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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

Year's End

Chris Pak

THE LAST ISSUE of the year comes at the tail end of an incredibly busy summer. I attended the SF Foundation Masterclass, held in a fantastic reading room at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London. Andy Duncan, Neil Easterbrook and K.V. Johansen led the lively discussions and Marek Kukula, the public astronomer co-ordinating arrangements at the venue, took us on a tour of the first artistic exhibition at the Observatory’s museum: Longitude Punk’d, a series of specially commissioned works of steampunk that approached in an irreverent and charming way the educative, fact based aspect of the museum experience. Immediately afterwards I attended my first ever WorldCon, Loncon 3, then Mark Bould and Rhys Williams’ two conferences, Irradiating the Object, on the work of M. John Harrison, and SF/F Now, which brought scholars together for a series of workshops and talks on aspects of critical theory in sf; my report on this conference will appear in Science Fiction Studies. All in all, it has been an exciting and eventful year for sf and sf scholarship.

In this issue we have three feature 101 articles. Victor Grech explores allusions to Star Trek in The Big Bang Theory, and also reports on the first academic Star Trek symposium that he organised in Malta. Plans for a second symposium are also underway; see the announcements section for more information, and have a look at the cfp from Science Fiction Film and Television for a special Star Trek issue in the 50th anniversary year, also in the announcements section. Giulia Ianuzzi takes a look at the history of Italian sf, tracing its development from its origins in magazines dominated by American translations to modes of distribution made possible by social media and the internet. This issue also contains a review of her book, Fantascienza Italiana, courtesy of Daniel Lukes. Finally, Mariano Martin Rodriguez gives us a history of sf theatre in the age of the scientific romance, a paper that he presented at the Stage the Future conference, reported in the previous issue of the SFRA Review (309).

We also have a special roundtable media review on Under the Skin, with Marleen Barr, Pawel Frelik and Andy Hageman offering perspectives on the film that approach and depart from each other in intriguing ways, along with a slightly larger non-fiction review section. I wanted to encourage you all to consider contributing items for next year’s series of the Review, whether that be conference reports, interviews, feature articles, pedagogical articles or reviews - especially reviews. Ritch Calvin and Jim Davis are now looking to initiate new editors into the roles they more than capably filled over the years. I wanted to thank them both for the support I received and for the pleasure of working with them over the last three issues. Pavel has some announcements about the upcoming elections of new officers and editors in his column, along with other important SFRA business.

As this will be the last issue before the year ends I also wanted to thank all those who contributed to the Review, the first under my editorship: it has been an exciting experience, and I’m looking forward to the work of next year. I also wanted to thank everyone who has made my editorial debut a supportive and exciting experience, from our new non-fiction editors Dominick Grace and Kevin Pinkham, who are doing a great job - as this issues’ slightly larger non-fiction review section shows - to the executive committee and all those who have been reading the Review. I hope this slightly larger issue will keep you good company over the cold (that is, if you have cold winters where you are!) months to come, and I hope you all have a great New Year!
Meanwhile, at the EC HQ . . .

Pawel Frelik

The summer’s gone, the school’s back, same old, same old. But there are things happening here, most of them of great importance to the organization, so let me go through them point by point.

1. Elections. When you’re reading this, Ritch Calvin, our Immediate Past President responsible for the elections, has probably already opened an online voting survey on SurveyMonkey. We have a really exciting roster this year, which, among others, reflects our push for SFRA’s internationalization – both Vice-Presidential candidates are from outside North America. And since the strength of any EC largely depends on the members who vote, no matter what their preferences for various candidates are, we would like to encourage everyone to, well, vote! If you need more info to decide, see the candidates’ statements in the previous issue of the *SFRA Review* (No. 309), which is available here: http://sfra.org/sfra-review/309.pdf.

2. Revised Bylaws. The SFRA Bylaws have needed attention for a while now. For a few months after the Madison conference, the EC discussed possible amendments and improvements. Some of them are cosmetic, reflecting, for instance, the use of electronic communications, but we also have suggestions of several more substantial revisions, major among which is the extension of Officers’ terms to three years. (If passed, this would become effective during the 2016 elections for the officers taking over in January 2017). The ultimate goal of all these amendments is to make SFRA an even more efficient venue for scholarly exchanges in the field of science fiction studies. Any changes to the Bylaws need to be voted by the membership during the Business Meeting, which we would like to happen during our 2015 conference on Long Island. To avoid the balkanization of the discussion into countless threads, we have decided to present all proposed revisions in one document and adopt the following roadmap. If you have any suggestions, remarks, or comments regarding our draft, please let us know by November 20 (email them to sfra.executive@gmail.com). By mid December, we will prepare the final draft, which will reflect this feedback and which will be published in the first 2015 issue of *SFRA Review*. The membership will then have over 5 months to consider the proposed revisions. We hope to vote on the new Bylaws during the Business Meeting in June 2015.

3. Job openings. Now that Chris, Dominick, and Kevin have settled in as new editors of *SFRA Review* (and how splendidly they have been doing!), we can resume our search for the other editors. Jim Davis and Ritch Calvin have devoted long years to the Review and would now like to step down and give others a chance. We will have many opportunities to thank them for their service, so for now I will only say: the Review wouldn’t be what it is without you. Thank you so much! This means that we’re looking for candidates who would like to take over as the Fiction Editor and the Media Editor. Those interested should send a short statement of intent, a CV, and a sample review (of media texts for the Media Editor position) to sfra.executive@gmail.com. The Executive Committee will begin reviewing applications on November 15. Needless to say, Jim and Ritch will help new editors during the transition period.

4. Volunteers. Last but not least, we need a volunteer to work on SFRA’s *Wikipedia* entry. For now, this is a once-only task. No special skills are required beyond the basic know-how of editing *Wikipedia* entries (which takes about 30 minutes to master) and some initiative in deciding what information should be included in our entry. The EC will provide all relevant data beyond what is available on our website and will vet the revised entry before it goes online. If you’d like to help the organization in this outreach task, please send an email to sfra.executive@gmail.com.

Also, remember to follow our Twitter at @sfranews and visit our Facebook page, both of which are now linked from the new website with live updates. Over and out.
Vice-President’s Message

Science is Trending

Amy J. Ransom

Having served on the Pioneer Committee and seen how many people are publishing on SF-related topics but are not yet members, I decided to use the information gathered by Keren Omry (Pioneer Committee Chair) and build on it to initiate a membership drive. Over the summer, I sent nearly 60 e-mails personally inviting individuals whose essays were considered for the Pioneer Award to join us at SFRA. I hope a few new members are reading this SFRA Review; if you are, we look forward to meeting you in Stony Brook in the summer of 2015 at our annual conference.

In addition, Executive Council just met via Skype; we had a productive meeting, drafting by-laws, putting together officer “cheat sheets” to pass on to our successors.

On a personal note, I want to briefly share the entertaining experience of attending “rockstar astrophysicist” Neil deGrasse Tyson at an event at Alma College, a few blocks from where I live in central Michigan. Riffing off recent headline items relating to astronomy and cosmology, Tyson’s talk was like stand-up comic science! He opened by quoting a Tweeter who had raved about his work prior to the airing of Cosmos and plugging his own Twitter feed. He declared that “science is trending”—which we already knew; SFRA is in good company on the social media front.

Share your own science-related excursions, media commentaries, and so on with us at the SFRA Facebook page and Twitter feeds!

SFRA Business

SFRA Election for Executive Committee for 2015–2016

Ritch Calvin

PER THE SFRA bylaws, we are holding our semi-annual elections for the four offices that comprise the Executive Committee of the Science Fiction Research Association. The candidate statements were published in the previous issue of the Review. The candidates are as follows:

President: Craig Jacobsen, Amy Ransom
Vice President: Keren Omry, Alfredo Suppia
Secretary: Susan A. George, Shawn Malley
Treasurer: Steve Berman, Ariel Wetzel

As we did two years ago, we are using Survey Monkey to conduct the voting. The ballot can be found here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XNQKKMV.

The ballot will remain open for 30 days after publication of the Review. The membership will be notified by means of social media platforms, the listserv, and the next issue of the Review.

Minutes of the SFRA Executive Committee

Meeting by Skype, 29 September 2014

Submitted by Jenni Halpin, SFRA Secretary

Present: Pawel Frelik, Amy Ransom, Ritch Calvin, and Jenni Halpin

Bylaws Revisions: We intend to present the revisions en masse rather than taking things point by point: many of the changes we are interested in require concurrent adjustments in other areas of the bylaws. Upon presenting the proposed changes in the Review and on the website, the EC will take feedback until 21 November.

Conferences: Ritch’s preparations are going well for the conference at Stony Brook. The film festival that will be part of the conference is also coming together well and will be an annual event of the SFRA. The EC also discussed future conferences.

Committees and Transitions: Officers and awards committees are generating “cheat sheets” to facilitate transitions. The ones submitted so far look good. We are finalizing placement on committees for 2014. We will be using the Review and the listserv this fall to seek a new editor for media reviews.

Other Details: It is time to review the fee schedule for institutional memberships to the SFRA. Amy contacted a number of the people who had been consid-
ered for the Pioneer award and invited them to join the SFRA. Response was positive.

**Association Bylaws**

*(Including proposed amendments for review October 2014)*

**ARTICLE I Name and Purpose**

Section 1
The organization shall be named, known, and styled as the Science Fiction Research Association. It is incorporated in the state of Ohio as a non-profit organization.

Section 2
SFRA is irrevocably dedicated to educational and beneficial purposes, fostering the common interests of its members in the field of science fiction and fantasy by encouraging new scholarship, furthering excellence in teaching at all levels of instruction, exchanging information among students and scholars throughout the world, improving access to published and unpublished materials, aiding in building library research collections, and promoting the publication of scholarly books and works pertinent to the fields of science fiction and fantasy. SFRA also promotes the advancement of this field of study by providing financial assistance or by conferring appropriate honors upon worthy writers, students, or scholars.

**ARTICLE II Membership**

Section 1
There shall be four classes of membership: active, honorary, institutional, and subsidized.

Section 2
(a) Active members: Individuals paying annual dues to the association (or pairs sharing a residence paying joint annual dues) thereby become active members of SFRA. They shall receive publications as designated in ARTICLE VIII sections 1 and 2, have the right to vote on all issues presented to the membership, and be eligible to hold office and serve on committees.

(b) Honorary Members: Recipients of the Pilgrim Award shall be honorary members. They shall pay no dues but shall receive all of the rights and benefits designated for active members in part a, above.

(c) Institutional Members: Certain appropriate academic or educational organizations may hold membership in SFRA. Such organizations may designate appropriate individuals to represent them in the association and, upon payment of annual dues, shall receive publications as designated in ARTICLE VIII.

(d) Subsidized Members: Students, the under-employed, and emeritus members shall be eligible to pay annual dues to the association at a reduced rate. Subsidized members shall receive all of the rights and benefits designated for active members in part a, above.

(i) Persons enrolled in accredited institutions shall qualify to enroll as subsidized members. Ordinarily, student memberships may be used no more than five times. A student may petition the Executive Committee for an extension of this period if special circumstances apply whereby he/she is a full-time student for a longer time.

(ii) Persons employed less than full-time (nine-month) in academic positions shall qualify to enroll as subsidized members.

(iii) Retired persons (and persons over age 65) who have been active members for a period of at least five years shall qualify to enroll as subsidized members.

Section 3
The membership of any person or institution will be terminated if delinquent in payment of dues. Delinquent members will be notified by the Treasurer.

**ARTICLE III Meetings of Members**

Section 1
An annual conference open to all members of the association and such guests as may be determined by the Executive Committee shall be held at least once during each calendar year. The president and members of the committee of the host institution shall decide upon the time of the meeting subject to ratification by a majority vote of the Executive Committee.

Section 2
A business meeting shall be held at some time during the annual conference. The time and place of the busi-
ness meeting shall be clearly indicated on the SFRA website at least 21 days prior to the convening of the annual conference.

(a) An agenda shall be provided to those members present at the conference. The business of the meeting shall not be limited to the agenda. Any member may propose additional business from the floor.

(b) The voting membership present at the meeting shall constitute the quorum needed to carry on business matters. A simple majority of those present shall decide an issue. Within a period of sixty days either any five members or the president in consultation with the Executive Committee may ask that a given action be confirmed or ratified by a vote of the entire SFRA membership. General membership participation shall be obtained in the same manner as described in section “e” below.

(c) The business meeting shall be conducted under the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised.

(d) Proceedings of business meetings and Executive Committee meetings shall be reported promptly to the general membership through the *SFRA Review*.

(e) Such items of business as cannot be delayed until the next annual meeting shall be conducted by the Executive Committee which may, where it deems appropriate, request the membership deal with the issue by means of a vote conducted through such electronic means as the Executive Committee deems appropriate. In such a case, a fair time limit shall be set, and such issues shall be decided by a plurality of the votes cast. The results of such ballots will be reported to the membership at the earliest possible time through the *SFRA Review*, and time shall be made available for discussion of these matters at the next annual meeting.

**ARTICLE IV Executive Committee**

Section 3
Other meetings and conferences of members may use the name SFRA only upon prior approval of the Executive Committee.

**ARTICLE V Officers**

Section 1
The officers of the association shall be chosen by the membership. There shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer. They shall take office on January 1 of the year succeeding their election.

Section 2
The president shall be chief executive of the association; he/she shall preside at all meetings of the membership and the Executive Committee, have general and active management of the business of the association, and see that all orders and resolutions of the Executive Committee are carried out; the president shall have general superintendence and direction of all other officers of the association and shall see that their duties are properly performed; the president shall submit a report of the operations of the association for the fiscal year to the Executive Committee and to the membership at the annual meeting, and from time to time shall report to the
Executive Committee on matters within the president’s knowledge that may affect the association; the president shall be ex officio member of all standing committees and shall have the powers and duties in management usually vested in the office of president of a corporation; the president shall appoint all committees herein unless otherwise provided.

Section 3
The vice president shall be vested with all the powers and shall perform all the duties of the president during the absence of the latter and shall have such other duties as may, from time to time, be determined by the Executive Committee. At any meeting at which the president is to preside, but is unable, the vice president shall preside. The vice president shall have special responsibility for membership recruitment for SFRA (working along with the secretary, the web director, and the public relations officer).

Section 4
The secretary shall attend all sessions of the Executive Committee and all meetings of the membership and record all the votes of the association and minutes of the meetings and shall perform like duties for the Executive Committee and other committees when required. At any meeting at which the president is to preside, but is unable, and for which the vice president is unable to preside, the secretary shall preside. The secretary shall give notice of all meetings of the membership and special meetings of the Executive Committee and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Executive Committee or the president. In the event the secretary is unable to attend such meetings as may be expected, the Executive Committee may designate some other member of the association to serve as secretary pro tem.

Section 5
The treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the association and have charge of all receipts and disbursements of the association and shall be the custodian of the association’s funds. The treasurer shall have full authority to receive and give receipts for all monies due and payable to the association and to sign and endorse checks and drafts in its name and on its behalf. The treasurer shall deposit funds of the association in its name and such depositories as may be designated by the Executive Committee. The treasurer shall furnish the Executive Committee an annual financial report within 60 days of the fiscal year; the fiscal year shall end on December 31. At any meeting at which the president is to preside, but is unable, and for which the vice president and secretary are unable to preside, the treasurer shall preside.

Section 6
The term of office for the president and vice president shall be three years. The president and vice president shall not succeed themselves in office.

Section 7
The term of office for the secretary and treasurer shall be three years. Secretaries may succeed themselves in office for a second successive term but shall serve for no more than two successive terms. Treasurers may succeed themselves in office for a second successive term but shall serve for no more than two successive terms.

Section 8
The order of succession in the event of death or resignation of the president shall be first the vice president, then the secretary, and then the treasurer.

Section 9
When the position of an officer other than the president shall become vacant due to death or resignation or for any other reason, the Executive Committee shall choose from the membership to fill the unexpired term of the position.

Section 10
Officers, members of the Executive Committee, and members of the association shall not be entitled to any compensation for their service but shall be entitled to reimbursement for their expenses in carrying out such duties as may be designated to them.

Section 11
The office of the web director shall be responsible for the maintenance of the SFRA website. The web director will report to the Executive Committee and will update the contents and format of the website as deemed appropriate by the Executive Committee. The web director will be appointed by the Executive Committee, and will serve an open-ended term, which can be terminated by either the web director or the Executive Committee. The web director shall not be a member of the Executive Committee.
Section 12
The public relations officer will organize, in coordination with the vice president, the various internet and social media outlets, in order to publicize and further the goals and mission of the organization. The public relations officer will be appointed by the Executive Committee and will serve an open-ended term, which can be terminated by either the public relations officer or the Executive Committee. The public relations officer shall not be a member of the Executive Committee.

Section 13
The SFRA Review editor(s) shall be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Executive Committee; editor(s) shall serve for a three-year period with the first year to be probationary. Editor(s) shall be responsible for electronic preparation of the SFRA Review, for obtaining and maintaining advertising, for coordinating print-on-demand requests, for coordinating other electronic sales mechanisms (such as links to online stores), and for fulfilling back issue requests.

ARTICLE VI Elections

Section 1
Elections shall be held triennially.

Section 2
The general membership shall elect the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer as set forth in ARTICLE V.

Section 3
In the last year of their term, the Executive Committee shall establish a time and date by which ballots for the election of officers must be received, which date shall be known as the election date.

Section 4
The immediate past president, in consultation with the Executive Committee, shall submit a slate of candidates of no fewer than two persons from the membership for each position to be filled at least 60 days prior to the election day. The immediate past president shall notify the membership in the SFRA Review, and all other appropriate and available electronic and social outlets, of this slate of candidates. Within 30 days of the publication of this slate of candidates in the SFRA Review, additional candidates may be nominated by submission of a petition signed by at least five persons of the membership in good standing entitled to vote in the election to the secretary of the association. At the end of this 30-day period nominations shall be closed and the ballot shall be prepared.

Section 5
Not later than October 1 of the election year, a ballot containing the names of the nominees shall be made available to the membership via a secure electronic, online voting format. The voting process will remain open for a four-week period.

Section 6
Except as provided in these Bylaws, the Executive Committee shall provide for administrative workings of the elections and the method of return and receipt of ballots cast by the membership. Except as otherwise specified herein, the immediate past president shall be responsible for conducting the election including the preparation and counting of ballots.

Section 7
Those candidates receiving a plurality of the votes cast shall be elected.

ARTICLE VII Dues

Section 1
The annual dues shall be set annually by the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VIII Publications

Section 1
All members of the SFRA will automatically receive the publications which are recognized as official publications of the SFRA, which are listed in section 2, below.

Section 2
The SFRA Review is an official publication of the SFRA
and shall be published four times per year or as directed by the Executive Committee. The expenses of the SFRA Review shall be paid from the association’s general fund.

Section 3
SFRA will continue to explore ways in which to sponsor and promote future publication of material valuable to the study of science fiction in the various media.

Section 4
Arrangements involving publications will be made by the president of the association with advice and consent of the Executive Committee, and such arrangements shall be reported to the general membership at the earliest time after completion through the medium of the SFRA Review.

ARTICLE IX Affiliate Organizations

Section 1
Appropriate regional, subject matter, and other special interest groups may seek affiliation with the Science Fiction Research Association. Such affiliation must be approved by the general membership upon recommendation of the Executive Committee. Such recommendation shall be made only following approval by the committee of the group’s constitution, Bylaws, and fiscal procedures.

ARTICLE X Assignment of Assets

Section 1
Should SFRA cease to be a viable organization, dissolution shall be effected in the same manner as amending the Bylaws described in Article XI.

Section 2
In the case of a dissolution, the Executive Committee shall determine at that time to which qualified tax exempt fund, foundation, and/or corporation organized or operating for charitable or educational purposes any SFRA assets remaining after payment of debts or provisions shall be distributed and paid.

ARTICLE XI Amendments

Section 1
Amendments to these Bylaws shall be proposed by the Executive Committee or by petition to the committee by no fewer than five percent of the persons holding membership in the association at the time of presentation of the petition to the Executive Committee.

Section 2
The proposed amendments shall be distributed by appropriate electronic and social media 60 days prior to the meeting or the voting process.

Section 3
The membership may by a majority vote of the membership present and voting at a meeting or by a majority of votes cast in electronic voting pass such an amendment.

* * *

The following sections were changed as a result of a vote of the membership of the SFRA in October 1992: Article I:1, 2; II:b; III:2, 2.d, 2.e; IV:2, 4; VI:5; VIII:2.a,4. A new Article X: Assignment of Assets was created; old Article X became Article XI: Amendments.

The following sections were changed as a result of the vote of the membership of the SFRA in June 2004: Article III:2a; V:3, 7; VIII:2a.

The following sections are proposed for change/addition by vote of the membership of the SFRA in June 2015: Article II:1,2; III:1, 2; IV: 2, 4; V: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13; VI; VII; VIII: 1, 2; XI.
ALBEIT INTRODUCED with a hackneyed cliché, this event truly went where no one had gone before: a two day academic meeting devoted solely to Star Trek.

The first Star Trek Symposium was held in Malta at the Dolmen Hotel on the 10 and 11 July, 2014, and was organised by Victor Grech and David Zammit. The event was opened by the US Ambassador to Malta, Her Excellency Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley. Faculty was varied, with an interesting preponderance of medical doctors.

Topics ranged from outright medically oriented topics such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation in Star Trek, to the chemical possibility of silicon life, to the intersection of Star Trek with the Big Bang Theory sitcom to the role of leisure in the utopian future depicted within the franchise. Dinner on the first day was preceded by a plenary by Jason Eberl, entitled “The More Complex the Mind, the Greater the Need for the Simplicity of Play.”

Overall, approximately half of the talks involved a philosophical/ethical bent while the remainder focused on scientific aspects in the franchise, such as the hypothetical possibility of faster than light travel by warping space-time. Some talks were given by two speakers, such as a talk describing the tricorder, followed by a doctor explaining how close medical technology actually is to achieving such a device.

Discussions were amicable but animated, lively and often thought provoking, invoking many narratives within the science fiction genre, especially with reference to some of the philosophical and moral issues that the franchise explores. This was particularly the case after the talk dealing with ethical issues in reproduction leading to species and genetic discrimination. Indeed, a delegate observed that perhaps all doctors should be made to watch Andrew Niccol’s dystopian *Gattaca* (1997).

The event closed with a discussion into the possibility of repeating this unique event or widening it in order to embrace science fiction in general. The consensus was to hold a science fiction symposium that would provide a half or full day focus on *Star Trek* if a sufficient number of related abstracts are submitted. Plans are also underway for a conference to be held in Malta to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Star Trek in 2016, which will be advertised in future editions of the *SFRA Review* and elsewhere.

Mugs, tumblers and beer steins commemorating the symposium were available for sale.

LL&P

http://www.startreksymposium.com

Victor Grech – victor.e.grech@gov.mt

Her Excellency, the US Ambassador to Malta, Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, opening the Symposium.

Open air course dinner at Batabulan Restaurant in Qawra, Malta. Left to right: David Zammit (organiser), Neena Modi (Consultant Neonatologist at Imperial College and Chairman of the Ethics Committee of the British Medical Journal), Jason Eberl from Marian University, Jennifer Vines, and Victor Grech (organiser).
The Importance and Relevance of Star Trek in The Big Bang Theory

Victor Grech

THE BIG BANG THEORY portrays scientists who identify closely with characters and the lifestyle portrayed in Star Trek (ST). The latter is in turn used to highlight their nerdism. This paper classifies references to ST as those of simple viewing of films and episodes, passing allusions to ST in ordinary conversation, the obsessive collection of ST memorabilia, the direct interaction with ST actors, intimate knowledge of the fictional Klingon language, the deliberate introduction of ST elements into real life, using ST as metaphor for real life, mental identification with Spock, and ultimately acting out ST roles. The scientists’ uneven enculturation is emphasised through ST to humorous effect. Conversely, a blonde female waitress constitutes the representative non-scientist viewing public, an overt observer and a surrogate judge of the antics that our eccentric scientists indulge in. This paper will also demonstrate that there is bidirectional flow of information, with our waitress gaining knowledge from her friends since they seem to inspire her to achieve a higher level of education, while she encourages them to cope realistically with life. ST is thus utilised to provide both textual and visual cues about character and stereotype.

Introduction

THE BIG BANG THEORY (BBT) is a sitcom which premiered on September 24, 2007. BBT is owned by the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), the company which also own the Star Trek (ST) television franchise.

“In The Big Bang Theory, the most relevant social identity […] seems to be that of the nerd or geek” (Bednarek 203). Indeed, the four principal male characters in BBT are ultimate science geeks and prototypical nerds, skinny postdocs working at the California Institute of Technology. This accedes to the notion that the frank depiction of geeks and nerds is akin to the “freak show discourse of stylizing people as ’the other.’” (Engelhart 3)

Such gender bias is unsurprising as Steinke et al. have shown that “male scientist characters were found to be both more prevalent than female scientist characters” in this type of media depiction (2). Physical frailty, nerddness and geekiness are equally expected as “[m]ale scientist characters were more likely to be shown with the masculine attributes of independence and dominance, but not athleticism” (2).

Sheldon is the principal character, a theoretical physicist who obtained a PhD at 16 years of age and went on to acquire a Doctor of Science degree. While his knowledge of theoretical physics is unparalleled, his lack of interpersonal skills is equally breath-taking, leading to him being referred to as “the crazy guy across the hall” (Cendrowski, “The Staircase Implementation”). Jim Parsons, the actor who reprises the part, has won both an Emmy and a Golden Globe (Bednarek 202). Sheldon shares an apartment with Leonard, an experimental physicist who is much more humanised but is shy and unlucky with women. Raj is an astrophysicist with selective mutism, able to speak to women only while under the influence of alcohol. Howard is the only non-PhD, possessing a masters degree in engineering. His approach to women is the exact opposite to Raj’s, coming over too aggressively for any reasonable chance of success.

Penny is an attractive, blonde, would-be actress who lives across the hallway from Sheldon and Leonard. Her level of education is very poor compared with the boys, but in terms of language and diction, she serves as a foil, contrasting sharply with Sheldon. Penny is a representative of the non-scientific/nerd/geek public, who Sheldon rejects as “muggles” (Cendrowski, “The Robotic Manipulation”), a term derived from the Harry Potter series referring to individuals who lack magical ability. Her role is clear. “[N]ot only are audiences interested in televisual characters; they also engage with them interpersonally” (Bednarek 201). Indeed, it is almost as if Penny stands in as an extreme example of the general public, a member of that group which in popular culture is not considered to be “the brightest pixels in the plasma screen: dumb blondes,” thereby constituting yet another stereotype (Inness 2).

