



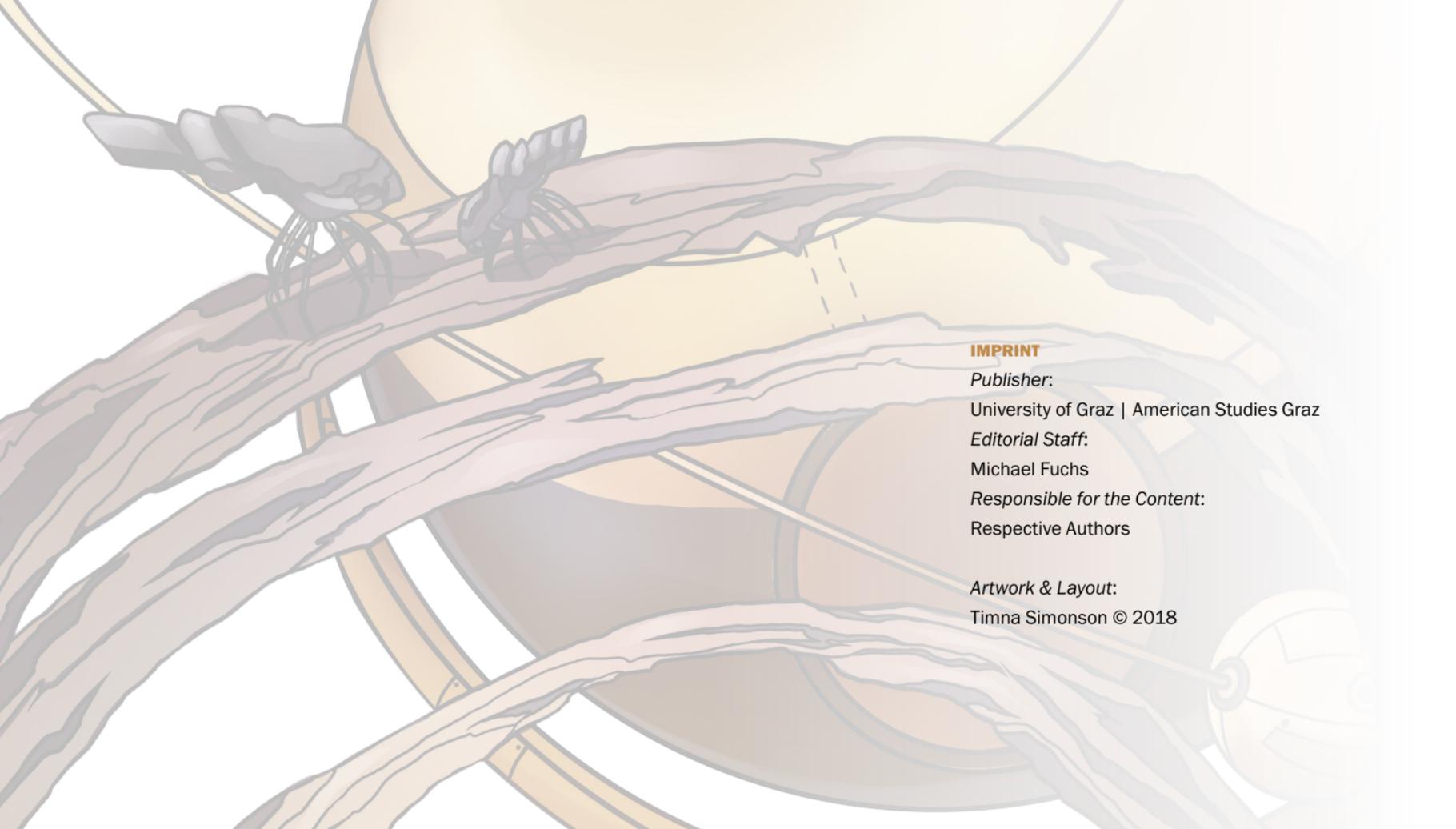
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December 6–8, 2018  
University of Graz, Austria  
[www.worlding-sf.com](http://www.worlding-sf.com)

# WORLDING BUILDING, INHABITING, AND UNDERSTANDING SF UNIVERSES

# SF



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Michael Fuchs

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Respective Authors

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## WORLDDING SF

*Everything is (in) a world.*

“To be a work [of art] means: to set up a world,” Martin Heidegger remarked in his 1950 essay “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Some four decades later, Carl Malmgren suggested that “the generic distinctiveness of sf lies not in its story but in its world.” Both Malmgren and Heidegger have a point—fiction, and more specifically science fiction, is more interested in creating plausible worlds than telling convincing stories. Indeed, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay has more recently remarked that world-building “determine[s] the relationships in the narrative, even when the action is full of dramatic movement.” Accordingly, everything is (happening) in a world; a (more or

less) coherent and cohesive world.

In the aforementioned essay “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger stresses that “[w]orld is not a mere collection of the things [...] that are present at hand. Neither is world a merely imaginary framework.” “*Worlds world*,” he concludes, meaning that we are subject to worlding “as long as the paths of birth and death [...] keep us transported into being” (italics in original). Gayatri Spivak has “vulgariz[ed ...]” Heidegger’s notion of “worlding,” suggesting that the “worlding” of any text carries ideological baggage—political messages that simultaneously naturalize specific ideas and seek to erase themselves. As a result, building worlds seems to necessitate the creation of hierarchies, which lead to processes of oppression and marginalization—from the co-

lonial subtexts of canonical texts Spivak uncovered and the feminist sf of Ursula K. Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and Octavia Butler to afrofuturism and visions of the future in which Earth liberates itself from human dominance.

In about 100 presentations by scholars from more than 25 countries, the conference “Worlding SF: Building, Inhabiting, and Understanding Science Fiction Universes” seeks to explore world-building, processes and practices of being in fictional worlds (both from the characters’ and readers’/viewers’/players’/fans’ points of view), and the seemingly naturalized subtextual messages these fantastic visions communicate (or sometimes even self-consciously address).

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## DECEMBER 6, 2018

11 a.m.:	<i>Opening Ceremony</i>
12–1.30 p.m.:	Keynote Mark Bould
1.30–2.30 p.m.:	<i>Warm Buffet</i>
3–4.30 p.m.:	Panels A1–A4
4.30–5.30 p.m.:	<i>Break</i>
5.30–7 p.m.:	Panels B1–B4
7.30 p.m.:	Reception

## DECEMBER 7, 2018

9.15–11.15 a.m.:	Panels C1–C4
11.15–11.45 a.m.:	<i>Break</i>
11.45 a.m.–1.15 p.m.:	Panels D1–D5
1.15–3 p.m.:	<i>Break</i>
3–4.30 p.m.:	Panels E1–E4
4.30–5 p.m.:	<i>Break</i>
5–6.30 p.m.:	Keynote Cheryl Morgan
7 p.m.:	Film Screening

## DECEMBER 8, 2018

9–11 a.m.:	Panels F1–F5
11–11.30 a.m.:	<i>Break</i>
11.30 a.m.–1 p.m.:	Keynote Gerry Canavan
1–1.30 p.m.:	<i>Break</i>
1.30–3 p.m.:	Special Presentation Austrian Space Forum
3–3.30 p.m.:	<i>Break</i>
3.30–5 p.m.:	Panels G1–G5
5.15 p.m.:	Conference Closing
6 p.m.:	Farewell Dinner

# PANELS A

## **A1: FRANCHISING (SR34.D2)**

Chair: Paweł Frelik

Dan Hassler-Forest

“Transmedia Worldbuilding and Industrial Convergence in the Age of Global Capitalism”

Stephen Joyce

“Rights Regimes and Franchise Guardians”

Jonatan Jalle Steller

“Building a Common Universe: Narrative, Commercial, and Ideological Strategies in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*”

## **A2: WORLDBUILDING BEYOND STORYTELLING (SR34.K1)**

Chair: Sarah Gawronski

Christina M. Heinen

“Music of Black Holes and Sounds from Space: LIGO Sonification and Their Creative Side Effects”

