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THE 46TH ANNUAL Science Fiction Research association conference was held in Stony Brook, New York at the end of June. It met my personal criteria for a successful conference: I enjoyed myself, and I learned things that I found fascinating and useful. The ripple effects are already being seen in the syllabi I am working on for the semester that begins in a couple of weeks. I have, of course, Ritch Calvin to thank for organizing and running the conference. As President of the association I got to hear a lot of compliments from attendees, which is great, and no complaints, which is also great, but I took no credit, as the work was all Ritch’s and those who helped him. And, of course, that of the presenters whose collective contributions made for an intensely rewarding few days of presentations and conversations. As an attendee, I deeply appreciate all of the effort made by so many to travel and participate.

So we turn our eyes to next year, to the 47th annual SFRA conference, to be held June 27-30 at the University of Liverpool, in the United Kingdom. The conference’s theme will be “Systems and Knowledge.” You should start planning right now to attend. Pause here and go put those dates into your calendar. Okay, now start thinking about what you might present, or the panel that you might propose. Your future self will appreciate its past self’s foresight when the deadline for the call for proposals looms next spring.

Our 2016 conference will be held in association with Current Research in Speculative Fictions, already an annual conference at the University of Liverpool, and the choice of venue reflects SFRA’s ongoing commitment to be truly international. Moving out of North America has historically meant a dip in conference attendance (but
not quality). I hope that next year many of the North American SFRA members can demonstrate the determination to attend so often demonstrated by members who fly over oceans to attend our conferences in the US and Canada. One of the things that I appreciate most about SFRA is that it is a movable feast, one that is made new again each year by an interesting new context. That feast is a potluck, though, and so its success depends upon who shows up and what they bring. I am already looking forward to it.

**VICE-PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

**Collaborations and Innovations**

Keren Omry

JUST OVER a month gone since many of us met in New York, conferring and conferencing about the SF we often don't see. Thanks largely to the imagination and organizational skills of Ritch Calvin, our conference organizer, we enjoyed three days of diverse panels, film screenings, and no less important, coffee-conversations. The three keynote lectures undoubtedly provided some of the highpoints of the conference. The filmmaker M. Asli Dukan screened clips of her project, bringing to light the decades of invisible faces and figures in SF cinema, and showing footage of talks and interviews with some of the leading literary voices in black SF. Vandana Singh, physicist and writer, whose talk, capped by a very convincing wolf howl, taught us to remember ourselves as just one of many subjects populating the earth, and that the local and the global are not (or need not) be distinct. Finally, scholar Alexis Lothian's work on 'vidding' demonstrated critical intersections between critique and consumption and made us consider the impact of digital mediation.

Since the conference, our image of the universe has gained color and depth. In a feat of means and mathematics comparable to 'nailing a hole-in-one' when hitting a golf ball from New York to Los Angeles, NASA's New Horizons probe has started sending unprecedented images of Pluto to Earth. Just ten days later, the discovery of Kepler-452b, what's being called Earth's closest cousin yet, was announced. Alongside these, a new theory of the extraordinary reach of our *H. sapiens* ancestors across the globe is developing, and rests on the combination of the remarkable capacity for collaboration together with that for ingenuity. "We modern humans cooperate to an extraordinary degree. We engage in highly complex coordinated group activities with people who are not kin to us and who many even be complete strangers." (Marean, C. W. “The Most Invasive Species of All.” *Scientific American.* August 2015. Pg. 25).

This capacity for imagining the other, for finding a common language of conversation across disciplines, cultures, generations, and media, that seems so critical for our very ability to progress, has been a cornerstone of Speculative Fiction, but also, on a more modest scale, for the SFRA. It is with this in mind that I continue my efforts in the coming months to expand the international reach of our organization, and invite all SFRA members to get in touch with any projects, ideas, contacts, or collaborations that you have that may enrich our SFRA experience. In the meantime, I happily anticipate meeting you all in the 2016 SFRA conference, to take place in the UK.

**SFRA Business**

**ASLE’s Notes from Underground:**

**The Depths of Environmental Arts, Culture and Justice**

[conference report]

Bridgitt Barcaly

THE ELEVENTH BIENNIAL ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) conference hosted an SFRA panel and included numerous panels and papers devoted to science fiction and speculative fiction. In fact, the conference's underground theme unearthed a good deal of classic science fiction films and texts and their relationship to environmental discourses. Additionally, sf-related themes of apocalypse (extinction, Anthropocene, and petroviolence, specifically) and discussions of cli-fi were perhaps some of the most common threads in the conference.

The SFRA-sponsored panel, "When the Creature Emerges: Eco-teaching Speculative Fiction Film," was the first panel of the opening day (Stephen Rust, Tiffany
Deater, Andy Hageman, and Bridgitte Barclay) and focused on science fictional and horror film to teach environmental themes. Rust showed how he uses such sf films as *Sleeper*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Day After Tomorrow* to discuss landscape and setting in an environmental course. Tiffany Deater examined the films *The Nest* (1998), *The Last Winter* (2006), *The Happening* (2008), and *Mimic* (1997) to analyze speculative fictional genre boundaries and to show the evolution of eco-horror. Andy Hageman analyzed Craig Baldwin’s experimental SF film to argue that humans are part of a technical ecology and that we can imagine our technical future by analyzing our technical past. I asserted that the *Gamera* film series are cultural artifacts that can facilitate classroom analysis of environmental apocalypse discourses in popular film, particularly shifts in narratives about nuclear power and human agency in environmental destruction. The panel produced lively discussion about teaching eco-speculative tropes in the classroom, assignments, defining the boundaries of science-fiction and horror, and issues of tone and fear, in addition to taking part in discussions of science and science fictional narratives that continued throughout the conference.

One of the most talked-about panels at the conference was “Underground Feminism, Subterranean Queer” (Catriona Sandilands, Greta Gaard, Stacy Alaimo, and Jenna Goldsmith), and while it was not explicitly science fiction focused, Catriona Sandilands used SF – the 1963 Japanese film *Matango / Attack of the Mushroom People* and John Wyndham’s 1951 novel *The Day of the Triffids*) to demonstrate the queerness of plants in her paper, “Fear of a Queer Plant.” During that same time slot, two other science fiction-related panels took place: the panel “Utopia/Dystopia/Apocalypse” (Christa Grewe-Volpp, Carissa Baker, and Amber Strother) that covered cyborg liberation in *Windup Girl*, an ecocritical reading of *Hunger Games*, and parenting in *City of Lost Children* and the panel “Cli-Fi? Rethinking Narrative in/ of the Anthropocene” (Cheng Li, Elizabeth Curry, and Katherine Buse) that included Chinese environmental literature, realist cli-fi, and the discourses of climate change in 1990s science fiction.

Nicole Seymour’s presentation on the “Theorizing Ecophobia” panel (Simon C. Estok, Xinmin Liu, Nicole Seymour, and Brian Deyo) was insightful and exciting in proposing that ecophobia and ecophilia may be rooted in fear of “trans” in transcorporeality, transgender, and other “boundary” crossings. Her work, including her book *Strange Natures* that was awarded the 2015 ASLE book award, can be useful in thinking of how SF pushes at normalized boundaries and plays with fear and “what if.”

Ana Tsing and 2011 Pilgrim Award winner Donna Haraway were Thursday’s plenary speakers, and in their panel, “Stories of the Chthulucene: Stories for Resurgence on a Damaged Planet,” they covered a good deal of speculative fiction and speculative ideas. Tsing talked about the 1984 anime *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* as a narrative example of humans living collaboratively with other-than-human beings, something key to resurgence, which she claimed is always a multispecies endeavor. Haraway used *Never Alone* – a world game based in Iñupiaq tribal narratives of human and other-than-human connections – as well as her own unpublished Camille Stories in which she imagines a world of human-animal symbiosis, human speakers for the extinct animals, non-traditional family structures, and resurgence. Haraway also noted the importance of speculation by emphasizing that speculative feminisms and speculative fabulation are recursive, collaborative genres that suggest play and mobility and are important to the resurgence that the session highlighted as imperative to mitigating the Anthropocene.

The panel “What Lies Beneath Cli-Fi Narratives? Climate Science, Climate Justice, Cli-Fi Aesthetics and EcoPedagogies” (Michelle Yates, April Anson, Stephen Siperstein, Laura Wright, and Rebecca Evans) included a number of science fiction texts. Yates analyzed masculinity in the sf film *Soylent Green* (1973) and smartly argued that the film’s edenic recovery is both nostalgic for an imagined pastoral and for a masculine hegemony. Siperstein deftly analyzed his own learning and alteration in teaching a cli-fi writing course that included science fictional texts such as Nathaniel Rich’s *Odds Against Tomorrow* (2013), voicemails from the future at Future-Coast.org, *I’m With the Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet* (2011), and Mary Talbot, Hannah Berry, and Irvine Welsh’s graphic novel *IDP: 2043* (2014). Wright discussed her use of Helen Simpson’s speculative short story “Diary of an Interesting Year” (2009) and Paolo Bacigalupi’s “The Tamarisk Hunter” (2006) among other sf texts in a climate change science and science fiction course. And, Evans skillfully analyzed Octavia Butler’s Parable series as cli-fi and shared some of her fascinating discoveries in her archival work on Butler. This panel’s range of classic and more recent sf texts and its focus on experimental, future-oriented teaching emphasized the richness of connections between science fiction and environment.

Science fictional and horror texts were also the focus

Additionally, the panel “Literature and Sustainability: Reading Sustainability Underground” (Louise Squire, Chris Pak, Adeline Johns-Putra, and Joshua Schuster) included four papers on non-realist works, several specifically science fictional. In fact, the conference included numerous other panels related to science fiction, including work on body horror, Hitchcock films, a SLSA-sponsored panel (Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts), and multiple references to science fiction works even in panels and papers not focused on science fiction, making it clear that science fiction is a genre useful in theorizing, analyzing, and teaching environmental issues, even to those scholars and writers more focused on realist literature.

The ubiquity of apocalypse, cli-fi, and science fictional and other speculative fictional texts at the conference suggests that the genre is integral to considering literature and film with environmental themes. This means that perhaps bleeding “boundaries” between cli-fi and sci-fi will likely continue to be addressed (how is cli-fi different from environmental sf, for instance?). Also, sf will likely be discussed by more and more otherwise realist-focused environmental literature and film scholars who teach the apocalyptic themes of climate change and extinctions of the Anthropocene. It may well be the most agile genre for writing and analysis about contemporary environmental issues.

Posthumanities: A Review of CRSF 2015
[conference report]
Arthur Newman

NOW IN ITS fifth year, Current Research in Speculative Fictions (CRSF) at the University of Liverpool is well-established as an important annual event in the academic study of science fiction, fantasy and horror. Entirely organised and run by, and for, students, CRSF has consistently been able to attract prestigious keynote speakers to complement its always formidable roster of panelists at the cutting edge of research in the field from throughout Europe, and beyond.

Since CRSF has remained a one day event, the schedule is perennially packed to the gunwales with two keynote notes, one opening the event and one after lunch, and as many as three panels running concurrently. Consequently, even the most assiduous attendee is destined to miss more than he sees, and discussions with other delegates at the end of the day reveal a markedly different sense of what themes have organically arisen to underpin narratives of the event.

From the route navigated through the conference by this reviewer, however, the theme of CRSF 2015 was the future of the human species, and many visions of what it might mean to become post-human. This theme was strongly suggested by Dr Sarah Dillon’s opening keynote address ‘Horror = Thinking the world-without-us’. Having postulated, pace a remarkable publisher’s rejection of ‘Echo’s Bones’ received by Samuel Beckett, that the twenty-first century is a fertile cultural age for the horror story because it is ‘a jim-jam inducing nightmare’, Dillon examined the disquieting cultural implications of the Anthropocene as the epoch in which humanity must face radical adaptation or extinction.

While presently critically marginalised in much the same manner as was sf in the latter decade of the twentieth century, horror fiction is, Dillon suggests, a resurrected and valuable fictional mode with which to express the anxiety of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene represents an absolute limit to our ability to think, and the unknown and the ungraspable have always been central motifs of horror fiction. Dillon’s critical vision of apocalypse not as sudden catastrophe, but the slow violence of the Anthropocene which brings about a world-without-us, while obviously uncomfortable, nevertheless provided a stimulating argument, both in its own right, and as
a conceptual springboard for the remainder of the day’s papers.

In the Visions of Feminism panel, Sarah Lohmann of Durham University, Anna McFarlane of St. Andrews, and Carolann North of the University of Ulster offered resonant readings of literary feminist utopias, Alex Garland’s 2015 film Ex Machina, and George RR Martin’s Westeros respectively. Lohmann employed a dense technical methodology to explain the probabilities of utopias, and its implications for feminism. This reviewer is always rather sceptical of the direct incorporation within literary criticism of scientific theories such as special relativity, but Lohmann handled it with aplomb.

McFarlane’s paper, which took Ex Machina as the source text for a wider consideration of the feminist implications of the posthuman, raised provocative corollaries to some of the themes suggested by Dillon in her keynote address. Beginning with some prevalent but disregarded cultural assumptions as to the condition of being human—the implicit assumption of the Vitruvian Man as the male, able-bodied embodiment of Enlightenment humanism, which renders other races, genders and abilities as deviations from the presumed norm, and the possibility of sexuality as a distorting factor in the Turing test—McFarlane considered the posthuman world as a form of world-without-us, with ‘us’ implying homo sapiens and/or homo economicus. In this context, Donna Haraway’s noted declaration that ‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’ forms a clarion call for the possibility of feminist solidarity within an incipiently posthuman but still residually kyriarchical world such as that depicted in Ex Machina.

North’s paper offered a complementary reading to the preceding papers, and elucidated problematic gender representations in George R. R. Martin’s Westeros. While accepting a certain legitimacy in Martin’s argument from historical verisimilitude—that the setting of Westeros mimics medieval Europe, and thus the prevalence of sexual violence and the establishment of sexist laws, customs and behaviours is contextual rather than ideological in literary intent—North rightly questions why such sexist context needs to be maintained when the setting moves from the quasi-historical to the outright fantastic with the traditions of the dragon riders of Valyria. North drew not only on the Game of Thrones series of books, but Martin’s other Westeros works, including short fictions, his novel for children The Ice Dragon, and the compendious A World of Ice and Fire. Consequently dense with intricate detail, her paper, as so many at CRSF, was engaging as a twenty minute presentation, but may require reading in its imminent published form for its incisiveness to be fully appreciated.

For the second panel, this reviewer was privileged to chair Building Realities, in which Grace Kelly of the University of Liverpool and Riyukta Ragunath of Sheffield Hallam University presented primers on Jorge Luis Borges as a writer of alternate realities and the critical framework surrounding study of counterfactual historical fiction respectively. Kelly is in the early stages of research which promises exciting recontextualisation of Borges and Yeats in a speculative fiction context. Coupled with Dillon’s discussion of Beckett in her keynote, Kelly’s paper served as a valuable reminder of the critical prerogative of the critic of speculative fiction to engage with those authors whose tendencies in this regard have been overlooked by a traditional critical snobbery which marginalises the speculative as genre forms.

The morning session thus established certain resonant themes which were to be reflected in the second half of the conference. Chiefly, the idea of world-without-us was explored both as a post-human condition, and as a historical condition for marginalised peoples. If the world-without-us of the future imagines a world from which homo economicus, the Enlightenment kindred of Vitruvian Man, is biologically subtracted, so the kyriarchical power structures and racist ideologies of the past can render the worlds of fiction symbolically worldswithout-us for groups such as women and people of colour who are perceived, even implicitly, as deviations from that norm.

Lunch afforded an opportunity for reflection and conversation generously aided by the not insignificant fact that attendees at CRSF perennially benefit from a remarkably high standard of catering. A stimulating digestif to the excellent lunch was provided by the charismatic Dr Andrew M. Butler’s keynote address ‘The Estranged Case of Ivan Istochnikov: The Uncanny Indexicality of sf photographs’. Conceptually, Butler’s talk considered whether the act of photographing a thing proved its thingness, with reference to Barthes, Judith Butler, Blade Runner, Batman and Brecht’s characterisation of the ‘unhappy world which requires heroes’. Why was Gotham never threatened by supervillains until the Batman came? As this necessarily inadequate précis hopefully suggests, Butler’s keynote was a zestful work, managing to convey the illusion achieved by the best lecturers of being extemporaneous, yet cogent and provocative.

Following Butler’s address was a daunting task, a matter of some inconvenience to the present reviewer,
as his own paper on H. P. Lovecraft and Enlightenment led off the Gothic Horror panel immediately following. The other papers on the panel were provided by Edward O’Hare of Trinity College Dublin and Dany van Dam of Cardiff University. O’Hare’s paper was rich in diverting cinema history, and formed an overdue and informed consideration of the commercial and practical difficulties which have limited effective cinematic adaptations of Lovecraft’s work. The 1963 film The Haunted Palace is a loose adaptation of “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward,” and the alterations made to the narrative suggest a need to introduce notes of optimism and human relationships to Lovecraft’s fiction, in addition to overcoming his noted lack of female characterisation.

Newman and O’Hare’s papers both considered Lovecraft’s distinct antipathy to humanity as a concept. Lovecraft’s horror is grounded on the establishment or allusion to a world—without-us—echoing Dillon’s discussion of that concept—but betrays a suspicion that the author himself is not horrified by the ending or superseding of humanity. In this respect, Lovecraft can be considered a radical form of post-humanist, with the proviso that he prefers considerations of human succession or replacement by analogous but different biological species to technological supersession.

Van Dam’s paper, promising in its title ‘The Weirdest Most Eccentric Historical Phenomenon of Them All,’ considered neo-Victorian fantasy works which introduce non-human races such as vampires into Victorian historical fiction. Van Dam’s critique of her source texts—Gail Carriger’s Parasol Protectorate and Anno Dracula by Kim Newman—was rigorous but fair. Anno Dracula had certainly found its way on to more than one delegate’s intended reading list after the paper. Thematically, Van Dam considered the historical-cultural implications of supernatural species, drawing persuasive parallels between vampirism and the fear of the racial other, and interrogating the assumptions made by both authors, but especially Carriger, in their presentation of colonial contexts and subjects.

All three papers in the Gothic Horror panel returned to ideas of horror as world-without-us, where humanity is drastically redefined or wholly eradicated; themes raised earlier in the day. These themes were prominent once more in the day’s final panel, titled—to the annoyance of one presenter—World SF. That presenter, Hanna Schumacher, made the valid point that the three papers on the panel shared little thematically in common, but seemed to have been collected together because of a shared non-anglophone element, either in the form of the works considered or the presenter of the paper. Her criticism was less of the organisation of panels at CRSF in particular than it is reflective of a wider and uncomfortable tendency in anglophone speculative fiction research to marginalise works not in English.

The first presenter on the panel, Päivi Väätänen of the University of Helsinki, was in point of fact considering works in English: postwar science fiction by African American authors. Väätänen herself, however, is not a native English speaker, and this may account for certain problematic uses of racialised language within her paper. Some of the broader concepts within the paper, however, appeared inadequately sensitive to the textual implications suggested by African American authors. In particular, her reading of Octavia Butler’s ‘Bloodchild’ fundamentally underplayed the significance of the powerful central image in which humans have become living surrogates for the spawn of intelligent aliens. Väätänen’s stated refusal to consider this an allegory for slavery appeared at the very least an unorthodox interpretation of Butler’s work. Her reading was challenged in a question from the floor at the conclusion of the panel, and Väätänen restated her interpretation that the condition of the humans in ‘Blood Child’ is a mutually beneficial arrangement rather than an act of exploitation, a reading which has distinctly uncomfortable implications in the context of a consideration of African-American texts.

Jonathan Ferguson, by contrast, was incredibly sensitive to the possibility of critical privilege intruding upon his reading, as a white male European critic, of Kang Youwei’s Datong Shu. His enumeration of his critical position was sensitive and comprehensive. Coupled with a need to outline much of the context of Datong Shu—a work of which the present reviewer, and by their own accounts many in the audience, was formerly ignorant—this limited Ferguson’s scope to delve into the deep critical reading covered in his thesis on the work.

Similarly, Hanna Schumacher was not able in her paper to devote as much time as might have been critically useful to the conditio (post)humana in Dietmar Dath’s Die Abschaffung der Arten, a topic of particular resonance with several prevalent themes of the conference, because she felt obliged to provide a potted summary of the present condition of science fiction in German. This summary was informative, and suggested that an exciting crop of science fiction authors are reaching a rapidly expanding market in Germany, but it was nevertheless rather disheartening that a critic at a conference of her critical peers should feel compelled to provide such elementary context. Research in speculative fiction has
a present and immediate problem in its failure to adequately incorporate and address speculative fiction in languages other than English.

Both Ferguson and Schumacher appeared ill-served by this tendency, and in an attempt to invite them to offer further critical consideration, the present reviewer, chairing the panel, asked a concluding question intended simply as an open-ended question allowing all panelists to expand upon the points raised in their respective papers. In delivery, however, the question became so open-ended that it ended up asking the panellists what they thought the future of humanity might entail. All three panellists were admirably eager to essay a response, however. Ferguson, an active satirist and humorist, offered a short and thought-provoking piece which served to move the discussion from the academic tone of the panel to the erudite and absorbing discussion of the following reception and dinner. Schumacher, meanwhile, drew on philosophy and post-humanist theory to suggest prospects for the redefinition and adaptation of what it is to be human.

CRSF is now an established institution, a lynchpin of speculative fiction research in the UK and Ireland, and a model for successful the engagement and development of doctoral and early career researchers. Like all good conferences, it is also an arena which helps define and coalesce the critical debate within the field. Posthumanism, horror fiction, and their shared concern with the implication of world-without-us—both pre- and post-human, encompassing technological enhancement, succession of non-human sentient species, and practical or conceptual mutations of humans such as vampires or zombies—are at present key strands in the critical field because they echo, and help conceptualise, contemporary economic, technological and ecological concerns within human society. As such, these critical considerations are a demonstrable example of the practical utility of the academic humanities today.

Utopia, Science Fiction and their Significant Others in the 21st Century [conference report]

Chris Pak

ON THE 8TH AND 9TH of May, 2015, I was invited to Timișoara in Romania to participate in Helion’s first annual international conference, “Utopia, Science Fiction and their Significant Others in the 21st Century”. I joined invitees from across Europe, including the renowned Romanian author Gheorghe Săsărman (long settled in Munich) – whom Ursula Le Guin recently translated into English from Mariano Martín Rodríguez’s Spanish translation (see my review in this issue) – Adriana Corrado (Italy), Vita Fortunati (Italy), Fernando Ángel Moreno (Spain) and Peter Seyferth (Germany). Participants based in Romania included Cătălin Badea-Gheracostea (who contributed a feature 101 article on Romanian sf to the SFRA Review 309), Tudor Beșuan, Ștefan Borbély, Gabriel Kelemen and Mircea Opriță.

The conference was organised by Cornel Secu, president of the Helion “anticipation” club, Mariano Martín Rodriguez (Brussels) and Sorin Antohi. Like Badea-Ghe-
eracostea, Rodríguez has also contributed a feature article to the SFRA Review. It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation and, not knowing what to expect upon arrival, was absolutely charmed by how welcoming and hospitable the members of Helion were. The first two days of the conference were conducted in English and was succeeded by a full day with presentations in Romanian – which I did not attend, although I did briefly visit at the beginning of the day. In addition to the main programme of presentations, we were taken on a tour of the beautiful city of Timișoara – which I knew almost nothing about prior to visiting. We thus had many opportunities to learn more about the city, about Romanian sf fandom and scholarship, and about our hosts’ plans to extend the international conference by attracting more attendees throughout Europe and beyond. The conference was supported by The Culture House of the Municipality of Timișoara, which organises a variety of cultural events throughout the year and which aims to attract international attention to the city.

The opening evening took place in the Sala Café Text in the Bastion, a portion of Timișoara’s old city wall, built between 1730-1735 and now preserved as a major historical site. Attendees were welcomed by a representative of Timișoara City Hall, while Sorin Antohi delivered the opening remarks. Peter Seyferth opened the conference with a talk entitled “The Citizen of Utopia as Author of Utopia: Homo Utopicus in Science Fiction Land”, where he surveyed the role of the narrator in several utopias both classic and science-fictional. The celebrated reviewer, scholar and fan Mircea Opriță followed with a survey of Romanian sf, “Utopian Traditions in Romanian Science Fiction”, which he delivered in Romanian to the benefit of the majority of the audience. In consideration to the non-Romanian speaking audience, he circulated a translation of the paper, which was an absolute delight to follow alongside the spoken Romanian. I had never before heard Romanian for such long stretches of time and it struck me how closely it sounded to Italian – no surprise, as I discovered that Romanian is a Latin language. It was an eye-opening moment to hear about the sf utopias imagined by Romanian authors, which included such quirky texts as Ovidiu Bufnilă’s Jazzonia (1995), a utopia of ‘continuous musical elation,’ and Costi Gurgu’s Reciparium (2006), which Opriță calls a “culinary utopia.” Badea-Gheracostea’s talk, “Where the Dream Ends and the Nightmare Begins: Overlapping Dystopia and Utopia in Romanian Literature”, provided a theoretical framework with which to plot the various Romanian utopias-cum-dystopias. As I was to discover throughout the conference, discussions of Romanian utopias and dystopias are always connected to Romania’s revolutionary history in a way that draws attention to immediate political realities. The flavour of these discussions, then, seemed to me urgently engaged with lived politics in a way that differs quite markedly from my experience elsewhere.

It was during the opening evening that Gabriel Kelemen’s exhibition of his standing wave art was held. Kelemen presented his paper “Fluidopolis: From Cosmic
Vibrations to the Ideal City” on the second day, a fascinating discussion in which he explored the utopian city plans that connected the material, human world to the everlasting energy of the cosmos which his artwork taps into. The sketches presented at this exhibition in many ways resembled Da Vinci’s, especially those of his vortex, with perhaps a touch of Giger.

The second day of the conference was held in the stunning space of the Sala Barocă, Muzeul de Artă Timișoara, Timișoara’s Museum of Art. As I walked up to the conference room I was greeted by the sound of a piano and, upon entering, saw its source: a pianist playing a grand piano by way of welcome. To say that the space and this welcome surprised me was an understatement. I chaired the first panel, which began with Rodriguez’s paper, “The Anthill as Communist (Anti)Utopia in Fiction”, which, needless to say, generated much commentary and questions on communism and the use of animal “societies” as political analogues. Beşuan’s paper, “Do Utopias Come from Venus and Dystopias from Mars”, despite its provocative title, explored male oriented utopias and the relative dearth of female oriented utopias. As one attendee noted, and as Beşuan admitted, he had declined to survey the 1970s-1980s feminist utopias of Joanna Russ, Marge Piercy and Sally Miller Gearhart in favour of emphasising the all too dominant masculine-orientation of many utopias.