BBT constantly refers to ST and this paper will categorise and analyse these references in an attempt to identify the points that the directors endeavour to make. These are mainly that nerdy and geeky scientists can successfully interact with non-scientists, and vice-versa, both within the show and with the covert audience that...
watches the show, and that this interaction can be mediated and actively fostered using ST since of all of the movie and television franchises that are referenced in the show, ST is mentioned most often.

References to ST in BBT can be classified into six types. In increasing order of obsession, the boys constantly watch ST, they frequently allude to and quote from ST in passing conversation, and they avidly collect ST memorabilia. Within the show, they directly interact with past ST characters and display an excellent knowledge of the fictional Klingon language. The show goes on to introduce ST elements into real life and explains life through metaphors derived from ST. Our characters, particularly Sheldon, identify with ST's Spock and they readily act out ST roles. Since dialog projects a particular social identity, drawing on stereotypes and shared knowledge with the audience” (Bednarek 199), direct quotations will be used.

This paper will show that ST is heavily alluded to in BBT, and these references are used as “textual cues that give rise to information about character” (Culpeper 163). These clues have been shown to be both explicit (167) and implicit (172), as will be shown in BBT. The scripts also “prove to be a masterpiece play on words to create humor and fun, with mystic science terminology, ingenious use of rhetorical devices, and individualistic expressions” (Yin and Yun 1221), with ST references being among the majority. ST is also used to highlight “the stereotypical nerd’s interest in science and […] identity as an (intelligent) ‘scientist’-nerd” (Bednarek 214).

Watching ST

THE BOYS ARE GREAT FANS of the franchise and regularly re-watch ST films and episodes such as the “Deep Space Nine/Star Trek: The Original Series Trouble With Tribbles crossover episode” (Cendrowski, “The Hofstadter Isotope”; West, “Trials and Tribble-ations”). Their knowledge of ST is encyclopedic. New films are avidly awaited and speculated upon. It is mentioned that they waited in line […] for 14 hours to see the midnight premiere of Star Trek: Nemesis” (Baird, Nemesis; Cendrowski, “The 21-Second Excitation”).

Even the ST reboot was eagerly expected, with conjectures about it, such as “a scene depicting Spock’s birth.” The reply is that there would be more interest “in a scene depicting Spock’s conception.” Almost inevitably, as scientists the cast wonders that, since “his mother was human, his father was Vulcan, they couldn’t just con-
make a suitable roommate: “Kirk or Picard?” To which Leonard replies “Oh, uh, well, that’s tricky. Um, well, uh, *Original Series over Next Generation*, but Picard over Kirk” (Cendrowski, “The Staircase Implementation”).

Most other SF series are judged inferior to *ST*. “I don’t want to watch *Saturn 3, Deep Space Nine* is better” (Cendrowski, “The Lizard-Spock Expansion”). This is important to such dedicated fans:

Amy: That’d be my boyfriend. Happier playing his dopey *Star Trek* game with his friends than hanging out with me.

Penny: Wars.

Amy: What?

Penny: *Star Wars*. They get all cranky when you mix the two up.

But to an outsider who is not an SF fan:

Amy: What’s the difference?

Penny: There’s absolutely no difference. (Cendrowski, “The Weekend Vortex”)

Not allowing someone to watch *ST* is considered a punishment. “I could not be allowed to go to the opening of the next *Star Trek* movie” (Cendrowski, “The Fish Guts Displacement;” Abrams, *Star Trek Into Darkness*).

Asking someone unfamiliar with the franchise to watch *ST* is also seen as a sufficient explanation for the illustration of a difficult point, such as when Sheldon gifts a girl with the complete *Next Generation* DVD box set. “*Star Trek* DVDs? Why would I want this?” and Sheldon replies “get ready for 130 hours of I told you so” (Cendrowski, “The Bad Fish Paradigm”).

**Passing Allusions to *ST* in Ordinary Conversation**

**SINCE THE BOYS ARE** intimately familiar with all aspects of *ST*, it is to be expected that they frequently refer to *ST* and quote directly from specific episodes or films. It is typical that “dialogs are full of jargons and rhetorical devices, unfolding the geeks’ unique language style before spectators’ eyes” (Yin and Yun 1220). Some of these allusions are listed hereunder.

Leonard remarks that Howard’s zero-gravity toilet for the International Space Station will allow its crew “to boldly go where no man has gone before” (Cendrowski, “The Classified Materials Turbulence”), referring to the opening credits of *The Original Series*. Similarly, when Howard marries, Sheldon paraphrases “Boldly go, Howard Wolowitz” (Cendrowski, “The Countdown Reflection”).

Supraluminal travel (travelling at warp speed) is frequently alluded to as a metaphor for haste. For example, Leonard squelches the boys by telling them that his amorous approach to Penny is to deliberately take “things slow. Which, by the way, compared to you guys approaches warp speed” (Cendrowski, “The Bad Fish Paradigm”). Similarly, Penny receives a text message from “Leonard. He says they’re on the road and headed for Bakersfield at warp speed” (Cendrowski, “The Bakersfield Expedition”).

A superlative comparison in the franchise is to refer to William Shatner (Captain Kirk in *Star Trek: The Original Series*). “I am the William Shatner of theoretical physics” (Cendrowski, “The Pants Alternative”). “He reminded me of a young William Shatner” is a compliment (Cendrowski, “The Habitation Configuration”).

When a *Star Trek* actor jumps the line to see *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg), Sheldon invokes Patrick Stewart, “as Captain Jean-Luc Picard once said, the line must be drawn here! This far, no farther!” (Cendrowski, “The 21-Second Excitation;” Frakes, *Star Trek: First Contact*).

When arguing with a lawyer, Sheldon pithily retorts “you may have gone to Cambridge, but I’m an honor ary graduate of Starfleet academy” (Cendrowski, “The Agreement Dissection”).

The street address of the actor Wil Wheaton’s house is 1701, the registration number of the Starship Enterprise (Cendrowski, “The Russian Rocket Reaction”).

“Live long and prosper” is a traditional oral Vulcan salute that is regularly used in *BBT*, mostly by Sheldon, sometimes accompanied by the traditional Vulcan hand salute consisting of a raised hand, palm forward, with the fingers parted between the middle and ring finger, and the thumb extended (Cendrowski, “The Russian Rocket Reaction”).

Sheldon also paraphrases the traditional incantation that Vulcans invoke when telepathically linking with others. In this instance, Sheldon refers to a bowling ball. “I am the ball. My thoughts are its thoughts. Its holes are my holes” (Cendrowski, “The Wheaton Recurrence”).

“Resistance is futile” is the customary greeting of the Borg, a fictional cyborg race who assimilate all others, and are therefore “our most lethal enemy” (Frakes, *First Contact*). This expression is used by Sheldon to attempt to win an argument before its commencement (Cendrowski, “The Precious Fragmentation”).

When Penny’s friend Zack asks how the boys are sure
that they will not blow up the moon with a laser experiment, Leonard facetiously replies that the laser is set “to stun”. Sheldon then initiates the experiment with Captain Picard’s famous order to “make it so” (Chakos, “The Lunar Excitation”).

And finally, Sheldon states that “the appropriate ranking of cool modes of transportation is jet pack, hoverboard, transporter, Batmobile, and then giant ant” (Cendrowski, “The Wheaton Recurrence”).

**Collecting ST Memorabilia**

SUCH ARDENT FANS are expected to collect ST memorabilia. These include items such as “black market phasers, your screen-worn Lieutenant Uhura panties” (Cendrowski, “The Precious Fragmentation”).

Companies that produce such merchandise naturally pander to fans. In fact, Sheldon comments “I don’t care for novelty editions of Monopoly. I prefer the classics, regular and Klingon” (Cendrowski, “The Boyfriend Complexity”). Even the classic Battleships game has a ST themed version (Cendrowski, “The Boyfriend Complexity”). Sheldon and Leonard are seen playing three-dimensional chess (Cendrowski, “The Pancake Batter Anomaly”) from The Original Series, and this is later modified by Sheldon to sport a “transporter pad,” an instantaneous matter transporter (Cendrowski, “The Wildebeest Implementation”). This leads Sheldon to declaim “welcome to the exciting world of 3D chess” (Cendrowski, “The Hofstadter Insufficiency”).

ST related props are strewn around their apartments. For example, a Next Generation tricorder is seen on display on a bookcase (Murray, “The Rhinitis Revelation”). Indeed, the apartment was once referred to as “nerdvana” (Cendrowski, “The Nerdvana Annihilation”).

Most such collectibles are kept in their original packing: “they’re mint in box. […] They’re Collectables. […] Once you open the box it loses its value” (Cendrowski, “The Transporter Malfunction”). The threat to open such an item is very effective. This is witnessed when Leonard menaces Sheldon by threatening an action figure:

Okay. I did not want to do this but, I have here the rare mint condition production error Star Trek: The Next Generation Geordi LaForge, without his visor in the original packaging. If you do not get out of my way, I will open it. (Cendrowski, “The Nerdvana Annihilation”)

One such box is actually opened on one occasion. “An original mint-in-package Wesley Crusher action figure” is given to Sheldon by a ST actor and another actor exclaims “oh, wow. I haven’t seen one of these in years. (Rips open action figure packaging) Remember how we used to make these things look like they were masturbat- ing?” Sheldon is mortified: “what have you done? That was an original mint-in-package Wesley Crusher action figure signed by my close personal friend, Wil Wheaton” (Cendrowski, “The Russian Rocket Reaction”). Collectibles from other SF movies and franchises are also collected, such as a bat-signal, the light device that is used in Batman films to alert the hero to trouble brewing in Gotham City (Cendrowski, “The Pancake Batter Anomaly”).

**Direct Interaction with ST Actors**

SEVERAL ST ACTORS have made appearances on the show as fictionalized versions of themselves. The first such actor to appear in BBT is reverently referred to as “THE Wil Wheaton […] aka Ensign Wesley Crusher on Star Trek: The Next Generation is going to be participating in your tournament?” The answer is yes, since he “lives around here. Big gamer.”

Sheldon is intensely adversarial and gives us an insight into his childhood obsessions, continually spicing his commentary with quotes from Khan, the engineered posthuman of Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (Meyer).

You don’t understand. Growing up, I idolized Wil Wheaton. Wesley Crusher had an eidetic memory just like me. […] I was such a fan that in 1995, I travelled ten hours by bus to a sci-fi convention in Jackson, Mississippi, wearing my Star Fleet Academy cadet uniform in order to meet Wil Wheaton and get him to autograph my mint in-package Wesley Crusher action figure. […] My arduous journey, however, was for naught. Although advertised to appear, he did not show up. It was at that moment, I vowed eternal hatred for Wil Wheaton. […] In the words of Khan Noonien Singh in the immortal Wrath of Khan, ’he tasks me, he tasks me and I shall have him. […] From hell’s heart, I stab at thee.’

Later, he continues to gripe, once again quoting Khan. “Look at him. Wil Wheaton, my old friend, I have chased you round the moons of Nibia and round the Antares
Sheldon finally confronts Wheaton himself in the tournament and when Sheldon is tricked and loses, the camera zooms out away from him to a scene above the Earth in a parody of a famous ST movie scene (Meyers, Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan), with Sheldon crying out “Wheaton! Wheaton! Wheaton!” (Cendrowski, “The Creepy Candy Coating Correlation”).

In a later episode, Sheldon insults him by greeting him “well, if it isn’t Wil Wheaton, the Jar Jar Binks of the Star Trek universe” (Cendrowski, “The 21-Second Excitation”). He also continues to insult him in a film queue by remarking that “this is Indiana Jones, not Star Trek. There should be no value to his pseudo-celebrity here. And even at Star Trek conventions, they only let him in if he helps set up” (Cendrowski, “The 21-Second Excitation”).

Wheaton is also faced in a bowling contest, and Sheldon names his team the Wesley “Crushers” […] Wesley Crusher was Wil Wheaton’s character on Star Trek […] It’s a blindingly clever play on words. By appropriating his character’s name and adding the S, we imply that we’ll be the crushers of Wesley.

During the same episode, Howard confesses to Wheaton: “Hey, I just wanted to tell you I’m a big fan […] I’m sure you’re probably sick of Star Trek questions, but, Whoopi Goldberg, you ever hit that?” (Cendrowski, “The Wheaton Recurrence”).

In a later episode Wil Wheaton throws a party at his house, which has a painting of him as Wesley Crusher in uniform and a USS Enterprise-D model. Raj remarks “this is Indiana Jones, not Star Trek. There should be no value to his pseudo-celebrity here. And even at Star Trek conventions, they only let him in if he helps set up” (Cendrowski, “The 21-Second Excitation”).

Knowledge of Klingon

THE BOY’S ARCANE KNOWLEDGE of ST includes the fictional Klingon language, both spoken and written, to the extent of being able to play Klingon Boggle, and the ability to write and pronounce words such as “kapla […] pokh […] potl […] pukhpa […] chorr […] nekhmakh […] qochbe […] llok, makh, and cherrrrkh” (Cendrowski, “The Panty Pinata Polarization”). Indeed, Howard claims to speak five languages, “six, if you count Klingon!” But Leonard remarks that “girls don’t count Klingon” (Cendrowski, “The Creepy Candy Coating Corollary”).

When Penny asks Sheldon whether he thinks that Leonard would eventually become bored with her were they to date, Sheldon assess her by asking three things, one of which refers to ST: “Do you have a working knowledge of quantum physics? […] Do you speak Klingon? […] Do you know any card tricks?” (Cendrowski, “The Bad Fish Paradigm”).

This language, belonging to a fierce, fictional warrior
race, is used by Sheldon to threaten Wheaton “bortasblr jablu’DI’ reH QaQqu’ nay,” who asks “did that guy just say revenge is a dish best served cold in Klingon?” (Cendrowski, “The Creepy Candy Coating Corollary”).

At one point, Howard Sheldon’s request to introduce him to Stephen Hawking is met with the comment “you don’t seem to be understanding the English word no. Maybe a different language will help. Russian, nyet. Chinese, bu. Japanese, iie. Klingon, qo. Binary coded Ascii, 0110111001101111” (Cendrowski, “The Hawking Excitation”).

When Bernardette prepares to marry Howard, her wedding invitations are mentioned. “I’m so glad you talked Howard out of having your wedding invitations in Klingon,” to which Bernardette replies “turn it over. I’m hoping my relatives think it’s Hebrew” (Cendrowski, “The Vacation Solution”).

During the wedding, Sheldon tries to give the wedding speech in Klingon. “I’ll do it, provided I can perform the ceremony in Klingon,” but Bernardette refuses. When he tries “Daq tu’ taH Daq yIn tlhej ghajtaH” Bernadette furiously stops him: “Sheldon! I told you no Klingon.” He laconically replies “fine, I’ll do it in English, but it loses something. […] The Klingon would have made you cry.” However, toward the end, after the customary “by the power vested in us, by the state of California,” Sheldon interjects “and the Klingon High Council” (Cendrowski, “The Countdown Reflection”).

Introduction of ST Elements into Real Life

WHEN ELEMENTS OF ST intrude directly into BBT, this provides an interesting variation of metalepsis, often for humorous effect. For example, Sheldon plays the theremin (not very well) by way of attempting to annoy the rest, saying “I’ve loved the theremin from the first moment I heard the original Star Trek theme” (Cendrowski, “The Bus Pants Utilization”).

He also carries a bat’leth, a prop of a Klingon hand weapon, with him to the house of the person who hacked his online World of Warcraft account, claiming “no weapon strikes more fear into a man’s heart than a Klingon bat’leth” (Chakos, “The Zarnecki Incursion”).

Sheldon introduces a ST version of rock-paper-scissors, a hand game that is used as a choosing method similar to coin flipping or throwing dice. He claims that because anecdotal evidence suggests that in the game of rock-paper-scissors, players familiar with each other will tie 75 to 80% of the time due to the limited number of outcomes. I suggest rock-paper-scissors-lizard-Spock. […] It’s very simple. Look, scissors cuts paper. Paper covers rock. Rock crushes lizard. Lizard poisons Spock. Spock smashes scissors. Scissors decapitates lizard. Lizard eats paper. Paper disproves Spock. Spock vaporizes rock. And as it always has, rock crushes scissors.

The symbol for Spock in this version of the game is the Vulcan salute, and all of the participants invariably hold out the symbol for Spock (Cendrowski, “The Lizard-Spock Expansion”). Interestingly, we learn that “Rock-Paper-Scissors-Lizard-Spock was created by Internet pioneer Sam Kass as an improvement on the classic game Rock-Paper-Scissors. All hail Sam Kass” (Cendrowski, “The Rothman Disintegration”).

Sheldon’s predilection for this choosing method is such that a rival scientist has him explain the method three times in rapid succession (Cendrowski, “The Rothman Disintegration”). He also challenges this rival to “a trivia contest, and you may choose the field of battle. Star Trek trivia, Star Trek: Next Generation trivia, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine trivia, Star Trek: Voyager trivia” (Cendrowski, “The Rothman Disintegration”).

Sheldon compares one of Leonard’s dates, Dr. Stephanie Barnett, with Dr. Leonard McCoy in Star Trek: The Original Series: 

Dreams are also laced with ST. In one dream, Sheldon finds an alien “Gorn sitting on the couch” (Cendrowski, “The Asparagus Triangulation”), and his personal diary is annotated à la ST: “Sheldon’s log, stardate 63345.3” (Cendrowski, “The Adhesive Duck Deficiency”).

Sheldon also gives a Vulcan salute when he notices her observing the conversation (Cendrowski, “The White Asparagus Triangulation”), and his personal diary is annotated à la ST: “Sheldon’s log, stardate 63345.3” (Cendrowski, “The Adhesive Duck Deficiency”).

Dreams are also laced with ST. In one dream, Sheldon finds an alien “Gorn sitting on the couch” (Cendrowski, “The Apology Insufficiency”). In another dream, Sheldon is guilty of stealing a ST toy from Leonard. He finds himself on an alien planet: “oh dear. Two suns and no sunscreen.” A Spock action figure speaks to him with Spock’s voice as a surrogate conscience:

Look, if you fail at this relationship, and history suggests you will, then we risk losing the medical officer that our landing party has always needed. […] You’re Kirk, I’m Spock, Wolowitz is Scotty, Koothrappali is the guy who always gets killed, and now we’ve got McCoy.

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Hello again, Sheldon. [...] I am very disappointed in you. You broke your toy and switched it with Leonard’s. You should be ashamed of yourself. [...] If I told you to jump off the bridge of the Enterprise, would you do it? [...] You must right your wrong, Sheldon. [...] I am unhappy. [...] Now do the right thing. (Cendrowski, “The Transporter Malfunction”)

Sheldon attempts to present a television program

Welcome to Sheldon Cooper Presents Fun with Flags. [...] Now this week we have a very special episode where we explore the flags of the popular entertainment franchise, Star Trek. And to help me, I’m pleased to introduce Internet personality, former star of Star Trek: The Next Generation, and the only guy I know lucky enough to be immortalized in one sixteenth scale. Set phasers to fun for my friend, Wil Wheaton. (Cendrowski, “The Habitation Configuration”)

The boys are so hopeless with matters that directly relate to life that when Penny asks several questions pertaining to the real world, the boys are only able to provide ST-like answers, such as the sexiest man alive being Patrick Stewart, who reprises Captain Picard in Star Trek: The Next Generation (Cendrowski, “The Bat Jar Conjecture”). This works both ways, and when Penny is asked who Stan Lee was, her first guess is that “he was on Star Trek” (Chakos, “The Excelsior Acquisition”).

When his friends attempt to set up a date, Sheldon questions the necessity, and they explain to him that “even Spock had a date once every seven years.” Sheldon corrects them “he didn’t date. It was pon farr. His blood boiled with mating lust.” Howard retorts “okay, well, why don’t you start with a cup of coffee, and you can pon farr Amy Farrah Fowler later” (Chakos, “The Lunar Excitation”).

Spock’s dying words are quoted in order to induce Sheldon to accede to the majority’s request to participate in a physics bowl. The Benthamite quotation is “The needs of the many [...] outweigh the needs of the few. [...] Or the one.” (Cendrowski, “The Bat Jar Conjecture”). And Sheldon accedes.

Sheldon himself acknowledges, invites and creates such comparisons in order to understand life. When faced with the inevitable, when “sometimes you can’t win,” he compares this to “facing Starfleet Academy’s unwinnable command scenario, the Kobayashi Maru. [...] Captain Kirk won.” Penny retorts “Kirk cheated,” leading the bemused Sheldon to remark “impressive that you know that. It’s hard to believe I’m actually having this conversation with you. [...] Kirk beat the Kobayashi Maru by reprogramming the simulator.” (Cendrowski, “The Apology Insufficiency”).

When a girl attempts to seduce him, she observes “Let’s look at this logically. I have a stomach, I get hungry. I have genitals, I have the potential for sexual arousal.” Sheldon is unimpressed and replies, referring to the fictional Vulcan ritual of Kolinahr which purges all emotions:

Oh, let’s see, how can I explain this, um, they don’t know how to use their shields. [...] Yeah, you know, like in Star Trek, when you’re in battle and you raise the shields? Where the hell did that come from? Anyways, um, you know how guys like this are, so, please don’t take advantage of them. (Cendrowski, “The Dead Hooker Juxtaposition”)

Later in the series, Penny attempts to explain to Sheldon why the other boys had faked his discovery of magnetic monopoles in order to help him “to deal with a difficult situation. [...] Remember that scene in the new Star Trek movie when Kirk has to take over the ship, so he tells Spock all that stuff he knew wasn’t true, like saying Spock didn’t care his mom died?” (Cendrowski, “The Electric Can Opener Fluctuation”; Abrams “Star Trek”).

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ST as Metaphor for Real Life

CONSTANT REFERENCES TO ST influence even non-Trekkies. For example, by the end of the second season of BBT, Penny has become so accustomed to ST allusions that she defends the boys’ naivety by referencing ST:

A cross we all must bear. You know, in difficult moments like this, I often turn to a force greater than myself [...] Star Trek: The Motion Picture [...] in it, we learn that when Spock finds himself drawn off the path of logic by feelings bubbling up from his
human half, he suppresses them using the Vulcan mental discipline of Kolinar. (Cendrowski, “The Alien Parasite Hypothesis”)

Sheldon also comments that he is tired of being reminded that whenever he complains about change, the fortuitous replacement of Leonard Nimoy by Zachary Quinto as a Spock replacement is brought up. Leonard sums this up: “relax, sometimes change is good. Uh, you were worried about Zachary Quinto being the new Spock, but you wound up liking him.” Leonard protests:

Every time the topic of change comes up, you throw Zachary Quinto in my face. I’m upset the mailman has a new haircut, Zachary Quinto. I’m upset that daylight saving time started, Zachary Quinto. I’m upset daylight saving time ended, Zachary Quinto. I’m saying this for the last time, Zachary Quinto was a weird, wonderful, unrepeatable event. So stop using him against me. (Rich, “The Love Spell Potential”)

Sheldon also explains his coping strategies for being around people. “I used to be uncomfortable around people, but then I learned a trick. I pretend everyone I meet is a beloved character from *Star Trek*” (Cendrowski, “The Bon Voyage Reaction”). He also indulges in blackmail and reminds Leonard and his new Indian girlfriend what happened to the alien, played by talented character actor Frank Gorshin, in the *Star Trek* episode “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield?” [...] Captain Kirk activated the self-destruct sequence and threatened to blow up the Enterprise and kill them both unless he gave in. [...] Computer, this is Dr. Sheldon Cooper. Activate self-destruct sequence. Code 1-1-A-2-B. [...] when it counts down [...] unless Leonard signs the new agreement in the next 41 seconds, this computer will send an e-mail to your parents in India saying that you’re in a secret relationship with the whiter-than-marshmallow-fluff Leonard Hofstadter. (Cendrowski, “The Agreement Dissection”; Taylor, “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield”)

Other individuals also refer to *ST* as a metaphor for life. When Leonard shares a bed with Penny, he calls “the middle here the Neutral Zone. [...] *Star Trek*. You know, the Neutral Zone between the Federation and the Romulan Empire. [...] Of course, sometimes the Federation and the Romulans would enter the Neutral Zone to negotiate a temporary truce.” To which Penny replies “sweetie, let me put this in a way you’ll understand. From the waist down, my shields are up” (Rich, “The Love Car Displacement”).

### Mental Identification with Spock

ALL OF THE BOYS are scientists and mentally identify with Spock, the scientist in *The Original Series*. However, the person who identifies with Spock most is Sheldon, as has already been noted in this essay. This is because Newtonian science offered men power because it brought order, rationality, and hence optimism to a universe that had seemed arbitrary and chaotic. Mr. Spock in the *Star Trek* series epitomizes this: he is rationality, and he brings order that often saves the Enterprise. (Haynes 247)

Indeed, Sheldon’s obsession with Spock led to the issuance of a “restraining order from Leonard Nimoy” (Chakos, “The Excelsior Acquisition”). Some more specific examples will be given here.

In a version of twenty questions wherein others have to decide which *ST* character Sheldon is, Raj immediately guesses with his first question “Are you Spock?” Later in the same episode, when playing the game once more, Penny fruitlessly uses up her twenty questions, Sheldon informs her “Fine. I was Spock” (Cendrowski, “The Vegas Renormalization”).

When trying to get Sheldon to drive faster, Penny instructs him, “warp speed ahead, Mr. Spock,” to which Sheldon replies “Mr. Spock did not pilot the Enterprise. He was the science officer” (Cendrowski, “The Adhesive Duck Deficiency”).

A recurring joke is Sheldon’s “Vulcan hearing,” a reference to the superior hearing of the Vulcan species (Cendrowski, “The Electric Can Opener Fluctuation”). Sheldon moves to Bozeman, Montana, where the fictional human starship *Phoenix* had been built and launched, reaching warp speeds for the first time (Frakes, *Star Trek: First Contact*). He gives the Vulcan salute in a farewell video and states “live long and prosper” (Cendrowski, “The Bozeman Reaction”).

At Christmas, Penny gives Sheldon an autographed napkin: “to Sheldon, live long and prosper. Leonard Nimoy. [...] he came into the restaurant. Sorry the napkin’s
dirty. He wiped his mouth with it.” Sheldon exclaims, in all seriousness “I possess the DNA of Leonard Nimoy? […] Do you realize what this means? All I need is a healthy ovum and I can grow my own Leonard Nimoy! (Cendrowski, “The Bath Item Gift Hypothesis”). Sheldon’s admiration for Spock leads him to order a “life-size cardboard Mr. Spock […] I know he wouldn’t care for an outburst of human emotion, but, oh goodie, oh goodie. Commander Spock requesting permission to be unfolded. […] Oh, no! They sent the wrong Spock! Live long and suck it, Zachary Quinto.” His disappointment is due to the fact that to him, “this is a disaster. I distinctly ordered the Leonard Nimoy Mr. Spock cardboard standee. Why would I feel safer with Zachary Quinto at the foot of my bed? […] No, can’t do it. Sorry, Quinto, you’re going back” (Cendrowski, “The Recombination Hypothesis”).