Jonathan Shipley

“World Building: The Devils is in the Details”

Maximiliano Jiménez

“‘Gratify the desires of the people who visit your world’: Immersion and Fictionality in *Westworld*”

## **A3: PERFORMING WORLDS (SR24.K2)**

Chair: Peter Goggin

Sanja Vodovnik

“Have AI—Will Perform”

Karin Lingnau

“Science Fiction and (Ecological) Reality: The Use of Game Engines as an Artistic Tool in the Construction of Extrapolated Realities”

Erin Horáková

“IV, IV \$, V”

## **A4: COHERENCE AND DE-COHERENCE (SR24.K3)**

Chair: Damian Podlesny

Mladen Jakovljevic & Milan M. Cirkovic

“De/Coherence in Philip K. Dick’s *Ubik* and *The Man in the High Castle*”

Manuela Neuwirth

“Beam me into Being? *Star Trek*’s Nova of (Dis)Appearance and/as the Existence and Essence of a Cohesive Multiverse”

Michel Diester

“World Transaction in *Black Mirror*”

## PANELS B

### **B1: STAR TREK I: DISCOVERY (SR34.D2)**

Chair: Sabrina Mittermeier

Jennifer Volkmer

“Building the Building Blocks of Today: How Zeitgeist Influences *Star Trek*’s Vision(s) of the Future”

Mareike Spychala

“Mother of the Fatherland: Gender, Sexuality, and the Mirror Universe in *TOS* and *DSC*”

Sabrina Mittermeier

“Captain’s Log: Experiencing *Star Trek*’s Universe from the Captains’ Point of View”

### **B2: URSULA K. LEGUIN (SR34.K1)**

Chair: Francis Gene-Row

Magdalena Hangel

“The Construction of Sexualized Violence and Its Representation in the Work of Ursula K. LeGuin”

Elizabeth Shipley

“Worlding Gender in Ursula K. LeGuin and Ann Leckie”

Amy Butt

“As Plain as Spilt Salt: The City as Social Structure in *The Dispossessed*”

### **B3: SF FROM THE FORMER EASTERN BLOC I (SR24.K2)**

Chair: Karolina Lebek

Anna Warso

“Worlding Resistance: The Woman’s Place and the Oppressive State”

Damian Podlesny:

“Politics and Science Fiction: The Political Worlds of Stanislaw Lem and Philip K. Dick”

### **B4: SEX AND GENDER (SR24.K3)**

Chair: Sylvia Spruck Wrigley

Sarah Gawronski

“‘There are always two sides, aren’t there?’ The Lines That Divide Us”

Jennifer Brown

“Queering Human and Alien Cultures in the *Wayfarer* Universe”

Christian Ludwig

“‘What are little boys made of?’ Representations of Sex and Gender Beyond the Binary in the *Star Trek* Universe and Their Potential for the EFL Classroom”

# PANELS C

## **C1: MOVEMENT IS KEY (SR34.K1)**

Chair: Jennifer Brown

Paweł Frelik

“Lost in Space: Vast Game Worlds and Spatial Science Fictions”

Dietmar Meinel

“Running a Neoliberal World: Movement in Space and Corporate Dystopia in Mirror’s Edge Catalyst”

Ria Narai

“Boldly Going: Traveling to Fictional Worlds”

Paweł Pyrka

“Critical Rules: Worldbuilding, Character Immersion, and Storytelling that Matters in Tabletop Roleplaying Games in the Digital Age”

## **C2: WORDS AND WORLDS (SR34.D2)**

Chair: Sean Guynes-Vishniac

Agnes Aminot

“Words of After: Rebuilding the World through Language and History”

Nadiia Vilkhovchenko

“The Semantic Peculiarities of Special Vocabulary Used in Science Fiction”

Jerry Määttä

“Minimalist Worldbuilding and SF Poetry: The Neologisms, Names, and Allusions of Harry Martinson’s *Aniara*”

Katherine Bishop

“Liminal Letters: Corresponding Worlds”

## **C3: BETWEEN SCARCITY AND ABUNDANCE I (SR34.04)**

Chair: Cheryl Morgan

Erin Horáková

“The Future, Wouldn’t That Be Nice?”

Pascal Lemaire

“Steampunking Rome: Economics and Technology in Alternate History—The Case of the Roman Empire”

Aurelie Villers

“How the World of Alastair Reynolds’ Revelation Space Is Being Built: Revealing What the Story Does Not Say”

Lars Schmeink

“A Future of Extremism: Cyberpunk’s Commodification of Bodies”

## **C4: ROGUES ONE (SR34.K3)**

Chair: Elisabeth Schneider

Wojciech Klepuszewski

“Boojly, Bandy, and Red Biddy: The Future of Drink in Kingsley Amis’ Fiction” ([Skype](#))

Iana Gagarina

“Worlding Food: The Familiar and the Strange”

Janin Tscheschel

“A World Within Us: Denis Villeneuve’s Arrival Opens an Outer Space of New Experience”

Sarah K. Stanley

“Building the Multiverse in Paris and Berlin, 1920–2500”

# PANELS D

## D1: ROGUES TWO (SR34.D2)

Chair: Leimar Garcia-Siino

Mojca Kregel

"The Periphery of the Future; or, the Future of Periphery: William Gibson's *The Peripheral*"

Roxanne Chartrand & Pascale Thériault

"Beyond Fiction: Performing the Videoludic Cyberqueer Identity"

Norbert Gyuris

"Semiotic Concepts of Gravity: Simulation vs. Representation in *Upside Down*"

## D2: BEYOND PETRO-MODERNITY I (SR34.K1)

Chair: Graeme Macdonald

Rhys Williams

"Making Worlds for the End of the World"

Amy Butt

"The Fabric of the City: Scarcity and Sustainability"

Francis Gene-Rowe

"Just How Can We Tell Alternatives to Petroreality? *Kaladesh*: An Instructive Failure"

## D3: SF FROM THE FORMER EASTERN BLOC II (SR34.04)

Chair: Sylvia Spruck Wrigley

Natalia Chumarova

"Ivan Efremov's Fictional World as an Example of the Soviet Science-Fictional Imagination" ([Skype](#))

Chris Hall

"Tarkovsky's *Solaris*: Settling the Otherworldly Self"

Artem Zubov

"Constructing the Cultural Imaginary: Factory Workers Reading Science Fiction in Late Imperial Russia"

## D4: SF BECOMES REAL(ITY) (SR34.K3)

Chair: Paul Graham Raven

Rhodri Davies

"Hard Science Fiction Faith: SF in Postwar New Religious Movements"

Miranda Iossifidis

"Uses of SF: Everyday Readers, Ambiguous Hopefulness, and Environmental Justice"

Julia Grillmayr

"Science/Fiction—the Most Prolific Oxymoron: Contemporary SF Literature and Scenario Writing"

## PANELS D

### D5: INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGIES (SR34.K2)

Chair: Kristina Baudemann

John Rieder

“The War of the Worlds in Albert  
Wendt’s *Adventures of Vela*”

Ania Paluch

“Métis Futurism: Rosalie Favell and  
Métis in Space Set their Phasers  
to Decolonize the Science Fiction  
Universe”

Kristina Baudemann

“(Un)Worlding Colonialism: Indige-  
nous Futurisms and the Unsettling  
of SF in Virtual Reality”

### E1: GREENING SF (SR34.K3)

Chair: Pawel Frelik

Beata Gubacsi

“Anxieties of Annihilation and  
HumAnimal Futures in Jeff Vander-  
Meer’s *Worldbuilding*”

Sarah Lohmann

“A Utopia Without Us: Ecofemi-  
nism, the Anthropocene, and the  
Paradox of the Non-Human Utopia”

Patrycja Sokołowska

“I Can Feel a Great Age Ending: An  
Ecocritical Reading of the *Dishon-  
ored Series*”

