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

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EDITORS’ MESSAGE

Making It New
Doug Davis

2013 OPENS with a new Executive Committee for the SFRA, a new place and time for our annual conference, a new editor for the Review, and a new anthology in the works—the last of which I invite all members of the SFRA to be a part of. Below you will find the inaugural addresses of our new President, Pawel Frelik, and our new Vice President, Amy Ransom. Based on our new executive leadership and the impressive scope of the forthcoming SFRA/Eaton conference, it is clear that the SFRA is growing globally. Pawel is the first SFRA President not to reside on the North American continent; Amy is the first SFRA Vice President to specialize not in English-language SF but in French-language SF. Each brings a fresh global outlook to our organization, as their inaugural editorials attest. The joint SFRA/Eaton conference, as described by Patrick Sharp below, features an impressive array of talent from the Americas, Europe, the Pacific Rim and beyond. The conference has proven to be so popular that the organizers will be running no less than seven panels concurrently over three days. I look forward to seeing many of you there. I also look forward to working with Michael Klein, my new co-editor of the SFRA Review. Welcome aboard, Michael! Lastly, I want to welcome all of you, the readers of the Review, to consider contributing to the first anthology to come from these very pages: Science Fiction 101: Tools for Teaching SF in the Classroom. As Ritch Calvin describes below, we are turning our popular “Feature 101” series into a book. We will include many of the 101 articles we have already published, but we are also looking for new articles on topics that have yet to be covered in the Review. We have listed some potential areas of interest below, but we are also eager to learn about new areas of expertise as well. As one of the editors of Science Fiction 101, I invite you to get in touch with either me or Ritch to discuss a proposal or review a draft of your own “Feature 101” piece. Please see below for details.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Keep Watching the Nets
Pawel Frelik

THE WORLD is still here as we all knew it would be—we all did, right? As one writer reminded us in an introduction to the anthology with glasses in the title, its future remains unwritten, but for SFRA, 2013 promises to be very auspicious, indeed.

First of all, as the incoming President, I would like to thank the previous Executive Committee, who did such a splendid job for the past two years—thank you Ritch, Jason, Susan, Patrick, and Lisa. Susan George, albeit in a different capacity, remains an EC member, and Ritch will now act as Immediate Past President, which should make the transition even smoother. I would also like to thank all those who took part in voting—all four of us in the elected EC will do our best to run the organization as smoothly as possible and make it even more attractive for its members present and future. As the first EC member and the first President from outside North America in SFRA’s history, I accept my appointment with a dose of humility but also as a sign of trust—I do hope, with Amy’s, Susan’s, Jenni’s, and Ritch’s help, to make a difference. The 2012 election also made history as SFRA’s first electronic ballot. That it worked is not itself miraculous (Jason Ellis harnessed available tools perfectly), but it has shown that, by and large, the Science Fiction Research Association is ready to embrace new solutions offered by digital technologies. And this, in fact, remains one of the main tasks that I have set for myself for this presidential term.

The first sign of this evolution is the changed status of SFRA Review which has gone fully electronic—a development partly forced by the economic realities but also an enormous opportunity for experimentation with its formula, some of which (hotlinking of the reviews to the SFRA Amazon store) is already happening. I do understand that many members like their hard copy of SFRA Review with their morning coffee, but the logistics and economics of getting it to individual subscribers changed radically after we lost the support of the University of Wisconsin, where Janice Bogstad did so much wonderful work for us over the years. We can now truly appreciate how much of the help to the organization she
and her institution were—thank you so much for this, Janice! In any case, those interested in having a solid copy in their library can still order the combined annual volume. And, don’t forget that those PDFs are typeset for easy printing.

In other areas of the electronic domain, over the next year or so, we hope to unveil the new SFRA website, where we will start preserving our organizational memory in the form of the conference archive; we will revise the philosophy of our Twitter feed and Facebook page, which should become channels for a steady stream of relevant and interesting tidbits and tidbytes; and we will expand into any and all online spaces and subspaces as befits the organization committed to thinking about futurity and technology. One of such loci is the SFRA group on the Steam gaming platform, initiated by Craig Jacobsen, but there will be more so keep watching the nets.

In the real world, we have our annual conference coming up soon (sooner than usual, too)—this year as a joint event with UCR’s Eaton Collection. Melissa, Patrick, and Rob have worked hard to organize the event, which promises to be not only inspiring in its thematic diversity (at this time, the program has already been posted online) but also beneficial for the organization in attracting new members. It also seems more than likely that for 2014 we will team up again – this time with WisCon. We would also like to expand our international membership—Amy Ransom has already started preparing publicity material for Francophone areas, I intend to do so for German-language countries and Central and Eastern Europe, and the planned 2015 conference in Brazil will allow us to take SFRA’s banner to South America.

For now, I hope you will have a great year (it’s never too late for those wishes) and I hope to see many of you in Riverside in April. If you’re attending the joint Eaton/SFRA conference, do come to our bring-your-lunch business meeting, which will take place on Saturday, between 12:30 and 2pm. We hope more members will be able to attend than they would on Sunday morning, when the meetings usually took place. Till then, over and out.

HAPPY NEW YEAR and Thank You to the members of SFRA for electing me as your Vice-President for 2013! During my term, I plan to continue developing the social media initiatives undertaken by Jason Ellis, so I encourage you all to “Like us” on Facebook and to think about using SFRA’s Facebook and Twitter in addition to the ListServ if you wish to share opinions about SF-related media, get some advice, or spread the word about an event you are hosting. In addition, my other goal is to increase our international membership; as you may know, French is my field, so I will use connections among the Québec and Franco-European SF communities and I will tap my colleagues in Spanish for appropriate recruiting venues in Latin American and Peninsular SF communities. I encourage those of you in contact with other SF communities (Indian, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Icelandic, etc.) to give me information for ListServs, journals, etc. that I can contact in these recruiting efforts.

As part of my efforts at increasing SFRA’s international presence, I’d also like to share briefly my readings and viewings with you all as part of the Vice-President’s quarterly column. If you read a text (available with subtitles or English translation, please) from outside the Anglo-American corpus, that you’d like to share, please let me know so I can include it in future editions of this column. Since the theme of our upcoming conference is media, I am going to plug some SF films from around the globe worth viewing. The first two are available streaming if you subscribe to a major mail and online video vendor’s services.

Banlieue 13 (District 13, 2004, dir. Pierre Morel): Before there was District 9, there was District 13, a (then—it occurs in 2010) near-future dystopia set in Paris’s suburban housing projects. Writers Luc Besson (of The Big Blue and La Femme Nikita fame in the 1980s and 1990s) and Bibi Naceri extrapolate contemporary racial tensions in France meeting with an extremist reaction: the government erecting a huge wall around the problem district and letting the “natives” fight amongst themselves. The film exploits the odd-couple police action comedy formula by pairing a cop with a local leader working for change, injecting new energy into the genre with a hyped-up techno soundtrack and the casting of
David Belle, one of the inventors of the now popular sport of parkour, as Leïto.

Sleep Dealer (2008, dir. Alex Rivera): Mexican filmmaker Alex Rivera’s feature-length directorial debut quickly garnered him the attention of academic circles and I have seen two papers and read a couple of articles already featuring this intensely well-written near-future dystopia which extrapolates NAFTA’s effects in the border region. Braceros, once workers physically invited over the border from Mexico to work in the States, have become the virtual arms of the global economy, plugged in to computers that allow them to operate machinery thousands of miles away without leaving the maquiladoras of Tijuana. See Lysa Rivera’s perceptive analysis of the film in Science Fiction Studies 118 (Nov. 2012).

Dans une galaxie près de chez vous (2004, dir. Claude Desrosiers): The success of Québec’s television series of the same name (1999-2001), itself a spoof of Star Trek (1966-1969) and its various iterations, merited the creation of a film and a sequel. Dans une galaxie près de chez vous savvily riffs on all of the genre tropes of the space film infusing them with a sense of local humor for the specific Québécois audience. This is a shameless plug for my paper to be given in Riverside where I’ll talk about it in depth, well, twenty-minutes’ worth of depth anyway.

Ra.one (2011, dir. Anubhav Sinha): Two articles on SF in Bollywood brought the films Koi... mil Gaya and Krrish (2003 and 2006, dir. Rakesh Roshan), along with their superstar Hrithik Roshan, to my attention. While still quite limited in number, the Bollywood boom has not neglected the SF film; indeed, it appears to have developed so much in the past decade that Ra.one, featuring India’s hottest superstar, Shah Rukh Khan (nicknamed “King Khan”), actually parodies the very genre it adheres to (and thus invoking for me Bruce Isaacs’ theorizations of postmodern film’s complex relationship to genre in Toward a New Film Aesthetic [London: Continuum, 2008]). A mashup of Iron Man (2008, dir. Jon Favreau), Tron: Legacy (2010, dir. Joseph Kosinski), and even Avatar (2009, dir. James Cameron), its star plays a triple role: an over-the-top superhero in his son’s fantasies; a nerdy game designer in real life; and the heroic avatar of the game he has designed which steps out of the box and into reality to save the world. With all of that, plus a love intrigue with Kareena Kapoor, wonderful dance numbers, and references to Hindu mythology (the battle between Ram and Ravana), Ra.one offers an interesting study in film genre through the unusual addition of some SF spice into the usual Bollywood masala.

Bon cinéma! as we say in French.
BEGINNING IN Winter 2008 (issue #283), the SFRA Review, under the new editorship of Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen, began running a series of articles called the “101 Feature,” which they described as “a 101-level primer hitting the high points of important topics that...are of interest to SFRA members.” The underlying idea was that these brief articles would provide a set of tools for anyone teaching SF in the classroom. They would provide a brief but nevertheless thorough and useful background for a particular topic related to SF studies. The initial article was “Science Studies 101,” by Patrick Sharp. Since that time, the SFRA Review has continued to publish the 101 features. To date, they have included: “Comic Studies 101”; “Critical History of Argentine SF”; “Fan Studies 101”; “Feminist SF 101”; “Genre Fiction in the (Pre)College Writing Classroom”; “Medicine and Science Fiction”; “Mundane 101”; “Narrative, Archive, Database: The Digital Humanities and Science Fiction Scholarship”; “New Weird 101”; “Postmodernism 101”; “Pride and Wikiness”; “Recent Spanish Science Fiction”; “Scholarly Research and Writing 101”; “Science Studies 101”; “Sex in the Machine: the Ultimate Contraceptive”; “SF Anthologies”; “SF Audio 101, or ‘It’s Alive’”; “Slipstream 101”; “Terraforming 101”; “Using Book History to Teach Science Fiction”; and “Video Games 101.”

Given the success and popularity of the 101 features, and given that more and more teachers are beginning to use SF in their classrooms—from YA fiction, to movies (long and short), to comic books and graphic novels, to video games, and various other forms—a resource for teachers (at all levels) would be invaluable.