In the second panel I presented alongside Vita Fortunati – co-editor of the Dictionary of Literary Utopias – whose paper, “Ecology and Pacifism in the Western Utopian Tradition”, explored the impact of Ernest Callembach’s Ecotopia on the imagination of ecological utopias and environmentalism. My paper, “This Country Called Sustainability: Utopianism and Climate Change”, considered Kim Stanley Robinson’s attempt to redefine utopia in ecological terms as an ongoing and fraught negotiation of political realities. Moreno’s paper in the succeeding panel, “Utopian Fames in Demiurgic Cinema”, brought a welcome focus on political sf film to the rather print-based focus of the conference. Extending the ecological aspect of contemporary utopias, Borbély surveyed several utopian cities, including Drop City in California, for their inspiring ecological vision before moving on to survey various architectural designs for ecologically oriented arcologies of the future.

In the final panel Săsărman presented on “Religion as Utopia” in Romanian. I unfortunately failed to obtain an English translation of the paper (which was circulated), and so cannot comment on the content of that talk. Judging by its reception, however, it was extremely well-received amongst the Romanian speaking attendees. Corrado’s paper, “Utopia Betrayed: Rereading William Morris’s News From Nowhere Today” extracted various principles of the utopians in this story to address the failures of the Western world in responding adequately to contemporary Muslim radicalism. This was a surprising talk in many ways. At first it appeared to be a commentary on Muslim radicalism and extremism, but it quickly developed into an indictment of the failures of Western governments – Italy being Corrado’s main example – in providing suitable environments for the poorest citizens and in failing to educate and welcome people of other ethnicities into the polis. The final talk of the English portion of the conference was presented by Antohi and was titled “Utopia, Science Fiction, and History in the 21st Century: Narrativity, Historicity, Ontology”. As a historian Antohi provided a survey of sf in Romania as he experienced it, conveying through an autobiographical mode the relations between his engagement as a historian with academia and with sf, which was central to his experience. The first full day ended with the launch of Săsărman’s collection of short stories and play, Varianta Balcanică Îmbunătățită, or The Improved Balkan Version, which is, as of yet, untranslated into English

Helion’s first international conference was a resounding success. The scholarly and fan engagement with sf showed a dedication to the field that was impressive. The investment in Romanian sf, and the awareness of its relationship to Romanian history and politics, and to Anglophone sf more widely, was a welcome educational experience for me, and it allowed me to see a side of sf scholarship that I was not previously aware. Helion’s members were inquisitive, welcoming and engaging. I participated in two interviews while I was there, and have submitted my paper for translation into Romanian, either for a projected collection of essays in book form, or for a special issue of their academic journal, Biblioteca Nova. It was also refreshing to participate at a conference where multiple languages were frequently spoken and where translation was being conducted as a matter of course, again in multiple languages. Now, as an honorary member of Helion, I look forward to the expansion of the annual conference in the future and to many more engagements in Romania and throughout Europe.
The Science Fiction Symposium – Malta 2015 [conference report]
Mariella Scerri

THE FIRST Science Fiction Symposium was held in Malta at the Old Humanities Library on the 17 July, 2014 and was organised by Victor Grech, Mariella Scerri and David Zammit. The event was opened by the US Ambassador to Malta, Her Excellency Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, who is becoming a regular at these events. Last year, Her Excellency opened the Star Trek Symposium in Malta and also introduced Jason Eberl, the plenary speaker. This year she opened the symposium with a captivating introduction focusing on disability issues in Star Trek.

This one day event was most enjoyable. Professionals from the medical and allied healthcare fields, IT specialists and the Humanities contributed to this symposium, allowing for a wide range of topics.

Presentations included the manifestation of Jung’s shadow in Star Trek, infertility in SF as a feminist issue, the role of women in Leinster’s Med Ship series, legal theory in SF, environmental issues related to the genre, and talks debating Neoplatonism, genetic engineering and mythology in SF. An interesting update on conspiracy theories in the 21st century was also greatly enjoyed. Two very interesting presentations by Chris Pak and Stefan Rabitsch on ‘Drilling, the Extractive Industries and Sustainability’ and ‘Taxonomic American Cityscapes in the SF Imagination’ were given respectively via Skype. Discussions were animated, lively and amicable; and as always, thought provoking.

The event closed with the announcement that a collection of papers arising from this event would be assembled and published, as is being done for the Star Trek Symposium of 2014. The next event was also announced: the Star Trek Symposium of 2016. This will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the launch of Star Trek: The Original Series and, similar to the conferences already held, will aim to explore the interface across disciplines such as medical health, the sciences and the humanities. Call for abstracts for this symposium are now open and further information could be found on website: [http://www.scifisyposium.com/](http://www.scifisyposium.com/).

The course dinner was held at the Dolmen Hotel and Victor Grech was surprised by a 50th birthday cake that was prearranged by the organising committee – a welcome and humorous touch. Victor Grech will also go boldly into his 50s, in the excellent company of Star Trek, his family and his friends.

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SFRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA
[March 8th, 2015]

Susan A. George

In attendance: Craig Jacobsen (President), Keren Omry (Vice President), Steve Berman (Treasurer), Susan A. George (Secretary), Paweł Frelik (Immediate Past President).

Skype meeting called to order 9:10 with all members present

Operations, Association Memory, and Organization—Craig Jacobson

I. To establish a long needed association history/mem-
ory the last EC wrote and posted Officers’ Cheat Sheets.
However, there isn’t one for the President position and
the others should be updated, expanded if necessary,
and standardized. We should also add timelines so we
can create a master calendar and add it to the SFRA
Drop box. Paweł volunteered to finish the President’s
cheat sheet so we can then add a time line and make a
master calendar.

a. Craig is also working on an organizational chart
that will include everyone who holds a position, in-
cluding the Executive Committee, the Review staff,
the Website staff, the Social Media staff, and the
Awards Committees so we can have current and reli-
able contact information for everyone.

b. This brought about a discussion about SFRA so-
cial media. Currently Andrew Ferguson is in charge
of Twitter. Several folks have worked on posting and
maintaining Facebook including Craig, Keren, Pawel,
Patrick Sharp, and Emily Connelly. However, no one
is clearly in charge of it and that might explain why
the postings have been inconsistent. There was dis-
cussion about setting up a chat room or discussion
board behind the SFRA website password section,
but there was little consensus regarding if members
would use it. The discussion of expanding or modify-
ing the way we use social media was tabled for later
in the meeting.

c. Craig raised the issue of the “dated and amateur-
ish” look of the SFRA logo that other ECs have also
noted. Craig’s concern is that it doesn’t help with re-
cruitment and we should look at an updated logo that
could be used across the website, SFRA Review, so-
cial media, organization letterhead, etc. Steve noted
that when the website was recently redesigned they
discussed the logo and changing it, but the EC voted
to keep it. Susan noted that a previous EC she was
on had commissioned new and paid a Georgia Tech
student ($150 I think) to come up with 3 designs that
had to be size adjustable. In the end we either couldn’t
decide on one or they couldn’t be size? We may still
have them around for consideration? Susan will talk
to Lisa Yaszek and get the designs for the EC to con-
sider. The discussion was tabled until then.

d. Craig created new subfolders on the SFRA Drop-
box and will continue to do this so we can stay better
organized, make the site a more useful tool and can
archive materials so we can more effectively see what
we have on the site and what materials and proce-
dures we need to write up and post to the site.

i. He told us that if we sync Dropbox to our
hard drives, we will automatically have copies of
SFRA documents saved on the EC computers on
three continents!

ii. He also suggested, since SFRA has a google
account, we might want to move over to the
Google account and try to condense everything to
keep better track of Twitter, Facebook, etc. If we
use Google Drive we could have an organizational
cloud storage account rather than a personal one.

Vice President Report

Clarify and Coordinating SFRA Social Media—Keren
Omry

II. Keren wanted to clarify her responsibility in terms
of our social media. Amy was in charge of main areas,
social media, Facebook, and Twitter, and so that is now
her responsibility. Paweł noted that he and Andrew
Ferguson are posting to the various SFRA social media
and it is going fairly well now. However, he will pass the
needed log in onto Keren so she can keep it running if
and when necessary.

III. Regarding membership Keren noted that Amy used
various databases/listserves that SFRA has access to and
started contacting folks individually to ask them to join.
Only a few did, but it might help with recruitment. She
will probably continue this strategy. This lead to a dis-
cussion of why and when people join or renew member-
ship and what we could add to the website behind the pass-
word that would make people renew even in years they
were not presenting papers at the conference. The sug-
gestions included: bibliography/list of story and sources taken from questions posed on the listserve, database with links of other sources useful for science fiction research such as blogs, websites, etc. How this would be done or who would do it was not fully discussed or decided. This was mostly a brainstorming session.

IV. Keren also noted that the website needs work and that discussion was tabled until later in the meeting as it was listed under Other Business in the agenda.

**Immediate Past President Report**

Problems with the SFRA awards and plaques—Paweł Frelik.

V. We are running out of blanks of the various award plaques and we don’t have the original artwork only copies or just copies of the plaque that will not allow for clean reproduction of new blanks or so a previous EC was told. We are also running out of room on the Pilgrim award. Paweł will see how many blanks are left and how much room is left of the Pilgrim and the EC will then decide how to proceed.

**Treasurer Report**

Financial Status of Association and Website Cost and Maintenance—Steven Berman

VI. Overall, the organization’s finances are strong. We have $55,642 plus $20,427 in the savings (we have to maintain $20,000 in the savings). However, we still owe subscription money to some of the journals.

VII. Steve asked the EC if we should pay $37.50 to increase the bandwidth of our website? This fee will allow more traffic on our website that is hosted by A Small Orange in California. He noted, however, that this was a special price and would go up after the first year and wasn’t sure what the regular annual cost would be. Paweł suggested we should do this—the bandwidth is worth it especially if we continue to improve the site. The EC decided to pay the fee to increase bandwidth.

VIII. Steve suggested that the SFRA website should also have all the upcoming conference information. Since each conference is run independently by a conference organizer and some financial support from SFRA, the conference site and SFRA are different or not linked.

IX. Steve also said he would like to see a list of the past conferences (going back to the 1970s if possible) that includes the location, dates, and host to establish an official list. Paweł has a list and agrees that we should add it to the site.

a. This raised another question regarding the website—the EC should have access to add and modify sections of the site for purposes such as these. Craig will talk to Matt about giving the EC and future ECs this access. He also suggested we make a list of items that need attention on the website and send it to Matt.

X. Steve informed us that Network Solutions, who provided us with our domain name, constantly e-mails SFRA (via his email address) asking if SFRA wants to connect/link to other social media and he can contact them for more information. Network Solution trying to offer us a bundle and after some discussion we decided we are fine right now and don’t need anything else at this time.

XI. There had been some suggestion that we raise Institution membership and Steve said it was not a good idea now because we don’t currently have many and raising the fees might discourage others.

a. Craig asked about the *SFRA Review* and institutional members. Steve said we still do a small printing of the *Review* annual for them, but most have discontinued it. We sell very few of the annual, printed *Review*.

**Secretary Report**

Getting Member Renewals Approved and Verify Procedure—Susan A. George

XII. Susan noted that we are behind on the time line for sending out renewal notices and they can’t be sent out (by email) until we discuss or make decisions about the following:

a. Raising the dues as Steve suggested some time ago in an email message. The EC decided not to raise dues this time.

b. Have any of the journals that come with membership raised their rates to us leading to an increase in dues to cover the charges. Steve stated that there have been no increases so the current fees are covered.

c. Have there been any increasing in other journals members can purchase that need to be updated on the form. Steve stated there have been no increases. So, we can send out the membership form to the listserve, individual members, and post it to the website.

XIII. Steve noted that the form has the proper information but needs reformatting. Susan volunteered to reformat the form if Steve would send it to her.

XIV. The EC before the last one had discussed suspending sending out renewals by US post because it is costly, the addresses are often inaccurate, and the response has significantly decreased over the last several years. However, Susan noted that the secretary cheat sheet still lists mailing out renewals, but that when she talked to the
past secretary, Jenni, she indicated that renewals were no longer mailed. Paweł confirmed that the last EC suspended sending renewals out by US postal service and that Susan should update the cheat sheet. She agreed to do so.

XV. The EC then discussed and made decisions regarding several small research grant applications.

**Other Business**

**Annual Conference**

XVI. Craig asked Ritch Calvin, this year’s conference organizer, if he has anything graphical/logo going for the conference, but haven’t heard back. He will also ask Ritch for a status report on the conference and let us know the status.

a. Film challenge: We need to ask Ritch if the money from the film challenge goes into SFRA or the conference. The prize money is based on a percentage of the entries and rest of money should go back into the conference budget.

XVII. Steve asked about the status of the 2016 conference in Toronto and it has been postponed.

a. Paweł then suggested having the 2016 conference 1.) in Liverpool and asking Chris Pak to be organize it or 2.) having it in Cambridge and asking Farah Mendlesohn to organize it. The discussion was tabled until the 2015 EC conference meeting.

**SFRA Review**

XVIII. There are two new editors of the *Review*, Media Review Editor, Leimar Garcia-Siino, and Fiction Review Editor, Jeremy Brett. They’ve been announced on the listserv. Craig wants to have an editorial meeting with them soon. The *Review* needs a refresh. The current layout is almost a decade old and very print-oriented. He would like to go with a screen friendly, more interesting format and it needs a new focus on content as well. For example have feature articles posted to or published on the website maybe bi-monthly. Chris Pak, the editor, could solicit the articles and then post them with all the bells and whistles.

a. Keren suggested it might be best to do it quarterly instead and others agreed that it might work better or be more consistently posted if done quarterly.

**Website**

XIX. Craig started the discussion of the website by noting it needs to be more interesting and useful. Currently it's mostly a membership management site and a conduit to the *Review*. It should be useful enough to be one of the primary benefits of membership. For starters, he would like for us to consider creating a “Research Hub” on the passworded side. This would simply be an annotated set of links to science fiction research resources. We wouldn't have to generate or collect new content, but serve as an entry point to existing content. Ideally this feature would allow for crowdsourcing, letting members create entries for projects they know of or are involved in. He’d like for us to look into a Drupal module that would support this.

a. Discussion: Keren asked how members could contribute without editorial rights to the site. Craig said drupal can add a wiki section that members can post to. Paweł suggested we could have someone filtered them once the EC has editorial rights. This is something that could be started quickly. However, Craig would like to keep the wiki idea so that the site would be more interactive and other libraries, groups, etc. could use it and it would generate interest in SFRA and encourage people to become members.

b. Keren asked if the listserv could also be run as a discussion board on the website. Paweł stated that he didn’t think it could be done at this point.

c. The site also needs a better opening page. The “everything is a blog entry” layout isn’t very engaging. There should be a permanent banner link to whatever the next conference is at least.

d. Craig informed us that he asked Matthew Holtmeier to help the EC to think about what it might do with the site and asked him to give him, Paweł, and Keren administrator privileges on the site. If anyone else feels comfortable working in Drupal or has a need for greater privileges than s/he currently has let Craig know.

e. We also discussed having some kind of online directory behind the password section of the website. The SFRA Directory would be a place members could expand their profiles. It would also make it easier for members to search, locate, and contact people. We might be able to construct it from the Treasurer’s master members list?

**The By-Laws**

XX. By-laws will be voted on at the conference. The business meeting vote will finalized the changes to the by-laws. The vote will be to accept or reject based on all changes no articles can be opened for discussion at this time. That phase was already done.

Support a Scholar Fund
vertise the Support a Scholar Fund on the website and the listserve. Craig wondered if we could use it for recruiting new members. Keren wondered if we could do something creative with it. We are going to think about it and discuss it more at the conference EC meeting.

Social Media
XXII. Craig then brought up the issue of social media and informed us that since the start of 2014, the number of people following SFRA on Facebook has more than doubled, now topping more than 1000 people. We should be sure to thank and publicly recognize our social media coordinator. He’d like to turn the people following us on Facebook and Twitter into association members if possible, but wants to wait until after the website is updated. He suggested we might consider budgeting some money for pushing some recruiting posts on Facebook, and see if that investment pays off in new members.

XXIII. Paweł told us that we also have a Google+ account but it hasn’t been used since 2011 and that Twitter can be cross posted to Google+ but Facebook cannot. Paweł suggested we get an Instagram account.

a. Craig noted that many of these can be interconnected so that the maintenance burden is limited and what is posted to one can be autoposted to others. He would like to see this year’s conference get a little more internet airtime, so we should think about what we want to have in place for that. For example, do we want to ask attendees to tweet? Post photos to the SFRA Facebook feed?

b. Craig also asked if the SFRA has that is used to create our social media accounts? If not, we should try to consolidate them and regularize them to avoid having a patchwork of account names, emails, and passwords. Once standardized we will post it to Dropbox for the next EC.

New Business
XXIX. Craig discussed putting together a conference bible to create some continuity across the conferences. So, like the cheat sheets, there is something for the organizers to use as a starting point. The EC would keep and update the document on Dropbox. Craig will start it based on the 2010 conference.

a. We also need to think about social media to advertise the conference. Paweł suggested we get Emily Connelly more involved with this by giving her a timeline and to-do list so we can advertise more timely and creatively with other organizations such as ICFA, Utopian Studies, etc.

Awards
XXIV. Craig couldn’t find a current list of 2015 Awards Committee Members in Dropbox and asked if we had one that could be posted.

XXV. Currently we have these winners decided:
Pilgrim: Henry Jenkins
Student Paper: W. Andrew Shephard
Bray: Pending (promised mid-February)

a. Steve noted that there was a communication problem with the Bray committee that was recently worked out so they are now deliberating.

XXVI. Also according to the Immediate Past President Cheat Sheet, there was a concern about whether the certificates for the two certificate-winning awards were outdated. This EC will take a look at them and, if necessary, update them. Paweł will ask Ritch about the current ones.

XXVII. The Pilgrim Award Committee has recommended that the award be offered less frequently, as it is increasingly difficult to find qualifying candidates. Perhaps the Pilgrim and the Clareson (both kind of “lifetime achievement” awards) could be given in alternating years. Will discuss with membership at conference.

XXVIII. The Graduate Student Paper Award Committee has recommended that the language specify that submissions be “as presented” at the conference, to avoid having students submit the 20-page essay they wrote and then cut down for presentation. We decided to reverse the graduate student paper submission form making it clear that the paper submitted for the award must be the one presented at the conference not an extended version of the paper. Keren will revise the form.

Craig adjourned the meeting at 11:27 am.
I AM DELIGHTED to present the 2014 Pilgrim Award to Professor Henry Jenkins on behalf of my award committee colleagues Craig Jacobsen and John Reider. We unanimously applaud Professor Jenkins’ groundbreaking scholarship as it relates to the serious study of science fiction across media, beginning with his work on textual poaching in fandom and extending to his current thinking about the changing relations of media production and consumption in a digital world. This work would be award-worthy in and of itself at any point in time, but it is particularly appropriate to celebrate Professor Jenkins’ accomplishments at a conference dedicated to exploring suppressed histories, liminal voices, and emergent media. We also applaud Jenkins’ use of both physical and virtual forums to publicize the work of fellow travelers in related academic disciplines and to highlight groundbreaking scholarship in new areas. In short, Professor Jenkins is truly a pilgrim willing to set off in new directions.

A quick review of Professor Jenkins’ biography suggests that he was destined to become a pilgrim from the very start. Henry Jenkins III was born in 1958 and studied political science and journalism at Georgia State University before earning his MA in Communication at the University of Iowa and his PhD in Communication Arts from the University of Wisconsin. Professor Jenkins taught at MIT from 1993-2009, during which time he was the Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities and founder and co-director of the Comparative Media Studies graduate program. He is currently a Provost Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and the USC School of Cinematic Arts. To date, Professor Jenkins has produced over a dozen books that reflect his wide-ranging interests in everything from science fiction fandom and the early history of film comedy to the complex and sometimes contradictory relations of democracy, capitalism, and media culture. As public intellectual, Professor Jenkins has spearheaded initiatives including the Convergence Culture Consortium and Project New Media Literacies, testified about the value of video games in venues including the U.S. Congress and the Donahue Show, and featured dozens of up-and-coming young scholars on his personal and professional blogs.

Of course, once upon a time Professor Jenkins was an up-and-coming young scholar himself, one who fostered new perspectives in media studies by taking seriously the suppressed voices and liminal histories of speculative fiction fans. As he argued most forcefully in his groundbreaking 1992 monograph Textual Poachers (and as he has continued to explore in Convergence Culture and Spreadable Media, the two more recent books that complete his “participatory culture trilogy”), fans are not just mindless dupes mindlessly rearranging the stories spoon-fed to them by Hollywood and the broadcast media. Instead, they are what we now call “critical makers” using every available technology to create transformative texts that reveal the limits of mass-produced narratives and make room for fans’ unique voices. As many scholars of my generation will attest, Textual Poachers was a transformative text in its own right, one that changed both what was possible to discuss in academia and what was possible to do in our own professional lives.

Professor Jenkins’ early work is also notable because it calls attention to the suppressed histories and liminal voices within academia itself. From the beginning of his career Professor Jenkins has insisted that researchers cannot—and should not!—try to position themselves as ethnographer-observers distanced from the subjects they study. Indeed, as he puts it in the twentieth-anniversary introduction to Textual Poachers, he coined the term “aca-fan” to describe what he envisioned as a new breed of scholars who would be “willing to examine our own emotional investment in the forms of culture they study.” Note the “our” in this quote: it is significant! Even as Professor Jenkins recognizes his own pioneering—or, perhaps I should say “pilgriming”—status in the study of audience reception and production, he is quick to insist that he has never gone it alone. Instead, he places himself within a network of other scholarly traditions that emerged in the closing decades of the twentieth century, including the Birmingham School of cultural studies, feminist science fiction and media studies, and queer studies. Professor Jenkins is also quick to acknowledge individuals from all these traditions who have been particularly influential in his thinking, including John
Fiske, Joanna Russ, Constance Penley, Camille Bacon-Smith, Karen Hellekson, and Kristina Busse. Thus he places himself within a constellation of what were then liminal scholarly voices that came together to transform the field of media studies as a whole.

We also want to recognize Professor Jenkins's groundbreaking work on emergent media and the changing forms of the public associated with it, as he has moved from the formulations of *Convergence Culture* to an analysis of what he now calls the participatory culture practiced by the new forms of the public mediated by Internet access. Professor Jenkins has been instrumental in analyzing new modes of circulation in blogging and podcasting; the diverse affiliations constructed through memberships in online communities; new creative forms of expression such as digital sampling, fan fictions, fan videos, and mash-ups; and the collaborative problem solving exemplified in Wikipedia or alternative reality gaming. He has also spearheaded activist intervention into fostering the new literacies in the classroom, arguing for shifting the educational institution's conversation about new media from its obsession with technological access to the project of developing the cultural competencies and social skills necessary to play a full role in our emerging participatory culture. In doing so, he adds to the list of traditional research, technical, and critical-analysis skills such subjects as simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation.

All of this work is particularly relevant to scholars of science fiction and the fantastic, whose long traditions of robust fan culture made them fertile grounds for the kinds of production Professor Jenkins's work has examined, highlighted, and helped to legitimize. Not only are many of the most intriguing transmedia narratives science fictional or fantastic in their content, the techniques and technologies whereby these stories are produced, distributed, consumed, remixed, reimagined, cataloged, canonized, and kept in continuity are science fictional as well. Professor Jenkins's work has, appropriately, incorporated the processes of collaboration and participation that he studies. This is evident in both his shared blog, *Spreadable Media*, and his personal blog, *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, both of which regularly highlight the work of others, including theorists, critics, educators, fans, industry professionals, and media producers of all kinds. Such work continues to help in expanding the range of new lines of inquiry available to science fiction scholars. Craig, John, and I could all say much, much more about the significance of Henry Jenkins as a scholar and public intellectual. But we won't do that! Instead, we'd like to conclude with a quote from the SFRA's own Karen Hellekson, whom Jenkins celebrates as an important influence in his thinking about online fandom. As Karen puts it,

I have lots to say about how awesome Henry is! He invited me to Skype into a class he was teaching about Cordwainer Smith when he found out it was the subject of my MA thesis. Regarding his contributions to SF and fan studies, it is an understatement to say he is generous with his time and mentorship. He actively reaches out to younger scholars and graduate students and invites dialogue; he is also willing to coauthor with them. He invites scholars of all stripes to contribute to his widely read blog, thus signal boosting these diverse voices. And you can quote me on that.

As Karen's words make clear, Professor Jenkins' commitment to showcasing new perspectives on popular culture inspires the kind of enthusiasm and devotion amongst fellow scholars that we most often associate—dare I say it?—with fandom itself. And that makes him a true pilgrim indeed.

**Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech**

Henry Jenkins

I WAS DEEPLY HONORED to learn that your organization, the Science Fiction Research Association, had bestowed on me your 2014 Pilgrim Award. I am so sorry that I am not able to be there to accept the award in person. I am scheduled to leave in the next few days for an extended trip to India and Indonesia. The trip has been in planning for some time, and it wasn’t possible to adjust my plans accordingly. But I hope that I may be able to attend a future conference and perhaps share some time with many of you so that I can learn more about the research you are doing. So, first, let me say thanks. But, second, let me offer a short provocation -- one intended to build on the themes you have outlined for this year’s conference. Science fiction in particular; genre fiction more generally; and fandom above all have been key influences on my thinking since childhood. They remain sources of ongoing inspiration to me, as I am sure they are for those of you attending this conference. I grew up in the
segregated South. I went to segregated schools, and I attended a segregated church. Insofar as I encountered racial and cultural difference, I encountered it on Star Trek, with its multi-cultural and multi-planetary crew. I encountered it through alien life forms in the pages of science fiction novels. And I encountered it through Lt. Jeff Long, the black astronaut that Mattel controversially included in its Major Matt Mason toy line.

The narratives of that period, we might say now, were painfully flawed, unable to imagine a world not dominated by white men; unable to imagine a galaxy where being human was not the best possible thing we could be and being American was the highest form of being human. Yet, despite—or, perhaps, because of—those limits… because science fiction raised expectations it could not itself satisfy... my experiences as a science fiction fan were central to opening my eyes to the experiences of others. Star Trek’s Prime Directive was perhaps most powerful because it gave us a vocabulary to critique all of those many times when Kirk sought to disrupt or overthrow other cultures because they did not confirm to his own deeply entrenched norms and values. Talking about and critiquing the show with fellow fans sharpened my own sense of social justice and forced me to question things I was observing in the world around me.

