Foundation

The International Review of Science Fiction

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Editorial address (for submissions, correspondence, advertising):
Dr Paul March-Russell, journaleditor@sf-foundation.org
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Editor: Paul March-Russell
Book Reviews Editor: Andy Sawyer
Editorial Team: Cait Coker, Dean Conrad, Andrew Ferguson, Heather Osborne, Maureen Speller

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Volume 43, number 119, 2014

Book Reviews

Editorial

Paul March-Russell

I am writing this editorial on 14th December 2014 – towards the end of my first year as editor of *Foundation* – and science fiction and fantasy are the flavour of the month. The nationwide BFI season, *Days of Fear and Wonder*, and the British Library exhibition, *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* (curiously similar titles, those), have been accompanied by coverage in the press, on national radio and BBC TV. The screenings and exhibits have been excellent – the coverage less so. Chief offender has been Dominic Sandbrook's 'unearthly history of science fiction', a disappointingly earthbound series grouped around four tropes – space, invasion, robots and time – that has failed to apply either critical rigour or historical knowledge. Instead, a procession of clichés has been paraded plus the obligatory interviews with the stars of screen (sf literature apparently having ended sometime in the 1960s).

None of this should be a surprise. Although sf has been posited as being in the vanguard of a geek culture that has allegedly conquered the mainstream, the opposite is true. The mainstream has assimilated the most digestible products of an emergent, and potentially dissident, culture. This is what capitalism does. Likewise, Sandbrook's series is in love with screen images, rather than the printed word; TV – like the rest of the capitalist economy – is narcissistic: it desires its own image. TV loves to talk about itself but rarely (*pace* Jean-Luc Godard) does it play with itself – which is why I am looking forward instead to Charlie Brooker's Christmas special of *Black Mirror* (16th December).

What dominates this week's cover of *Radio Times*, however, is Doctor Who (Peter Capaldi) hovering over the shoulder of Santa Claus (a bewigged Nick Frost). Presumably, it's Santa rather than Father Christmas because – as he makes clear inside – Steve Moffatt is only concerned with how the series will rate with US viewers. Capitalism rules OK, UK? The fact that the most recent season was an unwatchable train-wreck is of little consequence. But why should that matter? It's only entertainment, after all. Well no, it does and no, it's not. Precisely because Moffatt has become so concerned with branding and marketing the series, *Doctor Who* carries more significance than simply being the longest-running sf serial in TV history. It has become, especially in the wake of the 2012 Olympics, an emblem of Britishness. And since, as Sandbrook's lamentable history shows, mainstream culture is only concerned with images that it can feast upon, *Doctor Who* has become the icon by which British sf is known and consumed. Instead, *Doctor Who*'s mass appeal is, in Marxist terms, a reification; a forgetting of what has made British sf in recent years into a vital phenomenon.

If Moffatt really wanted to innovate – as, to be fair, he did show in the first two seasons of Matt Smith's Doctor – he could have introduced writers who contributed to the British Boom. Writers like Graham Joyce, whose sudden death saddened so many, and whose last book is reviewed in this issue. Instead, we got Frank Cottrell Boyce, a fine writer but significantly the storyteller of the London Olympics. Boyce's story, a fairy-tale variant of the Gaia theory, was one of the more interesting efforts but it still played into a capitalist myth that the earth will endure, its resources will still be available for humanity to exploit, that the eco-system is there to protect us.

But, as last August's SF/F Now conference emphasized, it isn't and the earth probably won't. The greatest disservice sf can do is to lie about – to mystify or to reify – what is scientifically the most likely outcome. Instead, as SF Foundation patron Ursula Le Guin argued at November's National Book Awards, sf writers – 'realists of a larger reality' – have a duty to imagine our way out of our current situation, but only from where we presently stand. No quick fixes, no clichés, no fairy tales. This really is why writers and commentators like Moffatt and Sandbrook are such a sham, and why this issue's conversation on utopias between Iain M. Banks and Kim Stanley Robinson offers a necessary corrective.

This issue also features two complementary articles by George Gonzalez and Samantha Kountz on race and racism in *Star Trek* and Hollywood sf cinema whilst Matt Englund and Erica Moore reassess Philip K. Dick's neglected novel, *Galactic Pot Healer* (1969), and J.G. Ballard's post-Darwinian (and post-human) masterpiece, *Crash* (1973). Nick Hubble re-evaluates the legacy of the comic, *2000 AD*, through four recent graphic novels. For this issue, we have also adjusted the font. After a three-issue experiment with Century Gothic, we're hoping that Arial will be an improvement. Please also note that the current subscription rates remain the same for 2015 – now is the time to encourage friends and/or academic institutions to subscribe to the SF Foundation and to support its work helping to promote the greater public understanding of science fiction.

Correction: In #118, my editorial wrongly stated that the copy of the magazine, *Ronald Reagan*, was loaned to Loncon 3 from the SF Foundation Collection. In fact, it was loaned from the personal collection of Henry Wessells, comprising material from the late Thomas M. Disch. I look forward to learning more about this title.

The Rejected Text: Expectation and Disappointment in *Galactic Pot-Healer*

Matt Englund (Binghamton University)

Few critics seem to know how to approach Philip K. Dick's 1969 novel *Galactic Pot-Healer* (*GPH*). Rather than dealing with Dick's customary themes of reality and the human, the novel instead takes up the question of artistic creation itself. Dick was ambivalent about the novel, and when he reread it in February 1982, he reacted to it with disappointment: 'when it came time, in writing the book, to have the theophany occur (i.e., for Glimmung to show himself) I had nothing to say, nothing to offer because I knew nothing' (Dick 2011: 882). The critical community has also frequently been at a loss for what to do with so uncharacteristic a novel. When it has received critical attention at all, the gesture is usually to mark the overt Faustian elements, note the role ceramics and handicrafts play, and dismiss the novel as an exercise in failed mythmaking. Even Umberto Rossi's *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick* (2011) mentions it only in passing as 'the novel where Dick tried to anatomise artistic creation with a complex symbolic and psychoanalytical allegory. The attempt was not successful, but this does not mean that it does not deserve more critical attention than it has received so far' (Rossi 2011: 22–3).

This article seeks to redress this comparative neglect. The relationship of effort and failure described in *GPH*, and Dick's own retrospectively stated ambitions for the novel make it significant within his body of work because it offers insight into his attitudes toward the creative process, at a moment in his career when his pace of production was beginning to slow. There are landmarks in this novel that can be recognized as characteristically Dickian – fantastic alien creatures that have articulate if banal opinions on human art; a demigod whose motives and methods are suspect; passing references to Spinoza, Kant and Beethoven; wisdom that emerges from the trash heap – but his familiar thematic obsessions of reality and the human are largely absent. This absence has led many critics and Dick himself to reject the novel, which uniformly fails to meet expectations of the kinds of ideas that structure a Dickian text.

Instead, the novel grapples with the despair of an artisan unable to work at his craft. The unexpected contours of the novel are the result of Dick confronting the strain of a creative process that had become a struggle. It is significant that *GPH* was composed on the heels of *Ubik* (1969), a novel that Patricia Warrick has described as a struggle 'to overcome the entropic process. Its author is tired, he needs to write to stay alive but he has nothing new to say, his creative powers have been nearly devoured by emotional stress. Still he must try' (Warrick 1987: 136–7). In *Ubik,* Dick's efforts are rewarded with

one of his best novels. By contrast, Dick begins *GPH* with the cautious hope that wisdom might be gained from diligent effort at one's vocation, even as he grapples with the fear that he will fail.

The Jungian texture of the novel is a feature that many of Dick's critics have commented upon, and is by some regarded as a flaw: 'The novel so obviously works as an allegory of Jung's creative theory that it is not one of Dick's successful novels. He is at his best when he dives into his own unconscious to bring up archetypal figures rather than allegorising the process' (Warrick 1987: 99). The Jungianism of the novel is not the cause of its aberrant qualities but an effect of Dick's expectation that a gruelling creative struggle might yield something like wisdom or, at the very least, hope. Jungian elements notwithstanding, it is not an allegory but a plea. The novel appears Jungian as a result of what Dick refers to in 1982 as his lack of knowledge; Dick struggles to create a theophany and the form in which he expects it to manifest is Jungian. *GPH* fails to meet Dick's expectation but it remains significant because it is in this work he begins to break with the traditional shape of a Philip K. Dick novel and strike out for new worlds. This movement does not arrive at its goal until 1974 with the mystical 2-3-74 experiences and the publication of *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*. Dick judges *GPH* to be a failure, but the attempt itself is significant because of the way in which it frames his later successes.

In spite of Dick's own assessment of Glimmung, the creature does seem to possess wisdom, one that comes not in the form of revelatory truth but through the transformative power of effort. In fact, this is the lesson learned from the final awful pot Joe Fernwright produces at the conclusion of the novel according to both Eric Carl Link and Douglas Mackey (cf. Link 2010: 73; Mackey 1988: 99). It is not success or failure but the attempt that has the potential to transform the individual. It matters very little what Glimmung and his corporation are able to accomplish once they arrive on Plowman's planet because the leap of faith necessary to make the journey in the first place represents an overcoming of the entropic inertia that has manifested as their universal fear of failure. Though Dick's stated hope for the novel is the illumination of theophany, the novel itself privileges effort over outcome. Christopher Palmer offers a reading of *GPH* along these lines when he notes that the raising of the cathedral 'seems a trifle pointless, but it is certainly positive. It may even be that Glimmung has invented it to give his team a purpose' (Palmer 2003: 141).

Glimmung offers no guarantee of success, only an opportunity to be active and productive rather than dissipating in futility. Dick's own hope for Glimmung and *GPH* is mingled with the expectations with which Joe and the others enter into their work with Glimmung. The late 1960s were an especially difficult period for Dick. Professionally, he was coming to the end

of a monumentally productive period in which he produced nearly twenty novels in a decade but had failed to reproduce the early success of *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). Dick had made a wager with the universe when he forsook the mainstream for the sf ghetto. In the sequence of novels that appear in the 1960s, his cautious expectation that something would arrive in time to vindicate this choice gradually gave way to a desperate fear that his hopes for success would be disappointed. Personally, Dick was mourning the deaths of Anthony Boucher and Bishop Jim Pike, both of whom were mentors. Dick later commented to Paul Williams: 'what happened was after *Ubik* I gave up, in a way, on the rational solutions – you know, the ones that make sense' (Williams 1986: 99). What happened after *Ubik* was *GPH*, but the solution he was able to produce could only be as rational as the source that originated it: 'the greatest incentive to write is that you can't figure out the universe. And you keep trying to do it by writing about it. You can coerce it into making sense by writing a book that makes sense, but what happens is, your books don't make any sense either' (Williams 1986: 98).

Perhaps this sense of bewilderment explains Dick's hope to seduce a theophany from Glimmung, who fails to pass the test of divinity, even by the arbitrary standards suggested by the novel. Early in the text, Glimmung seems to be one of Dick's classic demiurges, a figure like Palmer Eldritch, whose power demands credulity. But as we learn more about Glimmung, we find he has more in common with Wilbur Mercer in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) who offers empathy rather than omnipotence. Glimmung is regarded by those among his corporation as at least quasi-divine not because of any claims he makes to divinity but because Joe and the rest desperately need for him to be divine. He lets them think as they will, and sooner or later they all permitted to come to their own conclusions. The interpretative freedom Glimmung offers is related to the distinction Christopher Palmer draws between good and bad books in Dick:

> Benign texts in Philip K. Dick are open and uncoercive, and they are often jokey in style (for instance, the messages in bottles that Glimmung sends Joe Fernwright in *Galactic Pot-Healer*, and the graffiti by which Glen Runciter communicates with his employees in *Ubik*) […] Malign texts in Philip K. Dick coerce by foreclosing the future (for instance, the Book of the Kalends in *Galactic Pot-Healer* and Dr Bloode's book in *Lies, Inc.* tell you exactly what you are doing and are just about to do). (Palmer 2003: 126)

As Palmer points out, Glimmung does not coerce, but neither does he reveal. He has little wisdom to convey and offers instead the example of his striving ambition and his desire to know the limits of himself. Somehow Dick seems to expect more from the god he has created and the narrative endlessly promises

a momentous struggle that never finally arrives.

The reader expects revelation. Instead there are a series of delays. There is precious little dramatic action in this novel, though much is reported to Joe second-hand. Even Joe's skill as a pot-healer is never demonstrated; we know his knowledge of the craft is extensive, as is his love for ceramics in all their forms and colours, but not once does the eponymous pot-healer heal a pot. Dick, for his part, prefers to report the action of the novel rather than dramatize it. A climactic scene in which the Black Glimmung threatens those gathered at the spaceport trying to evacuate the planet and they make a daring escape is reported to Joe only after the fact. This is in part the result of the novel's viewpoint, which belongs exclusively to Joe, but by constantly delaying even a hint of drama or resolution, the novel builds up the expectation of a resolution that is disappointed by the novel's final scene. Dick declines to dramatize the action in the novel, the characters he creates fail to act. They do not try and fail, as Glimmung exhorts them to do; rather, they fail to try, preferring to wait for a voice of authority to suddenly spring forth and solve the riddle of the world through a pronouncement that speaks with knowing certainty. This is the seductive illusion of the Book of the Kalends: it seems to speak in the absence of its author and, because it brooks no further argument, it appears to do so with a final authority. Rather than create a fiction that describes a distorted reality, or realities, in this novel Dick inverts his customary construction and creates a protagonist who allows his perception of reality to be distorted by his reading of texts that seem to claim some form of transcendent authority.

This point can be illustrated in comparison with *Lies, Inc.*, a novel that in its present form was published posthumously in 1984, which also plays with characters who are too trusting of information of dubious origin. The eponymous unteleported man of the novel's original title is not the novel's main viewpoint character Rachmael Ben Applebaum but Jack McElhatten, an everyman figure thatwho appears in two crucial scenes. In the first he is entirely credulous of the advertisements and news updates that present the distant planet Whale's Mouth as too good to be true (Dick 2004: 51). In the novel's final scene McElhatten rejects the propaganda of Trails of Hoffmann, Ltd. that promise riches and happiness in favour of a more realistic representation of reality and declines the teleportation that would make him a colonist on Whale's Mouth. *Lies, Inc.* also shares in common with *GPH* the presence of a book that comments upon the action of the novel in which it appears. In *Lies, Inc.*, it is *The True and Complete Economic and Political History of Newcolonizedland* by Dr Bloode, a work revealed late in the novel to be not a book at all but a Ganymedean life mirror, an 'entity that reflects back to you your own thoughts' (Dick 2004: 165). The analogue between Dr Bloode's book and the Book of the Kalends is deepened by the fact that both quote the novel in which they appear. Mackey has noted that Dr Bloode's book

‘seems to describe in detail both the past and the future of the main characters’ (Mackey 1988: 84). In *GPH*, Joe finds a passage in the Book of the Kalends that not only describes the Glimmung’s plans for the cathedral but repeats word for word the information Joe had earlier received second-hand from the government encyclopaedia (Dick 2013: 25, 77). These recursive moments of intertextuality call attention to the power of texts to conjure a reality out of nothing but words. Joe is especially susceptible to this seductive feature of texts and the Book of the Kalends is particularly tempting by its contrast to the uncertainty that Glimmung is able to offer.

Joe’s susceptibility to the apparent certainty of texts goes some length to illuminate his obsession with the Game early in the novel. Joe is deeply ambivalent about the Game, describing it first as an occupation that gives him reason to live and then as the slow death encroaching upon him while he waits for meaningful work. On its face, the empty circulation of the Game is an idle distraction, a form of intellectual labour that does little besides demonstrating a bare recognition of the quanta of a shared cultural history through the puzzle of catastrophically mistranslated titles of cultural artefacts. But the re-creative activity at the heart of the Game offers some comfort to the despairing Joe by presenting him with a problem that has a single, verifiable answer. Appropriately, the Game takes the form of apparently comprehensible texts that need only be decoded to unlock its truth. Dick draws the reader into Joe’s quest for easy, certain answers by leaving a few of the puzzles unsolved in the text – ‘Bogish Persistentisms’ (Dick 2013: 9) becomes Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) while ‘The Arithmetical Sum Ejaculated in a Leaky Flow’ (Dick 2013: 17) decodes as the title of the 1958 film *Some Came Running*. The Game implicates the reader in Joe’s own search for certain and graspable meaning, seemingly in order that Dick may shatter these expectations by the uncertain complications of the rest of the novel.

The specific seduction of the Kalends’ Book for Joe is that it offers him a comprehensible answer that appears certain. The Book poses an ontological problem, as Mali Yoyez points out to Joe in the novel, by confusing the distinction of cause and effect (Dick 2013: 72). What is the nature of the Kalends’ foreknowledge? Is there an element of self-fulfilling prophecy at work, as when the Kalend shows Joe a pertinent passage in the Book and thus allows Joe to act on a desire he already had? Or is the putative success of their Book simply a matter of their ‘time outside of time’ (Dick 2013: 74) an eternality in which all their predictions will eventually come to pass, a power similar to that of the Absolute Benefactor in Dick’s 1967 short story ‘Faith of our Fathers’? How these questions are answered will depend on where we locate the origin of their truth: whether in the striving ambition of the individual will or the passive and collective will that chooses to simply accept the wisdom of texts and the authority that such texts imply. Link reads the awful pot that

concludes the novel as an example of the limit to which an individual can overcome the determinism of the Kalends' Book: 'the cosmic forces, the laws of nature, upon which the Kalends base the assertions of their book, are, in the big picture and over time, correct. But in particular, isolated moments, the predictions found in the book are wrong' (Link 2010: 71). This is a more cautious interpretation than Mackey's reading, which imagines Joe as an as-yet-unfulfilled Faust: 'For it is better to strive Faustlike, and fail, than not to try. With the act of creation comes self-knowledge. Joe is not a god like the Glimmung, but he has awakened. He is on his way to becoming an enlightened human being' (Mackey 1988: 99).

The Faustian imagery is a feature of the novel that is often discussed, if only because Dick takes such pains to call our attention to it. Mackey raises the issue in support of his Jungian reading of the novel: 'The Glimmung is seen as Faustian because, like Faust, it is trying to reclaim from the sea a 'new earth' – which in this case is the raising of Heldscalla. Symbolically, the raising of the sunken cathedral is the resurrection of the buried, divine aspect of self – both Joe's and the Glimmung's' (Mackey 1988: 98). Warrick remarks on how explicitly Dick makes the similarity: 'As Faust reclaims the foul swamp and turns it into a green and fruitful meadow, so Glimmung attempts to reclaim the fallen cathedral […] creating forms from chaos, separating the light from the dark, the sea from the land' (Warrick 1987: 99). The Faust imagery is also the central feature of Laurence Rickels' reading of the novel in his 2011 monograph, *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick*.

Within the text, the dialogue between the quasi-arachnid and the bivalve on the similarity of Glimmung and Faust leaves the question unresolved (Dick 2013: 91ff). Like the Game, the indeterminacy of the Faust question allows Dick to draw his readers into the debate. The bivalve and the arachnid argue over whether Faust always dies, a disagreement that, in its way, is a continuation of the discussion that takes place in an earlier scene over whether the Book's prediction of Glimmung's failure guarantees that such a failure will occur (Dick 2013: 81ff). For these creatures, to ask the question of whether Faust must die in the culmination of his strivings implicitly asks the question of whether Glimmung will, because what is at stake in both discussions is the degree to which a tradition or a text shapes the world it purports to describe. Does a text necessarily determine the world it describes or are there individuals capable of exerting sufficient power over reality that the texts that describe it must be revised?

The ultimate ambition of Glimmung's undertaking is to find an answer to this question. He offers his corporation nothing more than an uncertain hope that the Book of the Kalends is less accurate than it claims to be. This is a hard lesson for Glimmung's corporation to accept, as is found in the scene in which they struggle to find the most accurate interpretation of a passage that seems

to predict Glimmung's failure and their own destruction (Dick 2013: 81ff). The irony of this scene is that they all fail to recognize that questions about the Book's truth cannot be satisfactorily answered by the Book itself. The purpose of Glimmung's undertaking is to disprove the Book's claims to perfect realism. This cannot be accomplished except by attempting to do the very thing the Book claims is impossible. The accuracy of the Book can only be tested in the crucible of action. Early in the novel, Glimmung offers to Joe the philosophy that 'to be is to do' (Dick 2013: 49) because it is only through doing that Joe and the rest can determine the limits of the possible.

This phrase is part of a graffito that was popular when Dick was writing *GPH*. The origin of the phrase speaks to Dick's tendency to find wisdom in the trash heap, while the context of the phrase raises the issue of how the perception of transcendental authority creates the expectation of wisdom. The website quoteinvestigator.com cites a story in the January 29, 1968 *Dallas Morning News* that describes the incremental appearance of this graffito on a warehouse wall. It begins as the phrase 'the way to do is to be', attributed on to Leo-Tsu [sic], a construction that appears in Chapter 47 of Witter Bynner's 1949 translation of the *Tao Te Ching*. To this apparently genuine quotation was added 'The way to be is to do' (attributed to Dale Carnegie) and finally 'Do be do be do' (attributed to Frank Sinatra). The joke in full appears, with some slight shift in attribution, in Kurt Vonnegut's 1982 novel *Deadeye Dick*:

> 'To be is to do' – Socrates
> 'To do is to be' – Jean-Paul Sartre
> 'Do be do be do' Frank Sinatra (Vonnegut 1982: 224)

The shift in attribution speaks to the transferential power of perceived authority; it is a bit of apparent nonsense that reveals some of the wisdom Glimmung is trying to convey. But it only appears as wisdom in *GPH* because Dick narrates it in the voice of the putatively divine interstellar entity, it might not have the same punch scrawled on the wall of a men's room. But when it is attributed to a luminary like Sartre or an entity like Glimmung, it appears as wisdom by borrowing from the authority traditionally ascribed to such figures.

The oppressive determinations of tradition and received wisdom weigh heavily in this text, which imagines the creative struggles of both Joe and Glimmung as governed in part by a kind of belatedness: Joe is without meaningful work because all of the pots on Earth have already been healed, while the success of Glimmung's endeavour is fated to fail according to the Book of the Kalends. Both Joe and Glimmung struggle to cast off the unjust imprisonment of their own historicity. Though Harold Bloom would not lay out his agonistic model of literary production in *The Anxiety of Influence* until 1973, some years after the composition of *GPH*, there are several points of contact

between the creative struggles of Dick's protagonists and the revisionary ratios that structure Bloom's work. The scope of the present work does not permit me to deal with these in detail, but I shall briefly sketch a few of them.

In his efforts to resurrect the cathedral from beneath the waters of Mare Nostrum, Glimmung rebels against the Book of the Kalends' imposition on his power. The Book, which is the sole literature of Sirius-5, predicts Glimmung's failure. Success for Glimmung in his struggle against this dominant form of literature would be a form of what Bloom calls *kenosis,* 'a movement toward discontinuity' (Bloom 1997: 14), with the tradition that precedes and imprisons him, a rejection of his precursor that takes the form of a test of his strength intended to overthrow the Kalends' implicit claim to canonical authority. At the same time, success means the return not only of the cathedral to dry land but also the return of the Fog-Things of Antiquity that created it. Success will make him part of the cathedral's history and break the spell cast by the Book of the Kalends, revising the tradition of Sirius-5 by overthrowing the Kalends thereby making himself part of the cathedral's history as though he were, in part, its author. Bloom calls this *apophrades* or 'return of the dead' which makes it appear 'as though the later poet had written the precursor's characteristic work' (Bloom 1997: 16).

Joe also struggles with his own sense of belatedness. Glimmung's appearance provides an opportunity for Joe to achieve what Bloom calls *tessera*, a term borrowed from the ancient mystery traditions that means completion. Bloom coincidentally describes this ratio as 'the fragment of say a small pot which with the other fragments would reconstitute the vessel' (Bloom 1997: 14). For much of the novel Joe remains a prisoner of his own sense of belatedness, searching always for the text that will offer him a final, unassailable answer. The impulse that motivates the *tessera* is a sense that, as Bloom puts it, 'the precursor had failed to go far enough' (14) and in order for Joe to render himself complete through a return to meaningful work he must leave Earth altogether. But when he arrives on Sirius-5, he remains proscribed by the awesome force of Glimmung who is both the impetus of Joe's renewed struggle and the primary impediment to his own individual expression. Joe's final acts, his rejection of fusion with Glimmung and subsequent creation of the doomed pot, is his attempt at *daemonization*, which Bloom describes as 'a movement toward a personalized Counter-Sublime, in reaction to the precursor's Sublime' (Bloom 1997: 15), a rejection of the ideal Glimmung attains through polyencephalic fusion in favour of solitary effort.

That *GPH* anticipates Bloom's agonistic model of creative tradition speaks to the scope with which Dick deals with the problem of tradition and creative production. It also raises the deeper question of against what or whom Dick was rebelling in his composition of this novel? By the time Dick was composing *GPH* he had already written more than thirty novels and scores of short

stories. Though he remained relatively obscure outside sf circles and failed to make any inroads into the mainstream, the volume of his output means that, for Dick at least, there was already an established tradition of his work. The bleak pessimism that begins to pervade his late Sixties fiction, a turn that is marked by the contraction of Dick's character systems and stark desolation that concludes many of these works, offers a sense that Dick felt himself to be in decline. Dick's later output frequently trades his evident care for the flawed characters he created in earlier works for a solipsistic despair that sometimes manifested itself as outright cruelty – the charnel house of *A Maze of Death* (1970) is perhaps the best example of this turn in Dick's work.

It is significant that in retrospect he came to regard *GPH* as an absurd failure because by 1982 he had successfully escaped the stylistic miasma he was mired in during the late Sixties, a breakthrough contemporaneous with the events of 2-3-74. In *GPH* Dick is concerned neither with the nature of reality nor the substance of the human but instead explores the work of creative production itself with the expectation that this process will yield a revelatory discovery. Dick hopes for something new. The hope takes the form of a novel with familiar Dickian tropes and character types but with conceptual and thematic concerns that are altogether uncharacteristic. *GPH* is a text about texts and the power they have, about tradition and its seemingly inescapable weight, but above all it is about the failure of texts and artistic creation in general to solve the problem of the self and its relation to the world.

This is perhaps also why this novel is so centrally fixated on the questions of failure and uncertainty, questions that appear always with the hope that a disappointed expectation might not be an end but an avenue to a new beginning. When, for example, Glimmung apparently fails in what he sets out to do, it does not diminish the affective power that he realizes in his attempt to raise the cathedral. The stakes for Glimmung, as for those he has gathered to him, is to know the limits of himself and what he is able to accomplish. Failure is reality pushing back. Though Dick describes his experience of the novel as pain and crisis in the *Exegesis* (Dick 2011: 883), the novel itself represents failure in radically different terms. That Glimmung fails to achieve divinity is not a default of Dick's imaginative power but is instead built into the structure of the novel. The basis upon which he founds his desire to accomplish his work is that neither he, nor any finite being, knows the limits of its own power. Dick, having reached the limit of his own creative power, writes *GPH* in the hopes of discovering through the text what lies beyond these limits.

But wisdom and knowledge will not be coerced, and so Dick's 'truly desperate attempt' (Dick 2011: 883) to will a theophany into being yields disappointment. Looking back at the novel, Dick reads it in terms of the insight he has gained in the intervening years. It is an artefact for which he had grand hopes, hopes that were dashed by the shape of the finished product.

Nevertheless, the novel has value not just in itself but because it anticipates the shape of what is to come. In Dick's work, it is possible for an artefact to save the craftsman who created it. Objects like Tagomi's trinket in *The Man in the High Castle* or the pot that Mary Anne Dominic gifts to Jason Taverner in *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* are not only beautiful in their own right but each in its own way saves its creator from annihilation. Tagomi's contemplation of the object made by Frank Frink transports him to another world. When Tagomi returns from this transport, he immediately rejects the extradition request that would have doomed Frink to death in a Nazi prison camp. The salvation made possible by Mary's pot is somewhat different. The object lives on long after all of the characters in the novel's epilogue have passed away and been forgotten, and is not only appreciated as a fine example of American ceramics but genuinely and openly loved. Modest, timid Mary lives on through the object she has bequeathed to history.

The final fate of Mary's pot demonstrates Dick's recognition that whatever the nature of the salvation available to an artist through his or her art, it can be torturously slow in arriving. Like the spider described by Glimmung early in *GPH* (Dick 2013: 50), the artist must wait and wait and wait, unsure the crucial moment will arrive in time. Glimmung strives in order to learn his own limits. Joe (and Dick along with him) creates in the hope of finding what lies beyond the limits of self; to place what is inside outside, to invert a turn of phrase from early in the novel (Dick 2013: 5). This hope is expressed in the grandiose language used to describe Joe's hope for his first pot: 'He professionally appraised its artistic worth. He appraised what he had done, and, within it, what he would do, what later pots would be like, the future of them lying before him. And his justification, in a sense, for leaving Glimmung and all the others' (Dick 2013: 180). Joe's first pot is not just a pot but contains the shape of all pots to come. It is the hope that all his suffering and effort has some value. It is not just an artefact but contains within its contours the possibility of all Joe's future pots. 'The pot was awful' (Dick 2013: 180); what is jarring in this final moment is not Joe's apparent failure to create a beautiful object, but the despair that seems to foreclose any future development. Joe tries something new and it fails to meet his expectations. In his composition of *GPH*, Dick is also in unfamiliar territory, seeking in ignorance an authority that will speak its wisdom. For Dick, reading this novel in retrospect, it is a failure because the theophany it attempts to create bears little resemblance to Dick's own visionary experience of 2-3-74. In spite of Dick's self-laceration, both in the comments he makes about *GPH* in the *Exegesis* and the more immediate rejection implied by the novel's conclusion, we can recognize with the aid of hindsight that the novel is not the ignominious end but rather, in the words of *Ubik*, 'just the beginning' (Dick 1991: 216), an initial attempt at the kind of wisdom literature that would characterize the work of his final decade.

Though Dick ultimately rejected the text, there is insight to be gained from *GPH*. It is a novel that broaches its own limits, a work in which Dick appeals to a wisdom he hopes lies dormant within himself. The final shape that the work takes is less important than what is revealed in the effort that shapes it. By opening to Joe the possibility that the world might be otherwise, Glimmung transforms the pot-healer into a pot-maker. It is the power of art to rewrite reality by reshaping how we understand our relation to it. In a letter to Claudia Bush dated July 8th, 1974, Dick remarks that 'Maybe by writing about it and getting other people to read my writing I change reality by their reading and expecting it to be like my books' (Dick 2011: 22). Dick himself approached *GPH* with the hope of something new and though he does not find it in the work itself, it is the first glimmer of a new kind of wisdom that begins to appear in Dick's fiction, the revelatory power of a creative act that revises our understanding by fashioning something wholly unexpected from familiar shapes.

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Star Trek, American Military Policy and the Developing World

George A. Gonzalez (University of Miami)

Other than sharing a common setting, how does *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–94) build upon, develop and revise the ideas and themes introduced in its 1960s predecessor? In particular, the two series differ substantially in their treatment of the interrelationship between the developed and developing world. Importantly, the original series sought to directly comment on U.S. foreign policy and the Cold War whereas *The Next Generation* explicitly forewent these issues. Moreover, while the original series could be said to prefigure Samuel Huntington's concept of the 'clash of civilizations' between the Federation, the Klingons and the Romulans, *The Next Generation* centres its narrative on this 'clash', and the idea that the world system is inherently unstable – as are the politics of the developing world. Very significantly, *The Next Generation* expands on the original series' notions of social justice and universalism. (For the sake of the argument, the article focuses upon the two principal series rather than the films or other TV off-shoots within the franchise.)