The Science Fiction Research Association plans to publish an anthology of 101 features. The potential topics for someone teaching SF in a classroom are boundless. Potential additional topics may include, but are by no means limited to:

- Adaptations 101
- Alternate Histories 101
- Anthropology and SF 101
- Astrophysics and SF 101
- Biopunk 101
- Biology and SF 101
- Canadian SF 101
- Chinese SF 101
- Computers, Computing and SF 101
- Cyberpunk 101
- Dieselpunk 101
- Ecofeminist SF 101
- Film and SF 101 (and/or Short SF Films 101)
- FTL 101
- Genetics and SF 101
- Indian SF 101
- Japanese SF 101
- Military SF (and/or War and SF 101)
- Nanopunk 101
- Philosophy and SF 101
- Physics and SF 101
- Political Science and SF 101
- (Post)Apocalyptic SF 101
- Postcolonialism and SF 101
- Posthumanism 101
- Religion and SF 101
- Robots, Robotics and SF 101
- Russian SF 101
- SF Poetry 101
- Singularity 101
- Space Opera 101 (The New Space Opera 101)
- Steampunk 101
- Time Travel 101
- Utopian/Dystopia SF 101
- Vampires 101
- Young Adult SF and Fantasy 101

Please consider writing and submitting a 101 feature to the editors for consideration. Contributors must be members of the SFRA. All submissions will go through a peer-review process. Please query the editors first for topics. Word count limit for final essay: 3500.

**Deadline:** Completed submission due by August 15, 2013 (or any time prior to that!).

**Contacts:** Editors Ritch Calvin, Doug Davis, Karen Hellekson, and Craig Jacobsen. Email: SFRA101s@gmail.com.
Feature 101

Narrative, Archive, Database: The Digital Humanities and Science Fiction Scholarship 101

Lisa Yaszek

This essay is a loose transcription of a talk I gave at the University of California-Riverside Science Fiction Symposium in May 2012. Thanks to the conference organizers and the participants for all their feedback, and thanks to the editors of the Review for allowing me to share it with you here.

IN THIS FEATURE 101, I will address the relationship of the digital humanities to science fiction (SF) scholarship. Both are relatively new fields of inquiry that work to bridge what C.P. Snow famously called “the two cultures” of the sciences and the humanities. As SF scholars, we study stories about science and technology. Meanwhile, digital humanities scholars use technoscientific tools and methods to study story itself. This leads to another point of connection: while practitioners of both disciplines are interested in individual authors and texts, we are also interested in processing large amounts of data and thinking about how entire genres change over time. Focusing on my experience as an SF scholar who works with both physical and online archives and who partners on interdisciplinary projects with significant digital components, I want to propose that the digital humanities—as both a set of tools and a set of methodologies—is crucial to the ongoing development of SF scholarship because it provides us with new modes of access and new research methods. But it also demands that we think carefully about what counts as knowledge, who produces that knowledge, and how that knowledge is shared with others.

To date, the most obvious way that the digital humanities has changed SF scholarship is by increasing access to archival materials. Two of the oldest digital humanities projects are putting texts online and creating research indices for them, prime examples being Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org) and the Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database (SFFRD) at Texas A&M (http://sffrd.library.tamu.edu/). I do not think it is any surprise that almost immediately after such projects got underway, we saw a resurgent interest in archival research throughout the humanistic disciplines. As Ed Folsom, co-director of the Walt Whitman online archive, puts it:

We’ve always known that any history or any theory could be undone…but when archives were physical and scattered across the globe and thus often inaccessible, it was easier to accept a history until someone else did the arduous work of researching the archives…. [The] Database increasingly makes inaccessible archives accessible from a desktop. (“Epic Transformation”)

Desktop access to archives around the world is more than just a mere convenience, of course. In an era of shrinking university budgets and therefore drastically reduced travel funds, it is, for many scholars, the only way we can ever hope to interact with the full range of texts we study.

My own experience suggests that digital tools both complement traditional SF studies methodologies and help scholars from outside the field better understand what it is we do. I got the idea for Galactic Suburbia, my book on postwar women’s SF, in an extremely conventional manner: while looking through old anthologies in the Georgia Tech library stacks for Golden Age SF stories to use in class, I was surprised to find that there were quite a few women writing—and, more specifically, writing about sex and gender—in this supposedly pre-feminist era. But I could not have determined just how many women were engaged in such projects without the Locus Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Magazine Index, nor could I have secured all their stories without my institute’s excellent interlibrary loan (ILL) system.

In that particular case, digital tools enhanced my regular research procedures. In others, they have fostered connections between my own research methodologies and those of other disciplines. For example, when I first joined an interdisciplinary National Science Foundation grant team charged with the task of mapping how certain ideas about nanoscience and technology circulate through culture, we could not figure out how to actually do what we had promised we would do: mesh the qualitative methodologies at the heart of my own research with the quantitative ones employed by the engineers and social scientists on our team. The solution to this quandary hinged on an analytic technique enabled by digital tools: data mining. Once we began searching both scientific and liberal arts databases for articles containing a certain set of mutually agreed-upon terms we realized that no matter what their discipline, scholars writing about nanoscience and technology often invoked the same source texts. This provided us with a
way to move forward: first we used data mining to identify which scientific, governmental and popular texts were central to the emergent discourse of small-scale engineering, and then we trained our student researchers to analyze how representations of this kind of engineering did or did not change over time. And so while we did not create an entirely new interdisciplinary mode of study, digital tools enabled us to identify similar patterns of interest across disciplines and to bring different disciplinary modes of inquiry together in a productive fashion.

While digital tools are broadly useful in a variety of individual and collaborative research settings, they are perhaps most useful in terms of facilitating the goals of SF archival scholarship. As Rob Latham put it when we first started talking about the roundtable discussion upon which this article is based, the goal of SF archival scholarship is to fill gaps in the scholarly record. In digital humanities terminology, the extant scholarly record is the narrative we use to represent history as usual. But computers and digital technologies do not operate on narrative principles; they facilitate the creation of the database. Lev Manovich describes the difference this way:

> As a cultural form, the database represents the world as a list of items, and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies. Competing for the same territory of human culture, each claims an exclusive right to make meaning out of the world. ("Database as Symbolic Form")

In my own experience, narratives and databases aren’t so much natural enemies as entities that co-exist in productive tension with one another—and that is key to modern SF scholarship. So let’s return to the example of *Galactic Suburbia* for a moment. Based on my initial findings in the Georgia Tech library, I got inspired to challenge extant narratives about prefeminist SF: that it didn’t really exist, that what little did get written was politically and aesthetically suspect, that such writing had little or no impact on men’s SF, etc. The Locus Magazine Index confirmed my initial suspicion that there were indeed many women writing SF in this period, and then ILL enabled me to collect all those stories quickly and create a database of women’s Golden Age SF stories. Once I had that, I quite literally played with the order of the items in my database by printing them out and shuffling them around into different piles and patterns of piles until I came up with a more compelling narrative.

In a similar vein, the data-mining techniques we used on the NSF nanotech grant also enabled us to create databases that challenged extant narratives about the flow of scientific ideas. In that case, our data-mining expert created a program that searched for meaningful patterns in the reference lists for both scientific and humanistic analyses of nanotechnology. The new database produced by this activity demonstrated striking similarities between the scientific and humanistic archives, and that, in turn, prompted the scientists and social scientists on our team to look more closely at SF itself. As a result, they ended up revising one of their own most dearly held narratives about the circulation of technoscientific ideas throughout culture. While the scientists came onto the project assuming that our understandings and representations of new sciences and technologies flow from the realm of science to the realm of public policy and then to the realm of science fiction, after studying the database they realized what many of us SF scholars already know: that in many cases, SF writers are the first to come up with compelling representations of new sciences and technologies, and that scientists and public policy makers rely on those representations both explicitly and implicitly when generating their own discussions of these topics.

But the tools and techniques of the digital humanities do more than simply confirm what we, as SF scholars, already know. They also demand that we reconsider the nature of our scholarship itself. Once upon a time—when the digital humanities was still called “humanities computing”—we could think about it as one strain of humanistic inquiry amongst many. Now, of course, all the humanities are becoming digital. And this raises issues about the fundamental nature of our profession—issues that were already there but that are made more evident by this particular change. Broadly speaking, we can break these issues down into three categories. First, digital humanities scholars such as Steven Ramsay, Johanna Drucker and Alan Liu ask: who produces knowledge in the contemporary digital context? The people who build databases? The librarians who run ILL systems? Or the communities of people who access those databases from their desktops? Second, researchers including Ed Folsom, Kenneth Price, Shane Landrum, and Tara McPherson ask: what counts as the object of study? Is it the original published version of a specific work? Is it all the alternate versions available in physical archives or digital databases? Is it the ephemera associated with the text in question? Or is it the whole constellation of social, political and aesthetic forces in which the prima-
ry text turns out to be enmeshed? And then, third and finally, scholars including Mark Sample and Kathleen Fitzpatrick ask: how do we share knowledge? Should we continue to privilege traditional scholarly venues such as conferences, journals and university-operated presses? Or is there equal (or perhaps even more) value in attending to tweets, Skype presentations and the new patterns of open-source, peer-reviewed publications emerging online? (For more specific reading recommendations, please see the list at the end of this essay.)

I do not think these are abstract or puckish questions. Perhaps that is because lately I find that I am confronting very similar issues in my own scholarship. This is particularly true of my current research project, a critical anthology of women’s contributions to the early SF community that I am co-editing with my colleague Patrick Sharp from Cal State-LA. So far the work has proceeded very quickly, precisely because we can access the SF archive in so many different ways. Patrick and I begin each loop of the project consulting the Locus Index to identify authors and texts of interest to us, and then we go into physical library archives using yet another set of digital tools—smartphone cameras and scanners—to collect our desired materials. After that, we continue our work at our respective institutions with our student research partners, Marissa Elliott-Baptiste and Shawn Sorenson, using various combinations of ILL, online research and more targeted archival research to complete that particular project loop.

One the one hand, this is extremely efficient because we are using digital tools to enhance SF scholarship as usual. But then again, when we look at the Dropbox folder where everyone stores their research findings, some more difficult questions arise: who is producing the knowledge that will end up in this book? Is it Patrick and I, since we are the expert scholars who have defined this project? Is it Marissa, who uses a combination of in-person interviews and online research to find stories we had not considered before? Is it Shawn, who sends out a continuous stream of photos and text messages recording his evolving ideas about early women’s SF as he travels through the Georgia university library system? Is it all of us together as we create a Dropbox-based database where we all seem to be equal authorities? These are difficult questions indeed.

