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Editor
Chris Pak
King's Digital Lab, King's College London, Virginia Woolf Building, 22 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6LE.
chrispak@hotmail.co.uk

Nonfiction Editor
Dominick Grace
Brescia University College, 1285 Western Rd, London ON, N6G 3R4, Canada.
Phone: 519-432-8353 ext. 28244.
sfranonfictionreviews@gmail.com

Assistant Nonfiction Editor
Kevin Pinkham
College of Arts and Sciences, Nyack College, 1 South Boulevard, Nyack, NY 10960.
Phone: 845-675-4526845-675-4526.
kevin.pinkham@nyack.edu

Fiction Editor
Jeremy Brett
Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University, Cushing Memorial Library & Archives, 5000 TAMU College Station, TX 77843.
jwbrett@library.tamu.edu

Media Editor
Leimar Garcia-Siino
Atlantic University College,
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, USA.
jc4u931@hotmail.com

SFRA Review

A publication of the Science Fiction Research Association

In this issue

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Passing the Baton

Chris Pak

EACH YEAR brings something new to the SFRA. Along with some modifications to the constitution of the EC and information about the organisation of forthcoming SFRA conferences, Keren Omry discusses some of these changes in her column. We also have an announcement for our annual SFRA conference, this year to be held at Marquette University, Wisconsin, under the auspices of our vice-president Gerry Canavan and Peter Sands. Gerry discusses the forthcoming conference in his column, while details for submitting proposals for the event can be found in the annoucements section of this issue.

Last year our first Support a New Scholar Award began with Joy Hancock as our inaugural recipient. In this issue Hancock reflects on her experience over the past year, and passes the baton to this year's awardee, Emily Cox, who discusses her research in the article "Handmaids, Androids and Sex Dolls: New Perspectives on Women and Gender in Modern SF." We also have a Feature 101 article by Victor Grech, entitled "The Manifestation of Manichaeism in *Star Trek*'s Nanotechnology." Alongside these pieces we have our regular series of non-fiction, fiction and media reviews, with discussions of *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*, volumes 2 and 3 of *The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury*, *Wonder Woman* and more.

I also have an announcement to make. After four years of editing the *SFRA Review*, I have made the decision to step back and pass on the editorship. This will not be my last issue as I shall assist in smoothing the transition, so I shall save my official farewell for a future column. We shall, however, be looking for someone who would like to take over at the helm and to continue guiding and shaping the publication to our needs. With that in mind, should you be interested in taking on this rewarding role, or if you have any questions, please do get in touch with myself or with a member of the EC. If you do feel that you would like to take on editorship of the *SFRA Review*, I shall be available to support you during the period of transition and beyond. In the meantime, enjoy this issue!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's Never Too Early to Think About Running!

Keren Omry

2017 HAS LEFT the building and, between us, good riddance. As the new year flexes its muscles and gets underway we at the SFRA EC are busy as ever. Katherine Bishop, who joined us last year as Web Director, has hit the ground running and has been working closely with the executive committee to get membership renewals streamlined efficiently and painlessly. If you have not yet renewed your membership, now is as good a time as any!

In addition, as we lend support to the current conference organizers, we have started considering bids for conference locations for the coming year or two. We've got a few juicy options on the table so be sure to keep the end of June open for the next few years. If you think you may be interested in hosting an SFRA conference in the near or distant future please do contact me or anyone else from the EC. This is a good time to thank the current conference organizers again who are working tirelessly to finalize details for the Future of Labor in Milwaukee. The call for papers should be distributed soon and I am eager welcome all of you at Marquette this summer.

It is a year in flux for the SFRA. Chris Pak, who has been an absolutely stellar editor for the *SFRA Review* for four years now has decided to move on. Although we lament his loss, it is a well-deserved respite, and so we are currently seeking someone (or *someones*) who would consider taking up the role. His won't be an easy act to follow but as I trust you will see, it is a gratifying and exciting challenge. Please contact me, Chris, or anyone else from the EC if you would like to be considered. Furthermore, we'd like to re-welcome Pawel Frelik who has agreed to resume a role of yore and serve as the Immediate Past President, and to

take this opportunity to thank Craig Jacobson for all he has done for the Association over the years. This year, as per the new bylaws, we'll also see a change in our Vice President and Treasurer positions. It's never too early to think about running! Finally, we want to congratulate **Emily Cox**, our latest **New Scholar Grant** recipient. If you don't already know her, you'll meet her in this issue of the *SFRA Review*.

So, a new year, new people, new tidings. May it be a speculative and a successful one for all!

VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"The Future of Labor"

Gerry Canavan

BY NOW the CFP for SFRA 2018 has gone out, but I wanted to reiterate how excited I am that the upcoming conference will be held at my home university in Milwaukee. Milwaukee's a great place, especially in the summer—I'm really eager to welcome you all here, and share with you some of the things I love about Marquette (including the Tolkien collection).

The conference will be held Sunday, July 1 through Wednesday, July 4 at Marquette; the theme is "The Future of Labor," with keynotes from Peter Frase (*Four Futures*) and Rebekah Sheldon (*The Child to Come*). See the full CFP for more details; of course we welcome proposals that don't speak specifically to the theme as well. We are also continuing the tradition of doing some programming specifically directed at early-career researchers the first day of the conference, including workshops and roundtables for graduate students and recent PhDs; more details on that to come.

Any questions concerning the conference, logistical or otherwise, can be sent to the conference email address, SFRAMilwaukee@gmail.com, or to the conference's local organizers, Gerry Canavan (Marquette University, gerry.canavan@marquette.edu) and Peter Sands (UWM, sands@uwm.edu).

I'm hoping to organize some sort of roundtable specifically devoted to "The State of Star Wars" after *The Last Jedi* and (gulp) *Solo*, so if you have interest in participating in that please let me know. In the meantime, send us your abstracts, and watch for more details about the conference and other events shortly!

A Glance Behind the Support A New Scholar Grant

Joy Hancock

WHEN LOOKING BACK on my scholarly involvement with SF studies throughout my graduate career, the words of speculative author Douglas Adams come to mind: "I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be." I never set out to write about the SF genre in the early stages of my dissertation project and in fact had never considered it. However, my research on early 20th century European utopian and apocalyptic literature led me to discover the *technischer Zukunftsroman*, or technical utopian novel, one of the earliest forms of German SF. My interest in the genre blossomed from there. About three years into my research and writing, I came across the SFRA's website and decided to apply for the Support A New Scholar grant to enrich my dissertation completion experience.

When I received the news that I had been selected for the graduate-level grant, I felt that my dissertation would develop in new and fascinating ways thanks to the resources made available by my SFRA membership. I was certainly not disappointed. One of the grant's major benefits included the reception of the *Science Fiction Studies* and *Extrapolation* journals, both of which expanded my scholarly understanding of SF and its many subgenres. I also had the privilege of publishing a short summary of my dissertation project in the [Fall 2016 edition of the *SFRA Review*](), which challenged me to formulate a concise representation of my work. The article propelled me forward at a critical point in my research and later formed the basis for my dissertation abstract.

Even more advantageous than access to the scholarly journals and the publishing opportunity afforded by the grant, however, was my participation in the SFRA's annual conference in June 2017. I traveled to Riverside, California to participate in the "Unknown Pasts / Unseen Futures" conference as I neared the end stages of my dissertation project. Throughout the entire writing process, I had been faced with the question of an appropriate theoretical framework for my analysis of interwar German SF. I at last discovered how to apply theory to both historical and current SF works while attending the many fascinating panels at the conference.

In November 2017, I successfully defended my dissertation project equipped with the compelling knowledge that I received at the SFRA conference. The defense discussion was particularly lively and engaging due to the application of both theoretical posthumanism and material ecocriticism to right-wing 1920s German SF. I am now employed as a part-time German faculty member at a small liberal arts college in Tennessee and have discontinued my scholarly engagement with SF for the time being. My participation in SF discourse might be temporarily suspended, but my gratitude to the SFRA continues for the generous bestowal of this fantastic opportunity.

Handmaids, Androids and Sex Dolls: New Perspectives on Women and Gender in Modern SF

Emily Cox

SINCE I STARTED my Ph.D. project on gender and science fiction, more than four years ago, both sf and gender theory have become increasingly dominant in the mainstream. While sexual harassment, abortion, feminism and transgender activism have become increasingly prominent in news and social media, at the same time, a growing cultural fascination with sf and fantasy has emerged within film and TV. Even more excitingly, popular sf franchises are channelling the current feminist and gender discussion while also promoting strong and nuanced female characters within a genre which has for so long been dominated by male writers catering to an almost exclusively male audience and male gaze. Yet we are currently experiencing two simultaneous cultural shifts: one has liberated sf and fantasy from the B-movie and cult-classic side lines to mainstream, big budget fame; at the same time women in sf are no longer confined to the role of shrill damsel in silver spandex. Princess Leia is now General Organa, the memory of her gold bikini now eclipsed by her use of its chain to strangle her captor, Jabba the Hutt. Meanwhile, the *Star Wars* franchise celebrates its new, fully-clothed

heroines, Rey the Jedi, Rose the Mechanic and Vice-Admiral Holdo the femininely dressed saviour with silver bangles and purple hair who goes down with the ship in *The Last Jedi* (Martine).

From Hulu's recent TV sensation *The Handmaid's Tale*, based on Margaret Atwood's feminist dystopia of the same name, to Netflix's Marvel series *Jessica Jones*, to *Game of Thrones*, popular sf is so inundated with a range of powerful and nuanced female characters that there are almost too many to name. Action blockbusters are also beginning to follow suit: we live in a time where feminism and genre fiction have combined to form a significant portion of mainstream media while the *Wonder Woman* movie grosses more than *Batman Verses Superman*. While my Ph.D. focussed on examples of second-wave influenced feminist sf I have watched as those same feminist ideas have flown off the pages of what I used to believe was a largely overlooked sub-genre and onto the big and small screens. As academics, how can we make the most of this cultural moment in order to further our exploration of both gender and sf?

In my dissertation I argued that sf is an ideal place to examine the nature of gender as a fundamental biopolitical construct that in recent years has shown that it is possible to imagine gender not as something essential or fixed but rather as fluid and dynamic, where masculine and feminine are not categories restricted to male and female respectively. Since Judith Butler first argued that sex and gender are indeed only culturally necessarily related through heteronormative standards, we have now reached a point where it is popularly accepted as a distinct and likely possibility that there is nothing biologically inherent, psychologically determined or in any other way necessarily essential about the gendered positions of men and women.

In my thesis, through the work of Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and other feminist thinkers along with the philosophers Giorgio Agamben and Gilles Deleuze, I explored non-essentialist conceptions of gender through an analysis of the representation of women and gender in sf. I think now, more than ever, this work is needed as a means of looking at gender in a non-binary manner that might allow us to conceive of gender unhindered by deeply entrenched patriarchal assumptions or even the problematic dynamics of identity politics. In my thesis I looked specifically at how Giorgio Agamben's understanding

of politically and culturally established oppositions can be valuably combined with feminist theory as a means of examining gender.

Feminist scholarship has historically examined gender from a fundamentally binary perspective, which recognises gender as feeding into similar codes of hierarchical domination such as self and other, identity and difference, master and slave. For example, there is a strong tradition within feminist discourse of applying the Marxist and Foucauldian ideas, founded on an oppositional conceptualisation of power and domination, to the political and social position of women: thus framing women as an 'other'. However, what makes Agamben's philosophy highly valuable, and in many ways unique is that, for him, such oppositional categories like master and slave are not truly opposing: 'the example is excluded from the rule not because it does not belong to the normal case but, on the contrary, because it exhibits its belonging to it' (Agamben 2009, 24). For Agamben, all such dichotomies inevitably bleed into one another so that one will have some qualities of the other and vice versa (Agamben 2009, 24). A particularly provocative and famous example of how Agamben theorises established categories held in opposition is that of totalitarianism and democracy which he views as two sides of the same coin, held in a state of indistinction: a specific kind of unstable opposition that reveals both categories contains qualities of the other and are in fact difficult to distinguish: '[t]he state of exception is a device that must ultimately articulate and hold together the two aspects of the juridico-political machine by instituting a threshold of *undecidability* between […] life and law' (Agamben 2005, 86). Though Agamben has done no work on gender specifically, his understanding of law and politics is highly valuable in theorising and establishing gender as not only a cultural but also as a fundamentally biopolitical apparatus.

Sf is historically known for playing with established boundaries, satirically admonishing governments, questioning political establishments and experimenting with cultural norms. The effectiveness of feminist sf during its heyday in the 1970s—the 'new wave' of sf—is perhaps demonstrative of this. Even more so is the current popularity of modern sf shows which explore feminist ideas or questions of gender identity. Where, in my dissertation, I analysed novels such as Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, written in 1985, I now have the opportunity

of analysing the new hit TV adaptation of the same name and exploring the implications of this new adaptation for modern conceptualisations of gender and feminism within the context of our current historical moment where Agamben's understanding of biopolitics is increasingly useful for considering the phenomenon of gender as a means of social and political control as well as an unstable institution whose nature is capable of being exposed. Sf is the ideal sphere in which to facilitate that exposure, particularly because of its increasing cultural significance. As an extension of my doctoral research, I am currently working on an article which examines the ways in which the home or the domestic sphere as represented in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Stepford Wives* is portrayed as unsettling, claustrophobic and threatening. Using Agamben's philosophy, I argue that this depiction reinforces and exposes the institution of the nuclear family and the system of heteronormativity as a biopolitical power structure whose successful operation depends on the unpaid and undervalued domestic labour of women as well as their marginalisation within the private sphere of the home, which is necessary for the success of men's careers in the public sphere.