1. Social Justice and Universalism in *Star Trek* and *The Next Generation*

The key commonality of the original series and *The Next Generation* is their shared commitment to social justice and universalism. Both shows point to the possibility of societies free of class, ethnic and gender biases. In 'City on the Edge of Forever' (1967), for example, Captain Kirk (William Shatner) falls in love with the 1930s social worker, Edith Keeler (Joan Collins). Responding to her plea of 'Let me help', he expresses the selfless politics of the twenty-third century: 'A hundred years or so from now, I believe, a famous novelist will write a classic using that theme. He'll recommend those three words even over *I love you*.'

The Next Generation takes this suggested critique of selfish profit-making and posits an overt rejection of capitalism. In 'The Neutral Zone' (1988) a wealthy businessmen from the late twentieth century, Ralph Offenhouse (Peter Mark Richman), is revived from a cryogenic chamber floating in space. Upon being awoken, Ralph explains that 'I have a substantial portfolio. It's critical I check on it.' Later, he adds, 'I have to phone Geneva right away about my accounts. The interest alone could be enough to buy even this ship.' Ralph assumes an attitude of arrogance, entitlement and authority. When Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) delays seeing him, Ralph retorts, 'My situation is far more critical.' Ralph condescends to the Captain: 'No offense, but a military career has never been considered upwardly mobile.' Picard, losing his

patience, informs Ralph that his value system (and attitude) is misplaced and disdained in the twenty-fourth century:

Picard:	A lot has changed in three hundred years. People are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of 'things'. We have eliminated hunger, want, the need for possessions. We have grown out of our infancy.
Ralph:	You've got it wrong. It's never been about 'possessions' – it's about power.
Picard:	Power to do what?
Ralph:	To control your life, your destiny.
Picard:	That kind of control is an illusion.

Chastened, Ralph asks, 'There's no trace of my money – my office is gone – what will I do? How will I live?' Picard explains, 'Those material needs no longer exist.' Ralph, invoking the values of the late twentieth century, responds by asking: 'Then what's the challenge?' Picard, outlining the values of the twenty-fourth century, retorts: 'To improve yourself ... enrich yourself. Enjoy it, Mister Offenhouse.'

Both *Star Trek* and *The Next Generation* hold that peoples from all backgrounds can live together and meaningfully participate in a single polity – the Federation. In 'Whom Gods Destroy' (1969), Kirk speaks of their founding fathers: 'They were humanitarians and statesmen, and they had a dream. A dream that became a reality and spread throughout the stars, a dream that made Mister Spock and me brothers.' Indicative of how the social justice politics (broadly conceived) of the Federation transcends all ethnic, religious and species divisions, Spock (Leonard Nimoy), when asked 'do you consider Captain Kirk and yourself brothers?', replies: 'Captain Kirk speaks somewhat figuratively and with undue emotion. However, what he says is logical and I do, in fact, agree with it.' In 'The Savage Curtain' (1969) an ersatz Abraham Lincoln (Lee Bergere) says to Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), 'What a charming Negress', but quickly corrects himself: 'forgive me, my dear. I know in my time some used that term as a description of property.' Uhura responds: 'But why should I object to that term, sir? […] We've each learned to be delighted with what we are.' During *The Next Generation* episode, 'Transfigurations' (1992), a visiting alien is impressed with the highly diverse background of the Enterprise crew: 'These people ... they're all so different from one another ... yet they work together freely.' In the film, *Nemesis* (2002), Picard declares: 'If there's one ideal the Federation holds most dear it's that all men, all [alien] races, can be united.'

While both series share an optimism about social justice and the ability of humanity to overcome all social, economic and ethnic divisions, they take differing tacks on the specific issues of U.S. foreign policy. The original series

does provide sharply-worded critical comments and scenarios that can be readily interpreted as directed against U.S. (Western) relations with the developing world. *The Next Generation*, in sharp contrast, fights shy of any commentary on U.S. foreign policy. Moreover, whereas the original series indicated that the global system is fundamentally stable, *The Next Generation* suggests instability is the rule in international relations as the result of unstable and bellicose politics amongst developing civilizations.

2. Foreign Relations in *Star Trek*

In 'A Private Little War' (1968), Kirk relates to a native on a primitive world that 'there came a time when our weapons [...] grew faster than our wisdom, and we almost destroyed ourselves.' When the Klingons begin to supply particular tribes on this planet with advanced weapons, Kirk is reticent to do the same. In the context of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, where the American military command measured success by the number of enemy dead, McCoy's (DeForest Kelley) comment that 'killing is stupid and useless' can be viewed as a powerful rebuke. Kirk refers explicitly to the Vietnam War: 'do you remember the twentieth-century brush wars on the Asian continent? Two giant powers involved […] Neither side could pull out.' Drawing his inspiration from this historical precedent, Kirk concludes that the Federation will arm its allies on the planet with the same kind of weaponry given by the Klingons: 'The only solution is what happened back then. Balance of power. […] The trickiest, most difficult, dirtiest game of them all, but the only one that preserves both sides.'

The ambiguity of Kirk's position, since a balance of power also necessitates an arms race, is prefigured in the episode, 'Balance of Terror' (1966). A Romulan ship has invaded Federation space and destroyed outposts along the 'Neutral Zone' (analogous to the Demilitarized Zone on the Korean peninsula) with the technological assistance of a 'cloaking' device. After his ship sustains heavy damage from the *Enterprise*, the Romulan captain engages the self-destruct sequence, preventing the secret of the Romulans' military advantage from slipping into Federation hands. Nevertheless, the two warriors can still share respect for one another; the Romulan captain says to Kirk, 'I regret that we meet in this way. You and I are of a kind. In a different reality, I could have called you friend.'

Two further episodes, 'Patterns of Force' and 'A Piece of the Action' (both 1968), can be read as allegories for Western intervention in developing societies. In the former, a renowned Federation historian, Gill (David Brian), is sent to a relatively primitive planet, Zeon, as a 'cultural observer.' In an effort to stabilize the planet's society, the historian remodels its politics on Nazi Germany. When Gill is asked why he interfered in Zeon's socio-political

organization, he responds in a drugged stupor: 'Planet ... fragmented ... divided. Took lesson from Earth history. […] knew what the Nazis were. Most efficient state ... Earth ever knew.' Consequently, Gill prioritized political stability and expediency over all other values.

'A Piece of the Action' involves a remote planet, Sigma Iotia II, which a Federation ship visited a hundred years earlier. This contact distorted the planet's society because the ship left behind a book dealing with 'Gangsters. Chicago. Mobs. Published in 1992.' As a result the society of Sigma Iotia II restructured itself into a set of competing mafia organizations – where the mobs themselves are the government. By a similar token, in many developing societies rentier/compradore classes came to dominate, once their nations became part of the American world system, since they offered raw materials and cheap labour to multi-national corporations. Such countries have been characterized by corruption and authoritarian regimes (see, for example, Arrighi and Silver 1999; Ismael 1993; Kerbo 2005; Wallerstein 2004). Such developments can be compared with the following exchange from 'A Piece of the Action':

Women:	When's the boss going to do something about the crummy street lights around here, eh? A girl ain't safe. And how about the laundry pickup? We ain't had a truck by in three weeks.
Henchman:	Write him a letter.
Women:	He sent it back with postage due. We pay our percentages. We're entitled to a little service for our money.
Henchman:	Get lost, will ya? Some people got nothing to do but complain.

Prioritizing stability and expediency, the *Enterprise* crew settles on the following course: 'Oxmyx is the worst gangster of all. We quarrel with Oxmyx's methods, but his goal is essentially the correct one. This society must become united or it will degenerate into total anarchy.' Just as the New York mafia did with the Costa Nostra in the 1930s (cf. Dickie 2005; Paoli 2008; Raab 2006), the *Enterprise* establishes a federated political structure employing the planet's mafia groups: 'You people, you've been running this planet like a piecework factory. From now on, it's going to be under one roof. You're going to run it like a business. That means you're going to make a profit.'

'The Apple' (1967) also raises questions about intervention into under-developed parts of the world. Visiting the planet Gamma Trianguli VI, the *Enterprise* crew finds that the inhabitants are content living a primitive life. They are sustained by an artificial intelligence also inhabiting the planet: 'I just ran a check on the natives, and there's a complete lack of harmful

bacteria in their systems, no decalcification, no degeneration of tissue, no arteriosclerosis. In simple terms, they're not growing old, and I can't tell you how old they are – 20 years or 20,000 years.' The natives provide the machine (Vaal) with energy (food) to maintain it. McCoy objects to this arrangement but Spock objects to applying human values to the situation, regarding it as 'a splendid example of reciprocity':

McCoy:	It would take a computerized Vulcan mind, such as yours, to make that kind of a statement.
Spock:	Doctor, you insist on applying human standards to nonhuman cultures. Humans are only a tiny minority in this galaxy.
McCoy:	There are certain absolutes, and one of them is the right of humanoids to a free and unchained environment, the right to have conditions which permit growth.
[…]	
Spock:	Doctor, these people are healthy and they are happy. Whatever you choose to call it, this system works, despite your emotional reaction to it.
McCoy:	It might work for you, Mr Spock, but it doesn't work for me.

Kirk expresses a similar opinion in 'This Side of Paradise' (1967) when his crew opts under an alien influence for a bucolic, sedentary life: 'Man stagnates if he has no ambition, no desire to be more than he is.'

Kirk's optimism extends to the episode 'Errand of Mercy' (1967) which suggests that a global conflagration is unlikely in the near term. The Federation and the Klingons are on the verge of an all-out war, in which the action centres on the planet Organia, deemed to be of high strategic importance. The Organians live technologically simple lives and are ostensibly oblivious to the machinations of either the Klingons or the Federation. Just as the two rivals are about to begin an interstellar war, the Organians intervene to prevent it. It turns out that far from being a primitive culture, the Organians are a highly advanced people, capable of rendering both the Federation and Klingon military machines 'inoperative'. On Organia, Kirk and a Klingon commander speak on behalf of their people's interests:

Kirk:	We have legitimate grievances against the Klingons. They've invaded our territory, killed our citizens. They're openly aggressive. They've boasted that they'll take over half the galaxy.
Klingon:	Why not? We're the stronger! You've hemmed us in! You've asked for war!
[…]	
Kirk	(to the Organian leader): You have no right to

dictate to our Federation.

Klingon: Or our empire!

Organian: To wage war, Captain? To kill millions of innocent people? To destroy life on a planetary scale? Is that what you're defending?

The Organians impel the Klingons and the Federation to conclude a peace treaty. Reading these fictional events into the geopolitics of the 1960s, the suggestion being made is that fear of the consequences of a global-wide war will prevent such a war from occurring – as happened during the 1963 Cuban Missile Crisis. Striking a hopeful note, the Organian informs Captain Kirk and the Klingon commander that in the future 'you and the Klingons will become fast friends. You will work together.'

The prophecy is confirmed in 'Day of the Dove' (1968): 'For three years, the Federation and the Klingon Empire have been at peace.' Yet, when the *Enterprise* rescues the crew from a Klingon vessel as it explodes, the two crews engage in hostilities with hate, anger and false accusations spewing from both sides. It turns out that they are being influenced and manipulated by 'an alien entity' to hate and attack each other. In the end, the Klingons and the *Enterprise* crew join forces to vanquish their common enemy: 'Maybe you've caused a lot of suffering, a lot of history, but that's all over.' The final scene shows the Klingons and the Federation crew arm-in-arm, laughing and jovial.

3. Foreign Relations in *The Next Generation*

While the original series cast the world system inhabited by the Federation as stable, at least in the short term, *The Next Generation* depicts a geo-political system fraught with dangers. In 'The Best of Both Worlds' (1990), when the Borg appears ready to attack the Federation, Starfleet is under-prepared: 'I can't believe any of [Starfleet's] new weapons systems can be ready in less than eighteen months.' It is even worse than that because Starfleet command is 'projecting twenty-four' months before their new weapons will be ready for deployment. When, in 'Redemption' (1991), civil war breaks out in the Klingon Empire and the Federation intervenes to prevent the Romulans from surreptitiously determining the outcome of the war, Starfleet's resources are deemed insufficient for the task: 'The only other ships available are either in spacedock for repairs or still under construction. Most of them don't even have full crews yet.' In 'The Wounded' (1991), when a rogue Starfleet ship commander threatens to destabilize relations with the Cardassians, Picard is informed: 'I don't have to tell you the Federation is not prepared for a new sustained conflict.'

Yet, possibly because of the embattled nature of the Federation – which, depending upon the viewer's ideological perspective, could either be seen as

an implicit call for increased military spending or as a satire upon misplaced hopes for a peace dividend following the end of the Cold War – *The Next Generation* was conspicuously silent on the U.S.'s post-Cold War role. The pilot episode, 'Encounter at Farpoint' (1987), expressly absolves the Federation of any present misdeeds. Before a court convened by the all-powerful entity Q, Picard proclaims:

> We agree there is evidence to support the court's contention that humans have been murderous and dangerous. I say 'have been' [...] and therefore we will respectfully submit to a test of whether this is presently true of humans.

Picard later adds: 'You should have long ago realized that humanity is *not* a criminal race!' The Enterprise crew passes their test by freeing a creature from slavery and exploitation at Farpoint Station, prompting Picard to respond to Q: 'You accuse us of "grievous savagery"? No, the one proven guilty of that crime is you!'

As for the Cold War, it is swept aside as 'nonsense' in the episode, 'Lonely Among Us' (1987), in a sign of the Earthlings' alleged remove from their twentieth-century ancestors:

Picard:	Do you understand the basis of all that *nonsense* between them?
Riker:	No sir. I didn't understand that kind of hostility even when I studied Earth history. Picard: Oh? Well, yes, but these life forms feel such passionate hatred over differences in, strangely enough, economic systems.

In 'The High Ground' (1990), when Dr Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) begins to question Federation policy towards a planet in turmoil, Picard dismisses her concerns by suggesting that she is mentally impaired as a result of her hostage experience:

Picard:	They're mad.
Crusher:	I don't know any more. The difference between a madman and a committed man willing to die for a cause ... it's begun to blur over the last couple of days.
Picard:	Beverly, I don't have to warn you about the psychological impact of being a hostage.

A similar minimization of colonial intervention is made in 'Journey's End' (1994). A peace treaty has been negotiated with the Cardassians and certain Federation planets are being ceded to them. One of the worlds, Dorvan Five, contains a tribe of Native Americans who relocated there 'to preserve their

cultural identities.' Picard objects to their forced removal: 'There are certain ... disturbing historical parallels here. Once again, these people are being asked to leave their homes because of political decisions made by a distant government.' Nevertheless, Picard is ordered to carry out their removal 'for the greater good.' In the end, the tribe opts to live 'under Cardassian jurisdiction' whereas in U.S. history, Native Americans were not offered an 'equitable solution' nor allowed to 'take that risk' of staying.

4. *The Next Generation* and the Developing World

In Chapter Four of *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (1998), Daniel Bernardi holds that *The Next Generation* conveys a racist or, more specifically, 'anti-black' attitude. My position is that the series, contrary to Bernardi's argument, is not racist *per se* but that it tends to cast the developing world as populated by corrupt, violent regimes. Although it can be argued that the series offers partial and incomplete metaphors for various 'Third World' peoples, it nevertheless provides what amounts to a very negative commentary on Africa, the Arab Middle East, Latin America and East Asia.

4.1 Africa

Bernardi's argument is based largely on two incidents: one, the episode 'Code of Honor' (1987) and, two, the treatment of the Klingons. 'Code of Honor' focuses on what appears to be a metaphor for sub-Saharan Africa. Bernardi aptly acknowledges that the planet depicted in this episode, Ligon II, bespeaks 'black' Africa:

> The Ligonians [who are all played by black actors] carry spears and staffs. The men have deep scars on their faces and chests, suggesting hand-to-hand combat and primitive tribal rituals. They wear turbans, poufy pants, and sashes cut in the figure of an 'X' so that their dark, muscular bodies are plainly visible. The planet is ruled by a bombastic chief, Luttan, whose followers are prone to beating sticks in rhythmic response to his emphatic proclamations. The Ligonian world is reminiscent of the African safari, as we see silhouettes of trees and shrubs against a saturated reddish-orange sky. Even the music-bed, with its heavy bass and slow beat, is reminiscent of classic Hollywood jungle movies and National Geographic documentaries of the 'dark continent.' The representation of these 'closely humanoids' in this way suggests that Ligon II is not only a black world, but one that 'parallels' real African tribes. (Bernardi 1998: 107)

The Ligonians' political insularity threatens the *Enterprise*'s mission, which

is to save a Federation colony afflicted with a deadly infection by retrieving a precious medicine (a natural resource) only available on Ligon. The Ligon leadership is little concerned with the fate of the colonists and instead draws the *Enterprise*'s crew into its tribal/clan politics.

While 'Code of Honor' features a negative portrayal of Africans (i.e. not African-Americans), Bernardi focuses solely on American race relations: 'the episode reveals a dramatic shift in the articulation of race in the Trek mega-text, perhaps due to a sociopolitical context less concerned with the practices of the civil rights movement than with a neoconservative ideal.' Bernardi further centres his analysis on U.S. domestic politics when he writes:

> The mid-1980s through the early 1990s, the period of the production and initial reception of *The Next Generation*, is marked by a sociopolitical climate quite different from that of the 1960s, the period of the original Trek's production. In what is now commonly referred to as the Reagan-Bush years, the civil rights movement was no longer the dominant arbiter of the meaning of race. (Bernardi 1998: 111)

Bernardi adds that *The Next Generation*, and the episode 'Code of Honor', is consistent with a backlash against the U.S. civil rights movement: 'with its roots in the 1970s and earlier, the neoconservative movement came to power during this period with the stated goal of curtailing and even rolling back many of the sociopolitical inroads that had been made in the 1960s' (111).

4.2 The Middle East

As with 'Code of Honor', Bernardi reads the treatment of the Klingons in *The Next Generation* as a broad indictment of dark-skinned people. He writes that the 'biological notion of blackness is displaced onto the Klingons while a civilized notion of whiteness is ascribed to the Federation' (133). Bernardi correctly notes that the Klingons are described as inherently violent: in 'The Icarus Factor' (1989) the point is explicitly made by the steadfastly objective Data (Brent Spiner) that 'there is, of course, a genetic predisposition toward hostility among all Klingons.' In 'Heart of Glory' (1988), this inclination is likened to that of the wolf-pack: the Klingons are portrayed as wolf-like when they howl as part of a funeral ritual. Although this lament echoes the ethos of loyalty ascribed to the wolf-pack in such texts as Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* (1894-6), it must be acknowledged that such an ethos is subject to political expediencies amongst the Klingons. For example, the clan of Duras is neither noble – killing Worf's mate and young Alexander's mother – nor loyal, spurning the Federation for the Romulans.

As in the case of 'Code of Honor', my argument is that the Klingons can be most productively read as members of the developing world, and not as

dark-skinned people *writ large*. Whereas Nicholas Sarantakes argues that the Klingons in the original series were substitutes for the Russians (2005: 74–103), Christian Domenig notes that they physically resembled peoples from Central Asia, but links their culture to the traditions and practices of medieval Europe (2013: 295). While the Klingons, particularly beginning with *The Next Generation*, possess medieval customs, such as the observance of ritual and a belief in ethnic identity, their physical appearance – brown skin, dark and wavy hair – associates them with an Arab identity. Although the focus upon ritual, tradition and martial honour could also equate the Klingons with, say, the Japanese samurai, other social factors – in addition to physical characteristics – suggest an association with Arabic culture. In 'Heart of Glory' a Klingon remarks: 'We are, after all, brothers lost among infidels.' Arab societies tend to be patriarchal, as is Klingon society – with women prohibited from sitting on the supreme political body, the High Council; political decisions made for the family/clan by the eldest male; and the crimes of fathers falling upon their sons. A comparison can also be drawn with the rise of political Islamism in the episode, 'Rightful Heir' (1993), which focuses on the figure of Kahless, the founder of the Klingon state, who is revered as a demigod: 'To believe in Kahless and his teachings […] and to become truly Klingon.' According to Klingon theology, Kahless 'united' the Klingons, gave them 'honor and strength', and 'promised to return one day'. In the story, Kahless is cloned from ancient DNA and his clone is made head of the state for the Klingon Empire.

The political instability of Klingon politics and the uncertainty of the Federation/Klingon alliance is evident in 'Sins of the Father', 'Reunion' (both 1990), 'The Mind's Eye' and 'Redemption' (both 1991). In 'The Mind's Eye', a Klingon colonial governor suspects that the Federation is arming an independence movement in the colony he governs. The brutality of the Klingons is conveyed when a Klingon ambassador is asked, 'You are prepared to grant [the inhabitants] independence?', and he responds: 'Perhaps. But we will conquer them again later if we wish to.' At one point, war between the Federation and the Klingon Empire almost occurs when the Enterprise is seemingly caught red-handed delivering weapons to the rebels: Governor Vagh 'is fully prepared to fire upon the Enterprise.'

In 'Sins of the Father', Worf's (Michael Dorn) father is posthumously found to have betrayed the Klingons to the Romulans, resulting in the destruction of a Klingon space-station. It turns out that the allegation was fabricated to maintain the current hegemony within Klingon politics: 'If the truth were known, it would [...] almost certainly plunge [the Klingon Empire] into civil war.' When Picard refuses to accept the outcome of a corrupt judicial process, the Klingon chancellor warns him that 'if you defy the orders of the High Council in an affair of the Empire, the alliance with the Federation could fall to dust.'

In ‘Reunion’, ‘the Klingon Empire is at a critical juncture’ and possibly ‘facing civil war’: ‘Klingon wars seldom remain confined to the Empire [...] the Federation won’t be able to stay out of it for long.’ The action is precipitated by the fact that the Klingon chancellor is slowly dying from an assassination attempt. The political situation is so uncertain that an outsider, Picard, is asked to serve as ‘arbiter of succession’, thereby overseeing the process whereby a successor chancellor will emerge. In ‘Redemption’ civil war subsequently erupts. One of the two factions vying for political power is led by the Duras family: ‘corrupt and hungry for power […] They represent a grave threat to the security of the Federation.’ In ‘Reunion’, a Duras foot-solider carries out a suicide attack in an effort to disrupt the succession deliberations. In contrast to its predecessor, *The Next Generation* casts Klingons as politically unstable, genetically combative or hostile, and seemingly incapable of engaging in a settled or permanent peace.

4.3 Latin America

The Cardassian Alliance also poses a security threat to the Federation. Introduced in *The Next Generation*, the Cardassians could be viewed as representing Latin Americans with their straight black hair and light, greenish-grey skin tone. Perhaps what the Cardassians have most in common with Latin America is a history of military dictatorship. In ‘Chain of Command’ (1992), Cardassia’s rule is both defended and vaunted by a Cardassian as he tortures Picard: ‘We acquired territory during the wars ... we developed new resources ... we initiated a rebuilding program ... we have mandated agricultural programs. That is what the military has done for Cardassia.’

‘The Wounded’ (1991) begins ‘nearly a year since a peace treaty ended the long conflict between the Federation and Cardassia.’ The action centres on a rogue Starfleet captain, Maxwell (Bob Gunton), who orders his ship into Cardassian space and destroys what the Cardassians describe as a science station. In justifying his actions to Picard, Maxwell contends that the Cardassians ‘are arming again. That so-called science station? A military supply port.’ Although Maxwell is finally apprehended by the *Enterprise*, Picard is convinced that Maxwell was correct and that the Cardassians are preparing for war or, at least, engaging in military moves menacing to the Federation. Picard confronts the Cardassian military liaison officer on board the *Enterprise* during its pursuit of Maxwell:

> Those ships weren’t carrying scientific equipment, were they? A ‘research’ station within arm’s reach of three Federation sectors...? Cargo ships running with high energy subspace fields that jam sensors…? If I had attempted to board that ship... I am quite certain that you and I would

not be sitting here now.

As proof of Picard's suspicions, in 'Chain of Command', the Cardassians are discovered to be marshalling their forces along the Federation border and readying for an invasion. The invasion is only stopped because the *Enterprise* is able to attach explosives to the Cardassian attack fleet. The Cardassians agree to forego their planned assault in exchange for the disarming of the explosives.

4.4 East Asia

In the *Star Trek* universe, Romulans have straight black hair, coming down to just above their eyes and ears, which resembles the peoples of East Asia (China, Korea, Japan). 'Unification' (1991) in part takes place in the capital city of the Romulan home world, which is described in the script notes as 'colorless, bleak... pedestrians only... this is a poor neighborhood, life here is a struggle', a description that bears some resemblance to a Chinese or Korean town of the early 1990s.

Although in 'The Enemy' (1989), Georgi LaForge (LeVar Burton) does make common cause with a Romulan soldier when they are trapped on a barren and inhospitable planet, the Romulans are typically cast as implacable and dangerous foes. In 'The Neutral Zone', they are described as 'violent beyond description' and egotistical 'beyond arrogance'. Picard asserts, in 'Redemption', that 'the Romulans have always been willing to take enormous risks in order to gain any advantage over the Federation'; as an example of which, in 'The Mind's Eye', the Romulans kidnap LaForge and 'brainwash' him into becoming a pawn in their machinations against the Federation/Klingon alliance. 'Unification' turns upon a Romulan plot to invade the Federation planet of Vulcan, under the guise of (re)uniting the Romulan and Vulcan peoples as variants of the same species. Romulan perfidiousness is further highlighted in 'The Next Phase' (1992) when, despite the *Enterprise* crew risking life and limb to save a stricken Romulan vessel, the Romulans' response is to fake gratitude and hatch a plan to destroy the Federation starship.

5. Conclusion

The original *Star Trek* was produced in the midst of the political and social turmoil of the mid to late 1960s: the U.S. civil rights movement, Lyndon B. Johnson's policy dream of the 'Great Society', the escalation of the Vietnam War and the emerging counterculture. In this context, the writers posited thoughtful criticisms and commentary of the Cold War, including U.S. foreign policy and the impact of incorporating developing nations into the capitalist

world system, whilst presenting that system as fundamentally stable. *The Next Generation* was produced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, during which the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union radically altered the political world-view of its predecessor, and of the new series as it aired. In a world-system which was now unstable and dangerous, represented by the uncertain alliance with the Klingons and multiple enemies (Q, the Cardassians, Romulans and the Borg), the protagonists were less avatars of liberal democracy, signified by Kirk's hero-worship of Lincoln, and more often participants operating as best they could within political structures beyond their control.

Nevertheless, both *Star Trek* and *The Next Generation* share an enduring belief in social justice, and the idea that such justice can ultimately allow humanity to overcome and erase all political divisions. The contribution of both series is that they pose arguably the prime question that confronts humanity at the beginning of the twenty-first century: can humanity transcend the stereotypes, suspicions and fears that are sharply outlined in *The Next Generation* in time to fulfil the promise and optimism shown in the original *Star Trek*?

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We Come in Peace: Immigration in Post-Cold War Science Fiction Film

Samantha Kountz (University of Kent)

Hollywood sf cinema from the 1950s to the 1980s was dominated by the context of the Cold War and by motifs of nuclear attack and foreign invasion. With the occasional exception, such as Philip Kaufmann's remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), these tropes were not explicitly related to the theme of immigration. The collapse of the Cold War political consensus resulted in renewed anxieties towards the United States' own immigration influx. A common controversy has been the extent to which white Anglo-Saxon Americans can accept immigrants, illegal or not, into their workplaces and private spaces. In concert with these anxieties, Hollywood sf films such as *Alien Nation* (1988), *Coneheads* (1993), *Men in Black* (1997), the *Star Wars* prequels (1999-2005) and *Man of Steel* (2013) have featured the heavy policing and discrimination of alien immigrants. This article will not only examine their representations of race, class and gender in relation to the theme of immigration but also the responses of sf films from Mexico and South Africa; the director of *District 9* (2009), Neill Blomkamp, having himself 'migrated' to Hollywood with 2013's *Elysium*.

In his book, *Film/Genre* (1999), Rick Altman shows how a semantic reading of sf film, focusing upon visual/narrative cues such as aliens and UFOs, is connected to a syntactic reading in which these elements are understood in relation to the culture that influences them. Moreover, J.P. Telotte reminds his readers that, like horror, the sf genre is notable for its skill in creating monstrous metaphors 'that are constantly changing in response to a variety of cultural and industrial influences' (2001: 9). For example, the introductory sequence to *Men in Black* tackles the anxiety of illegal immigration by portraying two secret agents from the Men in Black (semantic) questioning a line of Mexicans illegally crossing the border, a hot topic in the year of its release (syntactic), in order to find the extraterrestrial in the group of 'aliens'. An alien is in fact revealed in this scene (semantic) when his disguise as a Mexican immigrant is confiscated by the agents after they discover he is quite dangerous (syntactic).

One explanation for the alien-as-avatar can be found in Susan Sontag's essay 'The Imagination of Disaster' (1965). The conclusion she draws from the filmic representation of apocalypse is also applicable to the 'disaster' that occurs in contemporary sf concerning the alien discourse:

> Besides these new anxieties about physical disaster, [there is] the prospect of universal mutilation and even annihilation […] The other-

> world creatures that seek to take 'us' over are an 'it', not a 'they'. (Sontag 2006: 325)

Both these anxieties and objectification of the alien invader were revived in such post-9/11 films as *Cloverfield* (2008) and Steven Spielberg's remake of *The War of the Worlds* (2005). In the latter, the Martians literally emerge from within the earth to wreak havoc and destruction. Alongside these more stereotypical disaster movies, another group of films has depicted aliens in terms of race, class and citizenship – themes of human livelihood and culture that have not only been foregrounded by the influx of immigration during the post-Cold War period but also by such events as the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, the 2008 housing bubble crisis, and the subsequent recession from which the USA has yet to fully recover.

Alien Nations: Immigration and Social Division

President Bill Clinton's first term in office was a relatively tolerant environment for immigrants until the landmark passing of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Act's most famous statutes were the significant reduction of trade tariffs between Canada, the USA and Mexico, and the expansion of temporary work permits for labourers between the three nations. NAFTA was widely viewed as substantially opening the USA to illegal 'invasion', and was therefore a primary threat to employment and livelihood. Nevertheless, low-wage immigrant labour plays a large part in the US economy; while middle-class employment sectors are strenuously protected, jobs in agriculture, waste management, low-wage hospitality, and other 'dirty work' sectors are left to immigrants to occupy.

Alien Nation (1988) was the first Hollywood science fiction film to mark the transition into the post-Cold War period. In the film's opening sequence, the 'Newcomers' – genetically engineered humanoids who work as slaves on their home planet – are introduced by a montage of fictional news footage. This includes reactions by humans, one of whom bemoans 'Why do we have to take them?' This sequence is followed by footage of Ronald Reagan's second inaugural address, particularly a statement which seems to indirectly respond to the citizen: 'If not us, who? If not now, when?' There is derision towards being responsible for the aliens and yet a sense of entitlement towards them. This double-standard is exercised against the aliens through their personal treatment and degraded living conditions. Although the Newcomers excel at every task they are asked to perform, the narrative of *Alien Nation* keeps returning to the alien-filled slums or 'Slagtowns' where, in one scene, Detective Francisco (Mandy Patinkin) scolds a Newcomer for acting below his potential.