**Acting out Parts**

*Star Trek* uniforms often feature in the series. The earliest example in the series is when for the purposes of a physics bowl, Sheldon has his team wear uniforms based on *Star Trek: The Original Series* uniforms (Cendrowski, “The Bat Jar Conjecture”).

Leonard says to his Indian girlfriend that he owns “just two. Everyday and dress” *ST* uniforms from *The Original Series*. He then asks her “hypothetically, if I had access to a Lieutenant Uhura uniform, would you wear it?” (Cendrowski, “The Prestidigitation Approximation”). She later accommodates him, donning a Uhura uniform that belongs to her brother, somehow enacting one of Leonard’s sexual fantasies as he gleefully remarks (off camera) “You look beautiful, Lieutenant Uhura. Now prepare for inspection […] Open the landing bay doors, shuttle craft approaching” (Cendrowski, “The Roommate Transmogrification”).

When the boys return from an expedition to the North Pole, Sheldon sports a goatee, a reference to Spock in an alternate universe (Cendrowski, “The Electric Can Opener Fluctuation”; Daniels, “Mirror, mirror”). The willing suspension of disbelief is taken even further when the boys purchase a time machine prop from the movie *The Time Machine* (Pal), and they decide that it would be fantastic to pretend to travel to “the future and obtain a cloaking device. […] Captain Kirk will steal a cloaking device from the Romulans on Stardate 5027.3, which will be January 10th 2328 by pre-Federation reckoning” (Cendrowski, “The Nerdvana Annihilation,” Lucas, “The Enterprise Incident”).

Sheldon and Penny act out a fan fiction story that he had written as a child wherein he is taken to the 23rd century, with Penny playing Spock. Sheldon explains that it “took the liberty of adapting a *Star Trek* fan fiction novella I wrote when I was ten into a one-act play […] “Where No Sheldon Has Gone Before.” It’s the story of a young boy who is transported from the ignorant backwoods of East Texas to the 23rd Century, where his genius is not only appreciated, but celebrated. […] in this pivotal scene, Sheldon’s mother, played by you, argues with an emissary of the United Federation of Planets, Mr. Spock, the role I will bring to life” (Cendrowski, “The Thespian Catalyst”).

Sheldon dresses up as Spock, complete with ears and makeup and a tricorder prop at a medieval fair, and quotes Spock: “Captain, I’m getting an unusual reading” (Cendrowski, “The Codpiece Topology”). We also learn that Sheldon has a long history of wearing “a *Star Trek* ensign’s uniform,” even as a child, unwisely, during a “Texas State Fair” where he was “trotted out and shown off like a prize hog” (Cendrowski, “The Benefactor Factor”).

Sheldon and Amy are witnessed “playing doctor. *Star Trek* style” with Amy dressed in a Sciences division blue *Original Series* women’s uniform, and a medical tricorder prop (Cendrowski, “The Launch Acceleration”).

And finally, all of the boys dress up for a photoshoot while driving to the Bakersfield, California Comic-Con, and stop at “Vasquez Rocks […] they shot a lot of *Star Trek* episodes out there.” Sheldon dressed as Data, Raj as Worf, Howard as a Borg and Leonard as Captain Picard. “We’re Starfleet officers and a member of the Borg Collective.” They “begin with a classic *Star Trek* fight scene […] some sexy glamour shots.” In the excitement, their car is stolen from under their noses (Cendrowski, “The Bakersfield Expedition”).

**Discussion**

ROMAN NOTES THAT “[t]elevision programs and characters have a unique ability to become an intimate part of a household and family” (130). This is more so with series such as *BBT*, which “can capture an audience’s involvement in a way equalled by few contemporary media” (Creeber 4). Bednarek notes that in TV series, over the years “viewers build up a particularly close and intimate relationship with characters […] perhaps knowing more about them than they do about many
people in the ‘real’ world” (Bednarek 201). This also holds true for our BBT scientists and ST since Sheldon et al. know far more about the characters in ST and other realms of fiction and fantasy than they do about real life.

BBT portrays the boys as scientists who identify closely with ST, and ST is used to highlight the extreme level of nerdism that they have attained. All four boys are “constructed both through explicit and implicit cues in [their] own and others’ dialogue, drawing on shared stereotypes of ‘nerdiness’” (Bednarek 199). More specifically, “Sheldon’s repertoire provides insight into how and when linguistic deviance constructs nerdiness in contrast to other social identities” (Bednarek 199), and this is highlighted by constant references to ST.

Bednarek has pointed out that “[…] nerds are also frequently shown as young […] and they can be linked to obsessive-compulsive or Asperger-like behaviour” (204), traits amply displayed by Sheldon. These include difficulty with empathising and interacting with other individuals, struggling to understanding humour and sarcasm, a dislike for any form of change from established routine and an obsession with ritual, including an extreme reluctance to do anything that might modify the status quo of “the Sheldonian calendar” (Cendrowski, “The Cruciferous Vegetable Amplification”). For example, at one point, Sheldon observes “I’m still not comfortable. Of course. There’s too many people here” (Cendrowski, “The Staircase Implementation”).

To a greater or lesser extent, all four identify with Spock, a role model for intelligence, knowledge and logical thinking, all prized traits within the scientific community. However, as already intimated, Sheldon most closely identifies with Spock as he himself perceives his mental characteristics as overlapping with those of the unemotional and logical Vulcan character.

Indeed, when dressing up in a The Next Generation uniform, in the absence of Spock in this part of the series, he chooses to appear as Data, the emotionless android, an individual who, like Sheldon, is “unevenly enculturated, grasping some points of expected social behavior or cultural understandings suitable to a given framework while missing others completely” (Lundeen and Wagner 58). Such behaviour brings him closer to characters such as Seven of Nine in Star Trek: Voyager (Mandala 2011) or Data and Spock in other Star Trek series, characters who appear to damage others’ face unintentionally because of their partial ‘alienness’ and seem willing to learn more about ‘normal’ human conventions.” (Bednarek 221)

And, since BBT is a sitcom, these awkward moments are vital to the show, given that “quirky, inadvertent departures from cultural protocol have a way of breaking down our familiar frames of reference and providing the sort of unexpected dislocations that make for good jokes” (58), creating an exception to the observation that “our society does not find much to laugh about in science” (Weingart et al., 286). Bednarek has also observed that

Western audiences (and media) stereotypically associate geeks and nerds with the following traits: intelligent, studious; an interest in, obsession with, or knowledge of, all things technological or scientific, especially as relating to computers; an interest in sci-fi and fantasy and related activities; socially inept/awkward, ioners/outsiders, reclusive, unsociable, having only online friends, often socially isolated or ridiculed, no conversational skills; unattractive, e.g. in terms of weight (either very skinny or overweight), with glasses, weird clothing; frequently white males […]; physically awkward or unfit, uninterested in sports; sexually inactive/virgins (203).

This paper has shown that our scientists clearly accede to all facets of this stereotype. Moreover, Haynes notes that

[t]hroughout Western culture, the master narrative of the scientist is of an evil and dangerous man. This […] mythology […] arises from fear of the power and change that science entails, leaving many people feeling confused and disempowered. […] the number of recurring stereotypes is small. (243)

While all four scientists are gauche, nerdy and quirky, Sheldon constitutes the classical embodiment of the mad scientist prototype, a particular category defined by Haynes.

European romanticism, provoked in part by reaction against the scientific materialism of the Enlightenment, generated perhaps the most enduring scientist stereotype: that of the inhuman researcher who has sacrificed his or her emotions and human relationships in an obsessive pursuit of scientific materialism. (Haynes 248-9)
This and other “archetypes are the continuing folklore of our time. Like all myths, they appear simple but in fact represent complex ideas and suppressed fears that transcend time, place, and race” (Haynes 253).

Indeed, it is Sheldon who feels most out of place and time, and most embodies the yen for the ST future, identifying with this fictional universe from an early age, fantasising as a child that he would be swept off to a happier tomorrow by Federation agents from the future. In fact, he once vehemently states “if I got on the bridge of the Enterprise, I would never, ever leave” (Cendrowski, “The Transporter Malfunction”). Sheldon also wistfully confesses “what I want is to be departing starship Enterprise in a one-man shuttlecraft headed to the planetoid I rule known as Sheldon Alpha” (“The Maternal Congruence”). He grieves for this future, noting at best I have 60 years left. […] I need to get to here […] the earliest estimate of the singularity, when man will be able to transfer his consciousness into machines and achieve immortality. […] I’m going to miss so much, the unified field theory, cold fusion. […] In order to live long enough to fuse my consciousness with cybernetics, I need to change my diet.

When he is accused of wanting to become “some sort of robot? […] Didn’t you already do that?” he sighs “flattering, but sadly, no” (“The Cruciferous Vegetable Amplification”). This yen for the future is echoed by his friends, to the extent that when Leonard first signs the roommate agreement with Sheldon, he seriously acknowledges a clause which states “section nine, miscellany. […] if either of us ever invents time travel, we agree our first stop will be this meeting today in precisely five seconds.” Both look around and when no one materialises in the room, Sheldon remarks “well that’s disappointing” (“The Staircase Implementation”).

Any suggestions contrary to the philosophies and usages depicted within ST is anathema. When Sheldon is confronted with the question “are you suggesting we live our lives guided by the philosophies found in cheap science fiction?” he exclaims “cheap science fiction?” and resorts to the fictional calming Vulcan ritual of “Kolinar to suppress my anger at that last comment” (“The Alien Parasite Hypothesis”).

This is probably because scientists are fully cognizant of the enhancements that science and technology have made to everyday quality of life, and are aware of the potential advances and benefits that future scientific and technological innovations will bestow upon humanity. The ST future is thus so loved by our characters since it accedes to this vision. “This optimism offers solace in the promise of a brighter and better future” (Grech, “Picard” 22).

Penny constitutes the non-scientist representative in BBT, an overt observer, the audience’s gauge and surrogate judge of the antics that our eccentric scientists indulge in. In extremis, there are occasions when even the easy-going Penny loses her patience with her nerdy friends: “my God, you are grown men, how could you waste your lives with these stupid toys and costumes and comic books and… and now that… that… […] time machine” (“The Nerdvana Annihilation”).

This occasionally leads the boys to begin to come to their senses. Leonard once almost eschews all of his collectibles.

I’m packing up all my collectibles and taking them down to the comic book store to sell. […] no more toys or action figures or props or replicas or costumes or robots or Darth Vader voice changers, I’m getting rid of all of it. […] I think it’s time for me to get rid of this stuff and… you know… move on with my life. (“The Nerdvana Annihilation”)

Sheldon also simulates such intentions. “I think I’ve kind of outgrown Star Trek. You know, stock characters, ludicrous plots, beam me up. What a load of hooey.” And when someone gives him a Vulcan salute, Sheldon retorts “yeah, even that. You look like a dork” (“The Russian Rocket Reaction”). But all this is just pretence and the collectibles are retained and added to.

This is not to say that there is no insight in the show by the scientists with regard to the sometimes overwhelming nerdiness that they display. With great insight, Howard the engineer once notes “okay, make your little jokes, but of the four of us, I’m the only one making any real-world contribution to science and technology” (“The Classified Materials Turbulence”). On another occasion, he points “let me explain the difference between you and me. You watch Star Trek. I live it” (“The Launch Acceleration”).

However, the ultimate statement with regard to their outlook toward life is made by Sheldon:

Leonard, all our lives we have dreamed of finding ourselves inside one of the fantasy worlds we love.
And look at us. At this moment, we are, in fact, a Star Trek landing party stranded in an alien and unforgiving environment, relying only on our wits, our fortitude and our moxie. As long as we have those things, nothing can stop [us]. (Cendrowski, “The Bakersfield Expedition”)

It must also be noted that Penny, the non-scientific public’s champion, also gains knowledge through her engagement with scientists, an osmotic process that promises the public the chance of also acquiring scientific knowledge. Indeed, the scientists are occasionally completely overwhelmed to the point of incredulity by her lack of even the most rudimentary and fundamental scientific knowledge, with an occasional overreaction that constitutes harsh berating.

This is a typical example of Lorenzo-Dus’s “double articulation,” an interaction not only between the actors, but also between the actors and viewers (161). Penny is so changed that she finds herself unable to meaningfully engage with boyfriends of her previous ilk, mindless and uneducated hulks, a metamorphosis that she does not totally appreciate.

Damn you, you rat bastard. […] Zack was a perfectly nice guy, and then you ruined him! […] in the olden days, I never would’ve known he was so stupid. […] You have destroyed my ability to tolerate idiots. (Chakos, “The Lunar Excitation”)

Indeed, she even returns to college. She confesses to her educational inferiority with a degree of reticence and clear embarrassment that she had been thinking about going back to school for a while now. So a couple months ago, I started taking a history class at the community college. […] I don’t want […] to make a big deal out of it. […] Look, I didn’t finish college, so I thought I would give it a try. […] I’m not embarrassed. (Cendrowski, “The Extract Obliteration”)

In conclusion, this paper has clearly shown that ST is heavily utilised by four scientists in BBT in everyday life to provide textual and visual cues about character and stereotype. It also shows that nerdy scientists can engage with the general public as represented not only by the viewers, but also by characters within BBT. Moreover, information flows bidirectionally, from scientists to non-scientists and vice-versa, with Penny and the audience educated not only about SF and ST but also about science.

**Big Bang Theory Episodes Cited**


Star Trek Films and Episodes Cited


Secondary Texts


Italian Science Fiction 101

Giulia Iannuzzi

A HISTORY OF ITALIAN SCIENCE FICTION cannot be written without taking into account the problem of its critical visibility. In fact - even nowadays - the very existence of Italian sf is routinely called into question: English readers and scholars have at their disposal a very limited number of translated texts, and since sf is regularly excluded from university courses in Italian literature, Italians themselves are often poorly acquainted with Italian sf, meaning that in Italy the genre is usually associated with Anglo-American authors. The high proportion of translations from English in the specialized market is both a reason for, and consequence of, this widespread misconception.

Why this situation transpired is, of course, due to a complex set of circumstances, more far-reaching than the problem of sf and its fortunes per se, which involve the wider cultural, social and economic spheres, from the difficult relationship between the humanities and sciences which have characterized Italian culture in the contemporary age, to the influence of American popular culture after WWII.

The aim of this 101 is to reconnoitre the history of science fiction (sf henceforth) in Italy, focusing on literature and the publishing market and devoting special attention to sf written by Italian authors. The decision to focus on literature and the publishing market is connected, on the one hand, to my own field of study and specialization, and on the other, to the wish to set a reasonable limit to this essay in terms of space and range of topics. The bibliography contains a selection of further readings regarding the many aspects which it was impossible to deal with in the text.

A Few References to the Roots of SF in Early Italian Literature

A TRUE HISTORY OF SF IN ITALY should go right back to the beginnings of the literature written in Italian, and mention the theological allegory and the ultra-terrestrial journey of Dante's *La divina commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*, 1304-1320 in manuscript), or the fantasy-related features of Marco Polo's description of his journeys in the Far East contained in *Il Milione* (*One Million Stories*, 1298). It might include Astolfo's voyage to the moon on a hippogriff in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (*The Frenzy of Orlando*, 1506), and the utopian constructions in Tommaso Campanella's philosophical work *La città del sole* (*City of the Sun*, originally written in Italian in 1602, but first published in Latin in 1623).

In the fantastic or allegoric journeys and landscapes of these works, there are certainly some of the elements that we would include in a complete history of the genre, and in fact they usually are mentioned in the more exhaustive histories of sf (e.g. *The Routledge Companion* 2009, Roberts 2006).

The eighteenth century, as Pagetti put it, was “the Age of Reason, but also of a keen interest in exotic worlds [in which] Italian culture enthusiastically hailed the satirical-fantastical mood of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Voltaire's *Candide*” (Pagetti 1993). The century saw the publication of Zaccaria Seriman's *Viaggi di Enrico Wanton alle terre incognite australi ed ai regni delle scimmie e dei cinocefali* (*Enrico Wanton's Travels to the Unknown Lands of the Southern Hemisphere and to the Kingdoms of the Monkeys and of the Dog-Headed People*, 1764), which appeared just before another interesting example of the Italian fantastic voyage, this time more taken with science and alien technology: Giacomo Casanova's novel *Icosameron* (1788, drafted in Italian but first published in French). Casanova's two young protagonists discover an underground world inhabited by the Megamicri; this gigantic work (the first edition was published in 5 volumes) is full of descriptions and explanations of physical principles, of the rules of the Megamicri's government and social organization, of their biology and customs, and of their fantastic inventions;
including locomotion without the use of draught animals. 3

Förerunners and Pioneers: The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Science and Technology did not play that central role in Italian nineteenth century life that made possible the creation of works such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein in England. However, one of the great names of Italian literature, namely Giacomo Leopardi, introduced some scientific and futuristic elements into his Operette morali (literally Small Moral Works, 1827): the Proposta di premi fatta dall’ accademia dei sillografi (Proposal for Prizes Put Forward by the Sillos Writers’ Academy), for example, comes up with the bitingly satirical idea of replacing defective human beings with automata, both for work and in sentimental and intellectual pursuits (cf. Cremaschi 1978).

The second half of the century was dominated by the question of Italian unification (which came about in 1861) and the process of building the nation-state, and focus remained on an accepted and taught literary canon with a preference for patriotic narratives, rather remote from SF. Nevertheless, there was one original philosophical and technical projection into the future attempted by Ippolito Nievo, with his Storia filosofica dei secoli futuri fin all’anno E. V. 2222 ovvero fino alla vigilia incirca della fine del mondo (Philosophical History of Future Centuries until the year 2222, or, until about the End of the World, 1860). In this work of fiction – a “fantastic essay”, not a novel – Nievo, who will become famous for the patriotic novel Le confessioni di un italiano (Confessions of an Italian, 1867), describes the future social, political and technological future of humanity, from 1860 to 2222. Among other things, Nievo’s Storia filosofica predicted two world wars, a farmers’ revolution, and the invention and production of artificial homunculi.

The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries saw many Italians travelling in imaginary countries as well as through outer space, both in popular fiction and in publications for the young. In 1887 Dalla Terra alle stelle was published. Viaggio meraviglioso di due italiani ed un francese (From the Earth to the Stars. Wonderful Voyage of two Italians and a Frenchman) by Ulisse Grifoni, who also published serialized SF novels in La Domenica del Corriere, the Sunday supplement of one of the main Italian national dailies, Il Corriere della Sera.

Paolo Mantegazza, a neurologist, physiologist, and anthropologist, and the author of numerous texts designed to popularize science, wrote L’Anno 3000: Sogno (1897, cf. Clute 2014). L’Anno 3000 is a futuristic, utopian novel, set in a world harmoniously governed by the United Planetary States, full of extraordinary inventions. Emilio Salgari, too, the renowned author of the adventures of Sandokan the pirate, published several futuristic tales, such as La meraviglie del duemila (The Marvels of the Year 2000, 1907), Duemila leghe sotto l’America (2,000 Leagues Under America, 1888), Alla conquista della Luna (The Conquest of the Moon, 1893), and Il re dell’aria (The King of the Air, 1907).

Futuristic and adventurous elements were also a staple feature of Enrico Novelli’s fiction. Novelli, (who published under the pseudonym Yambo), was a journalist and illustrator, and author of a succession of novels for young people which enjoyed great success in his day (as shown by the number of editions and reprints over the years). His main characters explored underwater worlds (such as Atlantide - Atlantis, 1901), travelled to remote, imaginary countries (Capitan Fanfara. Il giro del mondo in automobile - Captain Trumpet: Around the World by Car, 1904), and even ventured to the rest of the Solar System (Gli esploratori dell’infinito - Explorers of the Infinite, 1906; Il Re dei Mondi - King of the Worlds, 1910), some to colonize the Moon (La colonia lunare - The Lunar Colony, 1908). More prosaically, his heroes were also quite happy to re-conquer for Italy the territories on Dalmatia’s Adriatic coast which had been lost to the Austrian Empire in 1815 (La rivincita di Lissa – The Re-taking of Lissa, 1909).

There was also quite a large popular production of “proto-sf” between the two centuries, which appeared in weekly and monthly literary magazines (Aeronavi dei Savoia 2001, Foni 2007). The Futurists’ love of machines, technological progress, and new means of transport in their narratives might justify including them in a history of the genre: something that, as Adam Roberts argued, “provides an uncomfortable context for the pulp, populist idiom that also valorised the technological – uncomfortable because Futurism was at heart a life-denying and fascistic movement” (Roberts 2006: 157).

Other examples of Italian fantastic narratives between the 1920s and the 1940s – be they gothic, surrealistic or metaphysical (e.g. the dark atmosphere of the Milanese “scapigliati” or the novels and short stories of Massimo
Bontempelli and Dino Buzzati) – were quite far removed from sf as a genre.

The Birth and Development of SF as a Genre: The 1950s and 1960s

DESPITE THE PRESENCE of the above-mentioned precursors, sf in Italy after WWII was perceived as essentially a foreign (Anglo-American) matter.

In terms of industrial development, Italy was a late starter compared to England and America, and it was not until the “economic miracle” of the 1950s that the majority of people were first able to afford a comic book, a weekly magazine or a cinema ticket. Moreover, WWII took its toll on the publishing industry, with a hiatus in the 1940s; later, during the 1950s, sf translations were just another symptom of a wider-ranging cultural domination by the US (connected to America’s position as an economic super-power and the Cold War, which ensued after the conflict). In fact, American dominance in the world of sf publication was common, to varying extents, in many other European countries during the same years.

In Italy, however, there were also specific cultural circumstances which worked against the success of sf. Italian literary criticism in the early twentieth century was dominated by Benedetto Croce’s philosophy of Idealismo (“Idealism”), which tended to penalize narrative in general, saw popular genres as inferior forms of literature and undervalued the hard sciences and technology as second-class forms of knowledge. At the other end of the scale, Marxist criticism was openly suspicious of a narrative form perceived to be a consequence of American cultural colonization, not produced from within the working classes, but for them in a top-down process ultimately aimed at entertainment: in other words, an opium of the people.4

The very fact that the Italian word fantascienza was coined as a translation of the English term “science fiction” is emblematic. Giorgio Monicelli, the inventor of the term, had been a self-taught translator from French and English since the 1930s. An avid reader of the American pulp magazines that came from overseas, he created in 1952 the first Italian sf magazine, Urania, for the Mondadori publishing house in Milan, taking as his model Horace L. Gold’s Galaxy. The publisher came up with the idea of launching a series of novels to be sold at newspapers alongside the magazine, to be called I Romanzi di Urania (Urania’s Novels). One year after its first appearance, publication of the magazine ceased, probably because of the greater success of the book series that continued and which, in June 1957 left aside “I Romanzi di” from its title and became simply Urania. Thanks to the combination of inspired choices on the part of the editor and Mondadori’s influence in terms of production and distribution, the international canon of sf and its collective imagery arrived in Italy, and in the early 1950s the series I Romanzi di Urania, published weekly or fortnightly, sold around 25–30,000 copies per issue. The earliest issues featured works by Arthur C. Clarke, Clifford Simak, Lester del Rey, John Wyndham, Jack Williamson, and Robert Heinlein. While a few works were translated from French, only 11 of the first 267 issues included complete novels by Italian authors. With very few exceptions, when the first Italians started contributing to the series, their identity was carefully concealed behind foreign pseudonyms (Luigi Rapuzzi wrote as Louis R. Johannis, Maria Teresa Maglione as Elisabeth Stern, Maria De Barba as Marren Bagels, Ernesto Gastaldi as Julian Berry, and Adriano Baracco as Audie Barr).

In 1957, after an argument with Mondadori, Monicelli also created the concurrent publication I Romanzi del Cosmo for the publisher Ponzoni in Milan, which adopted the same formula as I Romanzi di Urania: one complete novel in each issue, sold cheaply at newspapers. Many Italian authors wrote adventurous sf under pseudonyms for the Romanzi di Cosmo series, and some of them were to become household names in the Italian sf market of the Sixties and later (such as Roberta Rambelli and Ugo Malaguti).

Nevertheless, in the late 1950s, magazines such as Oltre il Cielo (founded in Rome, in 1957, by Armando Silvestri, with Cesare Fallesi and later Gianfranco de Turris as editors for the fiction section) started to feature a few Italian authors with their real names and Italian sf began to take off, first with adventurous short sto-

ries of space colonization (written by authors such as Falassi himself, Renato Pestriniero, Vincenzo Croce, Ivo Prandin, Giovanna Cecchini and others), and later with more varied experimentation by authors from the generation debuting in the early 1960s (such as Sandro Sandrelli). The magazine – with its Gernsbackian formula combining technical articles on spaceflight technologies, sf and columns on futurology, rocket model building and UFOs – would remain in print until 1970, but with increasing difficulties and irregularities in publication from the early 1960s onwards. In these years, events such as the launch of the first Sputnik (October 1957) and the first manned space flight (April 1961) stimulated interest in the new genre and led to the birth of many (often short-lived) publications. One exception worth mentioning is the birth of Galassia, in 1961, published by the small firm La Tribuna, in Piacenza. Galassia brought to Italy the first translations of Anglo-American social sf, especially during Rambelli’s time as editor (1962-1965), and then, during the editorships of Vittorio Curtoni and Gianni Montanari (1970-1978), it would feature translations of New Wave authors (often too sophisticated for the more popular readership of Urania during those years – from John Brunner to Samuel Delany, from Roger Zelazny to Harlan Ellison) and many talented Italian authors and their various experiments, such as Pierfrancesco Prosperi, Mauro Antonio Miglieruolo, Vittorio Catani, Livio Horrakh, and Curtoni and Montanari themselves.

From the early 1960s, a group of authors began to advocate an Italian approach to the genre, characterized by “the need for psychological insight, a ‘human’ perception of the alien and a (somewhat skeptical) moral probing into the triumphs of technology” (Pagetti 1993). The most important of these authors were Lino Aldani, Inisero Cremaschi and Gilda Musa, who, together with others, took part in editing and writing for the magazine Futuro (1963-1964). Futuro featured short stories and novelettes mainly written by Italian authors (using their real names), reviews and a series of interviews with well-known Italian mainstream authors interested in fantastic genres or science - such as Libero Bigiaretti, Giovanni Comisso, Ennio Flaiano, Mario Soldati, and Elio Vittorini. The aim was to propose a more high-brow version of sf, attempting to propound it as worthy of the attention of Italy’s cultural elites. Sadly, due mainly to distribution problems, the magazine ceased publication after only 8 issues.

