another character that 'decoupling the Heisenberg compensators' might be a solution for beaming Moriarty off the holodeck into reality. Moriarty buys into this and contacts the "real" First Officer William Riker (Jonathan Frakes). Or so Moriarty – and the audience again – believed. To deceive Moriarty, Picard in fact created a simulation within the simulation and transfers Moriarty there. Moriarty now thinks he is in the real world (as Riker is greeting him at the transporter room) and finally departs the Enterprise by shuttle. Picard – now having regained his command codes – orders the computer to end the second simulation (that is still within the first simulation). Again the audience has been misled. We were about to believe that a holographic character is indeed able to leave the simulacrum and get into reality but it was only another simulacrum. Yet again we were unable to tell which of the real is true or not.

Picard, Data, and Barclay are now able to communicate with the real world outside again and leave the first simulation. However, the simulation does live on within a small computer chip being put in a portable device – like a "ship in a bottle".

5. Conclusion

Storytelling means creating imaginary worlds. Both episodes are examples for how television writers deliberately manipulate the audience by telling stories within different worlds. Aside from the fictional format of television, the holodeck serves as secondary instance for telling stories and for an unreliable way of storytelling. These episodes demonstrate the thin line between reality and simulacrum. Getting immersed into a simulacrum may render an individual unable to distinguish between "true" and "false". As Picard puts it in the end of the episode (again breaking the fourth wall), 'our reality may be very much like theirs. All this might just be an elaborate simulation running inside a little device sitting on someone's table'. In a manner of speaking, this is a correct assumption. As Star Trek itself is only a fictional franchise, the 'reality' presented to us is in fact, just a simulation running inside a TV set on our table. Alas, there is no evidence that our 'reality' is truly real or just a simulation itself in which we are immersed in.

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6 We learn that this is a common plot device within the Star Trek universe.
7 The Emergency Medical Holographic will eventually be able to leave his confines with the help of a mobile emitter. Thus, a hologram can be existent in places where no holographic emitters are installed.
8 Moriarty and the question of sentient holographic characters are again referenced in VOY 'Alter Ego' (USA 1997). Here it is revealed that the incident made its way into scholarly discourse at the Starfleet Academy.

Mythology in Science Fiction
Mariella Scerri and David Zammit

Introduction
SINCE THE BEGINNING of humankind’s existence, myths have functioned as rationalizations for the fundamental mysteries of life. In the absence of scientific information of any kind, societies devised creation myths, resurrection myths and complex systems of supernatural beings, each with specific powers, and stories about their actions. Since societies were often isolated from each other, most myths evolved independently. Nonetheless, the various myths are surprisingly similar (Dundes 2).

The need for myth is a universal need. Over time, one version of a myth would become the accepted standard that was passed down to succeeding generations first through story-telling, and then, much later set down in written form. Inevitably myths became part of systems of religion, and were integrated into rituals and ceremonies, which included music, dancing and magic.

In modern society, myth is often regarded as historical or obsolete. Many scholars in the field of cultural studies are now beginning to research the idea that myth has worked itself into modern discourses (Bascom 20). Modern formats of communication allow for widespread communication across the globe, thus enabling mythological discourse and exchange among greater audiences than ever before. Various elements of myth can now be found in cinematography and video games. Although myth was traditionally transmitted through the oral tradition on a smaller scale, the technology of the film industry has enabled film makers to transmit myths to large audiences via film dissemination (Singer 5). Film is ultimately an expression of the society in which it was credited, and reflects the norms and ideas of the time and location in which it was created. In this sense, film may be regarded as the evolution of myth. Koven opines that the basis of modern story telling in both cinema and television lies deeply rooted in the mythological tradition. Many contemporary and technologically advanced movies often rely on ancient myths to construct narratives (Koven 180).

Mythological archetypes such as the cautionary tale regarding the abuse of technology, and battles between gods during creation stories are often the subject of major film productions. Hodge further makes claims that ’the heroic figures of today’s fantasy and science fiction are merely the latest in a long line of culture heroes who purport to be models of all that is best in our society and thus offer a comforting example of how truth and goodness prevail against evil and lies’ (Hodge 37). In an interview on science fiction and mythology, Grech contends that science fiction gave a paradigm shift to the world of ancient mythology (Fava). Contemporary television programmes and books with science fiction and fantasy story lines employ recreations of characters, incidents and motifs from the great “oral literary” heritage (Hodge 38).

The following paper will broadly explore the presentation of mythology in science fiction books and television series. The *Keltiad* by Kennealy Morrison and *The Ilium* and *Olympos* by Dan Simmons will be considered while selected relevant episodes from *Star Trek* and *Stargate* will be discussed such that myth representation will be analyzed.

Mythology Representation in Science Fiction

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The relationship of mythology to science fiction is not always obvious. Blish asserts that this confusion stems from the widely held belief that science fiction is itself a form of latter day mythology, fulfilling comparable hungers in us. Blish points out that myth is usually 'static and final in intent and thus entirely contrary to the spirit of science fiction, which assumes continuous change (Blish).

Traditionally mythology appears in science fiction in two ways, its archetypes being either re-enacted or rationalized. The re-enactment of myths is the more complex of the two cases. Behind the retelling of a myth in a modern context lies the feeling that, although particular myths grew out of a specific cultural background, the truths they express relate to humanness and remain relevant to all societies. The story of Prometheus, punished by the gods for stealing fire from the heavens, or its Christian variant, where Dr Faustus is doomed to external damnation for selling his soul in exchange for knowledge, has a direct bearing on the scientist’s aspiration for even more information about the meaning of the Universe (Blish).

Re-enactments of myth in science fiction take several forms. The simplest strives to deepen the emotional connotations of a story by permeating it with the reverberations of some great original, as C.S Lewis does successfully with the myth of the temptation of Eve in Perelandra (1943).

A less complex and yet popular strategy for mythology stories is to tell the myths from the time in which they happened, rationalizing them in the process. Such rationalization or revision takes place in The Keltiad series by Patricia Kennealy Morrison. The author blends science fiction and fantasy as it transposes the ancient Celtic world and its customs into a space-faring future. The premise behind the series is that a group of Keltic people left earth in 453 C.E in their spaceships and travelled to outer space to create a new kingdom, Kelta.

Three novels in The Keltiad series deal specifically with Arthur and are known as "The Tales of Arthur" - The Hawk’s Gray Feather (1990), The Oak above the Kings (1994) and The Hedge of Mist (1996). All three books provide an extensive treatment of Arthur’s descendants and their history. Kennealy-Morrison’s novels create an extensive family tree that continues beyond King Arthur, providing for his descendants to succeed him as rulers of the kingdom.

By setting her novels in outer space, Kennealy-Morrison does not provide Arthur with a bloodline that connects him to the humans of twentieth century earth. Rather the "Tales of Arthur" novels take place in the 21st century. Outer space is that which leaves the novels open for such extensive creation of descendants for Arthur, providing interesting possibilities for the legend, even if they are greatly removed from the traditional story.

While it is easy to disclaim this as disloyalty to tradition, Kennealy-Morrison in a way is truer to tradition than purists who simply translate or retell. MacKillop notes that myths have never been static, and the very idea of a right version of an excerpt of the narrative of human imaginative story is flawed. The revision's contemporary relevance and vitality is almost necessary. Her books help to illustrate this point. Though different from its likely origin, the Arthurian myth remained alive, and so more likely to be continued, at least in part than a static official version.

Dan Simmons also draws on literature and mythology in his works. In Ilium he draws on Greek legend and mythology, recreating The Iliad in a science fictional context, with people taking on the roles of Greek Gods and the war itself taking place on Mars. Three interweaving storylines (and timelines) interact in the telling of this story which is replete with elements like Artificial Intelligences and time travel. Olympos is its sequel. Both the Ilium and the Olympos are a form of literary science fiction, and rely heavily on intertextuality particularly Homer and Shakespeare as well as references to Marcel Proust’s A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and Vladimir Nabokov’s novel Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle (Wagner).

In Olympos, Simmons utilized the revisionist mythic possibilities afforded him by the Iliad. ‘Further, a pastiche of The Tempest is what Olympos’ earthbound story thread morphs into’ (Wagner). At a deeper level, Ilium and Olympos lend their fiction the ‘purely human art of storytelling’ (Wagner) and the way that heroic myths and romances and tragedies have shaped and continue to shape civilization. Whether through his own revising of Homer’s and Shakespeare’s characters and sagas, or the obsession his cyborg Moravec have with ancient human literature, or through his depiction of the vacuity of the lives of his human characters, Simmons drives home the theme that art is important to who we are as anything else in history (Wagner).

One of the ways the past informs the present is...
through the mythic narratives that are passed down from generation to generation. Just as humanity evolves, so too do the myths, and Olympos offers an example of this. 'In revising and re-contextualizing the epics of Homer and Shakespeare,' Simmons seems keenly aware that in future generations, revisions of contemporary epics are revised (Wagner).

**Mythology in Star Trek**

*Star Trek* has existed for half a century, and has accumulated a vast body of work which results in a total of 738 hours of viewing time. From the original series through *Star Trek Enterprise*, plot lines often directly or indirectly allude to religions and myths (Grech 23). Richard Lutz asserts that

The enduring popularity of *Star Trek* is due to the underlying mythology which binds fans together by virtue of their shared love of stories involving exploration, discovery, adventure and friendship that promote an egalitarian and peace loving society where technology and diversity are valued rather than feared and citizens work together for the greater good. Thus *Star Trek* offers a hopeful vision of the future and a template for our lives and our society that we can aspire to (Lutz 1).

However for an adequate analysis of the mythic qualities present in *Star Trek*, a close examination of the definition of myth has to be made. Blake Tyrell defined myth as

[... ] narratives with the power to move our psychic energies toward integration of self and of self with the cosmos. Myths define an image of the world within and without and relate us to it emotionally. Myths put in narrative from the unconscious assumptions that constitute the spirit of a culture. They can inspire and direct those energies to monumental achievements of good or ill (Tyrell 712).

*Star Trek* proffers many of the standard elements of mythic structure, fulfilling in the process the mythic functions of being mystical, cosmological, sociological and pedagogical. Campbell, in his seminal work of comparative mythology explores the theory that important myths from around the world which have survived for thousands of years all share a fundamental structure, which he calls the 'monomyth' (Campbell 23). In laying out the monomyth, Campbell describes a number of stages or steps along this journey. The hero starts in the ordinary world and receives a call to enter an unusual world of strange powers and events. If the hero accepts the call, the hero must face tasks and trials and may have to face these trials either alone or with assistance. *Star Trek*'s epic hero is Captain James Kirk. He displays charisma, bravery and independence – becoming an icon of contemporary culture. Though Kirk stands for the ideal of independence, he is not complete on his own. The friendship he forged with Mr Spock – a Vulcan, parallels the model of the epic hero and his double. It is also a representation of the American myth, in which 'the most enduring and respected American classics revolve around the friendships of two males usually of two different races (Selley 94). This bond is consummated when Kirk and Spock mind-meld (Abrams). The Vulcan mind meld is a telepathic link between two individuals, allowing for the exchange of thoughts, thus in essence allowing the participants to become one mind (Landau). It is a psionic technique for 'synaptic pattern displacement' (Landau) and is employed only by Vulcans.

Though the friendship between Kirk and Spock forms the crux of the *Star Trek* mythos, the other members of the crew are also essential players in this epic text. Ellington and Critelli applied the Jungian symbols to the Enterprises’ four senior officers who 'form a perfect quaternity of opposing personality types' – Kirk and Mc Coy embody the 'extroverted, intuitive, thinking type' while Scott and Spock are representations of 'introverted sensation, feeling type[s]. Ellington and Critelli contend that together these 'symbols of hope' create a 'model of effective functioning for personality as a whole' (Ellington and Critelli 302). The viewers are able to identify themselves with these representations, juxtaposing the mythic narratives in *Star Trek* with the emotional needs of the viewer (Zimmel 23).

Following this tradition, *Star Trek* provides a vision of friendship between two men of different races and different attitudes. This relationship is a central point of various episodes. A brilliant representation is rendered in 'Amok Time' (Pevney). On Spock's home planet Vulcan, Mr Spock is forced to fight a legal battle against Kirk to be allowed to marry according to cultural traditions. Kirk gives his life
but Spock’s desire for his future wife is gone: ‘I will do neither [live and prosper], for I have killed my

The mission of the Enterprise undoubtedly resembles the adventures of Homer’s The Odyssey — old Greek myths that are revolutionized in a science fiction format. Zimmel postulates that the voyage is one of the ‘most important similarities to classical myths: protagonists journeying through formerly unknown countries, braving all kinds of danger and trials to test their capacities’ (Zimmel 24). The mission of the Enterprise is similar – it is sent to explore unchartered space with a crew who rely on their ‘individual skills in many difficult situations’ (Zimmel 25).

The Romulans and the Vulcans are modern representations of the founding of the Roman Empire. In the Roman myth Romulus and Remus are the twin brothers that are the focus of the Rome creation myth. In the myth, Remus and Romulus are raised by a wolf and go on to found the Roman Empire. Remus and Romulus disagree on the location for the new empire. The dispute elevates and gets physical leading to the death of Remus by Romulus. After Remus’ death Romulus goes on to found Rome. Similarly, Romulans and Vulcans share a common ancestry. They had both lived on the Vulcan planet and were one race. During the time of ‘Awakening’ – the violent and warlike Vulcan race switched to more peaceful ways (Dawson). The change was brought on by a Vulcan called Surak who preached a philosophy of using logic to control emotions, as well as total pacifism. He was effective in spreading his teaching across Vulcan. However, a sizeable group of Vulcans resisted his efforts, leading to a war using weapons of mass destruction, such as atomic bombs. Ultimately, the warlike Vulcans left the planet becoming the ancestors of the Romulans. They began to formulate the Romulan Empire which parallels the Roman Empire.