From the start, science fiction was designed to be a provocation, an incitement for reflection and dialogue about the nature of change, whether understood in technological or cultural terms. At each step along the way, science fiction writers have encouraged readers to ask some fundamental questions about who we are and what kind of world we want to live in—questions which have inspired political movements and informed academic research across many disciplines. I have been struck recently by Michael Saler’s discussion in AS IF of early science fiction fandom as a “public sphere of the imagination”—that is, a space where fans could speculate and ask questions just removed enough from the realm of their lived experience that participants were free to consider and debate alternatives that might be unspeakable and unthinkable under other circumstances. Science fiction narratives and art provided resources for thinking through those other possibilities, and fandom provided a social space where people from somewhat diverse backgrounds might trade insights and experiences with each other.

My phrase “somewhat diverse” is meant to acknowledge what I take to be a central theme of this year’s convention—the attempt to reclaim science fiction’s suppressed and marginalized histories, to come to terms with the exclusions as well as inclusions that have shaped the history of science fiction as a genre and fandom as a social/cultural phenomenon. The histories of science fiction culture, which have been handed down to us from First Fandom, have stressed the roles played by white men who belonged to certain educational and technological elites, while they also remind us of the roles ethnic minorities and especially youth who were first or second-generation immigrants—people with names like Schwartz and Asimov—played in shaping science fiction cultures. Samuel R. Delany has written about the “liberal-Jewish” traditions that shaped this early fan culture. And, yet, we also know that these were not the only people engaging with speculative fictions.

If SF fandom constituted a public sphere of the imagination, we can only assume that there were multiple counter-publics where these same ideas were being discussed by those who would not have been welcomed at the World Science Fiction Conventions of the 1950s and 1960s. Where were science fiction’s “hush harbors”? Recent work on Afro-futurism has helped us to identify resources from science fiction that have found their way into other kinds of representation and become tools for survival of the black community, but we need to know much more about what these same processes have meant for Asian-American, Latino, first nation, and American Muslim communities across the 20th century. And we need to remember that science fiction has been a global discourse, one which has repeatedly addressed the process of globalization and colonial exploitation and one which has had an active role to perform in fostering post-colonial identities.

We are starting to piece together some fragmented histories of the roles science fiction fandom has played for female fans (and the conflicts they faced as they sought entry into the once almost-exclusively male clubhouse and continued to face once they got there). For me, this history has gained new poignancy as we have watched how some corners of fandom (such as Sad Puppies or Gamergate) are continuing to react aggressively against efforts to diversify and include others whose stories and perspectives matter. When we see the intensity of some of today’s fights, we gain a new appreciation of what that first generation of feminist fans must have confronted. Fandom studies was, in many ways, born from those gender wars and, from the start, has been inspired by feminist scholarship (whether the work of cultural theorists such as Janice Radway and Angela McRobbie or the work of science fiction practitioners such as Johanna Russ). Fan fiction was understood as
a form of women’s writing, and these stories were often read as counter-narratives which poached the genre conventions of science fiction or other genres to tell stories from the margins. And fandom studies was quick to embrace new insights from queer theory and to engage with what fandom’s alternative forms of production and reception meant for the LGBT community. We still have much to learn by digging deeper into early fanzines which included some of the first essays advocating gay rights in America, by seeing how fans responded to James Tiptree’s transgender identifications, by looking at how organizations such as the Gaylaxians advocated for queer characters on board the Enterprise, and by examining how slash fans were drawn by their fantasies into participation in struggles around “don’t ask, don’t tell” and marriage equality.

But the original sin of fandom studies was its silence about race. Those of us who pioneered fandom studies too often bracketed race and class in order to focus on gender, sexuality, and generation. As we sought to validate forms of cultural production and experience that were meaningful to us, we neglected the fact that our own ranks were still too narrowly constituted and that there was more we should have done to validate forms of culture that were meaningful to a more diverse population. However much we might have sometimes felt like outcasts in our own lives, we were still in a privileged position to help inform what kinds of cultural production and reception mattered in an academic context. We pioneers have much to answer for, but we cannot afford to wallow in liberal guilt.

Today, work on race and fandom takes on new urgency as we confront the grim, even deadly, political realities of our times (as represented by events in Ferguson, Baltimore, Charleston, and perhaps some other city by the time you read these remarks). In the process, we have seen the power of social media to coalesce communities and spread critiques of the police and the news media’s responses to racialized violence in America. In the forthcoming book from our USC Media, Activism, & Participatory Politics project team, entitled By Any Media Necessary: The New Activism of American Youth, we talk about the civic imagination. Before we can change the world, we need to be able to imagine what alternatives might look like. We need to understand ourselves as civic and political agents. We need to be able to grasp the experiences and perspectives of people different from ourselves. And we need to be able to imagine concrete steps we could take to change the world. We are finding that American youth are rejecting traditional political rhetoric as insular and partisan and seeking inspiration from popular culture, including science fiction and fantasy texts, as they make appeals to their collective civic imagination.

We have seen genre entertainment become yet again a space where vital conversations can take place—one where we can imagine alternative futures of race in America, where we can rewrite the scripts with their embedded racial and gender hierarchies, and where we can reimagine who gets to be depicted as a hero and how they get depicted in popular narratives. We have seen signs that fandom can be as intolerant as any other sector of our society, despite a historic embrace of “infinite diversity in infinite combinations” (as Star Trek fans of the 1960s might have put it). But we have also seen fandom as a place where alternative representations might emerge and where different kinds of dialogues might take place, grounded in shared passions and interests.

Just as we critique the failures of science fiction to achieve those ideals, we need to advocate for those practices that have proven productive in generating new visions for future race relations. As researchers, we need to be there as feminist fans redraw the covers of superhero comics to challenge their hypersexualized depictions of female protagonists as part of the Hawkeye Project. We need to be there as fans embrace a Pakistani-American girl as Ms. Marvel or when they debate whether they can accept a black Spider-Man or Human Torch. We need to be there as fan activists attach their civic imaginations to stories such as Harry Potter, Man of Steel, or the Hunger Games as vehicles for fighting for human rights, immigration reform, or fair wages. We need to be there when Racebending challenges a history of white-casting in the entertainment industry, as minority characters often change their colors when their narratives are brought to the screen, or when women at San Diego Comic-Con insist that Cosplay is Not Consent. And we need to be looking more closely at the ways fan fiction has experimented, sometimes in ways that are painful to observe and sometimes in ways that give us hope, with other kinds of stories we can be telling. As we observe and document these more recent developments in science fiction and genre narrative, we need to place them into a larger historical context. That will require us to go back and reclaim histories and revisit texts that were neglected by earlier generations of fans and researchers.

As science fiction fans, we know that technology will not be our savior in these struggles, that what matters are the human choices we make in response to the affordances of new media platforms. A crucial theme run-
ning through my own work has been the ways that a growing number of people around the world who are experiencing an expansion of their communicative capacities are using those platforms and tools to assert a much more active role in shaping cultural production and circulation. I used to talk about these shifts in terms of participatory culture, but it is increasingly clear that these opportunities are unevenly distributed and that many are being left behind...so it makes more sense to not only describe but to advocate a more participatory culture.

Studying fandom gives us a window into understanding how grassroots power might change the world. Science fiction fandom has a long history of networked communications, and of communities coming together and conducting long-distance exchanges around shared interests. Studying science fiction fandom has thus been an important entry point into larger conversations about how cultural agendas get shaped, how communities get formed, and how publics get mobilized in the age of Web 2.0. Much of the pressure for more diverse representations in commercial entertainment right now is being driven by fans. Fans are also driving many of the critiques of the mechanisms by which digital companies exploit the creative labor of their participants.

Critics of this work on participatory cultures and new media have sometimes dismissed us as engaging in pure speculation, describing our accounts as “mere science fiction.” However, the people in this room know fully the power that comes from tapping into both the utopian and dystopian imagination. The best science fiction dystopias often include within them representations of what forms resistance to power might take. And the best science fiction utopias often include some hint of the current realities against which they are being framed. As we think through what a more democratic and inclusive culture might look like, the theoretical turns we use need to do what science fiction has always done best. Go beyond what is known. Trace forward implications of current trends. Warn against dangers. Advocate for opportunities. And, above all, help us to think through the nature of change itself.

Some of this work is already being done, no doubt by those attending this conference—many of them graduate students and recently hired junior faculty members who are seeking to insert their voices into the scholarly conversation. Those of us who are more established need to be insuring that those emerging voices get heard. We need to be supporting their research and insuring that it gets published. And we need to be bringing these insights into our teaching and our own research.

I am encouraged to see your organization identify some of these topics as your central concern for this year’s event. I wish I were able to be there in person to more fully engage in these crucial conversations. I hope that we will hear of much more such research in the future. In short, science fiction researchers need to boldly go where no one has gone before.

Once again, thank you for this honor.

PIONEER AWARD

Remarks for the Pioneer Award
Amy J. Ransom (Chair), David Higgins and Gerry Canavan

Amy J. Ransom

THE PIONEER AWARD is given to the writer or writers of the best critical essay-length work of the year,” says the SFRA Website. Beyond that each year’s jury determines how broad the pool shall be and how they define “best” and “pioneering.” Because of the size of our task, I want first to thank my fellow jurors, David Higgins—next year’s committee chair—and Gerry Canavan. In addition, I’d like to thank Neil Easterbrook and Keren Omry for the wisdom and structures they shared as past committee chairs. This year, we considered over 275 essays published in 2014, not just in established journals like Science Fiction Studies, The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, Foundation, and Extrapolation, and also in newer genre-oriented journals like the Science Fiction Film and Television and the Eaton Journal of Archival Research, but also several publications in mainstream journals and the ever growing number of edited volumes produced each year. I say that not to prove how hard we worked—well, okay, yeah, just a little—but to underscore how exceptional each year’s Pioneer winner is, including this year’s winner.

This Pioneer committee evaluated all essays based on thoroughness, innovative approach, their potential impact on the field, and their literary style. Our decision was difficult given the number of essays we considered, as well as the diversity and quality of those that made our short list. But there was a clear consensus among the committee members that Graeme MacDonald’s “Improbability Drives: The Energy of SF” stood out, and not just for its sexy title. Before I speak about why we
chose it for this year’s Pioneer, let me say a few words about Graeme.

Dr Graeme Macdonald is Associate Professor, and teaches on the English and Comparative Literary Studies program at the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK. He is editor of two books, Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature (2011) and Post Theory: New Directions in Criticism (1999), and is currently working on a monograph, Shifting Territory: Scottish and World Literature Since 1968 and, in the longer term a study of Oil and World Fiction. MacDonald is also a member of WreC (Warwick Research Collective), who work on new ways to think about World Literature/Literature in the World, and have published a co-written monograph on Peripheral Modernism and World Literature: Combined and Uneven Development: Toward a New Theory of World Literature (2015). (Freely quoted from Graeme’s bio at www2.warwick.ac.uk)

As we read, we considered in particular that a prize-worthy work should be “Pioneer-ing,” and it’s clear that energy studies are on the forefront of the field. Indeed, other contributors to the volume in which this essay appeared, SF Now (Paradoxa 26), looked at the question of energy, but MacDonald’s work stood out for the scope of material it covers (from nineteenth-century lost world narratives to the postmodern space opera) and the potential impact for other scholars to follow him and apply the principles of the new field of the “energy humanities” to other works of SF. MacDonald argues convincingly that sf is the privileged literary genre for this field given the central role of energy in so many sf plots, from the apocalyptic potential of its over-exploitation to the need for massive amounts of energy for space exploration and colonization. But he also does so with style and verve, beginning with a vivid example (maybe a little overwritten) about the imagery of energy in the original Star Wars and then applies his notion to three specific sub-genres (space opera, post-apocalyptic narratives, and lost world), using examples across the history of sf from writers like M. John Harrison and Cormac McCarthy’s The Road.

Above all, as one of the jurors wrote about this essay, “it articulates the importance of SF studies not as a niche literary interest but as the site where our culture surveys, interrogates, and debates the Future. As MacDonald argues, there’s basically no difference between SF and energy futurity; “SF is how we think about energy futurity, because energy futurity is SF. It’s a tremendously important argument for why the work we do has central importance across myriad interdisciplinary fields.” For these reasons, we congratulate Graeme MacDonald as the winner of the 2015 SFRA Pioneer Award.

Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech
Graeme MacDonald

PROFOUND THANKS to the SFRA and the jury, not only for the award but also for providing the means for me to make it to Stony Brook and partake in what was an excellent conference. It was a truly memorable experience. Given a key point of my essay emphasizes the cultural and ecological imperative to imagine and materialize an alternative form of fuel, mobility and travel, my hasty slingshot across the Atlantic forces acknowledgement of my carbon hypocrisy. This is, of course, an inevitable and ironic feature of the techno-social lock-in of petro-modernity that I envisage sf and the related genres will help us eventually overcome. But not without realizing why our present attitudes towards the wondrous space and timebends of intercontinental travel are often a manifestation of the banal, fantastic and disastrous fictions of the (retro)future on offer in late capitalism. Anyone in doubt of this needs only be confronted by the culture of departure lounges. One advert in particular, for the ‘global’ bank HSBC, grabs me every time. It did so especially on my way to Stony Brook with my essay in mind. It depicts a giant mushroom replacing a turbine engine under a jet wing. It’s part of a series. In another a peeled banana skin replaces a propeller. These are accompanied by bold proclamations of the organically fuel mobilizing the world to come (“The Future Is Emerging”). It’s not a comforting thing – quite the cognitive estrangement, in fact – to stare out of the window mid-flight and see giant fungi where engines should be! As I waited to board my flight to SFRA 2015, these energetic but disingenuous images reminded me why I was getting on it, and why I chose this subject to write on.

To challenge what Imre Szeman refers to as “the fiction of surplus” we presently inhabit, and which, as I tried to argue in the essay, sf must seek to confront and expose.

Anyway, to the thanking. Serious kudos and gratitude to Rhys Williams and Mark Bould, editors of the marvelous SF Now volume (26) of Paradoxa. They commissioned the piece and throughout the whole process were generous, gracious, funny and incisive. They were also
healthily critical, offering a wealth of enthusiasm and knowledge. (OK, chaps, now I agree the long section on Dickens and aliens in Arabic petrofiction was a stretch too far!) Ditto David R. Willingham editor and publisher of Paradoxa, whose scopic precision and editorial brilliance complements his singular style of encouragement. These three should edit us all. What a journal is Paradoxa: I encourage all you field movers and shakers to keep the suggestions for special editions rolling in. Thanks also to Imre Szeman, comrade and fellow petro-scholar, pioneer of Energy Humanities and the Petrocultures/After Oil collectives (see www.petrocultures.com) And thanks also to Gerry Canavan, whose work on sf and oil I am indebted. His trenchant observation bemoaning the fact so many sf future worlds remain petro-economies was the scholarly spur for the essay’s theoretical and political concerns.

I was informed I had won this award in mid-April, via Twitter. I'd just arrived in Johnshaven, a tiny fishing village on the Mearns coast in North East Scotland. I was in recovery from a series of eye operations I'd had in the previous months, seeking rest, light and clarity for a badly damaged retina. Johnshaven lies thirty miles south of Aberdeen, once the self-styled “Energy Capital of Europe” (back in those naïve days when “Energy Cities” were seen as production hubs, rather than laundry spaces for the financialization and circulation of global carbon-capital circulation that London in particular has become). I'd hired a wee house from a formidable Scots-Norwegian mother-daughter duo. They had pigs and chickens and big Russian dogs and kept a large hut full of odd industrial equipment. The village was punctuated by wee 'oul pipesmokey-haired fishermen. A classic sf scenario, for sure. Chuffed with my social media news, I headed off along the coastal trail to spot wags-tails, curlews, fulmars and oystercatchers at the nearby bird sanctuary. Even with a gammy eye I saw plenty flitting around, backdropped by the North Sea, where the busy infrastructure of oil and gas reveals itself only by distant glints of shipping and the routings of submersible platforms on the horizon. "Offshore" is such a perfect metaphor for our contemporary petro-culture in so many ways.

When I got back to the cottage, I looked up the theme for SFRA 2015: suppressed histories. Apt. The Mearns Country is a literary coastline. I was just down the coast from the Lewis Grassic Gibbon Centre, museum for the rural modernist who was from up the road. His novel set here, Sunset Song, is routinely voted the most loved Scottish novel of the 20th century. (No 2 is usually Lanark, Alasdair Gray's sf classic of future dystopian Glasgow). What is lesser known about Grassic Gibbon, even in Scotland, is he was also (under his 'real' name, James Leslie Mitchell) a keen sf and fantasy writer. So were many of the Scottish modernists, essential figures in the revival of a distinct modern Scottish literary tradition that thrives today. Most of these writers were committed experimenters – and self-professed Marxist Internationalists. They were writing – often from small rural places – within what we used to call a minor or semi-peripheral literary formation, (now rather fashionably called 'liminal') one struggling to maintain an identity in the UK/world-literary system.

Scottish literary tradition has always entreated a kind of genre-splicing; some see it as a form of politico-cultural schizophrenia, others a natural reaction to modernity on the periphery. Most notable Scottish writers have not cared a jot for genre transgression, switching and combining sf, fantasy, horror, with socially concerned realism and naturalism, mixed within and between texts. Lines can be traced from 1800 to the present, from the devils and harpies of James Hogg, Robert Burns and Walter Scott to Conan Doyle's Dinosaurs and Stevenson's Mr. Hyde, Margaret Oliphant's ghost-realism and George MacDonald Fraser's 'innocent weird' to the folk-based modernist sf of the rural experimenters, through standout texts like David Lindsay's Voyage to Arcturus (1920) and Naomi Mitchison's Memoirs of a Spacewoman (1962). This continues in the latter part of the twentieth century in Muriel Spark's irrealism, Edwin Morgan's spacepoems. (My twitter hashtag is @Sobieski - not the Polish Royal line to Stuart Jacobites as people usually assume, but the name of the Cosmonaut in Morgan's 'In Sobieski's Shield', from his celebrated 1973 collection From Glasgow to Saturn). These chart a path to the contemporary, from Gray's astounding stories and Lanark, to the subsequent prolific outputs of the late and sadly lamented Iain (M) Banks and Ken MacLeod's space operas and speculative fictions. There are many more. For a small, relatively peripheral place, sf has been crucial to Scottish culture, just made liminal by critical illiteracy and forms of cultural misrecognition.

So when I receive this award I don't hesitate to think again about those birds as an alien species, haunted by those oilrigs and helicopters going out to the offshore rigs to slurp the last of the oil out of the North Sea. I also see a kind of resource frenzy that has naturally buckled itself in our social and physical landscapes as some kind of monstrous alien ecology that, of course, has a planetary provenance. A little further north is the Mo-
ray coast; the same gazed upon by a flock of unsuspecting, ruminating sheep in Michel Faber’s novel *Under the Skin*. An alien cargo ship floats above the flock. (And the film, *that film*, is a classic example of the otherworldly, transformational and alien qualities of any form of resource extraction). I think of them, these sheep, these indifferent, unmoving creatures, staring out into the same old murk (in Scotland we call it a *haar*, full of mysterious potential for realizing the world in an alternative guise, but also as stuff containing monsters) – doing just what they always do, standing by dumbly while imperialists from another world terraform underneath and around them. I see in the North Sea oil extraction an offshoring of energy potential resembling the entire work of extraterrestrial structures and classic imperial invasion narratives, with their giant tripods and sucking devices.

The fundamental thrust of my essay argues that such are the unseen, banal movements of contemporary petrolife in which we *all* subsist, taking place under our noses, getting onto and under our skin. Our inability to shed it recalls China Miéville’s bomb of a story, “*Co-vehithe*”, where no matter what we do to disarm these monstrous suckers and blow them out of the water they *keep coming back*. They are resilient, they naturalize themselves, they spawn a seemingly organic system. Like baby turtle eggs burrowing in the sand, baby rigs crawl back out into the ocean to taunt us with their enduring qualities.

The newly emboldened CEO of post-Deepwater Horizon BP recently claimed “we like black oil.” As a community galvanized by what the future can/might hold, this should get under our skin. The endurance of fossils is fantasy. But who is going to make these things obsolete by reading and writing them out of the water? Will our alt-petro imaginaries help keep carbon in the ground, interring it until it becomes represented by the ancient and obsolete, puzzling machines buried in post-oil novels like *Riddley Walker* or *Jonathan Comstock*. Or will they keep pumping out giant adverts for Oil such as the world of *Mad Max*? The fundamental point of my essay in many ways was a calling to all you practitioners of a fabulous, renewable resource – sf; fantastic fiction that creates alternative lifeworlds. Rewards recognize, so I’m extremely thankful for a wider spotlight on this burning question. Let’s see if we can use and develop our alternative energies towards an energy alternative. Think of those oystercatchers….

**CLARESON AWARD**

**Remarks for the Clareson Award**

**Ed Carmein (Chair), Grace L. Dillon, De Witt Douglas Kilgore**

**Ed Carmein**

TO BEGIN, my thanks to fellow Clareson Award Committee members Grace L. Dillon and De Witt Douglas Kilgore. It is always a pleasure to collaborate with colleagues attentive to their work, responsive to the needs of the day, and thoughtful and intelligent in the execution of their duties. While they can’t be with us tonight, please salute them. And when our president calls you to serve on the committee, say yes.

As the chair of this year’s team, I offered a simple idea to my colleagues: let us look to the history of the Clareson Award and consider what service means in our field. Our charge is to recognize “outstanding service activities-promotion of SF teaching and study, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, and leadership in SF/fantasy organizations.” We have honored luminaries such as James Gunn and Frederik Pohl, authors who demonstratively served the field, each contributing enormously to the structures that support SF/fantasy in general. And we have recognized many worthy individuals primarily from the academic world who also build and support structures that support SF/fantasy.

What if, I asked my colleagues, we considered a contemporary author who has contributed to the field? Grace and De Witt responded with marvellous and interesting candidates for us to consider, and I contributed as well. After a few weeks of discussion, we selected Von-da N. McIntyre to receive this year’s Clareson Award.

As an author, McIntyre won the Nebula and Hugo awards, among others, and has been frequently nominated during her ongoing career. Her novel, *Starfarers*, came about as the result of a prank played on a convention panel deploring the lack of good SF TV. She made up a series on the spot, attributed it to CBS, but ultimately had to admit it was nothing but a joke. Later, the jest took form as a novel well worth close critical consideration today. Worth noting: some years before there was a Bechdel Test, this novel passes it in the opening pages, with flying rainbow colors.

In *Starfarers*, some twenty years in the novel’s past, the “mideast sweep” changed the political landscape; a single radically religious polity controls the middle east,
Africa, and parts of Asia. In the 1970s this seemed like an unlikely idea born of science fiction, a convenient reframing of the customary US vs Soviet dyad that sets the stage for reactionary politics in the west that play a major role in space, the primary physical setting of the novel. If you haven't read it, how can you resist? Spoiler alert: academic ivory tower types steal a space ship and head yonder.

When it comes to service, McIntyre has a strong history. First and foremost, she founded Clarion West in the 1970s and gave the thumbs-up in its rebirth in the 1980s. The Clarion West Writers Workshop is an intensive, multi-week writer's workshop that focuses on speculative fiction. Participants develop new work during the workshop; participants collaboratively critique this work under the guidance of professional writers and editors who teach one-week portions of the six-week workshop.

Under its current management, Clarion West continues to produce authors and editors we know well here in the SFRA. Kathryn Cramer, for example. Or Kathleen Ann Goonan. Kij Johnson. Mary Anne Mohanraj. Cat Rambo. Lawrence Schimel. The esteemed Gordon Van Gelder. Who are these people? Cramer, among many other things, co-founded the New York Review of Science Fiction. Goonan, Campbell Award winner. Johnson, multiple award winner (“Spar” in 2009, for example), also serves the field out of the University of Kansas. Ann “Ancillary Justice” Leckie. Mohanraj, co-founder of Strange Horizons and founder of the Speculative Literature Foundation. Rambo, co-editor of Fantasy Magazine and new president of the SFWA. Schimel, co-founder of the Publishing Triangle and poet. Van Gelder, editor of Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine. Need I go on? Sure: I personally have taught texts by most of those just named.

As the computer age developed--McIntyre was one of the very first authors to complete a novel on a microcomputer--she learned skills few possessed at the time. As the web developed, Vonda volunteered for decades helping fellow SFWA members with their online presences--including yours truly. It is impossible to number how many professional SF/fantasy authors McIntyre assisted during the dark ages of the web.

McIntyre published material for aspiring writers, both how-to tips and insights into the genre. Goes above and beyond at conventions, recently stating “I will walk with you” at the upcoming Worldcon, her response to the ongoing storm of negative comments (so often precursor to more physical negatives) surrounding the Hugo nomination and award process.

Vonda N. McIntyre contributes to the infrastructure of publishing SF/fantasy (and beyond) as a co-founder of Book View Cafe, a cooperative book publisher. While BVC publishes a lot of fiction (including her excellent Starfarers series, for example), it is also a vibrant online community that brings writers and fans together.

One last thing. If you’ve ever wondered where Sulu got his first name--Hikaru--look no further. While mainstream SFWAns (back in the day, at least) fretted that McIntyre wrote Star Trek novels (the horror!), the fullness of time shows her quality work there and, among other things, gave us Sulu’s first name. For that vital service, for a lifetime spent in no small part providing support for others, we present Vonda N. McIntyre this year’s Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service.

Clareson Award Acceptance Speech

Vonda N. McIntyre

“THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I’m honored.”

Last week, these were my words of acceptance. Your president, Craig Jacobsen, asked for remarks “however brief or extended.” Since I can’t think of anything more boring than long comments from someone who isn’t even there, I’ll keep it short. This week I have been prevailed upon to say a bit more, so here it is:

Your conference highlights diversity and new distribution models, both of which are important to me. Your award includes service to the field, which I very much appreciate. Book View Cafe, of which I’m a founding member, is an author-owned publishing cooperative. We have a lot of great SF, nonfiction, and fiction in a number of other genres. We have fiction that defies definition, crosses boundaries, and inspires cries of “We don’t know how to market this!” from commercial publishers. I’m glad our enterprise represents the ideas your conferences highlights.

My novels and stories have always included people of
diverse backgrounds, sometimes including academics. The starship in *Starfarers* is a university town, not a military or quasi-military organization. Its faculty, administration, and staff reach decisions by consensus.

In 1970, I attended the third Clarion Writers Workshop in Clarion, Pennsylvania. Other members of the workshop included Octavia Butler, Glenn Cook, Dave Skal, Robert Thurston, and George Alec Effinger. It was a peak experience.

When Robin Scott Wilson said that 1970 would be the last workshop he would direct, I couldn't bear the thought that it wouldn't continue. With Robin’s permission, I helped organize Clarion West in Seattle, in 1971, 1972, and 1973. At that point I burned out and spent the next couple of years living four miles down a logging road.