Of course, there are even more issues for us to grapple with. What counts as the object of study for the purposes of this anthology? Initially Patrick and I—as trained literary scholars—assumed that we would work primarily with text. But the more time we spent in archives looking at actual SF magazines (rather than isolated stories), the more we became convinced that we would need to include artwork as well. Eventually, at Shawn’s prompting, we began to think about how we might include related materials such as advertisements. And so, as we’ve shifted from looking at isolated stories and taking notes on them to data-gathering practices based on smartphone technologies, we’ve grown our database in ways that significantly change the narrative we thought we would be telling. Sometimes that can be frustrating because it upsets our carefully planned work schedules, but mostly it is an exciting and welcome form of semi-chaos.

We also find we are having some surprisingly serious questions about how to share the knowledge we’ve acquired in the course of this project. Do we go with a traditional university press book publication? If so, how do we represent our evolving objects of study? And then what happens to Marissa and Shawn’s labor? Will we reach the widest and most appropriate audience possible if we go with a traditional university-based book publication, or should we start talking with new presses dedicated to electronic and multimedia book production? In short, what publishing format will let us come closest to having it all, by which I mean what publishing format will reach the greatest audience, preserve or even enhance my and Patrick’s reputations as experienced SF scholars, and enable us to faithfully represent the good work our junior research partners have done for us?

I am sure that many of you are grappling with similar issues in your own research. But for now, let me conclude by asking a few more questions we might also consider. The most pressing of these, of course is: how might digital tools continue to transform the SF archive? Tools like the SFFRD (http://sffrd.library.tamu.edu/) provide scholars with quick access to all the different narratives we use to make sense of our chosen genre and its history, and databases including Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org), the Hathi Trust (http://www.hathitrust.org/) and Pulpworld.com (www.pulpworld.com) make accessible to us all the text- and image-based source materials we might need to confirm, complicate or challenge these narratives. But there are other intriguing possibilities as well. At Georgia Tech, our librarians are working with SF author and Tech faculty member Kathleen Ann Goonan to import materials from her old computers and create a “Goonan Desktop” that will enable end users to explore the Goonan database to better understand her creative process. We are also looking at what it would take to create a digitizing service that
would enable SF authors to archive electronic copies of their working materials with our and other interested libraries. So I am curious to know: what other initiatives are happening out there, and what else might we do with digital tools and technologies?

We might also ask ourselves: how do the digital humanities impact other areas of SF scholarship? As Karen Hellekson, Heather Urbanowski and Robin Reid have already demonstrated, digital tools are facilitating a renaissance in critical fan studies as SF fandom moves online. I have recently started researching African SF and so far my sense is that the internet in general and the Web 2.0 in particular are the best tools for finding out about what is going on both in specific African countries and across the continent. And finally, how might the shift to electronically based research and production transform the publishing patterns of SF scholarship? As an executive officer for the SFRA I saw the editors of the SFRA Review—which has recently become an all-electronic publication—grapple with this on a regular basis. Now that the Review is digital, does it need to retain a quarterly publishing schedule, or could we switch to a continuously updated blog format? Can the Review begin accepting interactive essays organized around visual imagery and hyperlinks? Should the Review continue to demand that one must be an SFRA member to publish in the Review, or do we open that up, perhaps providing different levels of access to different people with different relationships to the organization? I know there are a lot of questions here with more examples than answers, but the fact that there are so many examples suggests that we really do need to confront these issues! And, as scholars who study a story form that celebrates educated people working together with new sciences and technologies to avert disasters and build better futures, it seems to me we are uniquely position to do so.

Works Cited


Recommended Readings

Drucker, Johanna. “Humanities Games and the Market in Digital Futures.” Criticism 47.2 (Spring 2006): 241-47.


Judith Merril: A Critical Study
Bridgitte A. Barclay


Order option(s): Paper | Kindle

IN A WELL-RESEARCHED study of Judith Merril's fiction writing and editorial, organizational and archival contributions to science fiction, authors Newell and Lamont address a call for more critical study of women science fiction writers. They deftly accomplish the hefty task of situating Merril as an author, science fiction community member, anthologizer and editor, translator, and life writer, as well as her place in American and women's literature, combating what they see as a near erasure of her in histories of science fiction literature and in her male colleagues' autobiographies. Lisa Yaszek, Justine Larbalestier and Eric Davin, among others, have recently drawn attention to post-WWII female science fiction authors and fans, and Newell and Lamont respond to these studies with this expansive study of Merril's work and life, both of which greatly impacted science fiction.

What stands out most about the book is its elaboration of Merril's experimentation. Merril not only wrote provocative fiction solo and collaboratively, but also experimented with non-writing endeavors. Newell and Lamont make a well-grounded, thorough argument for grounding Merril's impact, in part, in her creative approaches: collaborative writing, science fiction community organizing and popularizing, and innovative translation practices, among others.

The first half of the book, “The Postwar Fiction,” robustly situates Merril in American literature of the frontier and alien bodies particularly well. Beyond the analysis of Merril’s works in science fiction, the authors analyze the connections between westerns and science fiction in the first chapter, setting the stage for Merril’s fiction writing and its significance: that building on western genre tropes of the frontier, her fiction served as a critique of the oversimplified notions of the space frontier that discounted issues of race, gender and resources. The authors closely analyze a large variety of Merril’s fiction, positioning her in American literature,
particularly genre literature, such as westerns, mysteries and fantasies. They show how she participates in the captivity narratives and colonialist, western and mystery tropes that predated her, and how her writing predicted the work of later feminist theorists and feminist science fiction authors. For example, Newell and Lamont show how the space frontier literature of the post-WWII-era mirrored nineteenth century western frontier literature in many ways and how Merril offered critiques of common tropes by subverting them in some ways. The authors liken Merril’s “Daughters of the Earth” to western literature by women in the nineteenth century by arguing that Merril balanced editorial directives to create a story of place—in this case, two specific types of planets—with her own desire to write a story about multiple generations of pioneering women. What results, Newell and Lamont suggest, is a rich piece of literature that shows women’s desires and limitations in frontier literature.

In the second half of the book, “Shifting the Dimensions of Speculative Fiction,” Newell and Lamont categorize Merril as a pioneer in writing and anthologizing science fiction, thoroughly evidencing their argument by noting her personal and professional relationships with numerous well-known authors and her leadership in organizing communities of science fiction writers (115). For instance, they write about the collaborative process as Cyril Judd—the pseudonym for C.M. Kornbluth and Merril—and note the scant attention collaborative writing receives, despite its place in science fiction. Newell and Lamont argue that Merril brought to the collaboration of Outpost Mars social and domestic issues to complement and conflict with the established, usually male-dominated, colonization narrative. In addition, she documented the collaborative process through letters and her memoir. This section of Newell and Lamont’s text, in particular, highlights the web of contacts that Merril had with other science fiction writers through the multiple editions of The Year’s Best S-F anthologies, The Milford Science Fiction Conference, and elaborate correspondences with other science fiction authors.

This section also covers her later international influence in England, Japan and Canada, her work as a facilitator for other science fiction writers, and her memoir and its posthumous reception. Newell and Lamont detail the impact of all of this work through varied, well-researched sources. Merril’s work in Japan and Canada, the authors note, was particularly rewarding for her. Her unique work in translation—what she described as a sentence-by-sentence mining of the meaning, not just the literal translation—both changed the way she thought about language and collaboration, Newell and Lamont argue, and built on her experience as a collaborator and facilitator in science fiction. Likewise, her work in Canadian broadcasting in the 1970s, the authors argue, influenced a new generation of science fiction fans, much as her anthologies had in earlier decades. In addition to these major contributions to science fiction, the authors argue that Merril’s papers, which she donated to the Toronto Public Library, and her memoir make priceless contributions to science fiction studies and women’s life writing studies. They note the detail and vastness of her papers and the planned irreverence of her memoir as final evidence of Merril’s foresight in understanding her own role in science fiction, making a study of her work more available, and inspiring a study of other women’s work.

Newell and Lamont achieve their goal of preventing Merril’s erasure from science fiction by making well-researched, theoretically grounded arguments about the significance of her fiction and non-fiction writing and anthologizing, as well as her activism and facilitation in the science fiction community. Because of this, the book is important to anyone studying the history of science fiction, particularly those interested in how it fits within American literature, as well as anyone interested in women’s literature—be it fiction, publishing or life writing.

Science Fiction Television Series, 1990–2004: Histories, Casts and Credits for 58 Shows

Dominick Grace


Order option(s): Paper

THIS IS A REISSUE of a book first published in hardback in 2009. It offers precisely what its title suggests: encyclopedia-style entries, alphabetical by title, on SF television shows from the years in question. It is not
comprehensive, acknowledging in its introduction that categories such as superhero shows (e.g. Smallville), non-SF fantastical shows (e.g. Buffy the Vampire Slayer), children’s shows (e.g. Hypernauts) or shows primarily in other genres such as comedy (e.g. Third Rock from the Sun) or crime (e.g. The Sentinel) but with a SF element, have been excluded. Every show it does discuss, however, is dealt with reasonably thoroughly, with production details (including lists of involved performers, writers, directors, producers, and so on), series overviews, discussions of key individual episodes, and quotations from involved parties—actors, producers, writers, directors, and so on. Each entry includes a set of cast notes, informing readers of highlights of main players’ careers, and even indicates whether, or how much, of a series is available on DVD.

This is not an academic book. (I point that out as a fact, not a criticism.) Its treatment of the shows is primarily summative and anecdotal. Aesthetic judgments are rare; while good episodes are often identified as such, entries generally avoid categorizing a show as good, bad or indifferent, adopting instead a generally even-handed tone, allowing for criticisms as well as for praise, often in the form of the comments from show participants or reviewers in popular media, rarely in the form of evaluative statements in an authorial voice. Analysis of the shows in critical or academic terms is virtually non-existent, which makes such rare moments as the paragraphs devoted to the problems inherent in the time travel concept of Time Trax (bonus points for anyone who remembers this 44-episode series at all) all the more remarkable. For readers who want a comprehensive overview of television shows from the years covered (the book also includes capsule entries for the shows discussed in the preceding volume), this is a useful resource, especially because its thorough listing of people involved in shows and its detailed index help one track people who have been involved in multiple genre shows over the years. However, the book does not provide detailed insights into the shows (often, in fact, it offers tantalizing hints of behind the scenes stories that could be revealing, but rarely provides details), nor does it have an overarching thesis about SF on television. Indeed, the book provides no reason for the years covered other than, one assumes, that the first book ended with 1988 and shows up to 2004 gave them more than enough for this second volume. Admittedly, the format of this book does not allow for in-depth treatment of every show, or for a developed thesis. Nevertheless, since entries for forgettable shows lasting less than one season are often of a comparable length to ones for shows that either lasted for years or despite being short-lived have acquired a significant reputation (e.g. Firefly), one can’t help thinking that perhaps some of the lesser shows could have been dealt with more perfunctorily to allow more room to delve into the more significant ones. Perhaps that would be the task of a different book, however.