The Greek creation myth is also alluded to in the Klingon religion. A version of this creation myth is told during the traditional Klingon wedding ceremony in the episode ‘You are cordially invited’ (Livingstone).

With fire and steel did the gods forge the Klingon heart. So fiercely did it beat, so loved was the sound that the gods cried out, ‘On this day we have brought forth the strongest heart in all the heavens. None can stand before it without trembling at its strength.’ But then the Klingon heart weakened, its steady rhythm faltered and the gods said, ‘Why have you weaken so? We have made you the strongest in all creation’ (Livingstone).

When the heart expressed the solitude of being left alone, the gods knew that they had erred, so they forged another heart, stronger to beat together, destroying the gods who created them and turning the heavens to ashes.

Writer Ursula K. Le Guin once noted that ‘science fiction is the mythology of the modern world’ (Le Guin www.ursula.kleguin.com). She contends that it is an arrangement of old motifs utilized again, effectively portrayed in the connection between science fiction and Judeo-Christian mythology. The stories range from the search for paradise to the eternal struggle between good and evil which forms the mythical perspective. Further, Zimmel insists that in Star Trek the ‘fandom itself seems to have a nearly religious devotion to the series’ (Zimmel 26). Jewwett and Lawrence go on to compare the immense magazine literature that evolved around the show – to ‘acrophyal literature in the biblical tradition’ (Jewwett and Lawrence 50). This kind of writing answers essentially theological questions, ‘simplifying and illustrating a faith’ (Isaiah 11.6).

The Mythology of Stargate

Stargate is a military science fiction franchise, initially conceived by Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, based on the idea of an alien wormhole, that is, an Einsten-Rosen bridge (the Stargate) that enables nearly instantaneous travel across the cosmos. Stargate productions centre on the premise of Stargates that enable instantaneous transportation to other devices located astronomical distances away (Emmerich).

One of the grounding elements of the series’ overall story arc and a key aspect of its appeal is Egyptian mythology. Central to the framework of the Stargate universe is that the cannibalistic, warlike Goa’uld poses as the mythological gods of human cultures. A direct cultural link between Teotihuacan and the Aztecs, which does not exist in the real world, was also part of the Stargate framework, with an artefact found on the planet Orban referring to an Aztec goddess named Chalchuhthau (Turner).
Aztec mythology has a pantheon of bloodthirsty deities that can readily be adapted to fit the Stargate framework. In mythology, the god Huitzilopochtli, who founded the Aztec Empire, was born with all the knowledge of his Mayan mother, Coatlicue. Painted images of Coatlicue bear a remarkably convenient resemblance to a principle antagonist in Stargate: the Goa’uld queen Hathor (Turner).

To fulfill the requirements of using technologized mythology for the Stargate book *Exogenesis* (Whitelaw and Christensen) requires the seamless linking of real world mythology to Stargate mythology. In *Stargate*, the indifferent protagonists – and sometimes antagonists – are the Ancients, who bear the names and, often, the attributes of the gods, demigods and heroes of ancient Greece and Rome. In Earth’s mythology, Plato described Atlas as the first king of Atlantis (Raphael). In the *Stargate* framework, however, Moros was the Ancient Leader of Atlantis ten thousand years ago (Turner). Extrapolation from this in *Exogenesis* (Whitelaw and Christensen), allows for the possibility of an antagonistic relationship between the Ancients Atlas and Moros, the latter of whom might conceivably have displaced Atlas and Moros from a position of power. This contradiction is resolved in *Exogenesis* by suggesting that Atlas and Janus were aligned while Moros’ objectives to the temporally-enhanced exogenesis machine were personal (Whitelaw and Christensen).

Using a terraforming device in a compressed time frame of days or weeks by Ancients who were known to have recreated all life in the Milky Way Galaxy also connects to the creation myth in Genesis while there are several references to Biblical Mythology in *Exogenesis*. Using the creation god, Ea from Gilgamesh as an ancient character sidesteps the potentially delicate marketing issue of using the Judeo-Christian God as a character in *Stargate* (Whitelaw and Christensen).

Ea, god of primordial waters, is credited with creating Earth, and sometimes also credited with creating mankind through genetic manipulation, and of warning the Sumerian Noah of a great flood sent by the other gods to destroy mankind. In *Exogenesis*, Ea is an Ancient terraforming engineer who, despite her actions and grief, regretted her behaviour (Whitelaw and Christensen).

Nabu’s role in *Exogenesis* also mirrors that of his mythological counterpart. In Babylonian mythology he is Ea’s grandson, the god of wisdom and writing who rides a winged dragon. Regarded as a demi-god, he has the power to alter the length of a human life by writing their destiny on a stone tablet. In *Exogenesis*, Nabu is a half human half Ancient who rides a dragon-like Dart, and is a scholar who interceded with the destiny of the genetically altered humans (Whitelaw and Christensen).

**Discussion**

Myths are everywhere, tinged the blandest discourse with dire resonances and making the mildest encounter a drama. Disch maintains that even Freud, Levi-Strauss and Barthes assert that mythology, in a very broad sense, embraces the whole realm of the cultivated and the civilized shaped by the hand and mind of men, which for most of us includes everything in sight. Myths are especially present in literature, and even more so in science fiction. The reasons for this are tangible. Myths aim at maximizing meaning, at compressing truth to the highest density that the mind can assimilate. To attain such compression, myths make free use of the resources of the unconscious mind, that alternate world where magic still works and metamorphoses are an everyday occurrence. In fact, Disch claims that science fiction has been trafficking in magic and mythology since it first came into existence. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is subtitled *A Modern Prometheus*, and the horror show monster whose image continues to be emblematic of the genre is probably the descendant of ‘Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimaeras dire’ (Disch 21).

As mythmakers, science fiction writers have a double task, the first aspect of which is to make humeely relevant the formidable landscapes of the atomic era. Quite often, in searching for a place to install one of the latter science fiction figures, the safe author discovers that the new figure ‘corresponds very neatly with one already there’ (Disch 22), though this might prove difficult at times.

The second task of science fiction writers as mythmakers is simply the custodial work of keeping the inherited body of myths alive. Every myth is the creature, originally of a poet, and it remains a vital presence in our culture only so long as it speaks to us with the living breath of living art. The names might be changed, the scenery altered, but the basic patterns are fixed.

Science fiction is an exciting genre of literature. Science fiction and fantasy are by their very natures in a position to become the contemporary mythol-
ogy. Mythology is grounded in metaphor and Clayton claims that metaphors and symbols of mythology that feed the human spirit flow out of the story – the saga. And at the heart of such story, the midst of a dangerous and often unknown setting, human ingenuity and courage and faithfulness are put to the test. The mythic story is also spatial – it often involves unknown, perhaps terrifying terrain. Outer space thus provides an ideal setting for the contemporary myth (Clayton).

The genius of science fiction lies in the fact that the reader is caught up in a great story in the midst of a strange world, a long way from Earth and from our own time. With the turn of a phrase or a twist of perspective, the reading is suddenly given the chance to look introspectively. A good myth does this as well. Science fiction as myth can be a window into our own souls, a way of sounding the depths of the human psyche. And science fiction is a popular way of spinning a contemporary entertaining story even while exploring serious ideas.

Both myth and science attempt to provide an overview of existence by bridging inner with outer reality. Myth attempts to project inner reality (conscious desires, archetypal patterns) in a metaphor for outer reality, while science aims to illuminate inner reality through the study of outer, empirical forms. Sutton and Sutton contend that a body of myth forms an autonomous universe which stands in metaphoric relation to the actual world. Scientific hypotheses also form a universe, a universe which is not identical to objective reality but representative of man’s understanding of it. Thus the question of validation or disproof is irrelevant to myth since the relation of myth to reality is analogical, but it is paramount for science because the worth of a scientific hypothesis is entirely dependent on the accuracy of its relationship to objective reality (Sutton and Sutton 232).

Gilkey claims that before the advent of the scientific mode the only means by which man could relate to the universe was through the mythopoetic mode. His acceptance of the narratives of gods and heroes as the meaning of the world served as an affirmation of space, of time, of natural occurrence and of a historical event (Gilkey 286).

Prescientific man viewed everything outside himself as ‘other’ and to a large degree unknowable. For him myth served as the vehicle for his relationship with the ‘other’. As the scientific or technological mode developed, man’s orientation moved away from universal concepts to a more specialized focus on the individual empirical data (Gilkey 286). Historically this shift resulted in the sharp distinction between the two modes of thought, with the scientific recognized as the means to knowledge and the mythopoetic disenfranchised and relegated to the role of plaything for poets. Sutton and Sutton insist that now readers are in a position to move beyond this convenient dissection of thought, for the mythopoetic and the scientific modes in their matured states are now disintegrating. The present situation must be viewed in relation to a transcendent order of some description. For early mythopoetic man, this transcendent order was the cosmos with its god, heroes, planets and other inexplicable phenomena (Sutton and Sutton 236). In the area of scientific myth, the transcendent referent can no longer be the cosmos, some scientific research has shown that it is empirically knowable and as a consequence it is no longer entirely transcendent. As a referent, modern myth, especially science fiction, replaces the cosmos with the concept of space. This archetype, so vital to humanity, has been expressed throughout human history in various forms, but it is characteristic of our time that it should take the form of a technological construction in order to avoid mythological personification (Ellul 221).

Space-time lends science fiction an infinite, unknown extension which gives it the grandeur of whatever actions are undertaken in it. Unlike a scientific hypothesis, a science fiction story is not formulated primarily to advance technological knowledge, but rather operates on a visionary mythopoetic level. Thus science fiction is a self-conscious form of myth in which man intentionally mythologizes scientific narrative.

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Nonfiction Reviews

The Canadian Fantastic in Focus
Donald M. Hassler


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OUR FAMILY CONNECTIONS with the Canadians and with all things Canada are often carried beneath the surface but, still, are strongly embedded in our thought and behaviors. As we in the colonies rebelled, loyalists to King and Empire went North. Ironically, then, what had seemed in the past like a good market move turned the other way in present time so that Margaret Atwood, whom I knew as a writer of small poems in The Canadian Forum in the early sixties, now has moved South where the market and Empire have evolved with the rebels. So the vast land and clear “manifest destiny” of the northern Provinces is left to discover itself. Lately, in fact, the voice of The Canadian Scholar may be heard well in this third volume of selected proceedings from the Academic Conference on Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy which meets every other year under the auspices of York University in Toronto and the Judith Merrill Collection (volumes one and two are Perspectives on the Canadian Fantastic: Proceedings of the 1997 Academic Conference on Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy and Further Perspectives on the Canadian Fantastic: Proceedings of the 2003 Academic Conference on Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy, both edited by Weiss; issue 81 of Foundation (2001), co-edited by Jennifer Burwell and Nancy Johnston, is a further collection of proceedings from this conference). Allan Weiss does a fine job of organizing the conference, and his strong voice in editing this latest collection of keynote speeches and conference papers provides a nice order to the enterprise with the firm feistiness and spirit of a founding father. Robert Runté, in the most recent keynote address (from the 2013 conference), evokes the earlier well-known champion of Canadian SF and Toronto writer John Robert Colombo who argued, it was said, that Canadian work in the field included any writer “who had ever flown over Canada in a rocket” (17). The list is impressive and names many who were born in Canada and left, such as Atwood and A.E. Van Vogt, or who immigrated from somewhere else, such as Merrill and Spider Robinson. The voice we hear in most of the essays selected for this volume echoes the inferiority complex of adolescence that we have come to associate with Canada. It is significant, I think, that this is also the voice of fans and SF writers and academic critics speaking out against the high certitude we set for ourselves in the wider cosmos. The anonymous and continuous voice of the cosmos is always there and is major, of course; but the many minor voices collected in this book constitute a genuine Canadian voice to be heard.

As we know, both French and English chime frequently in the vast land to the North. I was fascinated to read a “new” approach to literature labeled “geocriticism” in the essay by Maude Deschênes-Pradet that focuses on a 2002 novel by Quebec writer Esther Rochon. The essay is in English; Pradet makes her own translations from Rochon’s Quebecoise French and prints the French text next to the English. There is a minor error in the otherwise skilled editing of Weiss whereby the running head at the top of each page credits another eager graduate student contributor, Cat Ashton, for the Pradet essay. Further, Pradet does not mention Hal Clement’s planet Mesklin in her formulation of the geocritical lens. Her own mentor Christiane Lahaie proudly associates the new concept mainly with Quebecoise fiction, hardly a valid claim for genre dominance. Another clever paper by another clever graduate student, Isabelle Fournier, is grounded, also, in the English/French presence in Canada. With punning wit, she describes various versions and translations linked to SF of a sixties song, sometimes called “Major Tom,” though its correct title is “Space Oddity,” by the late David Bowie. This is important in Quebec culture where la chanson, according to her discourse, may be genre. Peter Watts hails from Western Canada, however, and is developing into a major writer of hard SF. The essay by Dominick Grace, who is an experienced Ontario professor, traces in intriguing detail some Finnish roots in work done by Watts with John Campbell’s imperial 1938 story idea of “the thing,” “Who Goes There?” Grace presented his paper at the 2011 conference. The earliest keynote address collected
here is from Veronica Hollinger, and her clever, high-
ly-voiced essay was part of the 2005 conference. She
usually delights in what a recent New Yorker piece
calls “the whirl of interpretation and ideas” when a
good reader morphs into a good critic (see the is-
 mue of 7 March 2016). Hollinger does not disappoint
and quotes herself extensively from an earlier his-
tory of criticism essay in order to illustrate how a
good critic is doing a sort of creative performance
herself. Among other keynote speakers at this con-
ference over the years, though not included in this
 collection, have been John Clute, an inventive writer
as well as researcher, and Atwood herself back in To-
ronto for the occasion when her early poems were
republished by Milton Wilson. As a distinguished
editor and Shelley scholar interested in revolution,
Wilson would have been fascinated, I think, to see
this collection that mingles bilingual voices with the
voices of song writing, horror video and other me-
dia, as well as with the voices of the strong critic – all
giving the distinctive Canadian sound to work on SF.
I think this collection adds well to that chorus and,
further, the book contributes to our overall apprecia-
tion of SF and of Canada.