In 1984, Marilyn Holt and J.T. Stewart told me they wanted to give Clarion West a second incarnation. I told them I could refer them to a good shrink. They laughed and forged ahead. I taught at the reincarnated workshop in 1984 and 1990, and am the “o my Flying Spaghetti Monster, Emergency!” go-to local instructor should the workshop need one.

In the intervening 30 years, Clarion West has developed a non-profit educational organization that maintains and runs the six-week summer workshop, the Write-a-thon, one-day workshops, and other special events for the benefit of the workshop and new writers. The people who have run it over the years are amazing. J.T. and Marilyn, of course. And in addition:

Leslie Howle  
Dave Myers  
Linda Jordan-Eichner  
Nancy Thalia Reynolds  
Jill Zeller  
Jane Hawkins  
Eileen Gunn  
David Myers  
Kate Schaefer  
Karen Fishler  
Deborah Fisher  
Hali Myers  
Nisi Shawl  
Susan Gossman  
Neile Graham  
Kelley Eskridge  
Karen Anderson

Now there’s a board of directors and an executive director and a website, clarionwest.org, where you can find out more about the workshop and the people running it. As I told Ed, the list of names could go on for pages. My apologies to the people I’ve left out.

I appreciate your honoring me. I accept your kind award primarily on behalf of Clarion West and the many devoted volunteers and staff who have kept it running so successfully in its second incarnation.

These are much longer remarks than I intended. Thank you.

MARY K. BRAY AWARD

Remarks for the Mary K. Bray Award

Timothy S. Miller (Chair), Larisa Mikhaylova and Isiah Lavender III

Timothy S. Miller

THE INCREASING RANGE of materials now published in the *SFRA Review* – not only brief book and media reviews but also the “101” articles and other extended features – enormously complicates the process of choosing a single winner for the Mary Kay Bray Award. But, after long deliberation, the committee is pleased to present this year’s award jointly to Marleen Barr, Paweł Frelik, and Andy Hageman for their collective contributions to a roundtable on Jonathan Glazer’s little-noticed 2014 film *Under the Skin*. The roundtable makes excellent use of the format in a short space, assembling three complementary voices and readings that, among other achievements, clearly indicate how and why the film might be of interest to SFRA scholars working in areas as diverse as critical animal studies, sound studies, and ecocriticism. One member of the committee commented on the excellence but also diversity of the “the three entirely different takes on the film and the wonderful exchange of ideas that occurs between [the participants] regarding the visual, aural, and spatial – particularly, the defamiliarization of the Scottish landscape – complexities of the film.” Another member agreed that the roundtable was “brilliant in exchange between the researchers,” but observed that another important lesson to learn from its very presence in the pages of the *SFRA Review* is the changing nature of the publication. As such, the committee would also like to use this time to recognize two
other contributors to the *Review* in the past year, Sarah Canfield Fuller and Amy J. Ransom, whose shorter reviews offer a valuable service to the field and deserve the kind of recognition that the Mary Kay Bray Award was intended to provide. One member of the committee praised Sarah Canfield Fuller’s review of *Parabolas of Science Fiction* as a “succinct review of a very important book,” with the potential to “attract more attention [...] to a conceptually rich approach in SF research.” Every member of the committee also noted the consistently superior quality of Amy J. Ransom’s prolific reviewing, addressing in the past year media as diverse as the *Tesseracts* anthology series of Canadian speculative fiction, the Charles de Lint-introduced *Urban Green Man* anthology, and *The Lego Movie*. That such reviews manage to stand out even among the longer essays and features speaks to the continuing health of the *SFRA Review* and the field it represents. It is especially fitting, then, that the award this year should be split among the three contributors to the roundtable, because a large part of the strength of that field derives from the multiplicity of perspectives and diversity of approaches it encompasses – and which this roundtable itself encapsulates.

**Mary K. Bray Award Acceptance Speech**

Marleen Barr, Paweł Frelik and Andy Hageman

Marleen Barr

HERE ARE THE REMARKS I articulated at the SFRA Conference banquet awards ceremony after I was given one third of the Mary Kay Bray Award. I *really* did say this. There are witnesses!

***

I am a very big yenta.

Every year when June comes around I look forward to finding out who won the Pilgrim Award. When I saw that Henry Jenkins was this year’s recipient, I thought that he was a really great choice. Then I looked down the list at the other award winners. When I noticed my name listed under the Bray Award, I felt like I had been struck by a photon torpedo. I jumped up from my desk chair and began to scream “Bray, Bray, Bray.” Since I live in a one bedroom Manhattan apartment, my husband could not fail to hear me. Thinking that I was again responding to the upstairs neighbors’ air conditioner or construction noise, he ran into the living room to investigate.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Bray, Bray, Bray,” I continued at the top of my lungs while jumping up and down.

“Pray, pray, pray?” he inquired while immediately rejecting the idea that I had suddenly become a religious fanatic.

“Bray, Bray, Bray,” I even more vehemently insisted.

At that point, since my husband is named Pepe Le Pew in my new novel *Oy Feminist Planets: A Fake Memoir* and pictured as a skunk ensconced atop a spaceship on the cover, he logically concluded that I had turned him into an ass. He is a very proud and polite man. What could he do? He loves me.

But let me get serious. Winning the 1997 Pilgrim Award was so meaningful to me. During all of the years that have ensued, I never fail at least once a day to tell myself that I have won the Pilgrim Award. Being a Pilgrim means more to me than I can say. And now to have a chance to come up here and receive an award again. It is wonderful to share one third of the Bray Award with Pawel Frelik and Andy Hageman. I am speechless. The Science Fiction Research Association has shaped my life by publishing me, encouraging me, and providing me with colleagues. No. In truth, you have been more than colleagues. I have a wonderful husband and many friends; but I don’t have a family. You have been my family. There are tears in my eyes. I am speechless.

Let me end with a simple thank you.

Paweł Frelik

I AM DELIGHTED and honored to accept this year’s Mary Kay Bray Award. Since the symposium is relatively short and I share the award with my two co-authors, I’ll also keep it short. Jonathan Glazer’s *Under the Skin* is, to my mind, absolutely fascinating and offers a great deal of food for thought in all kinds of ways. If you have seen it already, I hope you will want to see it again after reading our symposium. If you have not, I hope you will be as fascinated as I was the first seven times I watched it. Thank you so much!
Andy Hageman

I am honored and thrilled to receive this award, in particular because this was a collaborative, conversational piece. It was wonderful to work on the film in dialogue with Marleen and Pawel. I thank them for their constructive responses and thank the SFRA Review for orchestrating this chance to do criticism collectively.

STUDENT PAPER AWARD

Remarks for the Student Paper Award

Eric Otto (Chair), Taryne Taylor and Shawn Malley

Eric Otto

THIS YEAR’S SFRA Student Paper Award goes to W. Andrew Shephard for his essay “What is and What Should Never Be: Paracosmic Utopianism in Margaret Cavendish’s The Blazing World.” Shephard is a Ph.D. candidate at Stanford University who specializes in British and American literature from the 19th century to the present, with a focus on genre fiction and literature of the African diaspora. Shephard’s paper stood out among the pool of submissions for its attention to expanding our understanding of both Cavendish and her unique mode of utopian writing. For Shephard, what distinguishes Cavendish’s utopianism from the work that precedes it is “her use of imaginary solutions for real problems” – the aristocracy, for example, taking on jewel-like, blue or green complexions to signify their superiority. Importantly, while recovering Cavendish’s work from its harshest critics, Shephard engages in more than adulation. He notes the problematic tidiness of the way The Blazing World deals with race and class. In the end, Shephard’s sophisticated analysis reveals the importance of Cavendish’s contribution. He notes, “The Blazing World is really a celebration of imaginative power, of its ability to insulate us against the worst the world has to offer and transport us elsewhere when things get tough.” Please join me in congratulating W. Andrew Shephard.

Student Paper Award Acceptance Speech

W. Andrew Shephard

HELLO, EVERYONE. While I regretfully could not be in attendance this evening, please know that I am incredibly honored to be the recipient of this year’s SFRA Student Paper Award. Recognition for one’s work is always gratifying, especially coming from so prestigious an organization as this.

And it is particularly gratifying to win for this paper. As many of you are aware, The Blazing World is one of the earliest works of science fiction published by an Anglophone author – a fact which makes it a significant literary milestone. At a moment when the participation of women and other marginalized peoples in the speculative genres are under attack from reactionary factions within the SF community, acknowledging and celebrating the pioneering work of female authors within our tradition seems more important than ever.

There are many people deserving of my gratitude to-night. First, I wish to thank the awards committee for their selection of my essay. There were a number of truly spectacular papers given at last year’s conference, so it means a great deal that you considered mine to be worthy of this award. Thank you to Stanford University for its continued support of graduate student research, and to Roland Greene for his excellent seminar Early Modern Prose Fiction, for which this paper was initially written. I would also like to thank my colleague Mary Kim, for quite generously agreeing to look at my work and for her insightful feedback. And finally, thanks to “Mad Madge” herself for crafting such a vividly conceived pair of worlds and for graciously allowing readers to sojourn in them for a while.

Writing this paper has been a truly rewarding experience for me; even more so for having the opportunity to present it to such an intelligent, inspiring, and amazingly supportive community of scholars. Thanks again.
THE MANCUNIAN POLYMATH John Anthony Burgess Wilson (1917-1993) had what might be best described as a reluctant relationship with science fiction. Famed as the author of one of the most famous dystopias of 20th century literature, A Clockwork Orange, Burgess, who penned some 32 other novels as well as reams of non-fiction and musical compositions, found the notoriety of his most infamous work restricting, and regularly dismissed it as a jeu d’esprit which overshadowed his other achievements.

Born into a poor working-class household in Manchester, and almost immediately deprived of his mother and sister by the Spanish flu outbreak which followed the first World War, the young John Wilson was a lonely child, forced into autodidacticism by his own feverish intellect and the paucity of stimulation in which he found himself. Following an undergraduate degree in literature at Manchester University, he spent the war years in a safe sinecure teaching soldiers in Gibraltar, which inspired his first completed novel, A Vision of Battlements, a sub-Joycean parody of Virgil’s Aeneid.

His war experience led to peacetime positions as a teacher, first in Oxfordshire, and later abroad, in Malaya and Brunei, during which his fiction-writing career took off with the publication of a semi-autobiographical trilogy set in Malaya on the cusp of independence. Hamstrung by an alcoholic and perennially unfaithful wife, Burgess returned to Britain on health grounds and was forced, according to his own self-perpetuated legend, to write novels to sustain her in the event of his own imminent death.

Allegedly given a diagnosis of a brain tumour, and a prognosis of a mere year to live by the neurologist and runner Roger Bannister, Burgess settled down in Hove at his typewriter and knocked out some five novels in a single year, only to find at the end of the terminal sentence that he was not due for death at all. His fecundity was such that his publisher began releasing his novels under various pseudonyms to mask the fact that all the books had the same indomitable author. During that annus mirabilis, Burgess penned not one but two SF classics, the aforementioned A Clockwork Orange, and the almost equally influential The Wanting Seed, which likely inspired the notorious ending of the movie Soylent Green.

With those two novels alone, Burgess’s reputation as a serious SF author of note ought to have been assured. Indeed, he went on to write two more SF texts (1985, a sequel of sorts to Orwell written in 1978, and 1985’s apocalyptic triptych The End of the World News), as well as incorporating multiple SF elements into his long-running Enderby series of comic novels. But like a number of other high-profile authors who have preferred to evade pigeon-holing as genre writers, Burgess consistently rejected suggestions that he was, even partly, a writer of SF. Burgess’s equivalent moment to Margaret Atwood’s infamous mockery of SF as “rockets, chemicals and talking squids in outer space” came in an article entitled, provocatively enough, “The Boredom of SF”, which is reprinted in his second collection of journalism, 1986’s Homage to Qwert Yuiop.

Burgess commences his article with the inflammatory rhetorical question, ‘Why is most science fiction so damned dull?’, and goes on to offer a series of possible answers: that SF writers ‘have fancy but no imagination,’ that it is a genre where ‘content counts more than form,’ or that, by being in some way opposed to the elitist modernism Burgess self-affiliated with, SF functions as ‘a category of near-popular sub-art, meaning bad type-writerese on coarse paper.’ None of this was designed to endear Burgess to the enormous SF reading public he had inadvertently obtained following the release of Stanley Kubrick’s cinematic adaptation of A Clockwork Orange.

This attempt to dissuade is perhaps the point. Ever hyperaware of his existence outside the mainstream of English letters - as exile, as Catholic, as working class – Burgess was far from inclined to increase the distance between his work and the Bloomsbury respectability he silently craved by embracing genre affiliations, unless there was either mockery or money in it. Hence his outrageous supra-Bond send-up of the spy genre, Tremor of Intent (1966), in which his hero engages with Death...
himself in a gargantuan eating competition intended to satirise the card-playing heroics of Ian Fleming’s hero. Later forays into genre writing – including the 1976 script for the abortive Puma disaster movie which Burgess later salvaged as The End of the World News – were primarily motivated by the large remuneration offered to him by Hollywood.

Burgess’s career is thus split into two phases relating to SF – an earlier one in which he wrote SF as easily as he wrote in other genres or in none, and a later phase in which he overtly sought to eschew any relationship with SF, and openly sneered at the genre. It is no coincidence that his perspective appeared to flip following the release of Kubrick’s infamous cinematic adaptation of A Clockwork Orange. As criminal acts began to be associated with the movie (and its source text) by the tabloid press, Kubrick withdrew from the public eye, leaving Burgess, a consummate media performer, to field the extensive media attention. Despite Burgess’s valiant defence of the novel as an exercise in dystopia and language, Kubrick ultimately withdrew the movie from release. Burgess later felt that the close association of his name with Kubrick’s film, and the concomitant controversy, was detrimental to his career as a popular but literary novelist.

It is more than possible that he came to further associate these events with the wider genre of SF. Certainly, his dismissive attitude to the genre, as depicted in “The Boredom of Science Fiction”, demonstrates that he was prepared to misrepresent SF as a formulaic literature of futuristic sub-adventure tropes, despite simultaneously professing admiration for Ray Bradbury and H.G. Wells, ‘the best of the esseffers’, as well as, on various occasions, Brian Aldiss, Rex Warner, Stanislaw Lem, J.G. Ballard and George Orwell.

‘SF plots are easily devised,’ he states confidently. ‘We are a million years into the future, and the world is run by the Krompir, who have police robots called patates under a grim chief with a grafted cybernetic cerebrum whose name is Peruna. There is a forbidden phoneme. If you utter it you divide into two identities which continue to subdivide until you become a million microessences used to feed the life system of Aardappel, the disembodied head of the Krompir. To subdivide the phone is to enter a morbid state in which you become a clone of yourself. But if you can manage to resist the System, for you are a droog and can control nothing. You will find yourself in the Gollancz SF constellation...’

This dismissive (and inaccurate) tone indicates how little interaction Burgess had with SF, despite being a voracious reader. Certainly, despite an extensive reviewing career which spanned over 30 years, writing for a bewildering array of international publications, Burgess reviewed little more than a handful of SF texts. This could be indicative either of his own inclination to avoid the genre, but could equally demonstrate the difficulties SF faced in the mid- to late-20th century in generating mainstream reviews.

Ironically, Burgess himself is an exception to mainstream resistance to reviewing SF texts. His first and most famous SF novel, A Clockwork Orange, provoked the sort of polarised response it later became renowned for before it was even in print, with Maire Lynd, Heinemann’s reader, reporting to the publisher that it was likely to become either ‘a big success’ or ‘an enormous flop.’ On publication, Burgess’s friend Kingsley Amis, another mainstream literary figure who dabbled in SF, positively reviewed the novella as ‘the curiosity of the day’, precociously identifying both the innovative argot in which the text is written, Alex’s Nadsat, and the Ludovico technique, ‘a machine that makes you good’, as SF tropes embedded in a morality tale.

The lineage upon which Burgess drew to create A Clockwork Orange is similarly science-fictional. What Malcolm Bradbury called ‘the rich language of [Burgess’s] inverted Utopia’ is somewhat derivative of one of Burgess’s own favourite novels, George Orwell’s 1984, as is the Suvinian novum of the Ludovico technique, a clear extension of Orwell’s own Room 101. The slang milieu of Nadsat has since become influential both in pop-culture and within SF circles, arguably helping to inspire the lunar argot of Heinlein’s The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, Russell Hoban’s post-apocalyptic English in Riddley Walker and Jeff Noon’s alt-Mancunian dialect in Vurt.

Teen Alex is the leader of a violent youth gang, known in Nadsat as droogs, following the Russian word друг, meaning “friend”). Following a rampage of arbitrary drug-taking, rape and assault, Alex is eventually arrested, imprisoned and subjected to an experimental psychiatric aversion therapy known as the Ludovico technique, in which he is rendered ill by any reference to violence, aggressive sexuality or his favourite composer, Beethoven. In the latter part of the novella, Alex re-encounters many of those he has aggressed in the earlier portion, only this time he is rendered the victim rather
than the aggressor. Plunged into a terrible depression having been deprived of his own free will, he attempts suicide, only to be saved by the political opponents of those who have harboured him. When he awakes, the technique has been miraculously reversed and he is, as he states ‘cured alright.’

This is where Kubrick’s infamous cinematic version concludes, but it is not where Burgess’s text ended. The confusion arises over a variation in texts between the original 21 chapter British edition published by Heinemann and the subsequent Norton edition published in America the following year, which omits the final chapter and includes a glossary compiled by the literary critic (and husband to horror writer Shirley Jackson) Stanley Edgar Hyman. Eager as he was to garner greater sales in a larger market, Burgess acquiesced to Norton’s demands to amend his text, a decision he was to regret on many occasions afterwards. In that final chapter, Alex comes to the conclusion that it is time to set aside childish things and grow up, perhaps even have children of his own and become a productive member of society.

The editors at Norton, and indeed Stanley Kubrick, felt that this post-script to Alex’s Dionysian rampage of violence was a milquetoast squib. However, for Burgess, it was integral to the narrative he had constructed, and to his own understanding that the novel argued legitimately for the primacy of human free will. If to rid Alex of his inherent tendency to evil was to dehumanise him, then similarly his ability to evolve beyond violence was also a product of his own free will. If goodness cannot morally be inflicted upon an individual, it is because, argued Burgess, that man must remain free to choose goodness, even if he chooses evil instead, in the hope that he will one day see the error of his ways.

An additional problem with the Norton edition arose with the inclusion of the Hyman glossary. Burgess had carefully constructed his art-language Nadsat so that it would function both to distance the readership from the “ultra-violence” of the novel’s action, but also to replicate Alex’s own experience of being brainwashed. As the reader attempts to comprehend Alex’s actions through the medium of his idiosyncratic argot, they are simultaneously and subtly coerced into learning a basic lexicon of Russian words. The efficacy of Burgess’s linguistic achievement (and he was an accomplished linguist among his many other skills, having studied philology and written two books on the subject) has been tested in experiments which found that readers retain up to 90% understanding of Nadsat terms weeks after reading the novel only once.

Ever since Kingsley Amis first mused on the inferences of having a feral British youth speaking a Russified slang, scholars have speculated about potential geopolitical causes for Alex’s Nadsat. The reason for Burgess’s Russification of English is much more prosaic than any Cold War subtext, however. Burgess had identified the problem of writing a novel in teen slang rooted in reality – so quickly does youth in-group communication change, there was a real likelihood that it would be outdated even by the time of publication. As Burgess was teaching himself Russian at the time of writing A Clockwork Orange, in advance of a visit to Leningrad which inspired the comic novel Honey for the Bears, he decided to incorporate his own linguistic education into the novel.

But A Clockwork Orange is also a morality tale for hypermodernity. Its plot derives largely from Burgess’s own idiosyncratic ideas about theology. He habitually described himself as a Manichean, by which he meant that he believed in a duoversal reality. The binary components of this duoverse were, for Burgess, best represented by the opposed theological positions he attributed to early Christian church theologians, Augustine of Hippo and the British heresiarch, Pelagius. For those unfamiliar with early church theological disputation, Burgess associates Augustine with the doctrine of Original Sin, the notion that mankind is born into a fallen state, and hence requires the grace of God for salvation. By contrast, Pelagius argued – so Burgess contended (Pelagius’s writings are almost entirely lost) – Jesus Christ functioned as an example to humanity of how to live perfectly, thereby arguing in favour of free will against Augustine’s doctrine of inherent sinfulness. This dialectic plays out in many of Burgess’s fictions, from overt references within novels like the third Enderby novel, The Clockwork Testament, to more subtle references, as in A Clockwork Orange or his masterpiece, Earthly Powers.

Burgess’s other great SF work, The Wanting Seed, written the same year as A Clockwork Orange, makes this theme much more overt. In another dystopian near-present Britain, a Malthusian overpopulation crisis has led to an inversion of societal sexual norms. In order to discourage further procreation, homosexuality has become a highly desirable lifestyle choice, while those who have children are socially shunned. Amid street signs proclaiming ‘It’s sapiens to be homo’, the novel’s protagonist Tristram Foxe attempts to teach history to schoolchildren, but the underlying formalist theory of history he teaches bears a debt to Spengler’s Decline of the West.
as well as the Hegelian synthesis of Burgess's own unusual theological perspective. He utilises the term Augustinianism to designate dominance of the state, often martial or conservative, over the individual, a position the cleric never espoused. Pelagianism, by virtue of its core value of human perfectibility, is distorted into a loose analogue for socialism.

Burgess’s homophilic dystopia, with its gay police wearing black lipstick and covert heterosexuals flirting with men at work while carrying on clandestine affairs with women, has become cult reading in some American TradCon circles, who view the novel erroneously as some kind of prescient warning about what they view as the potential excesses of gay liberation. Obviously this was not Burgess’s intention. Homosexuality occurs persistently in Burgess’s work, and in all occasions it is depicted sympathetically and without prejudice.

The realisation of Paul and Belinda Hussey, the protagonists of Burgess’s Soviet-set comic romp Honey for the Bears, that they are both actually gay is intended to reflect their need to find a third way to live, beyond the constricting Cold War ideological paradigms of Western capitalism and Soviet communism. Burgess often associates homosexuality with artistic talent in his fiction, and the bisexual experiences of Will Shakespeare in Nothing Like The Sun, or the eponymous Byrne, are indicative of their expansive artistic visions. The protagonist of Burgess’s most astounding novel, Earthly Powers, is a gay author of populist trash whose Zelig-like life, encountering the great and the good (and the evil) of the 20th century, is among the most encompassing portraits of human disappointment in English literature. Most significantly, his depiction of the Elizabethan dramatist Christopher Marlowe in A Dead Man in Deptford is a superbly rounded and sympathetic (if somewhat anachronistic) character sketch of a modern gay man trapped in a world slowly emerging from the Middle Ages.

Burgess himself associated for some time with William Burroughs’s circle in Tangiers in the late Sixties, and his noted campness in person and in interview even led contemporaries like Kingsley Amis to speculate about his sexuality. However, though Burgess was often the victim of his first wife’s infidelity, which he writes about movingly in his two volumes of autobiography, both of his biographers concur that he was most likely somewhat asexual, and heterosexually troped. Hence the inverted world of The Wanting Seed is best read as commentary on the difficult situation gay people found themselves in prior to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Britain in 1967.

If the culture depicted in The Wanting Seed is debased - and it is, with the Bible banned (God and the Devil are syncretised into Mr Livedog, a cartoon character for children) and Shakespeare’s works reduced to Dh Wks v Wlm Shkspr in order to save paper - it is not because it is gay-dominant, but because everything is stretched. Food is synthetic, London extends over half the island, and people inhabit, work and learn in sterile tower blocks. Overpopulation trumps all other considerations. The Wanting Seed depicts the flipside of John Brunner’s Stand on Zanzibar, another Malthusian dystopia. Where Brunner accurately predicted the 21st century’s information overload arising from a growing population, Burgess by contrast (and arguably equally accurately) presented a thinning of culture’s relevance.

This dystopia is the set-up for Burgess’s favoured theoretical construct, the binary nature of the duoverse, and its component impulses, Augustinianism and Pelagianism. In The Wanting Seed, Tristram teaches his students that society swings pendularly between these two poles, with Augustinianism representing authoritarianism and Pelagianism its counterbalance of liberalism. These are depicted in the novel as the Gusphase and Pelphase, which are marked by a transitional era of uncertainty called the Interphase. As the novel begins, society is about to emerge from the Pelphase, marked by liberal tropes such as homosexual privilege, into the Interphase which takes up the bulk of the narrative.

Burgess’s novel sets out to demonstrate that both the liberal and the conservative positions, depicted in these ill-fitting theological terms, are ultimately unsustainable. Man’s true nature, he implies, is complete only when it encompasses both in an eternal waltz of thesis, antithesis and volatile synthesis, such as that described by Tristram in the novel. Burgess’s Manicheism is an oscillating flux of opposites in which the debate may only resolve itself in order to commence a new cycle of opposition. In The Wanting Seed and A Clockwork Orange, where these positions are embodied in rival political movements, the vying forces ought to be more accurately called Hobbesian and Rousseauvian than Augustinian and Pelagian.

The great SF legacy of The Wanting Seed, however, relates to its conclusion which Burgess intended to embody the “red in tooth and claw” nature of pure Augustinianism as he understood it. Released from Pentonville Prison and in search of his (inevitably unfaithful) pregnant wife Beatrice-Joanna, the novel’s protagonist Tristram Foxe embarks on his ‘abasis’ towards Preston, where he believes his wife has gone. Before he has left
greater London, he encounters groups of people engaged in ‘Eucharistic ingestion’, and he eats meat for the first time in his life. A soldier in Aylesbury tells Tristram that he and his friends are ‘at least civilized cannibals. It makes all the difference if you get it out of a tin.’ Beyond Nuneaton, the ingesting is accompanied by ritual orgies, and Tristram later records ‘Dionysian revels at Sandon, Meaford and the cross-roads near Whitmore.’

After a lengthy trek across a chaotic Britain, Tristram is eventually pressganged into the army and sent to war. On the battlefield, he discovers the horrible truth about the conflict, which evokes the kind of meaningless eternal war engaged by Oceania in Orwell’s 1984. The sole reason for fighting is to thin the population and to provide a source of cheap protein. This shocking revelation was later allegedly borrowed by Harry Harrison when his own 1966 Malthusian dystopic novel Make Room! Make Room! was adapted for the cinema as Soylent Green. According to the account in Burgess’s autobiography, a notoriously unreliable document, ‘Harry Harrison, on his own confession during the downing of a bottle of Scotch in my New York flat, stole the ending for the film of his novel No Room! No Room!, called Soylent Green.’