Despite the modesty of this book’s ambitions, reading it through (as opposed to skimming for shows one is interested in, as most prospective readers will likely do) does lead to some clarity about SF on television. For one thing, reading the brief plot synopses for so many series in quick succession drills home how much televisual SF is derivative and/or inherently absurd (one wonders if there is some subtle humor in the po-faced plot summaries for some of the more ridiculous shows). The number of shows that revisit old concepts or that sell themselves as an SF twist on something else—even when the result has merit, as in Firefly (Stagecoach in space)—is depressing. Given the number of shows evidently produced by people with little or no knowledge of or interest in SF, however (a fact that emerges when one reads several entries in succession), this overall lack of originality in TV SF should not be surprising. In one of the more trenchant comments from an involved party, Sequest DSV producer Patrick Hasburgh is quoted as saying, “most of us doing TV are idiots and cowards and we rarely find what’s good and right. There’s just too much money to be made playing dumb” (214)—a truth borne out in the fate of all too many shows with potential but scuttled by various hare-brained decisions. The book can be mined for such nuggets, but the reader is left to construct his or her own thesis about SF TV.

This makes the book a useful library resource, especially for schools with media programs, as well as for fans of SF in filmic form, but of less use for scholars or students interested in deep analysis of SF as it appears on TV. Unfortunately, its merits as a reference resource are compromised by a number of typographical/editorial errors. Actor names, character names and show names are occasionally given incorrectly (e.g. Firefly’s Shepherd Book is correctly named in the entry for the show but listed as Shepherd Brook in the initial cast list). Almost every kind of editorial error that can occur crops up at least once (agreement errors, who/whom confusion, its/it’s confusion, etc.), with occasionally amusing results. For instance, the Star Trek: The Next Generation entry refers to “paralytic aliens who take over key Federation personnel” (283). Given that this is a reissue, one would
have hoped that such errors would have been corrected; if this is a revised edition (if so, that is not indicated anywhere), such continuing errors are all the more unfortunate. If there are substantive errors of fact, I did not note any, but such a number of minor errors in a reference work does not help inspire confidence.

Werewolves and Other Shapeshifters in Popular Culture: A Thematic Analysis of Recent Depictions

Kevin Pinkham


Order option(s): Paper | Kindle

THE MAIN PREMISE of McMahon-Coleman and Weaver's book lies in their observation that while recent years have seen a rise in texts in which supernatural beings appear, most of the critical attention has been focused on vampires; werewolves and other shapeshifters have been sorely overlooked, becoming the runt of the supernatural litter. Their study, which had its genesis in a handful of conference papers that unexpectedly, but happily, coincided, seeks to begin a critical conversation in which werewolves can receive the attention the authors feel shapeshifters are due.

The book is organized around a thematic study of the uses of shapeshifters as metaphors. Each chapter focuses on a specific theme or a set of related themes, which allows the authors to spread their readings of certain very popular texts across a number of chapters (thus preventing readers from feeling overwhelmed by an extensive exploration of a specific text such as Twilight), but also enables McMahon-Coleman and Weaver to highlight a number of texts that are on the fringes of popular culture, texts that might otherwise be overlooked had the authors limited themselves to select case studies. The first theme the authors explore is adolescence, which is an obvious choice—shapeshifters experience a change in their bodies and shift across boundaries in much the same way that teenagers do. In fact, the authors are quick to point out that werewolves have long served as a metaphor for the shifts that arise during the teen years, as evidenced by such films as I Was a Teenage Werewolf in the late 1950s, and Teen Wolf in the 80s. In this chapter, both the book and television versions of The Vampire Diaries and the book and film versions of Twilight receive the brunt of the critical attention, but a number of other texts, including such novels as Ellen Schreiber's Once in a Full Moon and Maggie Stiefvater's The Wolves of Mercy Falls trilogy, receive their due. In these texts, werewolves serve as representations of a teen's perceived lack of control, of bodily changes, of burgeoning sexualities, and of the search for identity that becomes one of the key experiences of adolescence. The authors' close readings of these texts, like most of the readings of their central texts, are clear and articulate. Yet werewolves are not the only shifters that the authors discuss in this chapter. For example, Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy receives some brief scrutiny. In those novels, shapeshifting daemons bonded to each person lose their ability to shapeshift when that person's adolescent identity becomes more solidified as he or she nears adulthood, a clear metaphor for the stabilization of identity that we imagine comes with growing up.

Adolescence as the theme for the first chapter is an elegant choice, for the issues covered in later chapters all arise during adolescence. Thus, chapter two discusses gender, exploring the male and female roles negotiated by shapeshifters in the chosen texts. In this chapter, the most compelling series of observations inform us that werewolves are overwhelmingly male in popular texts, and that werewolves are often metaphors linked to male violence and aggression, and that werewolves tend to reinforce gender stereotypes:

It is...interesting that in many of these texts it is the female human characters with stable bodies and boundaries who offer the most resistance against the traditional stereotypes and restrictions of gender roles. Instead, it is often the shapeshifting characters, the male and female werewolves with their unstable bodies, who seem more likely to be bound to conform to unchanging gender norms and hierarchies. (67)

Again, Twilight and The Vampire Diaries are a central focus, with True Blood, Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, and a number of other texts—among them Jackson Pearce's Sisters Red—supplementing the discussion.

Chapter three moves on to an exploration of sexuality, focusing on the queering opportunities offered by shapeshifters with fluid identities and on the shifting desires of the characters who interact with them. Over-
all, the texts the authors unpack largely reinforce heteronormativity, with only a few characters—often not shapeshifters themselves, such as Willow and Tara in Buffy, the Vampire Slayer and Lafayette in True Blood—identifying as something other than heterosexual. This chapter follows the pattern of development established in the earlier chapters (and that will continue throughout the book) of presenting more familiar texts first, followed by the less well-known shapeshifter texts. Here, Charlaine Harris’s Sookie Stackhouse novels and True Blood dominate the chapter, followed by Buffy, Vampire Diaries, Twilight and a more in-depth discussion of Pullman’s His Dark Materials series, the last novel of which features a lesbian relationship between a woman who can change into a blend of hawk and cobra identities and a woman who changes into a wolf.

Lack of space prevents me from continuing to summarize the remaining chapters as I have, brief though that summary has been. Suffice it to say that chapter four explores the metaphor of race and class as represented by werewolves, using Underworld’s vampire/lycan war, and Twilight’s Quileute werewolves as the primary grounds for this discussion. Chapter five discusses the werewolf as metaphor of illness, exploring the disease language such as “condition” and “infection” that surrounds lycanthropy. Harry Potter’s Professor Lupin is a key character in this chapter. Chapter six scrutinizes the connections between werewolves and addiction, focusing on the use of V (vampire blood) as a drug for werewolves in True Blood and examining a few texts in which werewolves self-medicate in order to prevent the anxiety that can trigger an unwanted change or in which changing shape can be seen as a way to lose one’s self. Finally, chapter seven examines shapeshifters and spirituality, exploring not only Twilight, The Vampire Diaries, and True Blood’s interests in the spiritual themes of Christianity, paganism, shamanism, and other religions, but also exploring shapeshifting in the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, in which shapeshifting is often linked to deception and sometimes to spiritual transformation.

Overall, the text is a fine contribution to the field of scholarly work on werewolves and shapeshifters. At times, some texts seem slightly out of place. For instance, Pullman’s His Dark Materials books do feature shapeshifting daemons that provide strong metaphors for adolescence, but the daemons are so unlike the human shapeshifting characters that are the focus of the rest of the book that it can feel their addition has more to do with adding length to the text than to effectively elucidating the theme of adolescence. Other texts that seem like natural fits for the topic, such as John Landis’s An American Werewolf in London or Richard Donner’s Ladyhawke or even Lon Chaney, Jr.’s 1941 vehicle The Wolf Man, are absent, leaving one to wonder if the authors could not fit them into their thematic schema. McMahon-Coleman and Weaver do draw a variety of boundaries around their study—for example, they hope to focus on popular texts from the last twenty years (thus explaining, perhaps, the absence of American Werewolf, Ladyhawke and The Wolf Man)—and these boundaries go a long way toward preventing their study from becoming overwhelmed by the sheer volume of shapeshifting texts that permeate so many cultures. As it is, the authors introduce us to a number of relatively obscure texts that deserve a closer critical look, providing extensive summaries where needed.

McMahon-Coleman and Weaver’s hope is to spark more critical conversation on the topic of werewolves and other shapeshifters; this book should do the trick. The book is not overly burdened with recondite critical language, so it would fit quite nicely on the shelves of virtually any library, from the public library down the street to the large research institution. Its price tag may place it out of reach for some personal libraries—$40 for a 211 page paperback seems a bit stiff—but the dedicated werewolf researcher or obsessed shapeshifter fan will be pleased to save up his or her pennies for this one.

**Future Wars: The Anticipations and the Fears**

Allan Weiss


Order option(s): Cloth

THIS COLLECTION of thirteen essays edited by David Seed (University of Liverpool) constitutes a most valuable contribution to the study of a genre that has acquired a new relevance in the past couple of decades, future-war literature. The pioneer in the field was I. F. Clarke (1918-2009), whose encyclopedic and influential Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984 (1966; rev. ed. 1992) is frequently cited by the contributors; indeed, the volume is in many ways a tribute to him, including a separate bibliography of his published works along with
a very full bibliography of studies of the genre. Seed’s introduction highlights Clarke’s immense influence on later scholars while briefly surveying the history of the genre.

The collection is organized in a largely chronological manner, dealing with future-war fiction from its flowering as a popular genre in the nineteenth century to its diverse forms in the first decade of the twenty-first century, especially in the context of 9/11 and the second Gulf War. The volume begins with a reprint of Clarke’s 1997 article, “Future-War Fiction: The First Main Phase, 1871-1900.” While the article is familiar stuff for the specialist, particularly given that it repeats some of what Clarke says in his book-length study, for those new to the field it is an essential introduction. As in Voices Prophesying War, he shows us the political, ideological and social factors that shaped the writing and contributed to the popularity of works like George Chesney’s The Battle of Dorking (1871), Jack London’s Yellow Peril story “The Unparalleled Invasion” (1910), H. G. Wells’s The World Set Free (1914), and the many novels and short stories published in France and Germany in the years leading up to World War I.

The other articles are original to the volume, and are very original indeed, as contributors apply Clarke’s insights to ignored and recent examples of the genre. Clarke concentrates on European fiction; in response, two articles in the volume, H. Bruce Franklin’s “How America’s Fictions of Future War Have Changed the World” and Rob Latham’s “Prophesying Neocolonial Wars in 1950s American Science Fiction,” explore the distinctive nature of American future-war fiction. Patrick Parrinder forges an important link in his article between future-war and utopian/dystopian literature, offering a very insightful and wide-ranging examination of how military thinking invades even those texts one would assume to be free of anything to do with the horrors of war. In “From Invasion to Liberation: Alternative Visions of Mars, Planet of War,” Robert Crossley presents an overview of differing visions of Mars in science fiction, showing how science fiction literalizes the metaphorical and mythological associations of the Red Planet.