### E2: UTOPIAN WORLDS (SR34.04)

Chair: Sean Guynes-Vishniac

Iren Boyarkina

“The New Worlds in the Science  
Fiction Novels of Wells, Tolstoy,  
and Bulgakov”

Evelyn Danis

“The Science-Fictional Enclave:  
*Worldbuilding and Utopia*”

Leimar Garcia-Siino

“Building Utopia: Examining *Star  
Trek’s Utopia* through Its Forms of  
Entertainment”

## PANELS E

### E3: IMAGINING NON-BINARY FUTURES (SR34.K2)

Chair: Simon Whybrew

Indiana Seresin

“Intimacy, Light, and *Worldbuild-  
ing: Encounters in Samuel R. Dela-  
ny’s The Motion of Light in Water*”

Simon Whybrew

“Transitioning to the Future? Af-  
fects of Trans-Becoming in Con-  
temporary SF Short Stories”

Elisabeth Schneider

“A Queering That Is None: Intersex-  
uality in Robert A. Heinlein’s ‘All  
You Zombies—’”

## PANELS E

### E4: ONTOLOGIES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES I (SR34.D2)

Chair: Dietmar Meinel

Elena-Brindusa Nicolaescu  
“World(ing) Transitions in Haruki Murakami’s *1Q84* and Boualem Sansal’s *2084: The End of the World*” (Skype)

Alexander Popov & Vladimir Poleganov  
“How Readers World: The Poetics of Ontology of World Creation as Negotiation”

Karolina Lebek  
“Sound as a Principle of World-building in Anna Smaill’s Novel *The Chimes*”

### F1: AFROFUTURISM (SR34.D2)

Chair: Katherine Bishop

Andrew Shepard  
“The History of Lions: Charles Saunders’ *Imaro* and the Revisionist Lost Race” (Skype)

M. Giulia Fabi  
“Worlding Plantations with Armies of Slaves: Frederick Douglass’ and S. R. Delany’s Speculative Fictions”

Hugh O’Connell  
“The Dialectics of African-Futurism between SF Worldbuilding and Neo-liberal Development”

Sean Guynes-Vishniac  
“Afrofuturism’s Specter: Alternate History, Racial Capitalism, and Nisi Shawl’s *Everfair*”

### F2: REGENERATIVE PLAY (SR34.K2)

Chair: Gerald Farca

Joost Raessens  
“*Collapsus*; Or, How to Make Players become Ecological Citizens”

Paweł Frelik  
“Regenerative Modding”

Gerald Farca  
“Building a Sustainable Future in Outer Space: *Mass Effect: Andromeda* as Critical Ecotopia”

Alexander Lehner  
“Regenerative Play and Empathy: *Prey* as an Example of—and Reflection on—the Aesthetic Potential of Video Games”

## PANELS F

### F3: HUMANS AND/AS ARTIFICIAL CREATURES (SR34.04)

Chair: Damian Podlesny

Gwenethalyn Engélibert  
“They don’t work as good as people”: Robots and Humans in Richard Matheson’s Short Stories”

Eftychia Misailidou  
“Rejecting Reality: What the Non-human Hosts of *Westworld* Teach Us about the Eternal Quest for Self-Discovery” (Skype)

Lisa Meinecke  
“My Own Humanity: (Post)Humanist Worldings in the *Star Trek* Universe”

## PANELS F

### **F4: POST-/TRANS-/NONHUMAN WORLDS (SR34.K1)**

Chair: Christian Ludwig

Aparajita Nanda

“Transnational Worldbuilding: Creolized Futures in Octavia Butler’s *Lilith’s Blood*”

Öznur Cengiz

“The Conflict between Technology and Oppression: Hillary Jordan’s *When She Woke*”

Miriam Köberl

“Crossing the Boundary: Between the Human and the Alien in Sid Meier’s *Alpha Centauri*”

Pelin Kümbet

“Transhumanist Worldbuilding in Richard Morgan’s *Altered Carbon*”

### **F5: ROGUES THREE (SR34.K3)**

Chair: Mareike Spychala

Gerold Haynaly

“*Perry Rhodan*: The Most Successful Science Fiction Book Series Ever Written”

Loredana Mihani

“That ‘most severe evil’: The Quest for Knowledge at the Peril of Social Estrangement in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*”

Victor Kennedy

“The Icons of Science Fiction as Depicted in Animated Cartoons”

### **G1: STAR TREK II: BEFORE DISCOVERY (SR34.04)**

Chair: Sabrina Mittermeier

E. Leigh McKagen

“Imperial Worlding: Adventure Narratives, Empire, and Brave New Worlds in *Star Trek: Voyager*”

Ricarda Krenn

“Everybody Comes to Quark’s: Looking at *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* through the Lens of Casablanca”

Agnieszka Urbanczyk

“World Re-Building: Eschatological Thought in the Science Fiction Genre as Exemplified by *Star Trek*”

## PANELS G

### **G2: BEYOND PETRO-MODERNITY II (SR34.D2)**

Chair: Francis Gene-Rowe

Paul Graham Raven & Johannes Stripple

“‘Let’s put fossil fuels behind us’: Toward the Instrumentalization of Science Fiction as a Sandbox for Social Science”

Graeme Macdonald

“Monsters in the Forecourt: SF’s Gas Stations as Future Energy-scapes”

Tom Lubek

“Imagining Beyond Petro-Cultural Angst: World-Ecological Consciousness in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*” ([Skype](#))

## PANELS G

### **G3: AGE AND AGING (SR34.K2)**

Chair: Roberta Maierhofer

Roberta Maierhofer

“The Real and the Imagined: Speculations on Age and Aging as a Human Condition”

Katie Stone

“Through the Eyes of a Child: Novelty and Age in Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*”

Sylvia Spruck Wrigley

“Pushing Grandma Out of the Airlock: The Representation of Older Women in Science Fiction”

### **G4: ONTOLOGIES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES II (SR34.K1)**

Chair: Katherine Bishop

Grant Dempsey

“Science Fiction and (Extra)Naturalism: Notes on the Ontological Complexity of SF and Its Worlds”

Chris Pak

“Modeling What Could Be Science Fiction’s Environmental Futures”

Peter Goggin

“Mars, Power, Place, and the Building and Unbuilding of Worlds”

### **G5: FROM THE MIDDLE TO THE FAR EAST (SR34.K3)**

Chair: Manuela Neuwirth

Loic Aloisio

“Worlding Chinese SF: Science Fiction Universes as a Mirror of a Society Developing at Breakneck Speed”

Agnieszka Podruczna

“Sites of Contamination, Sites of Containment: Liminal Spaces and Practices of Resistance in Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*”

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay

“The Atemporal Future in Early Kalpavigyan”

# THE GREAT CLOMPING FOOT OF NERDISM STAMPING ON THE HUMAN FACE—FOREVER: WORLDBUILDING AND CONTRADICTION

December 6, 2018 | 12 noon

Meerscheinschlössl (Mozartgasse 3)

Mark J.P. Wolf's symptomatically encyclopedic, anatomizing but largely pre-critical *Building Imaginary Worlds* (2012) attempts to normalize one particular mode of building, and of consuming, imaginary worlds—a mode that suits Disney's tyranny over our cinema screens, ancillary media, and themed merchandizing. Taking M. John Harrison's notorious provocation about worldbuilding and China Miéville's unseemly enthusiasm for J. R. R. Tolkien's *Watcher* in the

Water as its starting points, this paper will begin to explore the importance of contradiction to the worlds, fictional and otherwise, that we build.



**MARK BOULD**  
**UNIVERSITY OF THE**  
**WEST OF ENGLAND**

## **SYSTEMS OF SEX AND GENDER**

December 7, 2018 | 5 p.m.  
HS11.01 (Heinrichstraße 36)

Science Fiction has created many intelligent alien species, but all too often these are simple variations on the human pattern. In particular, they tend to follow the binary gender structure and heterosexual relationship pattern that we are taught is “traditional” for humans, and which we often project onto the animal world and history. In practice, Earth’s creatures exhibit far more variation in reproductive strategies than we give them credit for, exhibit fewer or more than two genders, and seem perfectly relaxed about sa-

me-sex relationships. Even human history is far more varied than “traditional” Western culture allows. This talk will look at the glorious variety of animal and human approaches to sex and gender, and will be illustrated with examples taken from science fiction that manage to break away from the cisnormative and heteronormative pattern, including Ursula K. Le Guin’s Gethenians and Martha Wells’ Raksura.