There are multiple problems with this account, not least of which is Burgess’s failure to remember the title of Harrison’s novel. More crucially, Harrison was excluded from the production of Soylent Green deliberately by the movie’s producers. Whatever the truth of the anecdote, Burgess’s novel predated both Harrison’s book and the subsequent cinematic adaptation, and the cannibalistic conclusion to Soylent Green matches that of Burgess’s novel and not Harrison’s. The Wanting Seed’s ending also influenced the conclusion of Kingsley Amis’s own foray into SF, an anti-Catholic uchronia titled The Alteration (1976), in which a young chorister faces the prospect of gelding to render him a castrato singer in a world where the Reformation never happened. That novel’s ending also includes the revelation that the all-powerful Pope intends to initiate a war to address the overpopulation problem arising from Catholicism’s rigid doctrinal position on reproduction.

Both of Burgess’s early Sixties dystopias owe a debt to Orwell’s 1984, and this was a debt Burgess sought to repay with the publication of a bizarre tribute in 1978. 1985 is a book in two sections, comprising a reimagining of Orwell’s dystopia set amid the industrial unrest of Seventies Britain, and a strange critical examination of Orwell’s legacy wherein Burgess at one point interviews himself. Burgess’s solipsism was not restricted to this particular text. His predilection for referencing himself and his own work when critically appraising that of other, arguably greater, writers can be found in his critical works on Joyce, Shakespeare, Hemingway and Lawrence, as well as throughout his autobiographical writings. Often these self-references function well as colourful anecdotes or oblique insights, and can be illuminating. But Burgess’s self-aggrandisement can also be found in the insertion of a ‘Jacke Wilson’ as narrator of A Dead Man in Deptford, his novel about Marlowe, and in the massively hubristic conflation of a colonial lecturer, Mr Burgess, with Shakespeare in Nothing Like The Sun.

1985 similarly suffers from this kind of hubris. Burgess’s attempt to parse 1984 as a darkly comic novel borne out of the deprivations of mid-century Britain would have been unconvincing had it emerged in the immediate aftermath of Orwell’s novel; coming as it did some decades on, his misreading of one of the most influential novels of the 20th century through the perspective of his own conservative expatriate perspective on Seventies Britain seems perverse. This almost willingly deliberate misstep persists into the fictional tribute section, a novella set in “Tucland”, a Britain dominated by the leaders of the Trade Union Congress. The protagonist Bev Jones (perhaps intended to evoke Beveridge and Bevan, the architects of the welfare state) is roundly betrayed by a state which is selling itself out to oil-rich Arabs to keep feeding the union-dominated beast.

Like Orwell’s Winston Smith, Bev becomes a free-thinker, challenging the orthodoxies of the day, and pays the price of re-education, suppression and ultimately destruction. Burgess’s Tucland strips the individual of all that is humane and loving. Bev loses his wife in a fire because the fire brigade is on strike, his underage daughter to the harem of an oil sheikh and his job to his failure to adhere to a reductivist, almost Stalinist, educational orthodoxy. But here the parallels (and indeed the tribute to Orwell) end. Though Bev’s Orphic descent into the underworld of a Britain on the verge of collapse has some brief moments to enjoy, not least a subversive reprise of A Clockwork Orange in which the droogs are transformed into a multicultural gang engaged in underground classes of Latin, Burgess’s dystopia reads like what it was – a cack-handed misunderstanding of Seventies England by someone who had not lived in the country for a long time, and who got their information from right-wing newspapers. The book, and especially the novella element, were roundly slammed by critics, and if anything 1985 has aged badly even from that low
assessment, as so many of Burgess's predictions proved laughably false (a critique he later accepted, noting only that he had accurately predicted the birth of a royal heir called William in the novella.)

Following the cinematic release of Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange in 1971, Burgess became in demand as a screenwriter, and his fictional output from then until the publication of Earthly Powers in 1980 is patchy at best. Often, his novels were afterthoughts to screenwriting commissions, such as his duology about early Christianity, Man of Nazareth and Kingdom of the Wicked, which derived from his work on Franco Zeffirelli's Jesus of Nazareth miniseries and its sequel A.D.

This tendency to relegate his own fictional output to the status of self-derivative hackwork is most notable in The End of the World News (1982), an inconsistent attempt to merge three unrelated scripts into a single coherent novel. The Burgess archive at the Harry Ransom Center in the University of Texas at Austin includes files on the component projects which were part-salvaged into The End of the World News. It is perhaps indicative that all of these failed to reach the screen or stage.

The earliest of the three is a libretto for an off-Broadway musical called Trotsky's in New York! for which Burgess wrote the text in 1975, intending that Stanley Silverman, who had composed the music for Burgess's translation of Sophocles's Oedipus Tyrannos, would provide the music. In the end Silverman didn't deliver, and Burgess, himself an accomplished composer, completed it in 1980, but it has never yet been performed, unlike Burgess's other major choral work, Blooms of Dublin, which is based on Joyce's Ulysses. This libretto features Trotsky's visit to the Big Apple in 1917, where he lived for three months before returning to Russia following the February Revolution of that year.

The second phylum of The End of the World News derives from a TV script Burgess wrote in 1977 about the life of Sigmund Freud, which notably features a weak, older Freud chatting casually with his own sentient cancerous tumour. The final element of the triptych was Puma, a movie script Burgess had developed for Zanuck/Brown in 1976, and which was to be an 'end of the world' disaster movie loosely based on When Worlds Collide. This unpromising source material is the element which renders the entirety of the text science fictional.

Puma, rendered presumably for copyright reasons as Lynx in the novel, is a planetoid hurtling towards Earth in the then-future year 2000. The Lynx phylum is Burgess's most traditional foray into SF, insofar that it functions within the limiting paradigm of the Hollywood disaster movie narrative model. It is a classic three-act narrative, complete with villain and love interest, which holds interest primarily because of how Burgess uses the hackneyed format to re-examine elements of his own oeuvre.

The narrative commences with Valentine Brodie teaching SF studies to his class, thereby synecdochally echoing the overall lecture format of the frame narrative: "Val was an instructor in science fiction, and he was himself moderately well-known as a practitioner of the form." Though his course commences chronologically with the lunar proto-SF of Cyrano de Bergerac, itself an unorthodox starting point for SF studies, he soon amends this to suggest that 'the true progenitor of the genre' is 'Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year'.

This critical analysis is unique, and more likely Burgess has Brodie propose it because Defoe's hybrid history/novel functions as an ur-text for his own disaster narrative. Defoe's journalistic analysis of the 1665 plague outbreak in London bears little of the speculative nature of SF and lacks the defining characteristic of the genre, a Suvinian novum. However, just like Burgess's Lynx narrative, it explores how people cope in a disaster environment, both in their denial of reality and in their adaptation to it. Defoe's text also critically examines the response of the state, and ultimately it depicts survivors sheltering from the disaster on ships.

Brodie's provocative statement generates a critical debate among his students who offer various definitions of SF. One suggests that it "ought to have scientists in it", an objection likely derived from Kingsley Amis's famous study of SF, New Maps of Hell. Another requires that SF should function as prophecy, and in accordance with this, Brodie's own debut novel Not to Call Night not only predicts a Lynx-type disaster, but also inspires his father-in-law, Professor Frame, and the government as to where to locate their spaceship project. The classroom debate, a format reprised from both The Wanting Seed and 1985, results in Brodie curiously dismissing his own chosen métier as trivial, mediocre trash. Brodie appears to be disillusioned in both of his vocations, the creation of SF and its critical study.

What follows is a curious repurposing of early key moments from Burgess's back catalogue. A song from his early libretto The Eve of St Venus is repurposed before Burgess then switches attention to his sole previous attempt to fictionally depict the apocalypse, the seminal conclusion to The Wanting Seed. This is introduced firstly via the perspective of Brodie's nemesis, Bartlett, who notes with concern that the approach of Lynx to-
wards Earth, ‘was inducing an instability manifested in various bizarre forms – sudden bad temper, often of a murderous kind, in normally placid temperaments; placidity in the normally violent; incursions of poetic inspiration among stolid bank managers and insurance brokers; satyriasis; sadism; a longing, as in pregnancy, for strange foods. Bartlett knew from one of his medical colleagues that the menstrual cycle, especially in girls under twenty, was being disrupted.’

This description evokes the swing towards the Gus- phase in *The Wanting Seed*. Released from Pentonville Prison and in search of his pregnant wife Beatrice-Joanna, Tristram Foxe embarks on his ‘anabasis’ towards Preston, where he believes his wife has gone. Brodie and his Falstaffian sidekick Willett progress, again from a starting point of involuntary incarceration, towards the rural location where Brodie’s wife is located, in many ways echoes Tristram’s earlier, failed, odyssey through a Dionysian Britain. They too encounter cannibalism and ritualised sex, and just as in the earlier novel, their journey is paralleled by that of a heavily pregnant woman. They even encounter the commercialisation of human meat, the can of ideogrammed Chinese human bully beef from *The Wanting Seed* rebranded in *The End of the World News* as ‘Mensch Spongemeats’.

How does all this relate to a libretto about Trotsky or a drama about Freud, a bewildered reader might reasonably ask, and Burgess provides two answers, one somewhat tongue-in-cheek and another more honest one. It transpires that the Trotsky and Freud narratives are video-discs being watched by children on the ark-spacehip fleeing the destroyed Earth, their personalities now reduced by the Chinese whispers of folk memory to ‘Trot Sky’ and ‘Fred Fraud’, experts in ‘Pol’ and ‘Sike’ respectively. In this respect, they are not dissimilar to God’s reduction to Mr Livedog in *The Wanting Seed*, and indeed Livedog makes a reappearance in this novel also.

The loose connectivity between these disparate narratives is in turn implausibly explained away in a preface preceding the novel proper, in which Burgess, playing the role of his own literary executor, discovers a note from the ‘author’ of *The End of the World News* in which he claims to have been inspired by an image of US President Jimmy Carter watching three television sets at once. The more honest answer, which can be read between the lines of that same sheepish introduction, is that Burgess wished to disown the text as an obvious piece of hackwork. It is perhaps telling that it is the only one of his novels copyrighted in his second wife Liana’s name.

The figure of Valentine Brodie, like that of Kenneth Toomey in *Earthly Powers*, reveals Burgess’s own anxieties about his position as a popular novelist who desired to be considered among the great literary experimenters. Toomey is aware of his artistic limitations and laments them agonisingly. Brodie, a SF author who appears to hate SF, is similarly conflicted about his calling. Burgess, echoing both, is at his most vulnerable as a writer when attempting to cover up his own genre hackwork, a Hollywood screenplay about the end of the world.

Yet for all his reluctance to associate with SF in his latter career, Burgess found it hard to escape. SF found its way into the fourth and last of his *Enderby* novels, in a coda made up of a superb SF short story in which Shakespeare’s plays are communicated to the Bard by time-travelling fans from the future, whom he then kills. Again, Burgess’s anxiety over becoming associated with SF remained paramount; he attributed the story to his poet-protagonist, F.X. Enderby. This neatly ties in with the original introduction of Burgess’s reclusive poet character, who, in 1963’s *Inside Mr Enderby*, is secretly visited by a tour group of time-travelling schoolchildren from the future, a scenario accurately described by Adam Roberts as inherently science fictional.

Yet despite Burgess’s apparent scorn for the genre (he once sneered that that Isaac Asimov’s novels would make good films because ‘there’s not much literature in them’), Burgess continued throughout his career as a reviewer and critic to find endless exceptions to his elitist dismissal of SF. He wrote an introduction to J.G. Ballard’s short stories and persistently reviewed Ballard’s work positively, including *The Unlimited Dream Company* alongside Keith Roberts’s *Pavane* and Aldiss’s *Life in the West* among his 99 greatest novels of the late 20th century.

Additionally, his achievements within the genre, as the author of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed*, are impossible to dismiss, no matter how strenuous the attempts Burgess made to distance himself from them. Like Valentine Brodie, Anthony Burgess was a reluctant SF author, but a prescient and admirable one, though perhaps, again like Brodie, far from being one of the genre’s most gifted critics.

**Infobox**

Anthony Burgess’s papers are dispersed among multiple archives, most notably the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester (www.anthonyburgess.org), the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Tex-
as at Austin, the Anthony Burgess Centre at the Université d’Angers in France (http://www.masterbibangers.net/ABC/) and at McMaster’s University in Ontario in Canada. While the bulk of Burgess’s personal possessions and library are in Manchester, many of his original drafts are in Austin, while the typescript for A Clockwork Orange is in Canada.

A Clockwork Orange has sold millions of copies and been translated over 50 times into nearly 30 different languages, and has been adapted for cinema on three occasions, including versions by Stanley Kubrick and Andy Warhol, and for the stage as a play and a musical.

The Wanting Seed likewise remains in print and is one of Burgess’s most popular works of fiction. 1985 and The End of the World News, as some of Burgess’s less regarded works, migrate in and out of print, though 1985 was recently re-released in 2013 by Serpent’s Tail Press in the UK. Burgess’s criticism of SF as a genre, as well as brief essays on Stanislaw Lem, Brian Aldiss and J.G. Ballard can be found in his second collection of journalism, Homage to Qwert Yuiop, published in the United States as But Do Blondes Prefer Gentlemen?

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**Star Trek’s Federation: A Keynesian Post-Scarcity Utopia**

Victor Grech and Peter Grech

**Introduction**

ECONOMICS IS A social science that studies the factors which determine the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, and the various interactions between these factors. The term is derived from the Greek οἶκος (house) and νόμος (nomos, custom/law). This is a critical field of study since goods, commodities and resources are always finite and the individual and the group to which the individual belongs must choose how to acquire and allocate these limited assets. Such choices may be influenced by central (such as state) planning, markets or prices and constitute an “economic problem” (Keynes 1930b), as will be explained.

The discipline is commonly divided into two separate fields of study. Microeconomics examines the behaviour of the smaller and more basic economic elements such as individuals and their own markets. Macroeconomics studies the behaviour of entire economies that in turn consist of aggregates of individuals (Mankiw 2011).

National macroeconomic approaches have varied over the ages and are naturally expected to continue to change in the future. Star Trek is a popular science fiction franchise that comprises over 700 hours of viewing time, “a rolling and seemingly endless adventure, a continual reaffirmation of the Campbellian monomyth” (Grech “Picard,” 20). The series spans the 22nd-24th centuries and includes the United Federation of Planets, a polity of allied worlds, a “(l)iberal, post-capitalist, almost perfectly socialist utopian democracy that embraces a constitutional republic” (Grech “Philosophical Concepts,” 3-4). In this future

most (if not all) of the major problems facing the human species have been resolved and the Earth has since been transformed into a human paradise, with […] a literate and compassionate population that has learned to appreciate life as a grand adventure” (Roddenberry 1987, 35).

The Federation practices a markedly different economic

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macroeconomic approach toward the end of the timeline depicted in the franchise when compared to the contemporary era.

This paper will review the relevant origins of current economic theory in developed countries, limiting its purview to the works of the economists Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes. This is particularly appropriate as 2016 is Star Trek’s 50th anniversary and the 70th anniversary of Keynes’s death. This essay will also contrast extant economic practices with those depicted in the fictional Star Trek future. It will be shown that the Federation comprises a Keynesian post-scarcity economy, as averred by Keynes in his optimistic predictions,

in days not so very remote, […] the greatest change which has ever occurred in the material environment of life for human beings in the aggregate […] will all happen gradually, […] there will be ever larger and larger classes and groups of people from whom problems of economic necessity have been practically removed (Keynes 1930b).

This paper will also demonstrate the contrasts that arise when members of the Federation, through a form of time travel, encounter contemporary individuals who are accustomed to capitalism. As Manu Saadia, the author of the forthcoming book Trekonomics notes, encounters of this sort are akin to

a modern-day version of Gulliver’s Travels. […] [R]einvents the old Enlightenment trope of the well-meaning explorer who grapples with the idiosyncrasies of the not-so-exotic tribes he encounters. […] When our world appears through strangers’ eyes, the audience’s perspective flips. This trope reveals the comical strangeness in what we consider familiar and habitual. We are led to realize that nothing in our world is in fact natural. Everything that we take for granted is arbitrary, the result of social convention, chance or historical accident, and will inevitably change (Saadia, Trekonomics, chapter 1).

This paper will further depict the deliberately exaggerated differences between the Federation and the Ferengi economic systems since the latter constitutes a deliberately overstated and parodic version of capitalism. This paper will also consider the circumstances that lead to persistent inequality to this very day, shaping our society more on Ferengi lines than on those of the Federation. Reference will be made to Thomas Piketty’s Capital in the Twenty-First Century (2014) since this authoritative work reviews broad historical global economic trends and suggests possible actions that may mitigate the current economic divides between individuals and nations.

**Adam Smith**

Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a Scottish moral philosopher and a key figure in the period of Scottish Enlightenment. He is widely considered to be the father of modern economics (Haakonssen) and his theories were published in two books, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). The two works provide somewhat contrasting views. According to Ekelund and Hebert, “in the former, sympathy is the moral faculty that holds self-interest in check, whereas in the latter, competition is the economic faculty that restrains self-interest” (2007, 105).

Smith’s most oft quoted maxim is that the “unintended consequences of intended action” benefit society at large, and he referred to this as “the invisible hand.” He asserted that the entrepreneur, “[b]y pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (Smith 1776). This refers to the actions of individuals who are driven by rational self-interest to better their lot in the setting of competition from peers, and who thereby inadvertently improve the economic lot of society at large, fostering prosperity for all. A free market is necessary for this to occur and for this reason, Smith is also known as the father of free market economics.

Smith also maintained that productive labour should be made more so by the process of competition which leads to a lowering of prices and thereby an extension of markets, resulting in more demand and the need for increasing supply and turnover. He also proposed that reducing barriers to business, both domestically and internationally (including lowering taxation) would stimulate economic activity, and enhance not only individual but also eventually State prosperity.

However, this viewpoint exaggerates and lauds self-interest as a magnanimous and philanthropic force that ultimately and invariably benefits all of society. This is unrealistic as evidenced not only by the poor working conditions and poverty of many workers during the industrial revolution (Jensen) but also by the current widening divide between the haves and have nots due to “worrisome forces of divergence” (Piketty 23).
John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) was a prominent economist who refined earlier work on business cycles. He is widely considered to be the father of modern macroeconomics and one of the most influential economists of the 20th century (Clarke). His book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), expounded the theory that a market economy naturally tends to restore itself to full employment after temporary shocks, depressions and recessions. Keynes wrote this work during the Great Depression and blamed the underlying problem as being a shortage of demand in the supply and demand equilibrium. He recommended that governments make up the shortfall in demand by borrowing and spending, thus creating demand and stimulating the economy. This concept is known as Keynesian economics and overthrows a basic tenet of classical economics: that saving results in economic growth.

However, Keynes also wrote a short essay in two parts entitled “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren” in the journal *The Nation and Athenaeum* (Keynes 1930a, 1930b), which was later reprinted in *Essays in Persuasion* (1933). This essay conjectured on the ways in which the global economy might eventually evolve, ending with optimistic predictions for a utopian economic future. Keynes propounded the eventual probability of the world evolving into a post-scarcity economy, one in which goods, services and information would be universally accessible since

[a]ll kinds of social customs and economic practices, affecting the distribution of wealth and of economic rewards and penalties, which we now maintain at all costs, however distasteful and unjust they may be in themselves, because they are tremendously useful in promoting the accumulation of capital, shall then be free, at last, to discard (Keynes 1930b, 37).

In brief, an idealistic prospect, “one in which the need for accumulation had withered away” (Chernomas 1984, 1007), a future wherein “[w]e shall once more value ends above means and prefer the good to the useful” (Keynes 1930b, 37). A vast amount has been written about this relatively short essay, to the extent that an edited collection of essays has been published (Pecchi and Piga 2008). Selected quotations from the essay will be used to contrast Keynes’s vision with that of Gene Roddenberry’s United Federation of Planets.

**The United Federation of Planets**

“Many worlds, human and otherwise, have joined together to form a Federation of mutual benefits and services” (Roddenberry 1987, 35). The utopian United Federation of Planets appears to operate as a post-scarcity economy which embraces rationalism, tolerance, altruism and egalitarian meritocracy. The economics of the Federation were not explored when the show was first aired. As noted in the *Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide* by the franchises’ creator, Gene Roddenberry, “television today simply will not let us get into details of Earth’s politics of Star Trek’s century; for example, which socio-economic system ultimately worked out best” (Roddenberry 1967, 29).

However, twenty years later, in *The Next Generation* and in the following series, as well as in the movies that overlapped the various series, these restrictions had become passé (Roddenberry 1987, 35). It is abundantly clear that the polity does not internally circulate currency as we know it. “When the new world economy took shape in the late twenty second century […] money went the way of the dinosaur, Fort Knox was turned into a museum” (Bole, “Dark Frontier”).

When a woman from 1986 protests “don’t tell me they don’t use money in the twenty-third century,” Captain Kirk almost sheepishly replies “well, they don’t” (Nimoy, *Star Trek IV*). This is reaffirmed by Captain Picard: “money doesn’t exist in the twenty-fourth century.” A flabbergasted 21st century human expostulates “No money! That means you don’t get paid.” To which Captain Picard replies “the acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives. …We work to better ourselves …and the rest of humanity” (Frakes, *First Contact*). This was prefigured by Keynes, as will be discussed later, who professed that

[t]he love of money as a possession – as distinguished from the love of money as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life – will be recognised for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease (Keynes 1930b, 37).

The contrast is even starker when the Starship Enterprise encounters a 20th century human, “Ralph Offenhouse, age fifty five, occupation financier” who is found in suspended animation with a terminal disease, and who is promptly revived and cured by the Enterprise medical
team (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”). Ralph is monomaniac:

I need to make a phone call as soon as possible. [...] I have provided for myself. I have a substantial portfolio. It’s critical that I check on it. Let the bank know that I am alive and well. [...] Well, do you at least have a copy of The Wall Street Journal? [...] I have to phone Geneva right away about my accounts. The interest alone could be enough to buy this ship. [...] I demand a phone, or a radio whatever else you have. Frankly, enough is enough. Especially under the circumstances, and considering what I paid for this procedure! I must make contact with my lawyer. (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”)

This echoes Keynes, who was fully cognisant of the cumulative effect of compound interest. He specifically observed that “the power of compound interest over two hundred years is such as to stagger the imagination” (Keynes 1930a, 97). Ralph Offenhouse further expostulates with the starship’s Captain:

I’m sure whatever it is seems very important to you, but my situation is far more critical. [...] Believe me, I’m fully cognisant of where I am, and when. It is simply that I have more to protect than a man in your position could possibly imagine. No offence, but a military career has never been considered to be upwardly mobile. I must contact my lawyer. [...] he was a full partner in a very important firm. Rest assured, that firm is still operating. (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”)

The 24th century crew comment disparagingly out of earshot: “these are the most unusual humans I have ever encountered. [...] Well, from what I’ve seen of our guests, there’s not much to redeem them. It makes one wonder how our species survived the twenty-first century.” This also echoes Keynes who stated “I feel sure that with a little more experience we shall use the new-found bounty of nature quite differently from the way in which the rich use it to-day, and will map out for ourselves a plan of life quite otherwise than theirs” (Keynes 1930b, 38). Clearly, capitalism in the Star Trek universe has been consigned to a somewhat distasteful past history, an almost bizarre anthropological aberrancy. Ralph later partially apologises:

Ralph is shaken, his worldview and lifelong beliefs exposed as not only outdated but puerile. The following exchange neatly summarises and reiterates the first Keynesian quotation in this paper:

Picard: This is the twenty fourth century. Material needs no longer exist.
Ralph: Then what’s the challenge?
Picard: The challenge, Mister Offenhouse, is to improve yourself. To enrich yourself. Enjoy it (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”).

In the Federation, labour and leisure are clearly indistinguishable. This was also prefigured by Keynes whose quotation applies not only to his utopian future vision but also to the fictional United Federation of Planets.

“I will be those peoples, who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life, who will be able to enjoy the abundance when it comes” (Keynes 1930b, 37).

I didn’t mean to come on so strong. It’s just that I’ve built my whole life on knowing what’s going on. For the first time I feel completely out of touch. It’s making me crazy. You can understand that? (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”)

But in between the previous quotation and the ones before, this telling exchange summarises the differences between current economics and the Federation post-scarcity economy.

Picard: A lot has changed in the past three hundred years. People are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of things. We’ve eliminated hunger, want, the need for possessions. We have grown out of our infancy.
Ralph: You’ve got it all wrong. It’s never been about possessions. It’s about power.
Picard: Power to do what?
Ralph: To control your life, your destiny.
Picard: That kind of control is an illusion.
Ralph: Really? I’m here, aren’t I? I should be dead but I’m not. (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”)
The Ferengi

As if the contrast between the utopian Federation future and contemporary times is insufficient, the Star Trek franchise portrays a parodic vision of extreme capitalism reified in an alien species, the Ferengi. This race venerates profit above all else, and thrives on cheating, bribery and misogyny in their relentless quest to accumulate profit. Ferengi who fail to behave as per custom risk having their “business license” revoked and becoming literal outcasts in Ferengi society (Brooks, “Body Parts”).

Trading is licenced by the “Ferengi Commerce Authority” (FCA) a Ferengi government agency supervised by a “Board of Liquidators” who are charged with overseeing business practices as per the official “Ferengi Trade By-Laws” (Brooks, “Body Parts”; Siddig, “Profit and Lace”).

Female Ferengi are forbidden from trading or owning property and the FCA had the power to punish Ferengi females found to have earned profit by selling them into indentured servitude (Siddig, “Profit and Lace”). FCA agents are known as “liquidators,” and are greatly feared by Ferengi traders (Siddig, “Profit and Lace”).

The Ferengi equivalents of heaven and hell are also based on monetary values. The “Divine Treasury” is the heaven to which financially successful Ferengi aspire to after death. It is said to be made of pure “ latinum,” the gold equivalent for Ferengi – as will be explained later. The newly deceased are met by a "Registrar" at the gates to the Divine Treasury and if they are found worthy, the Registrar accepts their bribe and ushers them inside, where they are then met by the “Blessed Exchequer.” Their profit and loss statements are reviewed and if found to be favourable, the deceased are allowed to bid on a new life under the supervision of the “Celestial Auctioneers” (Conway, “Little Green Men”; Bole, “False Profits”). Ferengi hell is known as the “Vault of Eternal Destitution” (Conway, “Little Green Men”).

Ferengi customs are best appreciated by referring to the equivalent of the Ferengi Bible, the “Rules of Acquisition” (Behr), a numbered series of aphorisms, guidelines, and principles that provide the immutable foundation of business philosophy in Ferengi culture, “unabridged and fully annotated, with all 47 commentaries, all 900 major and minor judgments, all 10,000 considered opinions. There’s a rule for every conceivable situation” (Bole, “False Profits”).