Some of the essays deal with specific authors and texts rather than the genre as a whole. David Ketterer has long been interested in the bibliographic study of science-fiction texts, and he continues in that vein in “John Wyndham’s World War III and His Abandoned Fury of Creation Trilogy,” revealing surprising connections between The Day of the Triffids (1951) and what we have always considered to be a fully separate novel, The Chrysalids (1955). In drawing those never-before-recognized links, Ketterer’s study reshapes our understanding of the novels. Brian Baker’s “On the Beach: British Nuclear Fiction and the Spaces of Empire’s End” offers an analysis of Shute’s novel grounded in images of Australia and the Southern Hemisphere in general. Baker’s analysis is a fine synthesis of contextual and textual scholarship. Nicholas Ruddick’s “Adapting the Absurd Apocalypse: Eugene Burdick’s and Harvey Wheeler’s Fail-Safe and Its Cinematic Progeny” traces the history of the novel and the film adaptation of it in the context of contemporary Cold War culture and preoccupations.

While most of the articles deal with fiction, a few are examinations of recent military doctrine, like Seed’s own “The Strategic Defense Initiative: A Utopian Fantasy” and Antulio J. Echevarria II’s “The War After Next: Anticipating Future Conflict in the New Millennium.” Nevertheless, these articles describe the interaction between fiction and military doctrine, maintaining the interdisciplinary approach apparent in all the articles—an approach that Clarke would have appreciated.

The articles are on the whole extremely enlightening, and most interesting when they deal with obscure and neglected texts. Virtually all the contributors are American or British, and the result is an unfortunate neglect of examples of the genre in other literatures. The major problem, however, is not so much intellectual as technical; Clarke’s essay is beset with typographical problems as foreign characters, such as É, are consistently misprinted, and some of his set-off quotations are not left-indentced, a problem that renders some of the text more difficult to decipher than they need to be. After this rough start, however, the text is largely clean, with only a few typos, and the cover illustration is striking. At a price of $95, the collection is perhaps beyond the reach of the average purchaser, except for the devoted specialist, and is most suitable for university research libraries.
Paradox Resolution: A Spider Webb Novel

Virginia Allen


Without Articulating the true nature of the problem, I have argued in the past against the advisability of using flawed fiction in the classroom. Setting out to review what is technically the fifth novel by K. A. Bedford, I got gobsmacked (as the Aussies say) by the question again, and with an unintended assist from Hans Georg Gadamer, maybe I can clarify my reluctance.

Because SF is more linguistically complex at the world-building level and because what Gadamer calls “the fore-structure of understanding” is more likely to be strategically deployed by the professional SF writer, to put it in hermeneutical jargon, “All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought.” Or to put it plain language: in SF, errors of interpretation cost double, and the extra cost is most likely to be borne by less skilled readers (students). Meanwhile, skilled readers (teachers) may derive a perverse pleasure from fixing or extrapolating the errors into a narrative construction that exists in the free play of imagination rather than “in the thing itself,” which for the literary critic, as Gadamer tells us, comes down to “meaningful texts.”

Time Machines Repaired While-U-Wait came into my hand because of the title, a blend of novum and mundane, promising more than it could reasonably deliver. Its sequel, Paradox Resolution: A Spider Webb Novel doubles down on the unfulfilled promise, offering more of the same to come, and for all its many flaws remains an entertaining read for (1) anyone who doesn’t care if a story makes sense and (2) anyone who willingly constructs her own meaningful or imaginary text from the bits and pieces left lying about.

The story is that sometime in our relatively near future, an unidentified spammer from an as yet unspecified, unexplored future has e-mailed the instructions for cheap, mass produced time machines that have become all the rage in a disintegrating global economy. To quote our beleaguered hero Aloysius “Spider” Webb: “Who the hell thought it was a good idea to let time machines become a mass-market item?”

The only textual justification for the title of this second in the series is the new boss’s suggestion that the repair shop should offer a “paradox resolution service,” to which Spider responds ironically, “Yes, sir, I’ll get right on that,” with a felt sense of “sinking, suffocating doom.”

The challenge in a time travel story is always to come up with something new, some twist that hasn’t been done to death, some way to solve inevitable paradoxes or a new take on the time guardians who try to keep history from running out of control. Bedford has met that first challenge with such panache that it makes his failures of execution all the more sorrowful.

In Gadamer’s terms (if not his intention), the SF reader’s “fore-structure of understanding” is explicit. Roughly put, there are three time travel scenarios: (1) history is a single swirling pallet that can be rewritten: kill your grandfather and you disappear; (2) history is a single pallet controlled by the inadmissibility of paradox such that attempts to change history short circuit themselves: with or without critical or plastic nodes that mysteriously allow change; and (3) the “Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics,” as explained in the user-friendly manuals that come with every new time machine. The problem with 3, according to Spider, is that “unfortunately, almost no one believed that an infinite number of new universes would be spawned by every single decision ever made by every single person, all of the time.”

Even if 3 is the official explanation, Spider generally prefers 2: “Like everything in the world of bloody time travel, it was circular; with fanciful baroque curlicues and ornate twists and turns in the time-space continuum—but which always ended up with Stapelton being torn to snack-sized bloody chunks in Midland.” Except he is still alive so far as Spider can tell.

Bedford provides ample support for any number of “arbitrary fancies” including all three of the possible scenarios, capped off with Dickhead’s millions of ships at the end of time purportedly manipulating events all across the space-time continuum.

The trouble with not fully trusting an author is the cognitive dissonance. If we keep reading Bedford’s future Spider novels, maybe we will learn what causes alternate-world versions of Spider to show up with such regularity to warn off or manipulate our point of view character, while he himself is not the least bit interested in returning the favor for any of his apparently infinite
alternates. It’s the unrequited hope of resolution that wears you down as a reader, or that sets you off in quest of an imaginary text not yet there on the page.

The first novel opens when Spider and his assistant Charlie are called out to look at a nonfunctioning Tempo that its owner picked up for $2,000. The machine’s problem, as it turns out, is that hidden in a pocket universe inside it is another time machine—this one an old Dolphin used to hide a murdered agent from Australia’s Department of Time and Space. In the second novel, P. J. Patel, whose company buys the repair shop after Dickhead’s disappearance, builds his own hotrod of a machine using government-restricted parts for a few dollars more at a very reasonable price tag of $150,000. It is an awesome setup.

As a dominant SF trope, the collapse of industrialized civilization has been edging out the colonization of other planets for some while now. The sense of impending doom is pervasive, with readers highly motivated to explore the architecture of collapse. Bedford has laid out an impressive palette for that exploration, but it is difficult to believe he knows what to do with all the colors at his command. For example, DOTAS has been “threatening to mandate nationwide pilot training and licensing for time machine operators,” but where the power to regulate is situated is ambiguous at best. Beyond restricting travel to certain historically sensitive time/place sites (such as the Crucifixion of Jesus) by means of the self-explanatory ghost mode, little coordination is evident. Who determines which sites are off limits? Because he and his point of view character are both Australian, Bedford has a privileged peripheral view to observe a shift from government to corporate control, but he seems disinclined to use it.

We learn along the way that Spider used to be a West Australian police detective, cashiered after exposing his boss’s boss and a gang of senior WAPOL officers for using time travel for nefarious child-molestation purposes. Spider tracked them using ghost-mode and a video camera at the behest of Internal Affairs. WAPOL doesn’t develop its own Time Crime Unit until the second novel; on the other hand, those who attempt to use chronotechnology for financial advantage run afoul of quantum mechanics and/or the US government’s Timeline Security cops. Simple, honest folk with larceny in their hearts always ask how the cops could know what they are up to. “The answer: they just know. That’s all you need to know.”... “Yes, they would argue, but if the government’s collapsed, and the constitution’s just a piece of paper, how can they prosecute me with any kind of validity? It didn’t matter. Some rules were bigger than mere national constitutions.” It is an awful letdown.

All of this background as well as his passive-aggressive, divorce-forever-pending wife with the melodic voice is carried rattling forward into Paradox Resolution. Molly, already a sculptor in the first novel, has been tortured by Dickhead’s minions, and in the second, although she does not remember the torture from the alternate timeline, she obsessively recreates the horrifying winged-looking image of herself with her dislocated shoulders pinned back—an image Spider remembers all too well. Mollyvore, a blend of Molly and an alien carnivore, is yet another lost opportunity to explore the concept of identity under changed circumstances.

Setting up the next sequel, following his unexplained disappearance, Spider’s ex-Dickhead-boss shows up as an enormous severed head (wired with a lot of very mysterious cyber-circuitry) in the office refrigerator at the opening of the second novel only to be dispatched three-quarters of the way through and then to show up at the end to bail out Spider and paramour Inspector Iris Street from certain death when for no reason we are yet aware of, VlJay Patel (the son) sends back the broken down, patched together machine as arranged, but doesn’t show up for an anticipated rescue. This sort of episodic patter keeps you turning the pages, but finally wears on your patience.

Still, the reader’s legitimate question is how many novels are we willing to read in order to get to the more engaging questions about a future contained inside a (metaphorically speaking?) black box and alternate psychological identities? Is he just making it up as he goes along? Will all of it or only some of it come together if we just have faith? And what about all those malfunctioning coffee droids?

Bedford, badly in need of an editor, would be the star pupil in any amateur writers’ workshop, but while an individual student might profitably write about the flawed novels, a pall of pedagogical unease pervades throughout the interpretive process.

Works Cited
H+: The Digital Series
[web series]

Ritch Calvin


THE WEB-BASED SERIES H+ made its premiere in August of 2012. Over the course of the series, forty-eight episodes—mostly between four and six minutes in duration—have “aired.” One of the primary producers is Bryan Singer (X-Men: First Class), though it was created and written by John Cabrera (The Homes) and Cosimo de Tommaso (Halo 4).

The series is set in the US (San Francisco and Portland), India, Finland, Italy, and Chile, primarily, with each episode being a fragment in one location. In total, the series was shot in fifty-four different locations. The plotlines set in various locations are all set in different times, all reckoned in relation to the moment that “it” happens. The Finland storyline is set seven years prior to the main event; the Italy storyline is set two years after the event; the India storyline 5 months prior. The San Francisco storyline happens in “real” time. Although the episodes can be watched in any order, the entire series in its original sequence can be seen at the above website. However, some fans have created sites that re-order the episodes so that they can be viewed in the chronology of the events as they happen. (The Wikipedia entry for the series also sorts out the timeline for each episode.) The series can also be viewed by character; that is, the series episodes are collected by the characters that they feature. In addition, the H+ Wiki (http://hplus.wikia.com/wiki/H+_Wiki) provides information on the plot, the characters and the chronology.