Nevertheless, class and social divisions are also undercut by racial

and ethnic distinctions. For example, in the *Star Wars* prequels, Tatooine is effectively ghettoized: the planet is outside of the Republic's civil domain and instead ruled by the gangster Hutts, crawling with criminals and criminal activity. Gambling and bartering are the primary methods for trade negotiation, involving everything from junk to stolen property to slaves. When Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman) comments that these conditions would not be tolerated under the Republic, a conclusion is made that it is the immigrants who have led the planet to barbaric ruin. White-skinned aliens, however, are performing almost as well economically as their human counterparts. In *Coneheads* (1993), the alien family is permitted substantial upward economic mobility and a comfortable suburban life despite living off the wages of appliance repair, cab driving and driving instruction. Even in *Man of Steel* (2013) Kal-El/Clark Kent (Henry Cavill) periodically switches between various blue-collar occupations according to how he can best hide his superpowers and is able to move up economically by being employed at the prestigious news journal, *The Daily Planet*, despite having a known record of falsified identities.

Race and Racism in the *Men in Black* and *Star Wars* Franchises

One way these films visually separate the immigrant/alien other from Americans/Earthlings is by applying characteristics of pre-existing stereotypes to alien characters so audiences can identify their 'race', no matter how far from human they might look. Homi K. Bhabha's 'The Other Question…' (1983), is a significant essay for understanding the representation of the racialized alien 'other'. Bhabha considers the act and effect of stereotyping by focusing on the methods utilized by colonizing powers as well as the importance of cultural history: 'Stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection' (Bhabha 1983: 33–4). 'Projection' describes how the oppressor constructs stereotypical racial images that the oppressed 'introjects' or subconsciously internalizes. In this respect, Bhabha's essay complements Edward Said's notion of 'Orientalism': the idea that stereotypes can represent a group of people as a 'unified racial, geographical, political, and cultural' population (Bhabha 1983: 23). To give an instance of this process, the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century wave of anti-Semitism was prompted by the mass immigration of Jewish Eastern Europeans to the USA and then 'projected' through popular mass media. Rosina Lippi, for example, notes that in 1932 United Artists and Walt Disney produced a short film for the *Silly Symphony* animated series, retelling the classic tale of the three little pigs. For his last attempt to get into the Three Pigs' brick house, the Big Bad Wolf disguises himself as a Jewish peddler who speaks with a strong Yiddish

accent, donned with a long fake nose, a beard and a yarmulke (Lippi 2012). A similar stereotype was projected earlier through the 'Kikeriki', 'an anti-Jewish caricature published in Vienna at the turn of the century – round-bellied, big nose, and spindly arms, wings sprouting from his shoulders, and a scroll that says "Anything for money"' (Leo 1999).

In more recent years, the Arab has been the target of harsh stereotyping; in films like *Aladdin* (1992), the cinematic Arab is represented as violent, greedy, hairy, and usually sporting a big nose and some form of gold jewellery. The visual and temperamental similarities between the Arabic and Jewish caricatures are embodied in the *Star Wars* character, Watto (Andy Secombe). In *The Phantom Menace* (1999) he is a Toydarian junk salesperson/human slave-owner who sports a big hooked nose, large belly and bat wings, eerily resembling the Kikeriki. When Watto reappears in *Attack of the Clones* (2002), he now also has a dark beard and wears a round, low-brimmed hat that resembles those worn by Hasidic Jews of certain regional courts. After Qui-Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson) tries to use a Jedi mind manipulation trick to convince him to take Republic credits as payment, it becomes clear that Watto is as greedy as his stereotype suggests when he replies, 'Mind tricks don't work on me, only money.' Contemporaneously, in *Men in Black* (1997) and its 2002 sequel, Jack Jeebs (Tony Shaloub) appears as an alien disguised as a pawn shop owner known for lying to the agents about not having certain items in the hope of selling them and keeping the profits. Like Watto, he is dubious and enhanced with stereotypical features including enlarged ears, a fat nose and unkempt curly black hair, whilst adorned with obnoxious gold jewellery. Jeebs, like Watto, 'is a conventional, crooked, Middle Eastern merchant […] Jewish if you want him to be, Arab if you don't' (Leo 1999).

Whilst characters such as Watto evoke both historical anti-Semitism and more recent Islamophobia, the greedy Trade Federation in *The Phantom Menace*, run exclusively by a race of aliens called Neimoidians, can connote both contemporary Western anxieties over the financial power of China and the cultural legacy of the Yellow Peril (cf. Frayling 2014). Represented by Viceroy Nute Gunray (Silas Carson) and his assistant Rune Haako (Jerome Blake), the Neimoidians are characterized as having dark eyes with thin slits for pupils, and speaking English with a thick East-Asian accent. They are economically and technologically driven, deceptive, and cowardly. Gunray and Haako's robes and headgear bear a striking resemblance to both the ceremonial clothes of Japanese Shinto priests and Chinese Imperial Court scholars (Wetmore 2005: 151–183). In *The Phantom Menace*, the Neimoidians lay siege to the planet of Naboo. When Queen Amidala refuses to sign a treaty that will guarantee them economic control over the planet, Gunray physically threatens her people. In *Attack of the Clones*, the Neimoidians align themselves with Count Dooku/Darth Tyranus (Christopher Lee) and the Separatist Movement that seeks to

dismantle the Galactic Republic. The surprise siege, the threat of torture, their alliance with anti-Republican forces, and their overall stereotypical features lend the Neimoidians an ambiguous Oriental identity onto which contemporary racial and political tensions can be projected.

In *Men in Black 3* (2012), the Chinese restaurateur/alien immigrant Mr Wu (Keone Young) purposefully speaks in stereotypically Chinese-accented English as a way of appearing 'normal' to other human beings. Instead, he is harbouring aliens whose mission is to assassinate Agent Kay in the service of Boris the Animal (Jemaine Clement). Boris's nickname refers to the animalistic noises he makes while attacking others, and his razor-sharp teeth, aspects of himself which are associated with his alien origins. Throughout the film, Boris shows nothing but contempt for his moniker, furiously correcting anyone who says it. In effect, according to Boris, 'Animal' equals 'Alien'. In Wu's kitchen, which uses alien meat for some of their dishes, recalling the alleged use by East Asian people of cat or dog meat disguised as chicken or beef in their food, 'Animal' equals 'Alien' equals 'Immigrant'; hence 'Animal' equals 'Immigrant'. In China, this entire scene was removed from screenings of the film (Moore 2012).[1]

Lastly, *The Phantom Menace* also introduces the Gungan race, settlers on the planet Naboo who echo Jamaican racial stereotypes. Although in Hollywood sf cinema the Afro-Caribbean had been both demonized (as the merciless warrior and hunter in *Predator* (1987)) and idealized (as Zion in *The Matrix* (1999)), the figure of Jar Jar Binks (Ahmed Best), a Gungan exiled for his stupidity and clumsiness, is played for comic relief. His ears hang like dreadlocks, any other hanging tendrils are adorned with beads, and the Gungans all speak English in a thick near-Jamaican accent. The Gungans are portrayed as technologically backward: they prefer organic materials and primitive weapons to the superior technology of the human Naboo. The Grand Gungan Army dons leather armour, rides on the backs of beasts, and wields spears and catapults as it faces an army of gun-wielding droids. Their only advanced technology is a defensive energy shield. When one of their shield generators is destroyed, forcing them to face the droids head-on, the Gungans' first course of action is to retreat.

Although, like the Naboo, white-skinned aliens have been positively stereotyped as intellectually and physically advanced, for instance the genetically engineered Newcomers in *Alien Nation* or the super-efficient *Coneheads*, *Men in Black* portrays even white alien immigrants as menaces to be feared or as passive wastes of space. For example, *Men in Black*'s Edgar (Vincent D'Onofrio), one of three white alien villains in the saga, crash-lands on a small farm and literally steals the skin of the farmer, reminiscent of the prevalent fear of absorption by incoming migrant cultures. The series subsequently introduced a set of non-criminal Caucasian aliens, Scrad (Johnny

Knoxville), Ben (Jack Kehler) and Griffin (Michael Stuhlbarg), who assume greater importance than the non-white aliens, yet remain untrustworthy. Scrad is an unemployed slacker who lives in a run-down sty of an apartment; Ben owns a small, borderline-successful pizzeria in a poor part of the city; and Griffin is the last of the Archanans, a race of highly intelligent beings that can see and experience all pasts, presents and futures simultaneously. Yet for their good qualities, all are held accountable for some fault. Scrad is too much of a jester to defeat the Men in Black, Ben dies early on, and Griffin is too naïve to not be constantly guided by Agents Jay and Kay. More recently, in *Man of Steel*, a worldwide hunt for any and all white Kryptonians is triggered by General Zod (Michael Shannon) when he threatens the Earth with mass destruction. This suspicion of white immigrants can be traced back to the 1920 American census when, for the first time, migrants from Western and European nations, such as Italy and Poland, were classified as 'white' (American Anthropological Association 2007). These films ultimately reinforce Chandra Talpade Mohanty's comment that in American culture 'one can be either a resident or illegal immigrant, but one is always an alien' (2001: 492).

Sex, Birth and Miscegenation

Bhabha's essay also recognizes that the other can act as both an object of desire and derision, 'an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity' (Bhabha 1983: 19) that can sometimes generate a sexual thrill associated with interbreeding and interaction between races. A recurring sub-text is that of miscegenation, in particular, through the sexual exoticizing of the non-white female. The identities of non-white female characters are split between a racial and a gendered self that shape both how they are gazed upon and their expendability as characters. For example, *The Phantom Menace* features two Twi'lek aliens dressed in risqué attire attending to rival pod racer Sebulba, rubbing his back and feet. Since the appearance of Oola (Femi Taylor) at Jabba the Hutt's palace in *Return of the Jedi* (1983), female Twi'leks have been portrayed as beautiful, exotic yet troubled sirens. A Twi'lek Jedi Knight, Aayla Secura (Amy Allen), does feature in *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith* (2005) but all hope is dashed when she appears in scanty battle gear and given little to no screen time. More commonly, despite their sensuality, the Twi'leks have been regarded as little more than disposable sex-slaves.

By contrast, and comically evoking such other films as *Lifeforce* (1985) and *Species* (1997), *Men in Black II*'s Serleena (Lara Flynn Boyle) literally uses her sexuality throughout the film in her mission to destroy the Earth. Her true alien form resembles a Venus flytrap, but embodies human sexuality as she morphs into a disguise resembling a model in a Victoria's Secret ad.

She weaponizes her sexuality throughout the film, choosing to wear form-fitting leather attire, including a corset that can be severed down the middle to expose her cleavage as a tactical advantage. For example, she uses this ability to expose herself in the Men in Black's immigration and customs post, causing a distraction that allows her to subdue the entire organization's headquarters.

Between these two poles of doomed sensuality and voracious sexuality, the domestic comedy of *Coneheads* presents a sweet teenage coupling between a strange-looking female alien and her overweight human boyfriend. The physical set-up of this couple by itself is already palpable as a comedic scenario; no typically attractive human would find either of these characters desirable. In another unusual twist, it is Connie Conehead (Michelle Burke) who prompts the teenagers' relationship when she initiates the gaze towards the boy, rather than vice versa. The sweetness of their liaison, though, is contrasted with the grotesque violence of Connie's birth as her mother's bed shakes heavily and then her father, Beldar (Dan Ackroyd), cuts the umbilical cord by biting through it.

Similarly, the brutal and primal nature of alien birth also features in *Men in Black*. For their first assignment together, Jay (Will Smith) and Kay (Tommy Lee Jones) investigate an alien named Reggie (Patrick Breen) who is stuck on the New Jersey turnpike as his wife (Becky Ann Baker) gives birth in the back seat of their car. In the background, Jay wrestles with a mass of giant tentacles that seem to be coming out of the wife's vagina whilst, in the foreground, Kay and Reggie discuss their leaving jurisdiction. The birth is funny yet unnecessary to both the scene and Reggie's intentions. His wife could have just as well been in the midst of pregnancy and their desperation to leave would be understood all the same. Consequently, the scene can also be read for its latent content: the abject horror and appalled fascination with female reproduction that Barbara Creed explores in *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993).

The birth that opens *Man of Steel* is less grotesque but it nevertheless perpetuates the theme of miscegenation. Having given birth to Kal-Al, Lara Lor-Van (Ayelet Zurer) and her husband, Jor-El (Russell Crowe), then send their newborn away to Earth with the contents of the 'Codex', a Kryptonian skull encrypted with the genetic information of the entire race, imprinted onto every one of Kal's singular cells. Jor-El's intentions are for Kal to be raised as human, so he can learn how Kryptonians can both culturally and biologically mix with humankind. In all of these cases, the alien mothers in question are associated with the anxiety of gradual cultural mixing. That is, by giving birth in the new country/planet, these immigrant mothers are creating racially othered citizens that are protected by the law, allowing them to mix with their new culture and, possibly, grow up to interbreed with indigenous citizens.

Authority and Assimilation

In *Alien Nation, Coneheads*, the *Men in Black* franchise and *Man of Steel*, assimilation is a significant plot point, featuring aliens that wear disguises, switch between languages and take on new identities, with the secrecy of the aliens' existence increasing with each film. Bhabha concludes that in light of the negative portrayal of the alien immigrant 'discriminatory and authoritarian forms of political control are considered appropriate' (1983: 35). The Men in Black are unbeknownst to and above all forms of government. Despite the racial diversity of the *Star Wars* universe, two different humans have been Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Republic while the Jedi Council, which works as a democratic structure in which alien Master Yoda is executive, is swayed by the arguments of humans Qui-Gon Jinn and Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson). Although *Alien Nation*, *Coneheads* and *Man of Steel* portray their oppressors as being ambiguous or foolish in their efforts, the aliens in question nevertheless comply with the laws at hand if only for fear of the consequences. Alternatively, films like *Men in Black* take full trust and competence out of the aliens' hands and place them into the authorities'. When we first meet Jeebs, Agent Kay blasts his head off simply for lying to him. According to this sequence, sometimes the only way to deal with immigrants is through violence; yet the film allows Jeebs' head to grow back and the audience to laugh at his expense. In *Men in Black 3* Boris the Animal is incarcerated on the moon's LunarMax prison for several murders in the name of a Boglodite invasion of Earth. After imprisoning Boris, Agent Kay releases the ArcNet system, a shield made to protect the Earth that ends up exterminating the entire Boglodite race. This genocide is deemed entirely necessary as the Boglodites would have destroyed Earth.

In the minds of the oppressors, it is their burden to control and civilize aliens/immigrants for their own safety. Giving up everything they know and own culturally is to do what is best for their own good, and the USA has taken similar action towards immigrants. For example, the struggle for immigrants to make do with living in deplorable and hazardous conditions in either shared homes or non-zoned shelters when they cannot afford subsidized housing was 'fixed' when officials in New Jersey and California 'promised to prosecute or fine landlords' who sheltered immigrants and also promised to periodically perform raids on suspected 'dwellings' of undocumented residents (Menjívar and Kil 2002: 169–70). These actions were allegedly taken for the immigrants' own good as several people beforehand had been injured or had died because of unsafe housing arrangements. The *Star Wars* prequel trilogy projects a similar message about regulation of immigrants. Young Anakin Skywalker reveals to Qui-Gon Jinn his dreams of becoming a Jedi in order to free his mother and the slaves of Tatooine. The conditions of Tatooine are the film's

justification for human supremacy over the rest of the universe. The Republic maintains civilized order across most of the galaxy; otherwise aliens would treat humans much worse than humans already treat them.

Across the Borderlines: Immigration in Mexican SF and *District 9*

Whereas *Men in Black* plays upon the real-life, illegal migration of Mexican workers for its scenario of hidden extraterrestrials, Mexican sf films such as *Why Cybraceros?* (1997), *A Day without a Mexican* (2004) and *Sleep Dealer* (2008) have used the genre to speculate upon the future of globalization as seen from the other side of the political, social, economic and national border. *A Day without a Mexican* is a science fiction comedy that imagines what chaos would ensue if every Mexican immigrant in the USA suddenly disappeared, leaving millions of middle-class Americans to do their own domestic duties and low-paid work. Alex Rivera's online short film, *Why Cybraceros?*, explores the possibility of replacing immigrants with robots that are remotely controlled by labourers in Mexico and other countries, while his later feature film *Sleep Dealer* expands upon that concept through the experiences of one of those outsourced Mexican labourers. The term 'cybracero' is an explicit reference to the Bracero Program which from 1942 to 1964 allowed a regulated supply of Mexican labour or 'braceros', a slang term for 'a man who works with his arms and/or hands', into the US. An estimated 4.5 million Mexican citizens migrated north of the border throughout the Bracero Program, yet an inestimable surplus of illegal immigration simultaneously poured into North America.

Similarly, in Neill Blomkamp's South African science fiction film, *District 9* (2009), the uneven patterns of economic migration, including those of asylum-seekers, have become the basis for a new form of apartheid. The condition of the alien refugee camp has degraded into that of a ghetto. The Multi-National United munitions corporation is cited as being responsible for the low morale of the refugee camps, only made worse by their eviction of the alien Prawns. Although, as in the lawless society of Tatooine, we see several refugee aliens participating in criminal activities such as gambling and weapons trading, their criminality is the direct consequence of their enforced ghettoization. This criticism of the dominant society's treatment of the Prawns extends also to the themes of contamination and miscegenation. When the film's central protagonist, the government employee Wikus van de Merwe (Sharlto Copley), becomes contaminated by an unknown alien substance, one of the reasons why he receives no help from his family or friends is because the government and news media accuse him of becoming infected through sexual intercourse with a Prawn, thereby foregrounding the sexual repulsion that underlies the portrayal of the alien other. This horror, however, is not like the abject fascination that occurs in *Men in Black*; instead it is contextualized as part of

the racial prejudice that has created and sustained the alien ghetto in the first place.

Conclusion

Assuming that immigration anxiety is projected onto aliens in science fiction film, a conclusion can be made that the persistent imagining of worlds in which aliens are forced to assimilate culturally and physically is symbolic of a subconscious desire for this resolve. What is changing are the exceptions most Americans will make in order to share the labour they feel entitled to and once feared to lose. These exceptions however come at a price. Overall, 53% of Americans think the government should be dealing in some way with illegal immigrants already living in the USA (Gallup June 2014), and 88% of Americans favour making immigrants pay taxes and learn English as part of the process of becoming a US citizen (Gallup June-July 2013). According to most Americans, becoming a citizen is equivalent to paying your dues.

The slightly improved attitude shown by the American public towards immigration is reflected in sf film. The *Star Wars* canon is currently improving the reputation of the Twi'lek race on their TV show for Disney XD called *Star Wars Rebels.* The star of the show is a female Twi'lek named Hera Syndulla (Vanessa Marshall) who is the pilot of the Ghost rebel ship. She is the direct antithesis to Oola in *Return of the Jedi* as she is shown as wearing no make-up, practically dressed in rebel military pilot gear, and with complete political and sexual independence. On the other hand, Blomkamp's Hollywood debut, *Elysium* (2013), marks the continuation of a pattern of assimilation by which foreign talent is imported for its non-Hollywood credentials – for example, Jean-Pierre Jeunet's direction of *Alien Resurrection* (1997) – only to be absorbed into a pre-existing franchise or readymade set of clichés. *Elysium* substitutes refugee aliens for non-white humans who almost exclusively occupy a destitute Earth. The 'natives' in question are entirely white upper-class citizens of a utopian, disease-free colony, Elysium, orbiting the Moon. The hero Max, played by Matt Damon, an actor identified by audiences of mainstream cinema with conventional action heroes such as Jason Bourne, is one of a small handful of white humans on the crime-riddled dystopian planet, and is deemed the most capable of reaching the lunar space station for the purpose of retrieving the disease-curing technology for Earth. Despite the recurrent theme of social segregation, the brutal honesty of *District 9* is substituted for familiar plot heroics from other American films.

What is ultimately illustrated is that Hollywood cinema is only willing to make mild reforms as opposed to the fundamental changes needed to improve attitudes toward immigrants. Bhabha emphasizes the negative aspects of how the oppressor shapes projections for the oppressed to introject within their

subconscious. However, when an audience sees and responds positively to Hera's characterization as opposed to the sexualized Oola the Twi'lek, there is the acknowledgement that attitudes about immigrant females can be changed. If the introjected self-representation of the immigrant can be made better, then so too can the attitudes of the people around them, whether they be American or not.

Endnote

[1]J.J. Abrams, director of the upcoming *Star Wars: Episode VII* (2015), recently released an online video announcing the 'Force for Change' charity organization. In the video, a turtle-like alien with a classic Fu-Manchu beard and thin slits for eyes shambles by behind him while hauling a sack and a coop of alien creatures resembling chickens on his back. There is no interaction between the two; in fact, Abrams stops talking completely to stare at the grunting alien as he shuffles by. The alien is not important enough to be addressed by his human creator, but simply grunts like an animal and shambles across the frame.

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Concrete and Steel Evolution in Ballard's *Crash*

Erica Moore (Wheelock College, Boston)

J.G. Ballard's *Crash* has presented a series of problems concerning intelligibility since its publication in 1973. Yet a critical aspect of the text is often overlooked: a post-Darwinian meaning in the merger between human and machine. Ballard's oeuvre manifests this theme and poses a response to his sf predecessors, particularly via his well-known appeals to 'inner space' (Ballard 1997: 197). To take a comparative example, in Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), early humans learn to use tools, then language, and propel themselves towards an evolutionary inevitability that entails dominance over their environment and other species:

> And somewhere in the shadowy centuries that had gone before they had invented the most essential tool of all, though it could be neither seen nor touched. They had learned to speak, and so had won their first great victory over Time. Now the knowledge of one generation could be handed on to the next, so that each age could profit from those that had gone before.
>
> Unlike the animals, who knew only the present, Man had acquired a past; and he was beginning to grope toward a future. (Clarke 1968: 30)

Clarke's human is at once an evolutionary being and a masterful entity, while Ballard reacts with one that is adaptable, yet uncertain and non-central. Clarke's text moves across eons and leaves Earth frequently, and it is this type of contradistinction that seems at once to distance and bind Ballard to an sf tradition. That movement towards inner space and the psychological realm for which Ballard's texts have become known is in constant dialogue with the genre's so-called Golden Age. Although *Crash* raises a plethora of themes, at their intersection the novel enters into a consideration of the human and its evolutionary trajectories that binds the text to its status as 'New Wave' and 'postmodern' as well as 'posthumanist' and 'evolutionary'. As James Ballard, *Crash*'s protagonist, comments: 'I realized that the human inhabitants of this technological landscape no longer provided its sharpest pointers, its keys to the borderzones of identity' (Ballard 2008: 36). In the quasi-science fictional space of *Crash*, the human must look beyond its own borders in order to comprehend itself and its locale. Profusely and precisely described sexual encounters evoke human-machine integration and intercourse, and hence evolutionary potential for the future of the human.

Writing of Ballard's earlier novels, Brian Baker notes how 'Ballard's protagonists are only too eager to embrace the transformative possibilities of the disaster, even if this is at the cost of personal dissolution' (Baker 2008:

15). Roger Luckhurst considers *The Drowned World* (1962) and its sequels as an illustration of 'painterly post-disaster worlds in which traumatized survivors sought various ways to embrace, rather than defeat, oncoming death' (Luckhurst 2005b: 148). Significantly, the evolutionary drive of Ballard's characters in these early novels does not cease, and the theme is carried forward throughout his literary production. In transgressing numerous borders in terms of genre, taste, style, identity and sexuality, *Crash* ultimately demonstrates how a vision of the human and the machine connects both to evolution and the posthuman. This entanglement may be best understood in relation to an emerging critical discourse on 'posthumanities' that moves on from the anthropocentric basis of the humanities to consider the intermeshing of the human with animals, the environment and technology: 'the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world […] a historical moment in which the decentring of the human by imbrications in technical, medical, informatics and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore' (Wolfe 2010: xv).

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Critical *Crash*es

Scott Bukatman established *Crash* as a posthuman text in the 1990s via his theory of 'terminal identity': 'an unmistakably doubled articulation in which we find both the end of the subject and a new subjectivity constructed at the computer station or television screen […] the human is configured as a "terminal of multiple networks"' (Bukatman 1997: 78). Significantly, in his discussion of science-fictional representations of technology, Bukatman notes how texts seem to 'foster an acceptance of media culture as a natural evolutionary state' (76), thereby relating this to the machine acceptance that occurs in *Crash*.

To demonstrate Bukatman's terminal identity in Ballard's auto-geddon, one might notice how words like 'penumbra', 'rictus', 'carapace', 'fascia', and 'iliac' refer to specific aspects of the body and appear alongside descriptions of the automobile. Use of scientifically specialized, non-colloquial vocabulary creates in *Crash* a sterile, unadorned atmosphere, and also suggests that the lexis of the quotidian cannot do justice to descriptions of the body; the language bank must be expanded to a level of mechanical precision. Form appropriates content. The human is becoming machine, so the language used to describe this 'becoming' must involve technicity. Bukatman says that *Crash* reveals 'a landscape in which the erotic is denied, repressed, and paved over by layers of concrete, tarmac, and chrome […] Eroticism becomes a question of mathematics, of alignment' (Bukatman 1993: 292). Other critics have commented on Ballard's methodical prose, a writing style which Michel Delville refers to as 'Ballard's clinical approach' (Delville 1998: 23), commenting that

‘the images of sexual perversion which abound in Ballard’s *Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* […] are almost entirely deprived of erotic content, as they are always depicted in strictly technical terms’ (30).

As the ‘plastic laminates’ of the automobile are compared to the ‘vestibule of [a woman’s] vulva’, the text ceaselessly equates the human with its inert surroundings. Mechanical sex emerges via mechanical syntax. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the result is a series of sexual acts divested of passion: ‘Catherine seemed still only half aware of Vaughan, holding his penis in her left hand and sliding her fingers towards his anus as if performing an act divorced from all feeling’ (Ballard 2008: 132). Although denoted as a pornographic novel, the text often reads more like a technical writing manual, a guide to the vocabulary of sexual organs, or a how-to pamphlet on ‘techno-erotic’ foreplay (Fox 1985: 89). For these and other notable reasons, an established body of critical work identifies the complex, exponential meanings represented by the automobile-human configurations strewn across Ballard’s text.

Drawing on Jacques Derrida’s concept of the ‘hinge’, Roger Luckhurst has explored Ballard’s tautological tendencies:

> Ballard renders visible the space *between* frames, exposes the hidden assumptions behind the secure categorizations of literature and literary judgment. These, operating dualistically (science fiction/mainstream, popular/serious, low/high, modernist/postmodernist, literature/theory, autobiography/fiction, and so on), all tend to find their mechanisms troubled when confronting a Ballard text (Luckhurst 1997: xiii).

Acknowledging the repetitions that constitute Ballard’s texts, however, Luckhurst also insists on avoiding the assignment of a comprehensively thetical reading of Ballard, stating that ‘profound differences emerge to question any account that would wrap up the series (the entire series of Ballard’s work) within a singular frame’ (48). Taking this into account, one frame that applies to Ballard’s oeuvre is that of adaptability. Luckhurst’s hinge, or ‘between’, applies to a posthumanist/evolutionary reading as well. Ballard’s characters continually move beyond socially-constructed notions of normalcy, often encompassing perversity and transgression. This movement complicates the question of what might or might not be considered nightmarish, reminding us that the distinction between ‘dream’ and ‘nightmare’ is necessarily a relative, derived and contingent, *hinging* concept. Jeannette Baxter and Sam Francis have attempted to explore this blurred boundary in terms of, respectively, surrealism and psychoanalysis. Yet, via the question of evolution, these issues also play out in the posthuman positions posited by the narrative. To this end, Jeff Wallace combines evolution and the posthuman in his reading of D.H. Lawrence, maintaining that ‘there are significant connections to be made between the moment of the posthuman, with its debates around the

relationship between humans, creatures and machines, and the moment of post-Darwinian evolutionary materialism with which I associate Lawrence' (Wallace 2005: 6). A similar statement can be applied to how the evolutionary and the posthuman are represented and interact within Ballard's fiction.

'A language in search of objects'

In his 'Project for a Glossary of the Twentieth Century', Ballard defines science fiction as 'the body's dream of becoming a machine' (Ballard 1997: 279). Although the piece is, in short, a list of sardonic definitions for terms like 'war', 'genetics', or 'personal computers', the statement raises an important question for Ballard's fiction. Reconceptualized visions of human and machine act as a leitmotif in *Crash*, traversing the traditional boundaries of human definition, yet also of the ephemeral border between dream and nightmare. Ballard asks in his introduction: 'Do we see, in the car crash, a sinister portent of a nightmare marriage between sex and technology?' (Ballard 2008: iii). This paradoxical framework can be understood in terms of Ballard's 'nightmare logic' (Ballard 1976: 59–60): a continually ambivalent perception that dominates his narrative landscapes. The dream can also be read as a kind of unconscious evolutionary wish so that *Crash* enacts a fictional model of Freud's theory of dreams and wish fulfilment: 'the motive-power behind the dream-formation must be furnished by a wish belonging to the unconscious' (Freud 1899: 344).

Yet, while Ballard invokes the idea of the dream in his definition of sf, often the process of enacting the 'body's dream' is portrayed as a 'nightmare'. In fact, the word is used throughout both introduction and narrative to describe various characters and situations. Still, 'nightmare' within the text is complicated by the characters' willingness to accept what might conventionally be deemed a dystopic existence. *Crash* obscures its own potential to be nightmarish by complicating conventional notions of normalcy to the point of decentring morality. The reader becomes unaware of whether he or she is waking from a nightmare or falling into one. In the space between the dream and the nightmare, an analogous relationship is constructed: within this ambiguous realm, the text also unsettles the category of the human. The next evolutionary stage for the human species – and the human's attitude towards this potentiality as dream or nightmare – is thus hypothesized.

In David Cronenberg's 1996 film adaptation, Vaughan (Elias Koteas) ironically comments that the body's dream of becoming a machine is just 'a crude sci-fi concept', thus rejecting the 'dream' of the cyborg as unfeasible. Vaughan continues to state that the idea of a human/machine merger 'just floats on the surface and doesn't threaten anybody'. Perhaps, then, the posthumanist argument that incorporates the machine at a bodily level is a critical and conceptual phase past its expiration date, and superseded by the

more recent rise in Animal Studies (cf. Vint 2012). Yet, as Donna Haraway indicated in her pioneering 'Cyborg Manifesto' (1985), the question of the animal has always stood alongside the question of technology, whilst sf continues to provide a pivotal encounter between the human and the non-human that can help to enable theories within the posthumanities.

Crash's **'**marriage between sex and technology' also presents an evolutionary imperative. Overwhelmingly, *Crash* depicts the human accepting the machine as an adaptive possibility enabling transformation. The drive to sexually unite with the machine indicates an evolutionary shift in which the human body and machine surface become interchangeable. Relating to established debates and a host of emergent theories, two key concepts inform this reading of Ballard: a) the post-Darwinian and b) the vision of machine-driven evolution.

Towards Machine-Inspired Evolution

Awakening from the shock of his automobile crash, James Ballard surveys his surroundings like a pubescent child undergoing a sexual awakening:

> This obsession with the sexual possibilities of everything around me had been jerked loose from my mind by the crash. I imagined the ward filled with convalescing air-disaster victims, each of their minds a brothel of images. The crash between our two cars was a model of some ultimate and yet undreamt sexual union. The injuries of still-to-be-admitted patients beckoned to me, an immense encyclopedia of accessible dreams. (Ballard 2008: 19)

Flesh and metal combine as the physical world opens up as a sexualized landscape: 'the elegant aluminized air-vents in the walls of the X-ray department beckoned as invitingly as the warmest organic orifice' (30). Closely observing the X-ray technician, Ballard ponders:

> How could I bring her to life – by ramming one of these massive steel plugs into a socket at the base of her spine? Perhaps she would then leap into life, talk to me in animated tones about the latest Hitchcock retrospective, launch an aggressive discussion about women's rights, cock one hip in a provocative way, bare a nipple. (29)

Ballard even considers his wife's 'lived-body' 'as inert and emotionless as a sexual exercise doll fitted with a neoprene vagina' (38). Significantly, it is only after his near-fatal collision that Ballard participates in a reassessment of the machine's fetishist potential, suggesting that the road to re-aligning the human is littered with overturned vehicles and unrecovered corpses.