The Rules of Acquisition may be arbitrarily but conveniently grouped by theme and only a few representative examples will be given. Several refer to common business sense, e.g.:

- Rule 3: Never spend more for an acquisition than you have to (Allen, “The Maquis, Part II”).
- Rule 45: Expand or die (Bole, “False profits”).
- Rule 57: Good customers are as rare as latinum. Treasure them (Kolb “Armageddon Game”).
- Rule 62: The riskier the road, the greater the profit (Conway, “Little Green Men”).
- Rule 74: Knowledge equals profit (Kroeker, “Inside Man”).
- Rule 98: Every man has his price (Lobl, “In the Pale Moonlight”).
- Rule 112: Never have sex with the boss’s sister (Livingston, “Playing God”).

However, blatant misogyny is patent in:

- Rule 94: Females and finances don’t mix (Siddig, “Profit and Lace”).

The fraudster trait is unmistakable in:

- Rule 239: Never be afraid to mislabel a product (Brooks, “Body Parts”)
- Rule 1: Once you have their money, you never give it back (Livingston, “The Nagus”).
- Rule 17: A contract is a contract is a contract... but only between Ferengi (Brooks, “Body Parts”).

The trait to cold-heartedly exploit one and all is evidenced in:

- Rule 6: Never allow family to stand in the way of opportunity (Livingston “The Nagus”)
- Rule 21: Never place friendship above profit (Livingston, “Rules of Acquisition”).
- Rule 111: Treat people in your debt like family... exploit them (Vejar, “The Darkness and the Light”).
- Rule 211: Employees are the rungs on the ladder of success. Don’t hesitate to step on them (Burton, “Bar Association”).

And finally, the rules that most parody Ferengi and the rank capitalism that they embrace are:

- Rule 10: Greed is eternal (Bole “False profits”).
- Rule 18: A Ferengi without profit is no Ferengi at all (Auberjonois, “Ferengi Love Songs”).
- Rule 23: Nothing is more important than your health... except for your money (Whitmore, “Acquisition”).
- Rule 263: Never allow doubt to tarnish your lust for latinum (Burton, “Bar Association”).
- Rule 285: No good deed ever goes unpunished (Bole, “The Collaborator”).
- Unnumbered: A man is only worth the sum of his possessions (Whitmore, “Acquisition”).

This code of behaviour directly violates Keynes’s credo. “When the accumulation of wealth is no longer of high social importance, there will be great changes in the code of morals [...] by which we have exalted some of the most distasteful of human qualities into the position of the highest virtues” (Keynes 1930b, 36). However, even in the absence of Keynes’ teachings, Ferengi behaviour so lampoons the worst of capitalist behaviour that the race becomes an outright parodic caricature of capitalist comportment. Indeed, Ferengi conduct clearly demonstrates “that avarice is a vice, that the exaction of usury is a misdemeanour, and the love of money is detestable” (Keynes 1930b, 37).

One particular monologue summarizes the enlightened Federation’s view of the Ferengi

I’ll never understand this obsession with accumulating material wealth. You spend your entire life plotting and scheming to acquire more and more possessions, until your living areas are bursting with useless junk. Then you die, your relatives sell everything and start the cycle all over again (Lynch, “Q-Less”).

Current extreme capitalist demeanour as inspiration for the Ferengi species is actually acknowledged by a Ferengi bartender in a conversation with Sisko, the commanding officer of the space station Deep Space 9.

Commander, I think I’ve figured out why humans don’t like Ferengis [...] humans used to be a lot like Ferengi. Greedy, acquisitive, interested only in profit. We’re a constant reminder of a part of your past you’d like to forget. [...] But you’re overlooking something. Humans used to be a lot worse than the Ferengi. Slavery, concentration camps, interstellar wars. We have nothing in our past that approaches that kind of barbarism. You see? We’re nothing like you. We’re better (Friedman, “The Jem’Hadar”).

Currency

The technology in Star Trek includes replicators which are able to produce just about anything if given the correct template/pattern (Grech “The Transporter,” 52). One would have thought that this would instantly result in a post-scarcity economy unless the usage of these devices consumes something (such as energy) that is relatively scarce, re-invoking the tenets of supply and demand and thereby necessitating a form of medium of exchange, material or electronic.

Indeed, some sort of currency appears to be in use in the Federation but its role is never quite pinned down. The currency is called latinum and is a rare silver-colored liquid that is used as currency by the Ferengi and several others races. Denominations in increasing value are the slip, the strip, the bar, and the brick. The liquid is said to unreplicable and for ease of use, is bound to replicatable (and therefore valueless) gold to produce a solid (as opposed to awkward liquid) currency (Lobl, “Who Mourns for Morn?”). The occasional need for currency by humans can result to humorous situations:

Jake: I’m human, I don’t have any money.
Nog (a Ferengi): It’s not my fault that your species decided to abandon currency-based economics in favour of some philosophy of self-enhancement.
Jake: Hey, watch it. There’s nothing wrong with our philosophy. We work to better ourselves and the rest of humanity.
Nog: What does that mean exactly?
Jake: It means. It means we don’t need money (Dorn, “In the Cards”).

Post-Scarcity Economy

Keynes noted that the existential “economic problem, the struggle for subsistence, always has been hitherto the primary, most pressing problem of the human race – not only of the human race, but of the whole of the biological kingdom from the beginnings of life in its most primitive forms” in the toil for survival (Keynes 1930b, 36). He attempted to predict long-term trends, clearly stating that the
purpose in this essay, however, is not to examine the present or the near future, but to disembarass myself of short views and take wings into the future. What can we reasonably expect the level of our economic life to be a hundred years hence? What are the economic possibilities for our grandchildren? (Keynes 1930a, 96).

His paper commenced on a historical note, observing that in

the beginning of the eighteenth century, there was no very great change in the standard of life of the average man living in the civilised centres of the earth. […] But no progressive, violent change. […] This slow rate of progress, or lack of progress, was due to two reasons – to the remarkable absence of important technical improvements and to the failure of capital to accumulate (Keynes 1930a, 96).

Since the essay was penned during the Great Depression of the 1930s, he alluded to this as a transient setback.

We are suffering just now from a bad attack of economic pessimism. […] We are suffering, not from the rheumatics of old age, but from the growing-pains of over-rapid changes, from the painfulness of readjustment between one economic period and another. The prevailing world depression, the enormous anomaly of unemployment in a world full of wants, […] blind us to what is going on under the surface to the true interpretation of the trend of things (Keynes 1930a, 36).

Keynes attributed this temporary upheaval to

the increase of technical efficiency [that] has been taking place faster than we can deal with the problem of labour absorption; the improvement in the standard of life has been a little too quick. […] What is the result? In spite of an enormous growth in the population of the world, which it has been necessary to equip with houses and machines, the average standard of life in Europe and the United States has been raised, I think, about fourfold. The growth of capital has been on a scale which is far beyond a hundredfold of what any previous age had known (Keynes 1930a, 97).

Keynes predicted that in “a few years […] we may be able to perform all the operations of agriculture, mining, and manufacture with a quarter of the human effort to which we have been accustomed.” This would almost inevitably lead to “technological unemployment” (Keynes 1930a, 98) since the rate at which workers are laid off due to increasingly efficient work practices outruns “the pace at which we can find new uses for labour.” Keynes happily anticipated this since “[a]ll this means in the long run that mankind is solving its economic problem.” Despite this, he opined that the available commodities would increase “the standard of life in progressive countries […] four and eight times as high as it is to-day.” He also hedged his bets by acknowledging “the possibility of a far greater progress still” (Keynes 1930a, 98).

He concluded that “assuming no important wars and no important increase in population, the economic problem may be solved, or be at least within sight of solution, within a hundred years” (Keynes 1930b, 36). He also admitted that the current capitalist code of conduct must perforce continue awhile as a necessary evil until this future was reached. “Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight” (Keynes 1930b, 37), viewing this period as an evolutionary phase until the post-scarcity condition is reached. Keynes therefore anticipated

a Marxist revisionist prediction fulfilled by capitalist reform. Labor, which is the sole producer of value added, inherits control and ownership over all that is produced. Private property is no longer a source of economic power, its historic purpose of saving and accumulating having outlived its usefulness (Chernomas, 1023).

Keynes assumed that the problem would metamorphose into one of excessive leisure, with a novel set of troubles. Referring to the common man, he wondered how he would “use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well” (Keynes 1930b, 36). He commented: “I think with dread of the readjustment of the habits and instincts of the ordinary man, bred into him for countless generations, which he may be asked to discard within a few decades” (Keynes 1930b, 37). A par-
tial solution is offered, such that individuals who desire purposeful work will be allowed to, and will be “glad to have small duties and tasks and routines [...] to make what work there is still to be done to be as widely shared as possible” (Keynes 1930b, 37).

However, at least to the present time, Keynes’s predictions were wildly optimistic. He bluntly noted that “the needs of human beings may seem to be insatiable. But they fall into two classes – those needs which are absolute” and are necessary to survival and those “of the second class” which “make us feel superior to, our fellows.” He correctly noted that the latter “may indeed be insatiable; for the higher the general level, the higher still are they” and this is precisely what we find to this day, an Adam Smith scenario run wild (Keynes 1930b, 37). Thomas Piketty in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has described this as the “central contradiction of capitalism” (Piketty 2013, 571) wherein wealth grows faster than economic output and

the entrepreneur inevitably tends to become a rentier, more and more dominant over those who own nothing but their labour. Once constituted, capital reproduces itself faster than output increases. The past devours the future (Piketty 2013, 571).

Keynes was therefore naïve in his assumption that that once essential needs are satisfied, then we would “prefer to devote our further energies to non-economic purposes” (Keynes 1930b, 37) since it is manifestly obvious that the richer are becoming increasingly richer, the middle class is shrinking, and the inequality gap rises inexorably in an “endless inegalitarian spiral” (Piketty 2013, 515). This is an almost inevitable economic consequence since

[w]hen the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of output and income, as it did in the nineteenth century and seems quite likely to do again in the twenty-first, capitalism automatically generates arbitrary and unsustainable inequalities that radically undermine the meritocratic values on which democratic societies are based (Piketty 2013, 1).

**Current capitalism**

Keynes acknowledged that the entrepreneur would continue to strive to better him or herself, averring that “[t]he strenuous purposeful money-makers may carry all of us along with them into the lap of economic abundance” (Keynes 1930b, 36), harking back to the *laissez-faire* invisible hand theories of Adam Smith. Keynes labelled this type of individual “[t]he “purposive” man [...] always trying to secure a spurious and delusive immortality for his acts by pushing his interest in them” (Keynes 1930b, 37). This typifies Ralph, the fictional entrepreneur in *Star Trek* and the Ferengi race. Keynes even conceded that if and when his post-scarcity utopia arrived, there will still be many people with intense, unsatisfied purposiveness who will blindly pursue wealth – unless they can find some plausible substitute. But the rest of us will no longer be under any obligation to applaud and encourage them (Keynes 1930b, 37).

Keynes thus partially acknowledged that the “needs [...] of the second class” (Keynes 1930b, 36) may pose obstacles since he saw “the solution to the economic problem as limited by human nature (unlimited wants)” (Chernomas 1984, 1009). Interestingly, Saadia, the author of the upcoming book *Trekonomics*, observed that such individuals might still be satisfied as

[s]elf-interest, conflict and competition may certainly exist but the reward for winning in the marketplace [...] is of an intangible but no less real nature: glory [...] , merit, prestige and recognition, then self-interest will drive at least some individuals to excel at their trade and to shoot for the moon in their endeavors. The products of their combined labor will be available to everyone at no cost. Society will reap the benefits of countless strokes of genius [...] Your currency is your good name (Saadia, *Trekonomics*, chapter 1).

This is witnessed several times in the canon when individuals refer, for example, to “Doctor Noonien Soong [...] The foremost authority in cybernetics” (Scheerer, “The Measure Of A Man”), “Galen: the foremost archaeologist in the Federation” (Frakes, “The Chase”), “the foremost space trader of our time. Carter Winston has acquired a dozen fortunes only to use his wealth time and again to assist Federation colonies in times of need or disaster” (Sutherland, “The Survivor”). However, Keynes made an arguably unwarranted assumption. He
seems to think that the consumption needs of a human being can be satisfied; this suggests his belief that the dominant characteristics of capitalist society, once they have served their purpose, can and should be discarded (Chernomas 1984, 1009).

But man is more like Scrooge, avidly collecting wealth and often indulging in “conspicuous consumption” as a public display of economic power in order to maintain a perceived social status and to preserve a spurious sense of superiority (Veblen 1899). This is evidenced by Ralph Offenhouse, the financier (Conway, “The Neutral Zone”) and by the entire Ferengi race. Indeed, in Star Trek, primitive races often parody the application of Bataille’s theory of consumption that refers to “the accursed share” that excessive and non-recuperable part of the economy that is produced in excess of need and gratuitously wasted without gain to society as a whole, such as in sumptuous spectacles, the construction of monuments, warfare etc (Bataille 1849).

This is contrary to the precepts of Star Trek’s Federation and to many contemporary philosophers and writers, as summarised by Hemingway: “There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self” (quoted in Nielsen et al, 11). Keynes opined that the rate at which his utopian predictions would occur depended on only four things:

- our power to control population,
- our determination to avoid wars and civil dissensions,
- our willingness to entrust to science the direction of those matters which are properly the concern of science, and the rate of accumulation as fixed by the margin between our production and our consumption; of which the last will easily look after itself, given the first three (Keynes 1930b, 37).

He also urged humanity to introduce gentle measures for the eventual post-scarcity era, as “there will be no harm in making mild preparations for our destiny, in encouraging, and experimenting in, the arts of life as well as the activities of purpose” (Keynes 1930b, 37 ). Keynes’s theories prefigure the currency-less Federation, but does not sufficiently recognise the current evolution toward a “globalised patrimonial capitalism” due to the hoarding of global wealth by a relatively small proportion of individuals (Piketty 2013, 534).

It has been noted that “there is no natural, spontaneous process to prevent destabilizing, inequalitarian forces from prevailing permanently” (Piketty 21), leading to the conclusion that active measures must be taken in order to approximate the Keynesian ideal. Several suggestions have been put forward and one relatively simple application is education. Piketty states that “the main force in favour of greater equality has been the diffusion of knowledge and skills” (Piketty 22). This is evidenced in “the Scandinavian countries, where wage inequality is more moderate than elsewhere, [who] owe this result in large part to the fact that their educational system is relatively egalitarian and inclusive” (Piketty 307). A general improvement in global population education levels would not only reduce the haves-haves not gap but also prepare humanity to enjoy the attendant leisure that a post-scarcity economy would bring about.

**Conclusion**

At one point, 24th century Enterprise crewmembers bring Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) to the future on board the Enterprise (Landau, “Times Arrow” Part 2). Clemens is disbelieving, clearly thinking that what he is seeing is too good to be true. He maintains:

Well, that’s the problem I see here. All this technology, it only serves to take away life’s simple pleasures. […] I’m not so impressed with this future. Huge starships, and weapons that can no doubt destroy entire cities, and military conquest as a way of life? […] Well, I know what you say, that this is a vessel of exploration and that your mission is to discover new worlds. […] That’s what the Spanish said. […] And the Dutch and the Portuguese. It’s what all conquerors say. (Landau, “Times Arrow” Part 2)

Counsellor Troi however explains:

I think what we’ve gained far outweighs anything that might have been lost. […] We live in a peaceful Federation with […] thousands of species that we’ve encountered. […] The people you see are here by choice. (Landau, “Times Arrow” Part 2)

Clemens remains unswayed.

So there’re a privileged few who serve on these ships, living in luxury and wanting for noth-
ing. But what about everyone else? What about the poor? You ignore them. [...] Young lady, I come from a time when men achieve power and wealth by standing on the backs of the poor, where prejudice and intolerance are commonplace and power is an end unto itself. And you’re telling me that isn’t how it is anymore? (Landau, “Times Arrow” Part 2)

And Troi gently explains “poverty was eliminated on Earth a long time ago, and a lot of other things disappeared with it. Hopelessness, despair, cruelty” (Landau, “Times Arrow” Part 2), finally persuading Clemens that the Federation is indeed an ideal to which humanity should aspire.

Will Keynes ever be vindicated? A Federation type utopia can only be achieved by a concerted global effort that is glaring in its absence. However, it is possible that new technologies give “the possibility of a far greater progress still” (Keynes 1930a, 98) and advances in nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and robotics, automation and 3-D printing may forcefully precipitate a post-scarcity economy.

Manu Saadia, the author of the upcoming book Trekonomics notes

the greatest sense of wonder [...] from Star Trek comes not from the warp drive, the stars, new life and new civilizations, but from its depiction of an uncompromisingly humanist, galaxy-spanning utopian society. [...] our potential for social and economic improvement (Saadia, Trekonomics, chapter 1).

Until then “wealth is so concentrated that a large segment of society is virtually unaware of its existence. [...] That is why it is so essential to study capital and its distribution in a methodical, systematic way” (Piketty 259). This is an issue of global importance, one that affects all of humanity. “Indeed, the distribution of wealth is too important an issue to be left to economists, sociologists, historians, and philosophers” (Piketty 2) since unfortunately, “[s]ocial scientific research is and always will be tentative and imperfect” (Piketty 3).

Science fiction may prove useful (as it does in so many other fields of study) in speculating where the future may lead us and possibly chart us away from courses that might be detrimental to the overall economic development of mankind. Our studies might lead us toward a utopian future that approaches the “Epicurean approach to life by citizens of the Federation with their “balanced approach towards life. Never too much, never too little” (Bole, “Liaisons”) (Grech “Picard,” 22), a future “wherein humanity has enlightened and transcended itself and explores its playground, the entire galaxy, with wonders still to be discovered” (Grech “Picard,” 22).

In Trekonomics the absence of money implies that status is not tied to economic wealth or discretionary spending. Conspicuous consumption and luxury have lost their grip on people’s imaginations (Saadia, Trekonomics, chapter 1).

All Federation denizens are therefore free to pursue the goal of self-actualisation, to transcend levels of physiological, psychological and social needs in order to obtain fulfilment of personal needs in terms of life’s meaning (Maslow). This position may become possible in a post-scarcity economy since the resulting economic surplus could be channelled into the arts and the sciences, including the exploration of space and time – an enviable goal that is inarguably worth aspiring to.

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Nonfiction Reviews


Dominick Grace


Order option(s): Hard

THE FINAL DOCUMENT by C. S. Lewis included in this book is his “Introductory Letter to Collected Poems,” apparently written in 1963 but not published until 1994, where it appeared in the Walter Hooper-edited Collected Poems of C. S. Lewis. It is a document that seems designed to forestall criticism, as in it Lewis points out many of the grounds of criticism the unsympathetic reviewer might address: that Lewis is “out of touch with all the dominant trends of contemporary literature” (455), for example, or that he is escapist, fond of archaic diction, “mainly interested in phonetic patterns” (455) and so on. Don W. King’s introduction (“Why Lewis’s Poetry Matters”—when the introduction to a collected poetry volume begins with such an introduction, one must be skeptical that it does matter) suggests that Lewis’s views of how critics viewed his poetry are well-founded, as a considerable part of King’s focus is to try to make a case for Lewis’s poetry being worth serious study. This volume, he concludes, “demonstrates [Lewis’s] lifelong commitment to poetry, revealing a dedicated, determined, and passionate poet at work” (6). However, neither the poetry itself, Lewis’s attempt to forestall criticism, nor King’s case for Lewis as poet demonstrate that Lewis achieved his aim of becoming a great poet.

King presents the poems, insofar as their dates can be determined, in chronological order, so roughly the first third of the book consists of work Lewis composed as an adolescent and young man: juvenilia, basically. This early work certainly shows Lewis to be precocious in his breadth and depth of literary and linguistic knowledge, and ambitious in his poetic aims, but what constitutes good poetry for a teenager does not constitute good poetry per se. For all its ambition, this early work suffers from numerous infelicities, both linguistic (lines such as “The breath blew on and mild and lovingly / It played about my brow and through the hair of me” [55] seem intended to be taken seriously) and in terms of structure and content. Lewis’s early attempt at a long narrative poem, for instance, Dymer (1926—published when Lewis was 28), is of some interest to SF/fantasy readers for its quasi-dystopian elements (Dymer rebels against an apparently overly-conformist state) and allegorical quest motifs, but its development is inconsistent and its narrative (and its allegory) muddled. Its chief interest stands more in how it can be contrasted with Lewis’s far more accomplished work in prose SF and fantasy later in his career.

Some of Lewis’s later poetry does achieve higher levels of success. His interest in “phonetic patterns”—rhyme, poetic form, meter, and other more formal elements of verse—manifests itself in some remarkably complex and sophisticated uses of older poetic forms such as alliterative verse, or of the sort of complex rhyme and meter Lewis no doubt has in mind as out of touch with the contemporary poetry of his day. Especially interesting, perhaps, is the extent to which the Romantics can be seen to have influenced Lewis’s work, which one might not expect, given his scholarly focus on medieval and early modern literature (unlike Tolkien, Lewis clearly did not see the end of the middle ages as also the end of literature that interested him—though one can also challenge Tolkien’s assertions to his effect). However, anyone aware of the influence of such nineteenth-century fantasists as George Macdonald on Lewis might be less surprised to see him draw from an array of literary antecedents.

The poetry itself, therefore, does not support a case for Lewis as more than a minor poet. Nor does the critical apparatus. I would expect a critical edition to offer more thorough notes and context. Many of the notes deal primarily with explaining classical references (e.g. identifying Greek or Norse gods—though there are inconsistencies in how King does this; for instance, different notes use different forms of such names), unfamiliar words, or words that King thinks might need explaining (e.g. “saboteuse”—“feminine form of saboteur” [438]), though bafflingly not for many other obscure terms, such as the title of the poem “Experempment” (392), a word which as far as I can tell was coined by Lewis but for which King does not vouchsafe any explanation. One of course can always quibble about what editors choose to comment on and not, but given one of King’s standard note strategies is to direct readers elsewhere for the context of many of the poems—a strategy that
seems antithetical to the very purpose of a critical edition – one expects notes in a critical edition to provide explanations, not to direct one elsewhere for them.

In short, this edition does provide for readers interested in Lewis's poetry a complete set of Lewis's known poems, including several never before published, and it does provide some useful context and commentary in its introduction and notes. It fails, however, to make a case for Lewis's poetry mattering in any significant way, certainly at a level comparable to how his criticism and his prose fiction matters. Readers with a deep and abiding interest in Lewis should probably add this book to their collections. Readers interested in Lewis as a SF writer (and critic) or fantasist will also probably find some of the work here of interest: the above-mentioned Dymer might be profitably compared/contrasted with Lewis's later SF and fantasy, and other of his characteristic concerns come up elsewhere (a handful of the poems are arguably either SF or more frequently fantasy), and he even has a brief poetic go at what he saw as bad SF in “An Expostulation (Against too many writers of science fiction)” (394). Readers more generally interested in modern poetry, or poetry of the fantastic, will probably find relatively little here to grab their interest.

The Monomyth in American Science Fiction Films: 28 Visions of the Hero’s Journey

Dennis Kratz


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IN HIS INFLUENTIAL BOOK The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949), Joseph Campbell explicated an archetypal pattern, now commonly referred to as the “monomyth,” underlying heroic quest narratives. Campbell emphasized the importance of this pattern in narratives depicting the quest for enlightenment by religious heroes such as Jesus and the Buddha. The basic elements of the monomyth, as abstracted by Donald Palumbo, are “a call to adventure, a threshold crossing to an unknown world in which trials must be endured, the acquisition of a boon, and a re-crossing of the threshold back to the known world” (142). Studies of this pattern in narratives after Campbell’s book face the problem of deciding whether its application by contemporary storytellers represents the emergence of a deep-seated psychic pattern or the purposeful adoption of a formula in order to maximize the power and popularity of a particular work.

Palumbo’s study of the “monomyth” in selected twentieth and twenty-first century science fiction films is thoughtfully argued, thoroughly researched, in many respects a model of attentive reading, and ultimately frustrating. Unquestionably the book succeeds in his goal of demonstrating that Campbell’s formulation serves as the underlying plot structure in “numerous science-fiction films from [the twentieth century] this period and the beginning of the twenty-first century” (1). The problem is that this ambition is too restricted.

After an extended and insightful introductory analysis of Campbell’s formulation that emphasizes the centrality of “enlightenment” to the concept of the monomyth, Palumbo offers meticulously detailed analyses of a wide range of films, including the original Star Wars trilogy (1977-1983), The Terminator (1984), Back to the Future (1985), The Matrix (1999), and the first ten Star Trek films (1979-2002). His method is clear and invariable. He offers a detailed reading of a film (occasionally examining several films comparatively), focusing on the presence of specific stages and components of the monomyth. Each of the films, he proposes, utilizes the pattern of the monomyth to some degree; however, with a few exceptions (notably the Star Wars films and Star Trek franchise) it remains unclear whether the imitations emerge from the filmmakers’ innermost psyches, a knowledge of Campbell’s book, or simply the recognition of a good formula.

At its best, the analysis (as, for example, of Dune [1984]) reveals new levels of narrative depth in a particular film. It certainly caused me to re-see and re-evaluate several. Too often, however, Palumbo’s unrelenting emphasis on using a catalog of correspondences as evidence of the influence of the monomyth marginalizes the complementary half of creativity: transformation. Muting or omitting elements of the monomyth is generally presented as a flaw that diminishes the narrative. Palumbo tends to ignore the possibility that they are meaningful departures for the purpose of making the work more attractive to a twentieth or twenty-first
century audience. This approach is especially problematic when Palumbo is considering films in which, by his own admission, “the filmmakers were not intentionally attempting to replicate the qualities of the hero or its stages of adventure” (33). The Time Machine (1960), Logan’s Run (1976), and Time After Time (1979), are three such films. Nonetheless, after noting in each film aspects of what he obviously regards as the perfected form of the myth, he states that the “Initiation Stage is the stage of adventure that is most neglected in these films. None of them features a woman as temptress…” (45). Among the other absences are scenes of atonement or a gift brought back to the world by the hero. Even in films like Back to the Future and Star Wars that he implicitly praises for adopting major elements of the monomyth, Palumbo expresses disappointment because the stage of apotheosis (the monomyth’s “climactic episode”) is “muted to the point of extinction” (121). Such comments reflect a reading not in terms of the monomyth as a formulaic narrative model but rather in terms of the improvable assumption (though argued brilliantly by Palumbo in the Introduction) that the monomyth, in fact, represents a manifestation of a “lucid dream of humanity” (13) and a universal quest for enlightenment.