**CHERYL MORGAN**  
**INDEPENDENT**  
**SCHOLAR**

## **WORLDING CRISIS, CRISISING WORLDS**

December 8, 2018 | 11.30 a.m.

AULA (Universitätsplatz 3)

As Kim Stanley Robinson has noted, climate change is not a crisis—not exactly. While “abrupt on geological scales,” even in its most dire, worst-case scenarios, climate change narratives will always entail “individual humans living variants of ordinary life ... daily life of a slightly different sort, and seldom more.” One of the greatest difficulties in contemporary science fiction is finding ways to depict the full magnitude of the ecological situation without resorting to the sort of unrealistic, apocalyptic break we see in such blockbuster films as *Pacific Rim* (2013) or *The*

*Day after Tomorrow* (2004).

How do we tell stories about a planet where every year is just a little bit worse than the last one, and just a little bit better than the next one, on and on and on down through the decades, until (somewhere in there) the future no longer looks anything like the past? How do we tell stories about a shift that is barely recognizable on the scale of the individual human life, but undeniable in the circuit from grandparents to grandchildren?

The strange temporality of climate change as a perpetual not-yet, always arriving but never arrived, haunts not only contemporary science fiction but all contemporary fiction; as Aaron Bady



**GERRY CANAVAN**  
**MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY**

has memorably noted, all fiction set in the present today is really about climate change—just usually starring characters who are in denial.

This keynote will thus take up perhaps the most urgent worldbuilding problem in science fiction today: How to depict a planetary crisis on a human timescale, how to make the sheer weirdness of our postnormal future available to the present without sensationalizing it or reducing it into a ludicrous cartoon?

# LOÏC ALOISIO

AIX-MARSEILLE UNIVERSITY

**PANEL G5: FROM THE  
MIDDLE TO THE FAR EAST  
SR34.K3, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

# AGNES AMINOT

CAEN UNIVERSITY

**PANEL C2: WORDS & WORLDS  
SR34.D2, DEC 7, 9.15AM**

## **WORLDING CHINESE SF: FICTION UNIVERSES AS A MIRROR OF A SOCIETY DEVELOPING AT BREAKNECK SPEED**

Since “it is almost impossible to write a work of fiction set in another world—be it some alien place or our own world in another time—which does not make some sort of statement about the writer’s own real world,” it is not surprising that the authors of the “new wave” of Chinese science fiction express their fears and worries about China’s current and future situation. To this end, many of their works are rooted in today’s Chinese society, and the worlds built by these authors are not so far from China’s reality.

This paper will analyze alternative worlds created by some new waves writers which reflect issues facing Chinese society today, such as pollution, overpopulation, sharp economic and social disparities, or political pressure. For this purpose, I shall focus on authors such as Han

Song who addresses issues about China’s unbridled development and political interference; authors such as Chen Qiufan who tackle urban life’s problems, unemployment and pollution issues; authors such as Hao Jingfang who are concerned about pressing issues such as overpopulation and inequalities; and authors such as Ma Boyong, whose *The City of Silence* is a bitter satire of China’s internet censorship.

## **WORDS OF AFTER: REBUILDING THE WORLD THROUGH LANGUAGE AND HISTORY IN RIDDLEY WALKER AND THE BOOK OF DAVE**

*Riddley Walker* (1980) is set 2,000 years in the future, after a global nuclear conflict destroyed the world. Riddley, the eponymous character, is a twelve-year-old boy in an Iron Age England who lives, as his entire clan, through the mythical renditions of historical events reinterpreted through *Punch and Judy* shows.

*The Book of Dave* (2006) is also a post-apocalyptic novel in which Dave Rudman—an enraged, pathetic London cabbie living in the early 2000s—writes a diary which becomes the cornerstone of a violent cult, 2,000 years in the future, in the remnants of a post-flood England. This “book of Dave” is the only glimpse of the past the new, postdiluvian world can get, together with misunderstood ruins from our civilization. These new Middle Ages/Dark Ages reproduce their ancient History—and Dave’s terribly dull present—as a mythical Golden Age.

Fantasies of building a new world order after the end of the old one pervade the postapocalyptic genre. However, in *Riddley Walker*, as in *The Book of Dave*, this notion of novelty is clear-

ly not considered as paramount: after the catastrophes (nuclear warfare and global flooding) which wiped out humanity almost entirely, the reader comes face to face with strange attempts to organize society according to forgotten and ill-adapted guidelines.

These two novels focus on the importance attributed to history, cults, and myths as the bedrock on which their world must be built. In a world shattered, fragmented by the nuclear bomb or obliterated by a giant flood, landmarks are gone. By focusing on the past and adorning it with new qualities, these novels question both the notion of history and belief and their use as a political delusion. I will explore this aspect, in particular, as this new world, filled with new

# KRISTINA BAUDEMANN

UNIVERSITY OF FLENSBURG

PANEL D5: INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGIES

SR34.K2, DEC 7, 11.45AM

challenges ranging from human mutation to geographical misconceptions and displacements, concentrates not on the possible creation of something new, but on the repetition of forgotten patterns in order to reach (in vain) the same grandeur as their ancestors.

One of the most prominent features of these two novels is the unusual language in which the stories are written. Both works display a mock version of what future English could be. The words and concepts used are mostly embedded in our modern popular culture. As such, the blatant discrepancy between this technological and modern language and its Iron Age or medieval use emphasizes how misfit this postapocalyptic world is.

Words portray the postapocalyptic world as a dangerous forgery of the old one. In my presentation, I will examine this generic characteristic and its impacts, both for our present and their future, as well as the individual paths of the main characters in their quest for meaning and their search for stable historical landmarks.

## **(UN)WORLDING COLONIALISM: INDIGENOUS FUTURISMS AND THE UNSETTLING OF SF IN VIRTUAL REALITY**

On the occasion of Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the ImagineNative Film & Media Arts Festival commissioned five Indigenous multimedia artists and filmmakers to create 2167, a virtual reality (VR) project that would portray the reality of In-

digenous people in Canada 150 years—or seven generations—in the future. When presented at the 2017 festival, two of these projections—Danis Goulet’s VR *The Hunt* and Postcommodity’s VR *Each Branch Determined*—turned out to be sf worlds; one more—Scott Benesiinaabandan’s VR *Blueberry Pie Under a Martian Sky*—might be interpreted as an abstract representation of the sf metaphor of time and interdimensional travel.

In my talk, I will argue that all artists, in order to create their Indigenous futurisms (i.e., their Indigenous-centered visions of a future world), had to “unsettle” sf first. Familiar themes and tropes such as the (post-)apocalypse, first contact, and even the future itself are rooted in colonial imaginaries, as John Rieder has convincingly argued in

his 2008 book *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*. This colonial imprint makes the creation of sf worlds especially difficult for Indigenous artists and other people of color who, African-Canadian and Taino/Arawak sf writer Nalo Hopkinson reminds us, are constantly “under suspicion of having internalized ... [their] colonization” for liking, and creating, sf. Virtual space has moreover been understood according to a Cartesian dualism of body/mind in Western scholarship—as Cree filmmaker Loretta Todd has already argued in the mid-1990s—and therefore seems to exclude the expression of Indigenous visions of space, time, and corporeality. Drawing on Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship on sf, post-colonialism, and future imaginaries,

# KATHERINE E. BISHOP

MIYAZAKI COLLEGE

PANEL C2: WORDS & WORLDS

SR34.D2, DEC 7, 9.15AM

I will trace how Goulet, Benesiinaabandan, and the artist collective Postcommodity transform familiar representations, dismantle colonial mechanisms, resort to traditional knowledges, and even subvert the medium of VR itself to create immersions that allow their users to experience Indigenous-centered sf worlds.