Also connected to the magazine was the anthology Esperimenti con l’ingnoto (Experiments with the Unknown, 1963). Along with other collections published during the 1960s and the 1970s, this represented the debut of sf in bookshops and the development of a national school, or at least an attempt to foster the visibility of Italian authors, e.g. *I labirinti del terzo pianeta* (The Mazes of the Third Planet) edited by Cremaschi and Musa in 1964, *Universo e dintorni* (Universe and About) edited by Cremaschi in 1978, and *Interplanet*, the series of collections edited by Sandro Sandrelli during the 1960s.

Despite the fact that the specialized market was shrinking in the late 1960s (probably due to the plethora of new publications in the late 1950s and early 1960s), 1967 saw the founding by Malaguti of a small specialized publisher, Libra, which produced a mail-order only magazine called *Nova SF*, notable for the space it devoted to articles and essays and its predilection for short stories, as well as its editorial quality and relatively high price.

**In the Bookshops at Last: The 1970s**

DURING THE 1970s, the specialized market lost many of the publications which had been sold at news-stands (such as the above-mentioned *Oltre il Cielo*, Galassia, and others) but saw the appearance of new collections, now distributed in bookshops. Interest in the sf genre was much stimulated at the close of the Seventies by the success of American blockbusters in the cinema, such as *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The TV serial *Star Trek* arrived in Italy in 1979, but gained popularity only after the first film appeared in Italian cinemas in 1980. The big names in the publishing market at this time were Nord, set up in 1970 in Milan by Gianfranco Viviani, and Fanucci, founded in 1971 in Rome by Renato Fanucci.

Nord mainly published translations from English, and immediately set itself apart with the attention it paid to its presentation: there were introductions and bibliographical and bibliographical notes on the authors, and so on (also thanks to the editorial presence of Renato Valla). During the 1970s, two of Nord’s biggest successes were Heinlein’s *Citizen of the Galaxy* (1957, translated in 1971 as “Cittadino della galassia”), and Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965, translated, with the same title in 1975). There would always be only a limited presence of Italian authors in Nord’s catalogue; the most important ones were Luigi Meneghini, with novels from 1977 into the 1980s and 1990s, Daniela Piegai, Virginio Marafante, Gilda Musa; and Paolo Aresi – one of the few Italian authors of
hard sf. In 2005 Nord became part of the Mauri Spagnol publishing group. The presence of sf in its collections is only marginal, and it is now more concerned with other genres of the fantastic aimed specifically at young readers.

Fanucci’s collections were distinguished by the critical approach adopted by the two main consultants: Gianfranco de Turris and Sebastiano Fusco. Along with the quality of the biographies and bibliographies of the featured authors, de Turris and Fusco had a special interest in the fantastic (sf, but also fantasy and heroic fantasy), not only as worthy of serious critical attention but also to be read as modern myths and interpreted as symbols, drawing on the work of Mircea Eliade and Julius Evola, and on a value system close to the political right of the Italian Social Movement. In the decades to come, Fanucci’s editorial programs would change significantly: nowadays, the publishing house, under the leadership of Sergio Fanucci, son of the founder, mainly publishes other genres aimed especially at young adults. However, in the year 2000, it started a major initiative in sf with the first volume of Philip K. Dick’s complete works in Italian, edited by Carlo Pagetti.

During the 1970s, there was an important presence of Italian authors in the collection Andromeda (1972-1975), published by Dall’Oglio and edited by the writer Inisero Cremaschi. Andromeda inherited the refined approach first established by Futuro, and offered such fare as the personal anthology of the poet and writer Gilda Musa Festa sull’asteroide (Celebration on the Asteroid, 1972) and her novel Giungla domestica (Domestic Jungle, 1975); the novel Sfida al pianeta (Confrontation with the Planet) by Anna Rinonapoli (1973), an author of dystopian and satirical stories that had appeared in Futuro; and La donna immortale (The Immortal Woman) by Gustavo Gasparini (1974).

Among the periodical publications, in its brief existence Robot (1976-1979), edited by Curtoni and published monthly in Milan, proposed quite an innovative formula for the Italian market: the idea was that of a “real” magazine with a selection of high-quality short stories mainly translated from English, but featuring an Italian author in each issue, along with articles and columns on the most varied expressions of sf across different media, inflamed debates about sf and politics, sf and the mainstream, sex in sf and so on.

For Urania, the years between 1961 and 1985 belonged to Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini. Popular writers of crime stories themselves, they succeeded Monicelli as editors of this series (and of the other Mondadori series connected to it). Their editing was characterized by the absence of French and Italian authors: the Italians were relegated to an amateur final column called Il marziano in cattedra (The Martian Professor). While Urania published many important authors – such as J. G. Ballard and Philip K. Dick – New Wave experimentation was essentially excluded (and remained the domain of Galassia). As under Monicelli, translations were often cut, either to meet the page-limit of an issue or for the purposes of censorship (removing sexual and erotic content).

**Cyberpunk and Fantasy: The 1980s and the 1990s**

THE 1980s SAW a declining interest in sf in favor of fantasy, heroic fantasy, and sword and sorcery. Emblematic of this was the success of the publisher Solfanelli’s fantasy series, created in 1981, and the Italian Tolkien Award for fantastic narrative (1979-1992, animated by de Turris). What is most revealing about this new trend is the eager participation in the award (as hopeful prizewinners) of many sf authors, such as Antonio Bellomi, Gustavo Gasparini, Lino Aldani, Renato Pestriniero, and Anna Rinonapoli.

In the meantime, the main sf series published by Fanucci, Mondadori and Nord continued to appear, with one significant difference: at Urania, Gianni Montanari (the previous editor of Galassia) took over from Fruttero and Lucentini in 1985 and radically changed the editorial line. In what were difficult times for sf publications, Montanari’s Urania aimed to win the trust of the most passionate sf readers, with better-quality translations, the inclusion of non-English authors and more sophisticated and experimental works – from Serge Brussolo, to Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, from Octavia Butler to Somtow Sucharitkul. In 1989, Montanari established the Urania Award for Italian authors, the winner of which would be published in the series from 1990 onwards (the first winner was the remarkable Gli universi di Moras - Moras’ Universes by Vittorio Catani, 1990).

In 1989, Giuseppe Lippi took over from Montanari and has been editing Urania since then with his own, eclectic approach. After many changes over the years, the series became a regular monthly publication, and during the 1990s and 2000s Italian authors had a regular showcase in the shape of the annual Urania Award. Among the winners are Nicoletta Vallorani, Massimo Mongai, and Luca Masali, presenting various hybrid versions of
Another writer, Valerio Evangelisti, made his debut by winning the Urania Award, with a first novel about the figure of Eymerich - *Nicolas Eymerich, Inquisitore* (Nicolas Eymerich, Inquisitor, 1994), the protagonist of a remarkably successful cycle (see Rossi 2013).

Malagutti followed up on the activities of his publishing house Libra with a new edition of *Futuro* (1989-2008) and a book collection especially dedicated to European authors. Also worth mentioning of the early 1980s is the magazine *La Collina* (1980-1983), in which Cremaschi tried to promote the idea of Italian neo-fantastic literature. *La Collina* published short stories by Italian authors such as Claudio Ferrari, Virginio Marafante, Renato Besana, Giuseppe Bonura, Gianni Menarini, and Gilda Musa, accompanied by critical essays and profiles.

Not until the late 1980s and then during the 1990s did an Italian version of cyberpunk emerge, with new publications, authors and critics often connected to the underground cultures of left-leaning movements. Among those authors who managed to successfully incorporate cyberpunk elements into their writing were Giovanni De Matteo, Dario Tonani, and Vallorani. Among the publishers particularly involved in cyberpunk, also with translations from English and through the publication of the magazine *Decoder* (1987-1996), was the small company Shake in Milan. The collective that animated Shake publications also promoted the diffusion of the first Bulletin Board Systems in Italy. Some of the most interesting critical essays during this period came from the cyberpunk milieu, from critics such as Daniele Brolli, Antonio Caronia and others.

**Virtual Cafes, New Publishers, and Dissemination:**

The 2000s, Towards Today

FIRST THE BULLETIN BOARD SYSTEMS operating since the 1990s, then the ever-growing use of the Internet and new digital printing technologies in the 2000s have fostered the creation of a number of new initiatives – from small publishing houses offering magazines and book series to a small but passionate readership, to new virtual cafes, forums, and single-authored blogs. Digital media gave writers and publishers a way around what has traditionally been the main obstacle for specialized publications: the system of distribution. Take the example of *Carmilla*: founded as a fanzine by Evangelisti in 1995, it then became a professional magazine devoted to non-realistic genres and ceased publication in 2004 because of distribution problems; its on-line version, on the other hand (<http://www.carmillaonline.com/>), continued and enjoyed remarkable success (220,000 readers per month in 2006!).

Among other important initiatives, the magazine *Delos* was distributed on BBS from 1995 onwards and later migrated onto the web. Edited by Silvio Sosio, it still has a paper edition, sold only by mail-order, and an on-line version hosted by Fantascienza.com. Fantascienza.com has become a significant portal for sf readers, featuring the magazines published by Delos Books editions as well as writers’ personal blogs, a secondhand book exchange, and so on. Another publication, *Hypnos*, founded by Andrea Giusto, began life as a fanzine before becoming a professional magazine and, in 2010, a small publishing house. One publisher’s catalogue that specialized in sf is Edizioni Della Vigna, directed by Luigi Petruzelli since 2007, which has recently begun to publish a few books in English; the activities of Kipple are devoted to enhancing the Italian *connettivismo* movement (inspired by van Vogt’s nexialism and post-cyberpunk aesthetics; on *connettivismo* see Sailer 2011, pp. 29-30).

In the meantime, the annual Urania Award has continued to bring interesting new authors to the attention of Italian readers, adopting an eclectic approach to its choices over the years, with the prize going to a wide range of sf authors: from the sf-crime story writer Nicoletta Vallorani to Luca Masali’s alternative histories, and from Massimo Mongai’s entertaining adventures to *connettivisti* such as Giovanni de Matteo and Francesco Verso.

Under the editorship of Giuseppe Lippi, *Urania* has continued to specialize in publishing translations from English, and is as eclectic as ever in its approach, so as to keep its appeal with its faithful readership. Its sales, however, are now much smaller than in its heyday (the 50,000 plus copies sold in the 1950s-1970s period have shrunk to 5-7,000 copies per issue today); since 2012, an electronic edition has also been available.

While the field of sf published as such seems to have suffered a marked decline in publication numbers, non-genre sf and sf imagery have become ubiquitous in mainstream narrative in the 2000s, in authors central to modern Italian literature (from Tommaso Landolfi to Primo Levi, and from Guido Morselli to Italo Calvino). There is more than one telling example of critically acclaimed and/or best-selling authors who have written works of sf

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5 On the history of Italian uchronia and its connections to political movements and debates see Marra 2014.
published without any specific label, or works incorporating sf elements (such as Stefano Benni – since Terra!, published in 1983- and more recently Tullio Avoledo, Antonio Pennacchi, and Antonio Scurati).

Some Remarks on SF Criticism

THE WRITER LINO ALDANI was also the author of the first monograph on sf to be written in Italian: La fantascienza (Science Fiction, 1962), in which he defined sf as a genre able to “place the reader in a different relationship with reality” thanks to an estranged point of view prefacing, to some extent, Darko Suvin’s idea of cognitive estrangement. The same year also saw the translation into Italian of Kingsley Amis’ New Maps of Hell. Among Italian academic critics, the genre was still largely ignored, with very few exceptions. The refined critic and poet Sergio Solmi wrote an important essay in 1953, analyzing English sf as the “mythology of the atomic era”, and pointing to the conventional nature of many sf themes and tropes adopted, shared and developed by many authors. Worth mentioning during the 1960s is the presence of sf in the work of the philosopher Gillo Dorfles, who approached the genre from the perspective of the sociology of aesthetics, which focused on sf cinema more than literature. Umberto Eco dealt with sf in his famous essay collection Apocalittici e integrati (1964) (partly translated into English as Apocalypse Postponed, 1994), categorically defining the genre as “para-literature”, to be studied as a significant production of our age, but not with the same critical instruments to be used for “high literature”.

The 1970s saw the publication of the first serious and extensive studies by Italian critics: Il senso del futuro: la fantascienza nella letteratura Americana (The Meaning of the Future: Sf in American Literature, 1970) by Carlo Pagetti and Che cos’è la fantascienza (What SF Is, 1970) by Franco Ferrini. At the same time, other scholars of American literature, such as Ruggero Bianchi, explored the genre with a particular interest in utopias and dystopias, and one of the first important conferences on the topic was held in Turin, Italy: Utopia e fantascienza (Utopia and SF), the proceedings of which were published in 1975. Three years later, an even more important conference was held in Palermo which marked the real arrival on the scene for the genre in Italian academic circles: La fantascienza e la critica (SF and Criticism) organized by the scholar Luigi Russo. Among the many interesting contributions published in the proceedings in 1980, most notable was the paper by Darko Suvin (leading up to the 1985 translation of Metamorphoses of Science Fiction) and the ones by Marc Angenot, Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, and Brian Aldiss.

The fresh wave of interest in sf between 1978 and the early 1980s, which emerged with the popularity of certain blockbuster movies, saw the publication of numerous guides, companions and studies, either translated from English or written by Italian editors, but these usually devoted little space to Italian authors, while academics still made few attempts to reflect seriously on the genre.

As examples of two opposing attitudes towards the genre still alive in this period, it is worth mentioning two very different critical contributions: Oreste Del Buono’s introduction to the translation of Suvin’s Metamorphoses and Antonio Fabozzi and Adolfo Fattori’s essay for the history of Italian literature edited by Alberto Asor Rosa. In his 1985 introduction to Suvin’s Metamorphoses, Del Buono, already the editor of popular publications like the comic magazine Linus, radically subverted Suvin’s approach, claiming that however many in-depth studies might be produced, sf remained a sub-genre with an origin in the mass-market, a rough and ready product. Fabozzi and Fattori’s 1989 essay, on the other hand, was the first important writing on Italian sf ever to be included in a history of Italian literature (a multivolume reference work widely adopted on university courses), which took as its starting point the sociology of literature, and would later be updated and appear in a new revised version (Fabozzi Fattori and Fucile 2012).

By the end of the 1980s, the position of sf in the English and American departments of Italian universities was finally well-established, with ongoing studies appearing by scholars such as Pagetti and Oriana Palusci (cf. Pagetti 1981). The journal of sf studies La Città e le Stelle (1982-1987), edited by Pagetti, was in fact the first such journal Italy had ever had, and its main contributors were Italian scholars of English and American literature.

In fact, over the following decades, while the rediscovery by the critics of an Italian fantastic tradition would lead to the publication of numerous anthologies edited by scholars of Italian literature, sf would essentially remain the domain of foreign language departments. In-

6 Along with the critical essay on the fantastic by the expert on comparative literature, Remo Ceserani (Cesarani 1986), anthologies of Italian gothic and the fantastic have regularly appeared, from Racconti neri della scapigliatura (1980), to Fantastico italiano (2009).
indeed, the most important writing about Italian sf during the 2000s came from scholars working outside Italy (such as Pierpalo Antonello, Roberto Bertoni, Florian Mussgnug, Arielle Saiber), or from scholars of American literature (Umberto Rossi; Salvatore Proietti with the editing of the journal Anarres founded in 2012), or from sociologists (Carlo Bordoni, and Adolfo Fattori, who are also editor of, and contributor to, the journal If. Insolito e fantastico - I.F. Uncanny and Fantastic), philosophers (Giuseppe Panella), or independent scholars (Domenico Gallo and Riccardo Gramantieri).

The “well-established split in Italy between scientific language and ‘literary culture’” remarked upon by Pagetti in his “Italy” entry for the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (Pagetti 1993) is even more evident when it comes to Italian authors whom scholars accept as belonging to the canon, such as Italo Calvino or Dino Buzzati: scholars outside Italy often describe their work as partially sf or at least make the connection (Antonello 2005), but in Italian universities the very word Fantascienza (the Italian for science fiction) is to be avoided (Baldi 2014).

The Chronicles of Fandom

ITALIAN SF FANDOM began to develop at the beginning of the 1960s, when a whole range of non-professional publications was first printed and changed hands during conventions and festivals. We should at least mention Futuria Fantasia (Future Fantasy), published in 1963 by Luigi Cozzi (who would go on to direct sf films), Aspidistra by Riccardo Leveghi (1964-1967), Nuovi Orizzonti (New Horizons) by Luigi Naviglio, and Micromega by Franco Fossati and Pierfrancesco Prosperi (1965). The first European SF Convention (EuroCon) was organized in the city of Trieste in 1972, shortly after the first International SF Film Festival was held in the same city (1965). A series of small informal conventions took place in Milan, Turin and Carrara, and in 1967 a Fanzine Award was created, later renamed Premio Numeri Unici (Unique Issues Award). At the Trieste EuroCon, a Premio Italia (Italy Award) was also established, which became annual from 1975 onwards. Annual SF Italian Roundabouts (SFIRs) took place in Ferrara until 1978, and it was an SFIR which hosted the main Italian sf convention – ItalCon – which took place independently from 1981. From 1969 to the early 1970s, the number of fanzines decreased, but a few new ones were founded which are worth mentioning, such as Austral, edited by Gianfilippo Pizzo and Pippo Marcianò in Palermo, and Alternativa (Alternative) (1974-1978), edited near Milan by Giuseppe Caimmi and Piergiorgio Nicolazzini, who would later be on the editorial board of the above mentioned Robot.

Fanzine production in the late 1970s was more diversified. To mention just two examples: The Time Machine, first appearing in Padova in 1975, of which 50 issues were published mainly before 1985, and which presented a good number of Italian authors (such as Musa, Almani, Pestriniero, Massimo Pandolfi, and Gianluigi Zuddas), and Il Re in Giallo (The King in Yellow), appearing in 1976, the mouthpiece of the Trieste group (including Giuseppe Lippi, the future editor of Urania), seven issues of which were published in four years. In the second issue, a section devoted to H. P. Lovecraft presaged the re-discovery of that author on the part of the publishing world, which would take place just a few years later. The attention devoted to the fantastic and the gothic in Il Re in Giallo prefigures the success these genres would go on to enjoy in the specialized market in the 1980s. In 1979, the fanzine Intercom appeared in Palermo; after a series of changes in format, editorial board, and place of publication, Intercom would migrate to the web and become one of sf’s most lively “virtual cafes”.

The 1980s and the 1990s saw the birth and development of specialized fandom communities, each with their own conventions and awards (for Star Trek, Quantum Leap, and Babylon 5), along with the creation of new publications, such as La Spada spezzata (1981-1993), edited by Paolo Pavesi and Silvio Sosio (the latter a future editor with the previously mentioned publishing house Delos), and THX 1188, edited by Scacco, Ragone and Catani. The Star Trek Italian Club deserves a special mention: it was established in 1982 by Alberto Lisiero: after the particularly poor Italian dubbing of The Original Series, the Club complained and was entrusted with supervising the dubbing of all subsequent series.

Following on from the Bulletin Board System, it is now the Internet which offers Italian fandom new spaces for discussion, critical appropriation, and creative writing. There are a whole host of initiatives, from the personal weblogs of readers interested in the genre, and those of sf fans and writers (such as Riccardo Barbieri’s blog, Carlo Bordoni with Micromegas, Gian Filippo Pizzo with Fantascrittura), to very high-quality e-zines (such as Roberto Forlani’s Continuum, 2000-2011, and Sandro Pergameno’s Cronache di un sole lontano, 2013-running). Let us not forget the websites dedicated to collections, archives, and to libraries (SF Quadrant, Mondourania, Uraniamania, and Urania & Co.). In conclusion, to my
knowledge, the only equivalent in the whole world to the on-line catalogue of sf, the fantastic and horror in Italy, edited by Ernesto Vegetti (and unfortunately, since his passing, not updated since 2012) is the English-language Internet Speculative Fiction Database.

Note: With non-Italian readers in mind, the bibliography is organized into two parts: essential references (a selection of the Italian works cited and selected secondary sources, where I have tried to include a substantial number of contributions in English language); and a selection of primary sources translated into English. For a complete bibliography of sf published in Italy I would suggest: Catalogo SF, Fantasy e Horror, edited by Ernesto Vegetti, Pino Cottogni, and Ermes Bertoni, <http://www.catalogovegetti.com/catalogo> (covering: 1602-January 2010) and the OPAC SBN, On-line Public Access Catalogue, Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale (Italian Public Libraries) <http://www.sbn.it>.

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A Selection of Early and Contemporary Italian SF Novels and Short Stories in English Translation

Original titles and years of publication are indicated where available before the English title.


Science Fiction Drama in the Age of Scientific Romance 101
Mariano Martín Rodríguez

AS IT IS (OR SHOULD BE) widely known, at least among scholars, the period between the 1870s and the 1940s is arguably the Golden Age of European science fiction, or of scientific romance, as it was often designated back then in English (Stableford). In this period, scientific romances were widely published and read all over Europe and the world.¹ Science fiction was almost universally considered a respectable literary, and soon cinematic,² genre in that period,³ being cultivated by some of the most acclaimed representatives of literary Modernism, such as Ferdinand Bordewijk, Karin Boye, Mikhail Bulgakov, Karel Čapek, Alfred Döblin, Aldous

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¹ Scientific romances of the European kind also existed on other continents, and even in Anglophone America, as the speculative novels of Frederick Grove, Ward Moore, George R. Stewart or Philip Wylie show. Among the science fiction plays written in non-Western countries, Egyptian Tawfiq Al-Hakim’s Rihla ila al-ghad [Voyage to Tomorrow] (1957) can be mentioned. In Europe, there are well-written scientific romances in almost every literary language, such as Serbian, in which Dragutin Ilić’s Posle milijon goinda [A Million Years After] (1889) is one of the earliest fully modern science fiction plays (Dergović-Joksimović, 2000: 6-7). In addition, although the arrival of American genre science fiction as from the 1950s virtually replaced its European counterpart as a living cultural phenomenon after World War II in the Western part of the continent, while at the same time dogmatic socialist realism all but killed serious speculative literature on the other side of the Iron Curtain, some scientific romances were still published in the second half of the 20th century. Among them, some plays in this mode could also be mentioned, such as Elias Canetti’s Die Befristeten [The Numbered] (1956), William Golding’s retro-futurist The Brass Butterfly (1958), and Marcel Aymé’s La Convention Belzébîr [Belzébîr’s Convention] (1966). Furthermore, it could be argued that the European New Wave in science fiction had inherited both its intellectual concerns and its taste for formal experimentation from scientific romance rather than from genre science fiction. This fact can be ascertained by looking at some science fiction plays written in the mode of the New Wave mainly by non-genre authors, such as Augusto Abelaíra’s O Nariz de Cleópatra [Cleopatra’s Nose] (1961), Augusto Frassineti and Giorgio Manganelli’s Teo o l’acceleratore della storia [Teo, or the History Accelerator] (1966), Friedrich Dürenmann’s Porträt eines Planeten [Portrait of a Planet] (1967), Josep M. Benet

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² Some of the first science fiction film classics from Europe were, indeed, based on earlier scientific romances, such as Holger-Madsen’s Himmelskibet [A Trip to Mars; literal translation: “The Air Ship”] (1918), based on a novel by Sophus Michaelis with the same title eventually published in 1921; Yakov Protazanov’s Aelita (1924), based on the classic scientific romance by Aleksey Tolstoy published one year earlier; Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1927), the screenplay of which was written by Thea von Harbou, who turned it into a novel in the same year, and William Cameron Menzies’ Things to Come (1936), adapted by H. G. Wells from his future history The Shape of Things to Come (1933). There were also some science fiction screenplays by famous writers which were not filmed, but published. A telling example of this particular kind of cinematic play in scientific romance (often being quite reluctant to embrace technological change) is Romain Rolland’s La Révolte des machines [The Revolt of the Machines] (1921). A further significant screenplay of this kind is Marcel Pagnol’s Le Premier Amour [The First Love] (1946), which is a rare work of prehistoric fiction in dramatic form.

³ The following statement by Bozzeto relates to France, but it can be extended to most European literatures: “Literature of imagination, which was written by recognized writers, was accepted as part of the literary field. [...] The opposition between legitimate and non-legitimate literature had nothing to do to its belonging to a particular genre. [...] What will later be called science fiction enjoyed, therefore, no special status” (Écrit par des écrivains reconnus, la littérature de fantastique est admise comme composante du domaine littéraire. [...] L’opposition entre littérature légitimée et non-légitimée ne passe pas par l’appartenance de l’œuvre à un genre. [...] Ce qui sera dénommé plus tard science-fiction ne bénéficie donc d’aucun statut particulier; 186).
Huxley, Frigyes Karinthy, André Maurois, George Orwell, Pedro Salinas, Antoni Słonimski, Franz Werfel, and Yevgeny Zamyatin, to name but a few. They wrote significant scientific romances in narrative form using the science fiction tropes that had been clearly established at least since H. G. Wells, including the centrality in the work of a novum of a technical and/or scientific nature, the consequences of which were rationally and consistently developed in the course of the action in order to present a speculative view of society and humankind through the perspective of an estranged time and/or place. Narrative prose was not, however, the only vehicle for this kind of rational fictional speculation, since poems⁴ and plays were also written in this mode. Among the above-mentioned authors, Bulgakov and Čapek did indeed write some science fiction plays. The most famous of them is perhaps Karel Čapek’s R.U.R. (1920), whose merits go well-beyond the fact of having introduced the word “robot” into English and into many more languages. This play is also a successful example of science fiction that has found its way onto the international stage, a fate all too rarely met by other science fiction playwrights, past or present, perhaps due to “a widely held assumption that the theatre, with its physical limitations, cannot plausibly present the fantastic vistas which sf writers envision” (Willingham Theatre 1216).