Neil Badmington notes that 'the monadic subject of humanism finds itself replaced by a nomadic confusion of the organic and the inorganic, the natural and the cultural […] Taking this trembling of tradition as its starting point, posthumanism has, to put matters in somewhat general terms, interrogated the myth of humanism by activating the moments of pollution and the slow slide of certainties that have habitually been drowned beneath the white noise of uniqueness' (Badmington 2006: 263). Yet here, too, the 'body's dream of becoming a machine' is portrayed as a yearning, a desire to *become* the inert environment, to adapt the human to its surroundings. To Lynn Barber Ballard commented:

> I believe that organic sex, body against body, skin area against skin area, is becoming no longer possible simply because if anything is to have any meaning for us it must take place in terms of the values and experiences of the media landscape, the violent landscape […] That is why I bring in things like the car crash. (Barber 1970: 27)

Here, Ballard expands the remit of sexual experience, extending its possibilities as the human is considered intrinsically linked with the technological landscape of the twentieth- and now twenty-first centuries. In *Crash*, sexual encounters repeatedly depict not a human interacting with another human or machine, but more specifically, *crashing* into the other. James Ballard notes that: 'Detached from his automobile, particularly his own emblem-filled highway cruiser, Vaughan ceased to hold any interest' (Ballard 2008: 94).

Writing in response to Jean Baudrillard's interpretation of *Crash*, Vivian Sobchack comments that 'Throughout the discourses of cyborgism, there is extraordinary emphasis on the erotics of technology as flesh-based, on a transcribed and transubstantiated sexuality that is fatally confused as to the site of its experience' (Sobchack 1995: 212). Sobchack's use of the term 'fatal' is intriguing as it suggests that the move toward the machinic is inevitably flawed and unsustainable. Yet the characters in *Crash* ceaselessly pursue this alleged dead-end, driving themselves towards a co-mingling of human and machine. The desire to envision the human as machine dominates, from the disabled figure of Gabrielle to the reliance of human on machine to construct meaningful identities. James Ballard perceives 'the flyovers overlaid one another like copulating giants, immense legs straddling each other's backs' (Ballard 2008: 59) whilst, at the Road Research Laboratory, Helen Remington 'reach[es] through the starred windows and caress[es] the plastic arms and heads' (98), assigning life-like qualities to the mannequins. For Vaughan, 'the smallest styling details contained an organic life as meaningful as the limbs and sense organs of the human beings who drove these vehicles' (140). As Badmington argues: 'the task of posthumanism is to uncover those uncanny moments at which things start to drift, of rereading humanism *in a certain way*,

against itself and the grain' (Badmington 2004a: 118).

Towards Evolution-Inspired Machinations

Instead of resisting the conjoining of the human and its technological environment, James Ballard opts to adapt: 'I realized that the entire zone which defined the landscape of my life was now bounded by a continuous artificial horizon, formed by the raised parapets and embankments of the motorways and their access roads and interchanges' (Ballard 2008: 40). In this adaptation there is a degree of hope and excitement:

> The hard jazz of radiator grilles, the motion of cars moving towards London Airport along the sunlit oncoming lanes, the street furniture and route indicators – all these seemed threatening and super-real, as exciting as the accelerating pintables of a sinister amusement arcade released on to these highways (37).

Ballard's perspective on his environment shifts as he begins to see new possibilities in the external world: 'I was convinced that the key to this immense metallized landscape lay somewhere within these constant and unchanging traffic patterns' (50); 'The glass curtain-walling of the terminal buildings and the multi-storey car-parks behind them belonged to an enchanted domain' (35). Instead of viewing his surroundings as harbingers of dangerous and threatening mechanization, James Ballard gauges the opportunities present in the artificial environ, including that of merging with the machine to construct a reformed human identity.

To move from the fantasies of Ballard's narrator to contemporary concepts of evolution is to enter a realm of speculative theory. As Lucile Desblache comments:

> Recent scientific and economic developments are also forcing thinkers, artists and creative writers to reroute the ways in which they interpret otherness. The Other, biologically and socially, is no longer defined in opposition to the self but as part of a self that is constantly evolving. (Desblache 2012: 245)

Likewise, Ballard presents the human as an evolutionary participant, significantly with a degree of self-awareness and influence over surroundings and adaptive choices. Faced with the threat of extinction, the characters in *Crash* embrace a posthumanism that entails adapting the human to its machinic landscape. In this respect, *Crash* extends the psychological trajectory of Ballard's early fiction:

> My characters, right from my early natural-disaster novels, accept the transformation taking place, because it's an externalization of some deep, unconscious – or semiconscious – need of their own. They embrace the catastrophe because they're keen to remythologize themselves, and rediscover the different world that lies beyond the transformation. (Hultkrans 1997: 78)

In effect, this re-mythologization is a form of evolutionary adaptation; without the transmutation that accompanies adaptation, shifts in the composition of organisms do not occur. If a species does not adapt, it does not survive. The evolutionary biologist Robert Foley identifies adaptation as 'another consequence of natural selection' apart from evolution:

> In its simplest meaning this refers to goodness of the fit between an organism and its environment. The better fitted an individual is to its environment, then the better adapted it is. Adaptation is a consequence of natural selection because it is those individuals who are better adapted to their environment that will leave more offspring, and given the other conditions, then over time a population will come to be adapted to its environment. (Foley 1995: 27)

John and Mary Gribbin note that 'the ability to be flexible and adapt is itself something that is part of our genetic inheritance and has evolved because it is successful' (Gribbin 1988: 92). In discussions of evolution, adaptation plays a constitutive role in shaping an organism. If adaptation is largely concerned with the transformation of the organism to fit its environment, then it is this drive towards environmental fit that *Crash* illustrates, a process that can be termed 'participant evolution'.

First discussed by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline in their article 'Cyborgs and Space' (1960), participant evolution posits that the human can adapt to technological change, thereby advocating the interception of human agency in evolution. In a 1994 interview, Clynes stated:

> We are presently programmed biologically for a certain rate. There is nothing *absolute* about that rate […] Evolution is more than survival of the fittest. And participant evolution can make fit the adventurous, the self-chosen unfit, and probably improve the qualities of life more effectively, even in the long run, than by just waiting for the less fit to become extinct. (Gray 1995: 53)

Chris Hables Gray speculates on the possibility of escaping a potential evolutionary nightmare by seizing the reins of human development:

> With the advent of genetic engineering, we not only can consciously evolve and invent our machine companions, we can do the same for our bodies. This is clearly a major step beyond natural selection and the careful breeding Darwin called artificial selection […] We have an opportunity, if we take participatory evolution seriously, to be free of both the rule of blind chance-necessity (the Darwinian perspective) and its opposite, distant absolute authority (creationism). (Gray 2001: 3)

Although Gray is identifying advances in genetic engineering as potential contributors to participant evolution, the conceptual shift required is implicit in Ballard, where the human is reconfigured in terms of the machine. Luckhurst notes that *Crash* 'absents itself from making any conclusion about the thesis it remorselessly restates page after page' (Luckhurst 2005a: 515), such that it prompts the question of how the machine can be theoretically positioned in relation to the human.

As if in response, the Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal has argued that 'Evolution works through the survival of variants that out reproduce other variants. A couple of centuries ago this still applied to our species […] Good nutrition and modern medicine have removed the selection pressures driving human evolution' (de Waal 2006: 224–5). Technological systems now play such an integral role in shaping human evolutionary drives that the cultural historian Bruce Mazlish has posited that evolution has ceased except 'in the form of prosthetic adaptation, that is, mechanical means' (Mazlish 1993: 7). Invoking a biological variant of the technological singularity, Mazlish comments that 'we can also consider seriously the question whether, broadly defined, *evolution* is taking a new direction with the increasing presence of machines' (13). Foley, for instance, speculates on human development that 'Perhaps […] anatomy is not the appropriate criterion, for after all, it is our behaviour that really distinguishes humans from the rest of the animal world. Technology, perhaps may be the key' to 'becoming human' (Foley 1995: 75):

> To many, tool-making has been the decisive factor. Even a cursory glance at the world shows that humans depend on technology to an extraordinary extent. This is not just the case for urban, industrial peoples, but for all societies. Houses, food, weapons, games, all involve technology to some extent even if they are relatively simple in construction […] Technology is the means by which the human world is created. (43)

If the incorporation of machine technology is a defining step for the human, then Clynes' concept of participant evolution aptly applies; awareness of the machine's role in evolution increases with the coterminous proliferation of the human-machine interface.

Posthumanism and Evolutionary Theory

The underlying foundation of both posthumanism and evolutionary theory requires a view of the human that entails transmutation and change over time. A specific strand of posthumanism maintains that the changeable human category posits ambiguity and doubt, diffraction and disturbance as foundational principles, features that also in part inform evolutionary theory:

> Posthuman narratives ambivalently but inextricably connect empowering uses of new technologies, new possibilities for self-control and self-definition, and new possibilities for cultural diversity outside the universalizing framework of the normative human form, with increasing possibilities for external control and manipulation of those same uses and possibilities. (Foster 2005: 244)

Thomas Foster here outlines a dichotomy between viewing technology as both controlling and manipulable, instead advocating adoption of a 'dialectical relation' towards new technologies: 'a combination of unbounded pleasure in the horizons they open up and unceasing scepticism toward what we might find when we get there' (244).

Similarly, *Crash*'s characters are not disturbed by the emergent parameters of their technophilia or techno-erotic sexualities; in fact, they are unaffected, unsurprised and non-resistant to shifting views on the human and the machine. *Crash* subverts technophobic tropes as the human characters long to become machine. Willing adaptation constitutes the horizon of their nightmare logic. In this sense, a reformed human subjectivity prevails via the machine. Yet this does not exclusively refer to a physical conjuncture; it is also internalized. Evolution occurs in the inner spaces of the characters' group psyche and then is made manifest in the numerous crashes. Alongside Ballard's conception of inner space, this process of adaptation can also be read via posthumanism.

Understanding the human in this manner is also of relevance to the discussions that underline evolutionary biology. Richard Dawkins states: 'Today the theory of evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory that the earth goes round the sun, but the full implications of Darwin's revolution have yet to be widely realized' (Dawkins 1976: 1). Mazlish's recognition of the machine as a 'fourth discontinuity' recalls Sigmund Freud's claim that Darwin forged the second major challenge to human centrality after Copernicus (and before Freud himself). Implications of Darwinian thought have been traced in numerous literary and cultural realms and *Crash*, too, enters this debate with a renewed angle on the question of machinic integration.

Foley has discussed the difficulty of neatly assigning an origin date to the human, identifying that 'becoming human and being a human being are two different things entirely' (Foley 1995: 77). The question of when the human

became so appears to be just as complicated as the question of what remains to define the human category in the age of the machine. Yet the idea that the human even possesses the capacity to make or re-make its own existence and structure is a philosophical leap that suggests participant evolution:

> For a Darwinian there is another important, and rather neglected, issue, namely, whether the waste and suffering inherent in the process of natural selection means that we cannot properly be expected to have moral respect for a natural world within which such a process is absolutely central. Should we not seek rather to escape the nightmare of natural selection, and put as much distance as possible between ourselves and natural processes/entities? (Baxter 2007: 12)

Brian Baxter distances the human from its 'natural' forbears by aligning an evolutionary trajectory within the technological realm. Baxter utilizes language that clearly separates the 'human', the 'natural' and the 'unnatural'. Accordingly, if a transmutation towards the machinic is possible, then the concept of adaptation will play a fundamental role in the process. David Porush affirms this evolutionary procedure in his reading of the posthuman:

> To understand the deepest root of the concept of the posthuman, we note that evolution of the human genotype through natural causes effectively stopped from the moment humans made their debut on the stage of nature. The human genome is an end point of nature, the end of its work. If humans evolve henceforth, it will be the result of artificial evolution and not of natural pressures on our genome through mutation, adaptation, and selection. (Porush 2007: 148)

Indeed, with his claim that 'Culture overrides instinct. In fact, that may be its primary function' (149), Porush prefigures *Crash*'s depictions of the human as an intersection of the cultural and biological theories posed by evolutionary biologists such as Dawkins:

> Among animals, man is uniquely dominated by culture, by influences learned and handed down. Some would say that culture is so important that genes, whether selfish or not, are virtually irrelevant to the understanding of human nature […] If genes really turn out to be totally irrelevant to the determination of modern human behaviour, if we really are unique among animals in this respect, it is, at the very least, still interesting to inquire about the rule to which we have so recently become the exception. (Dawkins 1976: 3)

Porush and Dawkins echo the continuing debate between cultural and genetic determinism as summarized by Philip Kitcher:

> Attributions of various kinds of action to genetic causes are becoming commonplace in popular culture, and those who have 'the wrong genes' are consequently doomed. If it's in the genes, it can't be changed.
>
> Those with a license in genetalk know better. Virtually all biologists publicly disavow genetic determinism, insisting that both genes and environments are involved in the formation of phenotypes. (Kitcher 1997: 239)

Negotiation between cultural and genetic influences is an ongoing project for the Posthumanities. With the current upsurge of interest in scientific knowledge in the mainstream media, establishing a manner in which the human can be understood in relation to non-human others, such as the animal and the machine, is a valuable endeavour. The Posthumanities that might arise from an incorporation of evolutionary theory into academic discourse could offer a philosophical grounding for these questions.

Thinking with *Crash* about the relationship between evolutionary theory and posthumanism can help to contribute to this project. As inert and organic comingle, the text raises the question of how adaptation drives evolution. *Crash* occupies Bukatman's 'posthuman solar system': a 'world of infinite possibilities and cyborg multiplicities, defined in and through the technologies that now construct our experiences and therefore our *selves*' (Bukatman 2000: 111). This shift can be read as a necessary critique, rather than a negative occurrence, of the formerly opposed categories of inner and outer, human and non-human, the biological and the social.

*Crash*ing into Maladaptive Evolution

An overriding challenge drives *Crash*: the question of whether the characters can survive their machinic integration. If *Crash* depicts a 'human' that has not evolved as fast as it has constructed its environment, then perhaps the suggestion is that technology is the catalyst that enables an accelerated evolutionary process. While the characters in Ballard's text display an acceptance of the machine that hints at a participant evolutionary process, adaptive attempts to a concrete and steel environment can also be read as a sardonic display of this impossibility. As Jeremy Rifkin notes in his discussion of biotechnology:

> Human beings are tool makers by nature. We are continually rearranging and altering our environment to secure our well-being and enhance our prospects for a better way of life. We are also risk takers. How then, do we know which tools to use and what risks to take? (Rifkin 1998: 233)

In her discussion of the posthuman, Desblache raises a similar concern:

> A widening of perspectives which follows this decentring of the self is to be welcomed in some respects. Yet the commodification of human and non-human life in bioengineering and the dependence of humans on technologies, driven by profit-oriented multi-nationals, lead to the exploitation and exclusion of the less powerful members of society […] Life can now be created and marketed to serve human interests and many see these developments as new forms of the colonization of life. (Desblache 2012: 246)

Crash poses the question of whether adapting to a system that has been constructed by the human indicates a viable evolutionary shift or a phase of speculative prognostication inspired by technophilia. If Ballard's text is read as a warning, then it is a warning against adapting to a system that is not necessarily conducive to the future evolutionary possibilities for the human. Roy Boyne writes of Cronenberg's film adaptation:

> If we are the disaster, if the disaster is us, right now, how would we know? In parallel to our disconnectedness from the past, there is our dislocation from what is to come; the meaning of our present is absent, unavailable to us. (Boyne 1999: 42)

As the characters in *Crash* navigate their environment, they must come to terms with adapting to a system which may soon become uninhabitable, hence the need to reassess human subjectivity in terms of the posthuman. Read in this way, the novel moves from a consideration of the physical impact to how the human might be colliding with the entire machinic system under which it resides. Carl Tighe observes that '*Crash* does not suppose the end of the world: humanity survives the invention of the car and then adapts to it – that is the problem. The point at which the car, instead of being shaped by humanity, has begun to shape humanity is one that has already gone by almost unnoticed. The book is a kind of auto-erotic dystopia' (Tighe 2005: 80). If the human adapts to a machine-dominated existence when the system remains finite and unsustainable, then the result will be a species unable to adapt to further changes within its environment. Although *Crash* continually threatens to depict the human in an absolute merger with the automobile, the physical union between flesh and machine takes place within a theoretical realm that necessitates an acceptance without visible results. Maladaptation raises a question not only within *Crash* but also the posthumanist discourse. The characters in Ballard's novel are faced with adaptive choices and strategies that continue to resonate with human behaviour and definition in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion: *Crash* Space

Haraway comments that 'the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion' (Haraway 1991: 149), and the concrete-and-steel *Crash* exhibits that the future is not happening in a remote location or faraway, non-existent locale: the future is occurring within the present. Dani Cavallaro notes, 'Ballard's narratives focus on the catastrophic side of science fiction to intimate that catastrophe is not a destiny that awaits humans but rather something that has already happened' (Cavallaro 2000: 6). Locating the confused topography of *Crash* in an ambiguous present/future space speaks to the need to take these conjunctions and theoretical shifts seriously. *Crash* presents an imaginative speculation on what the human is, what it might be, and what it might one day become. As Ballard states in his introduction: 'the writer offers the reader the contents of his own head, a set of options and imaginative alternatives. His role is that of the scientist, whether on safari or in his laboratory, faced with an unknown terrain of subject. All he can do is to devise various hypotheses and test them against the facts' (Ballard 1997: ii). Luckhurst comments that 'a literary text (especially a science fiction one) can investigate science, but could not conform to strict scientific protocols without losing its fictivity' (1997: xvi). *Crash* joins the ontological questioning typical of sf, as it continually confronts the subjects of the strange, the alien, the unprecedented. Even if by 2015 the technology with which the human threatens to merge has changed focus, the questions and manifold angles of perception raised by a text like *Crash* remain noteworthy.

Importantly, in relation to the current topography of academic debate, authors like Ballard draw attention to the intersections between humanities and scientific theories, about the human, the environment, and the universe. Badmington identifies posthumanism as a theoretical space capable of taking on this challenge:

> Posthumanism, in short, would seem to be enjoying considerable success, and its growth seems to have little respect for traditional disciplinary boundaries. It has certainly made an impact in my own field, which is probably best described as an uneasy hybrid of cultural criticism and English literature. But it has made waves in other places, too, for scholars working in science studies, theology, visual culture, geography, architecture, philosophy, political theory, gender studies, media studies, and computer science, have all recently begun to discuss with each other the possibilities of the posthuman. (Badmington 2004b: 1344)

Posthumanities should not be deemed a catch-all, fix-all philosophy, but as a critical space that remains open and gives voice to a multiplicity of perspectives. In this respect, thinking with a text like *Crash* that also occupies an ambiguous

space in relation to sf, the avant-garde and critical theory enables readers to contribute to this development.

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The Legacy of *2000 AD*: Review-Essay

Nick Hubble (Brunel University)

Alan Moore and Ian Gibson, *The Ballad of Halo Jones* (Rebellion, 2013, £13.99)

Pat Mills and Patrick Goddard, *Savage: The Guvnor* (Rebellion, 2012, £14.99)

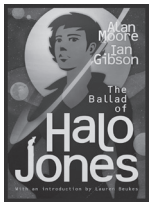
Pat Mills, Kevin O'Neill and Jesus Redondo, *Nemesis the Warlock: Deviant Edition* (Rebellion, 2013, £30.00)

John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra, *Strontium Dog: The Life and Death of Johnny Alpha: The Project* (Rebellion, 2012, £14.99)

It is a measure of the failure to date of the twenty-first century to live up to its billing that *2000 AD* still sounds futuristic. However, the comic of that name is approaching what will be its fortieth anniversary in 2017. In *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), Fredric Jameson argues that sf emerged as a modern genre in the late nineteenth century by superseding historical fiction and registering a sense of the future in the space formerly occupied by a sense of the past. In similar vein, while futuristic content had long been a feature of comics, the advent of *2000 AD* would eventually mark a decisive shift from the retrospective focus of war comics such as *Warlord* (1974-86) and *Battle* (1975-88) that then dominated the British market. What replaced this backward outlook, though, was not a progressive vision of rational steps towards an enlightened humanity to come but a savage and cynical take on a dystopian future in which Judge Dredd, *2000 AD*'s most popular and well-known character, shot first and passed sentence afterwards.

This cynicism had first showed itself in the anti-authoritarian stance of comics like *Battle* in comparison with the more deferential tone of established comics, such as *The Victor* (1961-92), as the deficiencies of post-war British society became clear during the financial and industrial crises of the 1970s. Both *Battle* and *2000 AD* were developed by the same writer, Pat Mills, but the switch to a future orientation in the latter gave an extra dimension to the sense of futility and frustration that pervaded the times, and ensured that this cynicism did not collapse into nihilism. Series, such as *Nemesis* (which debuted in 1980) and *Strontium Dog* (which initially appeared in *2000 AD*'s short-lived sister publication, *Starlord*, in 1978), depicted communities of outcasts, mutants and deviants, which were beyond authoritarian social control, and therefore free to develop new ways of living. In respect to the publication of series from *2000*

AD in graphic novel form by Rebellion, who bought the comic in 2000, the question is whether these counter-cultural products are still relevant today? This question is further compounded by the appearance of more recent series, such as *Strontium Dog: The Life and Death of Johnny Alpha* and *Savage: The Guvnor*, and whether they live up to their predecessors.



One reason why it is useful to bear this original context in mind is because otherwise the republication of *The Ballad of Halo Jones* (1984-6; first collected 1991) might be seen as another entry in the Moore canon, consisting primarily of limited-issue series collected as single-volume graphic novels, such as *From Hell* (1989-96; collected 1999), *V for Vendetta* (1982-9; collected 1990) and, above all, *Watchmen* (1986-7; collected 1987). The edition considered here is marked out from the other three volumes by virtue of containing an introduction by the Clarke Award-winning author, Lauren Beukes, who has herself written a sequence of *Fairest* (2012-), a spin-off from Bill Willingham's series, *Fables* (2002-). As Beukes notes, the story is about an ordinary young woman who becomes caught up in extraordinary circumstances, which enables Moore to explore questions of choice, compromise and identity, and provide a convincing story of 'the girl who got out'. This ordinariness is emphasized by the fact that Book One of *Halo Jones*, comprising ten five-page instalments, is almost entirely concerned with narrating the progress of a shopping expedition. In a neat satire on conventional space opera, much of the tension is generated not by traditional cliff-hanger adventures but the need to catch the next public transport connection.

Halo might be a fiftieth-century mall rat living in 'the Hoop', a huge floating construct tethered to Manhattan, but for all that she is still very much a teenage girl interested in music, fashion and finding her way into the wider world. It is when she finally achieves this ambition, after working her passage out into space as a hostess on a liner (narrated in Book Two) that the plot deepens. At the beginning of the third and final book, Halo is a washed-up barfly in a forsaken spaceport, following a decade wandering the inner-rim systems from one dead-end job to another. When she meets Toy, an old friend from the space liner who is now in the army, Halo enlists and becomes a soldier in the endless interstellar war that forms a backdrop to the whole series. In her transition from hapless recruit to veteran, which is punctuated by the death of various comrades, Halo appears finally to move beyond naiveté towards a knowing acceptance of a cynical world. 'I know you're going to be bad news and I want to be with you anyway,' she flatly tells the military commander and war criminal General Luiz Cannibal when he takes her for a lover. In a final twist, she kills him and steals his personal space cruiser in order to head outwards into the far systems.

Originally, the series was intended to run to nine books and would have seen Halo reach old age but it was cut short due to a dispute between Moore and *2000 AD*'s then publishers. However, it can be seen that the tendency of the overall narrative arc suggests a political coming-of-age story not dissimilar to Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (1956) but written from a feminist perspective. This was presumably a theme playing on Moore's mind at the time because the contemporaneous *V for Vendetta* also begins with a bored teenage girl, Evey Hammond, longing to get out into the world, who then undergoes a political awakening. It is interesting to speculate what the standing of *Halo Jones* would be now if the full series – like *V for Vendetta* – had been completed as intended. Arguably, it would have been more feminist than its counterpart because Halo learns for herself whereas Evey is educated by V in ways that are sometimes problematic, such as her abduction and imprisonment by him. The first episode of Book Two of *Halo Jones* is particularly suggestive in this respect because it is a flash-forward 1500 years to 6427 AD, in which an academic at the Institute for Para-Historical Studies is lecturing on Halo and how she 'went out past Vega, out past Moulquet and Lambard! She saw places that aren't even there anymore.'

Yet despite these accomplishments, the lecturer argues that the most amazing thing about Halo was her insistence that she wasn't anyone special because 'anyone could have done it'. The implication of this episode, which lies in the contrast between the lecturer's description of the conditions of the Hoop and the generally idyllic, gender-equal, post-scarcity appearance of the Institute, is that Halo's example has somehow helped bring about this utopian transformation of conditions in the human-inhabited universe. It is further implied that it is precisely because she was a woman that she truly demonstrated that anyone could do anything and the lecturer is particularly scathing in his dismissal of the futile claims of the 'Tru-Male Empire of the 52nd Century' that she was a man named Hal Jones.

However, despite the significance of *Halo Jones* in terms of Moore's body of work and for all that he has acknowledged that he was deliberately trying to avoid the usual guns and gore trappings of *2000 AD*, the story is nevertheless entirely consistent with the comic's general tendency at the time to promote the viewpoint of cynical outsiders. Halo's experiences in the back-street bars and with her fellow odd-ball recruits in the military are similar to the camaraderie of the mutants in *Strontium Dog*; while her final escape from the institutionalised violence of hierarchical society is reminiscent of the arch-deviant Nemesis and his ship Blitzspear. In fact, rather than reading Moore as a literary figure who has transcended the sensationalist pulp of comics such as *2000 AD*, it might be more productive to consider *Halo Jones* as the clearest expression of a collective vison disseminated by that comic of the emancipatory potential embodied in the outsiders and rejects of society. The German Marxist critic,

Walter Benjamin, described how the writings of Franz Kafka teach us that hope lies in the fools and the failures and how it is their 'courage, humour, cunning and fortitude' (Benjamin 1992: 246), which he grouped within 'the tradition of the oppressed' (249), which is the most effective challenge to the ruling order because it refuses to be assimilated by that order. Furthermore, Benjamin implied that these characteristics were the true mark of humanity to be valued above any conventional notion of the victors' spoils. The logic of such a valuation is so far outside the purview of bourgeois norms that it actually requires alternatives to respectable literature, such as fairy tales, children's stories and pulp forms, in order to be made visible.

This phenomenon is perfectly illustrated by *Nemesis*, in which the titular anti-hero is the leader of Credo, the underground resistance to the Brotherhood of Terminators and their leader Torquemada, who are leading a ruthless crusade from a future-Earth to rid the Galaxy of all aliens. By setting up a stark opposition between the rigid Brotherhood and the mutants, deviants and aliens outside it, *Nemesis* demonstrates more effectively than any theoretical analysis how hierarchical orders are built by excluding difference and turning fear of others into a religion. As the alien Eyebright explains to her children, the humans want to kill them 'because we are different from them. They suffer from an illness called Hate!' Against this hate, *Nemesis* advances alliances of the dispossessed and, in a sequence that cleverly reverses expectations, a re-education programme administered by giant spiders on the prison planet of Arachnos. Zelotes, the lead spider, informs the human prisoners that for their crimes against the Galaxy, they have forfeited 'the right to civilisation'. Once disinherited, and stripped of clothing and material human possessions, the humans find themselves forced to collaborate in the manner of the deviants and outcasts elsewhere in the *Nemesis* universe. They become happy living a hunter-gatherer lifestyle and their children start to lose their fear of aliens until Torquemada disrupts the harmony and war begins again. However, from this brief example and other moments in the text, it is possible to see that *Nemesis* is not just a wittily, cynical gorefest but also contains the same sort of hetero-utopian impulses present in *Halo Jones*.

Nemesis was one of a number of collaborations between Mills and Kevin O'Neill, perhaps best known for his subsequent collaboration with Moore on *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999-2012). As Grant Morrison observes in his book, *Supergods* (2011), O'Neill should be considered in the context of the British tradition of grotesque satire that stretches from William Hogarth to Ralph Steadman. The wonderfully-titled 'Deviant Edition' of *Nemesis* collects the issues (comprising the first three of the eventual ten books of the series) that O'Neill coloured for publication in Eagle Comics, a

publication set up to reprint *2000 AD* stories for the North American market in the mid-1980s. The resulting visual onslaught is undeniably lurid and liable at first sight to confirm the prejudices of all those adherents of what Jameson has described as the 'conventional high-cultural repudiation' of the pulp origins of science fiction in general. This repudiation has little to do with personal taste but is the expression of an unconscious 'literary reality principle' (Jameson 2005: xiv), which serves as a defence mechanism for the sanctity of the bourgeois ego. Unconscious yearnings, though, for multiple bodily desires can never be totally hidden from either the self or from others as, for example, when Nemesis addresses Brother Gogol's secret anxiety of being half-alien: 'I am the Nemesis – I am the Warlock – I am the shape of things to come […] I am the one who waits on the edge of your dreams.' This is the core of what *Nemesis*, and *2000 AD* in general, represented: the anarchic, topsy-turvy, lurid dreams that haunt the night-time hours of the repressed but which cannot be publicly acknowledged by the respectable.

Therefore, because of the way they challenge the repressive norms of hierarchical society, both *Halo Jones* and *Nemesis* remain as relevant today as when they were first published. However, what has changed is the way that comics are consumed and the need today for a series to be saleable in the graphic-novel format that has become the market norm since the late 1980s. Unlike, say, *Watchmen*, which was originally published as a single series consisting of twelve issues of 20-30 pages, both *Halo Jones* and *Nemesis* were published in 5–6 page instalments that do not lend themselves to multi-layered story-telling. In *Halo Jones*, Moore's story-telling ability overrides the limitations of the form to generate a seamless, linear narrative but *Nemesis*, which developed from a one-off story, is inevitably bittier. Nevertheless, it works as a single-volume due to the production quality and the sheer panache of O'Neill's uncompromising visual style. As the price suggests, fans might wish to buy it as a collector's edition or even as an art book.

However, this is not true of all *2000 AD* series. For example, the entirety of the original *Strontium Dog* has been reprinted in much larger volumes that do not aspire to the coherence of a graphic novel, but simply collect the comic strips in sequence. However, the more recent stories written since 1999, when the creators of the series John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra revived it and returned to writing about the original Strontium Dog, Johnny Alpha, have been written in longer story arcs with a view for publication in the graphic-novel format. Apart from the minor problem that Johnny Alpha had been killed off in a previous story which necessitated the writing of prequels, there was the further issue that much of the comic strip's appeal turns on Johnny being very cool and laconic in the manner of a young Clint Eastwood and, therefore, not the kind of personality

such as Halo Jones upon whom a longer character-based story can easily be based upon. Both of these problems are solved in *The Life and Death of Johnny Alpha* when new evidence turns up to suggest that he had not died as previously thought and so his biographer, Precious Matson, and his former sidekick, Middenface McNulty, set off in a hunt across the Galaxy for him. Thus dialogue, character interplay and quest plot are combined to provide a satisfying narrative drive with the added bonus that by the end of the story, Johnny is alive and beginning a new adventure. So, while *The Life and Death of Johnny Alpha* is unquestionably the least significant of the four titles reviewed here, it is nonetheless a pleasurable read, especially if you like comics for their own sake.