## LIMINAL LETTERS: CORRESPONDING WORLDS

When one looks to origins of the novel as we know it, the voluminous correspondence of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries often fill the spotlight. The then-efficient conveyors of news, life, and seductions were familiar to contemporaneous readers, corre-

spondents all, and provided a useful and verisimilar frame for authors from Samuel Richardson to Bram Stoker. In the second decade of the twenty-first century (your temporal coordinates, Dear Reader), the idea of sending a letter, a real honest-to-god letter with ink on paper delivered through physical travel routes and handled by genuine humans along the way, feels at first blush, if not unusually intimate, then egregiously romantic. Unnecessary, perhaps. Anachronistic, certainly. There are vastly faster (if less literal) ways to reach out and touch someone. And so the epistolary novel has fallen with postal stock. Is it any surprise, then, that in many speculations of the future, there is no stock at all? Paper is rarely illuminated as a means of

communication, letters rarely a mode (except, of course, for technologically retrograde, dystopian futures or e-communications). But epistles have not wholly died, in speculative literature or in life. Epistolarity in sf includes stardated captains' logs, holographic pleas for help, letters from the future, and even plant diaries. In this presentation I will focus on the latter in Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Diary of the Rose" (1976) and Sue Burke's *Semiosis* (2018).

Historically, epistolary novels have created bridges between the world of the text and that of the reader, exchange being the watchword of correspondence. Moreover, they have birthed spaces for writers, particularly women, often disregarded by their peers as valid authorial

agents, linking the private realms in which they were created to the public ones from which they were forbidden, forging new worlds. This presentation will consider the worldbuilding properties of speculative epistolary texts and ask how they maintain and play with the formal conventions of correspondence, rethinking pathways and materialities of communication. Drawing on narratology, ecocritical philosophies, and systems theories, I will discuss how epistolary texts inscribed by and inscribing ecological subjects open a dialectic space between human and nonhuman interlocutors, grafting the two, as philosopher Michael Marder might say, in the paused narrative time of Anthropocene era correspondence, and rebutting Heidegger's refusal of plants' worlding.

# IREN BOYARKINA

UNIVERSITY OF ROME

PANEL E2: UTOPIAN WORLDS

SR34.04, DEC 7, 3PM

## THE NEW WORLDS IN THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS BY WELLS, TOLSTOY, AND BULGAKOV

Science fiction is one of the few literary genres very closely concerned with the analysis and improvement of society. Any significant work of sf can be viewed as a kind of a research laboratory in which the important trends in the development of a society are studied and then extrapolated to an imaginary world for further analysis. This imaginary world is like a metaphor, a model for the sf writer to work with. Indeed, various forms of utopia have been occupying the minds of sf writers for hundreds of years, and these debates became particularly prevalent after the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. In their

works, H. G. Wells, Aleksey Tolstoy, and Mikhail Bulgakov offer various views on the ideal society and the ways it should be achieved.

This paper will focus on *Aelita* (1923), *The Heart of The Dog* (1925), and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933). These novels are important milestones in sf literature, as they represent different views on the construction of the future ideal society. Bulgakov seems to be critical about the ways bolsheviks imagined the construction of a new world. The paper carefully analyzes the motives of his criticism and compares them to the principles advocated by Wells. Tolstoy, on the other hand, seems to be in favor of the revolutionary establishment of a new world, a socialist state. The protagonists of *Aelita* are even ready

# JENNIFER BROWN

**BOSTON COLLEGE**  
**PANEL B4: SEX & GENDER**  
**SR24.K3, DEC 6, 5.30PM**

to help their extraterrestrial colleagues to fight for their rights against their oppressors. In fact, these ideas are somehow similar to the Wellsian ideal of the world state, which has influenced many important writers, artists, and filmmakers.

These novels also address ethics and morals pertaining to scientific research. The novels by Wells and Bulgakov also dwell on the issue of eugenics, the field that was later widely explored by many prominent sf writers. A careful analysis reveals that the influence of Wells on Tolstoi and Bulgakov is more substantial than it seems at first sight. In *The Heart of The Dog*, Bulgakov creates an alternative world, namely, an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment, by introducing the experimentally

produced super-intelligent dog as novum to the "zero world." The choice of the super-dog as the novum is not incidental and serves different cognitive purposes, which this paper will investigate.

## **QUEERING HUMAN AND ALIEN CULTURES IN THE WAYFARER UNIVERSE**

This paper will focus on gender, sexuality, and their importance in constructing identity in Becky Chamber's *Wayfarer* universe. In the first book, gender, identity, and sexuality are all explored, although less explicitly than in the second. One instance of this is the existence of the character Ohan, who is a Sianat Pair, or an alien infected with a virus that allows him the understanding

of the space-time continuum and its mysteries. Ohan and other Sianat Pairs are referred to as a plural “they,” and when Ohan is cured of the virus, Ohan is referred to in the singular masculine as a “he.” This still holds interesting possibilities, though, as the Sianat Pairs are considered gender neutral, but with the loss of The Whisper (the virus), they gain a gendered identity. Ohan’s character allows for an analysis of the shifting of a gender identity and the effect it has on a character’s identity as a whole.

Both books deal with the construction of human and alien identities, although the second book is more straightforward in its study. The central character, Sidra, is an AI who is put in a “kit,” or a mechanical housing meant to mimic a

human body and avoid the government’s detection. Allowing AIs to have human bodies is illegal, just as gender reassignments were considered illegal and illicit until recently. Sidra struggles with forming her identity and experiences dysphoria as she attempts to grow accustomed to her new mechanical body. Sidra provides us with a study of an individual who experiences dysphoria and is discouraged from showing her true nature, which, I will argue, allows readers to establish parallels to transgender individuals and their struggles in the real world.

**AMY BUTT**

**UNIVERSITY OF READING**

**PANEL B2: URSULA K. LE GUIN**

**SR34.K1, DEC 6, 5.30PM**

**AS PLAIN AS SPILT SALT:  
THE CITY AS SOCIAL STRUCTURE  
IN *THE DISPOSSESSED***

“Abbenay was poisonless: a bare city, bright, the colours light and hard, the air pure. It was quiet. You could see it all, laid out as plain as spilt salt. Nothing was hidden,” wrote Ursula Le Guin in *The Dispossessed* (1974).

We are in a critical moment for the writing and building of our built futures. With 54% of the global population living in cities, the rapid proliferation of urban infrastructures has the potential to both structure the patterns of our daily lives and shape the future political and social action they contain.

This paper will turn to *The Dispossessed* to

examine the spatialization of social difference manifest in the soaring steel of Urras and the bare brick of Annares. It will explore how sf can provide designers with an empathetic appreciation of how the built environment reflects and informs social relations, a vital tool for those involved in designing our built future.

There is a growing call for consideration of sf when discussing the future of cities in geography, planning, and urban studies, but the source material is predominantly drawn from a limited selection of seminal texts referred to by geographers Kitchin and Kneale as “a canon of ‘approved’ authors, novels and films,” which centers on the written work of H.G Wells, J. G. Ballard, and William Gibson, and the films *Me-*

## AMY BUTT

UNIVERSITY OF READING

**PANEL D2: BEYOND PETROMODERNITY:  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES I  
SR34.K1, DEC 7, 11.45AM**

*tropolis* (1927) and *Blade Runner* (1982). Alongside the narrow selection of sf visions being discussed within the urban design professions, the architectural profession itself suffers a similar constraint of perspective, with the percentage of licenced female architects in both the US and the UK standing at just 20%.