Contrary to film, it might have seemed quite difficult, indeed, to resort then to visual effects on the stage which could enhance the plausibility of the estranged possible world for an audience mostly used to realistic means of representation, especially if the action was set in the future. According to Klaić, “setting the dramatic action in the future requires such an extensive reliance on imagination that the intelligibility and plausibility of the vision could be undermined.” (45) The reason for this could be that

the fantasy of the future acquires a certain degree of

specification and fluidity on the stage; the world of the future is to be revealed as functioning world in the performance. As abstract as the rendering on stage might be in the text of any play of the postrealist dramaturgy, it still possesses a higher degree of concreteness, an inherent mimetic quality (even if a very fantastic and elusive one), compared to the convenient ambiguity affordable in narrative fiction. This pressure to give specific explanations and descriptions might well influence the authors to avoid the future as the time frame in drama. (46)

Indeed, “there are a very few plays, both older and contemporary, that do have their entire action, or at least most of it, explicitly placed in the future.” (45) This contention is, perhaps, exaggerated. Among the science fiction plays listed by Willingham (Science Fiction 149-192), many are actually set in the far future, including the series of George Bernard Shaw’s short Farfetched Fables (1950). Nevertheless, the difficulty of making plausible far future action that has “concreteness” on the stage remains. A solution to this alleged limitation was writing science fiction dramas for the reading cabinet. George Bernard Shaw’s Back to Methuselah (1921) is a good example of this, even if the reputation of this playwright prompted an early staging, in 1922, of this huge play by the New York Theatre Guild. Other plays of similar scope and length, such as Ricardo Baroja’s El pedigree [The Pedigree] (1924/1926), have never had the same luck, although none other than Luis Pirandello had intended to stage that Spanish science fiction satire on eugenics in Italy.

⁴ Some of them were written by prestigious poets, such as the early speculative xenofiction La Révolte des fleurs [The Revolt of Flowers] (1874), by the first Nobel Prize laureate in literature Sully Prudhomme; Gli emigranti nella luna [Emigrants on the Moon] (1905/1909), by the classic Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli, or the prehistoric-themed epic The Great Feud (1926), by leading Canadian modernist poet E. J. Pratt. There were also speculative epic dramatic poems set in the future, such as Paul Claudel’s La Ville [City] (1893/1901).
Another way to overcome contemporary theatrical constraints was to apply a commercially proven dramatistic technique to a science fiction plot novum. As Klaić has argued,

[t]he boulevard theater, which in France always operates with sexual allusions, innuendo, and risqué situations, easily accommodates the predictive perspective, but subjects its action to its own popular devices and stylistic marks. A triumph of sexuality revived and rehabilitated confirms the status quo, proving once again that some things are eternal, as the conventional wisdom of this realm of theater requires. (140)

He gives as an example Carlos Larronde's Le Sixième Continent [The Sixth Continent] (1932), which “flirts with the tricks of the boulevard theatre in sketching out his futuristic vision” (139). This contention would more aptly be applied to a lighter comedy such as Pierre de La Batut's La Ville sans amour [The City without Love] (1929), in which a chemist invents a vaccine against love, which is administered to a city's population with negative consequences for a number of industries, until an artist who has fallen in love with the chemist's daughter discovers an antidote. Larronde’s play tends, however, to combine a traditional love interest with a certain dystopian bend, since love is a revolutionary force against a highly regulated and repressive society. These French plays had little success on the stage, and they are all but forgotten. Their theatrical skills were not perhaps up to the task of successfully blending science fiction chronotopes with other ingredients of supposedly easier consumption. Burlesque humour was one such ingredient, as in Enrique Jardiel Poncela’s classic play on temporal paradoxes caused by a scientific invention able to stop and reverse human ageing, entitled Cuatro corazones con freno y marcha atrás [Four Hearts with Brakes and Reverse Gears] (1936). Romance was, above all, another, whether social romance, as in the popular London hit A Message from Mars (performed in 1899 and published in a revised version in 1923) by Richard Ganthonly, or love romance, as in Maxwell Anderson’s time travel drama The Star-Wagon, which ran in Broadway for more than two hundred performances since its premiere in 1937. In these cases, the playwrights’ skills could have helped to make science fiction acceptable on the commercial stage, but this was not always enough: not even a consistently successful playwright such as Noel Coward could prevent the failure of his alternate history play Peace in Our Time in becoming a popular hit when it was staged in 1947. Was its treatment of the dangerous topic of a Nazi-invaded England perhaps too serious? On the other hand, did the science fiction components of the plays have to be watered down for them to be appreciated on the stage? This was one of the conundrums for a science fiction playwright back then, and perhaps also today.

Between the Scylla of having to write plays for the reading cabinet and the Charybdis of the superficiality of a conventional commercial theatre, it comes as a small wonder to see that there still were quite a few playwrights who tried to steer a middle course by trying to adapt their plays as much as possible to contemporary theatrical practice without renouncing a deep exploration of the societal and philosophical impact of their chosen science-fictional novum. Thus, they sometimes proposed works that were both intellectually significant and viable on the stage. This exploit was almost complete in Karel Čapek’s main science fiction plays R.U.R. and Bílá nemoc [The White Disease] (1937), and other playwrights also succeeded in presenting demanding speculative dramas on the stage. A further significant example is Robert Nichols and Maurice Browné’s Wings over Europe (1928). This is a highly political drama in which a young scientist used his mastering of the atomic forces to convince a reluctant British government to broker universal peace or else suffer his explosive retaliation. It was relatively well received both by critics and by audiences in New York City and London (Kabatchnik 233). However, it is too little remembered today, although its value as a leading science fiction play in the framework of high modernist English-speaking drama for the stage has occasionally been recognized. According to Carpenter,

as a dramatized hypothesis (however extravagant) of political and ethical problems that might arise at the onset of the nuclear age, the play not only adopts Shaw's use of drama […]; it also incorporates a notable degree of his thoughtfulness and earnest concern. At the same time, it remains a dazzling and diverting theatrical exhibition, as charming as it is fascinating for its semi-absurd fantasy. (560)

Unfortunately, its success in that framework remains exceptional. Furthermore, it has not endured, and has not even been republished in the last few decades, in spite of perhaps having influenced later writers. For instance, Vladimir Nabokov’s play Izobretenie Val’sa [The Waltz Invention] (1938) also presents the conflict between a
morally faulty scientist and the government with a plot quite similar to the one developed in *Wings over Europe*, albeit with a more sarcastic tone than in Nichols and Browne’s work.

In the long term, science fiction drama for the commercial stage has not fared well. If their oblivion among publishers can be explained by the absence of most of these plays from current theatres, their being neglected by scholars might be due to a traditional academic bias against any form of art intended for a larger public. In contrast, much attention has been paid to minority Avant-Garde literature. This has been somewhat positive for the critical reception of science fiction drama in this mode, at least for the plays written by renowned representatives of artistically revolutionary Modernist literature. In fact, quite a few science fiction plays by these authors have even been translated into English. This kind of drama was, however, still marginal in its historical context. If for science fiction playwrights, the Avant-Garde world-view could seem to be potentially more tolerant of the kind of alternative prospects on society and history that speculative drama often explored, their choice of this mode could have serious setbacks as well. Given the limited potential for Avant-Garde theatre to gain a contemporary mainstream recognition among wider audiences, those minority experiments in bringing to the stage the topics, content, and literary techniques of scientific romance could undermine the possibility of their taking part in the intellectual debates of the age, as opposed to the purely artistic ones which were the staple of the Avant-Garde circles – at least in the context of capitalist Europe and America. There are some exceptions to Western European Avant-Garde science fiction plays failing to become relatively popular, such as George Kaiser’s expressionist drama in two parts, *Gas* (1918 and 1920). It seems, however, that only the special circumstances of the Soviet Union sometimes allowed for the normal staging of dramatic experiments, such as the science fiction plays set in the future by Russian Futurist Vladimir Mayakovsky, entitled *Klop* [*The Bedbug*] (1929) and *Banya* [*The Bathhouse*] (1930). On the other hand, the science fiction plays by another Futurist, the Italian Ruggero Vasari, such as *L'angoscia delle macchine* [*The Anguish of the Machines*] (1923) and *Raun* (1927; untranslated into English), were only produced, if at all, by companies interested in experimental theatre for limited audiences. A similar fate fell to the prospective dystopian plays by another important Avant-Garde playwright, Polish Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, including his longest one, *Szewcy* [*The Shoemakers*] (1931-1934). Soviet science fiction theatre was, indeed, more open to experiments, including speculative ones, if we consider the above-mentioned works by Mayakovsky and other important science fiction plays such as Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy’s *Bunt maschin* [*The Revolt of the Machines*] (1924; it is a free adaptation of Čapek’s *R.U.R.*) and Mikhail Bulgakov’s comedy *Bagrov ostrov* [*The Purple Island*] (1928), as well as the staging in 1922 of an earlier symbolist drama set in a far future frame, Valery Bryusov’s *Zemlya* [*The Earth*] (1905). Stalinism soon put an end to this artistic experimentation, though: another masterful science fiction play by Bulgakov, *Adam i Eva* [*Adam and Eve*], was written in 1931, but it was neither published nor staged until a few decades later, and the same happened to his time travel comedy *Blazhenstvo* [*Bliss*], which he had finished in 1934.

In a different context, a significant dystopian play of the interwar period, Elias Canetti’s *Komödie der Eitelkeit* [*Comedy of Vanity*], had been written in 1933-1934, but its author did not publish it until 1964, probably due to the fact that he was well aware that right-wing totalitarianism in Germany was little more open to science fiction drama than Stalinism was proving to be. Benito Mussolini’s dictatorship seemed, however, to be rather indifferent to the dangers entailed by satiric science fiction drama if we were to judge after the successful production in 1932 of Gino Rocca’s *Il mondo senza gamberi* [*The World without Shrimp*], where a scientist creates a chemical that allows for the easy killing from a distance and without trace of any person or group who holds a grudge against someone, including whole armies. The societal consequences of such a novum are finely described using a dramatic technique that takes due account of both the constraints of contemporary commercial theatre and the Modernist wish to innovate. Rocca’s play is now largely ignored, as it has happened with *Wings over Europe* and other technically and thematically innovative science fiction dramas produced at the time, such as Felipe Ximénez de Sandoval and Pedro Sánchez de Neyra’s tragicomic *Orestes I* (1930), which portrays the invention and dire consequences for the economy of a potion which inhibits the urge to steal until a would-be dictator saves the day. Even if their number might be small when compared to the staggering number of plays produced, as well as narrative scientific romances published during the golden age of this genre, they experiment with dramatic form according to their commitment to High Modernism in the framework of actual
theatrical practice. The virtual oblivion of this kind of play has thus deprived both science fiction and the history of theatre a series of works that might also deserve closer attention as examples of a serious stance regarding the issues of their time, or perhaps of any time.

Works Cited


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Nonfiction Reviews

The Science Fiction Handbook

Cait Coker


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HUBBLE AND MOUSOUTZANIS’S The Science Fiction Handbook is the sort of volume that will prove a godsend to scholars with a minimum of SF experience who have SF courses foisted upon them. The book assumes the reader has little to no background on the topic, and in less than three hundred pages seeks to provide a crash-course on the history, canon, and theory of an entire genre of literature—and largely succeeds in doing so. The eleven essays contained in the Handbook provide readable and economical overviews of major authors, primary and secondary key texts, hot topic issues, and a baseline curriculum of books and films for use in the classroom. In short, it is genuinely the handbook it is billed as, and arguably belongs on the shelf of everyone who teaches SF or knows someone who does.

The book is organized so that it can be read straight through as a continuous narrative of the genre as an academic discipline, or one can reach directly into the individual, topical essays, each of which has its own table of contents for ease of reference. Some chapters, such as those on “Major Science Fiction Authors” and “Key Critical Concepts, Topics, and Critics,” are alphabetized entries with useful synopses, meant to provide hard and fast reference information. Others, like Mousoutzanis’s “The Science Fiction Film,” are single essays that provide a topical introduction, overview, basic criticism, and a selection of texts with discussions of their various readings—in this case, of Metropolis, The Day the Earth Stood Still, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Alien, Blade Runner, and The Matrix. Thus a century of film is handily condensed down to twenty-seven pages: no mean feat!

Essays that particularly stand out are Nick Hubble’s “The Historical Context of Science Fiction,” Adam Roberts’s “Changes in the Canon,” and Pat Wheeler’s “Issues of Gender, Sexuality and Ethnicity.” These three pieces are informationally dense yet user-friendly enough that they can easily be used in class with undergraduates. Furthermore, all three essays speak particularly to the schisms that have erupted in the genre over the past six years or so, such that they can also be of use to scholars (or fans) who have to face, yet again, arguments “against” Feminist SF or updating the canon to include more than “Dead White Guys.” It would have been very easy for the editors of a reference volume like this to ignore these topics; that they chose to address them speaks not just to our contemporary concerns but a willingness to meet them that bodes well for our field as a whole.

Other useful pieces include Christopher Daley’s “Case Studies in Reading 1: Key Primary Literary Texts” and Jessica Langer’s “Case Studies in Reading 2: Key Theoretical and Critical Texts in Science Fiction Studies.” I suggest in particular that both essays should be read by first-time teachers of SF; these essays provide valuable synopses, readings, and bibliographies that may save the sanity of some overworked graduate students or lecturers. Both essays pay equal attention to male and female authors, which speak again to a willingness to acknowledge traditionalism through classic authors and contemporaneity through gender equality.

The one peculiar piece in the collection is Joseph Norman’s “An Annotated Science Fiction Timeline.” Though it performs the thankless task of combining the dates of literary and cinematic enterprises with world events and scientific breakthroughs, it does so unevenly. The September 11 (and July 7) attacks garner more discussion than the entirety of World War II; the publication of Suzanne Collins’s The Hunger Games is not acknowledged but Gary Ross’s film adaptation is; all of the novels of some authors (such as Le Guin) are listed while many more authors aren’t listed at all. It seems foolish to list all of Philip Pullman’s books but none of J.K. Rowling’s, James Cameron’s Avatar but not Peter Jackson’s adaptations of The Lord of the Rings. That said, these very visible omissions gesture at the difficulty of the enterprise at large, and while it is imperfect, the attempt is commendable and still useful.

To conclude, The Science Fiction Handbook is a useful tool for the novice science fiction scholar. While inappropriate as a textbook itself, it will be very valuable in conjunction with one, especially with regard to quickly developing a course plan. Slight and inexpensive, it belongs on the shelves of teaching scholars either for their own use or for foisting upon their innocent (haggard) colleagues; it should absolutely be acquired by academic libraries as part of their SF collections, and by any English departments that teach SF and maintain their own

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reference collection. Seasoned scholars and aficionados may well want to take a look to see how the field has grown and developed, especially in the microcosm of the past decade. Less serious-minded readers may find the volume illustrative but probably not terribly interesting; this is a pity, since several of the chapters speak directly to many ongoing concerns about the state of the genre right now. Above all, the book aptly demonstrates--and illustrates--the scholarly reach and depth of science fiction studies as a discipline.

**Fantascienza Italiana: Riviste, autori, dibattiti dagli anni Cinquanta agli anni Settanta**

Daniel Lukes


**Order option(s):** Paper

ITALIAN SCIENCE FICTION. If it sounds like a paradox, Giulia Iannuzzi’s work is acutely aware of this, as are many of the authors her book examines. The minoritarian position of Italian SF writing, not only with regard to US and British SF imported and translated into Italian throughout the twentieth century, but also within Italian mainstream literature and culture, is one of the central topics that this meticulous study tackles, unpacks, and seeks to redress. Despite its centuries-old tradition of fantastic narratives, from Dante to Emilio Salgari, Italy did not produce household names in SF literature, at least in the timeframe analyzed here (Valerio Evangelisti holds such status in the contemporary era). The exception of course, is Italo Calvino, who like other big Italian names associated with SF (Primo Levi, Dino Buzzati) is not a practitioner of genre SF, but a writer of literary fiction who adapts elements of the fantastic and the science fictional.

Why, then, did Italy not generate a well-recognized and received corpus of postwar SF? Iannuzzi’s work answers that question admirably and comprehensively, from a variety of intersecting perspectives: literary, historic, socio-cultural, economic.

*Fantascienza Italiana* covers the editorial history of six magazines, published between the fifties and the seventies, with a chapter dedicated to each: *Urania, I Romanzi del Cosmo* (Novels of the Cosmos), *Oltre il Cielo* (Beyond the Sky), *Galassia, Futuro*, and *Robot*. Modeled on the US Golden Age and 1950s pulp magazine tradition of *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Galaxy Science Fiction*, these magazines primarily offered Italian translations of US, British, and other foreign (including Soviet, Polish, and French) SF works. They also, in different ways and to different degrees, offered a stage for Italian SF writers. The place of Italian SF within these magazines quickly emerges as Iannuzzi’s primary topic, and her detailed and richly-researched chronicles of the inner workings of these publications reveal the matter of SF written by Italians as a highly ideologically charged and contested one.

With the help of biographical sketches of key and lesser players – publishers, editors, translators, writers – and their interactions and movements through the Italian publishing industry, Iannuzzi’s history, often rendered with dry wit and erudition, is cumulative, and has the effect of an archive covering twenty years of editorial policies and politicized debates. For Iannuzzi, literature is not so much a matter of the writer’s solitary creation, but rather the product of a web of networks, market forces, ideological pressures, editorial decisions, social demographics. She thus dedicates ample space to the role played by fandom in determining the fate of Italian SF: the letters page, reader-editor conversations, tastes and trends, discussions about poor sales and publication cancellations.

Looming over all is the issue of Italian SF’s subaltern position toward the dominant fiction of Anglo-American SF, which not only has the chronological advantage, but also seems to be regularly perceived by readers, writers, and editors alike as the genuine article, and Italian SF the lesser imitation. Iannuzzi here very perceptively addresses the nature of
cultural colonialism, and the extent to which it is embraced and internalized by the colonized, who welcome their colonizers with open arms as superior beings.

Thus, the two struggles are interrelated: SF’s struggle for recognition within Italian culture at large, with its preference for realist modes (verismo, neorealismo), and Italian SF’s struggle for recognition within an Italian publishing industry that relentlessly privileges Anglo-American SF. Many of these magazines tend to relegate Italian authors to lesser rubrics. Oltre il Cielo, and then the short-lived Futuro (1963-64), stand out as examples of swimming against this current. Not only does Futuro prioritize the development and fostering of Italian SF talent (including a young Giorgio Agamben, with the short story “Decadenza”) but it also fights for SF to be recognized by Italy’s intellectual and cultural elites, contesting the often self-imposed boundaries and restrictions of genre writing, and arguing for a broader, avant-gardist, and destabilizing conception of SF. Sadly, Futuro succumbed too soon to distribution failures, and Iannuzzi’s book ends with a discussion of Robot, a magazine which signals a return to a more traditionalist, genre-based, fan-oriented approach.

Of particular interest and fascination here are the pseudonyms adopted by Italian writers, who pass themselves off with editorial complicity to the public as Anglophone (or Francophone), and are often accompanied by the indication of an Italian “translator” (in some cases the author in question’s real name): Audie Barr, B.P. Stiller, L.R. Johannis, Laurentix, Marren Bagels, Esther Scott, Julian Berry, John Bree, Norman Shave, Robert Rainbell, Joe C. Karpati, Hunk Hanover, Hugh Maylon, Lewis Flash, Louis Navire, P.D. Four, Gee L. Walom, Welcome Braun, Morris W. Marble, Lorraine Parr, Ben Niutold, C.B. Drums, R.Weather, Beryl Norton, Norah Bolton, Beryl Worthy, John Ott, George Winnow, Rocky Docson. These names suggest an alternate pantheon of SF writers in a parallel world.

Italian SF did not flourish as it might have had conditions been different, or get to establish itself as a school in its own right; yet as a largely failed genre and object of critical analysis, it has precious insights and pleasures to offer. Not only does this book depict Italian SF as a fascinating field, largely untapped by Anglophone scholarship, with a variety of interesting texts worth unearthing and re-discovering (and translating for a wider audience): Fantascienza Italiana also shines a defamiliarizing light on SF in general, re-thinking the hegemonies and colonialist complicity of the Anglo-American tradition through its often imitative, yet also often inspired, rebellious, and distinctive Italian counterpart. Iannuzzi is currently at work on a follow-up volume focusing on four Italian SF authors: I look forward to reading it.

Disability in Science Fiction: Representations of Technology as Cure

Jamie L. McDaniel


IN COUNTOURS OF ABLEISM, Disability Studies theorist Fiona Kumari Campbell defines ableism as “a network of beliefs, processes, and practices that produces a particular kind of self [. . .] that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human” (5). By introducing genre into debates about abledness and its effects on representations of the (post)human body, Kathryn Allan has organized an anthology of thought-provoking essays exploring the ableist impulse that Campbell critiques. This exceptional book shows how science fiction (SF) works, including novels, films, and philosophical discourses, are especially adept at investigating the concepts of corporeal fidelity, idealism, and augmentation integral to Disability Studies (DS). The first of its kind to create a sustained conversation between SF and DS, Disability in Science Fiction develops an innovative
method to highlight how SF deals with disability as a fundamental part of identity.

The collection features a variety of scholars from literature, film, history, classics, anthropology, information sciences, and philosophy. In the contributors’ citations, readers encounter all the players one would expect to find in a well-researched collection of essays on SF and disability, including Darko Suvin and Joanna Russ from SF as well as Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, Tom Shakespeare, and Nicole Markotić and Sally Chivers from DS. The authors’ approaches are truly more than the sum of their parts, which is the mark of a successful interdisciplinary endeavor.

In her introduction, Allan outlines the medical and social models in DS and reviews past interpretations of disability in SF. These overviews will benefit people who are new to SF or DS, and the language never devolves into jargon. Allan reminds readers that “SF narratives involving people with disabilities inevitably also feature technology as either curing or attempting to contain their unruly bodies” (2). Therein lies the focus of the books’ twelve essays. This attention to treatment pervades SF to the extent that cure takes on a double meaning. Not only does cure indicate the tendency of the medical establishment to try to restore the supposed disabled body to the norm (a fully functioning healthy citizen) or to improve upon the body’s natural state through technology, but it also forces us to examine “how the cure narrative is performing in that text. In other words, what does it mean to cure the disabled body, what are the cure’s outcomes, and are they desirable?” (9). Within this context, SF often exposes the illusion of the “perfect form” and the “average form” as all bodies are only temporarily abled, despite technological advances that work against physical decline. SF then, reveals the dangers of unquestioned posthumanism that erases evident difference from disabled bodies.

Allan divides the book into three parts: “Theorizing Disability in Science Fiction,” “Human Boundaries and Prosthetic Bodies,” and “Cure Narratives for the (Post)human Future.” The first section focuses on the SF techniques that help to better scrutinize traditional depictions of people with disabilities. For example, Joanne Woiak and Hioni Karamanos express how the ambiguity inherent in the SF genre allows authors to resist normalcy by refusing, in the case of Samuel R. Delany’s work, to describe normal or average bodies and minds. Similarly, two other essays from this section focus on characterization. Ria Cheyne contends that characters in John Varley’s hybrid work “Tango

Charlie and Foxtrot Romeo” signify worlds appearing in different SF genres and allow an understanding of how social processes classify certain somatic distinctions as positive or negative. Howard Sklar uses Daniel Keyes’s Flowers for Algernon to complicate SF characterization methods for unifying the voice of characters with intellectual disabilities.

The final two sections turn to portrayals of prosthetics and cures in SF. For example, Netty Mattar argues that prosthetics can become tools of capitalism by creating a “superhuman” body to exploit for monetary purposes. Additionally, Leigha McReynolds coins the phrase “prosthetic relationship” to describe films, such as Avatar and How to Train Your Dragon, that join human bodies with those of animals or aliens “in order for one or both of the bodies to perform a specific task, where both bodies share agency in the performance,” thereby problematizing the typical body-subject/prosthesis-object division (116). Christy Tidwell uses a discussion of autism to expose the fact that SF privileges certain kinds of cures, such as surgery or drugs, over other options. Tidwell instead suggests that society should develop “a model of progress that is not built on technological advancement but on an increased understanding of autism and a focus on species change rather than individual change” (165).

These divisions, however, do not disallow for conversations among the essays. For example, Ralph Covino through George Lucas’s Star Wars and Robert W. Cape Jr. through Robert Silverberg’s The Man in the Maze locate inspiration in classical Greek and Roman concepts of order, logic, chaos, and nature. Their works show how prosthetics can potentially disrupt binary claims to righteousness through the force’s light side and associations with dishonor through the force’s dark side (Covino) and how the protagonist’s interactions with the eponymous maze dramatize the social construction of disability (Cape).

While unique in its subject, the collection sometimes becomes slightly myopic in its focus on the medical and social models of disability. As many contributors note, the medical and social models remain two of the dominant approaches to disability. Other models, such as the minority model that shows how people with disabilities constitute a minority position in society or the moral model that views disability as a punishment that an external force imposes on individuals, can provide a wider theoretical context. Some essays acknowledge these models but never fully embrace them. Additionally, general readers may get a bit lost in the more
philosophical chapters on posthumanism and cure. Nonetheless, I recommend this book for all audiences, including general readers, teachers, scholars, and undergraduate and graduate students. It would also make an excellent addition to a library's holdings in SF, popular culture, film, literature, and philosophy.

**Science Fiction, Alien Encounters, and the Ethics of Posthumanism: Beyond the Golden Rule**

Kevin Pinkham


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“POSTHUMANISM” IS A SLIPPERY TERM. Does it refer to the ideology of the posthuman? Does it refer to the philosophical position left in the wake of humanism, that is, post-humanism? Is it an invitation to consider revising our privileging of human agency, our belief that humans are superior, in the way that “postracism” invites us to imagine a world in which race is no longer a factor in establishing hierarchies? For Gomel “posthumanism” can be all of these things.

The unifying theme in all of Gomel’s uses of “posthumanism” is the decentering of the human, whether that be in erasing the borders we have drawn around what we consider to be human or in dethroning humanity from its privileged position at the top of some humanist chain of being. To some extent, Gomel is offering a tool to explore the possibilities of how humans will interact with a nonhuman Other when the occasion arises. She seems more convinced that that occasion may arrive with the technological Singularity rather than with the arrival of some landmark-dwarfing alien mother ship, yet she argues that exploring the ways that SF has imagined the interactions between humans and an alien Other—perhaps the core trope of SF—provides a foundation on which to build an ethic for our encounter with the nonhuman Other, alien or otherwise.

Gomel argues that for most human cultures, the Golden Rule is the foundational ethic for the treatment of fellow human beings. However, Gomel posits, the Golden Rule is built at the intersection of empathy and the theory of mind. In other words, the Golden Rule relies on a human’s ability to recognize that the human Other is capable of independent thought different from one’s own and that one can and perhaps should attempt to understand that Other and share in its feelings. While the vast majority of daily human interactions seem to provide some support for the efficacy of the Golden Rule, the drastic exceptions to the rule—ISIS/ISIL, Ferguson, September 11th—demonstrate how difficult following the Golden Rule can be.