In addition, one of my chief current research interests is the significance of the female robot (or gynoid) both as a popular sf trope as well as an emerging commercial enterprise. From Fritz Lang's Maria robot in *Metropolis* to the Caprica Six Cylon in the 2004 remake of *Battlestar Gallactica* to Seven of Nine in *Star Trek: Voyager* to *Halo*'s Cortana, female machines and/or female cyborgs have remained a pervasive trope within popular sf for decades. Before sf became more widely consumed the fantasy of the mechanical or simulated woman can be traced as far back as Ovid's tale of *Pygmalion* who, having carved the statute of an ideal woman out of ivory prayed to the goddess Venus for it to be brought to life, who granted his wish. However, the fantasy of a constructed woman has translated into industry as the 'Harmony' sex robot, which recently came on the market: a sex "doll" combined with an artificial intelligence that is able to speak, make facial expressions and engage in conversations (Kleeman and Tait).

The female robot can be viewed as an expression of femininity at its most nightmarish extreme, a symbol of objectification and sexualisation. Yet it is the very nightmarish quality of the gynoid that allows it to expose the horrific qualities of womanhood and femininity as experienced and performed by actual flesh and blood women. While hyper-sexualised women machines might appear as the climax of male technological obsession combined with leering male gaze this is not all that the gynoid embodies. Consider also the unsettling qualities of those female androids examples I mentioned earlier: the evil Maria gynoid from *Metropolis*, the Caprica Six Cylon in *Battlestar Galactica*, part of a robot empire intent on the destruction of humankind, or Seven of Nine, a member of a totalitarian race of cyborgs known as the 'Borg' who are similarly bent on the destruction (assimilation) of the human race. The female robot does not merely reflect patriarchal, sexual objectification of women but also exposes the horrifying implications of the male desire to make robots of women, or more disturbingly, to make women into robots. This is exactly the nightmarish male fantasy revealed in Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*, which describes the frightening, eponymous town where the women have all been replaced by androids programmed only to perform domestic chores and sexual gratification.

Yet it is not merely the suggestion that men might prefer machines to actual women for their sexual partners that dehumanises women. Rather, the gynoid highlights a far more disturbing fact: that women and the mechanical facsimiles that are used to replace them in both fiction and reality (remember 'Harmony') are more alike than we may feel comfortable admitting. The performative nature of femininity requires not only a great deal of pretence, but also a great deal of costume preparation and bodily alteration. From corsets to modern waist trainers, false eyelashes and wigs, or makeup and high heels to breast enlargements and Botox, women have a long history of physically adapting their bodies for the pleasure and recognition of men. As Lili Loofbourow argues women are socially conditioned to believe that wearing that which is 'designed to wrench to bodies' (Loofbourow, para 29) is the only way to remain sexually viable. With further 'enhancements,' photo-filters and the modern 'photoshop' ready trend in makeup, these modifications that women put themselves through seem to bring women ever closer to an approximation of a living doll. While fictional flesh and blood women in sf are becoming more and more authentic in terms of their portrayal, actual women

of the real world are drawn ever closer to the sphere of the female automaton and the Harmony doll.

I believe that the Support a New Scholar Award and my SFRA membership will help me to further explore the research interests outlined in this article and to share my work with other sf scholars. I am particularly excited to attend the SFRA conference where I hope to present a paper and share my ideas with other academics and receive feedback. I think that SFRA will be a crucial organisation through which to develop my understanding of sf from a theoretical perspective and continue to expand on my current projects while also learning from the work of others in the field and drawing on their ideas and experience.

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The Manifestation of Manichaeism in *Star Trek*'s Nanotechnology

Victor Grech

NANOTECHNOLOGY is defined as the study, creation and utilisation of structures ranging in size between 1 nanometer and 100 nanometers. A small example will facilitate the understanding of the scales involved. It would require eight hundred 100 nanometer particles laid side by side in order to match the width of a single human hair. Nanotechnology in *Star Trek* has been used by both the Federation and the Borg, humanity's 'most lethal enemy' (Frakes, *First Contact*). Manichaeism is a dualistic philosophy that recognizes the universe as being divided by principles that are either intrinsically good or evil. This article will demonstrate that the utilisation of nanotechnology by these two *Star Trek* groupings reveals the Manichean nature of the struggle between the benevolent Federation and the hegemonic Borg.

The Federation

The Federation uses 'nanites. Tiny machines built from the atom up. Designed to have exposure only to the inside of nucleii during cellular surgeries. Until then, they are kept tightly confined in a non-functioning state' (Frakes, *First Contact*). They are effectively 'little tiny robots with gigabytes of mechanical computer memory. They're designed to enter living cells and conduct repairs [...] supposed to remain confined to the lab' (Frakes, *First Contact*).

An ensign on the *Enterprise* wreaks havoc when 'working on [his] final project for Advanced Genetics. It's on nanotechnology. I've been studying the nanites we have in the Sickbay genetic supplies' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). He accidentally releases two of them. The experiment was designed to experiment on the synergistic ways in which 'they would interact and function in tandem. You see, in my experiment, I had proposed a theory that by working together they could combine their skills and increase their usefulness. It was working.' However, he

was pulling an all-nighter to collect my final

data. I fell asleep. And when I woke up I saw the container had been left open. It's just a science project. [...] They're really harmless [...] they're equipped with only the most basic skills. [...] I think I've made a horrible mistake. [...] I always get an A. (Kolbe, "Evolution")

To which his confidante replies 'so did Doctor Frankenstein' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). Indeed, this accident has unintended consequences since the nanites multiply and infest the ship's computer with the crew left 'dealing with a potential breakdown of the main computer' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). Indeed, it is almost as if 'someone had climbed in there and started taking it apart' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). Captain Picard muses 'I can't get the story of Gulliver out of my head. Overpowered by Lilliputians' (Kolbe, "Evolution").

It transpires that 'these are not ordinary nanites [...] they have evolved [...] able to mechanically replicate themselves' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). Their evolution could even potentially result in a Kurzweilian singularity since 'it is conceivable that with each new generation they enhance their own design. The rate of evolution would be extraordinary' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). The emergent property of sentience is therefore manifest since 'these nanites are now working with a new collective intelligence. Operating together. Teaching each other skills' (Kolbe, "Evolution").

The malfunctioning computer jeopardises an important scientific experiment and the scientist in charge is scornful of all of hypotheses related to nanite sentience. 'Oh really. I'm sorry but this is nonsense. You can't have a civilisation of computer chips. They're made in a plant in Dakar, Senegal. I've watched the construction' (Kolbe, "Evolution").

The crew disagree and Captain Picard points out that 'we cannot exterminate something that may or may not be intelligent [...] try to remove them safely. If things get worse, we'll use stronger measures' (Kolbe, "Evolution").

The scientist becomes desperate and exposes the computer core to a 'high level gamma radiation' (Kolbe, "Evolution") burst, cognisant of the fact that this would kill the nanites within the core. The nanites retaliate, flooding the ship with toxic gases, proving 'that the nanites do have a collective intelligence' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). The scientist is confined to his quarters and the nanites attack him

there with an energy bolt.

The *Enterprise* crew finally manage to communicate with the nanites and explain that they 'try to co-exist peacefully' with other beings. 'We misinterpreted your actions as an attack on us' (Kolbe, "Evolution"). An interesting dialog takes place:

Nanites: We were seeking raw materials for our replicating process.
Picard: Yes, but you endangered this vessel in which we all travel. You nearly killed a crewmember.
Nanites: We meant no harm. We were exploring.
Picard: I understand. We are also explorers. We mean no harm to any other living creature. [...] This conflict was started by mistakes on both sides. Let's agree to end it here and now. [...] I pledge we will do everything possible to assist your continued survival.
Nanites: We agree. [...] Thank you, but we have evolved beyond any need for your assistance. This vessel has become too confining. We require relocation. (Kolbe, "Evolution")

The scientist also apologises:

I deeply regret the incident. I am a scientist on an important mission. Your colleagues' exploration of the core memory put our mission at risk. I was only trying to protect a lifetime of work from being destroyed. I am at your mercy. (Kolbe, "Evolution")

The nanites then reconstruct the computer core, the experiment takes place successfully and the nanites are relocated to an empty planet, a 'new home of the nanite civilisation' (Kolbe, "Evolution").

Nanites were also used for forensic purposes, helping to identify a murderer's DNA in a fatal head wound (Bole, "Meld"). Other members of the Federation are also peripherally mentioned as having experimented with nanotechnology but little is made of this (Livingston, "Regeneration").

The Borg

The Borg are cyborg drones ruled by a Borg Queen in a hive hierarchical structure. The forcible assimilation of an individual into the Borg Collective results in the

destruction of the individual and the self. [...] [t]he Borg destroy freedom of choice, and any ability to act independently of the collective mind. That alteration is allegedly worse than death for the individual involved. (Consalvo 193)

The Borg were originally purely biological beings, who 'evolved to include the synthetic. Now [...] use both to attain perfection' (Frakes, *First Contact*), a process that has been 'developing for [...] thousands of centuries' (Bowman, "Q Who"). They 'constitute a relentless inhuman tide that threatens to violently overwhelm every species by assimilating all individual beings into the Borg collective, stifling their *élan vital* and incorporating them as part of a hive mind' (Grech 13). This is indisputably the most terrifying aspect of the Borg Collective.

The Collective avidly assimilate all technologies in its search for perfection, including nanotechnology which is central to the assimilation process whereby individuals are integrated into the Collective. Individuals inducted into the collective develop 'assimilation tubules' in their hands in order to assimilate new members into the Collective.

These injection tubules are the first step in the Borg assimilation process. Once inside the skin, they release a series of nanoprobes into the bloodstream. [...] The tubules are capable of penetrating any known alloy or energy field. Which means our battle must be waged inside the body itself. The first tissue to be attacked by the nanoprobes is the victim's blood. Assimilation is almost instantaneous. [...] They take over the blood-cell functions like a virus (Livingston, "Scorpion").

Moreover, 'the Borg gain knowledge through assimilation. What they can't assimilate, they can't understand' (Livingston, "Scorpion"). Each Borg drone contains approximately 3.6 million nanoprobes (Kroeker, "Inside Man") and each drone's nanoprobes has an exclusive coding sequence. (Biller, "One"). A cure from the assimilation process is virtually impossible (Livingston, "Regeneration").

The ultimate attack on humanity by the Borg would have involved the widespread release of a biological weapon on Earth with 'nanoprobe viruses. Assimilation would be gradual. By the time they realised what was happening, half their population

would be drones' (Bole, "Dark Frontier"). Thus, nanotechnology is subverted and integrated into 'the extreme embracement of the "prosthetic impulse," [...] Star Trek's "Borg"' (Grech, "Pinocchio" 11).

Borg nanoprobes have also been used by the Federation as an offensive weapon (Livingston "Scorpion"), or as a defensive weapon in order to disable organic circuitry (Kretchmer, "Warhead"). They can also be used to cure disease, and with limitations, even reverse death. This is because 'the Borg have assimilated species with far greater medical knowledge than your own' Federation.

> If the deceased's neural pathways are [...] intact [...] we are capable of reactivating drones as much as seventy three hours after what you would call death. [...] Nanoprobes are used to reverse cellular necrosis, while the cerebral cortex is stimulated with a neuro-electric isopulse. (Kroeker, "Mortal Coil")

This is achieved by 'seventy micrograms of nanoprobes [...]. The nanoprobes will compensate for any cellular degradation' (Kroeker, "Mortal Coil"). More mundanely, nanoprobes may be used to remove intoxicating products from the bloodstream (McNeill, "Someone to Watch Over Me").

For all of these reasons, Borg nanoprobes are extremely expensive on the open market and indeed, a group of Ferengi traders perpetrate an elaborate scheme in order to get their hands on a former Borg drone and her nanoprobes, to the extent of being ready to sacrifice the entire *Voyager* crew (Kroeker, "Inside Man"). Ironically, it was once suggested that Federation nanites could be modified and used against the Borg (Bole, "The Best of Both Worlds, Part II").

Disussion

Nanotechnology was introduced and popularised by Richard Feynman in his seminal paper "There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom:"

> I would like to describe a field, in which little has been done, but in which an enormous amount can be done in principle. [...] [I]t would have an enormous number of technical applications. What I want to talk about is the problem of manipulating and controlling

things on a small scale. (Feynman, "There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom")

Manichaeism is ubiquitous in Star Trek, manifest both inexplicitly and implicitly as a binary structural opposition between good and evil. Cyborgs and androids have been shown to directly manifest Manichean tensions, as was demonstrated in an earlier article (Grech, "Pinocchio") which analysed the struggle between the *Enterprise*'s android second officer, Data who wished to become human, in effect manifesting a Pinocchio syndrome, and the Borg Queen who epitomises the "prosthetic impulse" (Smith and Morra 4). 'The Borg contain biological components, and Data does not. It is almost ironic that Data, a completely artificial being, repudiates the Borg's ideal of perfection through the fusion of the biological and mechanical' (Grech, "Pinocchio" 13). Thus, on the macro level, the eternal struggle of good against evil is manifested by machines and machine-like beings.