Palumbo’s approach is at its best and most valuable in his analysis of the Star Wars films and the “first ten” Star Trek films. His point of departure, that “both may owe much of the impact they have had on the popular psyche to their similar uses of this archetypal material” (142), is valuable but deserves a more nuanced presentation. The dispersion of the heroic characteristics among multiple characters throughout the lives of Star Trek is an enormously valuable insight. And yet similar imitations occur in profusion, sometimes numbingly, in countless hack works (granted, I am referring mostly to interminable series). The difference lies less in the adoption of a formula or even its dispersion among multiple characters than in the skill with which they are integrated into a compelling tale with alluring characters and (most important for science fiction) intellectually exhilarating concepts. It is not enough to list elements to support an assumption of the continuing power of an archetype; the necessary next step is to show how its adoption gives the narrative more power and deeper meaning. The failure to take this next step is the frustrating aspect of a book with much to recommend it.

**Paradoxa: Africa SF**

Hugh Charles O’Connell


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AS MARK BOULD’S introduction to Paradoxa’s special issue “Africa SF” makes clear, the western-derived concepts of “Africa” and “SF” are deeply imbricated. The mandate of “Africa SF” then, is to force us to think not only about the concept “Africa” as constituted by SF, but also of SF as constituted by Africa. Indeed, Africa was at the center of the development of SF from its start, whether as the ‘otherworldly’ space of adventure for exploitative colonial projects and lost race tales or as a place for early African American anarchists and socialists to project their utopian visions (9). Across the history of SF then, Africa is an unstable sign, and if it is this instability that so many earlier western SF authors sought to contain, it is this same instability that African and African diasporic authors and their critical interlocutors now seek to prise open in the name of new futures and futuricities, in the form of what Eric D. Smith has re-dubbed SF’s “New Maps of Hope.” And if there is one thread that runs across the various articles, interviews, and reviews that comprise this expansive issue, it is the Afrofuturist and African futurist possibilities that inhere despite (or in some cases because of) the very crisis conditions that often form the hegemonic valence of neoliberal discourses that take Africa as their object.

To give some conceptual order to this project, the issue “situates African SF in three broad contexts: the history and recent development of the genre in Africa; SF produced within the African diaspora; and the treatment of Africa in SF” (7). The Africa or Africaness that ties these disparate foci together is multivalent, and it is among the issue’s strengths that it takes a discursive approach rather than trying to forge a unifying gesture that would run roughshod over national and ethnic differences. Outside of this three-pronged conceptual-organizational structure, the issue takes a pleasantly free-wheeling approach when it comes to content. It comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint’s influential “There is no Such Thing as Science Fiction” that the issue’s approach to genre is wide
and inclusive; it treats the borders between science fiction, fantasy, and horror (among others) as rather porous. Moreover, the dispersal of this discursive notion of the SF genre across a wide swath of media allows for a substantial thick description of “Africa SF” to emerge through individual articles that focus on everything from film, mass market comics, literary graphic novels, and SF topoi in literary fiction, to explorations of new avenues for creative-critical projects in the art world, music, and written genre SF.

The shortest of the three conceptual sections is dedicated to contemporary visions of Africa from within western SF (and shortest for good reason, given how long western SF writers have made Africa the object of their colonizing gaze). Here, Neil Easterbrook examines the transformation of the western SF tropes of the evolution narrative and African colonial adventure novel in Ian McDonald’s Chaga saga. Paramount for recovering these most imperialist and racially susceptible narrative forms for Easterbrook is the way that the Chaga saga foregrounds the European protagonist’s alienness within the African landscape, splinters the journalistic-consumptive gaze through an increasingly multi-focal narrative approach, and represents the new Chaga(alien)-African hybrid evolutionary transformation as a counterforce to neoliberal economic developmentalism. As Easterbrook argues, “In the Chaga saga, Africa is sf” (199). This stance allows for “a projective thought experiment on the inevitability of change, and on the possible consequence of change” within the global world-system (200). Indeed, with this utopian, inflationary stake, his reading strikes a tone that resonates with other articles that focus on SF production from within Africa, allowing for a more provocative contrapuntal reading across western and African SF, rather than a merely oppositional or contrasting approach.

Many of the articles focusing on SF produced within Africa likewise counterpoise the contrasting discourses of western dystopian apocalypse and Afro-utopian possibility. To borrow from Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum’s article, they work alongside already existing notions of Afrotururism to produce a corresponding “African Futurism” in order to locate an African sensibility in the imagining of African futures” (113). In this light, following the lead of Ghanaian cyberpunk novelist Jonathan Dotse, Lisa Yaszek re-reads the purportedly dystopic and apocalyptic spaces of African modernity as simultaneous progenitors of a utopian surplus. Reading across these sites of local possibilities, Yaszek uncovers within the filmic and literary SF coming out of Africa new “spaces of uncertain potential that contain the seeds of many different futures” (48), which then combat the western imposed ontology of crisis that threatens to engulf the continent.

Likewise, reading across three African SF novels – Mohammed Dib’s Who Remembers the Sea (1962), Sony Labou Tansi’s Life and a Half (1979), and Ahmed Khaled’s Utopia (2009) – Mark Bould limns a trajectory “from anti-colonial struggle to neoliberal immiseration” (19). Yet this trajectory is not presented deterministically, as Bould still finds reason to be hopeful in the possibilities presented by the Arab Spring as a popular political formation that, although anticipated by texts like Khaled Towfic’s Utopia, also counters their pessimistic limits. In doing so, he offers a counter-narrative to the afropessimism that animates the countering ideals of the neoliberal futures industry and so much of postcolonial studies in the figure of very real, present political movements. This focus on the precariously yet possibility of material political reality is similarly found in the two essays on Lauren Beukes by Malisa Kurtz and Marleen Barr, which focus on the effect of the actually-existing legacies of apartheid in South African SF. Lest we should make a new fetish out of Africa as a reified site of a banal utopianism, Kurtz, Barr, and Bould remind us of the all too real and all too actually-existing entrenchment of neoliberal capitalism within many national governments, as well as the shifting currents of possibility that arise within these contexts. African SF’s most salient vocations, then, is to mediate this conjuncture in order to reveal its animating and constricting contours.

Of equal weight to the SF coming out of Africa is the examination of the SF of the African diaspora. One of the most surprising and intriguing aspects to emerge from this cross-section of articles is the dialogue between superhero comics, SF, and the racial politics of the post 1950s US. De Witt Douglas Kilgore’s meticulous reconstruction of the disjunctive development of Marvel Comics’ most significant African superhero, the Black Panther, and his fictional African techno-utopian nation of Wakanda, dovetails brilliantly with Gerry Canavan’s analysis of the impact of superhero comics on Octavia Butler’s Patternist series. The radical and subversive Afro-utopianism of the Reginald Hudlin helmed Black Panther that was so slowly and precariously built up and redeemed from decades of tokenism and then subsumed by the Disney Corporation’s buyout of Marvel Comics makes for a fascinating intertextual dialectic with Canavan’s analysis of Butler’s deconstruction of the superhero, where the superhero is posited as a pure

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“Desde Júpiter,” Gubar’s focus is on Moore’s approach to dealing with women as the Other (with emphasis on her early “Shambleau” [1933]). But those later stories also focus on the troubling ideas of an alien future and the relation between mind and body – the latter still a hot topic.

Other essays fall into several broad categories. One is the examination of previously obscure works that are perhaps of no more than historical interest. For example, in “Samuel Madden’s Memoirs of the Twentieth Century” (1985), Paul K. Alkon examines the earliest novel to be set in a future that is in some sense an extrapolation of the present. While he observes that Madden had the germ of an idea for SF, Alkon admits that he didn’t do much with it – his future is “only superficially unlike the world of 1733” (38) and his main object was topical satire.

In Andrea Bell’s “Desde Júpiter, Chile’s Earliest Science-Fiction Novel” (1995), we find that topical satire is also the dominant element in Francisco Miralles’ 1878 novel. Bell was exploring mostly uncharted territory; in an afterward, she notes how much more has since been done in Latin American SF scholarship.

By 2007, when Rachel Haywood Ferreira’s “The First Wave: Latin American Science Fiction Discovers Its Roots,” appeared, more had been found to write about. She details examples of nineteenth century utopian and satirical works from Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, but calls her identification of them as SF “retrolabeling” in the same sense that Gernsback applied “scientifiction” to the works of Poe, Verne, and Wells. She also points out that such works had been largely forgotten in their homelands; perhaps the equivalent of critical mass is necessary for a chain reaction of genre consciousness among readers of a particular time and place.

I.F. Clarke rings in with “Future-War Fiction: The First Main Phase, 1871-1900” (1997), which goes over more familiar ground but gives greater emphasis to imagined advances in weaponry, while rounding up the usual suspects in alarmist/super-patriotic day-after-tomorrow works, from George Chesney’s “The Battle of Dorking” to the mammoth French epics of “Capitaine Danrit.”

Other essays focus on finding new things to say about familiar classics. Nicholas Ruddick’s “‘Tell Us All About Little Rosebery’: Topicality and Temporality in H.G. Wells’s The Time Machine” (2001), is largely a trival pursuit into the topical (for 1895) allusions – Lord Rosebery served briefly as prime minister but was better known for his racehorses. In “On Stapledon’s Star Maker” (1987), Stanislaw Lem takes Olaf Stapledon to task for dubious theology, and shows hardly any interest in the epic’s SF invention – as with the alien species and their cultures. If Ruddick and Lem were all we had to go on, we might wonder why Wells and Stapledon are still read and are still profound influences on SF in terms of what some now call “big history.”

Patrick A. McCarthy revisits the grandfather of many an anti-utopia in “Zamyatin and the Nightmare of Technology” (1984), stressing the critique of Taylorization in We as opposed to Yevgeny Zamyatin’s philosophical concerns. Speaking of technological nightmares, William J. Fanning Jr. takes on one of the most familiar in “The Historical Death Ray and Science Fiction in the 1920s and 1930s” (2010). It seems that the news media ran accounts that such weapons had actually been developed. Popular fiction writers and even movie makers thus found a ready audience for their imagined versions.

New theories and novel interpretations are applied to other classics in the entries of Josh Bernatchez, Sylvie Romanowski, Kamila Kinyon and Allison De Fren. In the first case, it’s a single source, Elaine Scarry’s “The Body in Pain” (1985) as applied to Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, about which it’s hard to find anything new to say – but Bernatchez does so in “Monstrosity, Suffering, Subjectivity, and Sympathetic Community in Frankenstein” and “The Structure of Torture” (2009).

Cyrano de Bergerac didn’t think of himself as writing “science fiction” in The States and Empires of the Moon and the Sun; they were part of a genre later called the voyage imaginaire or conte philosophique. Yet as Romanowski points out, in “Cyrano de Bergerac’s Epistemological Bodies: ‘Pregnant with a Thousand Definitions’” (1998), there wasn’t any consensus in his time of what “science” meant; animism and alchemy competed with Cartesian thought, “and it was not clear which kind of science would eventually win out” (3). Nor which, if any, won out in his fiction; it’s a stretch for her to argue that Cyrano’s remark about being pregnant with ideas was more than a metaphor, and that he somehow anticipated a popular contemporary theory of epistemology (“The narrator’s body and all bodies are intimately involved in the production of intellectual knowledge.” (4)

Kinyon, in “The Phenomenology of Robots: Confrontations with Death in Karel Čapek’s R.U.R.” (1999), takes issue with translations of the play, though not about the word “robot” having come to mean mechanical creations, as opposed to organic beings capable of reproduction. Rather, the first translation in 1923 left out one of the characters, and even a 1989 version is confusing. Motivations and key conversations can thus miss
Čapek’s real points – which, Kinyon shows, have their roots in his attitudes towards Kant, Hegel, Gustav Fechner, and other philosophers. She makes use of a kind of textual analysis that could and should serve well for other translated SF.

But to save the best for last, consider De Fren’s “The Anatomical Gaze in Tomorrow’s Eve” (2009). Villiers de l’Isle Adam’s 1886 novel isn’t as well known as R.U.R. or Frankenstein, but it’s hardly obscure. Neither is the idea of the “male gaze” – which is actually more than a gaze; De Fren’s essay was inspired by lengthy research into a trade in silicone sex dolls that caters to a pathetic male clientele (162).

It would have been easy for De Fren to have limited herself to using a variation of the “male gaze” approach to signal her distaste for a novel based on the idea of building what amounts to a sex doll, even if it isn’t called that (157-58). But she does more – a lot more.

First, she doesn’t consider Tomorrow’s Eve in isolation from other SF works. She relates it to E.T.A. Hoffman’s “The Sandman” in one direction, and such classic examples as Fritz Lang’s Metropolis in the other. She also relates it to the fiction of Charles Baudelaire, and to the fetishistic portrayal of women (including as mannequins) in early films by George Méliès as well as Thomas Edison (whose fictional avatar figures in the novel). But that’s only the beginning; De Fren traces the idea of “dissection” in the novel to the anatomical studies of cadavers that began in the Renaissance, and were reflected in art as well as science of the time, and even in a perverse fascination with death and decomposition.

She has done a staggering amount of research to bolster her case. Moreover, she doesn’t oversimplify that case; artificial persons in SF are not invariably sinister, nor are female versions necessarily just sex objects: Arnold Schwarzenegger showed that in Terminator 2, and Summer Glau in The Sarah Connor Chronicles on TV. De Fren won a well-deserved SFRA Pioneer award for her study.

One minor complaint about the bibliography: author studies are arranged in the order of the subject authors’ lives. But since most aren’t mentioned in the essays, or even in the key works list, it would have made more sense to list them alphabetically, with birth and death dates.

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**Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature**

Amy J. Ransom


NOT ONLY DOES it have the coolest title, but Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase, is also among the best-edited volumes on SF published last year. With twenty-six essays on post-NAFTA dystopian texts from the US, Canada, and Mexico, it surveys the dominant trope of our times, covering not just the ubiquitous Margaret Atwood, William Gibson, and Carlos Fuentes, but also drawing our attention to writers from the periphery of this vast continent, such as Larisa Lai, Ronald Wright, Michael Murphy, and Karen Tei Yamashita. As a study of North American texts, it addresses the continent’s tri-lingual colonial heritage, including five essays on Spanish-language and two on French-language texts. Reasonably priced for its heft, rigorous in its approach, this volume offers an extended interrogation of how contemporary writers extrapolate the detrimental effects of neoliberalism, the ongoing vicissitudes of European colonization of the Americas, and the dehumanizing aspects of global capitalism. At the same time, it covers a staggering array of texts and writers; above all, like NAFTA itself, it seeks to erase the national borders that all too often artificially compartmentalize literary studies, ultimately decentring the US by forcing readers to rethink the equation US = America.

Editors Grubisic, Baxter, and Lee clearly flung their net wide to reunite examinations of such diverse texts as canonical Québécoise poet Nicole Brossard’s Baroque at Dawn (1995), Neil Gaiman’s fantasy best-seller American Gods (2001), and regular contributor to the New Yorker Gary Shteyngart’s satirical Super Sad True Love Story (2010) as examples of dystopian literature. Ranging from an icon of SF criticism, Marleen S. Barr, to a number of assistant professors and one doctoral candidate, their contributors have all done their theoretical
homework, drawing from the vast body of utopia/dystopia theory, citing the likes of Fredric Jameson, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Tom Moylan, coupling these with a range of other problematics from Foucault’s concerns about power, Baudrillard’s simulacrum, Lyotard and the postmodern, and so on. Overall, this volume offers well-researched, well-argued, thought-provoking essays worth the time it takes to read them. Because of their number, I will focus on three significant trends in dystopian writing addressed here: YA, Mexican dystopia, and a focus on the city. I should first note that I derive these groupings independently from the editors’ creative four-part organization of the volume into sections titled “Altered States,” “Plastic Subjectivities,” “Spectral Histories,” and “Emancipating Genres.”

Alexa Weik von Mossner begins her interrogation of Susan Beth Pfeffer’s Last Survivor novel series (2006-2010) by underscoring the fact that “The dystopian mood [...] has been a dominant feature of much twentieth- and twenty-first century American literature, and, in recent years, it has found particularly powerful expression in the young adult novel” (149). Happily, contributors focus on works other than the omnipresent Hunger Games trilogy (2008-2010), such as Richard Gooding’s look at the construction of the posthuman in M. T. Anderson’s Feed (2002). Joseph Campbell theorizes the last five years “explosion of dystopian texts intended for adolescents” (165), invoking Foucault, Althusser, and Kenneth Burke to argue for the use-value of the genre as social critique for readers who are, like these book’s protagonists, struggling to become agentic subjects in dystopian societies not so unlike post-NAFTA North America.

“Dystopia now” is a recurring theme, as in Janine Tobeck’s reading of Gibson’s Bigend Trilogy. This focus is particularly the case for studies of texts from Mexico, arguably the most dystopian nation on the continent, and certainly the one whose citizens are most likely to suffer from the terms of NAFTA, as revealed in Lysa Rivera’s analysis of “post-NAFTA borderlands dystopias” (292). Similarly, Adam Spires argues that “[t]here is an unambiguous cause-and-effect relationship between NAFTA and the emergence of Mexican dystopia” (343), tracing its presence in two novels by environmental activist and writer Homero Aridjis. Luis Gómez Romero invokes Borges’ labyrinth in his discussion of Carlos Fuentes La Silla del Águila (2002), set in 2020 but really about the “fragility of Mexican democracy” since its origins. The utopian dream of the Mexican Revolution and its failure in the corruption of the (one would think) oxymoron-
Superposition

Bill Dynes


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WHEN ERWIN SCHRÖDINGER created his famous thought experiment, trapping a cat as both alive and dead until an observer forces the issue, he was calling attention to the absurdity of projecting quantum-level events into our observable world. Fortunately, science fiction can play with absurdity in entertaining ways, and this is precisely what David Walton does in his new novel Superposition. A mélange of techno-thriller, murder mystery, courtroom drama, and physics instruction, Superposition speculates within recent developments in particle physics, computing technology, and social media to offer a fast-paced and engrossing story. Walton's characterization can be wooden at times, and his plotting occasionally leans a bit too heavily on coincidence and convenient timing, but in the end his novel is a satisfying, engaging read.

Protagonist Jacob Kelley is a physics professor at Swarthmore College, having walked away from a prestigious position with the New Jersey Super Collider. When his comfortable suburban life is interrupted by an estranged colleague, he soon finds himself fighting for his life both in a courtroom, where he is accused of his colleague's murder, and in the Pine Barrens, where he is running from a mysterious creature capable of altering reality at the quantum level. Jacob's colleague Brian had been experimenting with particle entanglement, yet now Brian lies dead of a gunshot in a lab hidden deep beneath the Super Collider and is also hiding beneath a blanket in the back seat of the car Jacob has frantically commandeered. Even after this second iteration of Brian is apparently vaporized by the creature pursuing him, Jacob cannot quite understand how his former friend has managed to be in two places at one time, both dead and alive. The implications of Schrodinger's thought experiment become even more urgent for Jacob when he reaches his home and discovers that his wife and one of his children have also been destroyed by the creature Brian's experiments summoned. If Brian could somehow be in two places at once, is it possible that Jacob's murdered family members may also be alive?

Giving away too much of the plot would be unfair, though it is appropriate to say that Walton is at his best when juggling disparate plot lines that require the reader to pay close attention to small clues about timing and sequence. Each chapter is subtitled either “Up-Spin” or “Down-Spin,” and it may take some time before the reader realizes that there is more going on here than a creative approach to chronology. Walton's decision to have Jacob narrate his own story pays off well, for this maintains a consistent tone across both Up-Spin and Down-Spin chapters, allowing the suspense to build gradually as inconsistencies and paradoxes accrue. Part of the reader's fun in any mystery novel is the effort to piece the clues together before the detective can blurt out the answer. That pleasure is magnified in Superposition as the reader realizes that there are more mysteries in play that even Jacob recognizes.

Walton is less successful with some of the other elements of the novel. The emotional core of the story, Jacob's strained relationship with his daughter Alessandra, who survived the attack at his home, and his longing for his murdered wife and son, works well, but many of the secondary characters can feel flat or hastily developed. The attorney who defends Jacob is a familiar stereotype, for example, and Jacob's brother-in-law, Marek, seems to have been developed specifically for the role he needs to play in the plot. More effective is Jacob's friend Jean Massey, another former colleague from the Super Collider, who is one of the few to support Jacob during his trial and has her own fears for her family. The counterpoint between Jacob's powerful desire to save his wife and son and Jean's troubled relationship with her husband and daughter help drive the climax of the novel, although elsewhere the occasional coincidence or fortuitous timing can make the plot seem contrived. Some important physical clues pop up at particularly useful moments, for instance, and when Jacob returns to the Super Collider while searching for his missing wife, the receptionist on duty just happens to be the last person who had seen his wife before her disappearance – a fact that had been covered up in his trial. This happy accident allows Jacob to get closer to the truth much more quickly than he otherwise could have.

These are relatively minor quibbles, however, familiar hazards to novels like this that are more interested in particular ideas than rich characterization. In that respect, Superposition works extremely well. Although built upon the structure of the mystery or courtroom
drama, Walton’s story is at its heart Hard SF in the tradition of Isaac Asimov, Larry Niven, and Greg Egan. Concepts from quantum physics such as particle entanglement, the Higgs field, Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, and of course, superpositioning are integral to the plot, and Walton handles the necessary exposition challenges in efficient and plausible ways. The courtroom scenes are especially valuable here, since they provide an opportunity for expert witnesses to articulate theory to untrained jurors. Walton also distributes the expository chores across several different characters, primarily Jacob and Jean Massey, a decision that permits different voices and emphases across the sequence of the plot. As a result, the reader rarely has to stumble over the kind of “data dump” that can interrupt the story’s momentum.

Walton’s novel will be most useful in undergraduate syllabi focused on either Hard SF or the techno-thriller. In the former category, it offers intriguing comparisons with Asimov, Clarke, and other writers motived by “big ideas” and recent science. As Jacob becomes increasingly aware of his dual reality, items such as bosons, interference patterns, and collapsing quantum states become urgent and compelling. Students will also be interested in Walton’s handling of narrative point-of-view, since having a narrator with two distinct sets of experiences presents unusual challenges and opportunities. Walton’s first novel, Terminal Mind, won the 2008 Philip K. Dick Award for best paperback science fiction, and Superposition should help assure his reputation as a writer of entertaining and energetic science fiction.

The Affinities
Dominick Grace


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ROBERT CHARLES WILSON’S latest novel is social science fiction set in the near future, something of a change of pace for a writer known perhaps more for work in which reality is fundamentally transformed and/or questions of identity are deeply problematic. Nothing in The Affinities, really, is beyond what is currently possible. The novum is ‘teleodynamics,’ a field in which extensive testing of people allows for them to be sorted into groups of people with whom they have the eponymous connection, people sufficiently like them to make for easy rapport and co-operation, but there is nothing else counterfactual about the story. There are twenty-two different affinity groups, and not everyone fits into any of them. Furthermore, affinity affiliation is not necessarily permanent; one can “drift” over time, and subsequent testing can show that someone who once fit into a particular group no longer does. The novel focuses on Adam Fisk, who discovers he belongs to the Tau affinity early in the novel and recounts in the first person several years of his life involved with, and in service to, his affinity.

This is a book for the social network age, an age in which computer algorithms and marketing are as important to social dynamics as anything else. InterAlia, the company that created the affinities, is one part eHarmony, one part Scientology, one part social club, and one part surrogate family—all connections made more or less explicitly in the novel, as Wilson explores both the potential positives and negatives of alternate social arrangements. The novel thoroughly addresses the various ways that traditional social units such as families are or can be deeply problematic, and that people often do find greater kinship with groups other than blood relations, even without social engineering. Wilson is careful to keep exactly how the affinities discover and categorize their algorithmic kinships somewhat vague: candidates undergo a battery of tests both physical and psychological, so while there are essentialist elements to the process (e.g. DNA profiles), there is also room for social factors. Furthermore, Wilson is careful to show that the affinities cross racial, religious, gender, and class divisions - belonging to an affinity might make one a member of an exclusive club, a sort of elite, but it does so in ways that minimize the various forms of discrimination currently used to create selves and others, haves and have nots.

However, crucial to the plot is the fact that the affinities do nevertheless create new self/other dichotomies, just along different lines from the “natural” ones. In this regard, the cultish element of the affinities comes to the fore, especially when loyalty to the group supersedes all other links (e.g. many affinity members refer to one’s non-affiliated connections such as family or lovers as ‘tethers’—things tying the individual to something other than the group). And these new self/other dichotomies have both positive and negative implications.
Wilson digs into several issues here, from the blurring of the line between autonomous individual and corporate property to the tensions created by divided loyalties. Most interesting to me, though not as central a strand in the novel as it might have been, are the affinities' struggles with InterAlia over ownership of the groups. InterAlia sees the software allowing affinity testing as proprietary, but as the affinities grow in numbers and in power, they come to conceive of themselves as autonomous groups with rights to self-determination not allowed by the company. For a while, the novel looks as if it might explore a civil war between the affinities and their parent corporation. This strand in the novel raises interesting questions about the extent to which social organization is at its heart economic, and the extent to which one can be independent from the marketplace.

Tellingly, though InterAlia is eventually bankrupted by the various lawsuits that challenge their ownership of the affinity concept, that doesn’t mean the affinities win. Also woven into the novel is tension not only between the affinities and those not affiliated, but also between different affinity groups themselves. When some affinities—notably Tau, to which Adam Fisk belongs—demonstrate a statistically significant ability to benefit members financially and in other material ways, both people and governments become concerned about their growing power. The final section of the novel has as a major plot strand Tau’s attempts to influence a congressional vote that would significantly reduce affinity autonomy. Perhaps a little too overtly, a key vote belongs to Adam’s estranged congressman brother, so the conflict between family and affinity loyalty becomes particularly pointed in the novel’s conclusion.

However, a complicating factor is that the us/them split is not just affinities vs. non-affinities. It is also affinities vs. each other. One might liken the conflict to sectarian strife within a country or faith group. Wilson’s larger agenda is to explore the intractable problem of human social organization and the myriad ways that cooperation and competition interrelate, mutate, and, ultimately, undermine the very progress they initially allow. The micro-level of the novel locates this conflict within Adam, whose loyalty to Tau, on the one hand, and to non-Tau people, such as his step-brother, or former girlfriend, on the other, is the key conflict in the novel, despite its background invocation of thriller motifs (kidnapping, murder, political intrigue, etc all have minor roles here, but the focus is on the more mundane and personal). And Adam’s ultimate inability to balance these tensions—indeed, his ultimate drift out of Tau status—personifies and personalizes the novel’s depiction of the challenges the human being faces as a social animal. It is also interesting that the novel focuses on failure rather than success; the affinities, it turns out, do not lead either to utopia or dystopia but rather represent just one more step in the long and difficult process of social evolution.