Technologies of the Gothic
in Literature and Culture:
Technogothics

Kristen Koopman

Justin D. Edwards, ed. Technologies of the Gothic in
Literature and Culture: Technogothics. Interdis-
ciplinary Perspectives on Literature Vol. 32. New
York: Routledge, 2015. Hardback, 198 pages,

Order option(s): Hard | Kindle

EVEN IN SPECIFYING the intersection of technology
and the Gothic as its subject matter, Technologies of
the Gothic in Literature and Culture: Technogothics
covers a wide swath of subjects. Yet as Edwards im-
plies in his introduction to the volume, at the heart
of this intersection is a dual concern about techni-
cal monsters and monstrous technologies. The es-
says included in this collection examine not only
depictions of the ways narratives in literature and
popular culture have depicted technology creating
monster-humans, but also how media technologies
have been used to create, perpetuate, and reinvent
stories about monsters. Although these topics may
seem disparate, the result is a surprisingly coherent,
multidimensional examination of technology and
the Gothic.

The introduction provides less of a roadmap to
the book and more of an offloading of background
context for each of the essays, providing other the-
 matically-relevant texts that could easily accompany
each chapter (and, indeed, are often other works by
the authors). The first block of essays has a focus (central or peripheral) on technologies used to pro-
duce Gothic sensibilities, whether by using cinema
and the virtuality of imagery to analyze the specters
of M. Night Shyamalan’s The Sixth Sense or by show-
ing how the spread of new media technologies mir-
rors Gothic concerns over narratives as poisonous or
infectious. Both essays discuss form and function as
intertwined, focusing on how technological advanc-
es may not only portray monstrousness but create
new ideas of monstrousness and ways to transgress
societal norms through pointed distortions of reali-
ty. The following two essays turn towards sound and
the Gothic, focusing on an often overlooked aspect
of reality and providing examples of hearing as pro-
viding access to eerie realms or as being monstrous
in and of itself. Sound can be haunted, by creating
new methods to access existence or severing access
through disembodied audio. Bridging the gap be-
tween the themes of sound horror and body horror
is an essay on immersive sound design in zombie
gaming, including the ubiquitous call for brains that
puts the focus in zombie games on the experience of
playing rather than the narrative itself.

This theme of the body and biomedical technologies
in the Gothic continues across six essays that share a
concern for ownership of body, life, and death across
different states of existence. Echoes of Mary Shelley
abound, using Gothic themes to raise questions of
whether beings can own their own body, their own
death, their own mind, and their own life. Through
these discussions, the authors show how identity,
embodiment, and monstrosity are intertwined: the
body without self, the transplanted organ, the pub-
clic performance of death, the inability to stay dead,
the performance of one’s own body, and the capital-
ist reduction of body to nutritive value are all roads that can lead to monstrosity—roads that, often, are paved with well-intended technologies. Politics remain in the forefront for a discussion of embodiment in Mark Hodder’s steampunk novels, and the collection ends with a discussion theorizing language as a parasite, reframing all the words that have just been read in the collection as, perhaps, a Gothic infection in and of itself.

Taken together, these thematic movements within the collection may seem disparate, but it is a credit to editor Justin D. Edwards that no transition feels like an about-face. Instead, each essay flows into the following essay with ease, and although the book covers Zombies, Run!, the death of footballer George Best, a brief foray into actor-network analysis of dubstep, contemporary literature, and psychoanalytical theory in a scant 186 pages, it never feels random. Although this sacrifices a cohesive central argument for more ground covered, it succeeds well enough that it doesn’t feel much like a sacrifice at all. This versatility also provides entrees for both scholars in other fields that may use science fiction and Gothic fiction in their research, such as science and technology studies, philosophy of technology, and history of technology, and science fiction scholars who may make forays in the opposite direction in interdisciplinary research or courses.

Combined with a thorough index and a bibliography for each essay, this book lends itself to being used as a reference for a constellation of topics related to “technology and the Gothic.” It is not, nor is it attempting to be, an introduction either to studies of technoscience or the Gothic; there are no definitions or motions at surveying the field here. Instead, it functions best as what it is: a collection of interdisciplinary articles. They are specific and in-depth enough for use in graduate-level courses, but short enough for advanced undergraduates to read as well. The contemporary and pop-culture orientation or examples of several of the essays (particularly “Technospectrality” by Botting, “Braaainnss!: Zombie-Technology, Play, and Sound” by Gardner, “George Best’s Dead Livers” by Murnane, and “Text as Gothic Murder Machine” by Wester) would also lend themselves to professors searching for an accessible hook into psychoanalytic literary theory, media studies, death studies, and literary analysis respectively. These are also the essays that require the least amount of familiarity with the particular examples they use.

This book is not a starting point. It serves best, instead, as a jumping-off point, showing interdisciplinary connections between technoscience and the Gothic. Rather than narrowing in on one particular thread of analysis, it pulls back to show how these themes interweave with other disciplines and provides wider perspectives, even if it comes at the cost of depth. Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture is not an entry-level text, but shines most where it complicates the idea of its own topic being straightforward or stable. In this view, it becomes something of a useful monster itself, and it is just as enthralling as its subject matter.

**Steampunk: Back to the Future with the New Victorians**

John J. Pierce


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IF YOU’RE LOOKING to read a scholarly treatise about steampunk, you’re out of luck here. If you’re looking to write a scholarly treatise about steampunk, Roland’s book looks to be just what the doctor ordered.

The author of some thirty-five books about popular culture, true crime, the occult and music (he is actually best known as a musician and composer), Roland seems to have read practically every variation of steampunk fiction – and also delved into every aspect of steampunk art, film and TV, fashion and cosplay, gaming and music. His approach is fannish to the Nth degree, and the favorites he plays – some of whom he interviews – are clearly idiosyncratic.

One of those is Cherie Priest, the best-selling author of *Boneshaker* (2009) and other novels that often include zombies and vampires as well as Victorian settings and gadgetry. Yet another is Tim Akers, who has had trouble getting published at all, but who
– like Priest – rates an interview. Other interviewees include artists, designers, musicians and gamers as well as writers – most of whom may be unfamiliar to those whose exposure to steampunk has been strictly though the written word.

Roland touches the usual bases in tracing the origins of steampunk: the works of Verne and Wells, Michael Moorcock’s *The Warlord of the Air* (1971) and K.W. Jeter’s *Morlock Night* (1979) (Jeter later gave the genre its name), William Gibson and Bruce Sterling’s *The Difference Engine* (1990) and – going way back – even the retro-futurist TV series *The Wild Wild West* (1965-69).

The only precursor he seems to have missed is Karel Zeman’s film *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne* (1958), which may have been the first to give what Roland, commenting on Moorcock, calls a “nod and a wink” (64) to Victorian-era SF that is the real touchstone of the genre. But he is familiar with the TV series *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne* (2000), and with such other recent examples of retro-futurist sf on the screen as *The City of Lost Children* (1995) and *Murdoch Mysteries* (2008-).

Some of his segments, like that on “thirteen essential” anthologies of steampunk short stories, read like catalogs. But that’s all right; the one essential for those wanting to study steampunk is knowing something about what’s out there. Roland’s book should certainly help them get their bearings – better than, say, an “Illustrated History” by Brian J. Robb that costs almost twice as much in paperback.

It is divided into four parts: Part I, Self-Perception, Narrative and Identity; Part II: Social and Political Philosophy; Part III: Ethics and the Good Life; and Part IV: Logic and Metaphysics. Each essay contains endnotes to works cited and a useful bibliography, with an index to the volume appended. While there is some overlap in topics, each essay is thoughtful and well-argued, and accessible to those unfamiliar with the works discussed, while of particular interest to working philosophers and those well read in Pratchett’s works. Each author speaks from his or her particular discipline, but also as a fan of Pratchett, so the combined affection and insight reflected in these papers makes them of particular interest.

Jacob M. Held’s essay, “A Golem is Not Born, but Rather Becomes, a Woman: Gender on the Disc,” explores personhood in the Disc, the place and roles reflected in gender and species identity. Held focuses on “women, or rather, the idea of ‘woman’” (3) by examining the way Pratchett describes and explores the development of such characters as Granny Weatherwax, Eskarina Smith (*Equal Rites*), Gladys the Golem (*Making Money*), Polly Perks and Sergeant Jack Jackrum in *Monstrous Regiment*, and Cherry Littlebottom in *The Fifth Elephant*. The challenges explored are examined in the context of the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Simon de Beauvoir.

In “Nothing Like a Bit of Destiny to Get the Old Plot Rolling,” James B. South engages in a close reading of *Wyrd Sisters*, applying Stanley Cavell’s analysis of *King Lear* in “The Avoidance of Love” (32-35) to explore Pratchett’s questioning of the idea of destiny and emphasize instead “the importance of human free will” and the role of storytelling in determining what it means to be human. *Wyrd Sisters* parallels the story of *Macbeth*, with a “dwarf playwright, Hwel, [. . .] as a doppelgänger of Will(iam) Shake-speare” (25). South emphasizes both Pratchett’s lack of religious belief despite the frequency with which he creates gods in his stories, and “the sheer importance Pratchett places on the role of stories” (27). This insight is reflected in Pratchett’s four *Science of Discworld* texts, where the concept is framed as narrativium. South argues, “Pratchett views the world from a deeply moral perspective” (42) and thinks what matters to us as humans is not our knowledge, but “our ability to tell ourselves (and convince others of the value of) our stories. This contrast between knowledge and imagination is a crucial one [. . . that]

**Philosophy & Terry Pratchett**

Bruce Lindsley Rockwood


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THE EDITORS PRESENT an excellent set of thirteen thoughtful essays on the philosophy found or reflect-ed in Sir Terry Pratchett’s many novels and non-fiction writings, not limited to those set in Discworld.
“floats us through the cold, dark universe” (27-28). He cites Death telling Susan Sto Helit in Hogfather: “TAKE THE UNIVERSE AND GRIND IT DOWN TO THE FINEST POWDER [...] THEN SHOW ME ONE ATOM OF JUSTICE, ONE MOLECULE OF MERCY[...] AND YET YOU ACT AS IF THERE IS SOME ...SOME RIGHTNESS IN THE UNIVERSE BY WHICH IT MAY BE JUDGED” (28).

Applying the ideas of Judith Butler, Ervin Goffman, Jacques Lacan, Joan Riviere, Edward Said and Slavoj Žižek in “Feigning to Feign: Pratchett and the Maskerade,” Andrew Rayment “explores Pratchett’s constant recycling of and riffing upon the notion that not only is the subject always in disguise, but that this disguise is always already the only reality of the subject” (45). He examines novels that “take the forms of theater as the locus of their action” such as Maskerade, Moving Pictures and Unseen Academicals, and the part acting, singing, dress and make-up play in other novels (46) “to show his readers how reality is” “performance” and that “this is a state of affairs with consequences” (51). Showing what it takes to present as an Igor or a Vampire (62), Pratchett “undermines our intuitive understanding that there is a gap between the social roles we play” and a “real us’ behind them” (60).

In “Knowing Things Other People Don’t Know Is a Form of Magic,” Tuomas W. Manninen examines the relationship between magic in Discworld and critical thinking in our more mundane Roundworld through examination of Granny Weatherwax’s use of “headology.” Manninen draws a parallel between the literature of critical thinking and the way Pratchett explains “white knowledge” (things everyone knows though they don’t know quite how) in giving a foundation for Granny’s effective use of “headology” for getting Jarge Weaver to follow her instructions to cure his backache (80-85, 98) or explaining to Esk in Equal Rites how she is able to extract the queen bee from the beehive (77). White knowledge can be accurate or inaccurate in making generalizations depending on the representative nature of the sample size, comparing the process to John Locke’s defense of empiricism in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (86-87) and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s explanation of the value of partial definitions of what constitutes a “game” in explaining the definitions of both magic and critical thinking. (96-97).

The remaining essays are similarly insightful. Kevin Guilfoy presents Pratchett as holding a “libertarian-friendly” social and political ideology in his portrayal of the events and characters in Ankh-Morpork, drawing parallels between C.M.O.T. Dibbler, Moist von Lipwig and Harry King and the ideas of Adam Smith and F.A. Hayek, while seeing the Patri- cian Vetinari as modeled on Machiavelli’s Prince, in “Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy on the Discworld.” Dietrich Schotte makes the case for headology as a form of paternalism based on Plato’s concept of “beneficial lies” (134) in “Plato, the Witch, and the Cave.” Ben Saunders makes a sophisticated case for moving beyond the goal of simple equality, applying the ideas of Ronald Dworkin and Amartya Sen, in “Equality and Difference.” Susan Foster examines how time travel in the Johnny Maxwell trilogy and Granny Weatherwax’s experience of a possible alternative life in Lords and Ladies leads them to conclude “that the existence of other realities where they may have made difference choices is neither comfort nor reason not to bother acting here and now” (179-180). Foster argues Pratchett is an advocate of Aristotelian virtue ethics, but “unlike Aristotle [...] Pratchett’s conception of virtue and human flourishing rests on a less universal basis. [...] Happiness on the Discworld is as varied as the characters who inhabit it” (181). Jennifer Jill Fellows argues in “Categorically Not Cackling” that Pratchett fills a gap in Kantian ethics by providing a “direct response to Nietzsche’s attempt to overcome nihilism” (204-205). In Lancre or on the Chalk the witches “know what is right, regardless of what others think at the time,” but keep an eye on each other to ensure that none of them goes too far. (224-225) Erica Neely explores the importance of care and individuality as seen in the conflict between Death and the Auditors in Reaper Man, Hogfather, and Thief of Time. J. Keeping, in “Yes, Susan, There is a Hogfather,” assesses existentialism as found in his interpretation of both Hogfather and the work of Søren Kierkegaard. “When Death describes humanity as ‘the place where the falling angel meets the rising ape,’ his image is remarkably similar to Kierkegaard’s, with the angel representing the eternal and the ape standing for the temporal” (255).