The episodes depicted in this article have shown that this Manichean dualism is also present on the nanotechnology scale, with good represented by the United Federation of Planets and nanites, and evil represented by the Borg, along with their nanoprobes.

The Federation comprises an interstellar polity within this galaxy and is run on federal lines, with over 150 member planets and several thousand colonies spread across 8000 light years. It 'is best described as a liberal, post-capitalist, almost perfectly socialist utopian democracy that embraces a constitutional republic' (Grech, "Philosophy"). Indeed, 'the acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives. We work to better ourselves and the rest of humanity' (Frakes, *First Contact*). The benign Federation is promoted as a grouping that humanity should evolve into, having been seeded by an enlightened group of 'humanitarians and statesmen, and they had a dream. A dream that became a reality and spread throughout the stars' (Wallerstein, "Whom Gods Destroy").

The Federation is epitomised by Captain Picard who 'is arguably a symbol, a synecdoche for the *Star Trek gesamtkunstwerk* and for the entire genre' (Grech, "Picard" 20). The captain and the Federation that he represents tend

to pursue the Kantian categorical imperative

with its two essential precepts: that one should act only according to that maxim by which one can also will that it would become a universal law, and that one should treat humanity never simply as a means, but always as an end. (Grech, "Picard" 22)

Indeed, Picard upholds the tenets of the Federation which lives 'in peace with full exercise of individual rights. The need to resort to violence and force has long since passed' (Taylor, "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield"), as witnessed by his approach to the emerging intelligence and sentience displayed by the nanites. Despite the threat to the *Enterprise* and its thousand-strong crew, the nanites are treated with respect and compassion. This demonstrates an open mind that is capable of embracing non-biological life.

Aliens that are not chemical systems capable of Darwinian evolution are easily conceivable. [...] The nanites that infected the Enterprise computer [...] are informational in essence; their Darwinian evolution is not tied to an informational molecule, like DNA. (Benner 674)

The Borg approach is radically opposed to the Federation stance. This is evident in their initial greeting to all and sundry. 'We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender your ships. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile' (Frakes, *First Contact*).

This uncompromising horde is amoral, 'the ultimate users' (Bowman, "Q Who"). The Collective threatens the 'individual's self actualization (and indeed, selfhood itself) for the gain of the collective' (Grech, "Pinocchio" 13). Borg nanoprobes are the basic tools utilised for the purpose of forcible assimilation into the Collective. This hegemonising technique is reminiscent of the theme popularised by Greg Bear in "Blood Music," wherein biologically engineered computers based on human blood lymphocytes multiply and evolve inside their creator, altering their own DNA and achieving sentience. They communicate with their creator, take over his brain and body and proceed to assimilate the planet.

This short story was the first major account of nanotechnology in science fiction, portraying DNA as an expandable and programmable computational system that utilises medical machines at the nano scale.

Borg nanoprobes go further since they are mindless servants of the Collective that assimilate individuals into the hive, thus making them large versions of themselves, equally mindless cogs in a larger machine, producing 'ultimate Marcusians' (Grech, "Pinocchio" 14), as aptly summarised by Herbert Marcuse:

[T]he efficient individual is the one whose performance is an action only insofar as it is the proper reaction to the objective requirements of the apparatus, and his liberty is confined to the selection of the most adequate means for reaching a goal which he did not set. (Marcuse 142)

This is clearly different to the Federation approach: 'we don't assimilate, we investigate' (Livingston, "Scorpion"). These episodes also have a shared trope, the demonstration of potentially dangerous consequences of untrammelled and unregulated scientific inquiry, with the narratives 'used as a warning of the potential Faustian consequences of such tendencies' (Grech, "Pinocchio" 11).

Scientists have also expressed concern with potentially Frankensteinian hubris, and have questioned the wisdom of unlimited research into the natural sciences and only one such individual will be quoted. Martin Rees, ex-Astronomer Royal has noted that

Science is advancing faster than ever, and on a broader front: bio-, cyber- and nanotechnology all offer exhilarating prospects; [...]. But there is a dark side: new science can have unintended consequences; it empowers individuals to perpetrate acts of megaterror; even innocent errors could be catastrophic. (Rees, *Our Final Hour* vii)

This is because '[s]cientists are often blind to the ramifications of their own discoveries' (Rees, *Our Final Hour* 13). While nanotechnology 'is likely to transform medicine, computers, surveillance, and other practical areas,' it also implies the potential for the creation of

an "assembler" that could grab single atoms,

shifting them around and assem-bling them one by one into machines with components no bigger than molecules. These techniques will allow computer processors to be a thousand times smaller, and information to be stored in memories a billion times more compact than the best we have today. Indeed, human brains may be augmented by implants of computers. Nanomachines could have as intricate a molecular structure as viruses and living cells, and display even more variety; they could carry out manufacturing tasks; they could crawl around inside our bodies observing and taking measurements, or even performing microsurgery. (Rees, *Our Final Hour* 17)

However, this could result in a 'catastrophic "release"' (Rees, *Our Final Hour* 82), as exemplified by both of the abovementioned Trek episodes. For this reason, it has been suggested that 'there should be a ban on developing nanomachines that can reproduce in a natural environment' (82) lest we risk 'triggering utter disaster' (4).

   Star Trek therefore uses nanotechnology not only to portray yet another Manichean duality, but also to highlight the potential unintended consequences of unconsidered actions and completely unfettered research.

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The Perversity of Things: Hugo Gernsback on Media, Tinkering, and Scientifiction

Cait Coker

Grant Wythoff, ed. *The Perversity of Things: Hugo Gernsback on Media, Tinkering, and Scientifiction*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. Paperback, 400 pages, $35.00, ISBN 978-1-5179-0085-4. Kindle ASIN: B01MT1JOWW.

Order option(s): Paper | Hard | Kindle

THE PERVERSITY OF THINGS: *Hugo Gernsback on Media, Tinkering, and Scientifiction* collects nearly eighty essays and excerpts from Gernsback's career, almost all of which are nonfiction (there are five fiction pieces included), and most of which revolve around the science and technology of radio and engineering. Grant Wythoff presents these selections, dating from 1905 to 1932, and supplies dual Tables of Contents, one divided by topic and the other by chronology, with the stated aim to be representative of Gernsback's extensive career, *oeuvre*, and interests. While the texts presented here are accompanied by images from the original publications or related materials along with Wythoff's extensive footnotes, an electronic edition available online is promised later this year, which will include full issues of the publications the selections are drawn from to further contextualize them. Altogether, *Perversity* pulls together a useful collection of rare material that will be of interest to a variety of scholars, both those with conventional interests in Gernsback as genre pioneer and those interested in the less-often considered topic of Gernsback as inventor and technology writer.

The sections and topics presented include "Tinkering," which includes short "do-it-yourself" pieces on radio and similar equipment; "History and Theory of Media," which is as much about popular science as it is the dissemination of media-as-radio; "Broadcast Regulation," a series of pieces revolving around the U.S. national suspension of radio during WWI; "Wireless," pieces on radio and telephones;

"Television," four essays all written well before the true popular advent of that technology; "Sound," four articles on sound technologies; "Scientifiction"; and "Selected Fiction," which includes three very short stories and an excerpt from Gernsback's 1911 novel *Ralph 124C41+*. "Scientifiction" is the largest section by far, with eighteen essays, and the one of interest to most genre scholars. It includes several pieces that have received scholarly attention before, such as "10,000 Years Hence" (1922) and "How to Write 'Science' Stories" (1930), as well as several editorials and introductions from throughout the run of *Amazing Stories*—including the first issue in 1926, in which he lays out the magazine's mission and defines *scientifiction* itself, a term that would come to define much of twentieth century's engagement with genre as "a romance, cleverly weaving into and around the story, a scientific thread" (287). Though the term would be used often by Gernsback and his followers, it would have a greater publishing usage afterlife in the fanzines than it would in conventional mass-market publications, an aspect that is unfortunately neglected here. The final piece presented is on "Reasonableness in Science Fiction" (1932), a short essay originally published alongside John W. Campbell's story "Space Rays" in *Wonder Stories*. In it Gernsback complains about the lack of science in contemporary science fiction, in which authors "do not hesitate to throw scientific plausibility overboard… and often goes the fairy tale one better" (354). While this is a complaint that has seemingly never left the field, it perhaps speaks volumes that Gernsback uses the term "science fiction" instead of "scientifiction" to comment on publishing trends.

Wythoff's emphasis throughout the collection is on media and technology rather than on literary history and analysis, a different perspective on science fiction history and studies when it seems we are often saturated with media criticism at the expense of literary criticism. Indeed, at times he seems to seek a provocative stance against science fiction studies as literary history, as when he states that "Unfortunately, the prevailing approach in science fiction studies has been to dismiss the Gernsback magazines as embarrassingly simplistic, tasteless, and even detrimental to the eventual emergence of a mature literature. … The overwhelming attention that many science fiction critics give, to this day, to the low rates he paid his writers … leads to a misplaced derision of Gernsback's literary quality that often carries with

it an explicit disgust at his perceived character" (8–9). While perhaps certain criticisms to the limits of Science Fiction Studies as a field are valid, it is short-sighted to remove considerations of literary history and criticism to better champion media history, nor can Hugo Gernsback's legacy be altogether examined if we choose to ignore the problematic aspects of his business ventures. Further, noting production costs—including paying, or not paying, one's authors—is a not unusual aspect of publishing histories, which illuminates both the production and the reception of texts. No text is created or presented in isolation, and viewing it holistically gives scholars the best chance of contextualizing it correctly. While this practice is something of a standard in literary study, the same should hold true for media study, and it is not, as Wythoff would have it, unnecessary or insulting to the dead author.

The Perversity of Things: Hugo Gernsback on Media, Tinkering, and Scientifiction will be of interest to scholars in media and technology history as well as Science Fiction Studies generally and Hugo Gernsback specifically. Most genre scholarship on Gernsback does neglect his science and technology writing in favor of his literary influence as editor, and this collection remedies that oversight, in addition to providing easier access to a number of his writings. Wythoff's extensive commentaries through footnotes are definitely of interest in illuminating these texts, especially as they often function as mini bibliographic overviews to scholarship on Gernsback. The cost of the paperback edition is not prohibitive, making it available for purchase by both scholars (including advanced undergraduates) and casual readers with an interest in the topic.

Batman, Superman, and Philosophy: Badass or Boyscout?

Thomas Connolly

Nicolas Michaud, ed. *Batman, Superman, and Philosophy: Badass or Boyscout?*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2016. Paperback, x + 289 pages, $19.95, ISBN 978-0-8126-9918-0. Kindle ASIN: B01I8S305C.

Order option(s): Paper | Kindle

SINCE 2000, Open Court's *Popular Culture and Philosophy* series has been publishing works with the aim of examining "television programs, hit movies, books, video games or trends" through the lens of philosophical speculation (opencourtbooks.com). Aimed at a general readership, the series has seen the appearance of a staggering array of volumes devoted to topics as diverse as manga, the Red Sox, *Breaking Bad*, Louis C.K., *Jeopardy!*, Harley-Davidson motorbikes, and the Beatles.

Batman, Superman, and Philosophy is the hundredth entry in the series. As with each of its forerunners, it takes the form of a series of short essays by different contributors, each of whom examines the clash between these legendary DC superheroes from a different philosophical (or, in some cases, personal or fictional) perspective. These essays are arranged into sections, with each section broadly supportive of one character or the other. Hence, Superman "wins" the first section of the work, Batman the second, and so on, with a final section devoted to "Post-Fight Analysis."

It is not always clear which of the two aspects of the work—the superheroes or the philosophy—is to be given precedence. In some essays, the emphasis is clearly on philosophy, with Batman and Superman merely providing useful examples of different philosophical systems in action. Some of these are engaging and well-written: Ben Springett's two essays on Darwinism and transhumanism are good examples of this. By contrast, other essays put the emphasis on the superheroes, with philosophy providing theoretical tools by which these figures may be better understood. Of the two formats, this latter is the more stimulating. A good example of this can be seen in a comparison between A.G. Holdier's and Patrick J. Reider's contributions. Both of these writers interpret the characters of Batman and Superman using a variety of Nietzschean notions. But whereas Holdier's essay has a clear didactic purpose, drawing upon various characteristics of the superheroes in order to demonstrate Nietzsche's notion of the "will to power," Reider's focus is more clearly on the characters themselves. Deploying Nietzsche's conception of morality in support of his analysis of the characters—rather than vice versa—Reider makes a convincing argument for Batman as an "aristocratic lord" and Superman as demonstrative of Nietzsche's "slave morality," desiring to relinquish his heroic responsibilities to a

"superior" being (79–83).