Although some viewers complain of the episodic and fractured nature of the series (see the viewer comments on YouTube, for example), and although some suggest that this particular narrative method adds nothing to the series, in fact, I would suggest that it is the crux of the series. The viewer must pay attention to the clues within each episode. The viewer must actively put together the disparate storylines and characters because they are all connected. The HPlus chip is designed to make “everyone connected, all the time.” The series requires the viewer to make those connections within the narrative framework.

The company HPlus Nano Teoranta (http://www.hplusnanoteoranta.com/index.html), with the help of the Irish government, has worked toward the ideal of transhumanism. HPlus stands for “a set of ideologies, a set of technologies” that works toward the enhancement of the capabilities of the human body. They created a suite of medical technologies that monitors twenty-five key processes within the body and an early warning system for many diseases. One ideal would be to eliminate the need for doctors, since the body is monitored from within. The company pioneers its technology though its youth outreach program in Africa and elsewhere. Eventually, it creates an implant that can interface directly with the web. Company spokesperson, Breana Sheehan (Caitriona Balfe), recruits a computer wunderkind, Kenneth Lubahn (David Clayton Rogers), to give him the opportunity to change the world. However, Lubhan becomes disenchanted with the company and leaves. When asked about him, Breana tells a reported that he is irrelevant, a “broken human being.”

Despite legal protests over the implant, and despite widespread popular protest, HPlus Nano premieres with great fanfare—the opening day looks a great deal like the launch of a new iApple product. Soon, nearly all the adult population has gotten the HPlus implant. But when a computer virus strikes, every individual who has an implant—that is, every person with an implant who was within reception of the web—is struck down. We also discover that another entity has been working on an interweb-brain interface, and the machinations and maneuvers complicate everything—and ruin people’s lives. At the same time, an anti-singularity, neo-Luddite movement emerges, with Jason O’Brien (Sean Gunn) as its leader. So, what happens in a world in which very few adults remain? Where did the virus come from? Who was responsible? Has the HPlus Nano implant created a trans human? Has a schism taken place between those with the implant and those without?

The series as a whole has extremely high production values. The location shots (all shot in Chile) are very well done, and the digital sequences are convincing. The global cast and the global setting (and multiple languages used) demonstrate some of the ways in which technology has, indeed, connected us all. Future technological developments are likely to compound that interconnection. While some find the episodic narrative
tiresome or confusing, it does reinforce the interconnectedness of the narratives, and it compels the viewer to make those connections. Certainly, the series as a whole could be used in a class on narrative form. Perhaps more immediately, the series could be used to illustrate (some of) the consequences and dangers of being constantly connected, of the effects of being dependent on technology, and of conflict between the interests of companies and the interests of consumers. The series also explicitly raises ethical questions about the development of new technologies. Why are they being developed? By whom? For what purposes? And, perhaps most importantly, in what ways will they be used? As the (former) priest Matteo Spina (Francesco Martino) and (former) hacker Manta (Hannah Herzsprung) discuss whether or not science can rebuild society, Manta notes that “science” caused the destruction. He tells her, “The people who abused it were the cause.” A familiar argument, to be sure, but an important one. In addition, H+ takes a somewhat dismal view of the Singularity, though it is somewhat skeptical of the neo-Luddites as well. In each case, the series offers the opportunity to discuss the responses to technological change. The short segments are suitable for in-class viewing and discussing; the free access via YouTube is a plus for students. And we get to point out to our students the irony of watching a critique of interconnectedness on their smart phones.

\textit{DayZ: Fan-Modification for the Video Game ArmA II} \\
[video game]

Lars Schmeink


YOU WAKE UP on an empty beach and look around. There is not a soul in sight. You are hungry, thirsty, cold and have no weapons. You start walking and after a while you see a gas station in the distance. Hope surfaces in your thoughts and you run towards that emblem of civilization. But then you realize: something is off. There are no people, the station seems abandoned, the glass of the windows is broken, and the door is off its hinges. You slow down, only to hear a grinding sound, a scuffing of feet being dragged and a low growl. And that is when you see them, lurching from behind a shed next to the gas station: zombies! The dead and decomposed bodies move forward, some slow and steady, some in bursts, which brings them almost onto you. You run like you never ran before. But…it is too late. Infected, bloody hands grab on to you, tear at your clothes, and rip through your skin. You go down in an instant. The last thing you see, as the world slowly fades, is the shadow of a zombie over you, closing in and blackening out the light. You are dead.

This experience, or one similarly disturbing and short-lived, is probably what most players of \textit{DayZ} experience in their first (and often many more) game sessions of the notorious zombie mod for military first-person shooter \textit{ArmA II}. A “mod” is what gamers call a fan-designed game addition (or “modification”) to an existing game that adds new levels, a different setting or changes to the game design. \textit{DayZ}, with close to 1.5 million players (in Jan 2013), is currently the most favored of such mods for the 2009 Czech game \textit{ArmA II}, which in itself is neither fantastic (or science fictional) nor even critically a good game. It sets itself apart from other first-person shooters (FPS) of military persuasion, such as the more widely known \textit{Call of Duty} or \textit{Battlefield} series, by being a hard-to-play simulation rather than a “for fun”-shooter. And \textit{DayZ} takes this even further in allowing the player to experience a post-apocalyptic survival simulation, including the dire need for food, water, shelter and a means to defend oneself. Characters can die of exposure, starvation, dehydration or simple injuries. Jumping from a balcony can result in broken bones, which leave him/her immobilized and thus an easy snack for the roaming hordes of zombies. Wounds need to be treated; otherwise, blood loss will lead to unconsciousness. And most problematic of all: if a character dies, s/he dies permanently and all of her belongings (such as food and weapons) remain with the corpse. There is no second life or re-spawn. Restarting the game will simply let you take control of another character altogether who is again without any inventory and thus freshly born to \textit{DayZ}.

The story of the game is simple and not really new to our culture: an unknown and very deadly virus wipes out the population of the world—in the case of the game, the fictional post-soviet state of Chernarus—and leaves most of humanity as flesh-eating zombies. The remaining humans face the terror and challenges of a post-apocalyptic world. The game thus drops the player as a survivor into a scenario that reminds her strongly of \textit{The Walking Dead} (2010), \textit{28 Days Later} (2002) or
similar film and TV zombie franchises. Not only are the survivors threatened by the hungry zombie onslaught, as well as the environmental hazards, but other survivors also threaten them. In DayZ, the real threat of a post-apocalyptic world is the breaking down of law, order, ethics and modern society as a whole.

And this is where the video game, as an interactive and participatory medium, clearly goes beyond anything imaginable within literary or purely visual culture. First off, the game is a simulation and not a narration—almost to a fault: there is no goal, no learning curve, no manual or tutorial, no experience to be gained and almost no visual indication (beyond the bare minimum) to indicate some kind of game mechanic. And nothing within DayZ is scripted, nothing “needs to happen” in order to further a story line. Thus, the game—as Gonzalo Frasca’s definition of a simulation reminds us—is a “model of a (source) system...which maintains...some of the behaviors of the original system,” meaning that the game mechanics react “according to a set of conditions” (223) not defined by a fixed narration. And with DayZ the source system of the simulation is an extremely hostile environment without institutional order. The innovation of the game is to go beyond the good vs. evil narrative decision making that most games nowadays incorporate (leading to two or more alternate endings of the game’s storyline). Rather, DayZ throws players into a situation like that of Cormac McCarthy’s novel The Road (2006) in which every other human survivor becomes a potential thief, rapist, torturer or murderer. Dean Hall, the creator of the mod, states that his main interest lay in exploring “the levels of subtleties and decision-making that’s forced on you based on an emotional context” (cit. in Campbell, n.pag.), especially if that context is defined by “a primal struggle to stay alive” (Campbell).

Whereas characters in post-apocalyptic TV series such as The Walking Dead (2010), Falling Skies (2011) or Revolution (2012) are carefully drawn up to fulfill conflicts of morality with which viewers can identify and in the end at least try to re-establish our contemporary pre-apocalypse value systems, players of DayZ will soon find that letting go of any morals and crossing bound-
calls DayZ an “anti-game” because it is rigged against the player: “It’s the lack of balance that actually provides you with quite a compelling experience. So I made a deliberate decision with it to…provide that [post-apocalyptic] context around it and just use [it] to generate emotions in people” (cit. in Lathi, n.pag.). The big picture—the state of contemporary society—as well as the emotions generated on a very personal level, both of which the game lays bare, are deeply disturbing as the player’s humanity is stripped away and instinctual, opportunistic or downright sadistic behavior sets in.

The critical potential and academic value of DayZ, thus, does not lie within the very clichéd confines of its background story but in the unique mechanics of the medium itself. The mod and its stacked odds of survival, the emotional reactions and moral choices made by players and of course the ideological rules that govern this virtual world are a prime example of why and how video games are important cultural artifacts in their own right and should be examined. The game’s simulation allows for not only that personal ultimate “what if”-experiment of apocalyptic fiction but also for a cultural counter-argument against Hollywood’s dominant discourse of liberal humanist values—both of which are well worth exploring.

Works Cited

The Death-Ray
[graphic novel]
Dominick Grace

Order option(s): Cloth

THE DEATH-RAY may be the definitive revisionist superhero graphic novel, and that’s saying a lot, especially given its brevity (it runs to 48 pages, including title pages, and was originally published in 2004 as issue 23 of Clowes’s comic book Eightball). Superhero revisionism has existed almost as long as superheroes have, from the recurrent overhauls of individual characters such as Superman or Batman through line-wide innovations such as Marvel’s introduction in the early 1960s of “real-world” problems into the hitherto antiseptic superhero landscape. Recent decades have seen the revisionist approach proliferate, especially after the 1980s efforts of creators such as Alan Moore (whose Marvelman/Miracleman and Watchmen are seminal revisionist superhero books) and Frank Miller, followed by an array of other writers and artists determined to reinvent the spandex set. However, such works are almost invariably presented within the world of the superhero genre (i.e. published by one of the major “mainstream”—in comics, this means “superhero”—publishers such as Marvel, DC or Image) or are created by figures with at least some significant “mainstream” sensibilities (e.g. Rick Veitch, whose Brat Pack took revisionist aim at the kid sidekick in superhero comics). While they subvert to some extent the tropes of superhero comics, they remain fundamentally anchored in those same tropes. Alternate or underground cartoonists rarely venture into superheroes outside of parody or satire (e.g. Shelton’s Wonder Warthog and Spain’s Trashman).

Clowes, however, is alternate comics royalty, with a caustic, at best, view of the mainstream comics world, which he deflates thoroughly in his stories about Dan Pussey. While other such cartoonists (e.g. Dave Sim, Chris Ware, Chester Brown, the Hernandez Brothers) have glanced at superheroes and even acknowledged some influence of the superhero genre on their work, Clowes is unique in his creation of a book-length alternate take on the revisionist superhero (Sim’s various parodies of and meditations on superheroes in Cerebus
may be the only serious competition on this front). That alone renders *The Death-Ray* significant, but what renders it possibly definitive is its insightful deconstruction even of revisionist superhero comics.