Those difficulties will be geometrically exacerbated when we encounter a nonhuman entity that challenges empathy and/or theory of mind. If we are unable to recognize the Other as capable of independent thought or, perhaps more importantly, share in that nonhuman Other’s feelings, assuming it even has feelings, then the Golden Rule can no longer provide any reliable ethical direction.

Gomel ponders the role of the alien, the narrative tools available for the representation of the alien Other, the anthropocentrism that creeps into the representation of alterity—seemingly almost inescapable in SF, and the ultimate reinforcing of humanism that occurs in most SF through that anthropomorphism. In most instances of the posthuman—AIs, cyborgs, chimeras—the human is always a reference point; such entities either once were human or find their origins in humanity, thus highlighting the privileged role of the human. In Gomel’s analysis, the nonhuman alien Other offers a chance to escape the blinders of humanism, to see the human not ultimately reflected back upon itself in altered form but reflected by something that is truly Other, that exists outside of the framework of the human. The existence of the alien invites humanity to do more than merely expand its human-centric ethical values; the alien Other calls humanity to be truly transformed by an encounter beyond the abilities of our empathy and theory of mind and to create an ethic that surpasses the Golden Rule.

In order to build a scaffolding for her study, she provides a tripartite typology into which encounters with an alien Other can fit, enabling her (and us) to recognize the types of approaches to writing an encounter with the alien: Confrontation, Assimilation, Transformation. Each category comprises two chapters that discuss subcategories of her typology, in which she provides a number of representative examples. In her study, Gomel explores whether or not her chosen texts reinforce the centrality of the human by examining how alien alterity is repre-
sented, pondering whether alterity is simply a reimagined humanism, or whether the representation of alien alterity invites readers to imagine an ethic that goes beyond the human. While Gomel gives the nod to certain canonical texts, e.g. *The War of the Worlds*, *Lilith’s Brood*, *Roadside Picnic*, her preference is for texts that have not been the object of extensive critical scrutiny.

The Confrontation section analyzes texts that present conflict that usually arises from first contact. Chapter 1 explores texts that imagine the encounter between humanity and the alien Other devolving into violence and war. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* serves as a foundational text, but Gomel pursues a number of post-Wellsian texts, including Greg Bear’s *The Forge of God*, Housuke Nojiri’s *Usurper of the Sun*, and Stephen Wallenfels’ *POD*. Along the way, Gomel glances at works by Heinlein, Niven and Pournelle, and others. In these texts, humanism is almost always reinforced through the camaraderie shared by those at war with the alien. The Other poses a threat that must be eliminated, and humanism emerges stronger from the ashes. Chapter 2 focuses on texts based on the Soviet worldview. In these texts, including works by Efremov and the Strugatsky brothers, confrontation rarely results in violence; rather, understanding and cooperation arise from the encounter between the human and the alien Other fulfilling the ideals of Soviet Utopias. The weakness of the representation of the alien in many of these texts is that the it is often humanized, difference being erased to insist that “they” are like “us.” However, some of the Strugatsky’s texts, most notably “Little One” and *Roadside Picnic*, represent alterity skillfully and offer the chance for humanity to leave a human-centric ethic behind and become something new.

The Assimilation chapters explore texts in which the human merges with the alien Other. Chapter 3 explores some of the more horrifying of these texts, contemplating the erasure of humanity as the result of being infected or possessed by the alien: “The trope of alien infestation literalizes the cultural disintegration of “man” in the plot of the transformation of a human subject into a post/inhuman entity. This transformation preserves the body but re-crafts the mind” (97). In these texts, among them “Who Goes There?” by John Campbell, *The Puppet Masters* by Robert Heinlein, and *Infected* by Scott Sigler, the Golden Rule is undermined, as the infected/possessed humans are often mercilessly eliminated, leaving humanity once again the center of the universe. Chapter 4 discusses postcolonial works that use SF as a narrative tool to expose the political injustice inherent in colonial systems. The problem that often arises in these texts, among them Octavia Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*, Michael Bishop’s *Transfigurations*, and Paul Park’s *Celestis*, is that “[...][they perform] the same maneuver [they condemn], taming the Other rather than defamiliarizing the same” (31).

The Transformation chapters explore texts that are more successful in representing encounters with the alien Other that invite humanity to transcend itself and the ethics of the Golden Rule. Chapter 5 analyzes texts that explore how humanity can be transformed by encountering aliens that challenge us in three categories that we feel make us uniquely human: the search for the numinous, the capacity for human language, and self-consciousness. These texts challenge our humanist assumptions and hint at the possibility of transcending those assumptions. Among the texts Gomel discusses in this chapter are Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*, Sheri S. Tepper’s *Grass*, Ted Chiang’s “Story of your Life,” China Mieville’s *Embassytown*, and Peter Watt’s *Blindsight*. Chapter 6 focuses on Stanislaw Lem, providing readings of Lem’s novels *Solaris*, *Fiasco*, *Eden*, and *His Master’s Voice*, in which incomprehensible aliens demonstrate some form of intelligent agency but remain inscrutable to the human characters. These novels “…not only plumb the ‘eternally silent abysses’ of cosmology but develop a sophisticated and supple ethical discourse which points a way out of the narcissistic trap of the Golden Rule and toward a genuine acceptance of alterity” (188).

One mistake to make with *Science Fiction, Alien Encounters, and the Ethics of Posthumanism* is to assume that it will propose a system of the ethics of posthumanism. Rather, the book serves more as a call to action than as a manifesto—that is, Gomel convinces us of the need for re-evaluating our humanist ethics by exposing how myopic those ethics are, but the book does not provide a clear, coherent, concise system of ethics (if there can be such a thing) that addresses posthumanism. Providing that system is not her goal. As she indicates, “It is the greatness of good science fiction that it makes one think rather than emote and that it respects the reader’s capacity to buckle the book’s argument and to come up with alternatives of his/her own” (ix). The greatness of Gomel’s book is that it does the same, inviting us to leave the shackles of our vainglorious humanism behind. The book belongs on the shelf of universities and colleges that have programs focusing on either SF or ethics and would be quite at home in public libraries that are building a collection of SF critical texts. Perhaps the place the
book will prove most effective is in the personal collections of everyone at the Pentagon who has not yet read his or her SETI Post-Detection Taskgroup reports.

Co-editor Gerry Canavan states in his Preface that the book was inspired by Mark Bould and China Miéville’s *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction* (2009), and seeks to investigate the “genre’s relationship with ecology, environmentalism, and the emerging interdisciplinary conversation variously called ecocriticism, environmental philosophy, and the ecological humanities” (ix). He discusses the uncertainty implicit in combining the terms “science” and “fiction” and asks whether combined they implied texts that are predictive or merely reflective of current “anxieties and cultural preoccupations” (ix). I would add in light of the concerns of this text that ecological SF is also about what Frederik Pohl called “preventing the future” by focusing on trends to get our attention to act to prevent their outcomes (Frederik Pohl, “Science Fiction and Human Values” 9 *Carver* #1 (Spring, 1991): 29-38, Bloomsburg University, Pa); see also Isaac Asimov and Frederik Pohl, *Our Angry Earth* (Tor, 1991).

Canavan uses his introduction “If this Goes On” (1-21) to give an overview of the historic development of science fiction’s conversation with ecological themes, integrating them with the theoretical insights of Samuel R. Delaney, Fredric Jameson, Darko Suvin, Carl Freedman and others. His essay nicely summarizes the main themes of his contributors and briefly discusses the texts they address, while explaining the overall structure of the collection by applying concepts articulated by Delaney: Part I is “Arcadies and New Jerusalems;” Part II is “Brave New Worlds and Lands of the Flies;” and Part III is “Quiet Earths, Junk Cities, and the Cultures of the Afternoon.”

The essays in Part I stick most closely to the overall ecological themes of the collection. Christina Alt’s essay on H. G. Wells ironically compares his early *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and later *Men Like Gods* (1923), arguing that the early Wells was influenced by Darwin to conclude that mankind was just another animal species, resulting in Wells being pessimistic but having some empathy with lesser species, while the “early stages of [ecology’s] development as a discipline, [...] helped to restore the confidence in human dominance that had been unsettled by evolution’s revelation of humanity’s animal origins.” (25) She explains: “The Utopian conviction [in *Men Like Gods*] that scientific mastery of nature and physical laws makes it possible for humanity to permanently escape extinction promotes an attitude toward other organisms wholly different from that depicted in *The War of the Worlds,*” justifying the extermination of undesirable species (35). She notes that

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**Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction**

Bruce Lindsley Rockwood


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GREEN PLANETS INTRIGUES the reader by integrating literary analysis with reflections on the environmental challenges of our era as portrayed in SF. In the Afterword conversation between the editors, “Still, I’m Reluctant to Call This Pessimism,” KSR states: “The coming century will bring to one degree or another a global ecological crisis, but it will be playing out at planetary scales of space and time, and it’s possible that [...] things won’t happen at the right scales to be subjectively experienced as a crisis” (Green Planets, 243). Robinson’s environmental concerns are well known, as seen in his *Science in the Capital* trilogy, and having taught environmental law, I share his concern that “This coming century looks like the moment in human history when we will either invent a civilization that nurtures the biosphere while it supports us, or else we will damage it quite badly, perhaps even to the point of causing a mass extinction [...]” (244). He adds, “the way we live now, in a mixed situation, with some in misery and some in luxury, [suggests] that we might limp along in a degraded manner for quite a long time” (246) when discussing his recent novel *2312* in a manner suggestive of the implications of Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the 21st Century* (he discusses the negative impacts of capitalism at 248).

The Afterword is a fascinating discussion of both ecology and science fiction tropes, and it frames how I came to the text as a whole, and probably reflects how many potential readers will approach it. How well, then, does *Green Planets* stand up to this expectation?
“Subsequent works of SF seem inclined to move away from the exterminatory optimism” of *Men Like Gods*, citing Olaf Stapledon and C.S. Lewis, and concludes that Wells “preserves a historical moment in which ecological knowledge was seen as a means of increasing human beings’ ability to use and control nature.” (37)

In the second essay, Michael Page explores “Evolution and Apocalypse in the Golden Age,” focusing on a series of stories by Laurence Manning collectively referred to as *The Man Who Awoke* (1933; 1975 collected); Clifford Simak’s *City* series published in *Astounding* in the mid-1940s; Ward Moore’s satirical *Greener Than You Think* (1947); and George R. Stewart’s *Earth Abides* (1949). “Just as SF is inherently ecologically oriented, so too is much SF criticism,” Page asserts, citing critics such as Stacey Alaimo, Lawrence Buell, Ursula Heise and others (41). Page chose authors who “participate in the two major modes of ecological thought as it appears in SF: the evolutionary and the apocalyptic.” (42) In contrast to Alt’s portrayal of Wells’s evolutionary pessimism, Page remarks, “The struggle between an apocalyptic pessimism and an evolutionary optimism is a defining characteristic of SF, and one of the reasons why these golden age ecological narratives [. . .] are still relevant to the present.” (52-53)

The third essay, by Gib Prettyman, is a convincing reassessment of Darko Suvin and Fredric Jameson’s critique of the use of Daoism and ecological themes in the works of Ursula K. Le Guin, arguing that “Le Guin’s fictional explorations of ecological relationships do perform real political work on a cognitive and epistemological level by emphasizing a range of challenges to conventional egoistic perceptions.” (57) The fourth essay, by Rob Latham, “Biotic Invasions: Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction,” explores the quasi-imperialist or colonial triumphalism of early pulp SF of the sort endorsed by John W. Campbell in *Astounding* – “we’ll have peace on earth – and war in heaven!” (78) – and its opposite in the form of alien invasion or disaster texts that challenge notions of human superiority: Wells’s *War of the Worlds*, John Wyndham’s *The Day of the Triffids* (1951); John Christopher’s *The Death of Grass* (1956); and the British “eco-catastrophe” disaster stories exemplified by J. G. Ballard’s four novels of the 1960s, including *The Drowned World* (1962). He cites Ballard’s “influence over what came to be known as SF’s ‘New Wave’ [which] helped foster an overtly anti-hegemonic strain of eco-disaster stories [. . .] at odds with the technophilic optimism of Campbellian hard SF […]” and which “gradually aligned itself with other ideological programs [. . .] such as feminism, ecological activism, and postcolonial struggles” (80). Thomas M. Disch’s 1965 novel *The Genocides* is a focus of the essay, with Latham taking into account contrasting critiques of the text by Algis Budrys and Brian Aldiss, and arguing that it “develops a powerful critique of [. . .] ecological imperialism.” (82) Latham contrasts Disch’s approach with Ursula K. Le Guin’s treatment of ecological imperialism in *The Word for the World is Forest* (1972), which he argues reflects 1970s concerns with environmental devastation and resource depletion, positing the need to respect the “rights of nature and native peoples” (89) and citing the Club of Rome’s *The Limits to Growth*.

Each of the remaining essays in this collection is equally detailed and well referenced, while some focus more on introducing readers to lesser known texts for their own sake than on explaining how they pertain to the overall theme of “Green Planets” as opposed to other topics, such as critical theory, modernity versus post-modernism, feminist theory or gender difference. Sabine Höhler’s essay, “The Real Problem of a Spaceship Is Its People – Spaceship Earth as Ecological Science Fiction,” starts Part II and does a nice job of assessing the impact of the film ZPG, Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968), and the work of biologist and environmental philosopher Garrett Hardin as portrayed in Exploring New Ethics for Survival: *The Voyage of the Spaceship Beagle*. Andrew Milner’s essay “The Sea and Eternal Summer” discusses Australian SF texts *On the Beach* (1957) and the work of George Turner, in particular *The Sea and Summer* (1987), and makes a persuasive case for its significance as an “implicitly utopian warning” (116). Adeline Johns-Putra’s “Care, Gender, and the Climate-Changed Future” discusses the ethics and gender-related power dynamics of caring as expressed in Maggie Gee’s novel *The Ice People*, set in a world where anthropogenic climate change undergoes a sudden reversal from global warming to an ice age. Climate change is a background given for other concerns; “Perhaps care always conceals power imbalance [. . .] as so often happens in environmentalist discourse, the caring relationship is intentionally aligned with gender roles. [. . .] Ecomaternalism’s assumption that core characteristics of womanhood parallel the core characteristics of ‘nature’ is really a long-standing tenet of eco-feminism” (130-131). The novel is thoughtful in its exploration of the conflict among its male and female protagonists, tracking male arrogance through its unreliable narrator Saul and the rise of a Wiccan political power in response to the crisis presented by the ice age, but its
climate change setting seems more like a set-up than a real exploration of environmental concerns. “Care […] becomes a weapon in a gendered power play […] and then it is about the terrible cost of taking care for granted as a way of fulfilling [our responsibilities].” (137, 139)

Elzette Steenkamp’s essay “Future Ecologies, Current Crisis” provides a useful overview of the development of South African SF, focusing on Lauren Beukes’s Zoo City (2010), Jane Rosenthal’s Souvenir (2004), and Neill Blomkamp’s film District 9 (2009). These texts primarily address racial and gender difference in a South African context, and explore “ways in which human beings place themselves in relation to nature and nonhumans and form notions of ‘ecological’ belonging” (144). They are worth exploring as SF, but it is not clear how they fit into the theme of “Green Planets.” Much the same can be seen in the texts addressed in Christopher Palmer’s essay “Ordinary Catastrophes” -- the stories of apocalypse in Girlfriend in a Coma (2012), Oryx and Crake (2003), and Kraken (2011) -- they present critiques of “contemporary culture” where “the future is being squandered” (165), but without any clear link to our environmental challenges except as peripheral context for a “Last Man story” (166).

Part III starts with Eric Otto’s assessment of the ecotopian short stories of Paolo Bacigalupi, which he says mobilize “critical utopianism in the interest of critiquing social and cultural forces that degrade nonhuman nature and the human communities that are embedded in this nature” (179) in order “to influence readers to take action.” (182) Brent Bellamy and Imre Szeman recognize the significance of scientist James Hansen’s warnings of the dire consequences of climate change, and then launch into an extensive critique of what they call “science faction” as reflected in Alan Weisman’s The World Without Us (2007). They argue that such works fail to recognize that humans are part of nature and question the value of narratives that postulate an impossible situation where no one exists to tell the story or to hear it. They reference Slavoj Žižek’s “attempts to unsettle the shape and character of the dominant forms of ecological analysis […] an ecology of fear” (200-201). Timothy Morton’s essay on the film Avatar (2009), “Pandora’s Box,” is complex and highly theoretical, with frequent references to various philosophers which reduce the potential effectiveness of the essay as an exploration of the ecological lessons of this popular film in which the common SF trope of “planetary awareness” is highlighted. A reference to James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis and his changing view of the climate crisis could have been a useful counterpoint to the issues raised by the film. The final essay, Melody Jue’s “Churning up the Depths,” is an interesting explication of Stanislaw Lem’s Solaris (1961) and Greg Egan’s novella Oceanic (1999), both of which explore human attempts to understand life constituted by, or in, an oceanic world they have come to explore (Lem) or terraform and colonize (Egan). Issues of gender arise in both texts, and while the essay explicates both well, neither fits within the environmental theme of the collection.

So how well does the collection hold up to the expectation one brings to a book with the title Green Planets? These are well documented essays explicating a variety of SF texts, both written and film, many of which have characters and themes directly related to ecology. Missing is any discussion of KSR’s own important works, but the book helps readers discover new authors to explore in the emerging multi-national literature of SF. For those interested in the major theoretical commentary on SF in general there is much to be learned, although more to do with critical theory, gender, and race than with ecology itself. It belongs in libraries and on the shelves of serious students of SF, but may disappoint a general reader looking for a focus on how SF authors today address our pressing ecological challenges. For that, a collection such as Hieroglyph (Ed Finn and Kathryn Cramer, eds.) may be what is required (http://hieroglyph.asu.edu/; “Project Hieroglyph” BBC News, 3 September 2014 http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28974943).

Ray Bradbury Unbound

David Seed


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THE SECOND VOLUME of Jonathan Eller’s invaluable biography of Ray Bradbury picks up where the first left off with the publication of Fahrenheit 451 in 1953 and closes with the 1969 Moon landing. It was a period when Bradbury was constantly drawn to the cinema, starting with his collaboration with John Huston over
the filming of *Moby Dick*. Despite the stresses of that relationship, it was a project in which Bradbury learned to develop his skills at visual representation – as witness the opening montage – and at reordering events for the script. Soon after completion of the screenplay, Bradbury travelled to Italy to meet the art historian Bernard Berenson, who became a mentor figure to him. Indeed, Bradbury used Berenson as a sounding board for his ideas on literature, reflected in the fascinating passages quoted from his recently discovered letters. These show Bradbury attempting to strike a balance between popularity and literary standing, one which he maintained throughout his subsequent career.

In the wake of *Moby Dick* Bradbury began to receive offers of film work and himself toyed with a collaborative project with Gene Kelly, among others. From an early point in this volume Eller documents in detail Bradbury’s interest in the different media: radio and stage drama as well as film. He planned a TV docudrama to be called *Report on Space*, which would have drawn on *The Martian Chronicles* but failed to bear fruit. One of the many unpublished works from the mid-1950s was Bradbury’s film script for Roger Manvill’s novel *The Dreamers*, which, along with other projects, delayed the completion of *Dandelion Wine*. Towards the end of the decade Bradbury had a surge of interest in the performing arts, resulting in contributions to the TV series *The Twilight Zone* and several years later in the one-act series *The World of Ray Bradbury*.

Another major interest of Bradbury’s was the development of the space programme, inspired by developments in NASA and even by Pope Pius XII’s comments on humanity transcending its limitations in such ventures. Throughout the 1960s Bradbury’s comments on space exploration became increasingly inspirational; in his 1962 essay “Cry the Cosmos,” he declared, “humanity is an idea.” The directly celebratory tenor of such pieces offsets his ambivalence over the dangers of space travel, which he dramatized in stories such as “The Rocket Man” and built up to a rhetorical climax in poems such as “Christus Apollo.”

During this period, Bradbury’s fame was growing and he was increasingly in demand as a public speaker. Eller notes several times the irony, not lost on Bradbury’s fellow SF writers, that he was treated as the ambassador for science fiction despite the fact that very little of his writing could be neatly categorized within that genre. The Bradbury who emerges dramatically from this account was one who tried his hand, often unsuccessfully, at a whole series of projects, while his output of original fiction gradually declined. He compulsively revised his texts and the contents of his story collections. The sheer extent of these changes is only now becoming evident thanks to Eller’s ongoing critical editions of the stories. And then there was the issue of adaptation. In 1960 there was a possibility that MGM might film *The Martian Chronicles*, so Bradbury promptly set to work on a script. In the process he realized that he had devised characters with no past and also learned with chagrin how difficult screenwriting was. Indeed, Bradbury’s attitude to the cinema was complex and ambivalent. From early childhood he had been a keen movie-goer and constantly incorporated cinematic devices into his fiction, but the experience of working in Hollywood was a chastening one, as it was for writers like Faulkner and Chandler. Bradbury was accustomed to being the sole producer of his own works and had to adjust to working in a team, sometimes finding himself marginalized during production. Much the same happened with his contributions to *The Twilight Zone*, where Rod Serling expressed strong reservations about Bradbury’s dialogue. What read as acceptable in print was coming across as stilted and unnatural in performance, and much the same charge was later levelled against Bradbury’s one-act plays when they were performed in New York. The filming of *The Illustrated Man* in 1969 was a disappointment to Bradbury, not least because he wasn’t approached for a script.

One of the most interesting self-adaptations from this period was Bradbury’s ambition to write a Space Age version of *Moby Dick*, to capture the “essence of Melville,” as he put it. Originally he planned to start the work in a rocket port in the town of Independence, Missouri; and to make his equivalent of the whale the space ship Cetus I, though he later changed this to a white comet. The work took shape as *Leviathan ’99*, broadcast in 1968 by the BBC as a radio drama thanks to assistance from the actor Christopher Lee. The work fleshed out Bradbury’s view in his famous essay “The Ardent Blasphemers” of Ahab as a driven, self-destructive visionary.

As Bradbury acquired the status of a celebrity, he gave more and more interviews, including a long in-depth session at UCLA, which remains unpublished, as do many other interviews from this period. Eller rightly draws our attention to yet another strand to Bradbury’s career, his numerous appearances as a college speaker, where he repeatedly promoted the cause of SF. In one talk he declared, “We are science fictional children of a science fictional age,” and increasingly cast himself as spokesman for the national space programme and even
the history of the USA. In his script for the US Pavilion of the New York World’s Fair he asserted direct continuity between land and space exploration, which fed into his later works. Eller documents his account with thorough detail, clearly the fruit of painstaking research, and there is no doubt that his biography will become the definitive account of Bradbury’s career.

**Fiction Reviews**

**The Girl with All the Gifts**

Chris Pak


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*THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS* is a debut novel written under the *nom de plume* “M.R. Carey,” but it is far from the first literary achievement for author Mike Carey. He is better known for his work on *2000 AD* and the DC and Marvel comics *Lucifer*, *Hellblazer*, *X-Men* and *Ultimate Fantastic Four*. Carey’s experience writing comics translates very well into this longer form; this is especially evident in the economy of his prose, which gives the narrative an air of suspense that is remarkably well sustained throughout the course of the novel. *The Girl with All the Gifts* grew from a short story, “Iphigenia in Aulis,” collected in the 2012 anthology *An Apple for the Creature*, edited by Charlaine Harris and Toni L.P. Kelner. The title of the novel refers to the Greek myth of Pandora, the first human woman who was showered with gifts by the Gods, one of which was a box that, when opened, released all of the evils into the world, along with one virtue: hope. The title of the novel is an etymological rendering of Pandora from the ancient Greek Πανδώρα, literally meaning ‘all-gifted,’ or loosely, ‘having all the gifts.’

*The Girl with All the Gifts* is a zombie narrative that turns a sympathetic ear to the trials of the protagonist Melanie, a young girl who retains human consciousness despite being a zombie, and who must struggle to understand the world that she is born into. Melanie reveals one of the many ironies in the novel when she notes that her name means “the black girl” in Greek, though she is pale as death, and prefers to think of herself as Pandora. Helen Justineau, by contrast, is a black woman and a mother figure to Melanie, and Melanie reflects early in the novel on the beauty of her blackness and its significance to her own name. Educated on obsolete knowledge preserved from before the apocalypse, she is effectively held prisoner in a military / scientific out-
post known as Hotel Echo, which is geared toward the study of and experimentation on young zombies captured in the field. Zombies are referred to as “hungries,” and some of the young hungries display a capacity for learning and development that occasionally exceeds that of a normal human child. As the narrative unfolds and Melanie begins to understand her place in this new world, the deceptively innocuous prose, focalized from the young Melanie’s point of view, is transformed. We are no longer sharing her childlike perspective on the world, but what from our point of view becomes a disturbing blend of innocence and deadly experience. The reader, however, does not lose sight of the sympathy toward her that Carey is so careful to cultivate throughout the course of the narrative. As far as The Girl with All the Gifts explores the boundaries of trust due to a sympathetic zombie character, it distantly reminds me of Richard Matheson’s 1954 novel, I Am Legend, Matthew Kohnen’s 2007 film Wasting Away or Jonathan Levine’s 2013 film Warm Bodies – although The Girl with All the Gifts is quite different in tone to the latter two as it is not a comedy.

There is an sf element that accounts for the widespread zombification that had occurred in the narrative’s past, and that continues to occur. Carey works hard to ensure that this element is consistent throughout the narrative. It is enlisted to shape the novel’s carefully plotted trajectory, to support the history that grounds this story and which feeds into all of the characters’ orientations and behavior, and it forms the basis for the narrative’s emblematic conclusion. As it trades on the consistency of explanations grounded in biological and ecological epistemologies, it manages to extrapolate a facet of the natural world – albeit an uncanny one – and follow its logic in order create an ambivalently horrifying and satisfying conclusion to the novel.

Other important characters with whom Melanie interacts and travels with, and through whom some of the narrative is focalized, include Sergeant Ed Parks, the military leader of Hotel Echo, Justineau, Melanie’s much loved and conflicted teacher, Christine Caldwell, the head scientist responsible for the development of a cure for the zombiefication, and Private Kieran Gallagher, a young soldier subordinate to Parks. The conflicts between all these characters, from Parks’ pragmatic distrust of Melanie, Justineau’s guilt and shame for her complicity over the imprisonment and brainwashing of a score of intelligent young hungries under her charge, Gallagher’s fear and youthful inexperience, and Caldwell’s ruthless and cruel obsession with finding a cure at any cost, are all woven into a series of compelling exchanges. In this classic post-apocalyptic setting, all of the characters are involved in negotiations over their place in the world relative to their accidental companions, and to the larger community of people at Beacon, a home that only ever appears in the narrative as a utopic idea that motivates them. As its name suggests, it is as much a guiding marker as a warning of shores to avoid.