This is an accomplished and insightful example of social SF.

Satin Island

Andrew Hageman


IN THE OPENING SECTION of Tom McCarthy’s fourth novel, the protagonist, named U, informs us, “People need foundation myths, some imprint of year zero, a bolt that secures the scaffolding that in turn holds fast the entire architecture of reality, of time: memory-chambers and oblivion-cells, walls between eras, hallways that sweep us on towards the end-days and the coming whatever-it-is” (3). U is a corporate anthropologist working for a major firm on the Koob-Sassen Project—an endeavor that radically restructures society yet remains beyond U’s perception much less his capacity to represent it. McCarthy advances U’s narrative by having his protagonist recall it via the historical arc of an anthropologist working for a major firm on the Koob-Sassen Project—an endeavor that radically restructures society yet remains beyond U’s perception much less his capacity to represent it. 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scientific materials, from petroleum to smart phones, uncanny.

For SF scholars, Satin Island offers a range of critical opportunities. McCarthy frequently acknowledges J. G. Ballard as inspiration and influence, and this novel certainly converses complexly with Crash among other Ballard novels. One might also critically juxtapose Satin Island not only with William Gibson’s Blue Ant Trilogy but also the geo-anthropological reports such as those collected in Distrust That Particular Flavor. McCarthy’s novel inhabits a space adjacent to Gibson’s fiction and non-fiction, minus the thriller energies and the prospects of agency. Another course and/or project could read Satin Island with the slipstream subgenre. The uses of an anthropologist, ecological catastrophe, and the estrangement of everyday techno-science in our lives in this novel and Jeff VanderMeer’s Annihilation, for example, would make for productive comparative analysis.

More generally, as with much of Tom McCarthy’s oeuvre—the novels, the literary criticism, and the notable ‘International Necronautical Society’ reports he writes and performs with Simon Critchley (see The Mattering of Matter)—Satin Island explores the histories and futures of infrastructural grids, so-called raw materials, finance capital, wireless telecommunications, telepathy, and psychoanalysis. And, as with all of McCarthy’s other writing, Satin Island works with relentless sophistication to model relationships between parts and wholes—to limn the frontiers of our ability to glimpse totality. Readers familiar with Remainder (2005) will perceive an affective affinity between the unnamed protagonist of that novel and U as well as a fixation on maps and grids of technologies in the landscape. Likewise, readers of C (2010) will mark the way Satin Island develops ideas about the ramifications of wireless telecommunications on individuals and the social body that McCarthy laid out in that earlier novel. What makes Satin Island especially intriguing amongst McCarthy’s fiction is the casting of a doctor of anthropology who swerved from the miserable job market in academia to become a corporate consultant. U forces readers to tangle with the mythology of market forces and the ready capacity of capitalist enterprise to uncouple critical theory tools from their origins in cultural critique and then slot these tools into systems of data metrics geared solely to profit-motive development.

As a final note, Satin Island would contribute constructively to syllabi and/or research agendas focused on intersections of science fiction and ecology. Early in the novel, U tells the reader, “In my office, waiting for Peyman to come back to London, I began a dossier on oil spills. The oil spill that had started while I’d been in Turin was still making the news headlines, but I didn’t confine myself to that one: I read about all kinds of oil spill, going right back to the First World War. An anthropologist’s not interested in singularities, but in generics. Oil spills are perfectly generic: there’s always one happening, or one that’s recently transpired, or, it can be said with confidence, one that’s on the verge of happening” (37). U drags into view the agonizing regularity and inevitability of the catastrophic ecological degradation that underwrites practically all of our economic activity. But what is more, U pairs this revelation of the oil spills hidden in plain sight with his own aesthetic responses to and theorizations of the telecom mediations of these crises: U explores the techno-scientific representations of techno-scientific disaster and how these multi-layered experiences fit into the aestheticization of nature. We, just like U, might read Satin Island as a significant work of technology and ecology.

Squaring the Circle: A Pseudotreatise of Urbogony

Chris Pak


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URSULA K. LE GUIN has translated a selection of fantastic tales by the Romanian author Gheorghe Săsărmă, entitled Squaring the Circle: A Pseudotreatise of Urbogony. It was translated from Mariano Martín Rodríguez’s 2010 Spanish translation of the Romanian original, La cuadratura del círculo, and as such it is a translation of a translation. French, too, is thrown into this bridge of languages as Le Guin reports in her “Translator’s Introduction: The Road to π” that she also relied on Hélène Lenz’s 1994 French translation, La quadrature du cerle, when her Spanish was strained. Knowing neither Romanian, Spanish nor French, this review cannot hope to assess the reliability of the translation, but it can con-
sider what these tales do in its English translation, and why Săsărman’s short stories should be of interest to an English language audience.

Gheorghe Săsărman is a renowned author of Romanian speculative fiction and, in Romania, is well-regarded by fans and critics alike. Săsărman trained as an architect and worked as a journalist before being forced into exile and settling in Munich in 1983, where he still resides. Săsărman’s fiction — against his own expectations — was subjected to censorship by Nicolae Ceaușescu’s dictatorial regime for its perceived criticism of Romanian politics. As a result, many stories that were unpublished in Romania at the time saw their first publication in German translations in Germany. Although the first story of this collection, “Musaemum,” was written in 1969 and the collection was completed during the Romanian Cultural Revolution in 1971, it was not published until 1975, and only in abridged form. In spite of this checkered history, Săsărman’s fiction — through the efforts of Le Guin and Rodríguez — now has a well-deserved chance, in this reviewer’s estimation, to gain a wider circulation amongst English and Spanish language readers. There are many reasons why this collection should be of interest to scholars of speculative fiction.

Le Guin has translated twenty-four of the thirty-six short stories collected in the original Romanian publication for, as she explains, the others ‘resisted my understanding in a fundamental way’ or because, in a few cases, she ‘resisted identifying [her] self with the conventional attitude of the mid-20th-century European man towards women’ (viii). The stories in question are “Virginia,” “Protopolis,” “Verticity,” “Sinurbia,” “Stereopolis,” “Olympia,” “Arcanum,” “Isopolis,” “Záalzeck,” “Homogenia,” “Motopia” and “Geopolis” and the contents page in Le Guin’s translation retains the number of the story’s position in the first full Romanian publication. Although Squaring the Circle works with a similar premise to Italo Calvino’s Invisible Cities, which saw publication in 1979 — four years after the first publication of Squaring the Circle in Romanian — it develops the concept in a very different way.

Le Guin’s translation is a slim volume of twenty-four short stories, each of which is interspersed with Săsărman’s own geometrical sketches. These designs are part of a series that becomes more complex as the collection progresses, implying a ramification of themes and motifs between the narratives of the stories. They also speak to the individual stories themselves, where they appear to exemplify the basic logical principles underlying each tale. The tales themselves are short explorations, sketches themselves, of the topology, evolution, sociology, politics, culture or history of an imagined city — a different one for each story. Alternately humorous, horrifying and poignant, some of these tales are vignettes, some are narratives focalized through an individual navigating a city, and others are speculative projections of the thoughts of its narrator. The brevity of the tales gives each a compression that contributes to its symbolic effect. They are experimental and subtle, speaking sideways to the real-world, and many are ingeniously constructed. I will discuss just a few below.

The first story of the collection, “Vavylon,” details the space of a city designed like a ziggurat; here, as in other stories such as “Kreigbourg,” “Moebia” and “Utopia,” the reader can discern Săsărman’s training in architecture shining through. Vavylon’s topology is oriented toward a single socio-political conceit, that of the hierarchy that structures social differentiation and the difficulty of upward mobility. “Vavylon” thus reveals itself as social satire. Vavylon’s conventions are embodied in the specific design of the city and are an absurd way to structure social relations. Implicit in this portrayal is a wider critique of the function of social hierarchies and their rationale.

“…”, the ninth story in the collection, is a tale of a mysterious and nameless city that is painstakingly constructed in South America, only to disappear immediately upon its completion. The story is made up of fragments from a variety of sources that detail the work involved in the city’s construction, along with commentary about workers’ strikes and their resolution. One fragment records the re-discovery of the city by an explorer, who stumbles across more evidence of strange goings-on. The concluding fragment details the final disappearance of the city into the Pacific Ocean. We are left with a sense of mystery, the suggestion of ongoing conflict between employee and employer, and the startling fact (within the confines of the story) of the existence of a large, mobile city. This story, like many in the collection, reminds this reviewer of Jorge Luis Borges’ Labyrinths; in the case of “…”, specifically of “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”.

“Poseidonia,” the thirteenth tale, and “Cosmovia,” the nineteenth, makes use of classic sf tropes: that of the underwater city and pantropy — the adaptation of human bodies for the habitation of previously uninhabitable spaces — and that of the generation starship, respectively. Both are fine stories that deal with the themes of hope deferred, of adaptation to novelty and of history and memory. “Gnossos” (tale number eleven) is a retelling of Daedalus’ and Icarus’ flight from Crete from
Icarus’ perspective. This story deals with another prevalent theme, that of entrapment, escape and futility for which the labyrinth – as in Borges’ work – is emblematic. “Castrum” (tale number eight) describes the history of the formation of an ordered Roman city. The twelfth, “orthogonic” legion imposes their geometric logic onto the landscape, only to be overrun by hordes of barbarians. The final line of the story exemplifies the dry wit that underlies the satire at the heart of the stories in the collection: ‘[i]n times to come, the historians of Rome would ascribe this defeat to the barbarians’ ignorance of geometry’ (21).

Squaring the Circle is an immensely enjoyable collection of stories that is well worth becoming familiar with. Its condensed and well-wrought stories, its socio-political satire, its reflection on time, stasis and change, adaptation, hope and futility, makes it especially worthwhile for critics and teachers of speculative fiction. Squaring the Circle would make an excellent teaching text, and would work especially well on a syllabus that also featured the work of Borges. Courses that explored urban spaces, politics and society would also benefit from having this text on their syllabi. Le Guin’s translation is especially valuable for shining a light on a little known author of Romanian speculative fiction and on a work that should not be forgotten. To this end, Squaring the Circle would also make an excellent piece for courses on European speculative fiction, or for a course on speculative fiction from around the world.

In 2013, Le Guin and Rodríguez gave a talk at Seattle Public Library for the release of Squaring the Circle. A link to the recording of the talk can be found on the blog post, “Squaring the Circle at Seattle Public Library.” Le Guin and Rodríguez discuss the process of translating the collection and read several stories in English, Spanish and Romanian (read by an unidentified speaker); I would highly recommend listening to the hour long event. In addition, “Sah-Harah,” the twenty-first story of the collection, is available online at Lightspeed Magazine. For more information about Romanian speculative fiction, see Cătălin Badea-Gheracostea’s “No CNN at the Four Gates of Recent Romanian Imaginary” in the SFRA Review 309.

**Works Cited**


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**Media Reviews**

**Avengers: Age of Ultron**

Cait Coker


Order option(s): [Prime](#) | [Prime Bonus](#) | [Blu-Ray](#)

WHEN I REVIEWED the first *Avengers* film here three years ago, I noted that writer/director Joss Whedon appeared to draw on his interpretation of the team from Mark Millar’s version of the comic books: “These people are together because the world needs saving. And this flawed, bizarre group of mismatched myths is the only team in the world that can save it and watching them do it is a glorious thing.” *Avengers 2* lingers on this notion, but rather than dwelling on mis-matched myths, it is a surprising meditation on monstrosity through character studies. Because superhero films lack subtlety, this thesis is verbalized at one point or another by most of the characters, but to break it down, Tony Stark/Iron Man (Robert Downey, Jr.) is a “mad” scientist; Steve Rogers/Captain America (Chris Evans) is a soldier who doesn’t know how to exist outside of war; Thor is destined to bring destruction and death upon his people; Bruce/...
Banner/Hulk (Mark Ruffalo) is, well, a ragemonster; and Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) is a former assassin who was forcibly sterilized and taught to kill from a young age. A sequence early on establishes the root fears of many of the characters, and the rest of the film explores how they react to those fears.

In contrast, the initial primary antagonists are the Maximoff twins, Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) and Pietro (Aaron Taylor-Johnson), who are familiar to comics readers by their aliases of Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver – names which were used in the marketing but not in the actual film itself, presumably because of complicated studio rights issues that also necessitated a change in their story backgrounds. In the comics these characters are mutants who were born with their powers, but here they volunteered for an “enhancement” program to get superpowers to fight for their country, Sokovia, a thinly-veiled stand-in for Serbia. As children, their parents were killed by Stark-manufactured army shells, leaving them with a hatred of American imperialism in general and Tony Stark specifically. They are later joined by Ultron (James Spader), the genocidal Artificial Intelligence that Stark and Banner design with the best of intentions. The message of “We make our own terrorists” isn’t altogether lost in this very busy film, but it is one that stands out much less than the others.

Ultron is clearly the “Monster” to the Frankensteinnian duo of Banner and Stark. As he states, “Everyone creates the thing they dread. Men of peace create engines of war, invaders create avengers. People create... smaller people? Uhh... children! Lost the word there. Children, designed to supplant them. To help them... end.” Ultron himself creates a “child” as well – the android Vision (Paul Bettany). The Vision is himself monstrous to Ultron because he is, as he states, “Life.” He is what must replace Ultron, and in the film’s conclusion, there is a new generation of heroes to supplant the old guard – including Vision, but also Scarlet Witch, Falcon, and War Machine. It is also perhaps telling that these new heroes include not only another woman but two men of color, who will themselves be joined by additional heroes of equal diversity in further film offerings. In other words, Ultron gets to channel Whedon briefly for some meta-commentary on the film itself.

Whedon has also had the rather thankless task of balancing this film’s story needs, for it is simultaneously a Part Two (of the Avengers “trilogy”) and a Part Ten (of the Marvel Cinematic Universe); an entire story with its own beginning and end; a story that has numerous callbacks to previous adventures and is planting the seeds for many more (it includes set-up and introductions for Thor: Ragnarok, Captain America: Civil War, Black Panther, and the two-parter that will presumably be the franchise’s ultimate conclusion, The Infinity War). The backlash against Whedon has largely been based on his presumed insufficient feminism, especially characterized through the “monstrosity” of Black Widow’s sterility. I for one think that these views tend to overlook Whedon’s rather large corpus that emphasize his particular brand of radical feminism. Each of his films and series (with the exception of his adaptation of Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing) has focused on some aspect of mental/social control and concludes with the heroine’s disengagement from that system. Black Widow’s arc in both Captain America: The Winter Soldier and Age of Ultron is very much in keeping with this trope. Further, she is one of the only characters who has also made a measure of peace for herself, pushing her arc further than that of the male characters. We might further consider the possibilities inherent in a film that is so inherently with issues of reproduction and continuity: the notion of Ultron as a “monstrous” child, Vision as a “savior” child, and Black Widow as the personification of both through her inability to have children; the possibility of reading Black Widow as an analog for Whedon himself, who cannot and will not produce more Marvel films; and finally, the notion of replacement brought to its conclusion – when the Avengers films actually are concluded (admittedly a projected five years in the future).

Age of Ultron engages much more with the culture of comics and comics films than it does with the history of science fiction. That said, the notions of reproduction and monstrosity do harken back to SF’s beginnings with Shelley’s Frankenstein, especially with the dichotomy of technologies used for good (J.A.R.V.I.S./Vision; Captain America’s super-soldier serum; the helicarrier’s airborne rescue craft) and evil (Ultron; Stark’s bombs; the mind-wiping technology that both the Black Widow and the Winter Soldier struggle with). Finally, I think that what Marvel Studios does especially well is celebrating heroism through saving lives. As with the previous Avengers film, a lot of screen time is dedicated to the heroes focusing on saving civilians. Unlike other films which linger on carnage, or try to make “relevant” use of 9/11-style imagery, these superheroes pull people out of buildings and vehicles and then get them to safety – over and over and over again. While flirting with being overly repetitive and visually at odds with the more spectacular sequences of other films, it nonetheless concretely empha-
sized that humanity’s saving grace is humanity. A minor *deus ex machina* is the resurrection of a helicarrier to evacuate an entire city, and new hero Pietro Maximoff has to concede with a small smile, “This is not so bad.” The flip side of imperialism is globalism, even as fear is the flip side of heroism.

**Work Cited**


**Dying Light (2015)**

Lars Schmeink


Order option(s): PS4 | XBox | PC

*DYING LIGHT*, the latest release of Polish developer Techland, is a zombie game that allows players to experience how they might behave when faced with a global crisis. Innovatively reimagining the zombie game, *Dying Light* opens up nuanced options for ideological interpretation that lies between the two opposing ends of current zombie games: loss of volition and power fantasy. But as is central with zombie games (as argued by Matthew Weise in his essay “How the Zombie Changed Videogames”), it is not the narrative that is key to an ideological interpretation, but instead the game’s mechanics.

As stated, the narrative is rather commonplace among zombie narratives: The game drops the player into the action of an ongoing viral outbreak. As Kyle Crane, they parachute into the city of Harran, Turkey. An unknown zombie virus has broken out in the city, which by now is hermetically quarantined. It is Crane’s job to infiltrate the city and get some military files out, but he gets attacked and bitten. He ends up with a group of survivors and is informed that he will need to take a drug named Antizin to keep the infection at bay. Crane has to navigate the city, deal with the survivors and keep them in supply of food and medicine, struggle with another faction in the city, and stay away from the zombies.

Player survival in *Dying Light* means dealing with a dwindling amount of resources and is thus reminiscent of early survival horror games such as the original *Resi-
Dent Evil (1996), where resources were scarce and the player had to consider how to spend them. Dying Light forces the player not only to consider his own resource management but also that of the refuge camp, sending them off to gather supplies in many of the game's missions. Further, the game mechanics stress that weapons and traps get used up, they degrade and don’t renew automatically, thus enhancing the slow disempowerment of the player. Even though in daylight zombies are easy to kill, they tend to amass in numbers that are not manageable. Slowly fighting away at the zombies, players can easily overestimate their weapon resources and be caught unaware of their volatile position. Moving too self-assuredly through the game world can result in the ultimate loss of player agency – not being able to defend themselves. Here, the game is in close relation to the older, slower survival horror games and emphasises a loss of volition in the player.

In contrast, the game does allow players the illusion of power when confronting zombies, as these are easy to kill with a wide array of bats, pipes, planks etc., that are readily available around the dilapidated city. A skill system further allows the player to become better at survival and fighting, thus granting them the feeling of superiority in regards to ‘normal’ survivors. This is rather reminiscent of the power fantasy of first-person shooters and later zombie games, such as Techland’s previous game Dead Island (2011), which provided the fantasy of an exotic zombie slugfest on a tropical island.

But the central ideological metaphor lies in the game’s day/night cycle: for every hour of gameplay, players will have to survive 6 minutes of night-time. During that time, there is a significant change in game mechanics dealing with zombie behaviour. The sluggish Romero-type zombies of the day turn into fast, hyper-aggressive, infected-type zombies during the night. Within the game world logic, the UV light of the day slows their metabolism drastically, but at night, they become vicious hunters and the virus takes control. At this juncture, fighting becomes pointless and players are forced to take flight in order to reach safe zones, where zombies can’t reach them. Here, the horror of survival games, the ultimate loss of volition, becomes underlined by the hectic and heart-pumping action of the first person perspective, when players are being chased by hundreds of murderous infected. When it gets dark, the passive masses become uncontrollable and fully capable of ripping apart the fragile balance of the city and its remaining survivors.

It is at this point that the design of the city of Harran strongly impacts the game mechanics. Herein lies another innovation of the game, as it departs from both the highly restricted movement of Resident Evil as well as the open world horizontal roaming of Dead Island.
In *Dying Light*, movement is both horizontal and vertical – players use Parkour in order to traverse the city in length, breadth *and* height. This movement is key to survival, both when fleeing the infected and when searching the city for supplies. Maintaining momentum and concentrating on the body for motion, propulsion and ultimately survival is at the heart of this kind of traversal of game space and it neatly signifies the change in dealing with the simulated social crisis. Whereas *Resident Evil* underscored careful movement and thoughtful planning ahead, power fantasies of shooters such as *Left 4 Dead* (2008) built upon the idea of direct confrontation and making a stand against the masses (as long as bullets are available), the shifting zombie behaviour and the Parkour movements of the player suggest that in *Dying Light*, fluidity and adaptability to new and ever-changing challenges are key to survival.

*Dying Light* is thus a fusion of zombie games that came before it. It combines moments of player disempowerment central to survival games, while also granting a reprieve from it in parts where power fantasies prevail – first leading the player on with promises of control during the day, only to reveal their ultimate lack of volition once it turns night. It is also interesting to point out that zombie narratives in recent years emphasize a global space, in this case: situating the outbreak in Turkey, poised on the border between Europe and the Middle East. The geographic location, the powerful image of an outbreak crisis, the forceful quarantine of a region, the threatening masses of a disenfranchised people, and the illusion of control all allow reading *Dying Light* as a cultural commentary on the current situation in Europe. The zombie game becomes metaphor of a world out of balance and in crisis.

**Works Cited**

Transistor (2014)

Ryan Young


Order option(s): PS4

IN THE FIRST VOLUME of Asimov’s Foundation series, the Foundation on Terminus had to continually change its approach to social and military crises in order to regain the order found in the Galactic era. The intellectual stagnation of the Galactic era lead to the collapse of its central empire. The city of Cloudbank in Transistor is similarly built on a model of perpetual change through its system of collecting citizens’ views on aesthetic and administrative decisions. Yet this cyberpunk utopia is the site of an internal rebellion seeking to halt the constant change in aid of establishing an avant-garde aesthetic that returns the author to the forefront. Though this city is clearly benefiting from its utopian democratic system, those seeking to change it notice a cyclical pattern in the decisions made, prompting the small revolutionary band called the Camerata to take up the maxim ‘when everything changes nothing changes’. Transistor locates this theme of change through its narrative, ludic, and aesthetic elements.

Transistor reverses the perspective from the developer’s predecessor, Bastion (Supergiant Games: 2011), in order to locate the player at the beginning of the cities’ catastrophe. The eponymously named Transistor is a sword which is used to direct the change requested by citizens of Cloudbank. The sword controls the robot workforce called the Process which then carries out the designs of the Transistor and its wielder. A prominent engineer in Cloudbank, Royce Bracket, used the Transistor to construct buildings, bridges, and gardens but was unsatisfied by the transiency of his constructions. Forming the Camerata alongside a prominent political administrator, their intention was to capture the essence and abilities of exceptional citizens into the Transistor: allowing the creation of works which would transcend the whims of the people. However, these plans are ruined when control of the Transistor is accidently relinquished to the player-character: Red. Red, a target of the Camerata, is a famous singer in the city, adored by thousands of citizens. The attack by the Camerata locked Red’s voice in the Transistor, however, Red gained control of the sword. This subsequently set the Process free from the Camerata’s control, and the Process began to deconstruct the city and its inhabitants into a blank slate.

The ludic elements of the game mirror the themes embodied in the narrative. The mechanics provoke the all too common genre hybridization of action-RPG, though it is the latter category which holds the ludic balance. Not unlike the materia system in Final Fantasy VII (Square: 1997), the Transistor can be primed with four different attack functions which can in turn be augmented by other functions with added abilities. The result, as the player encounters the antagonistic Process, is an array of actions uniquely constructed by each player. If the player-character’s health runs down to zero, then instead of restarting the gameplay segment from a checkpoint, one of the attack functions is expelled from the Transistor, constraining possible actions. The expelled function is then suspended from use for another two encounters, meaning the player must replace it with another function. This forces the player to adopt a tactical malleability in their approach to playing.

As progress is made through the game, the city of Cloudbank undergoes architectural and aesthetic changes due to the Process. Cloudbank is built on a foundation of the most positive and utopic cyberpunk architecture, and a haven for rich blue and green colours. The work of the process systematically reduces the city to stark, white, geometric shapes: it returns the painting to a blank canvas. Though this outcome is unintended by the Camerata, their methods to break the cyclical change of this stagnant utopia were ultimately an attempt to resurrect the auteur. In this utopia of Cloudbank, the individual has been replaced by the will of the many. The system to maintain this is based on the universal platform of the internet, which is connected to the very fabric of the city and collects information willingly supplied by the citizens. From a position of administration, the Camerata see that the perpetual change is cyclical. They hold that a true utopia does not stagnate in cycles of faux-change, and intend to raise the city to new heights through taking ownership of the change. Though fighting against the ideals of the Camerata throughout the narrative, the player paradoxically embodies their beliefs of change through the auteur in play. The Camerata’s work of imbuing the Transistor with the abilities of exceptional citizens is realised by the players own progress through the game. The tactical malleability needed to cut through the deconstruction of the Process embodies the individual player’s identity of play. The player’s choice of functions manifest an identity of
how the story transpires and leaves an indelible mark of authorship by the player.

*Transistor* joins *Bioshock* (2K Boston: 2007) in showing how a utopia falls from grace. In *Bioshock*, the downfall of an objectivist utopia is told through the binary choices and internal processes delivered to the player by the designer. Greed both builds the city of Rapture in *Bioshock* and destroys it. In *Transistor* the fall inevitably occurs from a decision of greed to return the author and eschew the cooperation of the people. Save for the unlikely possibility of subversive tactics in play, the player is complicit with the construction of an author in play. Progress through the game furthers the degradation of the utopic Cloudbank. *Transistor* explores, through its simulation, the fall of a utopia from a cooperative phenomenon to a blank slate brought about by greed. It asks a question common in utopian themes: can a utopia exist without a social structure built on the cooperation of a community?

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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.

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

http://www.sfra.org/ | http://currentresearchinspeculativefiction.blogspot.co.uk/
Call for Papers—Conference

Title: Global Fantastika: An Interdisciplinary Conference
Deadline: 1 March 2016
Conference Date: July 4-5, 2016
Lancaster, Lancashire
Contact: fantastikaconference@gmail.com

Topic: “Fantastika”, coined by John Clute, is an umbrella term which incorporates the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, but can also include alternative histories, steampunk, young adult fiction, or any other imaginative space. The 3rd annual Fantastika conference will focus on productions of Fantastika globally, as well as considering themes of contact across nations and borders within Fantastika. It is our hope to draw together academics with an interest in Fantastika from an international audience to share and disseminate Fantastika-related research globally.

We welcome abstracts for 20 minute papers on Fantastika as they occur in any medium and form. Some suggested topics are:
- the production and development of Fantastika in non-Western or non-English-speaking countries
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Submission: Please submit a 300 word abstract to fantastikaconference@gmail.com along with a 50 word biography by March 1st, 2016.

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