Examining the spaces of Le Guin encourages and supports feminist readings and imaginings of our built future within a profession which is sorely lacking in these perspectives. The imagined worlds of *The Dispossessed* are rich with allusions to the metaphorical and social role of the built environment, from the symbolic role of the wall which surrounds the space port and defines a freedom for Annes from the universe

it contains, to the reflections of urban isolation contained in the mirrored glass of Urras. This paper aims to enable a deeper understanding of how the spatial depiction of these places relate to their alternative social or political structures, to support what urban theorist David Harvey terms the right to the city; “the right to change ourselves by changing the city.”

### **THE FABRIC OF THE CITY: SCARCITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The built environment accounts for 45% of UK carbon emissions, with raw materials accounting for 10% of this total. In response, debate and legislation around sustainability looks to mitigate both the embodied energy of construc-

tion materials and the energy requirements of buildings in use. However, the relative value of these considerations is inherently framed by the conceptualization of energy as a resource commodity and of architecture as an object-product within the neoliberal city.

As Jeremy Till has argued, a socio-material understanding of “scarcity” demands a move away from sustainability which looks to technically refine the building-object, to understand the wider dynamics which construct and constitute scarcity. This requires that architects consider systems of energy and resource production and consumption which precede and follow the architectural project, systems which are either “massively distributed in time and space”—as

Timothy Morton has it—or have been abstracted through capitalism, as Andreas Malm has convincingly argued.

This paper will draw on the work of architects Buckminster Fuller and Paolo Soleri, who address these issues by conceptually enclosing the built fabric, an approach explored and extrapolated in *sf*. It will undertake a close reading of the dome cities of Scott Russell Sanders’ *Terrarium* (1985) and the settlements in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Red Mars* (1992) by looking at how resource and energy scarcity drives the material construction of buildings and the infrastructure of energy production to maintain them, and the reciprocal impact that this has on the societies they contain.

# ÖZNUR CENGİZ

CANAKKALE ONSEKİZ MART UNIVERSITY

PANEL F4: POST-/TRANS-/  
NONHUMAN WORLDS

SR34.K1, DEC 8, 9AM

Through this close reading, this paper will argue that the worldbuilding of sf provides a vital space to reflect on frameworks of thought regarding sustainability and scarcity, by making manifest abstract systems and inhabiting their impact. These novels demonstrate how the built environment is shaped by the political and economic frameworks of the societies it contains, and conversely, opens the potential for alternative constructions of place.

## THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY AND OPPRESSION: HILLARY JORDAN'S WHEN SHE WOKE

At first glance, Hillary Jordan's dystopian novel *When She Woke* (2011) seems to be a reimagin-

ing of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). The novel presents a technology-based oppressive society attached to religious doctrines. Hannah Payne, the protagonist, is a member of conservative understanding in which the ones involved in illegal affairs are excluded and chromed with different colors depending on the crimes they have committed. sentenced to be chromed red because of the abortion she has undergone,

Future America or the world in general Jordan fictionalizes is formed with technological enhancements in the frame of authoritarian attitude, in other words, the social structure is in conflict with technology and obedience. Technological products are mostly used as a way of

# ROXANNE CHARTRAND & PASCALE THÉRIAULT

UNIVERSITY OF MONTREAL

**PANEL D1: ROGUES TWO**

**SR34.D2, DEC 7, 11.45AM**

punishment method rather than restoration of human life. Furthermore, individual features, desires, and ideas are repugnant to the society's general point of view and result in violence and even death. Hannah's arduous journey in order to escape from chrome procedure, violence, and oppression reflects her transformation that means an individual struggle and awakening against common cruel perception. Thus, this paper aims to concatenate human figure and harsh social atmosphere in terms of technology-oriented life style with respect to posthuman approach.

## **BEYOND FICTION: PERFORMING THE VIDEOLUDIC CYBERQUEER IDENTITY**

Video game culture is heavily tainted with militarized masculinity and has therefore often been described as toxic (Consalvo 2012). The state of this world, which is vastly harmful to women, people of color, and otherwise marginalized people, could be explained by the military-industrial origins of video games (Kline et al. 2003). However, there is an increasing feminist resistance in both video game creation and gaming practices. Faced with the homogeneity of the video game landscape, several creators and marginalized people are trying to reclaim the space by resorting to different political and technological strategies. The emerging AltGames movement in

the margins of the videoludic industry seems to subvert video game conventions to create radically different objects from typical games and can be situated within the queer game studies paradigm (Shaw & Ruberg 2017), which proposes to understand games as a system of pleasure, power dynamics and possibilities. Games are conceived as a space within which players are allowed to explore and subvert rules, thus shifting the focus from the content of games to their very essence. Ultimately, queerness interrogates the notion of social norms and subverts them by being voluntarily counter-cultural (Halberstam 2011). The queering of games can also be seen as a way to perform a virtual identity, to explore the notion of the self in a disembodied

form where rules are defined by a computerized entity and not by a physical one.

In this presentation, we will explore the ways in which the AltGames movement is in line with posthumanist and transhumanist theories, including Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg (1991), which poses the idea of a feminist and queer resistance within the space between the individual and the machine, as well as Morton's idea of the cyberqueer (1995) and Wakeford's theorization of the cyberqueer identity (2000, 2002). These unique conceptualizations of the self aim to imagine a post-human identity which transcends the physical norms and space, to the benefit of individuals and groups who subvert the norms of cisgendered

# **BODHISATTVA CHATTOPADHYAY**

**UNIVERSITY OF OSLO**

**PANEL G5: FROM THE MIDDLE  
TO THE FAR EAST: ASIAN SF  
SR34.K3, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

masculine heterosexuality (Wakeford 1997). While the concepts of cyborg and the cyberqueer identity have long been a central theme in the science fiction world, the videoludic medium allows to re-actualize these notions in two different ways: On the one hand, some games will openly repurpose the classical themes of cyberbunk and cyborg science fiction, while others will use the concept in a performative way, allowing the developers to actively engage in a “mind uploading” (Hauskeller 2012) creation process which represents a form of recrystallization of the self in the virtual space as it shifts the focus from body identity to identity as a construct.

In this sense, the AltGames movement could be seen as part of a posthumanist movement

that aims to recrystallize identity within a virtual space, thus getting rid of physical imperatives of identity performativity. As such, we will compare two games which tackle both the thematic and performative aspects of the cyberqueer in the gameworld, *2064: Read Only Memories* (Mid-Boss, 2015) and *Cibele* (Nina Freeman, 2015), in order to identify the components of a radically subversive form, approaching the ideal of Haraway’s cyborg and Morton and Wakeford’s cyberqueer identity.

## **THE ATEMPORAL FUTURE IN EARLY KALPAVIGYAN**

In this paper, I will argue that kalpavigyan writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century located the present in

# NATALIA CHUMAROVA

PARIS-SORBONNE UNIVERSITY

PANEL D3: SF FROM THE

FORMER EASTERN BLOC II

SR34.04 (SKYPE), DEC 7, 11.45AM

an atemporal future; that is, they engaged in anti-colonial strategies by dislocating the present and using the present as a template for a possible future. The specific form of this strategy that I will describe here is one that I will call the “atemporal future.” I will return to the concepts of the mythologerm and the delocalized locale, which I have developed in various publications over the last three years, but I will employ them specifically in an attempt to understand a central conceit often taken for granted in science fiction, borrowing from anthropology (Rieder 2008)—that the genre engages in a spatialization of time.

I contend that this argument needs to be reexamined in the context of non-Anglophone genres. Specifically, the lack of an open future

within a colonial moment for kalpavigyan makes necessary a different approach to the notion of future: creating an atemporal moment that redefines the present as a stand-in for a possible future. Progress in this genre does not take the shape of a movement through time—that is, from a past to a future—but *into* and *within* time, making it atemporal. The events in these other adventures take place in a present that is not the present, but the container of a possible future.

## IVAN EFREMOV'S FUTURE WORLD AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SOVIET SCIENCE-FICTIONAL IMAGINATION

According to Darko Suvin, Soviet science fiction literature can be divided into two Golden Ages:

the 1920s and the 1960s. The second period came with the Thaw and was characterized by the social aspect of its novels. The social, and sometimes political, critique of the Soviet system was made possible by the very nature of the fictional worlds depicted in those novels.