Future settings are often used to reflect on contemporary society and this tendency is clear in both *Halo Jones*, with its shopping mall scenes and commentating disc jockey, and *Nemesis*, which in similar vein features commuters and a disc jockey, who looks very much like Kenny Everett. In this respect, the flavour of the late 1970s and early1980s permeates the early *2000 AD* and poses a problem for ongoing series since in order for them to maintain that same tone and feel, it is necessary for them to remain within that period. A similar process can be seen in the trajectories of the classic children's comics, *The Beano* (1938–) and *The Dandy* (1937–2012), which despite periodical exercises in updating have effectively remained rooted in the 1930s and consequently are increasingly difficult to sell. One imaginative response to this problem of inevitable declining returns can be found in *Savage: The Guvnor*. The character Bill Savage had appeared in the very first issue of *2000 AD* as part of *Invasion*, a series set in 1999 in which an alternate Soviet Union, the Volgan Republic, has invaded Britain. However, the second of the three stories in *Savage: The Guvnor*, which first appeared in the comic in 2009, is set in an alternate present in which the explosion of an 'E Bomb' by the Americans has disabled the advanced electronics of modern cars and mobile phones and thereby effectively turned the clock back twenty-five years to '1984', which is the story's title. This is an incredibly elaborate temporal framing for what unsurprisingly turns out to be a very dystopian rendition of Britain but it has the advantage of cleverly legitimising the inescapably 1980s feel of the proceedings.

Morrison observes of Mills, in relation to his writing of *Marshal Law* in the 1980s, that he 'seemed too intelligent to be serious' (2011: 231) and this might also be the case with *Savage*, which could be taken at face value as an unpleasant glorification of guns and thuggery. An alternative reading would be to see the text as a form of artistic exercise in which the object is to critique modern British history while rigidly adhering to the representational range of the long-running BBC soap opera *EastEnders* (1985–

). While Bill Savage is a supporter of the martyred Thatcher-like Lady Shirley Brown, and lauds her policy of selling council houses, the text lends itself to the interpretation that he is being played by both sides in a never-ending war. Therefore, when he voices the cliché, 'Better to be the 51st State than part of the Volgan Empire', we are invited to think that actually it would be better to be neither. Although the action and story is always presented with a straight face, there is an underlying absurdity that suggests Mills is laughing at his country and maybe his readers as well. For example, when Savage needs to recruit East End gangsters for a raid on the Volgs' secret teleport facility under St. Pancras, he explains how the device has been trialled by transporting a man-eating Siberian tiger into the backstreets of London. The response this solicits from the gangland boss is priceless: 'I'm not having a tiger on my manor. That is well out of order!'

For all its ironies and little games, though, *Savage* reads like a cultural dead-end. *2000 AD* may well run for many more years but its original impulse is perceptibly starting to ebb. While its ongoing series, such as *Judge Dredd* and *Strontium Dog*, continue to provide pleasure, they are no longer contemporary. The fight for the future, for *a* future, has moved on from the mutants and outcasts of the 1970s and 1980s to the more complex and intersectional politics enabled by the internet. Yet due to the curious temporal quality of our time in which we are all poised on the cusp of a future that has not yet quite appeared, the register of these texts still has an emotional validity. Like Bill Savage, we are all waiting for Britain to be released from the time bubble in which it is trapped. In this context, the anarchic outward urge of the original *2000 AD*, most clearly expressed in *Halo Jones*, remains as relevant as ever.

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‘Utopia is a way of saying we could do better’: Iain M. Banks and Kim Stanley Robinson in Conversation

Transcribed and edited by Val Nolan (National University of Galway)

Iain M. Banks and Kim Stanley Robinson are both well known for left-leaning political convictions and strong beliefs in social justice. Their novels encompass themes ranging from the ethics of planetary colonization and the intricacies of counterfactual history to detailed depictions of posthumanism and questions of moral legitimacy in times of conflict. On 9th June 2012, they came together at the British Library to discuss their work and how, in particular, they approached, challenged and defended the concept of utopia.

Conversational and friendly throughout, though not afraid to disagree with one other, Banks and Robinson began by delivering readings from *The Hydrogen Sonata* and *2312* respectively before taking questions from the audience. In the process they addressed the importance of optimistic fiction in a market dominated by dystopias, the crucial differences between pocket utopias and real utopias, the potential economics of the future, the direction which science fiction may take from here, along with their own writing practices and influences.

Audience: Where do you two differ on the things that you put into your utopias?

Banks: I think we have to be careful talking about what sort of ‘utopia’ we mean. Utopia in a sense of ‘as good as something humanity can ever achieve’ is perhaps closer to what we mean in the perfect idea of utopia; as good as you can imagine or is at all practical. Mine is much more far-future wish-fulfilment whereas Stan’s utopias are much more practical and much nearer than the stuff I’m talking about in the Culture, which is very much post-scarcity with machines that are god-like. *Meek* god-like, not giant invisible sky pixies-like. More like Greek Gods with strange desires and, foibles, and weakness, and so on. I think that’s the main place where we differ. Partly it’s the time thing, but I think we’re both fascinated though by the idea of someone like us who is, shall we say, slightly better behaved than we are.

Robinson: I would agree with what Iain said. If you define utopia, which you need to do, as a positive course in history, then we take away a definition of it as this static end state, that sense of ‘We’re never going to get to that’ and ‘It might be boring and it might not be but in any case it’s not going to happen’. Utopia becomes a non-issue if it’s defined in those terms. But if it’s defined as a positive course in history you can shift it over to something that Joanna Russ made up, the ‘Optopia’, which is the best possible given where we are, given our technological base and what-not. So yes, Optopians working on and

trying to portray positive future histories, even near-future and far-future, end up being complementary members of the same team, like a football team. He [Banks] is the forward, he's the striker; I'm the defender getting killed in goal. We should switch actually [laughter from audience]. Or no, maybe not.

Audience: What are your thoughts on the post-NASA spaceflight situation we're in? Virgin Galactic, SpaceX, there's a company called Planetary Resources that's talking about mining asteroids … Can you see the commercial space companies creating a utopia or would it have to be a government-directed kind of effort?

Robinson: I want space of the people, by the people, and for the people. I'm a government man. I don't want this privatization stuff turning space into some kind of cruiser for rich people who are essentially bungee-jumping up rather than down [laughter from audience]. That's a waste, a waste of potential, because it could be public, it should be a commons. Though I kind of like this SpaceX project because Elon Musk isn't the richest billionaire on the planet and he is doing so much more than the rest of them. And the truth is that it can be a government-private cooperative thing. Most contract out to private companies to build their rockets anyway, so it's not particularly an either/or situation; it can still be a Keynesian mix. 'Leftist' at this point is just an argument for Keynesian, that's what it's come to. It's a little bit miserable compared to past times, but still. A mix of public and private but a common, public space that still belongs to us. People were mostly interested in those Martian rovers because they had no economic point or purpose. They were for curiosity only and they belonged to the people. Now these private things go up and it's, like, 'Ah God, the rich. Not only do they own the Eearth now they're owning space and the moon too'. It's dire, I think. That's my view on it.

Banks: I'm sort of bizarrely more sanguine about it. Basically whatever works; whatever energizes people, gets people into space and gets people interested in space at all. In the longer term it will all sort of sort itself out. In the end, with anything that's going to take perhaps hundreds of years – trying to get to another star, or whatever – then the long-term nature implies something that is on the path of all the people. That is a state thing that couldn't come by any commercial operation because they just don't think in those terms. They think in terms of quarterly reports. So, with provisos, yes, I agree with Stan. It would be a tragedy in a sense if space was pre-privatized entirely. But I think that in terms of whatever-the-hell-works, whatever gets us up there in any sort of numbers at all. I'm prepared to give a bit more credence in a way, but maybe that's just me being hopelessly naïve.

Robinson: No, I doubt that. One thing I want to say about the asteroid mining is that at first I thought it was absolutely ridiculous because all the stuff on asteroids is exactly what we have most of here on Earth. But then it was explained to me that the asteroids are going to be dragged down into Earth

orbit and then used, essentially, to build space stations and to have water in space so that we don't have to drag it up there. And then it began to look a little more practical and useful to me. Sometimes I get set on an opinion before I actually know what's being discussed, sorry. So now the asteroid mining project sounds pretty good to me. It's a step along the way.

Audience: A question mainly for Stan. I remember reading, back in the Eighties, some of your first books, *Icehenge* and *The Wild Shore*. And one of the earliest books of yours that I read was your doctoral thesis on Philip K. Dick. Would you say you've developed as the writer you have as a reaction against the research you did into Philip K. Dick?

Robinson: Good question. I love Philip K. Dick. He was a California writer. He was a leftist who was anti-capitalist and he was always writing about the ordinary person trapped in a bigger scene than they understood. He was a tremendous novelist. Even the novels that he wrote in two weeks have a great, compelling power. He was never my favourite science fiction writer but I've always admired him and tried to take those things out of his work. I think that's something Californian, leftist, science fiction writers often do. Maybe making that a plural is just him and me, I'm not sure [laughter from audience]. The thing is, utopia and dystopia are just the opposite sides of the coin. Utopia is a way of saying we could do better and dystopia is the warning side, and he was very concerned with that. Occasionally he would have an atomic war but then, afterwards, the brain-damaged robots and the humans who survived, often without their limbs or whatever, would actually be quite happy in a little utopian vision by The Bay in California. I take that out of him and I don't think I'm reacting against him very much. I really love Phil Dick as a precursor, a great American writer.

Audience: I see you more in the tradition of, say, Ray Bradbury than Philip Dick.

Robinson: I'm glad you said that since we just lost Ray Bradbury this week. He is another Californian, utopian, and positive writer; very enthusiastic, an inspirational figure with a deep love of reading. Over and over he has told us to enjoy reading, to enjoy life, and so he is a great soul that we have lost. This is a peculiar thing, but we were born in the same town in Illinois and in both cases our parents moved us out to Southern California when we were children and so that is what turned us both into science fiction writers [laughter from audience]. The impact of Southern California on the brain was like a harsh acid bath that we were dipped into [more laughter].

Audience: Wouldn't you like to write a nice, nasty dystopia for a change? Don't you find that utopias don't have any internal conflicts? Do you think they're harder to write? Do you always have to insert an external threat into a utopia?

Banks: I suppose you do a bit. But I need to point out exactly what a utopia

is. The Hampstead novel is, in a sense, utopian. Hampstead being very comfortably off. Full of quite intellectual people in London. *That's* utopian. The campus novel; campuses aren't quite as much fun as they used to be here. When I was a student, a student loan was sidling up to someone in the bar and saying, 'Can I have a fiver until next Tuesday?'. Not any more! Now it's thirty or forty grand of outstanding debt before you can start work, thank you very much. But on the campus, certainly in the old days – not so much nowadays that it's gone all corporate and bloodthirsty – the campus novel used to be in a sense about utopia. You can still have conflict within utopia. You can still have unrequited love; you can still have unfulfilled ambition in utopia. That would be possible within the Culture but that's not what interests me. I quite like explosions [laughter from audience]. Very, very large artefacts… being hit by even larger artefacts. That's not really the stuff of utopia in a sense. I'd have to go to the outskirts, to the interface between The Culture's utopia and everybody else, to find the conflict. You could actually write a perfectly satisfying conventional novel set in a deeply science-fictional utopia and ignore the science-fictional trappings or incorporate them or whatever. But then the question would have to be asked, why are you bothering? You could just write an ordinary, nice novel about people relaxing on campus or in Hampstead or wherever. There just doesn't seem to be much point. For me the fun comes in the difference between the utopian point of view of the Culture and whatever dark deeds are being got up by the less utopian characters in the novel.

Robinson: I wrote a dystopia, *The Gold Coast*. It was just Reagan's America extended out until now. So it was pretty predictional [laughter from audience]. But that was as dark as I cared to go because I don't see the point of the artificially miserable dystopia. It's usually faking it because if it got that bad it would actually get very much worse. So it's an extremely artificial genre. Usually when you're reading it you're thinking, 'That's bad, but at least today isn't as bad as that so maybe we're okay now'. The main emotion is a kind of complacency. I don't like dystopia. In terms of utopia, there's a couple of things to say. There's the pocket utopia, Hampstead or any of the prosperous parts of the world right now. They could be called utopias but they're *pocket* utopias. They aren't the real thing because they exist on a great pyramid of injustice and misery. They aren't really utopia at all, which would be a definition for an entire population. Pocket utopias are everywhere and a lot of us live in them, but the question is can you leverage that into a true utopia? And if you did, you would still have Character A falling in love with Character B falling in love with Character C falling in love with Character A. That creates an awful lot of misery as many of us know. And there would still be death because there's no such thing as immortality. The universe is mortal. Reality is mortal. We're all going to be mortal. We might get longevity but we're not going to get immortality. So there's death. What more do you need in terms of troubles?

Utopia is not going to be that boring because we'll still be facing love and death and so the human stories will still have a full range of bad stuff and drama without the unnecessary immiseration of a third to a half of the world's population. When people say utopia is boring it's usually a political attack from the right. It's also done by people who aren't living in cardboard shacks. The people who do live in those are probably willing to throw the dice on utopia and see if it's boring or not.

Banks: I got fed up with reading dystopias before I started writing properly. I just thought, 'Every bugger is doing a dystopia. But what if everything is nice; did you ever think of *that*?'. It's very much a British thing. One thing I've always loved about American fiction is that can-do attitude. To the stars and beyond! It always seemed a bit right wing but I loved the energy and the attitude that it had. Then you turn to the British stuff, which is usually rather better written and the characters were more believable, but *dear God*, here we go again … All the fantasy writers have read *The Lord of the Rings* and regurgitated it endlessly; all the science fiction writers have read *Nineteen-Eighty*-bloody-*Four*. Oh, it's another drab, communist future where everyone eats pills that are square meals and they're all dressed in the same grey dungarees … [laughter from audience]. I just got so pissed-off with it. I didn't want that, I wanted the can-do, hah-hah, let's-go-to-the-stars stuff, but I wanted to mix it with the better writing and characters and all that. So that's what my motivation was. There's enough dystopias. I think we need to redress the balance somewhat. If I had a totally brilliant idea for a dystopia, I'd have to write it. But unless it was absolutely top notch I wouldn't do it because it would just join the ranks, as it were. There is also that political aspect that Stan touched on: 'Utopia is boring, we tried it'. But none of us have, not properly. Like he said, it's not a true utopia unless it exists for everyone. The rich have always had utopia. That's what it was to be a lord or a king or whatever. They were in a relatively utopian place in the pyramid but it was only there for a tiny number of people. The rest was the immiseration of multitudes. So we haven't really tried it. We don't know that it's boring. We can always find things to struggle with. We make our own problems.

Audience: I was just considering that maybe you're describing pocket utopias in our western societies, and possibly the value of a modern dystopia would be one that relates to larger world conflicts that most of us do not live in. Since all these novels are generally exaggerations of features we have in our western society taken to their final, logical standpoint, don't you think that they may have a particular cultural bias in that sense? That true dystopia must then explore the aspects of other cultures and civilizations that we have little access to, that are quite distinct from our own value systems that we are projecting into these science fiction dystopias?

Robinson: That seems quite possible to me. What it implies though is that

the people writing these dystopias ought to be coming from places like that. They would be writing to their situation and it would be appropriate. We could try that out of solidarity. Really, I mean the Culture novels are always fighting against the breakdown because the utopian situation, the post-scarcity Culture is always being attacked from one angle or another. I take it that one of the things Iain is doing is finding various ways in which utopia could be in danger and seeing if that could be protected against. So I think it's valid to write from your own situation. I mean, Scotland and California are two of the more utopian places on this planet so, lo and behold, here we are writing. I could even claim both. My mom was a McIlroy. Scottish, or Scotch-Irish as she kept calling it.

Banks: It's your own cultural setting, as it were. It's a hard thing to get away from. You never really entirely know if you're being fully objective or if you're being kind of subtly – or not even subtle, necessary – subjective. It's a hard thing to get out of. As a science fiction writer you're kind of duty-bound to try and think outside of lots of different boxes but arguably you can never entirely get out of all of them. They'll always be there. Sometimes it'll all become clear when a very clever academic person writes about you and says, 'What you're doing here is this and that …' and then sometimes you say, 'Oh, damn, yes, blast it, flipping heck, so I was …'. Other times you'll never know because you'll be dead. Things will become clearer when you're contextualized with the rest of your peers and people have had a couple of centuries to look back. Only then will it be possible to put you in some sort of context that actually makes sense. Or maybe AIs will come along and say, 'Ha-ha! This is clear now, obviously,' and they'll explain it in plain language too. Until then, all we can do is do our best. Keep your vest on and do what you can [laughter from audience].

Audience: Both your utopias are set relatively far in the future where the characters you're writing about are able to jet off around the Solar System, around the galaxy just like that. 'Oh, yes, let's go to Mercury next week'. What about the ordinary people? I know in *2312* you do allude to this a little bit on Earth, the seven billion in poverty and such. But where are the people doing the work?

[Long silence from panel leading to laugher from audience]

Robinson: This is a famous problem; the novel is famously incapable of writing well about work. When you're postulating self-replicating machinery, and part of post-scarcity is that a lot of work is automated, and then if people are not left without a means to buy their subsistence, then you get the post-scarcity, luxury-type society. But the problem is if it's not a total scene. So in *2312* the pocket utopia is simply space itself, the rest of the Solar System, and Earth is still screwed up and immiserated. The problem becomes 'Can the tail wag the dog?' Can you create a complete utopia? That's somewhat

the story of *2312*. The engagement with work per se is simply a big problem for the novel; try writing a scene where you describe somebody's work day, and then try again and try again. I think I gave it my best shot in my Antarctic novel, though it's only a small part of that, and in my California novels. But in this novel the focus is on the idea that we still need revolution. And how could a revolution be reconceptualized to actually be successful and non-violent, etc.? I hope that I'm addressing these questions as best I can but really, once you're done, you take a look at it and say, 'Okay, I need to take another bash at it'. So you have to write another novel.

Banks: In the Culture, the people jetting off to wherever they damn well please *are* the average Joes. That's what they're all like. The fact that they all have very long names like aristocrats, that's deliberate. Because they are, basically. They're ferociously, disgustingly rich by our terms, despite not actually owning anything whatsoever. The only exclusivity that comes into the Culture novels is that, now and again, someone will be given their own ship, but that's just to get them from Point A to Point B … for plot reasons [laughter from audience]. Apart from that there's not really a distinction between the working people and the characters in the Culture novels. That's exactly what the ordinary person is doing. Someone like Gurgeh in *The Player of Games* is unusual because he's a bit of a throwback; he's very, very competitive. People in the early part of the novel keep saying, 'You love playing to win,' and it's regarded as being slightly suspect. Or if not suspect, suspicious or perhaps betokening some sort of psychological harm. The Culture really is more about taking part. He's quite an unusual character from that point of view. It's almost like psychological damage and that's what's different about him. It makes him an obsessive and totally brilliant game-player. Other than that, yeah, that's what they're all like. They're not all having adventures, because they're not all space-warping off to the far reaches of The Culture, but that's what they do. Does that makes sense?

Audience: Yes and no.

Banks: Let's concentrate on the 'no' bit.

Audience: I appreciate that it's difficult to write from the perfect point-of-view of somebody's work day because that doesn't really advance the plot very much, but these people don't appear to be there in the background, the characters don't pass by them. I'd be interested in that transition phase. How to get between now and the far future when there isn't any need for work? What are the class implications of that transition?

Banks: In getting to that point where everything is being made by machine, you only build a machine just clever enough to do it in the same way that you're not exploiting a calculator by getting it to do your bidding. The thing is that they must have no capacity to suffer. That, when it comes to the Culture, is the absolute defining precept if you like. You prevent suffering or remediate

suffering; that is what it's all about. As long as something can't suffer then it doesn't really matter that much. If a thing, an entity, is not able to suffer then you can't really exploit it.

Robinson: In *2312*, when you sign onto a terrarium you become part of its work-crew. There are scenes of people planting rice, which is back-breaking work, and scenes of people cleaning up in the kitchen after the meals. It's kind of a co-op or a voluntary thing. The work gets done and part of your contract in being a passenger on one of these spaceship terraria is that you work. Now this is supposedly inefficient but economic efficiency is basically the speed at which money moves from the poor to the rich so I don't believe in efficiency per se. Inefficient work might be better work. Economics doesn't make good judgments. The values expressed by economics are not good values. Not by neoclassical economics anyway. We need a new economics and then work gets reconfigured and turned into a different kind of a thing. Self-actualization; work becomes your art, you do what you want. Work and play mixed together like certain musicians if they're lucky enough. So it's an attempt to say that in a properly built society, humans are really the best robots around, and probably good for work purposes, but that you shouldn't be enslaved to work.

Audience: You were talking about science fact before and I wanted to turn to science fiction and what the future of it might be? There's always another generation taking over from the old guard. Also, earlier you mentioned how a lot of science fiction has been written from the western experience, and a lot of our approach to space travel has been from the western experience because, more or less, that's where we mostly started, forgiving the Russians. I was wondering, where do you see science fiction going? Will it remain with the western experience? Will it become internationalized with an increase in the Asian or African experience of science fiction?

Banks: I think you're making the very common mistake of imagining that science fiction writers have some kind of insight into the future [laughter from audience]. A very good question though. One of those excellent questions that probably has an excellent answer, but certainly not from me. Except to say that we'll find out. It's entirely plausible, isn't it – as perhaps we do see the decline of the west – that the future of science fiction might lie in India and Africa and possibly in China. But that all depends. I'm not even sure that the conditions were right until a certain part of the twentieth century for science fiction to become, quite identifiable in some ways, an American thing. Not entirely, I'll say. Britain has a significant part to play. And Jules Verne as well in France. In some ways a lot of us do think of science fiction as being, at least, mid-Atlantic. I don't know if that will be the case in the future. Perhaps there'll be a retreat into other forms of fantastical writing rather than properly science fictional writing. I also think that writing is also one of the last things that will get properly automated. Because anything else can be automated. But writing

stories strikes me as probably one of the last ones because it will require something close to proper, true AI. And once that happens it will be interesting to see what sort of stories an AI will write. It will be the end of civilization as we know it, obviously, but it doesn't matter: it will be interesting. Other than that, who the hell knows?

Robinson: I'm thinking about how magical realism was the literature which came out of Latin America in the late '50s and early '60s, organically, as an expression of what living in Latin America felt like. Then in other parts of the developing world – Rushdie in India, and so on – magical realism moved around. In the industrial western countries, science fiction was the equivalent expression. Science fiction is indeed part of this culture and so if China begins to write a genre of literature that looks towards the future, and clearly is fantastika is one form or another, it could be as different from science fiction as magical realism is. And you see, for instance, there will be some North American writers – I presume it's true in Britain as well – that will write a magical realist novel set in Manhattan and they're such horrible, horrible crap [laugher from audience]. I'm also remembering as you say that, there's a heart-breaking moment in Orhan Pamuk's novel, a tremendous novel in which someone goes out of Istanbul to a town in the east of Turkey and gets trapped in a neverending snowstorm, and there's a young man wandering round the town who is a nineteen-year-old science fiction writer. He's a Muslim science fiction writer and he's a truly pathetic character who doesn't know what to say. I was thinking that Pamuk might be making a point there about the vision of the future. Does it exist in Islam? And, if it does, how do you formulate it? Maybe you don't formulate it as science fiction but as an interesting question about future fiction. I think it's Pamuk who ought to write a science fiction novel, a future novel, and see what we get out of him. That would be a beautiful text.

Audience: I was wondering if, when you're writing, you have to ignore large parts of what is usually called human nature and the course of human history which has generally not been very utopian?

Banks: Well first of all, the Culture isn't us. I came to that decision about thirty years ago. At one point it was going to be us in the future and I thought it too impossible because they're quite nice in the Culture and they tend to be rational. I mean, as far I'm concerned, we as a species are too prone to all the horrible 'isms'. Racism, sexism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism … anything else you can come up with. Anything that basically says we're going to treat that lot, that other lot of human beings, as somehow less deserving. Anything that makes it okay to enslave them or collectively punish them or just slaughter them. We're just far too prone to doing that as a species. This is a fairly bleak outlook but I'm taking a sort of devil's advocate approach here. I decided that the only way anything like humanity, like us, could approach something like the Culture or be able to produce anything like the Culture would be if we

genetically modified ourselves. That if there is a sequence of genes which code for all the isms, for the xenophobia stuff, then maybe if we knocked those out. It's quite a big step to take, particularly as it would only express itself in specific generations. Then maybe we'd be nice enough to have something like the Culture, but otherwise no. It's a very, very bleak point of view. It's quite possible that when you get to a post-scarcity situation and there's less things to argue about – there's less treasure; gold doesn't matter, and so on – it will remove at least one of our reasons for being horrible to each other. Which is simply scarcity and the need to grab hold of as much loot as possible. Beyond that, I don't know. Of course there's always AIs, and maybe the AIs will be nicer than us. I'm quite optimistic about that. Again, everyone else seems to assume that as soon as you create an AI, the first thing it does is go, 'And now die, puny humans!' Are you sure? Have you done the experiments? Obviously in your mind you have. But maybe they'll be okay. I'm pro-AI in that sense. Though if it turns out that we do create an AI, and in a way we're very close to it with the internet, and it does turn out that it wants to kill us all, then I'm sorry [laughter from audience].

Robinson: I think maybe you're expressing a fashionable pessimism about us that's inaccurate. We've only survived these Ice Ages repeatedly over the last 50,000–150,000 years through way of altruism and teamwork. It's a big part of our nature to cooperate with each other as social primates. It's important to look to social biology for what it can tell us about ourselves and our evolutionary history. It may be that we're like some bizarre experiment where too many rats have been put in one cage so that what you're calling 'human nature', an inevitable badness that will affect utopia, is just an aspect of our culture, not our totality. It also could be argued and has been argued that, when you look to public health and public safety, we're actually better off now than we've ever been before and that progress has been made through science. That science, as opposed to capitalism, is a drive towards improvement that is doing pretty damn good when you consider the headwinds of special interests and stupid power that it has to work against. So I don't think we're ignoring it. When you speak utopianly you're saying, 'Look, we can do better than this because human nature actually includes altruism'. Having seven billion people on the planet at once without them all *instantly* killing each other is actually a pretty good achievement in acrobatic justice. It's obviously not perfect and it's really endangered. We might be on a tightrope over the abyss. We might be trying to walk the tightrope and there's seven billion of us, and at least a billion are idiots trying to knock us off. It's a really difficult procedure and yet here we are still doing it with a little bit of success and reason for hope. I would make the most robust defence of utopian thinking that you want me to make. Maybe this is the British-American divide. You can take the bleak or the cheerful view, the Wells view or the Edgar Rice Burroughs view … wait, that's not right [laughter

from audience]. The Percival Lowell view; the American view that it's possible to make a better union and that we're working on it and we're not flat-out failures even at this point.

Audience: To follow on from two previous questions. The first is for Iain: are your books mislabelled as science fiction because elements of them, it occurs to me, are very similar to, say, Moorcock's *Dancers at the End of Time*. There's a decadence to them as well. So maybe, are you in the wrong publisher's genre?

Banks: Arguably, yes.

Audience: And the second part, following on from 'where will science fiction go?'. I would argue and ask the question, should science fiction now be taking a step away from space opera and back to things it was doing in the '60s in Britain particularly well and examining social phenomena, starting to look at modern and near future politics and where they're going to take us as a society

Banks: I wanted to write space opera because there didn't seem to be so much of it around. It seemed to be a slightly forlorn and even old-fashioned subgenre. I had a naïve belief that there was a moral high ground in space opera and I wanted to reclaim it for the left. Again, just to go against the whole dystopian project, as it were. In the end it is still the science-fictional flappy-hands: 'just trust me, there is hyperspace; it's faster than light, not slower, that's an important point'. That element of science fiction does attract me. The very fact that Tthe Culture is so varied implies a science -fictional basis rather than something fantastic. I do take your point. *The Dancers at the End of Time* stuff, a lot of the Culture does feel like that. There isn't quite the same saturation of ennui that there is in those stories, which I do love, but I think Tthe Culture is slightly more dynamic than that. Maybe because you have things like the drones floating about being sarcastic [audience laughter]. For me personally, no, I wouldn't want to go back. I love doing the space opera; I love widescreen, baroque space opera, to quote the admirable Mr Aldiss. I've always loved that phrase. I would like to do it a bit more. There is still Culture stuff to come. There're still areas I haven't explored. I'd like to make it *more* widescreen baroque. Not for me the kitchen-sink drama, Micky Boy, no-no [audience laughter]! There's a place for it, that's the thing. People will write it and we'll see what the take-up is. Someday I'll be defined as a space opera dinosaur, and fair enough. You have to accept your part in the whole big procession of whatever genre you're involved within. At some point you're going to be the old generation and there has to be an ecological niche for the new guys and gals that come along. That's the way it is.

Audience: Even though these pan-galactic space operas are so complicated and detailed, they seem so effortlessly presented. Do you just write the details and the cultural eccentricities of where your main protagonist is at the time as they go along – he's here, so these people do this – or do you have thousands

of ideas for the whole galaxy and you just have to cut it down until it fits?
Banks: I think, as a rule, it's Just-In-Time production. You're looking slightly ahead. I tend to plan the books fairly well so I have a rough idea of what I need to create next. But you're thinking of it as you go along. The little bits of eccentricity or social colour or whatever. You try to think of it as you go along. Also, you just get used to doing this. You become more experienced as a writer as you go along. You know what you can do and what you can get away with. What you can expect the back-burner to come up with. I think as a science fiction writer you never believe all that *rubbish* about 'only write what you know about'. Ha [audience laughter]! You have to take the leap. You have to say, 'I'm going to write about aliens so I'm going to be as genuinely alien as I can'. Again, keep your vest on and do what you can.
Robinson: I have this trick where I often think to myself, 'What would Banks do here?' [audience laughter and applause]. Then you just grind. Grind, grind, grind. Like an organ grinder's monkey and for two years and you come up with a paragraph or two. It's just a little bit deceptive on the page. You read a page in a minute and that may have taken three or four hours to write that page. It looks dense, and it is, but it's a time-shift phenomena. So read it as fast as you possibly can. It always looks better that way.
Banks: You put all the effort into making it look effortless.
Robinson: It's a rhetorical trick. One of the things in the last couple of drafts is to make sure that you make it look like it was always meant to be that way. A rhetorical gloss or sheen has to be applied. It's a sentence trick, an English major's thing. It's a matter of rhetoric and a lot of things can be smoothed over by clever rhetoric. Should I be telling stage magic tricks right now?
Banks: Why not?
Robinson: No more secrets!
Banks: Yes, but that was the last question.
Robinson: Then we can retire to the pub for further conversation. It's been so grand. It's an amazing thing for me to come over here. You wouldn't believe what I do nine-tenths of the year. You'd laugh. Basically just sit in front of a laptop screen. To get to do something with Banksy is one of the red-letter moments of my career.
[Audience applause]
The event concludes with a book signing.

Note: The author would like to thank Iain Banks' estate and Kim Stanley Robinson for permission to publish this conversation. The full recording is held by the British Library. Although the author has made this abridged transcription from his own recording of the event, he would also like to acknowledge the British Library's permission.