Basic elements of alternative comics and superhero comics meld and mesh in this book. The protagonist, Andy, is an alienated, disaffected teen (shades of Peter Parker, among others) whose scientist father did experiments on him that grant him super powers when he smokes. His father also left him the eponymous weapon. Andy therefore has a typical superhero origin story, complete with catalyst, powers and specialized weapon. He even has a teen sidekick, his equally outcast friend Louie, who initially eggs Andy on to use his super powers. Indeed, they imagine themselves as comicbook-style superheroes, and Clowes provided the occasional conventional superhero-style image of them (e.g. on pp. 14-15) as they fantasize about being like the comic book icons. However, such images are clearly ironized, a far remove from the lives these two lead. They try to manufacture typical superhero scenarios to allow Andy to use his powers, but these initially backfire or peter out—and when Andy *does* finally use the death-ray to kill someone, their relationship crumbles, as Louis (hitherto the one apparently more into playing out the vigilante tropes) realizes the enormity of such behavior. He tries to kill Andy and gets vaporized. Andy's life unfolds as a combination of pseudo-heroic actions and alternative-comics style kitchen-sink realism (Clowes is especially gifted at hybridizing genres). As a result, the story turns the comic book here into what he would almost certainly be in real life, a sociopath who uses his powers inconsistently (one victim of the Death Ray—in one potential story, anyway—is a man who spits on pigeons) and whose life is ultimately meaningless and shapeless. The pigeon-spitter is annihilated in a potential story because the book concludes with multiple alternate endings, describing differing possibilities for Andy's fate, in a final denial of meaning or closure (whether this is a parody of the propensity of straight superhero comics to reinvent themselves constantly and to spin out their narratives endlessly would be a fruitful subject for class exploration).

The comic is profoundly self-conscious, invoking its status as comic book constantly, sometimes several times a page, by the use of tactics such as giving numerous sequences individual titles and layouts that foreground their comics-ness (e.g. “The Origin of Andy,” “The Adventures of the Death-Ray”) while giving others banal titles (“The Next Day,” “Cigarette?”). The line between text and paratext is blurred by Clowes’s strategy of using comics tropes for every paratextual component (e.g. the back cover is designed as a comics splash page, with the book title presented as if it were a story title on that page and the cover copy presented in a speech balloon from Andy, who looks out directly at the reader). Speech balloons are also sometimes used within the story proper for narration rather than dialogue, as if the characters were speaking directly to the reader. Past and present, reality and fantasy, blur frequently, forcing the reader to remain alert and to untangle the narrative. This may or may not be a comment on the increasingly impenetrable narratives of straight superhero comics, but it is unquestionably a self-consciousness of form that gives even Alan Moore (possibly the king of self-consciousness in comics) a run for his money. It is a device that forces the reader to question the fundamentals not merely of the superhero genre but of comics as a medium.

In short, this is a dense, challenging, insightful, formally complex, funny, horrifying deconstruction of the superhero. It would be an excellent book for courses on popular culture, SF, or comics as a preeminent example of a postmodern deconstruction of the clichés of comics—not just superhero comics but alternative comics as well. Highly recommended.

**Doctor Who: Cobwebs**  
[TV series]  
Justin Felix


*DOCTOR WHO* has been a long-running British television institution, with its first episode airing nearly a half-century ago. The program was in the midst of what ultimately ended up being a very lengthy hiatus on TV when Big Finish Productions, a company specializing in full-cast audio dramas, received the rights to produce new plays based upon the first twenty-six years’ worth of the show’s characters in 1999. Remarkably, more than a dozen years later, Big Finish’s *Doctor Who* output has become voluminous, constituting hundreds and hundreds of hours of stories featuring the time-travelling Doctor, his companions and various other characters to have graced the BBC’s signature science fiction series. The studio re-
vealed recently on their website that their license has been extended through 2015, which means Doctor Who audios will proliferate for several more years at least.

Cobwebs, the 136th serial of Big Finish’s monthly main line of Doctor Who stories, is a significant first for the company, at least in terms of casting. Fans nostalgic for the program’s run in the early 1980s may delight in the fact that the Fifth Doctor, still portrayed by Peter Davison, has joined three of his original companions together in the studio for the first time in nearly 30 years. Sarah Sutton (Nyssa), Janet Fielding (Tegan) and Mark Strickson (Turlough) have all appeared in previous audio adventures, but not assembled together. Cobwebs, a four-part serial story, begins a new set of adventures for the quartet, and Jonathan Morris’s clever script offers a dense smattering of Saturday afternoon-styled sci-fi hijinks that should keep fans of the classic era of Doctor Who satisfied.

As these four characters only appeared in two television stories together—Mawdryn Undead and Terminus, the first two story arcs of what is generally considered the Black Guardian trilogy—Cobwebs is creatively set directly after that storyline’s resolution. Tegan is anxious about the Fifth Doctor’s decision to have Turlough accompany them, given the young man’s involvement with the evil Black Guardian. However, the TARDIS crew’s unease has to be shelved as they are drawn to an abandoned research station on the planet Helheim, where they are soon reunited with Nyssa, who has aged fifty years since they had last seen each other two days ago, and her robot servant Loki. As the Fifth Doctor comments upon their reunion, “time is relative.” Nyssa is keen to see if any clues may be found at the station for a cure to a plague she’s trying to discover. The story doesn’t take long to throw in a number of familiar Doctor Who elements: mechanical spiders, paranoid computers, mad scientists, and a time paradox. However, Morris’s script efficiently keeps the action going, and the cast uniformly revive their characters effectively. As true with Big Finish’s output in general, Cobwebs is engineered dynamically, with sound effects that convincingly bring the research station to life—and a ponderous score, credited to Steve Foxon, that enhances the story’s atmosphere. While fans of the Fifth Doctor’s era may best appreciate some of the characters’ interactions at the start, Cobwebs is still a good “jumping on” point for other listeners interested in trying out these audio dramas, especially given that it is followed by eight more serials (so far) featuring the foursome.

For roughly a decade, Big Finish audio productions, including their Doctor Who output, were only distributed via CD, which meant that their obtainability in the United States was somewhat limited. However, now that their catalog is, for the most part, available digitally, fans around the world have easier—not to mention instantaneous upon payment—access to these audio programs. Whether this creates a larger audience for the format remains to be seen; though, certainly, the resurrected television show’s hit status does not hurt. Audio drama, distinctly different than audio books, is a genre that warrants further consideration by the academic community. While one might argue that its heyday was during the old-time radio era of the 1930s—1950s, full-cast audio dramas, perhaps because of the proliferation of MP3s and podcasting on the web, seem to be thriving today. Big Finish, with its various licenses to produce stories on established sci-fi properties such as Doctor Who and Stargate, may be the best known and prolific, but other notable genre series include Fangoria Magazine’s monthly horror anthology Dreadtime Stories and GraphicAudio’s various series.

Big Finish Productions offers Cobwebs in two formats: a two-CD collection and a digital download in MP3 format. Purchase of the CD version directly from the company’s site provides access to the digital version, which, it should be noted, has additional interview material not available except on the CD’s extra tracks.

Cloud Atlas
[film]
Nathaniel Doherty


Order option(s): DVD | Blu-ray

A SIMPLE PHRASE, almost a grim nursery rhyme, re-echoes throughout the film Cloud Atlas (2012): “the weak are meat, and the strong do eat.” This phrase points to one of this film’s central concerns: powerful people’s unwillingness to acknowledge the humanity of those whose victimization allows them to live high. Cloud Atlas is not a conventional linear narrative, despite this familiar refrain. It’s storytelling moves back and forth between five conceptually linked plots, only two of which are identifiable as science fiction. One of these is a frame-narrative that opens and closes the film in the words of an old, scarred man with alien mark-
ings on his face. Zachry (Tom Hanks) tells the story, or stories, of *Cloud Atlas* over a simple wood fire under unfamiliar stars. I will focus on the science fiction plots exclusively in this review, given that each plot contains a similar refrain of tensions and moral/philosophical concerns.

One of the film’s five story arcs follows Sonmi-451 (Doona Be), a genetically engineered Server in a far future Korea administered by a “Corprocracy” (there is perhaps a sly audible reference to the Greek word ἱκόρας (feces), as it appears in “coprophilia,” suggesting some of the filmmakers’ politics.) Neo-Seoul is a cityscape of undetermined extent, piled upon itself like the vision of Los Angeles’s future in *Blade Runner* (1982). *Cloud Atlas* picks up two important themes from this predecessor: the danger of corporate influence over government and the ethical dilemmas wrought by humanity’s increasing powers of creation. Physically indistinguishable from Consumers, who are full citizens, Servers are legally objects because of their artificial creation—grown in factories by the firm that will “employ” them. They are awakened from storage sleep at the beginning of every shift and returned to stasis when it ends. They work nineteen-hour days in a fast-food restaurant closely mimicking the bright, primary colored environments and slick sloganeering of today’s chains. After a certain number of shifts, Servers are removed from the workforce in a ceremony called “Exaltation” that promises to grant them the status of a Consumer.

After being removed from her workplace/home by political revolutionaries seeking to bring down the Corprocracy, Sonmi-451 discovers that Exaltation leads only to a slaughterhouse. Exalted Servers are killed with a device resembling a captive bolt stunner, bled, hooked by their heels to a winch and mechanically butchered so that their components can be used to grow replacements and feed the current workforce. This referential stew of elements from the history of socially conscious science fiction film—*Soylent Green* (1973), *Logan’s Run* (1976), *Blade Runner*, and even *Metropolis* (1927)—combined with visual references to contemporary industries, makes it tempting to read Sonmi-451’s narrative as a rebuke of contemporary culture. The naming convention of “Servers” and “Consumers” may be heavy handed, but this picture is in line with claims that current international economics is impoverishing large and vulnerable segments of humanity to maintain the luxury of a privileged minority.

Viewers eventually learn that the collapse of Sonmi’s world, long after her execution by the Corprocracy, had something to do with a failure to recognize limits on its acquisition of power. Zachry’s story, in contrast, is one of spiritual trial in the post-apocalyptic future, many years beyond the end of everything Sonmi-451 knew. He struggles to resist temptation by his culture’s version of Satan, who tempts him to reject the friendship of Meronym, a woman from a tribe that has not lost its technology, but which cannot survive on the irradiated Earth. Meronym’s knowledge of the past, particularly of the brutalized human origins of Sonmi, threatens Zachry’s conceptual world; in his defining moment he nearly murders her for the blasphemy of her revelations. In the film’s closing moments, it is revealed that Zachry and Meronym have escaped Earth with her people and raised a family together on a distant planet, where the stories of *Cloud Atlas* are told over the family fire.