The author who started the renaissance of science fiction literature in USSR at the end of the 1950s and who remained henceforth one of the key figures throughout this period was writer and paleontologist Ivan Efremov. Scholars from different parts of the world (like the Canadian Darko Suvin and the Argentinian Pablo Capanna) have, in fact, called the 1960s the “epoch of Ivan Efremov.” Efremov’s novel *Andromeda: A Space-Age Tale* (1957; in Russian *Tumannost’ Androm-*

*edy*, which literary means “Andromeda Nebula”) provided a fictional universe for most of science fiction novels written in the 1960s.

In my presentation, I will explore the revolutionary role of this novel in relation to Soviet science fiction literature at large. To do so, I will study the construction of a fictional future world, first established in *Andromeda: A Space-Age Tale* and then used as the basis for the short story “Cor Serpentis” (1958) and the novel *The Bull’s Hour* (1968). I will describe and analyze the components of this fictional world: education, political organization, history, science, working environment, penitential system, etc. In my discussion, I will put particular emphasis on components closely related to Soviet social real-

# EVELYN DANIS

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

**PANEL E2: UTOPIAN WORLDS**

**SR34.04, DEC 7, 3PM**

ity, which includes Efremov's sources of inspiration, such as Russian philosophy (e.g. Nikolai Fedorov), Russian and early Soviet science fiction literature, and Western literature, especially the novels by H.G. Wells.

## **THE SCIENCE-FICTIONAL ENCLAVE: WORLDBUILDING AND UTOPIA**

Science fiction is dedicated to discussing change and varying human responses to change. Cognitive estrangement, which may be likened to worldbuilding, allows sf to imagine radically different societies, and the ways in which our own society might change to meet the challenges we face. In other words, the genre produces a third-person perspective on the utopian imag-

ination, and thus allows readers to witness social change from afar. However, sf criticism has largely treated worldbuilding as highly allegorical. Accordingly, what sf has lacked is a method specific to the genre that allows for its unique structural conventions to be translated into critical analyses of the utopian ideas it imparts. In my paper, I will present an experimental version of such a method, born of Fredric Jameson's notion of the utopian enclave.

Jameson's enclave requires that the social situation at the time of its founding be concerned with some dilemma. This could be anything from political to epistemological. Importantly, there is some specific issue that requires a solution. The enclave, for Jameson, is what produces

that solution or at least draws attention to the solution's requirement. But the enclave in our world cannot be easily read. It only exists as an abstraction until it reaches an end, that is, when it stops being an enclave and instead fulfills the role of a societal norm, or a ruling regime.

Where Jameson's enclave is abstract, the sf enclave is a function of worldbuilding. sf incorporates the enclave into its estranged world and thereby makes the stakes of—and solutions to—that world's problems available for the reader. Thus, it parallels the way in which the real-world, abstract enclave changes over time. And this is more than purely descriptive. With these estranged analogues to real-world enclaves, readers develop a better understanding of utopia.

Then, able to recognize and navigate the abstract enclaves of their contemporary moment, they are better equipped to produce solutions to the dilemmas their society faces.

Because the enclave is a constant structure of all utopian sf, it allows identification of how the novel is symptomatic of changes in real-world enclaves, and thus how real-world utopian thought changes over time. Therefore, a method for tracking how sf performs this feat is useful for elucidating the messages of the sf extrapolations of our time.

Using Jameson's framework, I will identify the enclave as a structural literary device employed by at least two of sf's most prolific and lauded writers, Isaac Asimov and Ursula Le Guin, and

# RHODRI DAVIES

**BIRKBECK COLLEGE,  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

**PANEL D4: SF BECOMES REAL(ITY)  
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extrapolated as a method for analyzing all utopian sf.

## **HARD SCIENCE FAITH: SF IN POSTWAR NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS**

As a literature supposedly grounded in a materialist, secular tradition, sf might well be regarded as an unlikely mode within which to construct religious narratives, yet the postwar era saw the emergence of a number of New Religious Movements (NRMs) which did just that. Adherents of the “I AM” Activity (est. 1930s), The Church of Scientology (est. 1953), Unarius Academy of Science (est. 1954) and The Aetherius Society (est. 1955) employed explicitly science-fictional

elements, such as advanced technologies and aliens, as well as pseudo-scientific and occult concepts in their cosmogonies.

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks offered by cognitive narratology and the cognitive science of religion, this paper will explore how the apparent tensions between the elements employed by these groups in their world construction can be reconciled. Sf, through its exploitation of the hegemonic authority of “science” as a “name” (a Latour has it) and its own increased cultural currency following the realization of rockets and atomic weaponry during the Second World War, enabled the articulation of epistemologies popularly assumed to be in competition—the scientific and religious. The

genre's increased status at that moment and the familiarity of "hard sf" motifs and those of the "occulture" popularized in the generically hybrid texts of the pulp era, such as "psi," the "hollow earth," and "Root Race" theory, facilitated their appropriation in imaginative worldbuilding and self-narration. Proceeding through past-life regression, "passive" channeling, and the application of the "active" clairvoyant imagination (Hanegraaff), these acts were themselves lent further metarepresentational authority (Cosmides & Tooby) by the auto-mythologizing of the leaders who determined the narrative parameters of the group, the credentials of the sources of channeled narratives, and even the use of technological arbiters of veracity, such as

the E-Meter of the Church of Scientology. Such imaginal cognition, long regarded in mystical traditions as providing access to a realm of reality intangible to the external senses, and its rescripting and reiteration, has parallels in hypnotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy, suggesting its efficacy as a means by which metarepresentational hierarchies and intersubjective ontologies can be established and shaped.

The science-fictional worlding of these NRMs shows, I will argue, how sf can function to overcome the lingering discontinuities between the Enlightenment Project and our belated pre-modernity. They illustrate both how "genres ... have ... colonized reality," as Jameson has put it, and sf "has come to be seen as an essential mode of

# GRANT DEMPSEY

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

**PANEL G4: ONTOLOGIES  
AND EPISTEMOLOGIES II  
SR34.K1, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

imagining the horizons of possibility” (Csicsery-Ronay)—and perhaps serve to encourage more critical evaluation of its modern appeal and potential as a repository for our hopes and fears in an increasingly bleak world.

## **SCIENCE FICTION AND (EXTRA)NATURALISM: NOTES ON THE ONTOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY OF SF AND ITS WORLDS**

Theories of ontological and existential pluralism in philosophy and anthropology have productive implications for our understanding of science fiction as a genre. They challenge the ontological formulations onto which the boundaries between science fiction and other speculative

genres, such as fantasy, tend to be mapped. Science fiction is, by definition, most essentially distinct for holding itself, as imaginative play, within the domain of naturalist conceptions of possibility and plausibility, whereas fantasy essentially exceeds or abandons that domain.

This paper will challenge the tendency to take for granted as an ontological given that difference between naturalist possibility/plausibility and extranaturalist conceivability, which is often held to ground science fiction’s work as a clearly distinct genre ontology, drawing on philosophical arguments for a radical reconception of existential agency, on expressions of Indigenous ontologies achieved in collaborative anthropology, and non-Eurocentric futurisms and scientific imagi-

# MICHEL DIESTER

UNIVERSITY OF PADERBORN

PANEL A4: COHERENCE

AND DECOHERENCE

SR24.K3, DEC 6, 3PM

naries. To this end, the paper will consider ways that science fiction or science-fictional worlds, insofar as they are conceived as essentially naturalist, are not built on an ontological given, but rather are both products of, and participants in, other modalities of worlding, entangled dynamically with the determinations of the naturalism in and for which they operate, extending those determinations beyond the field of the empirical over that of the imaginary.

The paper will accordingly ask what science fiction might be if its concept were not so bound to naturalism and will propose alternative ontological conceptions of science fiction. It thus proposes new directions for thinking on science fiction as a genre ontology with complexly mul-

ti-ple potentials for articulation of its world(ing)s with others.