In Part IV, Martin Vacek applies David Lewis’s On the Plurality of Worlds (1986) and “the idea of a plurality of possible worlds” (269) to suggest Discworld is logically possible even if physically impossible, and thus can play a useful role in our “analysis of history, law, knowledge, obligations, and beliefs” (284-285). Jay Ruud examines nominalism and realism as
reflected in Pratchett’s portrayal of the “Handyman God and the Doodling God” (292-299) in “Pratchett’s The Last Continent and the Act of Creation,” to claim that “the novel is essentially about epistemology and aesthetics--about art” (287).

These essays provide an effective introduction to both the varied themes and concerns in Terry Pratchett’s work, and contemporary thinking in philosophy. It should be a welcome addition to any academic library and to all those who will continue to read and reflect on the significance of Terry Pratchett to a better understanding of humanity and the challenges it faces in the 21st century.
Fiction Reviews

Every Heart A Doorway
Hanna Clutterbuck-Cook


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SEANAN MCGUIRE’S LATEST BOOK is a Faberge egg of fantasy writing: beautiful, mesmerizing, masterfully assembled.

Every Heart a Doorway is set in a refuge for those who have been to places that are not this world: Eleanor West’s Home for Wayward Children. “Taken to fairyland” is one possible way of describing their experiences, but it would not be entirely accurate; in McGuire’s story, no one’s fairyland is the same as anyone else’s. In Every Heart, each refugee’s experience is unique, and their loss of and longing for a very specific doorway acute.

McGuire posits the existence of multiple other worlds along a wide spectrum of possibilities from High Nonsense (a Wonderland-like experience) on one end to High Logic (something, perhaps, more like Gormenghast) on the other. That description makes it sound simple when really it is anything but: the combinations are more or less endless and one of the side outcomes of the Every Heart story is to reveal to the surviving characters that there are even more possibilities than they had previously thought. By the time you reach the last pages, you’ll be as eager for a map of this multilayered universe as the character who plans to create such a map.

Those at Miss Eleanor West’s house - presented to the world as an institution that is part boarding school/part rehabilitation clinic - are those who have escaped from, been rejected by, or somehow returned from their otherworldly trip. Many are desperate to return, either because they have been so fundamentally changed as to be perennially uncomfortable in their old lives or because they seek to return to an otherworld that satisfied them.

Nancy, sent back from an Afterworld, is our window into the school, as its newest member, going through the orientation process and learning from the other students. She not only learns about the worlds they visited, but gains insight into her own experience -- which she had previously thought to be unique. As the newcomer, Nancy is also one of those most immediately affected when a rash of killings amongst the Home’s population begins. Her status as a new arrival with no established relationships leaves her open to suspicion and puts her in a socially vulnerable position.

Among the cast of characters we meet are Sumi, Nancy’s new room-mate, returned from a High Nonsense world; and Kade, who went to a Fairyland and was forcibly returned when he didn’t grow up to be the person the fey desired. Eleanor West herself, and her teaching-staff-cum-assistant Lundy -- doomed by an unwise bargain with the fey to age backwards to infancy and death -- have their own backstories to share as well. Each character’s visit to an otherworld has left unique marks. Sumi, for instance, is a Manic Pixie Dream Girl pushed far enough to become almost tragic. Other characters have returned with unique skills, such as the boy who can pipe to make bones dance. While it seems initially as though all the other worlds lie along a fairly simple axis -- Logic to Nonsense -- it becomes clear as the story goes on that this is not the case; beyond each doorway is a land which is its own unique -- and, to the uninitiated, often brutal -- social and metaphysical reality.

To say that McGuire uses her story to engage with a wide range of topics from sexual identity to ageism to the individual experience of reality would be understating the case. As only one example, Nancy is an explicitly asexual heroine: her emotional relationships with the other residents of Eleanor’s school are a focus of the story, but there is no romantic tension. When Nancy is pushed by another character into explaining herself, the explanation feels like a natural part of the story, not like the identification of a hot-button topic. Nancy is among the first post-GamerGate additions to the list of asexual characters at a time when the discussion of character diversity, including sexual orientations and identifications, has become contentious. In Nancy, McGuire creates a character whose sexual identity is no more or less a part of her than the colors of her hair.

McGuire’s gift for putting the story first never falters. Every Heart never slips over the line into polemic and, if once or twice the characters seem to be lecturing the reader about their differences, this makes complete sense within the structure of a story.

"
where narration is a hard habit to break.

Readers who enjoy the darker side of Neil Gaiman’s writing or the work of Kage Baker will want to find a copy of this book as quickly as possible. Every Heart’s length makes it an ideal work for the classroom or workshop; students or teachers should find it a most thought-provoking piece of work to analyze.

Scholars interested in the development of the style of fantasy that started with Hope Mirlees’ Lud-in-the-Mist will also find Every Heart of interest. It sits in a fascinating middle space between high and urban fantasy, playing with the narrative of changeling children and looking at the dark side of works like The Chronicles of Narnia where the children return unscarred and unchanged to their normal lives after their fantastic adventures. McGuire instead asks how the experience of travel to another world, living another life by other rules would have left marks. Fans of Charles de Lint’s Newford stories will also find much to enjoy here.

**A Borrowed Man**

Cait Coker


**Order option(s):** [Hard] [Paper] [Kindle] [Audible] [CD]

Imagine, if you will, a future in which humanity has perfected cloning so as to use the dead as educational resources that one can check out of the library. Such “reclones” eat, drink, and think—indeed, are near-perfect copies of their former selves, yet are forbidden both rights as individual humans or from taking up their previous work. (Imagine, if you will, a world in which one can speak to a beloved author, but for some reason the populace not only has no interest in new books, music, or other compositions by the beloved dead, but actively forbids them.) Imagine a writer being forbidden to write, being frustrated by this edict but nonetheless obeying it, and being pulled into a murder-mystery not unlike those he himself used to author. This is the setting and situation of Gene Wolfe’s latest novel, *A Borrowed Man*, in which the intrepid reclone of Ern A. Smithe finds that a copy of his own Murder on Mars is the partial key to solving a crime, creating a bibliomystery within a bibliomystery.

Wolfe plays with genre a great deal in this book, making its greatest strength also its greatest weakness. *A Borrowed Man* reads like a pulp adventure from the heyday of the 1940s and 1950s, with robots, flying cars, and regressive sex roles in abundance. Ern’s first wife, Arabella Lee, was a famous poet and hence also a reclone, but she’s there largely as a cipher for sexual desire and emotional regret. Clones aren’t supposed to have sex, but Ern and Arabella do make away for something like a happy culmination at the end of the novel: “For a minute I was afraid she would not want to do what I wanted, but it was just about the best I have ever had” (287). Wolfe channels the stylistic language of earlier potboilers through more of a pastiche than an homage, and this method can get rather wearing. As such, *A Borrowed Man* could have been a brilliant short story or novella, but as a novel it falls a bit flat. Part of the success of the detective and SF yarns of yore was their editorial leanness—every word had to count in the handful of pages allotted in the magazines and later in the doubles.

This novel feels rather needlessly fat, even at fewer than three hundred pages; the very brief “Persons Mentioned in the Narrative” that concludes the text reminds us of the handful of characters we haven’t had time to forget anyway (unless either Wolfe or his editor have a low opinion of the average reader’s recall). Lists like that serve a purpose for long, ongoing sagas with casts of thousands, but with a cast of fourteen, two of whom are dead before the story starts, it feels peculiar and misplaced unless we read it as a play on the form of a book itself. The close reading of paratexts—the supplementary material provided by publishers and editors that encapsulate the intended reception of a work—is more generally the purview of literary historians and scholars than the casual reader; but used for a book that is about both books and their coded replacements (here, the reclones) draws the attention to the question of bookness perhaps better than the actual text does.

Academically, *A Borrowed Man* will be of interest to those who read Wolfe, those who are interested in delineating genre(s), and to those who are interested in the simple theme of books. There’s a lovely bit at the end where a physical book becomes a
very literal doorway to another world, and what this heavy-handed metaphor lacks in grace and originality it makes up for in sheer accuracy. A book is another world, and should be read as such, rather than read as only an author, or a dead author at that. It would have made the point rather more nicely if Wolfe could have played with this aspect more, and described "tits to die for" rather less (264). That said, there are segments of brutal possibility sprinkled here and there, as when Arabella is concerned about her fate if she’s not checked out more: “They’ll burn me! If nobody checks me out, they’ll burn me” (93). In general, libraries that deaccession under-used books from their collections tend to sell them for a pittance to the public, or, less often, haul them away to be recycled (the general public usually being uninterested in buying multi-volume sets of bound periodicals long since outdated), but this primal fear of book-burning—and human-burning—speaks to our ongoing fears regarding the “death” of learning, of education, and yes, of reading. In unstable economies, libraries are both more likely to be used by the public and more likely to feel the first cuts to the budget. What close readers may take from A Borrowed Man might be a different story than the slight mystery offered, but one that is perhaps both more relevant and more important.

**Barsk: The Elephants’ Graveyard**

Bill Dynes


**Order option(s):** Hard | Paper | Kindle | Audible

IN A FUTURE so distant that Earth and humanity are lost memories, a secret war is being waged over control of the drug *koph*. Adept who take koph are able to summon and communicate with the dead, but the drug’s manufacture is controlled by the residents of a single planet in the Alliance of Worlds. The people of Barsk won that control for themselves when their isolated planet was first founded, but the Alliance has become uncomfortable with their monopoly, and agents are moving to rob them of their secret. When Jorl, a Speaker of Barsk, realizes that some of those whom he has tried to contact may not in fact be dead, but kidnapped, he discovers that all of his people are in danger.

This synopsis of Lawrence M. Schoen’s novel suggests that *Barsk: The Elephant’s Graveyard* is essentially a political thriller or perhaps an action-adventure, and it certainly participates in both modes. But the fact that the people of Barsk are humanoid elephants, complete with prehensile trunks and flapping ears, quickly establishes a lighter tone and sense of creativity than such modes typically bear. The Fant of Barsk exist in two species, the Eleph and the Lox; the Eleph derive from Asian Elephants and the Lox, short for *Loxodonta*, from the African Elephant. The Alliance of Worlds is a vast network of anthropomorphic species; before becoming a Speaker, Jorl served offworld in the Patrol among Sloths, Pandas, and Anteaters, and while searching for the missing dead he is captured by a Cheetah, questioned by Badgers, and brought before Senator Bish, Chairman of the Committee of Information, a Yak. Each of these species retain some physical traits of their non-sentient forebears – Senator Bish’s horns are particularly fearsome– but all are human enough in their needs, their hopes, and their passions to be thoroughly engaging characters. *Barsk* never risks becoming either furry fiction or a Thornton W. Burgess talking-animal parable. Rather, the novel is a well-paced and dynamic space opera with a delightful playfulness that underpins its interest in narratives of friendship and alienation, prejudice and hope.

Schoen’s menagerie of characters suggests the debt the novel owes to science fiction interested in anthropomorphism, David Brin’s *Uplift* series being perhaps the most obvious. Schoen’s academic background is in psychology and language; he holds a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, and he is the founder of the Klingon Language Institute. That background informs the deep history he has constructed for his universe, differentiating his work from Brin’s in significant ways. That history has some resonance with anti-animal experimentation themes running from Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* through Richard Adams’ *The Plague Dogs*, but this theme is relatively minor in *Barsk*. Another important predecessor for Schoen is Frank Herbert’s *Dune*; the Fant’s control over the manufacturing secret behind koph reminds one immediately of Arna-
kis’ melange. Both drugs are associated with motifs of seeing and awareness, though the efforts to seize control of koph production are more clandestine than the forces arrayed in Herbert’s novel, playing to Schoen’s interest in personal responsibilities and confrontations. Perhaps the most important legacy within which Schoen is operating, however, is that of Pierre Boule’s La Planete des Singes (Planet of the Apes), and its many offspring. Like Boule’s Apes, Schoen’s bestiary retain enough of their animal traits to be recognizable, but are human enough to support the novel’s social and political ideas.

Schoen was a 2007 finalist for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, and he has been nominated for the Hugo for Best Short Story and the Nebula for Best Novella. Most of his previous work has been humorous fantasy, and Barsk does have some trouble maintaining the logic of its plot elements. One character in particular raises a number of questions that aren’t fully answered in the novel. Jorl’s closest friend, Arlo, died under mysterious circumstances before the novel’s action begins, leaving behind a young son, Pizlo, whom Jorl is helping to raise. Pizlo is an albino with a rare genetic condition that prevents him from feeling physical pain; shunned by most of the Fant who view him as taboo, he lives an isolated life. Yet he is somehow able to commune with the planet, receiving guidance from the ocean that helps Jorl embark on his quest, and direction from the moon that brings him to the Alliance invaders’ hidden base. Schoen never explains Pizlo’s intimacy with Barsk, although it may be linked to the psychic urge each Fant eventually receives that sends him or her sailing to the graveyard island where they end their lives. Pizlo is an endearing character, yet his preternatural awareness and isolation often raise more questions than they answer.