Reider's contribution, with its close familiarity with the characters, stands out in the volume—by contrast, many of the essays engage with the titular figures only in broad strokes. Indeed, for a collection devoted to analysing the relationship between two iconic comic book superheroes—each of whom boasts over eight decades of fictional history, spread across a variety of media—it is surprising how little sense of the complexity and depth of these figures actually emerges from the essays. Many contributors instead take the relationship between Superman and Batman to represent an assortment of opposing archetypes, such that the dichotomy "Superman/Batman" can be understood to equate with, for example, "universal/particular," "global/local," "light/dark" "bad/good" (in the Nietzschean understanding of these terms), "non-human/human," "biological/technological," and so on. Indeed, even editor Nicolas Michaud—in an essay titled "Gods Are Overrated," one of his two contributions to the volume—has little to say about the actual characters themselves. Although the essay makes some reference to Superman, the character is here mostly treated as a stand-in for God, and Michaud is more concerned with theological exploration than with the comic-book figure.

Of course, deploying relatable and familiar characters to explore a variety of philosophical and moral problems can be an instructive model, and readers less versed in philosophical thought will find some engaging and informative essays here. It also leads, however, to a superficial engagement with the characters themselves that may disappoint comic-book fans. The most commonly discussed iterations of the characters are those featured in recent Hollywood adaptations: the Batman of Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy (2005–2011), and the Superman of the DC Extended Universe, first featured in Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel* (2013). This reliance on recent movie appearances of the characters perhaps indicates a lack of in-depth knowledge regarding the complex histories of the characters themselves. On the whole, the volume may have been better served by incorporating more detailed reference to specific comic-book story arcs, which would better ground the various arguments in the mythos of the characters and offset the "hands-off" approach that marks many contributors' engagements with their subject.

The style in which the essays are written is, in general, informal, energetic, and fast-paced (indeed, one contributor even dismisses "academic jargon" as "green kryptonite to good writing" (101)). The clearest example of this approach can be seen in the final essay of the collection, an unusual piece by Jack Napier in which he lambasts both Batman and Superman for their ostensible self-obsession, and the reader for their hypocrisy in offloading their own moral anxieties onto fictional characters: "They [the two superheroes] both stand as shining examples to the rest of us that we can indulge our egos while failing to do the things that we really believe are right" (274). Napier chastises the reader for failing to combat such injustices as "the treatment of children in sweatshops, torturing animals for food and fun, racism, sexism, the treatment of the disabled, carpet-bombing civilians, mistreatment of clowns, whatever" (273). "You really could do something about it," he writes, before insisting that the real heroes are not of the super variety, but ordinary people fighting against injustice (273).

It is a daring and subversive conclusion to the volume—yet also a strange one, given that it explicitly criticises, and attempts to undercut the relevance of, all the essays that have preceded it. More broadly, Napier's concluding essay highlights the feeling, pervasive throughout the volume, that neither contributors nor editor are ultimately clear what purpose the volume is intended to serve—are we to use these characters as guides in developing philosophical approaches to life, use philosophy to understand the characters, or (as Napier appears to suggest) dismiss both as escapist fantasies? By the close of the volume, this question remains mostly unanswered.

Overall, then, *Batman, Superman, and Philosophy* offers a colourful, if inconsistent, introduction to some key philosophical ideas, and for that reason will be of value to the general reader looking to learn more about philosophical thought. Those seeking a more comprehensive or in-depth examination of these two iconic characters, however, may need to look elsewhere.

The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction

T. S. Miller

Rob Latham, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014. Hardcover, xx+620 pages, $150.00, ISBN 978-0-1998-3884-4. Kindle ASIN: B00NHWZ6F2.

Order option(s): [Hard](#) | [Kindle](#)

WE LIVE IN AN AGE of frenetically paced academic publishing not wanting for companions and handbooks of all kinds, and science fiction studies has been well served by such compendious volumes as James and Mendlesohn's *Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003); Seed's *A Companion to Science Fiction* (2005); and *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (2009), edited by Bould, Butler, Roberts, and Vint—not to mention the more specialized volumes that have also begun to appear. *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction* thus enters a crowded field, but the nature of science fiction studies as a discipline has continued to change at such a rate even over the last few years that a new handbook such as this one can usefully aim to complement and extend rather than replace or surpass its worthy predecessors. Such publications also serve as a kind of snapshot of the state of the field, and, if we take the book for a synoptic image of science fiction studies, we might begin to wonder if "the field" even represents a singular thing any longer. A book reviewer faces a daunting prospect in attempting to do justice to over 600 pages authored by 44 different contributors in a brief review, but the task faced by those contributors seems many orders of magnitude more difficult: namely, compressing hundreds of years of science fiction's history and the works of countless authors, artists, filmmakers, scholars, and fans into a single book promising to make sense of it all. Editor Rob Latham's approach has been to emphasize the interdisciplinary, trans-medial, and cultural studies dimensions of science fiction studies while decentering—but hardly neglecting—the literary. As one should expect from such a distinguished press, editor, and roster of contributors, *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction* succeeds admirably on its own terms, and would be an invaluable addition to any university library's reference section; the price point, however, seems intimidatingly high for individuals. Many of the chapters should prove helpful in orienting students new to the study of science fiction to major theoretical developments and important primary texts in the field: of particular use to students for their conceptual clarity are the opening chapter by Brooks Landon on "Extrapolation and Speculation"; Lisa Yaszek's contribution on "Feminism"; and De Witt Douglas Kilgore's chapter on "Afrofuturism." Yet the collection is not aimed exclusively or perhaps even primarily at students, and necessarily contradicts itself on foundational points by including multiple understandings of what "science fiction" is and means. All scholars of science fiction will learn a great deal from exploring the book's diverse contents, in spite and likely because of the fact that not even the scholars represented in it agree very often with one other.

Latham's substantial introduction is an important piece of critical writing in itself, offering a cogent—if also unabashedly agenda-driven—disciplinary history of SF studies that begins with the following assessment: "The problem for science fiction studies for much of its early history as an academic discipline involved determining the nature and boundaries of its putative object, deciding *what counts* as science fiction" (1, emphasis in original). Latham points out that the double marginalization of the study of SF in nonprint media unfortunately generated discourses distinct from the mainstream of science fiction studies, a separation that has only recently been bridged. In articulating the more specific objects of this volume, Latham glibly but also quite seriously remarks that "the problem today is to determine *what does not count* as science fiction," and explains that his handbook aims "to descry the historical and cultural contours of SF in the wake of technoculture studies," further "showing how SF's unique history and subcultural identity have been constructed in ongoing dialogue with popular discourses of science and technology" (5). To this end, Latham has eschewed more usual attempts to mirror the periodization of SF in the order of the chapters, and has instead chosen to organize the volume into four thematic sections of eleven essays each: "Science Fiction as Genre"; "Science Fiction as Medium"; "Science Fiction as Culture"; and "Science Fiction as Worldview." This structure obviously results in some potential overlap, and several essays could probably

fit just as comfortably in other sections: this in fact may be a feature and not a bug, as the flexibility of these porous groupings lends itself well to the new broader understanding of SF that Latham wishes to communicate. In Latham's argument SF does much more than traverse different media, but indeed crosses, shapes, and defines subcultures; Veronica Hollinger's chapter "Genre vs. Mode" perhaps most clearly articulates a comparable theoretical position on the increasing inseparability of SF from other contemporary cultural phenomena. Readers may disagree with Latham that SF has become "less a genre than a way of being in the world," but the intellectual vitality and richness of this book are testament to how productive it can be to understand it in this more capacious way (6).

Part I constitutes perhaps the most conventional section for such a handbook, and includes several invaluable overviews of issues bearing on the study of SF literature. Especially useful are Arthur B. Evans on "Histories" and Gary K. Wolfe on "Literary Movements" as essential accounts of the historiography of both science fiction and science fiction studies itself, which both challenge in different ways the traditional periodization or "development" of SF by revisiting the concept of periods in the first place. Scholars interested in the intersections of speculative fiction more generally and mainstream literary fiction will be particularly happy to see a trio of chapters touching on the subject, "Literary Science Fiction" (Joan Gordon); "Slipstream" (Victora de Zwaan); and "The Fantastic" (Brian Attebery). At the other end of the spectrum of traditional respectability, scholars of fan studies will likewise be glad to see Farah Mendlesohn giving "Fandom" equivalent shrift, a harbinger of the further cultural explorations to come in the book's third section. But it is the second cluster of eleven essays— "Science Fiction as Medium"—that apotheosizes the decentering of literature in this book's version of science fiction studies, covering an impressive and probably unprecedented range of media forms. Two fairly conventional chapters on "Film" (Mark Bould) and "Radio and Television" (J. P. Telotte) open the section, which then moves through comics, the visual arts more generally, digital narrative, video games, and music, only to conclude with unexpected but captivating chapters on "Performance Art" (Steve Dixon); "Architecture" (Nic Clear); and even "Theme Parks" (Leonie Cooper). Many of the most

prolific luminaries of SF scholarship associated with the editorial boards of its leading journals contribute chapters to this handbook, but the highest proportion of names unfamiliar to me appears in this section, precisely because Latham has traveled far afield to engage scholars working on SF in an assortment of disciplines beyond literary and cinema studies. Finally, while I would have liked to have seen a dedicated chapter on SF theater that did not restrict itself to performance art—because to my knowledge no satisfactory overview of a fascinating yet frustratingly ephemeral phenomenon yet exists—one can hardly complain about the breadth of coverage and depth of insight on display in these chapters. Scholars wishing to acquaint themselves with SF media of all kinds—and, perhaps more importantly, the disciplinary milieus of media studies of various kinds—will gain much from this section that it is difficult to find elsewhere in SF scholarship. An incisive chapter by Sherryl Vint on "The Culture of Science" opens Part III, the section of the book most dedicated to a strongly cultural studies-based approach to genre science fiction, emphasizing as these chapters do the genre's interpenetration with aspects of culture such as military culture and the space race; scientific discourse itself, including cyberculture and automation; countercultural and new religious movements; and finally body modification and steampunk aesthetics. Many of the essays in Part IV do not differ fundamentally from those in Part III, but often consider more specifically philosophical or intellectual cultures, including futurology and posthumanism; libertarianism and anarchism; and other forms of utopianism. This section also collects the volume's overviews of particular area studies such as "Colonialism and Postcolonialism" (John Rieder) and the aforementioned chapters on feminism and Afrofuturism; Patricia Melzer's piece on "Sexuality" and, among other things, LGBT fan cultures appears in the preceding section. Though I describe these particular pieces as overviews, even the more general-interest essays largely bear out Latham's warning in his introduction that the handbook's chapters intend to be "more argumentative than expository" (6). Accordingly, I can imagine a beginning undergraduate who might be disoriented and disappointed to learn that this is a handbook that does not hold one's hand, as it were, but other readers will likely be delighted to find such superb

and sophisticated work seemingly collected under the aegis of "yet another companion volume." For just one example of how the stimulating and wide-ranging essays in the latter half of the book typically proceed, Part III concludes with a short but engaging chapter by Elizabeth Guffey and Kate C. Lemay titled "Retrofuturism and Steampunk." The authors define "retrofuturism" as how we choose to remember our anticipations of the future, and excavate the iconography of "futurism" and other manifestations of a "retro" aesthetics in order to argue that both steampunk and the wider phenomenon of retrofuturism negotiate "a present longing for a historical past" (439). In similar fashion, the handbook as a whole emphasizes the historical specificity and cultural complexity of both science fictions and the moods and moments they generate and take inspiration from in turn. This chapter proceeds not as a rote survey of major steampunk works as we might expect, but becomes an interdisciplinary cultural history of these two linked phenomena; as such, it is representative of this volume's larger efforts to redefine the role of the companion volume at a time when such works continue to proliferate beyond the apparent need for them. In other words, *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction* manages to carve out a new and necessary space for itself largely by redefining the space of science fiction and science fiction studies in innovative and inviting ways.

The World According to Star Wars

Bruce Lindsley Rockwood

Cass R. Sunstein, *The World According to Star Wars*. New York, N.Y.: Dey Street Books.-William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2016. Hardback, 223 pages, $21.99, ISBN 978-0-06-248422-2.

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CASS SUNSTEIN is a well-known legal scholar who co-authored *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (Yale, 2008) with Richard Thaler, which incorporated behavioral economics in assessing business, legal and public policy. I used

his book in my MBA class in "Law, Ethics and Public Policy." He applied his ideas as Administrator of the Office of Administrative and Regulatory Affairs in the Obama Administration from 2009 to 2012. I used his earlier book *Republic.com* (Princeton: 2001) in conjunction with Frederik Pohl's *The Years of the City* in teaching an honors seminar in law and literature. He is, in short, an impressive and influential scholar who influenced me in my research, teaching and thinking about public policy. But apart from a 1999 book about clones co-authored with his former partner Martha Nussbaum, I had not seen evidence he was a fan or critic of topics related to Science Fiction.

So when I saw he had written a book about Star Wars—the phenomenon, the films as text, the reasons for its success, and its impact on society, I was intrigued. He writes as a scholar, but also as a fan and a father, and his knowledge of Star Wars is informed by his reading in the works of others—in particular Michael Kaminiski, *The Secret History of Star Wars* (2008), Chris Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe* (2015, revised ed.), the books by J. W. Rinzler on the original films, and Sally Kline, ed., *George Lucas: Interviews* (1999). He explains that he saw the original film when it came out, but became interested in writing about Star Wars only after being persuaded to introduce it to his young son, and this reflects one of the major themes in his treatment of the films and their creator: the relationship of fathers and sons.