Conference Reports

Biology and Manners: The Worlds of Lois McMaster Bujold, Anglia Ruskin University, 20 August 2014

Reviewed by Robin Anne Reid (Texas A&M University-Commerce)

As the organizer Una McCormack noted in her introduction, one reason for this conference is the relative neglect of Bujold's work in science fiction and fantasy studies: the fourteen presenters are clearly well positioned to address that neglect in future publications. Conference participants came from Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA, and presentations featured a range of approaches, including genre studies, cultural studies, feminist studies, gender studies, linguistics, and religious studies. Questions that emerged over the course of the day included the issues of genre categories, Bujold's subversion and hybridizing of genre and gender conventions, and the reception of her work by feminist readers and critics in sff fandom and academia. Presentations and discussions afterwards included the importance of Bujold's fandom and the issue of how Bujold's paratextual and epitextual commentary on her work should be considered by scholars.

Edward James' keynote built on his monograph about Bujold's work, scheduled for release by the University of Illinois Press in June 2015. James presented his reading of the Wide Green World series as science fiction rather than fantasy, arguing that it can be read as a specific type of science fiction influenced by Bujold's reading of American sf of the late 1950s and 1960s. Despite the post-holocaust setting, the Lakewalkers' skills (never called 'magic') can be understood as the result of an earlier disaster, similar to skills described in sf published by John W. Campbell, featuring humans developing mental powers in the future.

The first paper session, titled 'Feminist Readings', presented four feminist readings of Bujold's work. Gill Othen and Katherine Woods both analyzed *A Civil Campaign* (1999) in the context of Bujold's dedication to women writers she considers important: Jane [Austen], Charlotte [Brontë], Georgette [Heyer], and Dorothy [Sayers]. (Indeed, the novel's subtitle, *A Comedy of Biology and Manners*, inspired the title of the conference.) Othen argued that the dedication allows Bujold to claim status and territory for her own work in the context of these authors' work, despite differences in genre, style, era, personal history, and their relationship with writing. Othen's argument considered issues of genre and gender, focusing on how Bujold's work, like that of these four

authors, blends genre conventions in order to disguise social commentary.

Katharine Woods responded to the dedication in *A Civil Campaign* and its directive to pay attention to the authors cited by comparing the characterizations of Ekaterin Vorsoisson and Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*). Noting a number of similarities in their fictional lives, Woods pointed to how Fanny and Ekaterin are disliked by readers: critics who dislike Fanny include Martin Amis, Lionel Trilling, and Reginald Farrar, while Bujold's fans refer to Ekaterin as a weak character and a bored housewife who is unfit to be Miles' wife because of her lack of heroism. Ekaterin and Fanny are dismissed by many, but Woods argues that their authors' rejection of the simplistic binary opposition of 'domestic' and 'heroic' binds them in a literary connection.

Adrienne Martini presented a feminist analysis of uterine replicators in Bujold's work in the context of medical sf and the cultural context of reproductive technology, exploring the questions of the relative importance of technology and culture to women's liberation. Martini quoted Bujold on the importance of technology over culture (from 'Putting It all Together'). Unlike other sf representations of reproductive technology, Bujold's replicators are not used to replace parents. Citing contemporary debates over the possibility of when, not if, uterine replicators will be available for use, Martini considered the necessity to look at the historical and current relationship of pregnancy and childbirth as cultural processes, and argued that while reproductive technology can solve some problems, others will be created. In Bujold's fictional worlds, Martini argued, women's primary path to power in their cultures is through becoming a mother, no matter how the process of pregnancy is handled.

Caitlin Herington, while acknowledging that Bujold does not identify feminism as a primary focus of her work, argued that in the Chalion Series she has hybridized aspects of masculine tropes (Scientist, Warrior, Leader, and Explorer) with feminine tropes (Princess, Priestess, Witch, Mother) to create primary and secondary characters that show a variety of ways to be a woman. Bujold's narratives provide female characters with depth and interactions, rather than presenting them as isolated, and reduce biological and binary distinctions. Considering female and male characters (Ista, Learned Hallana, Ijada, Dy Lutez, Cazaril, and Ingrey), Herington concluded that the effect of Bujold's diversity of characters is to represent women more equally. While the works do not directly address systematic social attitudes towards gender, Bujold's revisions of the tropes allow readers to understand how social forces can limit gender performance.

The second session focused on the theme of 'Biology'. David Oberhelman analyzed Miles Vorkosigan and Cazaril as examples of connections between physical disabilities and spirituality, themes important in Bujold's sf and fantasy. Quoting an interview in which Bujold says that disabilities are not the totality of her characters but events which her characters must deal with, Oberhelman

noted the complexity of her work in its construction of cultural attitudes toward the body, and how physical deformity becomes a 'crucible of characterization'. In Bujold's science fiction, disability is considered within a scientific society, but in the Chalion series disability is presented as part of a divine plan in which the religious aspects of incarnation and spirituality are constructed to explore how the spiritual affects the material body. Oberhelman concluded that the disabled body serves as a focus for spiritual growth in the Vorkosigan series while, in the Chalion universe, the saint's body carries the divine.

Sylvia Kelso considered the extent to which Fawn Bluefield's pregnancy when she leaves her home provides a biological foundation for her characterization in *The Sharing Knife* (2006–9) and the basis for the female journey which changes the symbolic meanings of the road, the river, and the wilderness. Kelso's analysis of Fawn as a female protagonist is contextualized in three literary-cultural traditions: women's writing, American literature, and non-urban fantasy. Arguing that genre differences are biologically connected and contrasting the meanings of the wilderness as a space for masculine freedom and a space of feminine madness and disorder, Kelso posited that *The Sharing Knife* blends and changes previous genre conventions, changes carried on in the series when the second quest begins with a married couple and the river is re-visioned into a community a thousand miles long.

John Lennard began his analysis of the reworking of mythic and theological elements in *The Lord of the Rings* with Bujold's reflection on her responses to Tolkien's epic fantasy over four decades of reading and rereading. Bujold presents her epic as 'waging peace' rather than 'waging war' with heroic fantasy by replacing Tolkien's epic tropes with biological and sociological elements. The primary aspects of Bujold's work are the sharing knives (replacing a singular magic weapon), the Lakewalkers (a reworking of the Númenóreans), a circular rather than linear journey ending in the creation of a new home, the malices (reworking of the Dark Lord), and the replacement of the 'Eu/Catastrophe' with the necessity for slow and gradual change. Lennard concluded that epic fantasy is transformed to comedy in Bujold's work, which marks a major structural development in fantasy literature.

The third session included three presentations which focused on different issues relating to genre. Katherine Miller proposed a method of studying invented languages in speculative fiction which she then applied to Bujold's Vorkosigan saga. Miller discussed word, sound and structural elements as well as the general linguistic themes such as Barrayar's linguistic pluralism. Although Bujold's work contains few invented words, beyond names and items, Miller concluded that the linguistic features are critical to the plausibility of the invented world and noted the need for a more flexible framework for future analysis.

Greer Watson analyzed the extent to which detective-story conventions

inform Bujold's sf, both her Vorkosiganverse and freestanding works such as *Ethan of Athos* (1986). In addition to structuring the plot of stories and novels, the motif of the investigation allows Bujold to show readers in-depth information on different galactic cultures, especially when the investigator is operating in unfamiliar settings. The use of these conventions not only allows for plot resolution but also give readers the chance to gain a greater knowledge of the cultures. Watson concluded that Bujold subverts the traditional restoration of the social order by emphasizing the extent to which the solution of a specific mystery or crime allows for social change.

Chuckie Patel analyzed the paradoxical nature of how the binary oppositions of fate and free will operate in *The Curse of Chalion* (2001). Discussing Bujold's metaphor of Cazaril's soul as a cup which can be filled with the divine spirit only if he chooses to allow the possession, Patel argued that the metaphor was a reiteration of the stoic metaphor that explains the connection between determinism and free will. The stoic metaphor is that of a cylinder which can only move in a circle, like the shape of a hero's nature. This combination of a hero with a destiny and a character who can make choices is, Patel argued, an essential element of epic fantasy as a genre.

The fourth session, on 'Religion', contained three presentations which connected gender theory and religion in the Chalion series. Regina Yung Lee drew on contemporary queer theory to analyze the extent to which Ista's narrative in *Paladin of Souls* (2003) shows the artificialities of gender, race and class. Sainthood in the Chalionverse queers gender by making the social construction of gender visible through reprioritizing the saint's body away from purposes, nation, self, and replacing them with the concept of the divine. The saint is possessed by a god, and socially constructed ideas, such as the sexual expression of the body, are not relevant to the essentialized but non-material gods. Lee argued that Ista has two sainthoods, one failed: her first is aligned with the Mother, with the normative. When she fails, she is stranded outside social norms. Her second sainthood results in the emergence of Ista's own sexuality for the first time, and this sainthood is that of the Bastard whose presence disrupts the normative patterns of the other four gods and who is constructed as faintly androgynous. Ista's failure to conform to social norms is validated by her emergency as an avatar of a god.

Robin Anne Reid drew on the sixth of Alexander Doty's definitions of queer, defined as a word that destabilizes existing categories by resisting heteronormativity to argue for a queer reading of two narrative elements in the Chalion series. Rather than focusing on the homosexual and bisexual characters in the novels, Reid analyzed the style of descriptions of the visions heterosexual characters have of the gods and the ongoing theme of celebrating the beauty and messiness and 'density' of matter, especially the complexity of the human body. The five deities of the Holy Family, in particular the Bastard,

provide a theological foundation for a humane religion and culture by breaking the heteronormative nuclear family structure. Noting that the queerness differs with regard to male and female protagonists, Reid focused on Cazaril and Ingrey as feminized male protagonists, noting the blurring of differences between the epic heroic masculinity and the femininity of the heroine awarded to heroes, and raised questions concerning the problematic gender discourses in marking the male body as feminine through physical disabilities (in sf) and through torture and spiritual rape/metaphorical pregnancy (in fantasy) while avoiding gay and queer protagonists.

Meg MacDonald explored the extent to which Bujold's Quintarian pantheon of gods challenges monolithic authority, arguing that the Bastard, the last god born in the pantheon, operates in a Derridean manner in the narrative. The Bastard (imaged as the thumb which can cross and touch all the fingers, associated with shining whiteness, and the major pivot point between the worlds of spirit and matter) is part of a theological paradigm which resists binary constructions of good and evil. The novels question the stigmas and exclusion of those outside the norm by construction of an inclusive and representative theology. MacDonald concluded that Bujold's work challenges collective and personal consciousness as well as our secular and religious practices.

The last session of the conference was a roundtable chaired by Una McCormack, with Edward James, John Lennard, Sylvia Kelso and Farah Mendlesohn, which built on not only the presentations but the issues raised in the discussion sections after each session. These discussions actively engaged with the topics raised by the presenters and complicated the claims. The *Biology and Manners Conference*, as the best conferences do, left participants energized and with more questions to consider in future, questions which can lead to further consideration of Bujold's complex, fluid, multi-generic body of work.

Irradiating the Object: A Conference on the Work of M. John Harrison, University of Warwick, 21 August 2014

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

'I've been writing this stuff for 40 years, and I've finally found the readers who understand it.' This, or a variant of it, was M. John Harrison's refrain throughout the day, always uttered in a tone of mild surprise. Irradiating the

Object, organized by Mark Bould and Rhys Williams, was the first conference devoted to Harrison's work, and the consistent high quality of the papers and the enthusiasm they generated was evidence enough that such a conference was long overdue. Unfortunately, owing to a family illness, one of the two keynote speakers, Fred Botting, was unable to be there. However, this did allow the organizers to be more relaxed over timings, which may have contributed to the convivial feel of the conference.

One of the things that intrigued and delighted us all was the unplanned synergy between the various papers. For instance, the opening session began with my own 'From the Pastel City to London', which explored the literary developments within the Viriconium sequence, and how those stories prefigured later works. This was picked up and developed in the next paper, 'Textual Objects: Interpreting Versioning in the stories of M. John Harrison' by Ryan Elliott, which looked at the internal echoes within Harrison's work that he calls 'versioning'. The third paper, 'The Geometry of Deterministic Chaos: Fractal Structure and Recursivity in the works of M. John Harrison' by Nick Prescott, used chaos theory and complexity science as a way of approaching Harrison's narrative structuring, with the endless repetitions of a Mandelbrot set providing another way of looking at Elliott's versioning. The interlinking character of these papers energized the conference and set off a series of conversations that continued throughout the day.

Although not so tightly interconnected, the other two panels also displayed a curious synchronicity. Another aspect of versioning cropped up in the first paper of the second session, 'An Infinite Palimpsest: M. John Harrison and Arthur Machen's "weird urban magic"' by James Machin. Calling on John Gray (another name that would echo throughout the day), this considered the traces of Machen's work that recur in Harrison's fiction. The next paper traced another creative influence on Harrison. 'Light Transforms all things: the Superposed Mundane-Sublime in M. John Harrison and Andrei Tarkovsky' by Christina Scholz began with the familiar identification of Saudade City in *Nova Swing* with the Zone in *Stalker*, but went on from there to examine the symbols and language that both employed as a way of transforming the mundane into the sublime. Along the way Scholz discussed repeated iterations of themes and passages in Harrison's work that again sent us back to the idea of versioning. The final paper before lunch, 'A Heritage, but not our own: Estrangement from Place in Autotelia', by Jonathan Barlow, discussed the sense of alienation that emerges from some of Harrison's most recent work. The conclusion this led to, about the impact of ideology on human development and interaction, called to mind some of the images raised in Scholz's paper.

Lunch (and one of the pleasures of a well-funded conference is the selection of fruit and cakes that accompanied this meal) was an opportunity to continue some of the discussions initiated during the morning. But we

reconvened for one of the highlights of the day. The keynote address by Tim Etchells, artist and writer, and the Artistic Director of the experimental performance company, Forced Entertainment, was a bravura performance in its own right. Beginning by talking about the work of artist Vlatka Horvat, which consists of cut and folded paper and notebooks, he went on to use this as a metaphor to discuss both Harrison's work and his own reading of it. He ended with a ten-minute unscripted incantation in which lines from Harrison's work were repeated, broken up, folded in on themselves, to powerful and hypnotic effect.

After that, anything was going to seem like an anti-climax, but the final session of the day, devoted primarily to the Kefahuchi Tract trilogy, still had fascinating papers to offer us. Chris Pak, in 'Something that Looked Partly Like a Woman Partly Like a Cat: Deliquescence, Hybridity and the Animal in the Kefahuchi Tract Trilogy', followed on from his research into the discursive representation of animals to examine the way cats and dogs recur in the liminal spaces throughout the trilogy. The second paper, 'The Misanthropic Principle: M. John Harrison, John Gray, and the Drama of Passive Nihilism' by Vassili Christodoulou (manager of the Festival of Ideas 'HowTheLightGetsIn') discussed the pessimism prevalent in Harrison's work as an informed philosophical position inspired by Gray's work, which adds up to an attack on the values of liberal humanism. Finally, Timothy Jarvis gave us 'Sparks in Everything: Alterior Haecceities and the Fragmentation of Self, Narrative, and Cosmos in the Kefahuchi Tract Trilogy' which in a way brought us back to the day's opening papers by considering the weird materiality that runs from the nebulous plague of *In Viriconium* to the malignant 'daughter-code' of *Nova Swing*.

Throughout the day, Harrison was a generous participant in the discussions following each session, often considering variant readings of his own work. After the final panel, when we were discussing whether Seria Mau and Ed Chianese were manifestations of, respectively, the white and black cats that disappeared into the computer screen at the beginning of *Light*, he admitted that he had deliberately shaped the novel to allow such a reading. He was also happy to take part in discussions with smaller groups during the various breaks in proceedings. In one conversation I was happy to learn that my suspicions that part of *The Course of the Heart* was built upon Patrick Leigh Fermor's *A Time of Gifts* was indeed correct, and Harrison went on to suggest that fantasy is a form of travel writing.

The formal part of the day ended with a reading by Harrison of a new story that turned out, I think, rather darker than he had anticipated, though he did say in private conversation that his more recent fiction seems to be moving towards horror. Finally, Roger Luckhurst led a question-and-answer session that came back again and again to the dis-ease evident in the new

story. After that we repaired for a meal from which people drifted away only with great reluctance, as though none of us wanted this intense but enthralling day to end.

SF/F Now, University of Warwick, 22-23 August 2014

Reviewed by Paul March-Russell (University of Kent)

SF/F Now followed immediately after Irradiating the Object, again held at the University of Warwick, and also co-organized by Mark Bould and Rhys Williams. Whereas the preceding conference was largely conventional in its structure, SF/F Now innovated with a series of workshops punctuating the more familiar panels. Each workshop began with two thirty-minute talks grouped around a particular topic before breaking out into a group discussion based upon the reading/viewing of set texts. The workshops were on Animal Studies, Energy, Environment, Human 2.0, Science Studies, Crisis and Protest, World Systems, and Utopia. The speakers were, respectively, Tom Tyler and Sherryl Vint; Graeme MacDonald and Antti Salminen; Gerry Canavan and Pablo Mukherjee; Veronica Hollinger and Patricia MacCormack; Joan Haran and Roger Luckhurst; Mark Fisher and Carl Freedman; Andrew Milner and Stephen Shapiro; and Caroline Edwards and Lisa Garforth. Bould and Williams not only excelled themselves in garnering this range of speakers, but also ensured that the intellectual quality and engagement were of an exceptionally high standard. Coming also on the back of Loncon 3, SF/F Now completed an unusually intense week in which to consider the current state of science fiction, fantasy and sf/f criticism. The panel speakers featured several young and emerging scholars who also acquitted themselves well. Despite (or because of) the intellectual content, SF/F Now was a very enjoyable conference and the mixing of generations, and the conversations stimulated by the sessions, contributed to its sociability.

So, what did the conference reveal about 'sf/f now'? In brief, that one, the postmodern paradigm has been exhausted, and two, that it has been replaced by an apocalyptic sense of urgency, as fossil fuels dissipate and environmental damage escalates, in which blueprints for utopia are discredited and the utopian impulse can only be glimpsed within the momentary passing of empty, homogenous time; an unformed hope that might just realize the connectivity between humans, animals and other kinds of alterity – although actual protest is unlikely as such collective action is merely anticipated by the logic of capitalist realism, a logic that has already made us into zombie consumers and is well on the way to destroying the planet once and for all.

So, yes, despite being a very sociable occasion, the conference was also – as Garforth noted at the start of her talk – a bit of a downer.

Why this paradox (and is it more than coincidence that a number of the talks are now available in the current issue of *Paradoxa* (#26), edited by Bould and Williams)? Unless one is an unrepentant free-marketeer and confirmed climate-change denier, it is hard to refute the evidence of environmental collapse that underscored both Canavan's talk and the Energy workshop (although the concept of 'the Anthropocene' remains unproven amongst geologists). Yet, as Milner and Shapiro observed during the Environment session, concepts such as 'necrocapitalism' and 'capitalist realism' not only mark a break with the utopianism of classical and neo-Marxism but may also misrepresent grass-roots activism: a symptom instead of the academy's shift to being – as Shapiro put it – 'in the vanguard of neo-liberal economics'. The facts are irrefutable but what of the analysis? Is there a more viable critique which, potentially, is being missed?

Curiously enough, one was hinted at although it emerged from the postmodern paradigm that had seemingly been so trounced. As Vint suggested, and to some extent Haran consolidated, the rhetoric of the cyborg that has dominated discussion of Donna Haraway has also obscured what is more meaningfully viable in her work – the figure of the animal already implied in her so-called 'Cyborg Manifesto' (1985) but becoming more conspicuous from *Primate Visions* (1989) onwards. As Tyler commented, to think of the human-as-animal, rather than the false binary of humans *and* animals, effectively displaces the human into so many classifications of animal species that connectivity between them becomes a working *a priori*. To think in this more holistic sense not only counters the narrow logic of late capitalism, but the figure of the human-as-animal also resists a more common representation in recent popular culture: the human-as-zombie, the ultimate brain-dead consumer, a figure indicated, but not quite arrived at, towards the end of Luckhurst's otherwise fine cultural analysis of the 1968 definition of 'irreversible coma'. At the same time, both the World Systems session, drawing upon the work of Franco Moretti, and Mukherjee's postcolonial analysis of Satyajit Ray's science fiction gestured at ways in which the human could also be reconfigured as a 'being-in-the-world' (a formulation, incidentally, in accordance with Charles Olson's original application of the term 'postmodern' to describe both his and his contemporaries' work).

Although Edwards, at the start of her fine exposition of Ernst Bloch's obscure philosophy of time, referred to writers with only partial associations to sf, such as Maggie Gee and David Mitchell, more attention could have been paid to how the genre currently sits in relation to other literatures. In particular, although the holistic emphases in the Animal Studies workshop certainly spoke to Garforth's talk on utopia and the 'end of nature', it would

also be worthwhile considering how the ecological concerns of sf writers such as Gwyneth Jones and Kim Stanley Robinson may be complemented by the environmental writings of non-fiction authors, such as Robert Macfarlane, or poets working within the Olsonian tradition, such as Peter Riley (see Amy Cutler and Alex Latter's forthcoming collection on Riley from Gylphi Press). It is not only sf that is good to think with; other literatures provide similar opportunities. Furthermore, Gary Wolfe's claim to the dissolution of generic boundaries offers the basis for a dynamic, interactive reading practice that can also encourage a genuinely holistic critique.

Oddly, for a conference preoccupied with the contemporaneity of sf and fantasy, there was comparatively little analysis of recent fiction. Although Tyler and Vint effectively dismantled the re-re-booted *Planet of the Apes* films, only passing mention was made to a novel of the moment – Karen Joy Fowler's *We are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013). Haran explained that her current research is based on comparatively recent sf but only looked at Shelley Jackson's *Half Life* (2006) in any particular depth. More often than not, the examples were visual or from other media – Canavan's use of the film, *Snowpiercer* (2014), based upon a 1982 French graphic novel, Katie Moylan's comparative analysis of the TV series, *Dollhouse* and *Orphan Black*, or Dan Hassler-Forest's examination of Afrofuturism in the music of Janelle Monáe. Graphic novels were well served by Leimar Garcia-Siino and Jon K. Shaw (papers on Neil Gaiman and Grant Morrison respectively) whilst videogames received a separate panel (papers from Pawel Frelik, Tanya Krzywinska and Anna McFarlane). Perhaps the relative lack of attention to recent fiction, beyond the fantasy and Young Adult categories, was itself telling; equally that when it was addressed it came from outside the Anglophone world – Umberto Rossi's excellent overview of contemporary Italian science fiction and Anindita Banerjee's thoughtful analysis of Dmitry Glukhovsky's *Metro 2033* (2002) in the context of Vladimir Putin's bunker politics (begging perhaps an allusion to Paul Virilio's essay on 'bunker architecture'). Has recent sf literature disappeared thoroughly within a proliferating culture of sf products – part of which was expertly disentangled by Robin Reid in her analysis of racism and social media – or did its absence say something about the critical approaches taken? If utopia was in short supply, then so too was much mention of a writer like Iain M. Banks.

SF/F Now was, nevertheless, a rigorous, intellectually stimulating and superbly organized conference. The true measure of its success was in bringing together so many people from international backgrounds, in forging points of contact, and in stimulating debate – dialogues and conversations that will continue for a long time to come.

Book Reviews

Howard E. McCurdy, *Space and the American Imagination*, 2nd edn (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011, 395pp, £15.50)

Reviewed by Molly Cobb (University of Liverpool)

Originally published in 1997, but updated to take account of more recent developments, Howard E. McCurdy's history of the American space program is an engaging work, thanks to his obvious enthusiasm for the subject. With chapters ranging from Project Apollo to extraterrestrial life, robots and space commerce, his approach to space exploration through the realm of social imagination provides an overview of the cultural impetuses behind such advancements.

The range of subjects covered can cause McCurdy's work to appear as little more than an aggregation of available information rather than an original analysis of the subject, but this ensures that the book is an approachable source of historical detail that requires little extended research on the part of the reader. McCurdy's sources range from White House papers to the NASA archives although this authenticity is mildly spoiled by his additional use of Wikipedia as a reference tool.

This collection of information is interspersed with McCurdy's employing metaphors to show how the data presented fits into the wider perception of the American imagination and spirit. McCurdy does this, for example, by comparing space to the American Frontier, and the abundance of writing about possible alien species to more antiquated forms of bestiaries written by ancient explorers. These comparisons support McCurdy's assertion that the space program was founded on an inherent need to explore the unknown, and that the thrill of exploration is an extension of the American imagination rather than a new aspect of it.

Despite this interesting approach, *Space and the American Imagination* occasionally suffers from McCurdy's authorial style and tone. The order in which he presents facts is often disjointed. Though each chapter follows its own timeline based on the subject being discussed, this is often difficult to follow. For example, in Chapter Five, McCurdy discusses NASA's promotion of 'the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) throughout the 1970s and 1980s' (144). This is, however, then followed by a quotation from 1990 before

McCurdy continues to discuss events in 1978. In addition, the points McCurdy wishes to discuss can occasionally be convoluted, forcing the reader to digest an abundance of information before finally being presented with the key fact on which the information is based. In Chapter Three, for example, McCurdy introduces Dwight D. Eisenhower's 'alternative' to space exploration and discusses it for several pages before defining what that 'alternative' actually is.

Alongside such recurrences of disorderly structure, the text frequently comes across as repetitive. Rather than being a reconfirmation of a point or a reiteration of necessary information relating to the current discussion, a relatively high number of sentences throughout the text appear to be nearly word-for-word repeats of earlier sentences. The redundant nature of the captions found beneath the photos and drawings distributed throughout the text is another problem. The images themselves are a welcome addition to the text as they lend visual support to many of McCurdy's points, using artists' renditions of outer space as well as photographs from NASA in order to explore the imaginative output of the nation. However, the captions are, again, often word-for-word repeats of information found within the body of the text, usually on the same or adjacent page, thereby providing little to no new information.

McCurdy does make an attempt to inform his readers as to the more nuanced nature of the information he discusses, such as in Chapter Nine, which deals with robots (McCurdy has also co-authored a full critical work on this area entitled *Robots in Space: Technology, Evolution, and Interplanetary Travel*), wherein he defines the differences between robot, android and cyborg. Though the sf reader may find these definitions unnecessary, they do allow other readers to more easily follow the content of the chapter. However, McCurdy takes his habit of defining words a little too far, with intermittent short sentences that almost read like dictionary entries. In discussing the similarities between robots and servants, he extends his metaphor to the search for David Livingstone and the porters who assisted him in that endeavour. He proceeds to explain, 'A porter is a servant employed to assist travelers or carry luggage' (254). It is not so much that McCurdy feels the need to define the word but rather the style in which he does so, the fact that he has used the word 'porter' nearly a hundred pages earlier with no definition, and the lack of definition for more complex words.

This inconsistency can also be seen in the abundance of spelling, grammatical, and syntactical errors scattered throughout the writing. 'Livingstone' is misspelled; MIT is referred to as the 'Massachusetts Institution of Technology'. Whether these faults can be attributed to McCurdy or to the editing process is unclear but these errors should have been picked up, especially in a revised edition.

These negatives are outweighed, however, by the descriptions of the enthusiasm that people had, and continue to have, for space exploration.

The use of metaphors such as frontiers, maps, bestiaries, and fortifications shows a continuing place for these concepts in modern imagination. That said, the chapter on space commerce fails this comparison somewhat as it largely appears to present a simple extension of capitalism rather than a modern take on an older concept. Similarly, McCurdy's discussion of the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill feels out of place, as he uses it only to show a similar controversy regarding the use of robots in the space program rather than as an extended metaphor or source of imaginative material.

The historical origins of the space program, however, are shown to both feed off, and feed into, the public imagination, as the pioneers of rocketry, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Hermann Oberth, both read and wrote science fiction. McCurdy utilizes this to show the interplay between imagination and science. McCurdy often refers to sf literature (Verne, Asimov, Čapek), film (*Blade Runner, Back to the Future, Close Encounters of the Third Kind*), and television (*Star Trek, Twilight Zone,* Disney shorts) to show the prevailing interest in space found throughout American popular culture. His abundant use of fictional sources to parallel the visions he discusses thoroughly support McCurdy's premise regarding the American public's attempts to turn visions into realities and the strength of popular culture in creating and bolstering ideas of a space-faring nation.

Overall, science fiction is used in the book as a means of presenting a parallel between fiction and fact, though it is more often used through examples rather than as topics of discussion. The connection to sf is clear but the text is more often a straightforward history than an analysis; a history which includes sf components. In this sense, *Space and the American Imagination* is an excellent source for contextual information but not for analysis of sf. In the field of sf, this text would be more useful for indirect historical research or to provide context as it is replete with conveniently collected facts regarding the American space program and the historical interplay between the genre and the scientific community. Outside the field of sf, this text seems to be a well-rounded starting point for the history of the space program, technology, and imagination in American popular culture. However, despite the engaging nature of the book, it is perhaps less in-depth than some readers may wish and is limited in its analysis of the themes presented within, preferring to simply cite examples without thoroughly explaining the implications behind such connections, especially with regard to the broader historical context or the inevitable, and continuing, interplay between science fact and science fiction.

Stefan Ekman, *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings* (Wesleyan University Press, 2013, 296p, £22.00)

Reviewed by Leimar Garcia-Siino (University of Liverpool)

When we think about the traditional tropes and clichés of fantasy as a genre, one of the most common is the use of maps. It has become such an expected feature of the genre that Diana Wynne Jones begins her *Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996) with the words:

> **WHAT TO DO FIRST**
> 1. Find the MAP. It will be there. No Tour of Fantasyland is complete without one. It will be found in the front part of your brochure. […] Find the Map.
> 2. Examine the Map. […]
> In short, the Map is useless, but you are advised to keep consulting it, because it is the only one you will get. And, be warned. If you take this Tour, you are going to have to visit every single place on this Map, whether it is marked or not. This is a Rule.

In *Here Be Dragons*, Stefan Ekman interrogates the notion that fantasy maps are a frequent element in the genre, but more than this, he seeks to demonstrate how significant setting is to the development and interpretation of a fantasy text. Dissatisfaction at the scant amount of genre-focused critical studies on the subject of setting fuels Ekman's passion. His main interest lies in raising awareness about the possibilities for in-depth critical analysis not only of setting for its own sake, but also of the relationships between the land and its rulers; fantasy's capacity to establish, via a variety of borders and boundaries, different sets, levels or domains of reality, and the unique ways in which the genre juggles culture and nature (a topic to which he applies eco-criticism in order to observe its dynamics). The book is divided into four main sections: Maps, Borders and Boundaries, Nature and Culture, and Realms and Rulers, which are then subdivided into smaller sections that consist of individual practical studies of key texts. He uses each of these sections to demonstrate how a specific text or set of texts, his most commonly used being Tolkien's Middle-Earth legendarium, can be explored and analyzed in terms of the characteristics and qualities of its setting.

Ekman begins by challenging conventions and assumptions made regarding fantasy mapping. The chapter on Maps combines a literature

review of previous critical studies on the subject, accompanied by a thorough survey of two hundred randomly selected fantasy works. Here Ekman seeks to establish what exactly is a fantasy map in relation to maps in the real world, as well as whether they are as common in the genre as cliché dictates. He carefully identifies the ways in which scholars have defined maps in the past; of particular interest is the fact that the purpose of actual maps is to represent something that exists in the actual world, whereas fantasy maps are part of the creative process that invents and imagines a secondary world. In this sense, Ekman posits that fantasy maps do not 'represent' something as much as they 'portray' something. He further contrasts this with Gérard Genette's notions of paratexts, considering how, while fantasy maps are physically found in the paratextual margins of a given work, in the same way that title, author name, printing information, page numbers, footnotes, dedications, etc. are located, a fantasy map appears to serve a different function, one that directly pertains to a physical place within the narrative. In some cases this relationship between actual world and secondary world is complicated if the real map represents a map found within the story as well, in other words not merely portraying the landscape, as in the case of Thorin's Map in *The Hobbit*.