Similarly, the biology of the Alliance races is glossed over rather casually. It is difficult to imagine just how the musculature necessary for an Elephant’s adept trunk or flapping ears might work on a human-sized head, or how the Jaguars and Cheetahs manage to work alongside Gophers and Groundhogs. But pressing upon these kinds of questions would undermine the novel’s charm and ingenuity; this is not hard SF that depends upon a precise application of physical laws. The closest Schoen comes to such rigor is when Jorl finally learns the means by which the Alliance species were gifted with language and intelligence, an explanation that also helps Jorl understand why the Fant have been ostracized by the other species for so long. It is apparent that, for Schoen, the dynamics of prejudice and hatred are more important than those of anatomy and biology.

It is this emotional appeal that makes Barsk: The Elephants’ Graveyard so effective. The novel would work well in an undergraduate survey of science fiction, especially one with a focus on space opera or the use of anthropomorphism for social commentary. The means by which these animals have been raised to intelligence might also make the novel useful within explorations of artificial intelligence, especially as a counterpoint to fiction of robots or mechanical creations. Schoen’s novel is a rousing adventure within a creative and fully-realized universe. This is a jungle book that will immediately capture the imagination.

The Three-Body Problem
Larisa Mikhaylova and Anna Sitnik

Order option(s): Hard | Paper | Kindle | Audible | CD

WE STARTED WRITING this review before Cixin Liu’s novel won the 2015 Hugo Award for Best Novel. Subsequently, it eliminated the necessity to introduce to the general public an author who has already acquired fame not only in the People’s Republic of China, where he is the most acclaimed writer of the generation born in the 1960s, but now in the English-speaking world as well. A novel by a non-English language author winning a Hugo is a positive development. However, it makes one especially interested in analyzing its strengths and peculiarities in comparison with the present state of science fiction imagery.

At the beginning of the 21st century, many people thought we were on a path to the future where problems could be solved and life on Earth protected. Sustainable development – the concept born and disseminated at the threshold of the third millennium – was a prospect full of hope. But now, in the
second decade of the century, these high hopes may have already been shattered. The theme of Contact, developed by authors such as Arthur C. Clarke, Clifford Simak, Ivan Efremov, and Gene Roddenberry among others, is now almost entirely eclipsed by shows where the Skies Are Falling and Earthlings retreat before voracious invaders.

The enmity of extraterrestrial intelligence has been postulated in cinema, on TV and in quite a lot of major literary sf, and is a dominant trend of the 21st century. Among several possible reasons for this inclination, political stresses along the many longitudes and latitudes of our globe may be considered a main cause.

Cixin Liu includes in The Three Body Problem the characteristic 20th century aspiration for developing a mutual understanding with interplanetary intelligence, but then plunges us into the quagmire of today’s suspicions concerning the malicious intent of those extraterrestrials. And all this is seen through the eyes of Chinese scientists who lived through the tumultuous times of the Cultural Revolution in China.

The author uses parallel development of storylines connected with several of these scientists – mostly with an astrophysicist Ye Wenjie, a nanophysicist, Wang Miao; and a math prodigy, Wei Cheng - which cross with episodic appearances of a defense committee intent on eliminating an alien invasion. The invasion (though not to happen for more than four hundred years) comes from Trisolaris, a planet experiencing the catastrophic influence of unpredictable trajectories resulting from a three-sun solar system. Despite the time lag, a group of generals, and an extraordinarily observant detective named Shi Qiang, are working to execute countermeasures, arrest the chief Trisolarian collaborator Ye Wenjie, and eliminate another renegade – Mike Evans, an American. The text is a collage of present happenings, memories, and interrogation transcripts, interspersed with pictures of Professor Wang playing a complicated computer game called “Three Bodies”. In the last quarter of the volume, we observe the decision by the Trisolarian princeps to send the invasion fleet. Trisolarians also take measures to distort the worldview of human scientists, thus stalling the progress of science on Earth. And these measures, perhaps, constitute the most intriguing part of the narrative.

Seminal to Cixin Liu is the book Silent Spring by Rachel Carson. Mentioned several times throughout the text, this harbinger of ecological consciousness was considered 'counterrevolutionary' in the 1960s by Red Guards. Later, for another character in the book – American oil billionaire’s son Evans – it becomes a powerful engine, which motivates him to come to China and start replanting a forest in which a flock of swallows on the brink of extinction will have a place to nest. A bird becomes a symbol of life’s beauty and its helplessness before the progress of human civilization. The eyes of birds perishing under the coat of crude oil spilled in the Gulf of Mexico seem to look into Evans’ soul, and decades later still prevent him from sleeping. The most moving scene of the novel is the destruction of this newly planted forest by human greed – people of two villages hastening to cut young trees for firewood, out of a senseless drive for competition. And here Ye Wenjie’s earlier decision to send a message to extraterrestrials promising to help them conquer Earth wins emotional support from the reader: the utter irrationality of cutting a branch on which we are all sitting deserves drastic measures in order to cleanse the Earth of such a failure as humans.

At present, SF imagery develops under the significantly greater influence of visual media – TV, cinema and videogames – as compared to the most part of the 20th century. Cixin Liu’s novel is a visualization of the immense and the immensely tiny, of history and of supposed extraterrestrials’ intentions. The author himself considers it a peculiarity of his style: “I realized that I had a special talent: scales and existences that far exceeded the bounds of human sensory perception – both macro and micro – and that seemed to be only abstract number to others, could take on concrete forms in my mind. I could touch them and feel them, much like others could touch and feel trees and rocks (p. 393). The Three Body Problem is not a story in the traditional sense of plot development; it is, rather, a picture with text miniatures within. We meet Red Guards and see the tumult reflected in the beautiful eye of a killed girl impaled on a fence. We observe the etching of computer circuits in an unfolded proton. We see meetings of the Battle Command Center trying to deal with the imminent invasion. We see how the extraterrestrial fleet departs for Earth.

Characters one by one come to the fore only to be replaced by other figures. It is not just a whim of the author, but a reflection of the changing reality -
the drastic discontinuation of traditional values in
the 20th century China, which first adopted scient-
ific approaches and then substituted them with the
“voluntaristic” ascription of class meaning to all and
sundry while calling for awful “cleansing of counter-
revolutionary elements” among intelligentsia even
more sweeping than the Stalin purges.

The character whom we meet from the start and
whose actions come to move huge events – Ye Wenjie,
the daughter of a physicist murdered during the Cul-
tural Revolution – is often removed from sight and
figures only indirectly in the narration. She spends
a large part of her life on a remote military base in-
volved with a secret ‘Red Coast Project’. So, when out-
standing scientists begin to commit suicide her con-
nection to these events is unseen. Another character
– renowned nanophysicist Wang Miao – is thrown
into the thick of unexpected events. He is a reluctant
observer, whose scientific curiosity becomes awak-
ened first by the absurdity of the deaths of these
brightest minds, and then by his own improbable ob-
servations when he becomes involved with the shadowy
organization Frontiers of Science and starts to play an
engrossing videogame entitled “Three Bodies”, tak-
ing place on the world of ‘Trisolaris’. Therefore, he
comes a narrator of the part dealing with the fa-
mously unsolvable three-body problem in celestial
mechanics. Ye and Wang are brought together when
Wang visits the mother of a young nuclear physicist
who committed suicide and left behind an enigmatic
note: “Physics never existed”. This mother appears
to be Ye, and around page 100 the reader begins to
get clues to some of the riddles.

The game, in which Professor Wang meets a num-
ber of characters from the histories of Asian and
Western science, brings us to the realization that
the world depicted there is not entirely a fictitious
one. Regular sunrises and sunsets, forming circadian
rhythms on Earth, occur there only during the so-
called Stable Eras. In between, the population “dehy-
drates” and is “stored”, civilizations are swept away
by cosmic disasters and need a long time to gain mo-
mentum again. Progress is very slow.

Several levels of the game engage the reader in
interaction with the history of scientific and philo-
osophical approaches. We take greater and greater
strides toward comprehension in the company of sci-
entists starting with the legendary King Wen of Zhou
(11th century B.C. China), jumping to Mohist School
of philosophy founder Mozi (4th -3rd centuries B.C.),
and then introducing Confucius, Copernicus, Galileo,
Leonardo da Vinci, Giordano Bruno, Isaac Newton,
Norbert Wiener, John Von Neumann and Albert Ein-
stein. As each scholar tackles the three-body prob-
lem from his own point of view, the scenes allow for
Wang Miao’s input, which eventually proves invalu-
able for Trisolaris.

Although this novel clads the traditional theme
of Contact in local Chinese tones based on history,
it adds more sinister overtones cast by the precari-
ous situation in the world today and by Cixin Liu’s
doubts in the benevolence of extraterrestrials. The
author employs quantum logic as a plot device to
create a feeling of doom as his Trisolarians unleash
the power of their sophons – computers contained
within a single proton – on the unsuspecting Earth-
lings. Though the physicists we consulted for this
review don’t find the concept of feeding erroneous
data to every accelerator simultaneously very plau-
sible, still, the idea of imagining the world in more
than three dimensions (not in abstract but as it may
be experienced), is one of the strongest qualities of
the novel. The fundamental qualities of the universe
are “brought nearer” and thus made to be directly
felt by the reader, for example, through a very mund-
ane comparison of the folded dimensions to a ciga-
rette filter which, if unfolded, can be spread into a
very large area.

The stylistic and formal variety of the textual pas-
sages is great: the realistic narrative of Ye Wenjie’s
past and present, the highly symbolic scenes inside
the “Three Body” game, the detective story in the
investigation into the death of Frontiers of Science
member Shen Yufei, the ghastly naturalistic depic-
tion of a warship’s destruction (the ship, with people
inside, is sliced apart by molecule-thin nanowires),
the combination of explanatory texts with visual
richness in the description of the folding and unfold-
ing of particles, the stenographic reports of Ye’s in-
vestigation, the haunting landscapes of the Greater
Khingan Mountains. The feeling that humanity de-
serves its doom (there are enough scenes of violence,
perpetrated by humans, included to persuade us that
it is indeed so) is balanced to an extent by scenes of
nourishing human contact, which Ye Wenjie experi-
ences for the first time in the small hamlet Qijatun
below the Red Coast base where she was brought af-
ter the very difficult birth of her daughter. It is filled
with colorful pictures of simple life, likened to warm
embers under a kang (the bed in which she is nursed.
back to health): “The kerosene lamp was a wonderful artist and created a classical painting with dignified colors and bright strokes: Feng had her coat draped over her shoulders, exposing her red bellyband, and a strong, graceful arm” (p. 295).

The planetary systems orbiting the three suns are by definition very unstable. Taking that as a premise, Cixin Liu creates a world of sporadically evolving civilizations. Their tenacity, he argues, should move them to leave the too-shaky cradle that their native planet has become. Only, why should they respond to an open appeal for contact with a decision to exterminate those seeking contact? Shouldn’t developed civilizations cherish life or at least attempt to establish some working relationship with the sender of the signal? Liu’s argument undermines all the efforts of humanity to establish such contact. It cannot but leave us wondering what might happen if his views on the philosophy of contact somehow gained dominance in reality.

It might be of interest to mention here that within the Chinese Three Body trilogy fandom, the most discussed topics online are the combination of innovation and traditionalism (by traditionalism is meant the widely branched system of characters and by innovation the inventiveness of the images based on scientific theories), the possibility of sophon creation and the nullification of gravity in the finale, and of creating a “human computer” sequence in the game.

The Three Body Problem may be a great book to discuss in class, both on the level of content and form. Transhumanist tone and arguments on the irreparability of greedy human nature bear comparison with works by Iain M. Banks, Greg Bear or Stanislaw Lem, among others, underscoring the interaction of Asian and Western trends. A noteworthy comparison could be with the Q court deliberation scene in the Star Trek: The Next Generation episode “Encounter At Farpoint”. The novel’s characterization and storytelling techniques possess peculiar features to study in association, say, with Octavia Butler’s Parable of the Sower or Ann Leckie’s Ancillary Justice as acclaimed experiments in this sphere. In Russia the concept of cosmic forces preventing the progress of science on Earth was introduced by the Strugatsky brothers in the novelette A Billion Years Prior the World’s End (1977, published in English as Definitely Maybe: A Manuscript Discovered Under Unusual Circumstances), which may also serve as a productive source for comparison.

Climate change is a global challenge, to be overcome in the situation of political blocs clutching to “their” parts of the world and in the process only making it worse. In this context, even the use of the trope of extraterrestrials intent on conquering Earth may serve as a stimulus to boost survival reserves in an attempt to prove humanity’s value, these reserves necessarily including the biodiversity of our world. Here lies hope – after all, the only thing humans have never doubted is their own ability to find an answer to the most difficult riddles.
Media Reviews

H+: The Digital Series
Tania Darlington


Order option(s): Youtube

THE H+ WIKI, a website dedicated to the 2012-2013 web series produced by Bryan Singer, of X-Men and Usual Suspects fame, claims that “[H+] takes viewers on a journey into an apocalyptic future where technology has begun to spiral out of control... a future where 33% of the world’s population has retired its cell phones and laptops in favor of a stunning new device – an implanted computer system called H+. This tiny tool allows the user’s own mind and nervous system to be connected to the Internet 24 hours a day.” The only problem is that this future is one science fiction readers and viewers have visited many times before.