While most of the characters are very well drawn and work as characters rather than ciphers, Caldwell does operate more as a caricature of scientific progress and narrow-mindedness rather than as a character in her own right, a person who exceeds the confines of the role she occupies as one of the few brilliant scientists left to the human population. This flatness is perhaps highlighted by the development of the other characters, all of whom do wrestle with their changing circumstances, and all of whom must accept dangerous compromises in order to survive and stay faithful to their various motivations. Caldwell’s presence is absolutely necessary to the development of the latter parts of the narrative, yet the tragedy of her story is significantly overwhelmed by her monstrosity.

The Girl with All the Gifts is a compelling and refreshing re-visioning of the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative. If one were to teach the novel, I would recommend it as a part of a course on zombies for its sf premise, its depiction of sympathetic zombies, its blend of the gothic icon of the child and the zombie, and for its exploration of the individual’s response to crisis. The Girl with All the Gifts would also work well on a course that explored the boundaries between genre, blending as it does sf and myth through an overarching gothic framework. It would also work well on a course that explored laboratory experimentation and the justifications that undergird such research. It is an exceedingly well paced novel with a trajectory that builds on Melanie’s alter ego as Pandora, pursuing her curiosity until she makes a choice that would unleash something new, and deadly, onto the world.
A Roundtable: Under the Skin [film]

Marleen S. Barr, Paweł Frelik, Andy Hageman


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AT THE SFRA/WISCON conference in Madison in May 2014, Guest of Honor Sherryl Vint presented a keynote talk on the (at that time) newly released film, Under the Skin. The 2013 film, directed by Jonathan Glazer (Sexy Beast, 2000; Birth 2004) is based on a 2000 novel of the same name by Michel Faber (The Hundred and Ninety-Nine Steps, 2001; The Crimson Petal and the White, 2002; and The Books of Strange New Things, 2014). The talk, given to a packed room, was provocative in all the right senses of the word. Shortly thereafter, I issued a call for contributions to a roundtable discussion on the film. What follows are the contributions by Marleen S. Barr, Paweł Frelik, and Andy Hageman (in alphabetical order). The contributions were then circulated, and each participant was given the opportunity to respond to the others.

Ritch Calvin

Aye, The Eyes / I’s Have It Or, “Human” Is the New “Mink”

Marleen S. Barr

It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world. . . . Perspective makes the single eye the centre [sic] of the visible world. Everything converges on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity. . . . What you saw was relative to your position in time and space. It was no longer possible to imagine everything converging on the human eye as on the vanishing point of infinity. (John Berger, Ways of Seeing, 7,16,18)

Eyes pervade Under the Skin. The film opens with images of abstract other worldly eyes portraying everything converging “on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity.” The severed female head’s blinking eyes is the most jarring of the film’s many human eye shots. Viewers, thrown into a milieu devoid of locational markers, first learn they are situated in Scotland when they hear the word “aye.” The emphasis upon “eye” and “aye” indicates that the film underscores the individual “I.” It concerns estrangement which is extreme to the extent that humans relate to each other in terms of predator and prey relationships. It is about clearly seeing that it is wrong at once to reject what Michael Lerner calls “the politics of meaning” (valuing the innate humanity and worth of all people) and to accept exploitative relationships with other people and nature. The many men who wish to have sex with a beautiful “female” stranger enable viewers to see societal alienation, failed human interaction. Under The Skin presents ways of seeing the perspective of the single I responding to being the center of and “establish[ing] our place in the [dysfunctional] surrounding world.” The I must re-see victimization by replacing the affirmation “aye” denotes with Leslie Fiedler’s term “no in thunder.”

When the alien appropriates the female corpse, the acceptance of violence against woman is underscored. All eyes are on the dead-woman-as-alien, not on an individual woman’s lost life. In contrast to this disregard, the baby crying alone on the beach and the drowning victims evoke viewers’ sympathy. The alien is not completely estranged from her victims. She does not harm men who are connected to other people; she spares the man who has a disfigured face. She engages in human activities such as tapping her hands in time to music and attempting to eat cake. Her failed gastronomical effort brings the indifference “let them eat cake” communicates to mind.

The alien changes from predator to sympathizer to prey. Re-seeing her clothing as being aberrant rather than normal addresses her relation to humans and humans’ relationship to animals. She wears a fur jacket, a leather jacket, and a cloth coat. The cloth is benign. The fur and the leather are insidious. What right do humans have to appropriate animals’ skins to manufacture clothes without considering the rights of the sentient beings who live under the skins used to make fur and leather? Re-see the scene in which people ride horses. Forcing horses to transport humans exploits horses. Some of the pine trees are brown—i.e., killed by air pollution. The alien seen as a sex object and the trees seen as negligible objects call for re-seeing business as usual destruction of women and nature.

Back to the skin. The alien examines her vagina by taking a lamp in hand. Lampshades, as we are all aware, were made from human skin. A skin head rapes the alien.
Smoke rising from a purposefully burned body located in a European forest evokes Buchenwald. An alien with black skin who seems to have breasts is ensconced under the female corpse's white skin. This revelation makes seeing the alien as an enemy "relative to a [prior] position in time and space."

The alien has sympathy for the dead woman whose skin surrounded her body. The fact that the corpse's eyes blink show that she once had subjectivity. If she died to serve the alien's purpose, she is analogous to animals whose skin is used to clothe humans. The two insect images "converging on to the [viewer's] eye" unexpectedly have nothing to do with the alien. She is no *Men In Black* style insect monster. What lies under the white skin is a juxtaposed black, Jew, woman—a humanoid as hunted animal. The alien is more than human. She enables us clearly to see that exploitation and dehumanization should be relegated to "the vanishing point of infinity" the film's opening abstract eye/I imagery portrays.

The men who wear a body hugging wetsuit and a motorcycle suit address a means to impart sense to the film. In the manner of these suits, the dead woman's skin acts as a garment. Perhaps the alien hunts humans for their skins in the manner of people who club baby seals to death. Using sex as a means to compel men to remove their clothes, she might transport conveniently naked men to her home planet where they will be skinned and used to make clothing. The empathy the alien feels for the human whose skin surrounded her body is what fur and leather wearing humans should feel for animals.

*Under the Skin* stresses the need to say aye to accepting the importance of seeing and respecting the I of all earthly sentient beings who are alien in relation to the self. When the alien disrobes, takes off a coat-like garment made from human skin, the film calls for re-seeing in relation to a fantastic premise in which "human" becomes the new "mink." The point is that people should not put on clothing made from animal skin in a manner analogous to the alien's nonchalant attitude toward applying lipstick.

"*Under the Skin, In the Ears*"

Paweł Frelik

While there is much good to be said about *Under the Skin*’s adaptation-related decisions (creative despite significant divergences from Faber's novel), cinematography (brilliant), editing (masterful), and even Scarlett Johansson’s performance (inspired), it is the sound design that I find most fascinating in the film. In fact, Jonathan Glaz-
months of environmental harvest, but in the film they often appear muffled and distanced or, alternately, exaggerated and cacophonically crammed into the same audio plain. This unorganized although rigorously-executed chaos of noises clearly imitates the alien’s sensorium, particularly in the extended, slow-moving scenes in which the camera dwells on Johansson’s inexpressive face or its reflection in the rear-view mirror.

Consequently, the alien’s lack of understanding of the world around her is often tied to sound. In the scene, when she is watching a comedy TV show, the comedian’s stick, very appropriately, relies on mostly nonsensical speech and shouting. She doesn’t understand harmony, either, and awkwardly attempts to drum the rhythm of a radio song wither fingers after observing the man’s tentative swaying to the music.

The ingenious intermeshing of the score and environmental sounds is best exemplified in the scenes in the black room, an alien space devoid of sound and color, whose exact location is uncertain. Its utter strangeness centrally relies on sound. In the excerpt in which two victims meet, the complete absence of sound, save for faint crumpling, is at odds with the fact that both victims are clearly in the space in which they can breathe. The older man has a mouth and can scream, but no sound travels through the ether in the apparent abrogation of earthly physics. The uncanny silence is broken by the aggressive score only when the victims die and everything that is under their skin flows in a red river. The absence of color and the ghostly bluishness of men’s bodies certainly has an alienating effect, but it is the sound design that conveys the otherworldliness of the space.

Although it is far less radical formally than Southland Tales, Under the Skin can also be seen as post-cinematic. On the cinematic/post-cinematic continuum, it does not lie so far to the right, but it does go further away in this direction than most other SF films. Kelly’s masterpiece achieves its post-cinematic quality primarily through its cinematography and editing (although its sound design is also very innovative); the true understanding of alienness in Glazer’s film demands complete and precise sonic immersion that only headphones can afford.

Space-Alien Space

Andy Hageman

The Scottish mountains, forests, and firths forcefully shape Michel Faber’s novel, Under the Skin, and Jonathan Glaser’s film by the same name. Faber’s novel provides extensive access to Isserley’s interior thoughts and feelings, prominent amongst which is “her” deep attachment to the landscapes and waterways she encounters daily. Isserley’s attachment comes in part from the ecological crises that we learn have befallen her home planet. As such, the novel deploys non-human-built spaces to enhance the protagonist’s texture and to express an ecological allegory. By contrast, Glaser’s film all but excludes the alien protagonist’s interior, thereby eliding the sense of attachment in Faber, and it integrates shots of non-human-built spaces with shots of city life. This short foray will outline the distinct ecological insights of each version to suggest that analyzing the novel and the film together provides ecological revelations about making contact in a world of interconnected others that become powerfully available through alien eyes.

Early in Faber’s novel, we meet Isserley absorbed during her driving for hitchhiker-meat by the Highlands where “It was as if she had been set down on a world so newly finished that the mountains might still have some shifting to do and the wooded valleys might yet be recast as seas” (2). Through her eyes, we see non-human-built spaces afresh, though in a perspective not entirely alien to us. As a non-native to Earth, Isserley observes the pieces of the planet she encounters as results of processes that span geological and ecological time. Later in the novel, for example, we follow her on one of her treasured sea-shore walks: “Isserley walked along the pebbled shore of the Moray Firth, drinking in the beauty of the great uncovered world. . . . Each shell, each pebble, each stone had been made what it was by aeons of submarine or sub-glacial massage” (64). Such passages portray a connection to the environment that is part awe in the face of beauty and part perspectival shift to experiencing things on vast planes of time and change. Such passages flesh out Isserley’s character and create a foundation for the novel’s ecological allegory. “She” reminds us frequently that had she not come to Earth, she would be working in an oxygen production plant to compensate for a devastated atmosphere/climate. Faber builds upon this ecological allegory when Amlis, an elite, wealthy alien visits the operation on Earth and marvels at seeing the stars and feeling rain, “As if nature were actually trying to nurture me” (235). While the ethics of eating others is central to the novel, these broad ecological elements, narrated through landscape, reveal the ecological ideas and ideologies that enframe the aliens’ relationships to a homeworld they’ve destroyed and a population of others they justifying eating.

Glaser’s film also contains non-human-built spaces as significant milieu. Immediately after the psy-
chedelic light dot/eyeball opening sequence, the film cuts to shots of river rapids and a crepuscular mountain-scape; interspersed throughout the film are countryside and seaside shots, some populated by people and/or the alien, and some long takes of mist curling without obvious narrative import; and the film closes in the liminal zone of a forest being clear cut. While these landscapes parallel those of Faber’s novel, the cinematography does next to nothing to emphasize them, especially not through the alien’s eyes. Only in one late-film sequence is the image of the sleeping alien transposed onto a shot of the forest in which “she” is sleeping as if to convey a subtle, though unarticulated, connection. If anything, the city-life scenes are encoded with the deepest estrangement—quotidian activities like using an ATM and buying groceries appear disturbingly strange, alien. By contrast with the novel, the film resists identifying particular spaces as more or less natural or desirable. Although the film does not gesture at ecological allegory/import, it critically complements the novel as it more fully and radically renders the experience and ideas of being in the world alien, and it does so without a familiar, predetermined ecological allegory.

As a closing provocation, I cite the film sequence when two of the alien’s victims briefly meet and touch. Both human males reach out to each other, in the process alluding to Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel frescoes with the two-hand contact and with the left over skin of the man who gets eviscerated resembling St. Bartholomew in The Last Judgment, a figure of bodily sacrifice in one world for another. Through them, as through the novel and the film, we discover a new meaning of contact and interconnectedness within a world that has become a weird, gooey place of dimensions and aliens previously unimagined.

**Marleen S. Barr’s Response:**

Paweł Frelik, Andy Hagen, and I all respond in terms of human senses. The visual hit me dead on; I did not think of Frelik’s emphasis upon sound and Hagen’s attention to touch.

Frelik’s points about unscripted exchanges making the humans alien and unorganized sound reflecting the alien’s point of view are crucially illuminating. He adroitly explains that understanding the alien depends upon the “post-cinematic” film’s sound.

What Frelik’s calls “environmental sounds” relates to Hagen’s comments about comparing the novel to the film in terms of ecology. Hagen interestingly notes that the film is cinematically blind and deaf to emphasizing the landscapes the novel describes.

I was very moved by Hagen’s observation that when two male victims “meet and touch” they become analogous to the Sistine Chapel frescoes and to St. Bartholomew in The Last Judgment. The victims’ first contact enables viewers to, in Hagen’s words, “discover a new meaning of contact and interconnectedness” between women and men. The film depicts male bodies, not the usual female bodies, being sacrificed and compared to art. Such sacrifice in relation to all human beings is an alien assault upon human senses which, in terms of our three approaches, should never be seen, heard, or touched.

**Paweł Frelik’s Response:**

Both Marleen Barr and Andy Hageman take various routes to see humanity in Under the Skin: regained, acquired, coded in objects (lamps?), dressed, and undressed. And they may well be right, although, I have to confess, I see in the emblems they mention a never-ending procession of non/in-humanity. The omnipresence of eyes does have many precedents in SF cinema, but in the two most famous examples, 2001 and Blade Runner, the ocular organ always belongs to the notionally non-human (although, in both cases, the argument has been made that HAL and replicants may be more human than the presumed human). This could work well with Under the Skin, too, but at the same time, the eye-like shape may signify the non-human categorization. Speaking about the opening sequence, Glazer said: “I wanted the language of that sequence to feel like the alignment of planets, or the docking of a spaceship.” The eyes are thus not only I/eyes, but also conduits into other places that are empty of (human) life. In concert with this, eye-like circles appear in the sea scene, in which the wind is whipping up a water shower in a place whose desolation is increased by human deaths occurring on the shore.

I also really like Andy’s choice of the scene with two men—but my reading is exactly opposite. The allusion to Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam” is certainly there, just not as a glimpse of connectedness. Instead, it is a literal reversal, the uncreation of man, in which the nourishing contact is terminated and all is lost. The blue hue of the scene may thus, in this reading, allude to the blue star giant, a phase in the life of a star when it has exhausted most of its hydrogen fuel. The creaks accompanying the scene further stress, to my mind, decays, dissolution, and dispersal. Life slows down and fails. There are only eyes.
that lead into emptiness and the illusion of humanity that hides more emptiness.

Andy Hageman’s Response:

I really appreciate Marleen Barr’s and Paweł Frelik’s insightful, provocative essays. Marleen’s approach to living with sentient others and to the historical alignment of exploitation of women and the non-human world complement my own focus on the non-human elements of the novel and narrative—the seas, stars, trees, and the rain—towards a comprehensive ecocritical interpretation of Under the Skin. I am pleased that the collective roundtable includes both the interspecies ethics element of the film and my attempt at showing how SF is adept at reframing ecological interconnectedness as interplanetary. After all, haven’t we learned much about global warming on Earth by studying the atmospheres of our solar systemic neighbors?

Additionally, Marleen’s attention to alien appropriation of human corpses started me comparing Under the Skin with Alex Proyas’ Dark City (1998). Dark City overtly paints the Strangers, spider-like aliens who inhabit and fly around in pale, rigid, male human corpses like the uncanny progeny of Pinhead and Mary Poppins, as a dehumanizing species. In that case, though, they dehumanize largely because they think collectively and subscribe to psycho-analysis as opposed to hunting and utilizing human beings. I suspect there’s a comparison here, and one that could be extended to other films deploying the human corpse-appropriation trope, that could make for a nice sustained project.

As a film professor who teaches a unit on SF and music featuring The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951), 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), and Michael Radford’s short film Addicted to the Stars (2002), I was excited to read the immediately persuasive link Paweł draws between Under the Skin and the brilliant Southland Tales (2006). Furthermore, Paweł’s piece drove me to re-read and re-think a passage in Slavoj Žižek’s Looking Awry, when he writes, “The soundtrack gives us the basic perspective, the ‘map’ of the situation, and guarantees its continuity, while the images are reduced to isolated fragments that float freely in the universal medium of the sound aquarium” (40). Žižek was arguing that cinema had shifted from a visual medium to an audio one, yet his description of the symbolic/visual being reduced to flotsam in a “sea of yolky enjoyment” takes on new significance through Paweł’s exploration of Under the Skin. While the audio provides a map, it is auralized (as in the audio equivalent of focalized) through a radically alien Point of Hear that is anything but yolky enjoyment. I look forward to ongoing discussions we are here just beginning.

Works Cited


Wolfenstein: The New Order
[game]

Lars Schmeink


Order option(s): Windows | PlayStation 3 | PlayStation 4 | Xbox 360 | Xbox One

“It is hard to say what ranks lower on the artistic food chain than video games. Comic books? TV sit-coms? X-rated films? These ratlike vermin at the bottom scurry to avoid the thunderous footfalls of the towering behemoths of the art world.” (Robinett viii)

THIS IS ONE OF MY favorite quotes from the value discussion of video games as it clearly marks the difference in high and low cultural value given to artworks and poignantly comments on the elitism of literary or fine art scholarship. But aside from the question of value given to any one art form, the quote also hints at something that is especially intriguing when viewed against an international background. In the US, from where Robinett is writing, at least one thing seems to be clear and not part of the negotiation of video games: they are art—low life, bottom feeding, but art nonetheless. In Germany, where I am sitting at my desk and writing this review, this is not the case. Here, video games are considered toys. Yes, like Lego or Barbie, they are a plaything and not considered art. This has many repercussions for
anyone involved in games, as artistic grants cannot be given to game designers, as academic study of games concentrates on technology rather than aesthetics, as the industry talks about design prices, not awards for best artistry and as legislators are able to ban specific content from German audiences.

Because video games are toys, they do not fall under the lenient legislature for artwork and thus do not accommodate for artistic citation or the use of satire and irony. Toys may be cultural product, but their purpose is to entertain, not to educate or transport meaning. In Germany, this means that they do not deal with Nazis and the Holocaust (as the most prominent example of censorship). Since there is a law prohibiting the use of the Swastika or any other Nazi symbolism apart from education or art, video games dealing with Nazis are simply not possible. This seems ironic, as most games actually take a very anti-Nazi stance in their game mechanics and use them as foils for evil incarnate.

Wolfenstein: The New Order seems a case in point, as the last in a series of action games dealing with a science fictional setting in which the Nazis wield the technology of creating cyborgs and automated weaponry and finally manage to dominate the earth. The alternate history setting of New Order presents the Third Reich in 1960 as a global empire that even conquered the moon, created laser weapons, and is politically and economically unchallenged. The player takes on the role of former US Captain William Blazkowicz who recuperates from being in a vegetative state for fourteen years and sets out to rebuild the resistance and destroy the Nazi state once and for all. The game is hardly an innovation in terms of its standard gameplay (simple first-person-shooter), its ludicrous storyline (one man brings down an empire), or its science fictional novum (of cyborg experimentation). Nonetheless, the game refers to the Nazis as “The Regime” and all Nazi imagery has been removed and replaced with the stylized “W” of Castle Wolfenstein, the eponymous castle.

Unfortunately, the most promising point of analysis of New Order is exactly the one that the German government does not see and through its censorship eliminates. The use of Nazi imagery, the veneer of historical accuracy, and all the cultural associations that come with it, these are exactly the things that make this game artwork and not a toy. I would argue that New Order needs to
be understood as a grotesque performance much in the vein of the 1970s “sadiconazista” films, which Phil Hardy describes as “repulsively adolescent and racist torture-camp movies” and as “filmic atrocities” (315). According to Marcus Stiglegger these exploitation movies combine the Nazi veneer with sadomasochistic practices to “gain entertainment out of a pure imaginative destruction drive” (n.pag.). The historical elements as well as its connection to sexual perversity are used as part of the postmodern subversive arsenal to transgress ethical boundaries and to play with tastes and values. In a far more mainstream compatible version, similar imagery and the connection of sexuality and torture are used in the characters of Eva Krupp in Steven Spielberg’s Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (US 1989) and Eva Hauptstein in Guillermo del Toro’s Hellboy (US 2004). In New Order, the same elements are found in the character of Irene Engel, a blond, sadistic and violent prison camp commander that has a somewhat perverse sexual relationship with a much younger lover she calls “Bubi” (a German pejorative for little boy).

Since the game is rather focused on violence and not sexuality, I believe, the “sadiconazista” heritage has been glossed over with a more recent trend in depicting Nazis in fantastic films—that of violence filtered through carnival and grotesque, most prominently present in films such as Hellboy, Dead Snow (NOR 2009, Dir. Tommy Wirkola) or Inglorious Basterds (US 2009, Dir. Quentin Tarantino). Following the Bakhtinian concept of carnival, one could argue that the extreme forms of transgressive violence and the grotesque arsenal of body modifications and disembodiment (cyborgs, autopsy, hybridization, experimentation) in New Order functions as an over-the-top negotiation of the violence perpetrated during World War II. In the form of the carnivalesque we find a socially acceptable form to profane the sublime violence, to speak and even laugh about the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust (cf. Evers 65ff.).

In eliminating the Nazi imagery from the game, the player is denied the profaning moment of this “carnivalesque in uniform” (Evers 65) and thus loses the isotopic layer of historical play with symbolism and the cultural wealth of meaning behind it. The monstrousness of the Nazi history, combined with the grotesque “too much” of the cyborg soldiers and gigantic machinery is narrowed to a (science) fictional Other. Playing on the historic minefield of ethically questionable depictions of Nazi violence within this ‘ludic atrocity’ of a game is exactly the key aspect of the carnivalesque critique. Without the symbolism, New Order is simply any old shooter, but with the symbolism, the ironic stance and the grotesque exaggeration of violence become meaningful. The toy becomes art. Just consider the implications of the alternate history reading of the moon landing that the promotional material of the game suggests. The Hitler salute and the iconic Swastika

The combination of historically accurate Nazi imagery and the over-the-top sublime of the machine soldiers deliver a powerful grotesque message of subversion.
produce both an unease at the real possibility of the war turning out differently and a form of comic relief because of the outrageous suggestion of the historical reversal of roles. In the German censored version, with no salute and no iconic flag, this carnivalesque subversion simply ceases to exist.

Works Cited


Announcements

Call for Papers—Conference

Title: Thirty-Sixth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts: The Scientific Imagination
Deadline: 31 October 2014
Conference Date: March 18-22, 2015
Marriott Orlando Airport Hotel
Contact: http://www.fantastic-arts.org/annual-conference/submissions/
Guests of Honour: James Morrow (GoH), Joan Slonczewski (GoH), Colin Milburn (Guest Scholar), Brian Aldiss (Special Guest Emeritus)

The Scientific Imagination will be the theme for ICFA 36. Join us as we explore the possibilities and intersections of science and imagination—from Faust and Frankenstein, through the Golden Age and the New Wave, to steampunk and mash-ups—in all their guises, including fiction, film, television, music, theater, comics, visual art, and social media. Papers might explore topics such as rationalism vs. belief, science for good and ill, alternate and speculative technologies and biology, futurism, imaginary sciences, time travel, and the tensions inherent in discovery, among other topics. We welcome papers on the work of our guests: Guest of Honor James Morrow (winner of the Sturgeon Award, the World Fantasy Award, and two Nebula Awards), Guest of Honor Joan Slonczewski (winner of two Campbell Awards), and Guest Scholar Colin Milburn (author of Nanovision: Engineering the Future).

We also welcome proposals for individual papers and for academic sessions and panels on any aspect of the fantastic in any media.

Submission: Our submissions portal will open September 15 to receive proposals! http://www.fantastic-arts.org/annual-conference/submissions/.

Title: When the Alien Emerges: Eco-Teaching Speculative Fiction Film
Deadline: 31 October 2014
Conference Date: June 23-27, 2015
University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, US.
Contact: Andrew Hageman at hagean03@luther.edu and Bridgitte Barclay at bbarclay@aurora.edu

Topic: Related to the 2015 ASLE conference theme—Notes From Underground: The Depths of Environmental Arts, Culture, and Justice—we will determine the form based on the quantity of selected proposals—will explore eco-critical analyses of speculative fiction films with creatures who come “from underneath” or who “get underneath” and how those films can be used in the classroom. Proposals are invited for critical approaches to one or more speculative films that consider environmental pedagogy. Topics might focus on underground movements, activism, resistance, and emergence, considering how sf, environmental theory, and the teaching of these often fall into these categories. How can the convergence of the “what if” element of sf and the accessibility of film be a rich site to interrogate environmental issues? How has the cinematic notion of “underground” changed in eco-critical analyses over the decades? How can films about oceanic and/or other subterranean “monsters” be used in teaching to analyze environmental issues? How can films about parasitic creatures break down the “skin” between human/non-human? What do the human/nonhuman-ness of the creatures in these films say about human understanding of the non-human world? While this list of questions is merely a start, please make it clear in your proposal that your talk engages with teaching, whether experientially, anecdotally, or speculatively.

Submission: This panel is sponsored by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA), a professional affiliate organization of ASLE. Please submit a 250-word proposal in the body of an email to both Andrew Hageman at hagean03@luther.edu and Bridgitte Barclay at bbarclay@aurora.edu by October 31, 2014.

Title: What Lies Beneath Monster Movies: Exploring Ecohorror Cinema
Deadline: 1 November 2014
Conference Date: June 23-27, 2015
University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, US.
Contact: Christy Tidwell at christy.tidwell@gmail.com and Carter Soles at csoles@brockport.edu

Topic: Ecohorror reveals our fears about the natural world. In it, animals become monsters; landscapes become nightmares; environmental practices lead to apocalyptic destruction. In this panel, we are interested in exploring cinematic versions of these narratives and the ways in which these films help us grasp our own cultural anxieties, our relationship with particular species and
ecosystems, and past and current environmental policies.