The book is divided into ten "Episodes" that explore the themes he says George Lucas borrowed from Joseph Campbell in creating "A New Hope" and its sequels and prequels, while examining why the original film was "expected" to be a flop and the various explanations for its subsequent success (was it "awesome, well-timed, or just very lucky?" (39) is the theme of his "Episode III.") As others have noted (see A.O. Scott, "Help Me, Obi-Wan Kenobi," *NY Times*, June 9, 2016), it is a short book and tackles many themes very briefly rather than completely, sometimes with insight and often with expressions of his personal preferences which not every reader will share. For example, "Episode IV" is "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Star Wars" which includes possible Christian, Oedipal, Feminist, Jeffersonian (rebellion against tyranny), behavioral economics, Buddhist and other real or hypothetical approaches to interpreting the themes of the films

in just 25 pages, concluding with the idea that none of these possible "conspiracy theories" hold water, quoting Alan Moore (author of *The Watchmen*) that "the world is rudderless." (87-88)

"Episode VI" explores the case for freedom of choice that Sunstein finds central to many of the major events of the films, while "Episode VII" uses the films to explore the fall of empires and the roles of resistance fighters (or terrorists) with references to recent and contemporary political history (the rise of Nazi Germany, collapse of the USSR, and the Arab Spring). He introduces the reader to concepts he uses in his academic work on behavioral economics, including loss aversion, reputational cascades and group polarization. For instance, he notes that "What behavioral scientists have shown is that human beings suffer from *predictable biases*," citing Daniel Kahneman, author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*: "to many people, he's a real-world Yoda" (74).

"Episode VIII" is perhaps the strongest chapter, with an explanation of constitutional interpretation as a chain-novel, citing the work of the late Ronald Dworkin and explicating in a manner intelligible to the lay reader the problems of constitutional "originalism" in American jurisprudence. Supreme Court Justices, he argues, are a lot like film makers: like George Lucas, J.J. Abrams, and creators of subsequent films, who must build on the prior narratives while writing new chapters in the saga, Justices rely on precedent but must "make a judgment about what makes it shine most brightly" (147).

The book concludes with an assessment of the mythology of "the force" as an example of humanity's search for God or magic and the human tendency to see patterns in an attempt to predict the future, while missing what is right in front of them. He cites the case of assigning students to count basketballs being passed in a short film, and then asking them "and did you see the Gorilla?" which invariably most of them missed (168). *Star Wars*, he argues, is a "modern myth [. . .] both a spiritual quest and a psychodrama, insisting that redemption is always possible, that anyone can be forgiven, and that freedom is never an illusion" (176).

Sunstein's scholarship often manifests as the work of a political liberal seeking to reach out to libertarian conservatives—hoping to bridge partisan gaps much as his political mentor Barack Obama. *The World According to Star Wars* can be viewed as fitting this pattern. He discussed it at the libertarian [Cato Institute](#), and the [American Enterprise Institute](#) as well. For the general reader interested in *Star Wars*, the book provides a concise and useful overview of the many themes and controversies about this continuing cultural phenomenon (including the novelizations of the films which he sometimes quotes). Academics who have followed his career may be enticed to consider the possibilities available in reaching out to a wider audience for their concepts by applying them to the stories contained in the saga. Science fiction fans that pick up this book on a whim may learn something useful that will make them better citizens as well as fans. Sunstein worked for President Obama, who for many Americans and the wider world represented "A New Hope." President Trump reflects "The Empire Strikes Back." We can only hope for the political "Return of the Jedi" in the near future (Elizabeth Warren as Leia Organa?).

The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury: A Critical Edition, Volume 2, 1943–1944; and *Volume 3: 1944–1945*

Bruce A. Beatie

The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury: A Critical Edition, Volume 2, 1943–1944; and *Volume 3: 1944–1945*, Jonathan R. Eller, General Editor and Textual Editor. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press. Vol. 2: 2014. 495 pages, cloth, $75.00. ISBN 978-1-606351956. Vol. 3: 2017. 493 pages, cloth, $75.00. ISBN 978-1-60635-302-8.

Order option(s) Vol 2: [Hard](#)
Order option(s) Vol 3: [Hard](#)

WHEN MY REVIEW of the first volume of this edition of Bradbury's stories appeared in [*SFRA Review* in Summer 2011](#), Ray Bradbury was 91; by the time Volume 2 appeared in 2014, Bradbury had passed away (June 5, 2012) and William Touponce, the General Editor of the series, had retired. As I began this review in September 2017, Toupence had also died (in June 2017), and Jonathan Eller is now both the general and the textual editor of the series. In that 2011 review I speculated that, based on the 17 pages per story in vol. 1 and Eller's note that Bradbury had published "nearly 450 distinct stories," the total length of the critical edition may reach some 7,650 pages, or a total of 14 volumes the size of vol. 1. Eller is now 65; I hope that he will be able to complete this massive project.

The next two volumes, the focus of this review, have virtually the same format as Volume 1, and so I will not repeat the general description in my earlier review. Volume 2 includes 25 additional stories, from "The Sea Shell" (completed April 27, 1943), to "The Jar" (April 7, 1944). Volume 3 adds 22 stories, from "Ýesterday I Lived!," written in March 1944 and originally titled "No Phones, Private Coffin," to "The Black Ferris," begun in March 1945. All 79 stories reprinted in these first three volumes are, apart from nine "Selected Amateur Publications" in the first volume (published in fanzines), "professional" publications for which Bradbury was paid.

In that first review, I was concerned mainly with the structure and process of the edition. When I began making notes on Volume 2, I looked more carefully at the "Chronological Catalog" contained in all three volumes, and noticed that the "Compositional Sequence" in Volume 2 began with a repetition of the last ten entries in the catalog for Volume 1—which included, in fact, the last eight published stories in Volume 1; the Catalog in Volume 3 also overlaps with Volumes 2 and 4. In all three Catalogs, the titles of stories reprinted in these volumes appear in bold print. The pages of the Catalogs have two parallel columns: a "Compositional Sequence" on the right, and a "Publication Sequence" on the left; horizontal markers separate years. Story titles in the "Composition" column provide dates of composition and dates and locations of first publication; if unpublished, data about submissions is sometimes given. Many of the unpublished texts survive in Bradbury's files; for some the chronology notes that a photocopy survives in the Albright Collection—a private collection held by Bradbury's long-time friend and principal bibliographer Donn Albright. If only a title (presumably from Bradbury's careful logs) but no text survived, the entry notes "unlocated." Titles in the "Publication" column provide date and place of first publication.

Because of the overlaps, I decided to compile a spreadsheet summarizing the information of all three Catalogs thus far and ordered by titles and dates of composition. This combined index to the Catalogs lists 171 stories for which a text exist, plus 16 stories whose text is "unlocated." The overlap with Volume 4 allows inclusion in the "Publication" column of titles composed before April 1945.

All three volumes include an "Appendix B: Summary of Bradbury's Unpublished Fiction." In the first volume the 35 summaries were apparently compiled by Toupence; the introductory paragraph is signed "WFT." Volumes 2 and 3 contain, respectively, eight and five summaries; though unsigned, I suspect that Toupence wrote these summaries before his retirement, and that we should expect no more in later volumes. The "Bradbury Chronology" in Volume 2 adds the years 2010–2013 to the one contained in Volume 1, and Volume 3 carries the chronology through 2016.

My earlier review devoted a single sentence to

Touponce's "Introduction." Eller's introductions to volumes 2 and 3 merit more comment. The title of the introduction to Volume 2, "Disputed Passage," comes (in slightly edited form) from an epigraphic Walt Whitman poem: "Have you not learned great lessons from those who braced themselves against you, and disputed the passage with you?" (xiii). Eller clarifies this choice when he describes Bradbury's "disputed passage through the frenetic wartime world of pulp fiction..." (xxiii). The "great lessons," he argues, came from Bradbury's first agent Julius Schwartz, from Henry Kuttner and from Leigh Brackett. The evidence of his passage comes in the 1943 story "The Million Year Picnic," which Eller calls "one of Bradbury's earliest anticipations of his role as a Space Age visionary" (xxiii). We know the story best as the concluding entry in Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, which Eller's "Textual Apparatus" notes has gone "through eighteen editions and more than a hundred reprints" (392), as well as inclusion as a story in many anthologies. The "Historical Collation: Post-Copy-Text Substantives" (394–404) shows all the changes from the copy text included here (from *Planet Stories*, Summer 1946) in all significant later publications.

The introduction to the third volume is entitled "The Tyranny of Words." "By the spring of 1944," Eller begins, Bradbury's "rising reputation balanced on the threshold of a dream. The dream itself was ... a vision of achieving an enduring legacy as a master storyteller who had transcended genre boundaries" (xiii). Eller's concise discussion of the 1944–1945 stories chronicles Bradbury's fight to move out of the pulps (he had eight stories in pulp detective magazines, five in *Weird Tales*, and three in *Planet Stories*) into more mainstream journals (one each in *Charm*, *Macleans*, and *Mademoiselle*), through an intensive reading program urged on him by Brackett and Kuttner. By the end of the year, he had taken four of his child-centered stories (two completed earlier in 1944, and two new stories) and sent "all four of them off to the slick magazines; together they would become his first four sales to the major market magazines ..." (xxviii).

Apart from the stories themselves, the most interesting parts of the two volumes are the "Chronological Catalogs" discussed above, and the "Textual Apparatus" sections, which follow the pattern I described in the 2011 review. Returning to the printing history of "The Million Year Picnic": in the conclusion of that introductory narrative, Eller notes that the story "represents a departure from the predictable kind of science fiction stories he had written, and would continue for a long time to write.... It was the first tale to carry the very distinct Bradbury stamp of ordinary Earth people redefining (and reaffirming) their humanity within the silent canals... of a dead Martian civilization" (383). An example from Volume 3 is "The Invisible Boy," one of those child-centered stories mentioned above. Its initial publication in *Mademoiselle* served Eller as copy text for this edition, but he notes that Bradbury included "an extensively revised version" when it appeared in Bradbury's fourth book, *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953); the nine pages of collation show all of those revisions.

The first three volumes of this superbly edited series have taken us through 19 unpublished stories written between October 1935 (when Bradbury was 15) and the end of 1937, and through an additional 28 stories written in 1937–1938 (some of them published in fanzines—Volume 1 contains the annotated texts of nine of these stories). Bradbury's first professional story was "The Pendulum," co-written in January of 1941 with Harry Hasse and published the following November in *Super Science Stories*. Of the 148 stories written (and for which texts or titles survive) between that and "The Black Ferris," (written in March 1945, and the last story of Volume 3), this series takes us through the 70 stories for which Bradbury earned money. Most of these appeared in sf, fantasy, and detective pulps, but by the end of March 1945 Bradbury had sold four stories in "major market magazines" (xxviii). The first three volumes have included a number of stories which Bradbury made part of novels. Volume 4, which one may hope for soon, will doubtless show further steps in that process.

Doctor Who, "Twice Upon a Time"

Heather McHale

"Twice Upon a Time." *Doctor Who*. Written by Steven Moffat, directed by Rachel Talalay, BBC Studios Wales, 2017.

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

"Twice Upon a Time," though it's the last episode for Peter Capaldi, isn't primarily a wrap-up of the Twelfth Doctor's story. "The Doctor Falls," the final episode of Series 10, accomplished that task quite effectively. Instead, "Twice Upon a Time" is a reflection on some of the most deeply held preoccupations of *Doctor Who* in the Steven Moffat era: memory, change, and the persistence of the self.

Moffat, who took over as showrunner of *Doctor Who* in 2010, has long used the show as a vehicle for examining those ideas. In Series 5, for example (featuring Matt Smith as the Eleventh Doctor), the show undertakes an extended examination of the role of memory in the development of the self, using memory as a central plot point and engaging in substantial, frequent metacommentary about its significance. The finale of season 5 revolves around Amy Pond's ability to remember the things that she's experienced. The Doctor manages to rescue the rest of the world—using the TARDIS to "reboot the universe"—but he needs Amy to remember him in order for him to be restored. Those memories are submerged, inaccessible to her conscious mind. But as the Doctor says to her, 'Nothing is ever forgotten, not really.' The richness of her experience saves the day. This idea of memory as a core element of the self crops up in many other stories of Moffat's era: "A Christmas Carol," "The Rebel Flesh"/"The Almost People," and "The Girl Who Waited," among others. And the threat of the loss of memory—a tragic possibility that the viewer will remember from the end of Donna Noble's story in Series 4—hangs over both "Hell Bent" and "The Pilot."

At the same time, Capaldi's tenure on *Doctor Who* has often focused on the question of his identity, questioning whether the Doctor is a good man and whether he's even the same man he used to be. It's

fitting, then, that "Twice Upon a Time" takes up this idea as well: David Bradley steps into the role of the First Doctor, bringing the Twelfth Doctor face to face with his original, oldest self. As both Doctors resist their oncoming regenerations, the Twelfth Doctor gets a clear look at his own past, which casts his present self into sharp relief.