As its name indicates, H+: The Digital Series (H+) is largely concerned with the impact of transhumanism. In fact, the imminent danger of transhumanism is such an essential component of H+ that the series opens with its own simplistic definition of the philosophy: “Transhumanism N. An international movement that supports the transforming of the human body. This movement is often abbreviated as H+.”

The show’s basic premise turns on the ramifications of a nanotechnology implant, developed by the company HPlus Nano, which allows humans to network, compute, and surf the internet independent of any wired connection or physical computer system – the seamless merging of man and machine. Hailed by some as the ultimate triumph of nanotech, the implant is met with protest by technophobes and anti-corporate movements. The series opens at an undefined future date, marked only “5 minutes before,” as an H+-borne nanovirus wipes out all web-connected individuals, resulting in the decimation of one third of the global population and the collapse of the nanotech-driven infrastructure. Subsequent episodes are non-chronological and

trace the origin of both the H+ technology and the virus as well as the results of the attack. The temporal and global scope of the series is wide, ranging across eleven years (from nine years before the virus to two years after) and spanning locations as far-flung as Alaska, Tokyo, Ireland, and the Republic of Congo.

At its core, H+ is a cyberpunk series, as evidenced by its theme of the perils of transhumanism and the merging of mind and machine as a tipping point toward a dystopian future. While its discussion of physical and cerebral modification gives the series its strongest connections to classic works by authors like Phillip K. Dick and William Gibson, this is, in many ways, its greatest weakness, as its presentation and central concepts – integration of the human brain and internet technology, nefarious tech corporations, anti-cybernetic hackers – are cliché. Though H+ won a Streamy online video award in 2012 for Best Action or SciFi Series and received positive reviews for its production values and innovative narrative structure, its only storytelling advances lie in its ability to integrate the new technologies that have been developed since the heyday of cyberpunk in the 1980s and ‘90s.

While H+ may do little to advance the well-established themes of the cyberpunk genre, it does attempt to extend the way its viewers engage with narrative structure. To its credit, the series endeavors to make the most of the online medium, taking advantage of its potential for non-chronological storytelling, multiple narratives, and discontiguous arcs. This loose narrative structure, paired with high-quality and easily-rewatchable segments (most episodes are between three and seven minutes long) lends itself to recombination, be it to watch a single character’s timeline – as presented in playlists on the H+ YouTube channel – or to watch the events of the series in chronological order. Therefore, where H+ fails somewhat as an engaging cyberpunk narrative, it succeeds as an example of the transformative qualities of new media and its ability to foster user-defined relationships with a text.

It is hard to imagine H+ contributing much to classroom conversations on the cyberpunk genre, as it covers ground already so well (and better) trodden. Its compact narrative segments, however, could make it a useful tool for introducing a classroom discussion of transhumanism. Where H+ would likely be most useful, though, would be in the new media classroom, where its episode structure could facili-
tate discussions on the potential of online media for nonlinearity and new, looser narratives. As noted above, H+ has received positive reviews from critics of web series due to its web-dependent structure that invites user interaction but limits its potential for cross-media distribution, making it an interesting contrast to many popular, linear web-based series which have easily translated to video or cable series, mediums which have greatly increased their marketability.

Works Cited


10 Cloverfield Lane
Dominick Grace


Order option(s): Amazon Prime | Blu Ray | DVD

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE is another product from J. J. Abrams’ Bad Robot company and is a quasi-sequel (Margaret Atwood’s term “sidequel” might be more appropriate, as the action occurs during the action of that film but involves different characters, plot, and style) to Cloverfield (2008). Beginning life as a straight thriller about a deranged man who abducts a woman and locks her away in the shelter he has built in case of the end of the world, the story was transformed—and thereby made considerably more interesting—into a companion piece to the earlier alien invasion movie.

There isn’t much new about alien invasion as a plot point. Nor is there much new about the madman abducting a woman plot. However, the combination is novel. Michelle (Winstead) decides to leave her boyfriend Ben (voiced by Bradley Cooper but never seen) only to have a car accident and wake up in a bare room, chained to the wall. Howard (Goodman) claims to have found and saved her, and that keeping her locked away is for her own safety, as the world outside his shelter has ended due to some unexplained attack. His story is largely confirmed by the shelter’s third inhabitant, Emmett (Gallagher), who helped Howard build the shelter and who asserts that something very strange has happened in the outside world. Anyone unfamiliar with Cloverfield might assume during the first third to half of the movie that the film is a straight thriller, with Howard simply deranged and paranoid, Emmett his accomplice (or perhaps also a victim) and Michelle the stereotypical woman in distress who must exercise resourcefulness to escape. So far, the film plays off familiar stereotypes of the dangers city folk can encounter when they run into those odd folk who live out in the rural wilderness—a staple of films such as Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Deliverance.

By contrast, anyone familiar with Cloverfield almost certainly knows that Howard may be deranged but he is also right. This is the crux of the most interesting feature of the film: its blurring of generic lines, reflected even in how it was marketed, in a strategy that concealed the SF elements. True, anyone who investigated the film could discover its relationship to the earlier movie and therefore watch it aware that Howard would prove to be right about the aliens, but the structure of the film hinges on the (literally) central reveal when, in her first escape attempt, Michelle finds herself at the door to the outside world just as a fleeing survivor arrives at the door and begs for admission before dying right in front of Michelle. Trachtenberg and writers Josh Campbell, Mathew Stuecken, and Damien Chazelle know better than many makers of straight thriller or horror films that the most effective strategy to move an audience is uncertainty. There is something off about Howard, from the relatively overt (why is Michelle chained to a wall in a dank cellar? The explanation that it is for her own good seems thin, especially to anyone conversant with the tradition of the depiction of abducted women in such films) to the very subtle (the oddly banal and domestic hermetic world he has constructed in the centre of his shelter and the parody of domestic normalcy he requires everyone to enact). However, the independent confirmation of his story by Emmett modifies our response, and the second, external confirmation provided by the dying survivor makes clear that however eccentric
Howard may be, his paranoia has been justified by external events.

This aspect of the film, and notably Goodman’s performance, which is not subtle but which does show Howard as a complex figure, capable of reason and tenderness but also easily enraged and potentially dangerous, opens up fruitful lines of consideration in relation to alien invasion stories. A staple of the genre is the lone voice in the wilderness who is proven to be right, usually in ways that vindicate that person’s concerns about threats nobody else takes seriously. The vindication of that figure, however, usually makes that figure the hero, not the villain. Here, instead, Howard is both the one prepared for the worst who thereby makes our protagonist’s survival possible, and also himself a threat. Dangerous as the aliens outside may be, Howard is just as dangerous, in a more insidious way, inside, as overlooking the warning signs of his derangement is almost a necessary survival mechanism. With literally nowhere else to go, how does one live with a madman, especially when he is in charge? Can one really be sure he is mad, and not just doing what must be done to ensure survival? I doubt that Heinlein’s Hugh Farnham, of Farnham’s Freehold (1964), is a deliberate echo, but he, too, was a fallout-shelter-building paranoiac who did what would, in normal circumstances, be reprehensible things but who is nevertheless vindicated by Heinlein. For a while, it seems possible that Howard might be similar.

One might therefore see in the film a metaphor for the current state of affairs in America: how far can/should we go within America to protect her from the threat outside? How much of a difference does it make if that threat is self-created, the product of the mind of the one(s) in power, as opposed to genuine? Where is the real threat: out there, or here, in the “shelter”? Ultimately, 10 Cloverfield Lane comes down on the side of the objective reality of the threat (indeed, Michelle ends the film reversing her original trajectory; rather than fleeing from her life, as she was at the beginning, or for her life, as she was for much of the film, she now she chooses to join the resistance, even wearing what vaguely resembles a superhero costume: the hazmat suit she and Emmett implausibly construct from a shower curtain and other refuse) and thereby becomes a conventional monster movie, but in the main, it offers intriguing grounds for discussion of how alien invasion stories may be metaphors for the here and now, as well as of tropes such as the resourceful woman in peril and the psychotic killer.


Steve Nash


Order option(s):
Fallout 4;  PS4 | Xbox One | PC
Titan Souls;  Android

WHEN UMBERTO ECO suggested that ‘a text has potentially no end’ (37), his focus may have been on our tendency toward revisiting and revising literary history, but the statement appropriately extends to the reading of digital media, particularly the growing field of digital media that rejects traditional narrative structures. Fallout 4 (2015), and Titan Souls (2015) represent two dramatically different approaches to this subversion of familiar narrative boundaries. While they clearly occupy opposite ends of the Videogame spectrum in terms of development time and cost, what they share is an approach to storytelling which emphasises an engagement that can be readily described as rhizomatic.

Deleuze and Guattari state that ‘a book is an assemblage... It is a multiplicity’ (4), so too the videogame. Rather than a static and sealed artefact, the text is ‘full of holes through which connections can be made to others’ (214). The videogame, then, is rhizomatic:

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things interbeing, intermezzo. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be’, but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and... and... and...’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 27).
Bethesda's *Fallout 4*, builds upon previous titles such as *Fallout 3* (2008), the Obsidian Entertainment developed *Fallout New Vegas* (2010), and *Skyrim* (2011) to present a sprawling RPG world in which the main narrative is subordinated to the player's own whims. There is a plot here, and it could be argued that there is more emphasis in *Fallout 4* on that plot than in previous titles. This is the first *Fallout* game in which the player character is afforded a voice, and in addition to the power of speech, the ‘Wanderer’ (as the wasteland comes to fondly, or fearfully refer to him or her depending on your choices) also has a very clear purpose before they step foot outside of their iconic vault. *Fallout 4*’s dystopian, nuclear wasteland version of Boston (here a part of a new republic known as the Commonwealth) makes liberal use of science fiction tropes such as cryosleep, synthetic human beings, mutated creatures, and teleportation, but, at its most rudimentary, it is the story of an adventurer searching for his or her lost child in a strange new world. Even that narrative is not fixed, with four factions, touting varying and overlapping ideologies, vying for the Wanderer’s loyalty and support.

Boston provides a fertile topography for the dystopian science fiction world, and its historical significance is utilised throughout the game. Finding one of the game’s four main factions, The Railroad, even requires the Wanderer to ‘follow the freedom trail’. Though it may not be subtle, the question of cyborgian slavery, and the suspicion and fear of synthetic human beings, offers a suitable undercurrent of suspicion to a world already fragmented and at war with itself. *Fallout 4*’s Commonwealth map initially seems surprisingly small compared to *Fallout 3*’s Capital, but the Commonwealth proves to be a far denser geography. The sparse sprawl of *Fallout 3*’s map emphasised the claustrophobic loneliness of a largely empty world where one could travel for miles without witnessing signs of life. While post-nuclear Boston affords the player many opportunities to gaze across desolate and ruined radioactive deserts (particularly in one corner of the world entirely dedicated to a vast uninhabitable toxic wasteland known as the Glowing Sea), the map is teeming with both life, and signs of life, the latter providing particularly creative moments of environmental storytelling.

It is in the environmental storytelling that we find some of the most robust evidence for the reading and playing of digital media such as *Fallout 4* as rhizomatic texts. In one nondescript storage container in a shantytown on the outskirts of former Boston there rests evidence of a tragically ironic tale involving a woman starving to death, essentially buried alive, but around her are all of the tools she would need to escape her predicament, if only she’d been willing to look. This is one of many examples of stories whose components have been placed in the world waiting to be pieced together by the vigilant player or reader prepared to observe closely. In addition to this environmental storytelling, the manner in which the world is given licence to develop and exist independent of player interaction also leads to events which are unique to each player’s experience.

Despite the renewed emphasis on a defining story, and the inclusion of a voice for the main character, the main plot, or quest, can be ignored whilst the player explores the open-ended chronicle provided by the world, encountering and creating narratives as progress is made. The accomodatory nature of the open world game, as a storytelling medium, increasingly encourages rhizomatic readings. The growing scale of the worlds and their systems ensure that no two players will share the same experience, confirming that the narrative defies ownership. Such disparate possible readings suggest that the videogame becomes a heteroglossia: a multiplicity of discourses contained within a single text. Deleuze and Guattari’s suggestion of reading across the thousand plateaus is a useful scaffold for the interpretation of games such as *Fallout 4* as it affords an inclusive mode of reading, rejecting the reductive perspective of assigning narrative to a single level. As Deleuze and Guattari ask of Freud: ‘why must we be only one wolf?’ (29).

*Titan Souls*, originally created in two days by the two-person development team, Acid Nerve, could scarcely seem a more different prospect than Bethesda’s huge creation. However; the question of what these two markedly divergent texts offer in terms of comparative potential, can be answered by focusing on narrative, and the dissolution of boundaries. Taking inspiration thematically from Team Ico’s *Shadow of the Colossus* (2005), but sharing more in common technically and aesthetically with *The Legend of Zelda* (1986), or more recently *The Binding of Isaac* (2011), *Titan Souls* drops the diminutive player character in a fantasy world seemingly devoid of life, armed with a bow, a single arrow, and the knowledge...
that a solitary hit will kill you.

While there is little in the way of specific plot, *Titan Souls* tasks the player with finding the lairs of the titular Titans, waking them, and killing them. The game itself is steeped in mythology, in a traditional sense, and in a gaming sense. Each confrontation present here draws enthusiastically from the history and vocabulary of gaming. Does a Titan have a glowing body part? Are there switches placed conspicuously along the walls? Is one tile on the floor a different colour from the rest? Does your opponent mimic your movements? In order to progress in the game it helps to have some fluency in this vocabulary, but the game also utilises the player’s presumptions to subvert expectations.