Using alternative terminologies from Genette and Niels Winfeld Lund, Ekman considers that fantasy maps may be read in one of two ways: as a 'threshold' – 'a liminal space between the actual world of the reader and the fictional […] world of the fantasy story' – and as a 'doceme' – where 'rather than offering a threshold between fiction and reader, the map is part of the total fantasy document' (21). In addition, Ekman suggests that while actual maps represent that which is 'known', they also imply the existence of (and need to discover) the 'unknown'. Fantasy secondary maps, on the contrary, appear to convey a feeling of a 'safe place' that delineates all that the reader needs to know concerning the world of the narrative. Although Ekman does not elaborate as to the ramifications and implications of these ideas, the seeds for further research are conveniently planted; questions such as: How do maps allow readers to establish a deeper or stronger connection to the text? Is a fantasy map then a liminal object in itself or does it exist in a liminal space between real and fictional? Does the placement of the map at the beginning of a work, as opposed to within it (in the way that illustrations throughout a text would also function as docemes), influence its relation to it?

The most compelling element of this chapter is undeniably the scholarship, as Ekman makes it clear that he is familiar with reading maps from both an actual-world point of view (which he demonstrates by applying map interpretation techniques to the topographical information presented in fantasy maps) and from a fantasy-centred perspective (largely using John Clute's *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* and Jones' *Tough Guide*, he addresses the accuracy of things like 'water margins' and the perceived prevalent usage of

certain topographical elements). Overall, his study surprisingly informs us that maps are not as prevalent a feature as one might think (of the two hundred works, a little over ninety titles contained maps). More interesting than this are his observations of how often those works that do contain maps construct them in ways very similar to actual maps: the use of familiar legends, traditional western orientation (with north at the top), the inclusion of a compass rose, etc. is remarkably frequent.

The majority of this chapter, however, is dedicated to demonstrating, via practical close-reading cases, just how a fantasy map can be analyzed, and how it complements readings obtained from the text. This sets up the prevalent style of Ekman's book, where he identifies certain neglected areas of study with regard to topography, environment and relationships between characters and the landscape, and conducts a close reading of a selected text according to the area being observed, essentially leading by example. For instance, by studying the style, size, and colour used on the 'A Part of the Shire' map in *The Hobbit* to distinguish between different villages, forests, roads, directions, and surrounding areas, it is possible to determine the importance and relevance the author gives each location, in relation to Bilbo's adventures.

In the Borders and Boundaries chapter, Ekman emphasizes the differences between these, as well as considering the concept of a 'threshold', explaining that their usage depends on the way the separations between primary and secondary worlds is generated, and the relationship thereby maintained between the two (or more) worlds. Of particular interest are his observations regarding what he calls (following Clute) 'polders'. To begin with, Ekman separates the primary and secondary world into two identifiable domains – that of *mundanity* (the mundane world, but less tautological) and Faerie – which can be separated from each other by different types of border placements: first, Faerie can be an 'Otherworld, accessible from mundanity only by magic or certain portals'; second, Faerie and mundanity can intermingle or 'crosshatch'; or third, Faerie is found 'next to' or 'surrounded by' mundanity. In addition, Faerie is capable of holding further domains within itself, 'polders' within which the rules and parameters that apply to the rest of the secondary world might not exist. Ekman particularly offers the forest of Lothlórien as an example of this – an area within Middle-Earth where time appears to move slower or at a different pace, and where magic is more concentrated than outside of it. The notion that fantasyland is capable of containing a variety of domains, each of which operates in a different way to the inner workings of the rest of the land raises questions with regard to world-construction.

The next chapter in the book looks at the contrast between nature and culture or, as it can also be regarded, wilderness and order. Through a close reading of three fantasy landscapes, from *The Lord of the Rings*, Charles de Lint's Newford series, and China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station*, Ekman

establishes three ways in which the conflict between culture and nature can be expressed in a fantasy narrative. The first of these is possibly the clearest and most expected: Tolkien's contrast between the elven city of Caras Galadhon and the city of men, Minas Tirith. Ekman draws particular attention to the way in which Tolkien favours the wilder, nature-oriented elf city over the pristine industrially-constructed human capital of Gondor. Magic, and therefore the fantastic, is associated with the environment, and the lack of it signals the lack of the supernatural until Aragorn's ascension to the throne brings back some of the natural world back to the city. Meanwhile, in de Lint's Newford, Ekman identifies a social division between nature and culture, where the wild homeless population is seen as a threat to the city, progress and culture. Ekman remarks at how interesting it is that the separation between what constitutes the environment and what constitutes the man-made is so fluid and changeable. Finally, in *Perdido Street Station*, the division between nature and culture becomes twisted and corrupted as the citizens of New Crobuzon find their culture threatened by the wilderness of their own rubbish and waste. Here, nature and culture have become entangled, stained and practically indistinguishable from one another.

Finally, the last chapter on Realms and Rulers identifies how the landscape of fantasy works is often tied, via mystical, metaphorical or political forces, to its rulers, be they kindly kings, corrupted despots or dark lords. Though the chapter is mostly expositional, Ekman does make some interesting observations, particularly with regard to reader expectations, commenting on how it has become traditional for lands to reflect the character of those who rule them.

By focusing on how specific texts can be analyzed, Ekman misses the opportunity to examine the genre as a whole. The work is effective in generating additional questions and issues raised by Ekman's suggestions, but on the other hand this is also a source of frustration as one might expect some of these questions to be addressed. In addition, the majority of Ekman's observations merely appear to support or supplement the readings of certain themes and conflicts in the works he discusses. For instance, in discussing both the map for 'A Part of the Shire' and the realm of Lorthlórien, Ekman comments on how Tolkien shows a distaste for industrialization and a favourable perspective on nature and ecology. This is a theme that is detectable from the story alone, so that Ekman's reinforcement of what is already present in the text adds little to the discussion.

Overall, the purpose of *Here Be Dragons* is to observe, identify and expose the value of studying setting, through various means, instead of evaluating, analyzing, and raising arguments about these observations. As Ekman states at the end of chapter two and repeats throughout the rest of the work, '[these] readings […] demonstrate that paying close attention to fantasy maps, *as*

maps, can reveal information about the maps beyond the elements that were used in their construction' (66). In this sense, the book is helpful in providing a basis for further research, as well as the tools and some critical justification. If the book is frustrating because it does not delve deeper into the implications it proposes, then it can still be said to have successfully accomplished its intended purpose – to awaken an interest in the subject.

Thomas Van Parys and I.Q. Hunter, eds. *Science Fiction Across Media: Adaptation/Novelization* (Gylphi, 2013, 335pp, £15.20)

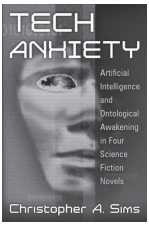
Reviewed by Lincoln Geraghty (University of Portsmouth)

Van Parys and Hunter's *Science Fiction Across Media* examines an increasingly important area of science fiction studies and media studies: adaptation. As the editors stress in their introduction, 'Science fiction (sf) is an important niche literary genre, but it is an absolutely central genre in contemporary film production' (4). But this collection does not just focus on traditional literary adaptation, from book to film; chapters focus on the diverse array of texts that inspire filmic representations: from comics, to graphic novels, to television, to toys. Thus, the editors argue that 'adaptation can be seen as a key function in a "vast narrative"' (3), which is a term borrowed from media studies in describing how narratives are constructed and spun out across a range of media platforms. Indeed, without stating it, the editors are clearly indicating that science fiction as a genre is inherently a transmedia one. The chapters address transmediality and transmedia storytelling in various ways: Part One examines book to screen, with chapters on cinematic estrangement and intertextuality; Part Two includes case studies of art film adaptations, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), *Solaris* (1972 & 2002), and *Stalker* (1979); Part Three focuses on issues of nationhood and gender in filmic adaptations including *Crash* (1996) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1966). The fourth and fifth parts offer the most intriguing and contemporary examples of adaptation, with chapters that discuss novelizations, books based on blockbuster movies, and intermediality, how themes, tropes and icons are adapted across a range of media texts.

It is perhaps unsurprising that while the last part of the collection contains chapters on more popular examples of the genre, *Superman* and *Flash Gordon* for example, the large proportion of chapters remain very traditional in their approach to science fiction adaptation studies and discuss a very select range of films that would be considered the most faithful and literary of

adaptations: Peter Wright on *Planet of the Apes* (1968) and Hunter on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) for example. However, Michael Stackpole's chapter on the taxonomy of novelizations and the chapters by Van Parys and Gwilym Thear, examining books based on film scripts which inspire this particular form of merchandising, are refreshing takes on the theme of adaptation. Stackpole argues that 'novelization' as a term has been co-opted by a small group of critics who want to protect science fiction literature from science fiction film. Creating a literary canon that does not include novels based on original screenplays garners more respect so they can 'make themselves feel good about their guilty pleasure' (212) of enjoying the genre. Indeed, Stackpole argues that to move beyond the stigma that a novelization is an unoriginal and unworthy version of the primary text one must remember that the two serve different purposes and different audiences. His taxonomy suggests that we must organize novelizations – and, by extension, other types of adaptation – in being 'related to a property by function rather than degree of kinship' (226). I would agree, and argue that we should go further and consider adaptations as entirely different texts, inspired by the original for sure, but texts that have the power to attract a whole new audience – and, of course, revenue stream – and to mean something critically and culturally different for the times in which they are made.

With this said, *Science Fiction Across Media* does a valuable job in bridging the gap between literary studies and media studies. In fact, as part of Gylphi's SF Storyworlds series, it is a welcome addition to the field. More needs to be done to break down the unfair distinction between science fiction literature and media. The way we might do this is through the concentration on what both forms of the genre do best: producing storyworlds that engage people and offer inexhaustible potential for new texts, whether they are formally based on previous ones or take inspiration from common themes and tropes. Fidelity is often the basis upon which science fiction adaptation scholars construct their critique of modern films – either fidelity to the source text or fidelity to the genre in terms of ideas and concerns – yet if we forget fidelity and concentrate on the processes through which science fiction films come to life then we can look at every example based on its merits, not the merits of the past. Mark Bould, in his chapter on the many variations of *Flash Gordon*, argues a similar point: 'Adaptation studies should abandon any residual notion of fidelity and embrace instead the notion of extraordinary rendition […] in the sense that each variant being a cover version, ordinary in its repetition of elements but extraordinary in its transformations of them' (321). Ultimately, what this collection can teach us is that there is plenty more to be said and done within science fiction studies since the adaptation of previous texts, films, and franchises will continue to happen in Hollywood so long as it makes a profit and audiences pay to watch.



Christopher A. Sims, *Tech Anxiety: Artificial Intelligence and Ontological Awakening in Four Science Fiction Novels* (McFarland, 2013, 242pp, £27.60)

Reviewed by Anna McFarlane (University of St Andrews)

Tech Anxiety is Christopher A. Sims' first monograph, and is based upon his PhD thesis and an article which appeared in *Science Fiction Studies* 36:1 (2009). Here he reads Martin Heidegger's philosophy alongside four science fiction novels: Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (both 1968), William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004). In doing so, Sims joins the chorus of critical work currently attempting to take the pulse of humanity's relationship to technology.

In his introduction, Sims provides an overview of the hermeneutic field to which he wishes to contribute, but perhaps sets his work in too wide a context. He makes reference to posthumanism, actor-network theory, human-animal studies, and science and technological studies among others. This whistle-stop tour of complex thought systems means they only receive nods of acknowledgement rather than the extensive engagement they demand. Dealing with complex thinkers so quickly means that some of Sims' commentary is reductive to the point that the thinker's work can no longer be recognized. For example, he identifies Katherine N. Hayles as unproblematically pro-technology, using a quote from an interview to support this claim. However, when one turns to *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) (the text to which Sims primarily refers), Hayles's attitude towards posthumanity and technology is more ambivalent. Sims goes on to refer to some of these thinkers in later chapters, making a sufficiently detailed introduction to their ideas even more desirable.

Sims focuses on Heidegger's 'The Question Concerning Technology' (1949) and *Discourse on Thinking* (1966) to argue that artificial intelligences are used ambiguously in science fiction (and his four chosen novels in particular); they represent the fear that humans could grow to see themselves as no more than machines or commodities. (This limitation of perspective is known as 'enframing' in Heidegger's terminology, and a human or object experienced only for its use value is referred to as 'standing-reserve'.) However, artificial intelligences in literature also represent an opportunity for humans to challenge this process of 'enframing' as they defamiliarize readers from their current modes of seeing, prompting humans to recognize their potential as so much

more than standing-reserve and, indeed, leading readers to the conclusion that 'all things should be viewed as something other than the standing-reserve' (136). The terminology alone might be enough to strike fear into the heart of anyone who has tried and failed to tackle Heidegger's ontology in the past but Sims takes his time explaining the meaning of each term in his first chapter and the book never falls into incomprehensibility. His thesis, that technology represents not only a challenge to humanity but also actualizes the potential of a 'saving power', a power that could help humanity to realize its own essence, provides a pleasing middle ground between technophobia and technophilia, as well as teasing some lovely detail from his chosen texts.

However, in taking on the heroic task of explaining Heidegger's concepts Sims falls into the trap of relying on commentators rather than taking examples from Heidegger's original writings. One can sympathize with this as Heidegger's major commentators, such as Hubert Dreyfus and Michael Zimmerman, are very skilled at translating Heidegger into accessible prose. Heidegger is not known for his soundbites and it is a temptation to resort to articulate secondary sources or to paraphrase, but this does distance Heidegger's work from the discussion and means that occasionally Sims's argument is weakened when he disagrees with the interpretation made by one of his sources. For example, when he states, 'I think Rojcewicz has it wrong when he conflates Being with the gods' (39), he fails to turn to Heidegger's writings to justify his position, meaning that he does not offer the nuances of his argument to the reader who remains unconvinced. After the first chapter, which explains the key Heideggerian concepts in which Sims is interested, there is almost no direct reference to Heidegger's writings and Sims relies on paraphrase to remind the reader of Heidegger's position. While the concepts are conveyed well in Chapter One, this means that the reader gleans no further insight into Heidegger's philosophy from the remainder of the book.

There are also places where Sims' argument could possibly have been strengthened through a consideration of the existing field of science fiction studies. Sims explains that his choice of Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* is because the novel 'has not yet received the critical attention that it should' (14); however, this statement overlooks the 2009 conference on Mitchell's work at the University of St Andrews and the resulting collection *David Mitchell: Critical Essays* (2011), edited by Sarah Dillon. This lack of consideration of the field means that some opportunities to strengthen the connections between Heidegger's philosophy and the chosen texts are missed. Reference to science fiction literary criticism might have deepened Sims' argument through making connections between Heidegger's defamiliarization from enframing and, say, cognitive estrangement.

The literary scope of the study is also limited. Apart from the four titular novels there are only two science fiction works even mentioned in the book

– *The Matrix* (1999) and *Terminator 2* (1991). This does mean that Sims has free licence to analyse his four chosen texts in some depth and his readings are a welcome return to texts that are (with the exception of *Neuromancer*) sometimes obscured by their hugely successful cinematic incarnations. One sympathizes with Sims' wish to focus on close reading, but overall the lack of context is more of a hindrance than a help to his project. Statements such as 'Abject loneliness or isolation may seem like an unusual conflict for an SF novel' (119), when discussing Dick, suggest that Sims is unaware that most science fiction novels since the birth of the genre can be described as dealing with aliens or alienation (or both), whenever one situates that point. Mary Shelley's Creature and H.G. Wells' Time Traveller are both lonely beyond the bounds of daily human experience. This lack of consideration for the wider field irks when claims like 'a central concern of 1950s and 60s SF is indeed the alienation of the male labourer in the corporate sphere' (111) are made without examples to contextualize such comments for the reader. This lack of context means that when the author lauds 'the complex and potent ways in which Dick uses the android and technology that extends beyond the props required to produce a formulaic SF novel of the late 60s' (111), it reads as though Sims has little respect for science fiction beyond his chosen texts.

However, this lack of scope may reflect the book's origins as a PhD thesis more than any disrespect on the part of the author. The book still bears traces of such origins in occasional awkward sentences, twisted to avoid reference to the first person, the placing of the abbreviations of Heidegger's work at the end of the first chapter, rather than before the main text as one would expect, and the repeated use of rhetorical questions in place of more subtle argument. These drawbacks are a shame, as Sims clearly has a strong grasp of Heidegger's work and his application of these ideas to the novels in the study is fascinating when their import shines through, particularly in the chapter on Dick, where his reading does tease new meaning from the text. Some more time between the completion and publication of the PhD might have been enough for this work to truly live up to the book format and leave behind its roots as a thesis. As it is, this work will hold some value to those attempting to tackle Heidegger and looking for a tangential way of approaching his work, while the readings of the novels will be of interest to those studying them if they are seeking a different approach. One hopes that Sims will be able to develop his Heideggerian technology studies in the future as they hold great potential – that potential simply is not fully realized in this book.

Jeanette Baxter and Rowland Wymer, eds. *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 272 pp, £60.00)

Reviewed by Joe Norman (Brunel University)

The thirteen essays in this collection are grouped according to four key themes in Ballard's fiction: Form and Narrative; Sex, Geometry and the Body; Ballard's Londons; and Psychology and Sociopathology. Despite the growth in Ballard studies, Baxter and Wymer's collection clearly indicates that the project of exploring his complete works is far from exhausted: it provides new insights into canonical texts such as Crash (1973) and The Atrocity Exhibition (1970), and emphasizes the range and diversity of Ballard's output, including his non-fictional writings and lesser-known novels.

In their introduction, Baxter and Wymer outline Ballard's deep and pervasive influence upon other authors – a diverse list including Martin Amis, Zadie Smith, China Miéville, Deborah Levy, amongst many others – but also in the fields of music, visual art, and architecture. Particularly notable is their assertion that Ballard's influence in cinema may be 'not so much a matter of direct and conscious influence as of repeated surfacings of the unmistakably "Ballardian" which bear witness to the collective cultural significance of his very personal set of obsessions' (2), citing American director Haskel Wexler, who may never have read Ballard's work.

As incorporated into the title of his essay, Roger Luckhurst uses the forward slash punctuation mark to reinforce the strategy of splicing/assemblage/juxtaposition that is integral to his analysis. With this new essay, Luckhurst returns to some of the issues he tackled previously in *The Angle Between Two Walls* (1997), examining Ballard's experiments in *The Atrocity Exhibition* as working in parallel with the montage films of Eduardo Paolozzi and Bruce Connor. In less confident hands, Luckhurst's use of the forward slash could quickly become gimmicky; this is far from the case, however, and it becomes a pleasurable visual analogue for the techniques that he convincingly argues as key to understanding Ballard's elusive, complex text/s. Discussing Connor, Luckhurst identifies 'obsessions in his key works of the 60s and 70s [that] are uncannily similar to Ballard's' (39), which include celebrities, assassination, the sexualization of the media, and mass destruction. Referring to his own essay, Luckhurst correctly states that 'Ballardians will not need much prompting to translate the parallel project[s] of moulding and re-moulding the traumatic media landscapes of the 60s' (45). As such, Luckhurst's technique also provides a fine starting point from which subsequent analyses can begin.

Baxter offers a fascinating study of Ballard's letters, essays and reviews, arguing that these texts can be regarded as uncanny due to their 'blurring of textual boundaries, generic classification […], and the stability of authorial identity' (7). One minor niggle is that, while Baxter mentions that Ballard wrote over one hundred 'non fiction' pieces, she makes general observations, seemingly relating to the entirety of this area of Ballard's oeuvre, based upon ideas derived from detailed analysis of only a handful of examples.

The three essays in Part II set out to examine Ballard's obsessive interest in the relationship between the human body and the mass media landscape, especially in relation to *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Jen Hiu Bon Hoa argues that Ballard's 'various utilizations of pornography are as much an observation of the relationship between exploitative social relations and solipsistic fantasy as they are a commentary on the far-reaching possibilities of the pornographic imagination' (8). Emma Whiting examines the Kristevan concept of the abject in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Asking if 'the traumas that fail to traumatise' depicted in the text relate just to a postmodern 'death of affect', Whiting ultimately concludes that Ballard uses the 'figure of the car crash to merge these surfaces at the point of the wound, which is re-situated as an erotically charged gateway onto what Ballard terms "inner space"' (8). Dan O'Hara develops a reading of Ballard drawing upon the psychiatric theories of R.D. Laing and Gregory Bateson (with whom Ballard was familiar) to argue that Ballard's seemingly 'flat' and crudely-drawn characters, far from a literary failing instead point to the necessity of a new formal critical perspective that focuses upon 'the active elements of Ballard's brand of anti-characterization – of gestures, roles and contexts' (9).

Considered as a whole, the essays in Part II seek to re-affirm Ballard's radical discontinuity from traditions of both sf and mimetic fiction. In order to glean meaning from Ballard's often coldly analytical approach to fiction writing, the critic must focus upon the psychological and physical relationships between his characters and their environments, infer subtle meanings from their gestures rather than their dialogue, and examine their power relationships, rather than attempt to understand them as rounded, emotional, and communicative beings. These essays act as a reminder that Ballard's characters are frequently treated as traumatized factors in their author's obsessive social and scientific experiments. In Section III, Sebastian Groes historicizes 'the urban disaster trilogy' of *Crash*, *Concrete Island* and *High-Rise* in dialogue with a range of material from Jean Baudrillard, John Maynard Keynes and Michel Foucault. David James takes up the subject of 'Late Ballard', challenging critics who suggest that the clear deviations in tone visible in his last works such as *Kingdom Come* and *Millennium People* – characterized by 'stylistic moderateness', 'a taut and unembellished register', and even 'intermittent banality' – represent not a

'senescent lapse' but instead mark a 'reinflection of a conscious kind' where 'the aggravating effects of style itself offer a counterforce to the endemic social monotony Ballard describes' (161). Another particularly noteworthy aspect of the essays in Section III is the range of parallels drawn between Ballard's work and that of others, which – including Daniel Defoe, William Blake and Thomas Hardy – is eclectic, surprising and convincing.

The essays in Section IV explore in different ways the links between two major themes of Ballard's work: his fascination with mental illness, and the extension of imperialism through capitalist globalization. David Ian Paddy examines the progression from Ballard's first short story, 'The Violent Noon' (1951), to the 'inner space' fiction of his middle years, with which he is most closely associated. It is with another critically marginalized story 'Manhole 69' (1957), Paddy argues, that Ballard shifts from 'political realism to a politics of the mind' (188); and in 'The Subliminal Man' (1963) develops an 'interest in psychic imperialism' (189), understood as the extension of capitalist globalization into consciousness through the practices of mass media. Simon Sellars develops similar ideas on Ballard's 'shifting conceptions of psychology, space and community', drawing parallels between 'Ballard's physical and psychological […] zones of suspension – motorways, airports, supermarkets, shopping malls – and Marc Augé's idea of "non-place"' (13).

Reading *Visions and Revisions* leaves one in no doubt that *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard's densest, strangest and most experimental work, is widely regarded as the apotheosis of his career. Whether understood as surrealist assemblage, an examination of spectacular media on consciousness, as the 're-imagined' literature of abjection (101), as 'consumer culture as a form of psychic imperialism' (190), or exposing the 'irrationality of rationality' (194), it is clear that there is plenty more still to be uncovered in this text alone. The collection's real strength, however, lies in its interrogation of more unfamiliar texts from Ballard's oeuvre which paves the way for even more interesting work in the future. *Visions and Revisions* may not be the best place to begin for casual readers of Ballard interested in delving a little deeper, but Baxter and Wymer skilfully organize disparate materials into a logical collection, providing a laudable and – most importantly – useful contribution to Ballard scholarship.

David Brittain, *Eduardo Paolozzi at New Worlds: Science Fiction and Art in the Sixties* (Savoy Books, 2013, 180 pp, £17.00)

Reviewed by Andy Sawyer (University of Liverpool)

Written from the viewpoint of a primary interest in Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi as a major figure in the British art movements of the 1960s and beyond, rather than as an icon of science fiction's 'new wave', this book is nevertheless essential for any science fiction fan who wants to know exactly what Paolozzi's function as *New Worlds*' 'aeronautics advisor' actually *was*.

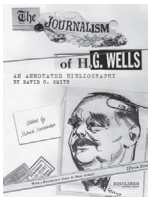
David Brittain curated an exhibition on Paolozzi and Science Fiction at the Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, and this book is an offshoot of that. It explores the way Paolozzi interacted with Michael Moorcock's *New Worlds* as 'denizens of the media landscape', taking the territories of what J.G. Ballard called 'inner space', the examples of William Burroughs's 'cut-up' techniques and fusing them with a 'pop' sensibility. The redesign of *NW* in the summer of 1967, with issue 173, changed the magazine from a conventional paperback size to a glossy A4 format where visuals could stand out, rather than being afterthoughts and fillers – John Carnell, Moorcock's predecessor, had responded to his own dissatisfaction with the low standard of sf artwork by leaving it out altogether. Moorcock, among other things a former writer for comic books, enlisted artists like Mal Dean to create a greater visual impact. 'Found' images such as advertisements and pictures of machinery reflected the 'media landscape': their juxtaposition in often startling ways created an echo of Ballardian 'inner space'. Of Moorcock's main literary collaborators in this enterprise, Brian Aldiss was/is an artist, and Ballard endorsed surrealist artists as practitioners of new forms whose examples had been only rarely followed by the literary establishment.

Paolozzi had participated in the 1956 exhibition 'This is Tomorrow', which featured work by the Independent Group, of whom Richard Hamilton, profiled in an issue of *New Worlds*, was also a member. Paolozzi himself collected science fiction ephemera and may even have attempted a novel of his own (61). The connections between Paolozzi and *New Worlds* seemed to have come about through a meeting between him, Moorcock and Ballard in 1967 (photographed in *NW* 178). Moorcock had already come to know him through a mutual friend, Ballard came to collaborate with him. Both appeared in the small-press magazine *Ambit*.

In *NW* 174, which featured a lengthy appreciation of him, Palozzi appeared on the masthead of the magazine as 'Aeronautics Advisor': a kind of flattering joke. In fact, few of his images appeared in the magazine and 'there is no evidence that he took any part in the editorial process' (56). What we get from this book, though, are two things. First, the sense – as hinted at above – that Paolozzi and many of his fellow-artists were a direct inspiration for the literary experiments Moorcock and his collaborators were trying to carry out. Profusely illustrated with cover and interior artwork from *New Worlds* and Paolozzi's own work, the book is worth the money for that alone: a record of the time where the visual and print media were trying to come together.

Second, Brittain has done his homework – as far as he could – in attempting to piece together who influenced whom and how. While much of the background of science fiction history is second-hand (Colin Greenland's *The Entropy Exhibition* (1983) is heavily drawn upon for the primary account of *New Worlds* and the 'new wave'), there are lengthy appendices of interviews with Michael Moorcock, Charles Platt, Michael Butterworth, John Clute and others. These are fascinating for (sometimes) how little information they give! Platt, for instance, admits: 'I don't have a theory [about what produced the trend for 'visual thinking' at the time] […] It was purely by chance that *New Worlds* was contacted by Christopher Finch, who was well connected in the art world' (129) and goes on to say, 'I never met Eduardo Paolozzi. I heard everything from him second-hand!' (133) Moorcock remarks that 'Paolozzi was perfect for us at *New Worlds* and [his] *Diana as an Engine* seemed an apt symbol for what we were trying to do' (133). A short and comparatively unrevealing interview with Ballard (who was seriously ill at the time) nevertheless suggests interestingly that 'Michael Moorcock was much less sure about whatever role Eduardo could play in *New Worlds* – too "arty" in a 1930s left-bank way – Eduardo sympathised with Mike.'

What seems to have been the case is that, as with all good movements, there never really was a 'movement' as such. Against the background of a swirl of cross-currents and influences and counter-influences within an increasingly visual and technologically-focused culture, connections were made and opportunities taken. Some readers will come to this book purely because of an interest in the visual arts; others will be primarily concerned in the history of science fiction, For both groups, this study of Paolozzi will be engrossing reading as an account of how art is made and received.



David C. Smith, *The Journalism of H.G. Wells: An Annotated Bibliography* (Equilibris Publishing, 2012, 432 pp, £19.99)

Reviewed by Tom Sykes (University of Portsmouth)

There is the aroma of a labour of love about this first-ever full-scale Wells bibliography. Its author, the late US academic David C. Smith, spent decades toiling away in archives and travelling abroad, on the hunt for material. In 1970, he chanced upon a mint-condition copy of Wells' address to the 1938 World Congress of Freethinkers in a chaotic second-hand bookshop in Saffron Walden. A little later, in a Vancouver store run by the Communist Party of

Canada he found a highly rare printing of *All Aboard for Ararat*, Wells' 1940 utopian allegory. Smith's wry regret in the introduction about how long this project took is a testament to the mind-blowing depth and breadth of Wells' literary output.

Simon J. James, editor of *The Wellsian*, has argued that Wells started writing at the moment when literary production became a truly mass form – and big business. This is evident enough from the briefest flick through *The Journalism of H.G. Wells*. Lacking private income or patronage, Wells had to earn a living with his pen and worked in almost every literary form, from the innovative speculative fictions he is now best known for to social realist novels, theatre reviews, political polemics, educational treatises, scientific analyses, and interviews with figures as diverse as Rabindranath Tagore, Orson Welles and Joseph Stalin. Between 1895 and his death in 1946, Wells worked for periodicals from *New Statesman* to *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Socialist Review* to *Science Schools Journal*. Smith has catalogued a total of 2,000 individual writing credits, but unlike a common-or-garden bibliographer, he succinctly summarizes each subject, adding trivia and direct quotations where relevant. His book is so comprehensive that, aside from containing references to all of Wells' known publications, it features 300 or so unsigned articles that are likely his but cannot be proven so. There are also absorbing chapters discussing the numerous interviews he gave throughout his life and 230-odd news items he appeared in.

One might argue that Wells' oeuvre was so wide-ranging that it was bound to throw up the sorts of contradictions that, for over a century, have made him such an enduringly intriguing writer. One week in 1905 he publishes a favourable review of Francis Galton's *Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims*, arguing that 'it is in the sterilisation of failures [...] that the possibility of an improvement of the human stock lies' (126), and a few weeks later he is defending socialism in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review*. Yet, he never agrees with the racialist imperatives of eugenics as is asserted in his 1916 book, *What is Coming?*, and indicated by a 1931 *New York Times* report on his championing of the Scottsboro Boys, the African-American youths wrongly convicted by an all-white jury in Alabama.

Perhaps of most interest to sf fans will be this book's charting of the development of both Wells the science commentator and Wells the science fiction writer. While in many ways he was an idealist about the capacity of the scientific method to deliver a sane, fair and compassionate society, he also warned of the dangers and excesses of science. Timely themes that he would later allegorize in his fiction – the moral consequences of misusing new technologies in *The Invisible Man*, anxieties about rationally-planned societies in *The First Men in the Moon*, scepticism about the positive teleology of Darwinism in *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* – he first

addressed in his journalism. Indeed, Wells' 1895 essay on human intervention in nature, 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity', was, according to Smith, only slightly rewritten before it was inserted into the manuscript of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.