As though to underscore this message, "Twice Upon a Time" also revisits Rusty, the "good Dalek" from "Into the Dalek" (2014). Although it may initially seem like an idiosyncratic choice, Rusty's presence makes perfect thematic sense, as "Into the Dalek" explores the role of experience and memory for shaping one's choices. In that story, Clara and the Doctor reawaken some suppressed memories in Rusty's data bank, reviving his experiences so that he can be open to learning, reason, and change. Rusty's ability to learn and believe new things is due to an error—most Daleks are not capable of it. But the Doctor explains that Rusty's memory of watching the creation of a star is a fundamental, crucial part of what opened up the Dalek's thought process. Restoring those suppressed memories will 'expand its consciousness, to consider things beyond its natural terms of reference,' leaving it 'open again' so that the Doctor can reason with it.

The Doctor undergoes this process himself in "Twice Upon a Time." He's forced to confront his own former self, as well as several of his companions (in the form presented by Testimony). He must examine his own memories—and assess how deeply he has already changed—before he can be "open" enough to consider changing his mind about whether to regenerate. The plot, which draws in frozen moments of time, an unknown World War I captain, and a sinister woman apparently made of glass, is incidental: this story focuses on the Doctor's own evolution, both past and future.

The depiction of the First Doctor in "Twice Upon a Time" isn't entirely fair; it overplays his sexist attitudes considerably, and that's bound to annoy Hartnell fans. While it's true that the First Doctor was sometimes patronizing toward his companions, perhaps especially the female ones, he was almost always the most progressive person in the room. As a result, his remarks in "Twice Upon a Time" about Polly dusting the TARDIS, for example, ring false. It's difficult to imagine a context in which the First Doctor would have asserted that all ladies are 'made of glass, in a way.' Granted, the dialogue does

try to draw on the material of the First Doctor era. His reference to Polly dusting, for example, draws on Barbara Wright's remark in "The Web Planet" (1965) that she's going to have 'a jolly good spring clean' in the TARDIS. But it's hardly fair to imply that the Doctor treated his female companions like staff, as no one ever expected or asked Barbara to tidy up. Similarly, while Barbara once complains to Susan, 'I do wish Ian wouldn't treat us like Dresden china' ("Keys of Marinus," 1964), she doesn't accuse the Doctor of the same kind of patronizing behavior. Even the one jarring line directly lifted from Hartnell's own dialogue, the odd "smack-bottom" remark, plays very differently when it's spoken to Bill, an adult woman the Doctor hardly knows, instead of to his own fifteen-year-old granddaughter.

Despite this inconsistency, "Twice Upon a Time" does show that the First Doctor is sharp and insightful, and the mischaracterization serves an important narrative purpose: it's a textual answer to the kinds of sexist claptrap that have sometimes been trotted out about the show. This structure allows the script to voice many of the stereotypes that have haunted *Doctor Who* fandom—the idea that a man may be a Doctor, but a woman would necessarily be a nurse, for example—and then dismiss them. The Twelfth Doctor, the most current and therefore presumably the most enlightened incarnation of our hero, refuses to countenance any of those attitudes, which makes "Twice Upon a Time" a manifesto of sorts. The episode says, from beginning to end, that things and people change, and that *Doctor Who* will not accept any of those sexist ideas—if, indeed, it ever did. It's disappointing for some classic-era fans, perhaps, to make those statements at the expense of the First Doctor, particularly because he was considerably more progressive than some of the later incarnations (for my money, the nadir of gender politics on the show is probably in the 1980s, not in the 1960s). Nonetheless, it's an important statement for the show to make, as the viewers prepare for their first female Doctor.

In general, the Christmas special juxtaposes these two incarnations of the Doctor to show how much he has changed. More specifically, this episode emphasizes the role the companions have played in the Doctor's evolution. When the First Doctor observes that the Twelfth Doctor has saved the Captain's life, the Twelfth Doctor agrees that he rescued (at least temporarily) both the Captain and the injured German soldier, and adds, 'Never hurts—a couple fewer dead people on the battlefield.' This assertion echoes Donna Noble's pleas in "The Fires of Pompeii" ('Just save someone,' she begs) and demonstrates that he has learned from her.

Doctor Who scholars, as well as scholars of television at large, will find plenty to explore in this episode, as embattled as the show has sometimes been about gender. It is, perhaps, more disappointing than surprising that the story so directly addresses questions of gender and sexism while ignoring race altogether. Although the Doctor has discussed race several times during Bill's tenure as companion—as, for example, when he declared that 'history's a whitewash' in "Thin Ice"—even the most forgiving critic has to acknowledge that *Doctor Who* has been slow to address race, even in the new series, and "Twice Upon a Time" isn't breaking any new ground in that regard. Indeed, at some moments it's difficult to witness the First Doctor's initially dismissive treatment of Bill and *not* read that behavior as racially inflected, even if the dialogue clearly establishes that he's equating her with the blonde, white Polly. Still, it's logical enough to focus on gender, with the first female Doctor waiting in the wings, and most scholars will find the episode's engagement with its own history rich enough for detailed study.

In terms of simple enjoyment, "Twice Upon a Time" delivers: it's fun to watch, and it's never boring. Even if the dialogue doesn't always deliver a recognizable First Doctor, David Bradley's performance certainly does. His grasp of Hartnell's mannerisms—not just the iconic and possibly overplayed holding of his lapels, but more subtle elements, such as the way that Hartnell uses his eyes to survey a room without turning his head—allows him to inhabit the role naturally, rather than providing an imitation or a caricature. He wears Hartnell's quirky costume effortlessly, and he delivers the most commanding lines in the script with wonderfully authentic authority ('Oh, for heaven's sake, will you put that ridiculous buzzing toy away and *look* at the woman!').

Any review of this story must weigh in on Jodie Whitaker's first moments onscreen as the Doctor, but of course there isn't enough material to draw any real conclusions about what kind of Doctor she's likely to be. It is possible to say, however—as though we had any doubt—that she's still an inveterate button-pusher. While it's too early to make judgments about the Thirteenth Doctor, this story does an admirable

job of setting the stage for her. As the show prepares to enter a new era (with a new showrunner, star, supporting cast, writing team, and composer), "Twice Upon a Time" explores how profoundly the Doctor has changed over the history of the show, but insists that the Doctor remains essentially the same person. The Twelfth Doctor's initial refusal to regenerate will presumably resonate for viewers who are uncertain about the casting of a female Doctor, and "Twice Upon a Time" makes a definitive argument in favor of embracing change, assuring viewers that no matter how different the show may look when it returns in 2018, the Doctor will still be the Doctor.

Blade Runner 2049

John J. Pierce

Blade Runner 2049, Dir. Villeneuve, Perf. Ryan Gosling, Harrison Ford, Ana de Armas, Sylvia Hooks, Robin Wright, Mackenzie Davis, Carla Juri, Lennie James, Dave Bautista, Jared Leto.

Order option(s): Amazon | Blu-Ray | DVD | 4k

SO HERE WE ARE in 2049, 30 years after the events of *Blade Runner*.

> Replicants are bioengineered humans, designed by Tyrell Corporation for use off-world. Their enhanced strength made them ideal slave labor.
> After a series of violent rebellions, their manufacture became prohibited and Tyrell Corp went bankrupt.
> The collapse of ecosystems in the mid-2020s led to the rise of the industrialist Niander Wallace, whose mastery of synthetic farming averted famine.
> Wallace acquired the remains of Tyrell Corp and created a new line of replicants who obey.
> Many older model replicants—Nexus 8s with open-ended lifespans—survived. They are hunted down and "retired."
> Those that hunt them still go by the name... Blade Runner.

That's all we get in an opening crawl (like those in Star Wars rather than the pop-up titles in the original *Blade Runner*) in the 2017 sequel to the 1982 classic, and it's sketchy. So sketchy, in fact, that director Denis Villeneuve authorized three "official" mini-prequel short films to fill in the details, which were made available online before the movie; links to them can now be found in the Wikipedia entry for *Blade Runner 2049* itself. But even as late as mid-January 2018, only 275,000 people had viewed them online, so the millions who saw the movie had nothing to go on but the crawl and the opening scene of K (himself an older replicant, not one of the new breed) tracking down and taking out Sapper Morton.

In *Blade Runner*, there was a sense of immersion in a real world of the future, the workings of which were gradually revealed through the story of Rick Deckard. In *Blade Runner 2049*, there are scattered glimpses of that world 30 years later, but they don't add up to anything but the final revelation about Deckard and Rachael's child. Only in two of the short films, *Blade Runner Black Out 2022* (anime) and *2036: Nexus Dawn*, do we get the real background of what has become of Los Angeles, the rest of the world and the replicant industry. In the third, *2048: Nowhere to Run*, we learn why K was out to retire Morton in the first place. A timeline, apparently based on them, was shown to fans at Comic-Con before release of the movie, and posted online by Jason Kottke of Kottke.org, "home of fine hypertext products."

It seems that in 2022, the West Coast was hit by the Blackout, an EMP (electro-magnetic pulse) set off by an atmospheric nuclear blast over Los Angeles that shut down cities for weeks and corrupted destroyed electronic data over most of the United States. That helps explains why (although it develops that there's more to it) it's so hard for K to find leads relating to Rachael—who died in childbirth and whose son he believes himself to be. The EMP also touched off a global financial and trade crash. Somehow it also devastates agriculture, leading to a dire food shortage. Well, that explains why we see what's left of farmland, now devoted to synthetic food production, but it doesn't explain a lot else. Why, for example, is Los Angeles still a thriving metropolis, whereas just outside it is a devastated cityscape that looks far worse than Mosul after the 2016–2017 Battle for the city—and why is that dead city the location of an orphanage that plays such a key role in the plot?

Blade Runner was an impressive example of what

James Cameron, regarding the first *Terminator*, called "exposition on the run." One example there: when Kyle Reese, a man sent from the future to protect Sarah Connor, sees construction machines at work, they remind him of hunter-killer machines of the future. In *Blade Runner*, we learned about the nature of replicants and the future city and the culture behind them through the story. Remember the teeming streets of Los Angeles, businesses like Animal Row and the Tyrell subcontractors, supporting characters like Tyrell himself and J.F. Sebastian as well as the iconic replicants Roy Batty and Pris? But there is a little of that in *Blade Runner 2049*. None of the characters are particularly memorable, even the older but hardly wiser Rick Deckard; they are there as players in the mystery plot: Retirement, they wrote.

"They" include Hampton Fancher, lead writer for the original *Blade Runner* as well as the sequel; behind him, Ridley Scott as producer and chief world-builder. Villeneuve's role was more idiosyncratic, of which more later. Scott had second and third thoughts about his *Blade Runner*, as witness his Director's Cut (1991) and Final Cut (2007). It may be ironic that only in the voiceover in the 1982 theatrical release, giving Rachael an extended life in order to offer a romantic happy ending for her and Deckard, was there any indication that there might be replicants with "open-ended lifespans"—something Tyrell seemed to rule out in his fatal encounter with Batty. Yet that became the premise of the sequel, and the basis of the idea that Deckard himself was such a replicant. Whether this was a good idea or a bad idea may not be relevant here, however excited fans and critics may be about it. But as an exercise in cinematic world-building as well as storytelling, *Blade Runner 2049* suffers obvious flaws.

The only time we meet Wallace, for example, it is for K to learn that he wants the secret of replicant sexual reproduction to increase the output of replicants (presumably the safe kind, demonstrated in *2036: Nexus Dawn*, where one commits suicide on demand) for shipment to the colonies. Yet Tyrell never seemed to have any trouble meeting that demand with the artificially produced kind. K's superior Joshi fears the discovery could lead to a new war between humans and replicants. But isn't there one already, with K and others hunting down replicants who survived the earlier backlash by humans, alluded to in *Black Out 2022*? How many are left of the "Many older model replicants" 27 years after that backlash and the subsequent hunt? And how are they identified? A database of "registered replicants" is destroyed in that short film to preclude further hunting, and yet the hunting continues.

Yet in *Blade Runner*, Deckard and other blade runners didn't seem to have a register; they had to use the Voigt-Kampff test to identify replicants by their lack of real emotions. No mention of that in the sequel, and in any case it is clear that replicants *do* have emotions (so did Batty and Pris and even Leon in the original, if you count rage.). In *2048: Nowhere to Run*, we learn that Sapper Morton can feel moral outrage—he gives himself away by using his super-strength to kill most of the thugs intent on raping a young human woman and her mother. Was he a member of the freedom movement that surfaces later in movie (its founding is referenced in *Black Out 2022*)? More important, would such a movement have any more hope of success than, say, the Chinese freedom movement at Tiananmen Square? And should we admire it unequivocally in any case? It has saved Deckard's child, but wants K to kill Deckard himself "for the greater good."

Some of the background in *Blade Runner 2049* is deliberately revisionist, and this is where Villeneuve comes in. The advertising in Los Angeles in 2049 includes some for the Soviet Union. "I went back to the Philip K. Dick novel and explored the geopolitics of the book," he explained in an interview with *Time*. "In the book, the U.S.S.R. was still present. I thought that it would be interesting to think—what if the U.S.S.R was still alive?" Given that Los Angeles in 2017–18 looks nothing like Scott's version of 2019 makes it appealing to imagine both Blade Runner movies as taking place in an alternate history, or alterative alternate histories. Does that make the new movie a reboot as opposed to a sequel?