Mechanically *Titan Souls* gets a surprising level of depth out of its simplicity. You have a single arrow. You can be killed with a single hit, but so can the Titans. The challenge is not in the act of fighting itself, but rather in staying alive long enough to solve the puzzle of how this particular foe needs to be approached. What is more intriguing is the narrative, or lack thereof. Unlike the named, and voiced protagonist of *Fallout 4* with his or her very clear directive, the 8-bit pixel hero of *Titan Souls*’ motivations are less clear, and, depending upon the reader/player’s perspective, quite possibly psychotic. Just as *Shadow of the Colossus*’ young hero Wander’s actions eventually lead to the revelation that reader/player is the villain of this world, so too the repeated pattern of waking these sleeping giants only to vanquish them in *Titan Souls*, raises the question: Why am I doing this? The answer, of course, is entirely up to the player as co-author to decide, but there a clear echo of Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* (1954): in this world perhaps we are the Boogieman.

Just as *Fallout 4*’s enormous living world, branching subplots, and player choices lead to rhizomatic narrative possibilities through the continual ‘and... and... and...’ of experiences, so too does *Titan Souls*’ elision of plot and character history beg to be completed by the interpretation of the player. With each player’s interpretation being as valid a reading as the next, the individuated yet networked mode of engagement with digital media narrative circumvents authorial regulation, and the reader/spectator becomes player/author, an active agent with a semblance of control over new, democratised narratives.

Despite the vastly differing nature of the games, both serve to emphasise the potential of the digital media narrative to encourage collaborative experience. Rather than the art being a mediating object between author and reader, or game designer and player, art here is co-created by all who engage with it, each time instantiating a new experience. This individuated yet networked mode of engagement encourages a rejection of traditional narrative restrictions by taking advantage of the rhizomatic potential of the medium. Deleuze and Guattari’s call for a ‘Nomadology, the opposite of a history’ (25), is also fitting here. The nomad is always in passage, in flight, and this infinite passage is precisely what is offered by videogames, or digital/postdigital media narratives such as these. For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘the nomad makes the desert no less than they are made by it’ (387).

**Works Cited**


The X-Files, Season 10

John J. Pierce


Order option(s): Amazon Prime | Blu Ray | DVD

“You WANT THE TRUTH?” Fox Mulder’s old enemy asks in “Babylon,” fifth episode of the reboot of The X-Files. “You’ve come to the right place.”

That was only part of a hallucination in “Babylon.” But if fans thought Cancer Man (William B. Davis), raised from the dead for the second or third time, would make sense of the “truth” in the finale of the mini-series, they were in for a terrible disappointment. The second part of “My Struggle” not only discarded the mythology of the original show, but that of its own first part – and didn’t make any sense in either version.

David Duchovny returned as Mulder, and Gillian Anderson as Dana Scully for the six-episode mini-series. So did Mitch Pileggi as Walter Skinner. But from the get go, the real issue was whether the storyline of the six-episode mini-series could justify bringing back the show at all. And while there will surely be more – ratings were good enough that it’s hard to imagine the series won’t be continued on the small or the large screen – it is hard to imagine a great story coming of it, no matter what series creator Chris Carter and the more credulous fans may think.

Carter himself had shown some nervousness about that at the Entertainment Weekly Fest in October when he objected to the characterization of the new X-Files as a reboot or a revival or even a mini-series: “‘Reboot’ sounds cheesy,” he said. “I don’t like any of those words” (Carter, 2015).

But the comparisons to the reboots of other TV classics like Star Trek and comic book superhero series that often relegate established history to the memory hole are, alas, inevitable now we that we have seen what Carter was up to in “My Struggle,” the two-part mytharc episode that bookended a related conspiracy episode, “Founder’s Mutation,” and three stand-alone monster-of-the-week stories.

Such reboots have become the rule rather the exception in comics and sf TV series, as opposed to literary sf. Even Isaac Asimov, who combined the robot and Foundation series in his last few novels, didn’t trash the actual events of previous works in those series, albeit the effort to reconcile them was unconvincing. Nor did Robert A. Heinlein pretend his future history never happened, even after he made it part of a solipsistic multiverse. You won’t catch writers of future histories like C.J. Cherryh or Lois McMaster Bujold claiming that the backstories of their series never happened. But that’s what Carter has done with The X-Files.

“I’ve been misled – we’ve all been misled,” Mulder had lamented in the first part. “I was being led through a dark alley to a dead end.” This came after right-wing conspiracy maven Tad O’Malley (Joel McHale) had introduced him to Sveta (Annet Mahendru), a multiple-abductee and seeming brood mare who could read minds – and revealed that her abductors had all been humans, not aliens. At last, Mulder was on to the path to the real truth out there, with Sveta as “the key to everything” – the very same thing he had said about Gibson Praise in the fifth season finale, “The End.”

But it was Carter himself leading Mulder and Scully and fans of the original series down the garden path, misleading them about his latest take on the mythology, which he had already re-explained several times in the original series – ending in “The Truth,” with a revelation that an alien invasion was due at the end of 2012. Only, in “My Struggle,” virtually everything has to be explained away. Oh, there was indeed the UFO crash at Roswell – which rates an elaborate flashback, with the only surviving gray executed by a Man in Black and an Army doctor making off with the body (without himself getting shot.). But there was never an alien invasion – just humans replicating alien technology and genetics in pursuit of O’Malley would later call “the most evil conspiracy the world has ever seen.”

Anything Mulder actually saw or experienced to the contrary, anything we ever saw was just SFX in service to the “real” conspiracy. Remember the Syndicate cutting a deal with the Colonists in 1973, under which the Elders gave up their children as hostages (among them, presumably, Samantha Mulder), but being wiped out by the alien rebels in 1998? Never happened; in “Founder’s Mutation,” we learn the Syndicate was working entirely on its own to create human-alien hybrids – who, in the finale, it develops, are to be the only survivors of a global plague. Not only that, but we are told Mulder himself never had any alien DNA or capabilities, as we had been given to believe in Season Eight – even though he can read
a near-dead terrorist’s mind in “Babylon.”

So what was Carter doing? Not only rewriting history, but reducing the mythology to something totally out of mundane conspiracy theory, except for the bit about creating alien hybrids, while replicating alien spacecraft and staging sightings of same to divert attention from the actual agenda of the conspirators.

O’Malley in the first part of “My Struggle,” offers a laundry list of elements such as “severe drought, brought on by weather wars, conducted secretly using aerial contaminants and high altitude electromagnetic waves, and a state of perpetual war.” He ticks off standard right-wing obsessions like gun confiscation, martial law and concentration camps – but also favorite liberal targets such as the Patriot Act, NSA spying, militarization of police, and the corporate takeover of the food industry in order “to fatten, dull, sicken and control the populace already consumed by consumerism” (TV Fanatic, 2016). He came off like Chico Marx in Duck Soup: “Who you gonna believe? Me or your own eyes?” (Duck Soup, 1933). Meanwhile, Mulder paraphrased George Orwell after meeting with Skinner: “It’s about controlling the past to control the future.”

There’s a brief scene of the now aged Army doctor from Roswell, but this latest Deep Throat balks at actually telling him anything. Another contact of O’Malley’s, Garner (Hiro Kanagawa) invokes Big Oil, which has suppressed alien “torroidal energy” except for its use by the Conspiracy to replicate alien spacecraft used for UFO sightings. Somehow, Garner and his anti-Conspiracy allies have reproduced such a craft in a hidden hangar – where they show it off to Mulder (it can take off soundlessly, and even turn invisible). But – no surprise here – the Evil Empire strikes back at Garner his team and Sveta by the end of the first part.

There are clips of Bush and Obama in that first episode. The fourth, “Home Again,” even centers on abuse of the homeless, perpetrators of which are torn limb from limb by the monster of the week. “Babylon” turns on Islamic terrorism – but also targets Islamophobia, personified by stereotype Texans and nasty Homeland Security agents. Talking heads rant at each other on a cable news channel, and Mulder and Scully muse about the epidemic of hatred. Indeed, the only episode that gets into the spirit of the original series is “Mulder and Scully Meet the Were Monster,” with its shape-shifting hibernating were lizard falsely accused of murder.

In the second part of “My Struggle,” fans were thrown for a loop again, with the sudden revelation by O’Malley of an alien plague that could wipe out the human race – but which Cancer Man and the Syndicate apparently see as the only way to save the planet from the depredations of ordinary humans: global warming and all that. A Spartan virus, carrier of a whole range of contagions, has been piggybacked for decades by genome editing onto vaccines for smallpox and other diseases – you know, the kind that cause autism in children – the latest having been anthrax shots for soldiers returning from Iraq.

Scully’s efforts to combat the outbreak are ludicrous, based on her discovery that she has alien DNA that could be replicated to confer immunity like hers on countless others – who, contrary to what O’Malley broadcast when he resurfaced, never had any to begin with. Or maybe she actually needs stem cells from her missing son William? Her discussion of biotech issues with newcomer FBI agent Einstein (Lauren Ambrose) is ludicrous – as is the notion that alien DNA or stem cells could be mass-produced in virtually no time to combat a global pandemic.

Other elements of the episode are just as ill conceived; for example, Cancer Man, it seems, is still a prime mover, despite his ups and downs in the original series – having been targeted by black helicopters in the finale – and yet he too is doomed by the plague. He has suborned former agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) by offering her alien DNA. But her only role is to defect and inform Scully about the new Truth. Mulder, meanwhile, drives hundreds of miles to meet get an earful from his old nemesis – ignoring cellphone calls from Skinner and Scully. Miller (Robbie Arnell), another new FBI agent introduced in “Babylon,” has to track him down and retrieve him, driving all the way back to the capital – where Scully manages to weave through stalled traffic occasioned by the panic over the plague in order to reach them with the cure – just as a UFO appears.

A cliffhanger ending, but hardly an auspicious beginning for any continuation of a story that doesn’t make sense on its own terms.

“This isn’t science fiction,” Mulder insists. That’s for sure.
Works cited


From computers, robots, cyborgs and androids to ecological systems, management practices and industry (including the production of goods, agriculture or meat production), to the social and hard sciences, art, language and communication, right through to the systematisation and dissemination of knowledge, the theme of this year’s conference – “Systems and Knowledge” – reaches across a wide range of areas in science fiction scholarship. As a genre inherently replete with a multitude of systems and ideas of knowledge generation and systematisation, science fiction is ideally suited to scientific, linguistic, cultural, sociological, political or philosophical studies.

We invite submissions on any theme and especially encourage proposals that address the thematic, formal, conceptual or theoretical engagement of sf with the conference theme, “Systems and Knowledge”. We welcome submissions from SFRA members on a range of sf productions and sf media, including those that might not typically be associated with the mode. This includes but is not limited to literature, film and TV, performance and theatre, music, games, art and sculpture, advertising, architecture, popular science and research in the social sciences.

Areas of engagement might include:

- Cybernetic Fiction and Cyberpunk
- Information Systems and Technologies
- Climate Change, Sustainability and Ecology
- Carbon and Energy Systems
- Genetics and Genetic Engineering
- (Cognitive) Mapping, Cartography and Modelling
- World Systems Theory
- Alternative Systems of Knowledge
- Myth and Storytelling
- Indigenous Knowledge
- Society and Politics
- Scientific Paradigms
- Disciplinary Knowledge and the “Two Cultures”
- Trans-, Multi- and Interdisciplinary Knowledge
- Translation
- Publishing, Scholarship, Libraries and Archives

The deadline for proposals is the 31st March 2016. Please send 250-400 word abstracts and a 100 word biography to sfaliv@liv.ac.uk. Panel proposals are welcome, as are suggestions for alternative presentational forms. All presenters must be members of the SFRA.
Call for Papers—Conference

Title: Ninth Anniversary Sessions of the Fantastic Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction Area.
Conference Date: October 21-22, 2016, Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire.
Contact: NEPCAFantastic@gmail.com.

Formed in 2008, the Fantastic (Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction) Area celebrates its ninth anniversary in 2016, and we seek proposals from scholars of all levels for papers that explore any aspect of the intermedia traditions of the fantastic (including, but not limited to, elements of fairy tale, fantasy, gothic, horror, legend, mythology, and science fiction) and how creative artists have altered our preconceptions of these subtraditions by producing innovative works in diverse countries and time periods and for audiences at all levels.

Special topics: Given the proximity of the conference to Halloween, we are always interested in proposals related to monsters and the monstrous, and, in anticipation of the two hundredth anniversary of the publication of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein in 2018, we are especially hoping for proposals that address aspects of the Frankenstein tradition and the fantastic.

The Northeast Popular/American Culture Association (a.k.a. NEPCA) was founded in 1974 as a professional organization for scholars living in New England and New York. It is a community of scholars interested in advancing research and promoting interest in the disciplines of popular and/or American culture. NEPCA's membership consists of university and college faculty members, emeriti faculty, secondary school teachers, museum specialists, graduate students, independent scholars, and interested members of the general public. NEPCA is an independently funded affiliate of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Membership is open to all interested parties, regardless of profession, rank, or residency. NEPCA holds an annual conference that invites scholars from around the globe to participate. In an effort to keep costs low, it meets on college campuses throughout the region.

Membership in NEPCA is required for participation and annual dues are included in conference registration fees. Further details are available at http://nepca.wordpress.com/membership-information/.

Title: Frankenstein and the Fantastic.
Conference Date: October 21-22, 2016, Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire.
Contact: NEPCAFantastic@gmail.com.

Formed in 2008, the Fantastic (Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction) Area celebrates its ninth anniversary in 2016, and, this year, we hope to commemorate the 200th-anniversary of the composition of Frankenstein by seeking proposals from scholars of all levels for papers that explore any aspect of Mary Shelley’s novel and its relationship to texts of the ongoing Frankenstein tradition. We are especially interested in papers that explore underrepresented works and media.