In addition to providing an exhaustive overview of a truly singular career, *The Journalism of H.G. Wells* shows that its subject – so politically and scientifically ahead of his time – was prepared to change his mind on some matters, but not on others. Even after the military-industrial carnage of World War I, Wells never lost faith in the progressive potential of science and technology. In 1939, just three months before the outbreak of World War II, he published in the Adelaide *Advertiser* 'the most complete version of his general history of utopias [and urged] returning to Francis Bacon's ideal of a utopia with science as its driving force' (247).

Graham Sleight, *The Doctor's Monsters: Meanings of the Monstrous in Doctor Who* (I.B. Tauris, 2012, 225 pp, £12.99)

Reviewed by Michelle K. Yost

When it comes to written histories and analyses of television shows, there are none more prolific than *Doctor Who*, and former *Foundation* editor Graham Sleight has thrown his own proverbial hat into the Rings of Akhaten with *The Doctor's Monsters*. Rather than approaching the show via more traditional avenues of the Doctor, companions, production notes, et cetera, Sleight arrives through the side door, following strange creatures onto the set and interrogating their purpose; a character study that does not directly study character, but character response to the monstrous.

In all, twenty-nine monsters that appeared between 1963 and 2011 are covered, a few of them (such as the Daleks and Cybermen) appearing in multiple chapters. Completists may be disappointed to find that not each and every monster is presented; rationalists may be disappointed to find there is no particular order to the entries; academics may be disappointed to find that it is not particularly academic. Fans of *Doctor Who*, and especially fans of the creature creations from the show, are the ideal readers; Sleight breaks down for them exactly why they felt compelled to hide behind their couches and how these monsters played into contemporary anxieties.

Sleight's introduction outlines his purpose in studying the monstrous because it is 'the personification of one human trait to the exclusion of all

others', and its purpose is to serve as 'a cautionary tale about the dangers of that trait' (1). For Sleight, though, the monstrous must be *physically* represented as other, and not human in appearance: 'monsters for the purpose of this book are creatures that act in an evil way and look in some fashion abnormal' (5). Sleight defines the monster of his study as 'a creature of nonhuman appearance that acts in a way that's evil, or at least to harm the protagonist and other characters we're meant to be sympathetic with' (5). While this certainly is an effective definition for examining the monstrous in *Doctor Who*, the monstrous often cloaks itself in human form: The Master, The Black Guardian, The Family of Blood, and others are excluded. Any monster that is being used by another malevolent entity, such as the Yeti and the Loch Ness Monster, is also excluded, being a weapon rather than a conscious monster.

Playing the role of devil's advocate for himself, Sleight outlines his own potential shortcoming in this study, from the potential of imposing interpretations not intended by the script writers to the 'risk of overinterpretation' (3). Sleight avoids this pitfall by never indulging in any extensive interpretation. There are thirty-three short chapters, averaging four to five pages each, and more of that space is given over to plot summary of the episodes the creatures appeared in than examining the monsters themselves. This leaves little room for Sleight's close reading of how these monsters influence the plot, and even less for the academic analysis. In discussing the Sontarans, Sleight states, 'Creatures with the same genetic makeup will arguably be much the same. (Though this has been disputed by scientists recently. See Richard Lewontin's *The Doctrine of DNA* [2001])' (64). Unfortunately, Sleight does not follow up with Lewontin's argument or examine what would be an interesting point about the Sontarans. The Sontarans also appeared years before Lewontin's work, and so his study had no influence on the development or interpretation of the Sontarans.

There is one glaring error in Sleight's book, when he refers to the 2011 Steven Moffat terror, the Silence, as the 'Silents' (the BBC website dedicated to *Doctor Who* is clear that these monsters are called the 'Silence'). Sleight also at times seems to overreach in the effort to justify the actions of some of the Doctor's monsters: 'The Cyberking is [...] a giant robot designed to stomp London into the ground. It makes sense that the Cybermen would be able to create a creature like this' (148). For all the brilliance of *Doctor Who* in its fifty-year history, attempting to credit 'sense' to 'a giant robot designed to stomp London' beyond entertaining plot point is stretching credulity.

In the Conclusion, Sleight mentions that in terms of the monster and the monstrous he has 'stretched these definitions at times' and that he is intrigued by the question, 'How much do monsters have a choice about being monstrous, and how much can they outgrow their natures?' (198). This question is only touched on lightly in the chapters, and readers aren't aware

that they are reading, à la Carnac the Magnificent, answers to the question. Sleight's most interesting ideas come out in the Conclusion rather than the Introduction, breaking down the monster into four categories: 1) those that warn against 'science overreaching itself', 2) the 'inherently warlike', 3) 'the predator', and 4) what he calls 'the rationalised myth' (199). Readers would probably appreciate this sort of analytic framing before delving into thirty-three chapters rather than after. This is a useful breakdown of the monster in *Doctor Who* and its purpose, but unfortunately each category has only a single paragraph exploring the examples and implications.

In terms of additional material, Sleight provides 'A Brief History of *Doctor Who*', instructions on using the book to address the changes to *Doctor Who*'s format over the years, a glossary that contains an alphabetical listing of creatures in the shows (both those that appear in the book and those that didn't), and a list of references (though there are no footnotes or endnotes in the text). Some of the references directly relate to *Doctor Who*, its history, production, academic texts, etc., and others are incidental. It is hard to connect them to the whole; it might have been useful for Sleight to divide his references between those directly related to the Whoniverse, and those that are not.

Other fan analyses such as the *About Time* series (Mad Norwegian Press), *TARDIS Eruditorium* series (CreateSpace Independent Publishing), and *Time, Unincorporated* series (Mad Norwegian Press) provide more in-depth looks at the show and the monsters. But as a focus on those monsters, without having to read through several volumes of text, *The Doctor's Monsters* provides those interested with a quick look at some of the most memorable evil creatures in the show's history, and introduces the newer generation of fans to monsters that have not appeared on screen in decades.

Paul McAuley, *A Very British History: The Best Science Fiction Stories of Paul McAuley, 1985-2011* (PS Publishing, 2013, 435 pp., £24.99)

Reviewed by Jeremy Brett (Texas A&M University)

For this career retrospective, Paul McAuley has himself selected the twenty-one stories and supplemented them with helpful story notes. The result is a wide-ranging collection that highlights the best of McAuley's writing as well as a deep and varied exploration of the themes that run throughout his fiction. This continuity and consistency of theme is especially evident in the stories that take place in McAuley's established Quiet War and Confluence universes.

Many of the stories in the collection involve the results of the mechanistic

exploitation of an underclass. In ‘Prison Dreams’ (1992, the story that serves as the source for McAuley’s 1995 novel *Fairyland*) and its follow-up ‘Children of the Revolution’ (1993), McAuley documents a world in which biotechnology has been used to create a population of genetically-engineered ‘dolls’, altered humans used and thoughtlessly discarded as slave labour and as battlefield fodder. The dolls’ existence frees up the humanity that exploits them and provides people with the opportunity to explore themselves and what it means to be human. McAuley’s stories warn of bitter costs of this objectification of others, an inevitable revolt and evolution of those who are cast aside in the name of an improved humanity. Similarly, in ‘Sea Change, With Monsters’ (1998), a contracted ‘monster hunter’ is hired to find and destroy an artificially-created bioweapon; an underwater ‘dragon’. In the process she finds a group of genetically modified workers built to service the underwater algae farms who have formed an alliance with the dragon against those who exploit them.

Several of McAuley’s stories have as protagonists children who, as the one of the most vulnerable segments of the population, face particular risks and abuses in a society hurtling (or often lurching) towards the future. These futures in McAuley’s fiction are all too often sad and dark reflections of our own present, where humanity’s faults not only continue but evolve alongside technological advances. And children often pay the price. ‘Little Ilya and Spider and Box’ (1985) is a lovely if sad story about a little girl, escaping from a home in which she has been subject to abuse, periodic memory wipes, and force-feeding of anti-aging drugs to keep her perpetually young. Yet, although technology provides new ways in which people may dominate others, it also provides for Ilya’s ultimate escape and freedom through the counsel of (ironically) a portable piece of advanced technology as well as the good offices of a free-living spacer. There is hope, even in the face of seeming hopelessness. One of McAuley’s strengths in this story and in others is his confidence in the ability of individuals to try and shape their own fates. Ilya makes the choice to flee, and the spacer makes the choice to help her succeed. In ‘17’, a child labourer on a far-future human colony, chooses to defy her fate by surreptitiously attaining an education about the cosmos, a choice that leads ultimately to her escaping her harsh and dreary existence for a new life off-world.

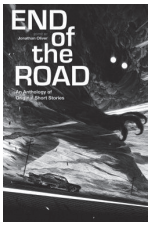
The title character of ‘Rocket Boy’ (2007) is a young orphan boy who makes use of a found piece of ‘smart’ military technology to violently seize control of his society; unlike Ilya and 17, Rocket Boy uses his newfound advantages to mould the world in his own image rather than escape from it. Since McAuley implies that Rocket Boy is likely to become a brutal emperor, it is a choice that seems to do little but repeat the cycle of power and corruption. McAuley is not so naïve as to write stories in which individual action always results in good. In this and elsewhere in his fiction, he is an astute observer of

the ways in which people actually behave.

Humanity's consistency is a driving theme in these stories. In 'All Tomorrow's Parties' (1997), one character asks another: 'Why would we accept limits? We are only doing what humanity has always done. We use science to master nature just as man-apes changed their way of thinking […] Humanity has always struggled to be more than it is; it has always been ready to travel to the edge of the world, and step over it.' The other replies: 'But you do not change. That is why you are so dangerous' (208). We remain flawed – sometimes broken, sometimes dangerous to our fellow, and sometimes these flaws in us have far-reaching consequences. The brief tale 'Meat' (2005) tells of a world in which the flesh of celebrities and others can be cloned and served up as edible delicacies; technology in the service of blind consumption. And in 'Little Lost Robot' (2008), an insanely overpowered military robot built millennia ago by humans continues to wage deadly war throughout the galaxy, bringing untold destruction to planets, driven by programming in a conflict long since buried and forgotten.

But all is not necessarily gloom, despair and pessimism. The collection's title story is a wry, amusing tale of an alternate world in which the post-war British, using captured German scientists, beat both the Americans and the Soviets into space. In a 'very British' tradition of understatement, however, the space-borne Empire is increasingly seen as a non-starter and the story ends with a hint that British efforts at space exploration will ultimately end the same way as the Empire in the real world. Another alternate history, 'Cross Road Blues' (1991), re-imagines the blues musician, Robert Johnson, as a driving force in a civil rights movement that erupts years before its real-life equivalent. Johnson's actions (with guidance from a time traveller from America's future) demonstrate, as McAuley does elsewhere, the power of individual human choice to change societies and situations. The very clever tale 'The Two Dicks' (2001) brings together Philip K. Dick and Richard Nixon in a meeting similar to the real-life (and incredibly surreal) 1970 meeting between Nixon and Elvis Presley. Where Presley met with Nixon in order to pledge his help in combating illegal drug use and offering his services as an undercover government agent, in McAuley's story Dick seeks out Nixon in 1974 to volunteer himself as a soldier in the battle against the counterculture. But in classic Dickian tradition he continually slips into temporal and sensory perception changes that cause him to question the reality around him. It is a wonderful story and a great homage to Dick and his work.

A Very British History is a wonderful introduction to McAuley's important literary career. McAuley's expertise in describing near and far-future societies is unparalleled. He describes with emotion, grace, and emotional detail how humanity will both evolve and remain tragically the same as it moves forward into a strange yet familiar future.



Jonathan Oliver, ed. *End of the Road* (Solaris, 2013, 242 pp, £7.99)

Reviewed by Grace Halden (Birkbeck College, London)

In this collection, Jonathan Oliver brings together short stories from across the globe on the theme of 'the road'. The stories explore ideas of journey and pathways. These 'roads' can be psychological, spiritual, emotional, developmental and, of course, physical. Oliver's anthology navigates the reader across extraordinary landscapes, through uncanny country lanes and precarious mindsets. Legends, folk tales, myths, fantasy, and even true accounts, are showcased in this rare book.

Oliver edited the graphic novel series, *2000AD*, is the author of the fantasy *Twilight of Kerberos* novels, and is currently the Editor-in-Chief of Solaris and Abaddon Books. Solaris publishes fantasy, horror and science fiction, and *End of the Road* contains all three in this volume. Unlike the documenting of journeys and travel by authors such as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, in Oliver's anthology, the road is part of a map which traces the psyche of both the reader and the characters.

The fifteen stories include authors from Australia, Malaysia, South Africa, the Netherlands, Canada, Britain and the USA. The reader encounters variations on the hitchhiker ('Without A Hitch' by Ian Whates), the horror of the 'hit-and-run' ('Always in Our Hearts' by Adam Nevill), and the struggle for meaning and identity as characters embark on a journey of self-discovery ('Peripateia' by Vandana Singh). These stories make contact with every conceivable aspect of the road from travelling through the afterlife (Zen Cho's 'Balik Kampung') to the physical construction of A-roads. Varied histories, cultures, and mythologies come together here to create a global and nuanced perspective on what it means to face and travel a road.

Philip Reeve's 'We Know Where We're Goin'' opens the anthology with the literal construction of a road. Reeve's experimental prose deals with the metaphor of the road as speaking of histories and destinations. This introductory story contends with personal exploration as well as physical roaming: 'I spent my whoal life helpin build it, I thought, it would be a proper pity not ter travel it, just once' (14). The travel in this story is layered as the exploration of the road articulates a need to explore cultural and political motivations of road laboring: 'Ant you stopped yet ter ask yourself what your glorious Road is fer, nor where tis goin?' (19). Of note is 'The Widow' by Rio Youers which questions the nature of road accidents. The widow's assertion that 'Thornbury

Road had claimed eleven lives' examines the nature of murder and offers a psychological thriller of one woman's act to avenge the 'claimed' dead (141). Sophia McDougall builds on her story 'Mailer Daemon' (2012) with the prequel 'Through Wylmere Woods' which explores many interpretations of the theme of the road through self-discovery, gender, sexuality and belief structures. These revelations and struggles coincide with the construction of an A-road and the development of the information superhighway.

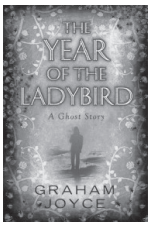
Although Oliver has selected stories which act as an exploration of self, by physically traversing geographic boundaries and bodily journeying over tracks, sidewalks, dirt paths, motorways and wilderness, many of the stories feature striking landscapes and the physical crossing of the land. The road is often represented as sentient pathways which are not passive, but instead steer us towards specific destinations, rendering the traveler and reader as metaphorical 'hitch-hikers'; 'the track ha[s] a mind', we are warned by Jay Caselberg in 'The Track' (103). True to Oliver's fondness for the dystopian and horrific, some stories feature the uncanniness of the unexpected path, unmade road and the dirt track, dealing with desolation and fearsome passage into dangerous and hidden worlds. However, writers such as Whates, Rochita Loenen-Ruiz and Helen Marshall note that often it is strangers and travelling companions who problematize a journey. Beware the road and those who travel it, we are often warned!

Through its exploration of fantastical pathways mirrored by personal enlightenment and self-discovery, *End of the Road* evidences our unconscious drives and fears. Stories by Youers, S.L. Grey ('Bingo') and Paul Meloy ('Driver Error') subvert boundaries of real and unreal, sabotaging the very nature of travel and journey by rendering the protagonist static, in conflict with physical and transcendent boundaries. Psychologists Daniel and Jason Freeman's description of paranoia as a 'twenty-first century fear' is true of the stories included here. Paths, journeys and destinations turn dystopian, with external influences acting upon travelers in bizarre and wicked ways.

The anthology, however, does not merely document the horrific in a gratuitous and sensationalist way. The theme of the road also contains ideas of escapism and betterment through experience. Further, the rich and exotic portrayals of mysterious geographies invoke feelings of the sublime as these journeys address our anxieties and desires. *End of the Road* joins a wealth of volumes detailing the profound impact of journeys. The reader may be reminded of Chaucer, of Oedipus' fateful encounter, and of modern horrors such as *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977; 2006). The reader may also recall the historical significance of roads such as religious pilgrimages and even popular holiday routes such as America's Route 66. In many ways, Oliver's selection modernizes and repackages many traditional perspectives of road travel: the horrific event, the fateful journey, the far shore and the fantastical

encounter. For example, Anil Menon's 'The Cure' channels *The Canterbury Tales*, Caselberg revisits Route 66, Meloy deals with the notion of fate, and Benjanun Sriduangkaew's 'Fade to Gold' examines exotic locations and esoteric mythology.

Anthologies can be a difficult sell, as Oliver himself points out. As he acknowledges in his introduction, the collection plays on that age-old adage 'it's the journey that counts': 'In literature, the road story is a central part of fantasy, the journey itself often making up the better part of the tale' (7). Whether the journey Oliver presents his readers with is a success is uncertain. As intriguing as this publication is, *End of the Road* is not his strongest collection. Other anthologies by Oliver, such as *End of the Line* (2010) and *House of Fear* (2011), are more cohesive, with tighter remits which focus the content and guide the reader more fluidly. *End of the Road*, while boasting diversity, loses coherence at times through loose interpretations of the central theme. Those interested in studying concepts of 'pathways' and 'journey' may find this collecting intriguing; however, the casual reader may become frustrated at the wildly veering subject matter. *End of the Road* is a difficult journey for the reader with unpredictable twists and turns with no clear destination in mind – but maybe that is the point.



Graham Joyce, *The Year of the Ladybird: A Ghost Story* (Gollancz, 2013, 266pp, £12.99)

Reviewed by Andrew Hedgecock

I have vivid memories of the endless, searing summer of 1976: reading Michael Moorcock's *The Final Programme* on a deckchair in the garden, playing Steve Miller's *Fly Like an Eagle* full blast until the neighbours banged on the wall, buying my first underage pint of bitter (25p) in the Magdalen in Doncaster marketplace and failing my maths O Level. I have no memory at all of the plague of ladybirds from which Graham Joyce's novel takes its title, but he renders everything else about those five months in such vivid detail I have no doubt whatsoever about his powers of recall.

Even if *The Year of the Ladybird* was merely a sharp and vibrant nostalgia trip it would be well worth reading, simply for the peerless clarity and conversational wit of the narrator's reminiscences. But there's more to the story than that: it is an affecting collision of the meticulously mimetic and the miraculous. It is also a rigorous inquest into the cultural and political dark side

of a decade that had a formative impact on the way we live now.

By the mid-1970s the nascent and fragile spirit of the late 1960s, based on creativity, generosity and optimism, had been replaced by anxiety, suspicion and a bogus sense of historical identity. There had been pub bombings on the British mainland, the National Front was at the height of its influence and there were, even at the time, rumours of a planned military coup. It is against this background that undergraduate student David Barwise takes a job as a Greencoat at a Skegness holiday camp, in spite of serious opposition from his mum and stepfather, and has a summer of '76 far more eventful than my own.

Joyce deftly captures the messy flux and tacky magnificence of holiday camp entertainment – donkey derby, bathing belle parade, sandcastle competition, bingo, whist drives and cigarette promotion events with women in hotpants. He demonstrates an obvious relish for human idiosyncrasy and foible with a richly drawn range of characters: Luca Valletti, an Italian tenor crooning MoR 'standards' but retaining a sense of commitment to his craft; the thuggish Colin who slips David a few quid to monitor his wife, the fearful and damaged Terri, a cleaner with a beautiful singing voice; the magician Abdul-Shazam, aka seasoned camp entertainer Tony; Madam Rosa the fortune teller; and the Mancunian motor-mouth Nobby, a habitual scam artist who, when he isn't missing from the camp, is perpetually wreathed in cigarette smoke. And last but not least there's David himself: an intelligent young man with a tendency to act first, think afterwards and get himself mired in some very tricky situations.

David's crises form a series of spectacular set-pieces in which tragedy and comedy collide. He naively accepts Tony's invitation to 'meet some interesting people' and finds himself as the only longhaired man in open-toed sandals at a National Front meeting: out of a well-developed sense of self-preservation he buys a copy of *Spearhead* magazine from skinheads in bomber jackets and high-laced Doc Martens. Later in the narrative, following one of a series of sexual encounters with Terri, David finds himself hiding from the rampaging and cuckolded Colin on the roof of the camp's theatre. David's life is further complicated by falling for Nikki, a charming, smart and beautiful dual-heritage dancer from Yorkshire. David's encounter with the fascists does not play well with Nikki.

Then there's the haunting: the strange vision of a glass-eyed child and a man in an electric blue suit – a figure with a face of smoke and a rope coiled over his shoulder. David sees this eerie pair while judging a sandcastle competition, during a lone stroll on a beach and while hiding from Colin on the theatre roof. He also sees them from the pier during a walk with Nikki. Whether they appear at night or in broad daylight, whether David is alone or in a public space, no one but him sees the unsettling apparition. It is never entirely resolved whether the ghosts are truly present or if they have been

synthesized in David's imagination: I came to my own conclusion on the basis of the timing and impact of their intervention in David's life. Other readers may come to a different conclusion on the basis of the same evidence. Like earlier novels such as *The Stormwatcher* (1997), *The Year of the Ladybird* is concerned with liminal experience rather than overt encounters with the supernatural. To classify experiences as exclusively physical, psychological or supernatural is to place an excessive limit on the way we apprehend the world. Events that take place in debatable territories can be valuable and life-defining: as is the case for David.

The book has flavours of Robert Aickman, *Candide*, Whitehall farce and a coming of age story. It is constructed from apparently dissonant elements but, against the odds in a comparatively terse novel, Joyce achieves stylistic integrity and symbolic unity. David is a likeable but difficult narrator. The ambiguities inherent in his story do not arise from self-deception, the traditional mechanism for generating narrative opacity, so much as his profound honesty in revealing his flaws, in terms of judgment and morality. This is a thoroughly convincing and compelling portrayal of the journey from teenager to adult.

The plausibility and conviction of the narrative is enhanced by Joyce's reliable eye for the telling detail. A key insight into David's character is the revelation that his musical heroes are innovators, rebels and risk-takers: Jimi Hendrix and the Velvet Underground. By 1976, of course, Hendrix was dead and the VU had split: in a way David is a young man slightly out of his time. An important aspect of the story is his ability to take consolation from the idea that, with effort, he can contribute to the creation of a more positive future. *The Year of the Ladybird* offers a subtle and compelling insight into a dangerous corner in British social and political history, an unsettling encounter with the numinous and a deeply satisfying emotional journey. It is an impressive addition to the oeuvre of one of our most original, morally engaged and entertaining writers.

Simon Ings, *Wolves* (Gollancz, 2013, 304pp, £14.99)

Reviewed by Will Slocombe (University of Liverpool)

Wolves is Ings' eighth novel, but it is the one that might propel him, finally, into the recognition his writing deserves. It is difficult to describe, because the density of its atmosphere means that it is not so much the situation and plot that one recalls after reading it, but its mood. Fragmentation, dissolution,

and loss might work as descriptors of the novel, but then they don't really do justice to the *sensation* of reading it. Perhaps the most apt definition is one that, in the end, only really makes sense when you've read it: 'immersively oblique'.

Like Ballard at his best (to whom Ings has been compared), *Wolves* is a gloriously dystopian, emotionally resonant, languorously described view of what it means to live in a world where time and technology collide:

> The mind erases old geographies. Maps paste themselves over each other constantly, indelibly. But no one told the city.
>
> It picks and scratches at itself like an animal kept in too small a cage, pining for its lost reflection. It obsesses over its own archaeology. In the shade of parking garages and electricity substations, stubs of classical brickwork, lacquered with a weatherproof resin, poke up through gravel beds and well-tended lawns. New buildings clad apologetically in glass contort themselves around the city's ancient leavings. (83)

Set between the city's malls, decaying industrial edifices, and a deserted coastline, the landscapes of *Wolves* are drowning, literally and symbolically. Movement is everywhere, but an atmosphere of constraint and collapse holds it in check.

As a result, *Wolves* has something of the flavour of a watery 'simulation' (à la Baudrillard). The relevance of simulation becomes more apparent as the novel progresses, for augmented reality (AR) forms part of the technological milieu of the novel and, moreover, bleeds into its form, which is a slow stratification of emotional and historical sediment. Like AR, Ings' prose acts as a filter through which the world, not so far removed from our own in some ways, becomes distorted, drenched in pathos, always at the edge of a quiet apocalypse. Conrad, the protagonist, is obsessed with vision and ways of seeing the world and, through his eyes, the reader comes to inhabit a peculiar hinterland in which nothing is quite what it seems. AR is significant to the novel because Ings foregrounds not only what AR can bring to consumer society, but also what it takes away, in which the 'augmentation' of reality is more akin to 'occlusion'. As Conrad realizes towards the end of the novel:

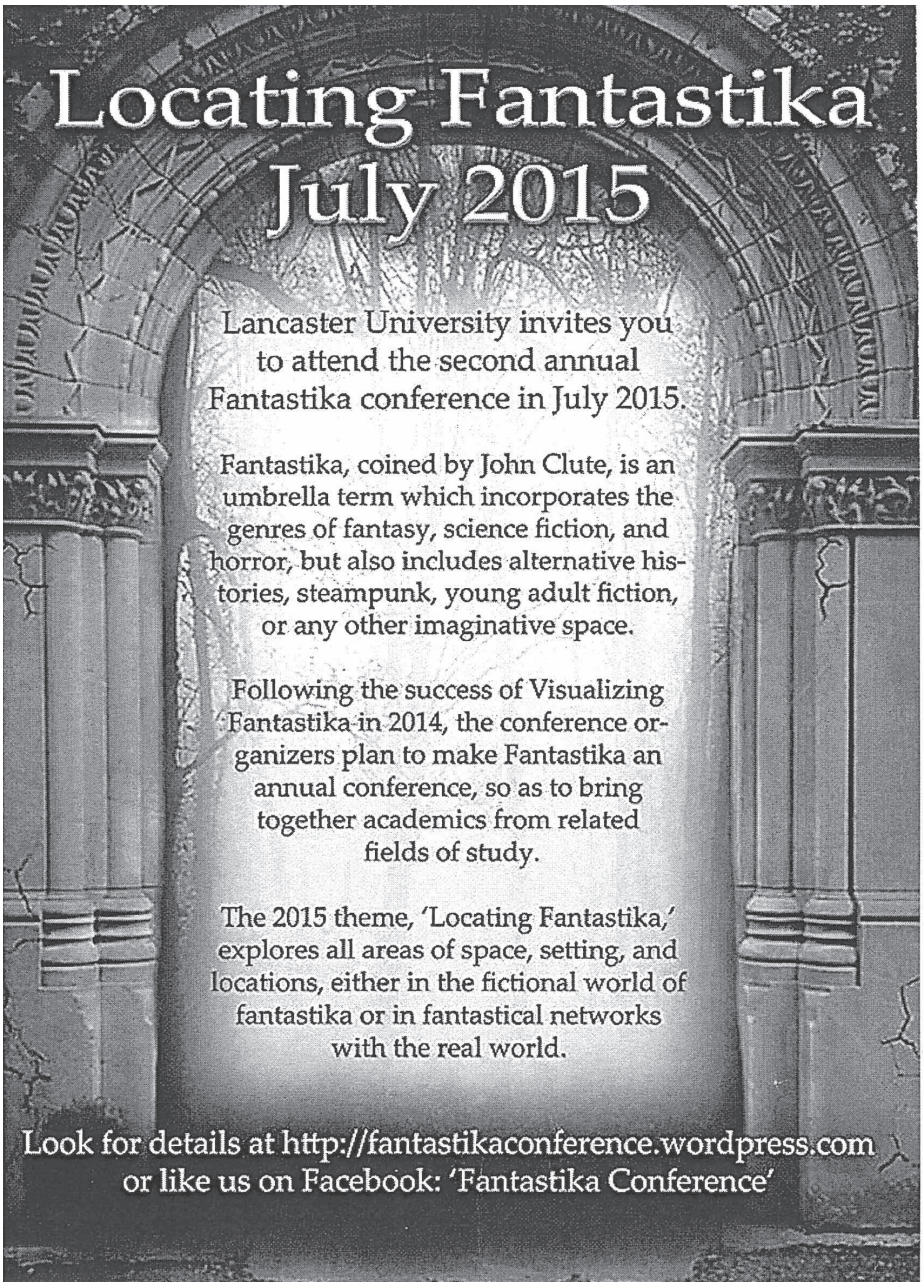
> There is a difference between a product, something you have to go out and find, and a utility, something sewn in, something so integral to you that you barely notice it unless it goes wrong. AR can only ever work as a utility. […] If AR became what it always had to become: a kind of Muzak, smoothing and glamorising the real. (198)

AR only works if it is replaces reality; these are not glosses and annotations to the world but a fully-fledged revision of it where nothing appears to be true

outside of our apprehension and perceptions of it. Slick marketing campaigns, apocalyptic games within shopping centres, all come to hide the fact that the 'truth', if it is not too old-fashioned to use such a term, is what you see.

But Ings is not satisfied with merely accepting this fact, or being curmudgeonly, or even with using AR as some kind of crass metaphor. Rather, memory, imagination and emotional baggage take on their own special meanings when placed within this context. Ings has stated that *Wolves* arose from an argument, although that only forms one small scene of the book and is in itself somewhat tangential in terms of explicating it. The novel is perhaps equally informed by Ings' non-fiction work, *The Eye* (2007), and the growing sense that what we see is determined by what's inside us or projected onto us as much as what is 'out there' in the world. Conrad's father works to repair the sight of soldiers wounded by battlefield lasers; Conrad's mother is a manic-depressive who, without giving too much away, disappears; Conrad's friend and sometime lover, Michel, is obsessed by photography and the apocalypse, maybe harking back to the way his father was killed. Each of these characters, and the others besides, are weighted down by, maybe even mired within, the past. Although they try to carry on and to move into the future, they don't seem entirely sure that they want to get there.

Wolves, then, is an example of what is best about sf writing: grounded in the contemporary but not beholden to it, full of ideas but not of itself, allegorical without being belligerently so. It is a book that balances acute observation of the personal and the public with story (no info dumps here!), and leaves the reader with the abiding feeling that the wolves are out there, but that we can never be sure who they are or when they're coming to blow our house down. Disconcerting, yes, but exuberantly so.


Locating Fantastika
July 2015
Lancaster University invites you to attend the second annual Fantastika conference in July 2015.
Fantastika, coined by John Clute, is an umbrella term which incorporates the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, but also includes alternative histories, steampunk, young adult fiction, or any other imaginative space.
Following the success of Visualizing Fantastika in 2014, the conference organizers plan to make Fantastika an annual conference, so as to bring together academics from related fields of study.
The 2015 theme, 'Locating Fantastika,' explores all areas of space, setting, and locations, either in the fictional world of fantastika or in fantastical networks with the real world.
Look for details at http://fantastikaconference.wordpress.com
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George A. Gonzalez explores US military policy in *Star Trek*
Samantha Kountz analyses the representation of immigration in post-war sf cinema
Erica Moore evaluates the post-Darwinism of J.G. Ballard's *Crash*
Nick Hubble reflects on the legacy of *2000 AD*
Iain M. Banks and Kim Stanley Robinson in conversation on the subject of utopia
Conference reports by Paul Kincaid, Paul March-Russell and Robin Anne Reid

In addition, there are reviews by:

Jeremy Brett, Molly Cobb, Leimar Garcia-Siino, Lincoln Geraghty, Grace Halden, Andrew Hedgecock, Anna McFarlane, Joe Norman, Andy Sawyer, Will Slocombe, Tom Sykes and Michelle K. Yost

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Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer, David Brittain, Stefan Ekman, Simon Ings, Graham Joyce, Paul McAuley, Howard E. McCurdy, Jonathan Oliver, Christopher Sims, Graham Sleight, David C. Smith, and Thomas Van Parys and I.Q. Hunter

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