As for the mystery as opposed to the history, *Blade Runner 2049* works well: it's all about following the clues, and as an sf mystery about figuring out what the clues really are. And while the violence of the climax is by the Hollywood book, the final resolution—where we learn what finally became of Deckard's child, and leads to a reunion of sorts—is a winner.

The sequel can be studied from a number of viewpoints. The most obvious is the issue of human and Other: K's holographic girlfriend Joi is a novel Other; their relationship is an absurdist variation of

that of Deckard and Rachael in the original movie. But the issues concerning world creation and exposition deserve at least as much attention, and relate to the human and Other theme; it makes a big difference whether Deckard himself (as Scott now has it, although it isn't made explicit in the new movie) is a replicant: was his relationship with Rachael one of human and Other, or only Other and Other? And how to cooperative replicants like K and their human supervisors truly feel about each other? What is the legal status of Dr. Ana Stelline, the daughter of Deckard and Rachael?

One thing I missed was Vangelis. His score for *Blade Runner* was magical. The Hans Zimmer-Benjamin Wallfisch music for the sequel is only loud. It seems to be the in thing these days for soundtracks to be loud. But while *Blade Runner 2049* works as a mystery story, its flaws as what Farah Mendlesohn has called "immersive fantasy" make it disappointing compared to the original *Blade Runner*. We are shown too little, and not even told crucial details that are relegated to the short films.

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Wonder Woman

John J. Pierce

Wonder Woman, Dir. Patty Jenkins, Perf. Gil Gadot, Chris Pine, Robin Wright, Danny Huston, David Thewlis, Connie Nelson, Elena Anaya, Warner Brothers 2017.

Order option(s): Amazon | Blu-Ray | DVD | 3D | 4k

THOSE UNFAMILIAR with comic books and movies based on them can raise all sorts of quibbles about Patty Jenkins' *Wonder Woman*, in which the iconic superheroine tries to change the course of World War I, ends up in combat with the God of War, and learns something about humanity. Yet it stands up as a classic of its genre, and not just because it was a hit. Though hardly the stuff of sf, the film is part of the 75-year plus history of superhero comics and the more recent history of films inspired by them. And because it is directed by a woman as well as centered on a heroine, there has been considerable debate over whether it is "really" a breakthrough for women in Hollywood, with a number of voices raised against it.

Among them were Kyle Killian ("Diana is a warrior, but she is also presented as being as sexy as the day is long") and Theresa Harold ("Let's start with Themyscira, a feminist utopia that consists purely of Victoria's Secret Angels"), who both thought the movie reduced its heroine to a sex object. But Jenkins begged to differ with such criticisms: "I, as a woman, want Wonder Woman to be hot as hell, fight badass, and look great at the same time," she told *Entertainment Weekly*. And in *The New York Times*, Gal Gadot added: "She has no gender boundaries. To her, everyone is equal." And the most prominent champion of Wonder Woman was and still is Gloria Steinem, who put her on the cover of *Ms* as part of a campaign to get DC Comics to restore the heroine's lost powers. Asked by *Vanity Fair* whether she liked the new movie, she said: "Yes. I thought it was very good. It made her Amazon origin story clear; she was stopping war, not perpetuating it; her strength was communicating in 200 languages; and she was exploring and learning without giving up her uniqueness."

Despite the nay-saying in some quarters,

Wonder Woman can be seen a feminist triumph—a blockbuster directed by a woman in a genre where some films by men have been flops, and sure to lead not only to sequels and other movies about superheroines but to greater opportunities for women generally on the big and small screens.

It was long overdue, after generations of male domination of the superhero comic book and film. Few if any other movies have taken so long to reach the screen; the Wikipedia entry details a number of false starts since 1996; during which time the DC Comics heroine has changed a lot—in 2011, she was rebooted as an actual goddess, daughter of Zeus, rather than an ordinary Amazon formed from clay and given life by the Greek and Roman gods. It is the new version that Jenkins embraces (with a screenplay by Allan Heinberg, but based on her concept)—only with Diana herself being unaware of it until the very end.

But the new version of Diana (Gadot, who seems born for the role in both her beauty and the aura she projects—and is nothing like Lynda Carter in the old TV series) is still born and raised in Themyscira, the hidden island where there aren't any men but where women are masters of combat just in case they need to fight—only with just swords and bows. When World War I Germans discover the island, in pursuit of the American spy Steve Trevor (Pine), we are asked to believe that the Amazons can outfight the invaders armed with automatic weapons and kill them to the last man, while suffering only one fatality themselves—they can even shoot three arrows at a time and unerringly hit three invaders.

When Diana ventures forth with Steve into our world, hoping to stop World War I by taking out Ares, the god of war, there is the same disconnect. She is armed only with a sword (supposedly meant for Ares) and shield. As in the comics, she has bracelets— upgraded to gauntlets here—that can deflect bullets, but in the comics, she faced only ordinary gunmen. Here she can lead a charge across No Man's Land in face of torrential machine gun fire—how can she possibly move her arms fast enough, or protect her lower body and her legs beyond the gauntlets' reach? It's the same in a later battle to take out the base where the Germans are producing a new poison gas that could kill millions and win the war for them.

Yet such incredulities are the basic stuff of superhero comics and movies. Superman, the first superhero, is superpowered and invulnerable because he was born on the planet Krypton—but he looks (and as Clark Kent acts like an ordinary Earthman, and in some versions of his saga he even has a relationship with Lois Lane. Larry Niven ridiculed that idea in "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex." Where the story demands it, a superhero or superheroine story can dispense with everyday plausibility.

Nobody seems to think it odd, for example, that Steve has brought a woman to the trenches, nor do the soldiers seem awed when Diana does her stuff. It's the same when she liberates a Belgian village from the Germans—the villagers dance for joy, and Steve gives her a dancing lesson. Yet none of the Belgians seem to react as one would expect them to the advent of an actual goddess with superhuman strength and agility. When she later crashes a German party, taking the place of a German woman, nobody notices the sword poking out the back of the stolen dress she's wearing (She has already shown she knows foreign languages, but Jenkins should have taken a lead from *Judgment at Nuremberg*, and had the people there speak German at first, then shift into English).

One of the Germans is General Erich Ludendorff (Huston), who in real life was the supreme commander of German forces—after the war, he promoted the stab-in-the-back legend of Germany's defeat, and allied himself with Hitler although he later turned against him. He even wrote a book called *Total War*, in which he argued that the entire physical and moral forces of the nation should be mobilized, because, according to him, peace was merely an interval between wars. Diana believes him to be Ares, as well she might. Only she's wrong. What's right about the movie, what redeems it from the failures of other superhero movies, is what happens next.

Most superhero movies are blatant and even cynical exercises in nothing but fighting, often over trivial issues—as in *Batman v Superman*. *Wonder Woman*, by contrast, is about something—about human nature, about good and evil, about the forces of darkness and the power of love. It is a spectacle, of course, but it works as a spectacle, for all its implausibilities, because it believes in itself.

Diana has believed that Ares alone is responsible for the evils of mankind, but she is in for a rude awakening when she confronts the true God of War—a seemingly meek British diplomat named Patrick Morgan (Thewlis). In a twist related to the

new mythology of the movie, he is Diana's half-brother. But what is more important is that in his human guise Morgan, unlike Ludendorff, is a man of words rather than action. And it is such men of words, rather than the men of action, who have led us into the darkness. Wars began as mere exercises in plunder. It was the men of words who turned war and oppression into causes. It was they who created ultra-nationalism, religious fanaticism, racism, fascism, communism and all other isms that have plagued us through the ages and seem to be reaching a climax in our time. To the extent that they have such beliefs at all, the Ludendorffs of the world feed off the Morgans,

In *A Criminal History of Mankind* (1984), Colin Wilson makes the case that the wars, mass murders and terrorist outrages of our times do not grow out of ordinary crimes like rape and robbery motivated only by the desire to get something for nothing, but are rather "the outcome of a twisted kind of idealism, an attempt to create a 'better world'":

> The frightening thing about the members of the Japanese Red Brigade who machine-gunned passengers at Lod airport, or the Italian terrorists who burst into a university classroom and shot the professor in the legs—alleging that he was teaching his students 'bourgeois values'—is that they were not criminal lunatics but sincere idealists. When we realise this we recognise that criminality is not the reckless aberration of a few moral delinquents but an inevitable consequence of the development of intelligence, the 'flip side' of our capacity for creativity. The worst crimes are not committed by evil degenerates, but by decent and intelligent people taking 'pragmatic' decisions.

That's an issue that, like the feminist debate, might be raised in the classroom as well as among fans. But what makes it dramatic is how Morgan uses the power of words to intimidate Diana as they are about to do battle. "Just look around you", he tells her. "Look at what they are, what they have made themselves: They don't deserve your protection." She seems helpless to gainsay him, and yet she does: "You were right about them—but they are so much more."

She knows we are so much more because she has met and found comfort with Steve, who declares his love just before he must part from her—to hijack a German bomber, loaded with poison gas, that is about to take off for London. He must destroy that plane, and its cargo, at the cost of his own life, to save his people. Greater love hath no man.

Yet Steve isn't alone; he has recruited old friends, no longer in the military themselves, to help him and Diana with their mission. They are comic types, but good men and true—the salt of the earth. And we have already seen others, like the Belgian villagers, taking joy in the ordinary things of life.

There is still the final reckoning with Morgan/Ares to come. But in a sense, that is an anti-climax; it has to be built up into a more conventional superhero battle by giving him a monster suit that conceals—for a time—the nebbish face of Diana's adversary. The real culmination of the story has come with the final parting between her and Steve, who gives her a token of his love—his wristwatch, which she has always thought rather silly. Only she doesn't think so now; it has become precious to her.

Sentimental, sure. But perhaps sentimental values are the only true values, as opposed to the sundry causes that contend for our souls but threaten to turn us into moralistic automatons. Diana knows this, at the end:

> I used to want to save the world, to end war and bring peace to mankind. But then I glimpsed the darkness that lives within their light. I learnt that inside every one of them there will always be both. The choice each must make for themselves - something no hero will ever defeat. And now I know... that only love can truly save the world.

There isn't room for such reflections, or ruminations on human history, in *Justice League*—where Gadot as Wonder Woman has to share the stage with Superman and Batman in epic battle with a gang of alien "parademons" out to destroy Earth's ecology. But can hope to see her in another stand-alone movie in which she can speak and act from her own soul.

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Call for Papers—Conference

Title: *SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018*
Conference Theme: The Future of Labor
Deadline: 30 March, 2018
Contact: SFRAMilwaukee@gmail.com
Dates: Sunday 1ˢᵗ–Wednesday 4ᵗʰ July, 2018

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS
Peter Frase (author of *Four Futures*)
Rebekah Sheldon (author of *The Child to Come*)

The Science Fiction Research Association invites proposals for its 2018 annual conference, to be held on the campus of Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI. In keeping with Milwaukee's long history as a site of labor activism and union struggle, including the famous Bay View Massacre of protestors striking for the eight-hour-workday and the longest Socialist mayoral tenure in US history—as well as ongoing and increasingly urgent global concerns about the rise of machine learning, artificial intelligence, and autonomous robots—the overarching theme of SFRA 2018 will be "The Future of Labor." When machines think and work—at speeds and efficiencies humans cannot match, and perhaps can no longer even understand—what will become of human beings?

Possible subtopics might include:

- artificial intelligence, machine learning, and algorithmic culture;
- the rise of the machines; automation and labor;
- the Singularity;
- drone warfare;
- automated and robotic care labor;
- the gig economy and hyperexploitiation;
- hyperexploitation and technology in the academy;
- automation and the digital economy;
- automation and the environment, especially climate change;
- automation and disability;
- automation and race, gender, sexuality, and class;
- nonhuman labor and nonhuman laborers;

- genetic manipulation, computer prosthesis, and other modes of cognitive enhancement;
- games, gamificiation, and other brainhacks;
- universal basic income and other modes of postcapitalism;
- the politics of artificial intelligence, utopian, dystopian, and otherwise;
- representations of nonhuman, robotic, artificially intelligent, and postcapitalist labor across the last two centuries of science fiction texts.

Of course we also welcome papers on topics relevant to science fiction research broadly conceived that are not specifically related to the conference theme.

Graduate students are encouraged to apply and attend; as with previous SFRA conferences, the first day of conference programming will include roundtables and workshops devoted to targeted at early-career teachers and researchers working in SF studies and in the study of popular culture more generally.

Submission: 300-500 word abstracts should be sent to SFRAMilwaukee@gmail.com by March 30, 2018. Notification of acceptance will occur by April 15, 2018. We also welcome submission of preconstituted panels and roundtables.

Questions concerning the call for papers can be directed to SFRAMilwaukee@gmail.com with the subject line "CFP QUESTION," or to the conference's local organizers, Gerry Canavan (Marquette University, gerry.canavan@marquette.edu) and Peter Sands (UWM, sands@uwm.edu).

Title: *Worlding SF: Building, Inhabiting, and Understanding Science Fiction Universes*
Deadline: 16th February 2018
Contact: contact@worlding-sf.com
Dates: 6–8 December 2018

Everything is (in) a world.