Zachry’s narrative of his own life undercuts the economic critique of the Neo Seoul segment because it is the finale; only through its events does the recurring problem of callous brutality seems to be solved. Though the revolution spurred by Sonmi-451 in Neo-Seoul survives, projecting her as a liberator-deity in the religion of Zachry’s time, the world in which she is a god no longer has the capacity to encounter recognizable problems of corporate overreach or international economic injustice. This narrative suggests that an attention to kindness and a rejection of the fear of difference can undo the feral dynamic of “the weak” and “the strong.” This type of very general moral admonition has existed for millennia and does not address the structural injustices of contemporary multinational capitalism, as would an ending focused on Sonmi’s pronouncements before her execution.

The differences between the Zachry and Sonmi-451 narratives of *Cloud Atlas* highlights the diversity within the genre, or field, of science fiction as it exists today. One way this is conceptualized is through the distinction between so-called “hard” and “soft” science fiction. Sonmi-451’s high-tech future contrasts sharply with Zachry’s post-apocalyptic peasant society in terms of how it reflects contemporary culture and the problems that have been taken up by this film. The contrast could make *Cloud Atlas* a useful pedagogical tool for demonstrating the influence even seemingly minor generic distinctions have over how a text relates to the society that creates it. Regardless of which kind of ending a viewer prefers, the conceptual groupings established in the two very different approaches to science fiction apparent in *Cloud Atlas* indicate the breadth, and something of the history, of science fiction film.
Announcements

Eaton Journal of Archival Research in Science Fiction

WE WOULD LIKE to announce the first issue of the Eaton Journal of Archival Research in Science Fiction, scheduled for publication April 10th, 2013. The journal is a peer-reviewed, open-access, online journal hosted by the University of California at Riverside and affiliated with the UCR Library’s Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy. Graduate student editors run the Eaton Journal, with scholarly review provided by an interdisciplinary executive board made up of SF scholars, research librarians, and archivists, including John Rieder, Mark Bould, Catherine Coker, Brian Attebery, Jess Nevins, Eric Milenkiewicz, Rob Latham, Sherryl Vint, Arthur B. Evans, Roger Luckhurst, Terry Harpold, Lisa Yazek, and Melissa Conway.

The journal fosters an interdisciplinary conversation, bringing literary scholars together with the archivists whose work assembles, curates, and makes meaning within archives. The Eaton Journal will provide a unique space for articles with an archival and historical focus that falls outside the purview of extant venues in the SF field, and will enable archival librarians and scholars of significant SF collections to share their best practices for conducting archival research.

The Eaton Journal will also be instrumental in encouraging coordination and community building amongst the SF scholars, archivists, and SF collections. Specifically, the Research Opportunities and Calendar/Notes sections will provide a convenient, centralized space for archives to publicize their holdings, exhibitions, and special events, allowing them to engage with each other and SF scholars in their area. The master-list of archival resources and events will promote SF scholarly productivity and participation in regional collections.

Each of the journal’s bi-annual issues will feature three types of articles, each addressing a different aspect of our focus:

- **Scholarly articles with a significant research component**: Not simply notes and speculations regarding material in an archive, these articles build original scholarly arguments that make archival evidence a significant, if not primary, focus.
- **Methodological/Pedagogical articles**: Just as the

**Call for Papers – Conference**

**Title**: Diversity in Speculative Fiction, Loncon 3 Academic Programme

**Deadline**: 1 October 2013

**Conference Date**: Thursday 14 to Monday 18 August 2014 London

**Contact**: emma.england@loncon3.org


The academic programme at Loncon 3, the 72nd World Science Fiction Convention, is offering the opportunity for academics from across the globe to share their ideas with their peers and convention attendees. To reflect the history and population of London, the host city, the theme of the academic programme is ‘Diversity’. We will be exploring science fiction, fantasy, horror, and all forms of speculative fiction, whether in novels, comics, television, and movies or in fanworks, art, radio plays, games, advertising, and music.

Proposals are particularly welcome on the works of the Guests of Honour, the city of London as a location and/or fantastic space, and underrepresented areas of
research in speculative fiction. Academics at all levels are warmly encouraged, including students and independent scholars.

Submission: We welcome proposals for presentations, roundtable discussions, lectures, and workshops/masterclasses. To propose a paper, please submit a 300 word abstract. To submit something other than a paper, please get in touch with Emma England, the academic area head, for an informal exchange of ideas. The deadline for submission is October 1st 2013. Participants will be notified by December 31st 2013. All presenters must be in receipt of convention membership by May 1st 2014.

Call for Papers – Journal

Title: Femspec: Special Issue on Aging and Gender in Speculative Fiction
Deadline: 30 May 2013
Contact: aganapath@gmail.com

Topic: Femspec, an interdisciplinary journal dedicated to challenging gender through speculative means in any genre, invites papers for a special issue of Femspec, Aging and Gender in Speculative Fiction, examining speculative fiction books, TV shows, or movies that re-imagine the way we view women growing older and/or depict the way societal expectations of gender roles impact how we age. Keeping in mind the feminist thrust of the journal, we seek submissions that consider how major feminist sf writers depict aging characters, that apply feminist theory to depictions of aging in sf texts broadly defined, or that address sf’s potential to critique the relationship of gender to ideologies of aging in contemporary society or to re-imagine the future of aging primarily for women, but also for men within a gendered perspective.

Submission: Because Femspec is a fully independent journal funded by subscriptions rather than institutional support, subscription is required on submission. Essays undergo a rigorous two-step jury process with independent readers and members of the Femspec editorial board. Submissions can be sent directly to the special issue editor, Aishwarya Ganapathiraju, aganapath@gmail.com or to Femspec.org, where subscription information can be found.

Call for Papers – Anthology

Title: Joss Whedon’s Firefly
Deadline: 1 May 2013
Contact: mgoodr@essex.ac.uk

Topic: It has been ten years since Joss Whedon’s Firefly (2002-3) was first screened. Although narrative covered only one season and a film, the series has enjoyed a long afterlife through comic books, a roleplaying game, and the fan community. Despite the continued interest in, and development of, the series, Firefly remains relatively unexplored in academic literature, particularly when compared to the critical attention directed towards Whedon’s earlier series, Buffy, the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003).

This volume, comprising of 12 essays, to be published by Scarecrow Press, seeks to address this imbalance. We are looking for 5,000-7,000 word contributions that fall into one of the following broad areas:

• Politics
• Race
• Class
• Agency

Preference will be given to proposals which satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

• Contributions which are prepared to challenge, as well as celebrate, Firefly. Consider Firefly in light of the controversy over the casting of Avatar: The Last Airbender (2010), for example. How should we read a series with an abundance of Chinoiserie and very few (if any) Asian actors? How does the uncomplicated, humorous and stylized violence of Firefly and Serenity relate to the high instance of gun violence in the US and the very real violence of American military action overseas?

• Contributions which examine Firefly alongside other texts. How does Firefly’s Western/Sci-Fi multicultural landscape compare to the Noir/Sci-Fi multicultural city shown in Blade Runner (1982)? How does the portrayal of Asian cultures compare to that shown in Avatar: The Last Airbender? How does the relationship between the Browncoats and the Alliance compare to the Empire and the Rebels in Star Wars?

• Contributions which include a consideration of Firefly and Serenity’s afterlife. How have the comics, roleplaying game and fan-made expansions of the universe changed the series? How have the creators used their respective mediums?
• Contributions which show an awareness of existing Firefly scholarship. How does your work relate to the papers in Investigating Firefly and Serenity (2008) and to Christina Rowley’s work on gender in Firefly? What are the limits of the existing scholarship?
• Willingness to apply theoretical concepts. Contributions should be prepared to mobilise theory in their approaches to Firefly, particularly if dealing with agency.
• Willingness to situate Firefly in a broader historical context. How does Firefly engage with prevalent themes in both US history and the history of international relations?

Submission: 300-500 word proposals should be sent to mgoodr@essex.ac.uk by May 1st 2013. Proposals should include the author’s email address and affiliation. Full papers will be expected by September 1st 2013.

Call for Papers – Anthology

Title: Time Travel in the Media
Deadline: 16 June 2013
Contact: timetravelcollection@gmail.com

Topic: We are currently seeking chapter proposals for the first collection of essay to address time travel across different media formats. The collection, to be be published by McFarland, will be edited by Joan Ormrod (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Matthew Jones (UCL).

Time travel has been a topic that has fascinated the media since the 19th century. Indeed, cinema has used flashbacks and montage since its earliest days to experiment with time. However, film is not the only medium fascinated by the concept. Television series explore history and play with notions of time as a social construct. Video games, manga and anime also examine time travel's unique narrative possibilities. Graphic novels and superhero narratives use time travel to explore heroes' ingenuity and the problems created by paradoxes.

Time travel narratives have invoked socio-historic concerns for subjectivity, narrativity, history, the future and potential apocalypse. The future and the past are frequently depicted as a means of understanding the problems of the present. Lately, time travel narratives have used philosophical issues based on scientific theories such as string theory, multiple universes and the philosophical construction of time. Contemporary time travel stories also acknowledge the potential for experimentation in media narratives.

The collection is aimed at:
• undergraduate and postgraduate students in film and media, cultural studies, philosophy, social sciences, history and science programmes.
• science fiction and fantasy fandoms across a range of media.

The volume will address a broad range of media, including television, cinema, video games, anime and manga, comics and graphic novels and radio plays. It will be divided into five sections addressing narrative and media form, time travel as genre, philosophical and theoretical concepts, time and culture and a number of case studies.

We are currently inviting 500-word proposals for 5000-7000 word chapters. These might address, but need not be limited to, the following topics:
• Adaptation and the differences between time in media forms • Parallel worlds/alternative realities in virtual media, gaming and avatars • Narrative devices such as the causal time loop • Cinematic and media apparatus as time machine • Experimental and avant garde depictions of time and time travel • Narrative tropes • Key characters - H. G. Wells, The Doctor, Sam Becket, Marty McFly • Iconography - the time travel machine, distinguishing the past/future from the present • The adaptability of the time travel narrative to many genres - science fiction, fantasy, romance, teenpics • The depiction of history and historical characters • The rules and regulations of time travel and parallel worlds • The experience and means of time travel (machine, magic, supernatural) • Use of specific theoretical models of narrative interrogation, such as psychoanalytic, carnivalesque, discursive, Deleuzian, Ricoeur, Bergson, postmodern and semiotic perspectives or new theoretical contexts • Philosophical considerations, such as free will and determinism, religious and ritualistic perspectives • String theory and parallel universes • Socio-historic notions of time (linear time, cyclical time, the Enlightenment and the mythic) • Tourism - cosmopolitanism, the flâneur • Time-travel narratives within the context of their socio-historic production • Case studies which examine a specific aspect of time travel in one text.

Submission: Proposals along with a 50-word biography should be sent to timetravelcollection@gmail.com by June 16, 2013.
The Science Fiction Research Association is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, booksellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership. Visit the SFRA Website at [www.sfra.org](http://www.sfra.org). For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the Website.

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**SFRA Review**

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

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