Because horror is a genre concerned with dark and often hidden fears and desires, ecohorror provides a promising space for discussion of ideas relevant to this year’s conference theme of the underground. Ecohorror may engage with repressed anxieties about the natural world or environmental issues, resistance to the environmental status quo or to environmental change, or monstrous hybrid species and landscapes.

We are particularly interested in papers about monster movies, but we are open to a range of ideas on ecohorror film.

Submission: Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words to both Christy Tidwell (christy.tidwell@gmail.com) and Carter Soles (csoles@brockport.edu) by November 1, 2014.

Title: Stage The Future 2: The Second International Conference on Science Fiction Theatre
Deadline: 30 November 2014
Conference Date: March 6-8, 2015
Arizona State University
Contact: stagethefuture@gmail.com
Keynote Speakers: Prof. Jay Scheib (MIT) jayscheib.com and Howard Sherman (The Stage) hesherman.com

Topic: Following a successful first conference in the UK, Stage the Future 2 invites abstract submissions for the second annual international science fiction theatre conference to be hosted at Arizona State University on March 7th-8th 2015. We welcome papers, panels, and performances that examine and explore the unique attributes live performance offers to science fiction and those that science fiction offers to live performance.

Science fiction theatre has been steadily emerging and growing into a diverse and global community of artists – from the Science Fiction Theatre Company of Boston, Gideon Productions, OtherWorld and the Vampire Cowboys Theatre in the US to Superbolt, WholeHog and Stars or Mars in the UK, as well as the annual SciFest theatre festival in Los Angeles – who recognize that the stage has singular qualities, different from literature and film, for engaging the technical and scientific advancements of our modern age.

The stage can offer wholly unique and original experiences of science fiction that move beyond the boundaries of other mediums. As Susan Sontag has suggested, science fiction literature and film are frequently viewed as two halves of a binary, wherein novels are structured around the intellectual intricacies of hard science, while film provides the viewer with the sensory experience of “science.” Theatre, however, is a platform for both intellectual and sensual elaborations that can transcend such binaries. In this spirit, we call for artists, scholars, critics, and scientists to share ideas on how science fiction theatre may better explore the complexities and contradictions of contemporary scientific practice, particularly in the context of STEM education, sustainable innovation, gender and racial equality, and rational engagement with religion and experiences of the metaphysical.

In addition to traditional notions of theatre, we welcome diverse views on not just what is considered science fiction, but also what can be considered theatrical engagement with science fiction. Dancers, digital and social media artists, and musicians are equally encouraged to present material that engages science fiction themes for live audiences that are either physically or tele-present.

Topics might include but are not limited to:

• Future and Alternate Histories
• Utopias, Dystopias, Political SF Theatre
• Non-human and post-human characters
• Steampunk, Cyberpunk and other -punks on stage
• Space Opera and Science Fiction Opera
• Apocalypse and post-apocalyptic societies
• Genetic engineering, Cyborgs, Clones, A.I.
• Ecological science fiction
• Science Fiction and Dance
• Menippean satire
• Planetary romance
• Adapting science fiction
• Contemporary Fantasy and Horror Theatres

Papers presented at the conference will be considered for publication.

The conference is organized by:
Christos Callow PhD candidate, Birkbeck, University of London; Susan Gray, PhD candidate, Royal Holloway, University of London; Boyd Branch, Visiting Assistant Professor, Arizona State University; Carol Stewart, PhD candidate, Instructor, Bellarmine University; Lance Gharavi, Associate Professor, Arizona State University; Carrie J. Cole, Assistant Professor, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
Submission: The conference welcomes proposals for presentations, roundtables and performances from any discipline and theoretical perspective. Please send a title and a 300 word abstract (as a Word document) for a 20 minute paper or a performance, along with your name, affiliation and 100 word biography to stagethefuture@gmail.com by 30 November 2014.

Title: British Society for Literature and Science Tenth Annual Conference
Deadline: 5 December 2014
Conference Date: April 16-18, 2015
University of Liverpool.
Contact: bsls2015@liverpool.ac.uk
Keynote Speakers: Professor Keith Barnham (Imperial College London), Dr Patricia Fara (University of Cambridge), and Dr Claire Preston (Queen Mary University of London)

The BSLS invites proposals for twenty-minute papers, or panels of three papers, on any subjects within the field of literature and science. In addition, ‘flash talks’ of up to 7 minutes on any topic are invited for a special plenary session. Other formats are also welcomed, but please email your suggestion to the organisers (via bsls2015@liverpool.ac.uk) for consideration, well in advance of the submission deadline.

This year the organisers would particularly welcome proposals addressing the themes of light, optics, vision and colour, and proposals for papers, panels or roundtables on engaging the public with literature and science research. However, the BSLS remains committed to supporting and showcasing work on all aspects of literature – including comparative literature and European and world literatures – and science, medicine and technology.

Submission: Proposals of no more than 250 words, together with the name and institutional affiliation of the speaker, and a biographical note of around 50 words, should be sent in the body of messages (not in attachments) to bsls2015@liverpool.ac.uk. Proposals for panels should include a separate proposal and biographical note for each paper. The closing date for submissions is Friday 5 December 2014.

The conference fee will be waived for two graduate students in exchange for written reports on the conference, to be published in the BSLS Newsletter. If you are interested in being selected for one of these awards, please mention this when sending in your proposal. To qualify you will need to be registered for a postgraduate degree at the time of the conference.

Accommodation: please note that those attending the conference will need to make their own arrangements for accommodation. Information on local hotels will be made available soon on the forthcoming conference website.

Membership: conference delegates will need to register as members of the BSLS (annual membership: £25 waged/ £10 unwaged). It will be possible to join the BSLS when registering for the conference online.

For further information and updates about the conference, please contact Greg Lynall (bsls2015@liverpool.ac.uk). A conference website will be available in due course.

Title: Sideways in Time: Alternate History and Counterfactual Narratives
Deadline: 15 December 2014
Conference Date: March 30-31, 2015
University of Liverpool, UK
Contact: sidewaysconference@gmail.com
Keynote Speakers: Karen Hellekson

The University of Liverpool, in collaboration with Lancaster University, invites you to attend Sideways in Time, an Alternate History Conference, to be held March 2015. This interdisciplinary conference will bring together scholarship in science fiction, fantasy, historical and literary fictions, as well as historians and counterfactual thought-experiments, to discuss those fictional narratives that deal with alternate histories.

Despite a long and diverse history, alternate history has attracted surprisingly little scholarship. This conference will attempt to establish lines of communication which will rectify this deficit. It is hoped a selection of the essays presented at the conference will be made available as part of a published collection.

We are pleased to announce Karen Hellekson, the leading authority on alternative history fiction (The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time), as the first of our keynote speakers.

Submission: 300 word abstracts to be submitted to sidewaysconference@gmail.com, along with a 50 word bi-onote by December 15, 2014.

Look for details on our website: http://sidewaysintime.wordpress.com/.
**Title:** Locating Fantastika  
**Conference Date:** July 2015  
University of Lancaster, UK

Lancaster University invites you to attend the second annual Fantastika conference in July 2015.

Fantastika, coined by John Clute, is an umbrella term which incorporates the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, but also includes alternative histories, steampunk, young adult fiction, or any other imaginative space.

Following the success of Visualizing Fantastika in 2014, the conference organizers plan to make Fantastika an annual conference, so as to bring together academics from related fields of study.

The 2015 theme, ‘Locating Fantastika’, explores all areas of space, setting, and locatings, either in the fictional world of fantastika or in fantastical networks with the real world.

Look for details at [http://fantastikaconference.wordpress.com](http://fantastikaconference.wordpress.com) or like us on Facebook: ‘Fantastika Conference’.

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**Title:** The Once and Future Antiquity: Classical Traditions in Science Fiction and Fantasy  
**Deadline:** 15 December 2014  
**Conference Date:** March 27-29, 2015  
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA, USA  
**Contact:** classicalreceptions@gmail.com

What roles has classical antiquity played in visions of the future, the fantastic, the speculative, the might-have-been? How have works of science fiction, from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus*, imagined ancient traditions in relation to the modern world, whether at present or in the days after tomorrow? What might it mean to consider antiquity – its art, history, literature, philosophy, and material culture – through the lens of fantasy, a genre traditionally associated with medievalism? This conference seeks to build on recent and increasing work (e.g., conferences in Rouen, France (2012) and Liverpool, U.K. (2013), as well as the recent collection of Bost-Fiévet & Provini (2014) and the forthcoming collection of Rogers & Stevens (2015)) in this exciting field within classical reception studies.

Proposals are invited for conference presentations (20 minutes plus discussion) [or thematically-organized panels of three (3) such presentations each] that raise particular versions of these questions under the general heading of *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Topics might include, e.g., the rewriting of an ancient story by a modern author working in science fiction or fantasy; examination of a moment or trend in ancient history from a perspective developed in response to the modern genres; strategies for teaching ancient classics via comparison with modern works; or comparison of classical and science fictional / fantastical approaches to knowing the world.

These are only examples, and the organizers welcome proposals dealing with any intersection between antiquity and modern science fiction or fantasy, including speculative fiction. The organizers also welcome abstracts considering how the Digital Humanities can help advance scholarship in this field. In preparing their proposals, contributors are encouraged to keep in mind an audience including not only professional scholars and students but also devoted readers of science fiction and fantasy.

The conference is planned for the weekend of March 27th-29th, 2015, at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA, USA. (Tacoma is the hometown of *Dune’s* Frank Herbert and located close to Seattle, home of the EMP, a museum devoted to SF, fantasy, and music). Participants will receive details about registration and lodging in December.

Questions may be directed to the organizers, Prof. Brett M. Rogers (University of Puget Sound) and Prof. Benjamin Eldon Stevens (Bryn Mawr College) at their individual email addresses (bmrogers@pugetsound.edu, bestevens@brynmawr.edu) or at the conference email address given above.

**Submission:** Proposals of no more than 300 words should be sent to classicalreceptions@gmail.com no later than December 15, 2014. Authors will be notified of their proposals’ status by the end of December.

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**Title:** Seeking, Seizing, Sharing... Knowledge and the Fantastic  
**Deadline:** 31 December 2014  
**Conference Date:** September 24-27, 2015  
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen  
**Contact:** gff2015@uni-tuebingen.de

Knowledge has always been a fundamental part of fantastic stories: characters seek specific knowledge – be it the need for concrete information, the aim to metaphysically broaden one’s horizon or the acquisition of
special abilities – and they live in high-tech, futuristic or foreign, anachronistic worlds, which in turn are only accessible and immediately familiar to the inaugurated – knowledgable – reader or viewer. Thus, fantastic stories task even the most seasoned viewer with the act of world-building, of acquiring sufficient knowledge in relation to these fantastic, fundamentally different, worlds.

*Seeking, Seizing, Sharing...* the sixth annual meeting of the Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung aims to address the diverse functions and importance of knowledge in the fantastic from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Whether secret, specific or generic, what are central motifs of knowledge and how is knowledge as content determined? What are the forms and structures of knowledge – the rules by which it is defined, organized and communicated? And finally, what importance does knowledge possess – as capital, as a power base, as a cause of conflict?

Especially in connection with serial formats does the process of knowledge acquisition appear crucial – and ever so worthwhile, as in times of social media such stories can offer a deeper experience, one that surpasses the singular reception process of individual works. Current research on fandom has shown the relevance of shared knowledge, thus exemplifying the social and socio-cultural nature of knowledge and its importance as the basis of specific value and norm systems.

Moreover, fantastic stories often contain mythological, technological or philosophical motives, which offer the recipient hints, to be deciphered only through general cultural knowledge rather than specific media knowledge. Conversely, the fantastic genre can serve the dissemination of knowledge beyond the single work, and in its indirect-direct characteristic can mediate and communicate attitudes, opinions, and thus, not last, education. Here questions ensue regarding the relation of knowledge, memory, and remembering, about the psychology of learning and pedagogical contexts of knowledge acquisition, as well as social aspects of participation and access to knowledge.

Concluding, the conference wants to address the relationship between knowledge and science and reflect subsequent meta-discourses revolving around researching the fantastic.

The aim of this conference is to illuminate the diverse functions and importance of knowledge in the fantastic from different perspectives and methodological approaches. Invited are scientists from various disciplines and directions, such as philosophy, literature, and media studies, to psychology, education, cultural and social sciences or cognitive and neuro-sciences.

As has become usual, there will be an open track for those presentations that are not directly related to the overall theme of the conference. In order to mirror the wide field of research we explicitly welcome talks about other aspects of the fantastic.

The GFF offers two student stipends (250,- Euro) to help with travel finances. Interested students should mention the stipend in their application to the conference and provide a short note of motivation.

**Submission:** Everyone interested should send an abstract of a 20-minute talk in German or English (max. 350 words, including contact details and brief biographical information) to gff2015@uni-tuebingen.de by December 31st 2014.

**Title:** Nature and Technology in Environmental History

**Deadline:** 1 January 2015

**Conference Date:** May 28-31, 2015

Renmin University of China, Beijing

**Contact:** Mingfang Xia (xiamingfang2@vip.sina.com), Helmuth Trischler (h.trischler@deutsches-museum.de) and Donald Worster (dworster@ku.edu)

**Keynote Speaker:** Edmund Russell (The University of Kansas)

Co-Sponsored by the Center for Ecological History, Renmin University of China, and Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich.

Nuclear power plants, bullet trains, factory farms, and ancient rice paddies are all forms of landscapes transformed by technology. They express a relationship between humans and the natural world. Like all technologies, they have been shaped by their environmental conditions and in turn have reshaped the earth into new environments. Lewis Mumford, in *Technics and Civilization*, distinguished between “eotechnics,” “paleotechnics,” and “neo-technics,” each representing a set of ideas, values, and material ways of relating to nature. Such broad changes over time and yet also very local landscapes of nature-technology will be foci of our conference. Our scope is interdisciplinary and ranges widely over time and space, from the preindustrial era to the modern age when the whole earth is sometimes described as a human artifact.

We seek papers on such topics as the transformation of native plants into medicines, animals into “organic machines,” and genes into GMOs; the impact of water or...
electric power production on natural systems; mining as an intervention in nature, the perception of nature through the changing lens of astronomy, technology and innovation; and the ecology of industrialization. We are interested in such issues as the meaning of the “Anthropocene” and its cultural implications, western vs. nonwestern views of the line separating nature from technology, theories of hybridity and techno-imperialism, and concepts of envirotech histories.

**Submission:** this conference is open to all ranks and all scholars, from graduate students to senior professors. Participants will be selected competitively. Those interested in attending should send a written proposal of one page in length (or about 300 words) and include a title and a one- or two-page CV. **The deadline for consideration is 1 January 2015.** Successful proposals will be announced around 1 February, and complete drafts of papers (minimum of 5,000 words in English or the equivalent in Chinese characters) will be required by 1 May. All papers will be circulated to the participants in advance and will not be orally presented in full during the conference.

Travel expenses for scholars living outside of China will be paid by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. Scholars living within China should depend on their own universities for covering travel expenses. For all participants, hotel expenses for three nights will be covered by Renmin University of China.

The distinguished historian Edmund Russell of the United States will be our keynote speaker. Among his works are *War and Nature; Evolutionary History; “The Nature of Power: Synthesizing the History of Technology and Environmental History;” and “Can Organisms Be Technology?” The last day of the conference will be devoted to a field trip that will explore the interaction of technology and nature in the Beijing area.

Send proposals in Chinese or English to all of the conference organizers: Mingfang Xia (xiamingfang2@vip.sina.com), Helmuth Trischler (h.trischler@deutsches-museum.de) and Donald Worster (dworster@ku.edu).

Mingfang Xia is Director of the Center for Ecological History, Remin University of China, and Director of and Professor of History in the Qing Institute. Helmuth Trischler is Head of Research at the Deutsches Museum, Professor of Modern History and History of Technology at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, and Co-director of the Rachel Carson Center, Munich, Germany. Donald Worster is Hall Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA, and Distinguished Foreign Expert, Renmin University of China, Beijing. The organizing committee also includes Shen Hou, Deputy Director of the Center for Ecological History and Associate Professor of History at Renmin University of China. The conference secretary is Agnes Kneitz, Assistant Professor of History at Renmin University of China.

**Title:** The Second *Star Trek* Symposium 2016  
**Conference Date:** 2016  
**Malta**

**Welcome.**

2016 marks the 50th anniversary from the launch of *Star Trek: The Original Series*. To commemorate such an event, plans for the second *Star Trek* Symposium are under way. This will differ from the traditional Fan-Based Convention in that it is a platform for academics from across many disciplines to meet and explore the intersection of humanities and sciences. It will be an academic meeting, with the presentation of scholarly papers that will explore the intersection of the humanities and the sciences.

The first *Star Trek* Symposium held earlier this year was well received, thus motivating the organizers to plan and thus promote another symposium to celebrate *Star Trek’s* Golden Anniversary. The organizers are also in the process of compiling and publishing all presented papers of the said symposium in a book. Hopefully it will be out for the public later on this year or the beginning of next year.

The event will be held under the auspices of HUMS, a programme at the University of Malta that has been set up to explore and encourage the interfaces between the humanities, medicine and the sciences, and aims to facilitate and disseminate cross-disciplinary research. The *Star Trek* Symposium is an event that will appeal to scientists and fans of science fiction alike.

**Title:** Eighth Anniversary Sessions of the Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Legend Area  
**Deadline:** 1 June 2015  
**Conference Date:** October 30-31, 2015  
**Colby-Sawyer College in New London, New Hampshire**

**Contact:** Kraig Larkin (kraig.larkin@colby-sawyer.com) and Michael A. Torregrossa (NEPCAFantastic@gmail.com)
Formed in 2008, the Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Legend Area celebrates its eighth anniversary in 2015, and we seek proposals from scholars of all levels for papers that explore any aspect of the intermedia traditions of the fantastic (including, but not limited to, elements of science fiction, fantasy, fairy tale, gothic, horror, legends, and mythology) and how creative artists have altered our preconceptions of these subtraditions by producing innovative works in diverse countries and time periods and for audiences at all levels.

Special topics:

- Given the proximity to Halloween, we are especially interested in proposals related to monsters and the monstrous.

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

Submission: If you are interested in proposing a paper or panel of papers, please send the NEPCA Paper Proposal Form (download from http://nepca.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/nepca-paper-proposal-form1-1.pdf) along with an abstract of approximately 250 to 400 words and a one to two page CV to both the Program Chair AND to the Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Legend Area Chair at the following addresses (please note “NEPCA Fantastic Proposal 2015” in your subject line): Kraig Larkin, Program Chair, kraig.larkin@colby-sawyer.com; and Michael A. Torregrossa, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Legend Area Chair, NEPCAFantastic@gmail.com.

The Northeast Popular Culture/American Culture Association (NEPCA) is a regional affiliate of the American Culture Association and the Popular Culture Association. NEPCA is an association of scholars in New England and New York, organized in 1974 at the University of Rhode Island. We reorganized and incorporated in Boston in 1992. The purpose of this professional association is to encourage and assist research, publication, and teaching on popular culture and culture studies topics by scholars in the northeast region of the United States. By bringing together scholars from various disciplines, both academic and non-academic people, we foster interdisciplinary research and learning. We publish a newsletter twice per year and we hold an annual conference at which we present both the Peter C. Rollins Book Award and an annual prize.

Membership in NEPCA is required for participation. Annual dues are currently $30 for full-time faculty and $20 to all other individuals; dues are included in conference registration fees. Further details are available at http://nepca.wordpress.com/membership-information/.

Call for Papers—Articles

Title: Maps and Mapping in Children's Literature
Deadline: 21 November 2014
Manuscript Deadline: 25 September 2015

Contact:

Topic: Literature for children and young adults is a rich source of material for the study of literary maps, one that has been largely overlooked, despite the growth in academic interest in this area of study. We are therefore seeking contributions for a proposed collection on maps in children's literature that will bring together the best current thinking on the topic, which will become a resource for scholars, and provide a springboard for further study in this area, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary and international discourses.

Possible areas for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- The interplay of literary maps and texts
- The historical and aesthetic development of maps and mapping in children's literature
- The impact of genre and form on maps (for example in works of fantasy and picturebooks)
- The cultural, ideological, pedagogical, metaphorical, cognitive, narrative and imaginative function of maps in children's literature
- Differences in form and function between literary maps in children's literature and those found in adult literature
- The shifting iconography of literary maps
- Issues of representation in maps and mapping
- The use of maps in works of non-fiction for children
- The role of maps and mapping in constructions of children's spatial, personal (including gendered), regional, international and global identities.
- The poetics and politics of maps and mapping in writing for children
Contributions might cover a range of maps from different sources or times, or focus on maps in a single series. We are particularly keen to enlarge the discussion beyond English language texts and maps, and so we welcome contributions that discuss literary maps and mapping in children's books from non-Anglophone countries.

Submission: Please send a 250-300 word abstract as a Word attachment outlining your proposed content, brief biographical information, and a preliminary bibliography to both editors: Dr. Hazel Sheeky Bird at hazelsheekybird@gmail.com and Dr. Anthony Pavlik at anthony.pavlik@ltu.se. E-mails should have the subject line “literary maps”. Questions regarding proposals can also be directed to the editors prior to submission and abstracts should be sent no later than November 21st, 2014.

Full articles of no more than 6,000 words will be required no later than September 25th 2015.

Acceptance of abstracts will not guarantee inclusion in the final collection. All contributions will be peer reviewed, and responsibility for obtaining copyright permissions lies with the contributor.

Title: The Canadian Alternative: Canadian Cartoonists, Comics, and Graphic Novels
Manuscript Deadline: 30 April 2015
Contact: Dominick Grace (dgrace2@uwo.ca) and/or Eric Hoffman (diamondjoecity@gmail.com)

For a proposed edited and refereed volume on Canadian graphic novelists and cartoonists. Dominick Grace and Eric Hoffman, editors of Dave Sim: Conversations, Chester Brown: Conversations, and Seth: Conversations for the University Press of Mississippi, are editing a collection of essays provisionally titled The Canadian Alternative: Canadian Cartoonists, Comics, and Graphic Novels. We seek previously unpublished essays addressing Canadian cartoonists/comics. Our primary interest is in “alternative” cartoonists and cartooning, narrowly defined; that is, figures associated with the underground, independent, and/or ground-level comics movements. Figures of key interest might include but are not limited to

- Marc Bell
- David Boswell
- Chester Brown
- David Collier
- Julie Doucet
- Rand Holmes
- Jeff Lemire (especially his independent work)
- Bernie Mireault
- Bryan Lee O’Malley
- Dave Sim
- Seth

However, and as the inclusion of Lemire above indicates, we are also interested in papers dealing with the Canadian “alternative” more broadly-defined, whether represented by the visions of specific creators who have worked in mainstream comics (Byrne, Dan and Gene Day, Lemire, McFarland, etc.) or by Canadian alternatives to mainstream US comics publishing (e.g. the Canadian “whites” of World War Two), the various attempts to create a Canadian market/national hero (perhaps best represented by Richard Comely and Comely Comics’s Captain Canuck), and other distinctly Canadian takes on the graphic medium (e.g. Martin Vaughan-James’s The Cages, or BP Nicholls’s use of comics/cartooning).

Submission: Substantial essays (5,000-8,000 words) focusing on specific creators, comparing/contrasting the work of a few creators, or addressing Canadian movements in comics are welcome. Submit completed papers by April 30 2015 to Dominick Grace (dgrace2@uwo.ca) and/or Eric Hoffman (diamondjoecity@gmail.com). Inquiries/proposals are also welcome.

Though a publisher has yet to be determined, the University Press of Mississippi has expressed interest in publishing this collection.

Title: SFFTV Special Issue CFP: “Star Trek at 50”
Manuscript Deadline: 1 September 2015
Contact: Mark Bould (mark.bould@gmail.com), Sherryl Vint (sherryl.vint@gmail.com), and Gerry Canavan (gerrycanavan@gmail.com)

Science Fiction Film and Television seeks submissions for a special issue on “Star Trek at 50.” Since its premiere on September 8, 1966, Gene Roddenberry’s Star Trek has become shorthand for liberal optimism about the future, even as the franchise’s later entries have moved towards increasingly dark depictions of aging (ST II-VII), war (DS9), lifeboat ethics (VOY), and post-9/11 securitization (ENT). This internal tension has now culminated in the rebooted “Abramsverse”
depiction that — while nominally directed towards re-invigorating the franchise by returning it to its youthful origins— has seen the Spock’s home planet of Vulcan destroyed by terrorists (ST) and the Federation itself corrupted by a coup from its black-ops intelligence wing (STID).

SFFTV invites fresh approaches to Star Trek media in the context of its amazing longevity and continued popularity, with possible emphases on:

- revivals, retcons, and reboots
- canon and canonicity
- *Star Trek* and/as “franchise”
- fan cultures, fan productions, and fan sequels
- *Star Trek* ephemera and paratexts
- lost episodes and unproduced scripts
- parody and pastiche (*Galaxy Quest, Star Trek XXX, “The Wrath of Farrakhan,”* etc.)
- spinoff media like video games and comics
- *Star Trek* and politics
- *Star Trek* and science/technology/invention
- *Star Trek* and race
- *Star Trek*, sex, gender, and orientation
- *Star Trek* and disability
- *Star Trek* and aesthetics
- *Star Trek* and aging
- *Star Trek*’s influence on other works or on the culture at large
- *Star Trek* and other Roddenberry productions (*The Questor Tapes, Earth: Final Conflict, Andromeda*)

**Submission:** Articles of 6,000-9,000 words should be formatted using MLA style and according to the submission guidelines available on our website. Submissions should be made via our online system at [http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com:80/lup-sfftv](http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com:80/lup-sfftv). Articles not selected for the special issue will be considered for future issues of SFFTV.

Any questions should be directed to the editors, Mark Bould ([mark.bould@gmail.com](mailto:mark.bould@gmail.com)), Sherryl Vint ([sherryl.vint@gmail.com](mailto:sherryl.vint@gmail.com)), and Gerry Canavan ([gerrycanavan@gmail.com](mailto:gerrycanavan@gmail.com)).

The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2015, with anticipated publication in *Star Trek’s* 50th anniversary year.
The Science Fiction Research Association is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, booksellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership. Visit the SFRA Website at www.sfra.org. For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the Website.

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

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

**Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts**
Four issues per year. Scholarly journal, with critical and bibliographical articles and reviews. Add to dues: $40/1 year (US); $50/1 year (international); $100/3 years.

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