"To be a work [of art] means: to set up a world," Martin Heidegger remarked in his 1950 essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" (2002, 22). Tellingly, some

four decades later, Carl Malmgren suggested that "the generic distinctiveness of sf lies not in its story but in its world" (1991, 7). Both Malmgren and Heidegger have a point—fiction, and more specifically science fiction, is generally more interested in creating plausible worlds than telling convincing stories. In response to the effects and challenges of transmedia convergence, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay has more recently remarked that world-building "determine[s] the relationships in the narrative, even when the action is full of dramatic movement" (2008, 82). Accordingly, everything is (happening) in a world, a (more or less) coherent and cohesive world.

Following Heidegger's elaborations in Being and Time (1927), one may argue that entering such a fantastic world means being thrown into it, as the reader/viewer/player must learn to navigate the fictional world and to understand its underlying rules. This "thrownness" defines the subject and its relation to the world (2010, 169–73). As such, Heidegger's approach opens up ways to begin to understand the ways in which we become immersed in—and engaged with—sf universes.

In the aforementioned essay "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger stresses that "[w]orld is not a mere collection of the things [...] that are present at hand. Neither is world a merely imaginary framework." "Worlds world," he concludes, meaning that we are subject to worlding "as long as the paths of birth and death [...] keep us transported into being" (2002, 23; italics in original). Similar to the ways in which the previous paragraph condenses Heidegger's concepts, Gayatri Spivak has "vulgariz[ed ...]" (1985, 260) Heidegger's notion of "worlding," suggesting that the "worlding" of any text carries ideological baggage—political messages that simultaneously nat- uralize specific concepts and always-already seek to erase themselves. Heidegger himself, for example, denied nonhuman agents the capability of worlding, stating that "plants and animals have no world; they belong [...] to the [...] environment into which they have been put" (2002, 23). As a result, building worlds seems to necessitate creating hierarchies, which lead to processes of oppression and marginalization—from the colonial subtexts of canonical texts Spivak uncovered and the feminist sf of Ursula K. Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and Octavia Butler to afrofuturism and visions of the future in which Earth liberates itself from human dominance.

The conference "Worlding SF" seeks to explore these three thematic clusters—(a) world-building, (b) processes and practices of being in fictional worlds (both from the characters' and readers'/viewers'/players'/fans' points of view), and (c) the seemingly naturalized subtextual messages these fantastic visions communicate (or sometimes even self-consciously address). Accordingly, we would like to invite interested scholars to submit panel proposals and/or abstracts for individual papers on topics that may include, but are by no means limited to:

- (transmedia) storytelling and world-building (establishing coherence, explaining contradictions, embracing contradictions, world-building beyond storytelling, etc.)
- the (im)mutability of sf worlds (retconning the operating principles of established universes)
- world-building and philosophy
- human and nonhuman agents' being-in-the-(fictional) world
- worlds as characters in their own right
- engaging with sf storyworlds/universes (e.g. fan culture, but also popular culture representations of specific sf worlds and their fans)
- movement (and/or the lack thereof) in/of sf worlds
- (overcoming) marginalization in sf worlds (race, class, gender, sexuality, species)
- non-western conceptualizations of sf worlds (e.g. indigenous cosmologies)
- sf worlds and the "real" world

Confirmed keynote speakers:
- Mark Bould (University of the West of England, Bristol, United Kingdom)
- Gerry Canavan (Marquette University, United States)
- Pawel Frelik (Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland)

Submission: We have two separate deadlines for panel and paper proposals. For the first deadline, please submit only your panel proposals (i.e., 300–500-word pitches for your panels). You may, of course, already recruit scholars for your panels and include a tentative list of speakers; however,

individual paper abstracts (no matter whether submitted for the open track or for a specific panel/track) will be due at a later point.

Timeline:
Deadline for panel proposals: January 31, 2018
Acceptance of panel proposals: February 16, 2018
Deadline for paper abstracts: April 15, 2018

Panel proposals should be emailed to contact@worlding-sf.com; for individual paper abstracts, please use the submission form on the conference website (www.worlding-sf.com), which will be online from February 20 to April 15.

Limited funding for independent scholars and graduate students may be available. In order to create a more inclusive environment for international scholars who may have funding, scheduling, and/or travel issues, the conference will feature a Skype track. We expect papers to be presented live (and not to be pre-recorded), however.

Organizers: Stefan "Steve" Rabitsch, Michael Fuchs, and Stefan Brandt (University of Graz)

A volume based on selected conference papers will be published with the University of Wales Press' New Dimensions in Science Fiction series, edited by Paweł Frelik and Patrick B. Sharp. (FYI: UWP is distributed by the University of Chicago Press in North America.)

If you have any questions, please drop us an email at contact@worlding-sf.com.

Title: *Fantasy and Myth in the Anthropocene*
Deadline: 28th February 2018
Contact: fantastikabrno@gmail.com
Dates: 3–5 October 2018

"The relationship between myth and fantasy is a particularly convoluted one. ... [B]oth words have so many meanings and applications that they can be synonyms or direct contraries."
(Brian Attebery, *Stories about Stories*)

"The Anthropocene is a belief that humanity has already changed the living world beyond repair ... [and that] the destiny of the planet is to be completely overtaken and ruled by humanity. ... Like most mistaken philosophies, the Anthropocene worldview is largely a product of well-intentioned

ignorance."
(Edward O. Wilson, *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*)

Myth and fantasy have always been forms of collective dreaming. They offer metaphorical grounding in existing reality but inspire imagination to conceive of a world that is different. Humanity has used myth and fantasy as vehicles for exploring the notions of heroism, group identity, power and destiny; for asking questions about the meaning of life, ethics, and happiness; for expressing social criticism and speculating about the supernatural. What do these questions mean at a time when human activity has been altering the planet in game-changing ways? How can myth and fantasy be used for hopeful dreaming that is not escapist? Can they point a way to restoring the connection with the natural rather than the supernatural? Can they articulate a vision of non-anthropocentric life, in which humans are part of rather than rulers of the biosphere?

This conference aims to explore the challenges and opportunities for myth and fantasy that have arisen out of highly contested debates over climate change, pollution, habitat extinction, mass pauperization and migrations, and other effects of global capitalism's assault on the natural and human world—an assault otherwise known as "growth and development." If myth and fantasy remain relevant vehicles for hopeful dreaming, how do they operate in the Anthropocene? Do they accept, ignore, or challenge the Anthropocene's assumptions? Whose visions of change do they express or sanction and whose visions do they exclude? Most of all, can fantasy and myth help us rethink what it means to be human at the time Amitav Gosh has dubbed "The Great Derangement"?

We invite scholars, graduate students, artists and independent researchers from all fields across the humanities, education, and social sciences. We also welcome submissions from undergraduate students. Proposals may range, but are not limited to, comparative literary studies, linguistics, film and game studies, cognitive science, art, religious studies, philosophy, education, popular culture, music, material culture, and related fields. Across this broad spectrum, we invite participants to examine, interpret and explore the various aspects of fantasy and myth in the Anthropocene. Presentations on the theme are encouraged but not required.

Relevant topics may include:

- The Anthropocene as represented in fantasy, including fantasy art
- How fantasy engages with, or avoids the Anthropocene's moral, ethical, and political challenges
- Anthropocene as a myth or myths for the Anthropocene
- Myth and fantasy on stories about humanity's ultimate triumph or inevitable end
- Magical beliefs about the Anthropocene
- Science and Fake News about the Anthropocene as part of the fantasy spectrum
- Indigenous and global fantasy vs the Anthropocene
- Fantasy, myth, and new humanism (or posthumanism)
- Fantasy as a modern form of mythmaking
- Fantasy, ecopoetics, and the ethos of "greenness"
- Films, cartoons, video games, picturebooks, comics, graphic novels and other (multimodal) formats as representing the new(?) relationship between humans and nature
- Ecocritical and/or Anthropocene readings of myth and fantasy
- Fantasy, myth, and the apocalypse
- Fantasy of survival or resetting of the current civilization
- Work of Ursula K Le Guin, N. K. Jemisin, and other writers dealing with the Anthropocene

Presentations need not be limited to the above topics or one mode of delivery. We encourage prospective participants to submit proposals for papers, panels, forums, workshops, multimedia events or propose new presentation formats. If unsure, direct questions to Tereza Dědinová (fantastikabrno@gmail.com).

Submission: Proposals may be submitted in English, Czech or Slovak. Send an abstract of no more than 500 words accompanied by a short biographical note to fantastikabrno@gmail.com. The deadline for proposal submissions is February 28, 2018. Authors will be notified of acceptance by March 15. Except for the keynotes, all conference presentations will have to be delivered in 20 minutes. Conference Registration fee, payable by April 30, is €65. Authors of selected presentations may be invited to submit their essays for a peer-reviewed collection.

Call for Papers—Articles

Title: *CFP: Gothic Nature: New Directions in Ecohorror and the Ecogothic*
Completed Chapter Deadline: 15th April 2018
Contact: gothicnaturetcd@gmail.com

"Horror is becoming the environmental norm." —
Sara L. Crosby

Gothic and horror fictions have long functioned as vivid reflections of contemporary cultural fears. Wood argues that horror is 'the struggle for recognition of all that our society represses or oppresses', and Newman puts forward the idea that it 'actively eliminates and exorcises our fears by allowing them to be relegated to the imaginary realm of fiction'. Now, more than ever, the environment has become a locus of those fears for many people, and this journal seeks to investigate the wide range of Gothic- and horror-inflected texts that tackle the darker side of nature.

As we inch ever closer toward an anthropogenic ecological crisis, this type of fiction demands our attention. In 2009, Simon C. Estok highlighted the importance of 'ecophobia' in representations of nature, emphasising the need for ecocriticism to acknowledge the 'irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world' present in contemporary society. Tom J. Hillard responded to Estok's call 'to talk about how fear of the natural world is a definable and recognizable discourse', suggesting that 'we need look no further than the rich and varied vein of critical approaches used to investigate fear in literature.' What happens, he asks, 'when we bring the critical tools associated with Gothic fiction to bear on writing about nature?'

Gothic Nature seeks to address this question, interrogating the place of non-human nature in horror and the Gothic today, and showcasing the most exciting and innovative research currently

being conducted in the field. We are especially interested for our inaugural issue in articles which address ecocritical theory and endeavour to define and discern the distinctions between 'ecohorror' and 'ecogothic'. We welcome academic articles from a variety of different subject backgrounds, as well as interdisciplinary work.

Subjects may include, but are by no means limited to:

- Ecohorror and the ecogothic: theory and distinctions
- Ecocriticism and horror literature/media
- Ecocriticism and Gothic literature/media
- Gothic nature/ecophobia
- Global ecohorror/global ecogothic
- Environmental activism and horror/the Gothic
- Human nature vs. nonhuman nature
- Rural Gothic
- Landscapes of fear
- Legends of haunted nature/Gothic nature and mythology
- Monsters in nature/natural spectres
- Climate change and Gothic nature
- Environmental apocalypse
- Animal horror
- Gothic nature in art through the ages

Submission: If you are interested in submitting a piece for our inaugural issue, please send an article of 6-8,000 words, using Harvard referencing, along with a brief biography to gothicnaturetcd@gmail.com by April 15th, 2018.

Our current editorial board includes Dr Elizabeth Parker, Emily Bourke, Dr Bernie Murphy, Professor Simon C. Estok, Professor Andrew Smith, Professor Dawn Keetley, and Dr Stacy Alaimo.

Title: *So Say We All: Religion and Society in Science Fiction (Special Issue of Religions journal)*
Completed Chapter Deadline: 1st August 2018
Contact: James Thrall (jthrall@knox.edu)

Science fiction wanders perennially in realms traditionally considered the purview of religion, asking questions about the ordering of the universe, the nature of existence, and the proper basis for human (and non-human) relations. When the speculative force of science fiction is directed toward imagining societies shaped by distinct sets of values, often those systems of value are or could be understood to be religious. This Special Issue of *Religions* journal will explore the ways science fiction constructs social systems of meaning that are either explicitly or implicitly religious, both in recasting received religious forms, and in imagining new forms of its own. What wider social assumptions are being rehearsed when the crew on Battlestar Galactica joins in the ritualized affirmation "So say we all"? Or when any imagined community functions according to shared (or at least enforced) general principles that take on the power of religious norms? What religiously motivated processes of refinement, recalibration, or rejection might be at work in resistance to those social foundations? Our focus will be on the issues—aesthetic, ethical, spiritual, practical—raised by science fiction as it invents social frameworks for answering the religious question "How shall we live?" and its concomitant, "How shall we not live." Articles addressing science fiction in any form, including written texts, film and television, are welcome. Information about the journal and the special issue is available here: http://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/sciencefiction.

Submission: Manuscripts should be submitted online at www.mdpi.com by registering (https://susy.mdpi.com/user/register) and logging in (https://susy.mdpi.com/user/login). Manuscripts can be submitted until the deadline. All papers will be peer-reviewed. Accepted papers will be published continuously in the journal (as soon as accepted) and will be listed together on the special issue website. The "article processing charge" for this issue will be waived or covered by a grant.

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

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

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dhiggin@inverhills.edu

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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.

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

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

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

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

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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
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