Potential presenters should be aware that studies of Frankenstein in popular culture do not exist in a vacuum, and, in pitching their ideas, will be expected to be familiar with previous discussions of the Frankenstein tradition, including Donald F. Glut’s The Frankenstein Catalog (McFarland, 1984) and The Frankenstein Archive (McFarland, 2002) and Susan Tyler Hitchcock’s Frankenstein: A Cultural History (Norton, 2007).

Submission: Please see our website NEPCA Fantastic (http://nepcafantastic.blogspot.com) for further details and ideas. Presentations will be limited to 15-20 minutes in length (depending on final panel size).

If you are interested in proposing a paper, please address inquiries and send your biography and paper abstract (each of 500 words) to the Fantastic (Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction) Area Chair at nepcafantastic@gmail.com, noting “NEPCA Fantastic Proposal 2016” in your subject line. Do also submit your information on NEPCA's official Paper Proposal Form accessible from https://nepca.wordpress.com/2016-conference/.

Please submit inquiries and/or proposals for complete panels directly to the Fantastic (Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction) Area Chair at nepcafantastic@gmail.com.
interest in the disciplines of popular and/or American culture. NEPCA’s membership consists of university and college faculty members, emeriti faculty, secondary school teachers, museum specialists, graduate students, independent scholars, and interested members of the general public. NEPCA is an independently funded affiliate of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Membership is open to all interested parties, regardless of profession, rank, or residency. NEPCA holds an annual conference that invites scholars from around the globe to participate. In an effort to keep costs low, it meets on college campuses throughout the region.

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Please submit inquiries and/or proposals for complete panels directly to the Fantastic (Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction) Area Chair at nepcafantastic@gmail.com.

Title: Star Trek Symposium.
Conference Date: July 15-16, 2016.
Contact: www.startreksymposium.co.

Scifi Malta will host the second Star Trek Symposium on the 15-16 July, 2016 at the University of Malta. 2016 marks the 50th anniversary from the launch of Star Trek: The Original Series. In order to commemorate this event, Scifi Malta is organizing a Symposium dedicated solely to Star Trek. This will differ from the traditional fan-based convention in that it will be an academic meeting with the presentation of scholarly papers, a platform for academics from across varied disciplines to meet and explore the intersection of the Humanities and the Sciences.

The event will be held in collaboration with the Faculty of IT, under the auspices of HUMS, a programme at the University of Malta that has been set up to explore and encourage the interfaces between the Humanities, Medicine and the Sciences, and aims to facilitate and disseminate cross-disciplinary research.

Scifi Malta has also teamed up with the prestigious Sciphi journal to produce a series of interviews with several of the symposium faculty. The interviews showcase some of their work and their passion for Star Trek and can be found at http://www.sciphi-journal.com/star-trek-symposium-interviews-pt2/.

The Star Trek Symposium is an event that will appeal to scientists and fans of science fiction alike. Further information can be found in www.startreksymposium.co.

Title: First contact - Academic track Eurocon 2016 Barcelona
Deadline: None listed
Conference Date: November 4-6th, 2016
Barcelona
Contact: Sara.Martin@uab.cat

As organizer of the academic track for Eurocon 2016 (Barcelona, November 4, 5 and 6, http://www.eurocon2016.org/) I am seeking international academics who might be interested in participating in one of the three planned round tables in English.

The round tables will have a maximum of 4 participants each and will deal with the following topics:

- Trans and post-humanism
- Gender and SF (please, note this will focus on both masculinities and femininities)
- Teaching SF in a university context

Please, note that Eurocon cannot cover travel expenses, as all our limited funding is going to the very nice list of guest writers (which you may check at Eurocon’s website).

Submission: If interested, please contact me at Sara.
Title: 2016-17 Le Guin Feminist Science Fiction Fellowship  
Deadline: September 2, 2016.  
Contact: for full information, go to Le Guin Funding Details: [http://csws.uoregon.edu/funding/le-guin-fellowship/](http://csws.uoregon.edu/funding/le-guin-fellowship/).

The Competition is now open for the 2016-17 Le Guin Feminist Science Fiction Fellowship. Now in its fourth year, the fellowship is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women in Society and University of Oregon Libraries Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) for the intention to encourage research within collections in the area of feminist science fiction. The UO Libraries Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) houses the papers of authors Ursula K. Le Guin, Joanna Russ, James Tiptree, Jr., Kate Wilhelm, Suzette Haden Elgin, Sally Miller Gearhart, Kate Elliot, Molly Gloss, Laurie Marks, and Jessica Salmonson, along with Damon Knight.

This award supports travel for the purpose of research on, and work with, the papers of feminist science fiction authors housed in SCUA. These short-term research fellowships are open to undergraduates, master’s and doctoral students, postdoctoral scholars, college and university faculty at every rank, and independent scholars working in feminist science fiction. In 2016, $3,000 will be awarded to conduct research within these collections. The fellowship selection committee will include representatives from the Center for the Study of Women in Society (CSWS), Robert D. Clark Honors College (CHC), and SCUA.

Call for Papers—Articles

Title: Welcome to Night Vale.  
Contact: Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Jeffrey.Weinstock@cmich.edu.

Proposals related to the podcast Welcome to Night Vale are solicited for chapter contributions to an edited scholarly collection to be published by Palgrave. The editor seeks to include a range of approaches focusing on both form and content. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- internal themes and allusions  
- genre and influences  
- performance, music, and effects  
- politics and historical contextualization  
- podcast production, distribution, and consumption  
- reception and fandom  
- paratexts, marketing, and merchandise

Submission: 250-word proposals and abbreviated CV indicating academic position and publications due by June 15th, 2016.  
5000-word chapters due by February 15th, 2017.

Inquires and proposals to Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock at Jeffrey.Weinstock@cmich.edu.

Title: Studies in the Fantastic.  
Contact: fantastic@ut.edu.

Studies in the Fantastic invites submissions for issue 4 of our peer-reviewed academic journal. Issue 3, which is available online through Project MUSE, covered reboots in a variety of incarnations. For issue 4, set for publication in late 2016, we seek contributions that examine the role of history (real and invented) as a fantastic mode in contemporary media. Analyses of works that employ historical or pseudo-historical methods as modes for fantastic narratives are especially encouraged, including examinations of faux chronicles, alternative histories, manufactured ephemera, epistolary and diary forms, and invented philology. Essays investigating the fantastic from other perspectives are also welcome.

Studies in the Fantastic is an annual journal publishing refereed essays, informed by scholarly criticism and theory, on both fantastic texts and their social function. Although grounded in literary studies, we are especially interested in articles examining genres and media that have been underrepresented in humanistic scholarship. Subjects may include, but are not limited to weird fiction, science/
speculative fiction, fantasy, video games, architecture, science writing, futurism, and technocracy.

**Submission:** for consideration for issue 4, please send submissions to fantastic@ut.edu by August 1, 2016.

Submitted articles should conform to the following guidelines:

1. 6,000-12,000 words.
2. MLA style citations and bibliography.
3. A separate title page with author information to facilitate peer review.
4. 1” margins, 12 point serif font, page numbers.

**Title:** Laika special issue: A ficção científica no cinema / Science Fiction Film.

**Manuscript Deadline:** 1st August, 2016.

**Contact:** Editor responsável/Guest Editor: Alfredo Luiz Suppia (Pesquisador e professor Unicamp): laika@usp.br. http://www.revistalaika.org/como-colaborar.

In addition to space operas – with their intergalactic kingdoms, Apollonian heroes saving endangered princesses, gleaming spaceships and multiple laser beams –, science fiction is now a multifaceted, heterogeneous and universal genre, perhaps the most complex “mode of expression and behavior” going beyond the boundaries of a particular genre, while spreading throughout a variety of media (literature, film, television, theater, video games etc.) with significant influences on our contemporary agenda. Since the 1950s boom in science fiction film production, this genre has been one of the most profitable in the audiovisual industry, providing an international showcase for cutting edge film technology (visual effects, stereoscopy and computer-generated imagery, for example) and, in its expanded form (the speculative fiction, or science fiction and fantasy), it now accounts for 9 out of 10 biggest box office hits in the world. But science fiction film is not entirely represented by visual spectacle targeted at global audiences. Well before the 1950s, since the rise of the film medium itself and the subsequent cinematic avant-gardes, science fiction film has been emerging as a unique field for experimentation in terms of new forms of “cognitive estrangement” and sense of wonder. Not only the hegemonic film industry, but also internationally renowned film auteurs have been contributing to the history of audiovisual science fiction – one might recall Fritz Lang, Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, Stanley Kubrick, Andrei Tarkovsky, Hiroshi Teshigahara, Andrei Zulawski, Alexander Kluge, Piotr Szulkin, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Hugo Santiago, David Cronenberg and David Lynch, among many others, as well as the Brazilian filmmakers Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Walter Lima Jr. Paying homage to Laika, an icon in the history of space race, and whose martyrdom is indistinguishable from a science fiction story, we invite authors to contribute to this special issue with unique perspectives about one of the most long-lived, thought-provoking, artistically provocative and economically relevant audiovisual genres of all times. 

Laika is a journal published by the Laboratório de Investigação e Crítica Audiovisual (LAICA), based at the School of Communications and Arts (ECA), University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil. It is open for submissions of unpublished works (individual or collective authorship) or rare pieces by artists, researchers, teachers and students of Film and Audiovisual Media and related areas, in the form of reviews, articles, photo essays, videos and podcasts. The thematic dossiers, subject to initial deadlines for submissions, remain open to possible reverberations over several issues.

**Submission:** All regular submissions are subject to the scrutiny of the Editorial Board and will go through the double-blind peer-review process. Submissions must be sent to the email: laika@usp.br. Sending the text automatically implies your consent to its publication. Please, download pdf for submission guidelines: http://www.revistalaika.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Submission-Guidelines-LAIKA.pdf.

**Title:** World Science Fiction Studies.

**Manuscript Deadline:** Ongoing.

**Contact:** Dr Laurel Plapp, Senior Commissioning Editor: L.PLAPP@peterlang.com.

The book series *World Science Fiction Studies* understands science fiction to be a global phenomenon and explores the various manifestations of the genre in cultures around the world. It recognizes the im-
importance of Anglo-American contributions to the field but promotes the critical study of science fiction in other national traditions, particularly German-speaking. It also supports the investigation of transnational discourses that have shaped the science fiction tradition since its inception. The scope of the series is not limited to one particular medium and encourages study of the genre in both print and digital forms (e.g. literature, film, television, transmedial). Theoretical approaches (e.g. post-human, gender, genre theory) and genre studies (e.g. film shorts, transgenre such as science fiction comedy) with a focus beyond the Anglo-American tradition are also welcome.

Submission: Proposals for monographs and edited collections in either English or German are invited. For more information, please contact Dr Laurel Plapp, Senior Commissioning Editor, Peter Lang Ltd, 52 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LU, UK. Email: L.PLAPP@peterlang.com. Tel: +44 (0) 1865 514160.

Title: Museum of Science Fiction Call for Submissions for New Triannual Journal of Science Fiction.

Manuscript Deadline: Ongoing.

Contact: Register on website: http://publish.lib.umd.edu/scifi/about/submissions#authorGuidelines.

The Museum of Science Fiction, the world’s first comprehensive science fiction museum, will publish an academic journal of science fiction using the University of Maryland’s journal management system. The first issue of the Museum’s new Journal of Science Fiction will be launched in January of 2016 and will serve as a forum for scientists and academicians from around the world to discuss science fiction, including recent trends in the genre, its influence on the modern world, and its prognostications of the future.

Greg Bear, member of Museum of Science Fiction’s Board of Advisors and Hugo award-winning science fiction author said, "Science fiction as literature has real staying power and has been a huge influence on our modern world. It’s only fitting that we attempt to understand the cultural and mythic roots of our need for anticipation, adventure, and imagination.”

“We want readers everywhere to consider the science fiction genre they love from new angles. We want them to ask questions and to have fun doing so,” said Monica Louzon, managing editor of the Museum’s new Journal of Science Fiction. "We’re encouraging anyone who considers themselves a science fiction scholar to send us their original articles, essays or book reviews for our first issue."

The Journal of Science Fiction will be published online and freely accessible to everyone -- no subscription or submission fees are required. The Museum’s Journal of Science Fiction welcomes original work from writers around the world, with an emphasis on the interdisciplinary and innovative aspects of science fiction. Issues will be published three times a year and each will feature between eight and twelve peer-reviewed academic articles as well as several book reviews and essays.

Submission: submission information for the Journal of Science Fiction can be found on the Journal’s homepage at the University of Maryland: http://publish.lib.umd.edu/scifi/index.

Submissions for the Journal of Science Fiction can be sent to: http://publish.lib.umd.edu/scifi/about/submissions#authorGuidelines.

Any Journal-related questions can emailed to Monica Louzon, Managing Editor: journal@museumofsciencefiction.org.

More information about other activities are available on the Museum’s website: www.museumofsciencefiction.org.

About the Museum of Science Fiction: the non-profit Museum of Science Fiction will be the world’s first comprehensive science fiction museum, covering the history of the genre across the arts and providing a narrative on its relationship to the real world. The Museum will show how science fiction continually inspires individuals, influences cultures, and impacts societies. Also serving as an educational catalyst to expand interest in the science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) areas. The Museum uses tools such as mobile applications and wifi-enabled display objects to educate and entertain. For a full press packet on the Museum of Science Fiction's vision and other information, please visit: www.museumofsciencefiction.org/presspacket.
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. For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the Website.

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

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