## WORLD TRANSACTION IN BLACK MIRROR

This paper will suggest that science fiction films build and legitimize worlds by distinguishing them from other inner-filmic worlds. In other words, filmic worlds gain their cohesion and coherence through a specific (temporal, spatial, and/or medial) distinction to an additional concept of a world that is depicted within the film. To illustrate this argument, the paper will turn to two *Black Mirror* (since 2011) episodes: “San Junipero” (S3E4) and “Hang the DJ” (S4E4).

In “San Junipero,” a gadget allows users to

enter a virtual world for a couple of hours once per week (or in full after death). In contrast to a video game, for instance, the experience in the virtual world is full. In other words, users experience only the virtual world while the perception of the original world is suppressed. In addition, the users do not navigate avatars through the virtual world, but a younger version of themselves and encounter other subjects with whom they cohabit the virtual world of San Junipero.

“Hang the DJ” represents the inner workings of an algorithm which determines whether a potential partner will be a match. The protagonists are entirely simulated in the sense that their related subject in the original world has no explicit knowledge of what is happening in the simulated

world of the algorithm. In addition, the simulated doubles neither have memories of an antecedent life nor do they know of a world other than the simulated one.

The relations between the two worlds are very different in the two episodes: The simulated world in “San Junipero” is aesthetic, while in “Hang the DJ” the other world is anaesthetic (Welsch 1990)—at least from the perspective of the original world. Both episodes display diverging tendencies of digital media: On the one hand they provide access to new spaces of experience. Here, the observer is no longer situated in an external position but is entering the image space (Krämer 1995). On the other hand, digital media produce algorithmic spaces in which a

# GWENTHALYN ENGÉLIBERT

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN BRITTANY

PANEL F3: HUMANS AND/AS

ARTIFICIAL CREATURES

SR34.04, DEC 8, 9AM

human observer is no longer needed. The algorithm processes information and thus generates knowledge as an autonomous authority without any human intervention at all (Lovink 2008). However, both of these spaces could be described as worlds.

According to Cassirer, worlds are not defined by matter in space or occurrence in time but by a particular “system of events.” Drawing on this idea, this paper will argue that the virtual worlds of *Black Mirror* establish a logic of organizing eventfulness. But this logic unfolds itself emphatically not until it is clearly distinguished from another worldly form of organization. The worldliness then emerges when the different system of events sets up a relation, a world transaction

that succeeds or fails.

## “THEY DON’T WORK AS GOOD AS PEOPLE”: ROBOTS AND HUMANS IN RICHARD MATHESON’S SHORT STORIES

In several of his short stories, Richard Matheson builds worlds in which robots and humans coexist and cannot be told apart. Robots are a way for him to explore the solitude of his characters and their incompatibility with the society they live in. In “When the Waker Sleeps” (1950), for example, human beings are used as tools to take care of the Machine, a great mechanic that allows the city to live. Drugged by doctors, these workers dream that they accomplish great

# M. GIULIA FABI

UNIVERSITY OF FERRARA

PANEL F1: AFROFUTURISM

SR34.D2, DEC 8, 9AM

things while they are merely oiling parts of the mechanism. In “Brother to the Machine” (1952), on the other hand, a robot experiences moral dilemmas about the world he lives in and about the kind of humanity his society develops (selling extraterrestrials as pets or confining old and sick people to certain parts of the city). His wondering about the society he lives in and the production of weapons to destroy human beings is perceived as a malfunction, but it also questions what humans renounce and delegate to robots and machines.

As I will suggest in this paper, Matheson’s short stories hence focus on issues of marginality and solitude. In this way, these tales question conformity and difference in his sf worlds.

## WORLDING PLANTATIONS WITH ARMIES OF SLAVES: FREDERICK DOUGLASS’ AND MARTIN R. DELANY’S SPECULATIVE FICTIONS

My paper will explore the ways in which Frederick Douglass and Martin R. Delany engaged with the genre of speculative fiction in “The Heroic Slave” (1853) and *Blake; or, The Huts of America* (1859). I will argue that the framework of speculative fiction allowed them to advance critiques of the slave regime and to represent an oppositional understanding of slavery by centering on the slave’s thought life and ethos of resistance.

I will examine Douglass’ and Delany’s use of militaristic imagery to portray plantations as worlds teeming with widespread slave unrest, or-

# GERALD FARCA

VITRUVIUS HOCHSCHULE

PANEL F2: REGENERATIVE PLAY

SR34.K2, DEC 8, 9AM

ganizing, and rebellion. In their works of fiction, the slaves stand out forcefully against a stereotyped background of supposed docility and contentedness. They emerge as a large army with a capillary network of spies and conspirators of both genders and all ages. They possess secret codes of communication, share a rebellious ethos, have the ability to read “the mere countenance ... of the master ... with astonishing precision” (Blake 11), mobilize religion against their masters, organize to liberate a slave ship, and plan a general insurrection for the overthrow of slavery.

Douglass’ and Delany’s speculative fictions offer an alternative, black-centered portal into the world of slavery and into the more egalitarian

polities that take shape in works that propose projects of social change covering the spectrum from emancipation to transnational slave revolt.

## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

### IN OUTER SPACE: MASS EFFECT:

### ANDROMEDA AS A CRITICAL ECOTOPIA

*Mass Effect: Andromeda* (2017) follows a new utopian trend in contemporary sf and envisions a faraway future in which humankind searches for a new home in the depths of space. The game endows the player (in the form of PC Sara/Scott Ryder) with the task of transforming the Helios cluster of the Andromeda galaxy into a liveable space of co-existence with different races—for the supposedly Golden Worlds are not the prom-

# PAWEL FRELIK

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

PANEL C1: MOVEMENT IS KEY

SR34.K1, DEC 7, 9.15AM

ised Utopias the Initiative expected. This attempt at a fresh start confronts the player with a conflict between ideologies and (alien) ethnicities she/he has to mitigate—the Angara/Roekaar (natives), Krogans (military), kett (colonizers), Initiative (colonizers)—and involves the player in a regenerative struggle for Utopia.

I will argue that the game thus foregrounds the encounter with the Other (known from post-colonial sf) and builds on the framework of the critical utopian plot. This plot framework has the protagonist/player encounter a better but flawed world, where arising issues aggravate the continual struggle for Utopia and demand negotiation between many parties. The notion of regenerative play is here then linked to ergodic

and imaginative work and the finding of solutions to problems that plague the gameworld. This experience and virtual trial action may translate to the player's (potential) struggle for Utopia in the real world.

## LOST IN SPACE: VAST GAME WORLDS AND SPATIAL SCIENCE FICTIONS

If worldbuilding is, indeed, one of the most distinctive features of science fiction, then video games may well be one of the genre's most privileged media. While many games rely on convoluted storytelling and complex character development, even more foreground their science-fictionality through the creation of gameworlds. Their narrative complexities notwith-

standing, the *Homeworld* series (1999, 2000, 2003, 2016), *EVE Online* (2003), and the *Mass Effect* trilogy (2007, 2010, 2012) have been widely praised for the expansiveness of their universes and their visual detail.

In absolute terms, however, most fictional gameworlds prove much smaller than they feel to be—the original *World of Warcraft*'s (2004) continent of Azeroth only stretched for 80 square miles. Of course, space opera titles feature much larger stellar systems, but, again, their landing missions are limited to relatively small areas (e.g. all landfall missions in *Mass Effect*) and galaxies count mere dozens of stars and planetary systems at best. Such territorial trimming is, in most titles, dictated by very practical concerns

with the games' narrative cohesion and gameplay management, but it also detracts from the appeal of presumably unlimited space. There are exceptions, though. A number of games, which can be described as space operas, feature universes that are functionally, if not literally, infinite. Whether it is *Noctis IV* (2000) with 78 billion stars or *No Man's Sky* (2016) with 18 quintillion of explorable celestial bodies, such texts redefine not only the meaning of the advertising slogan "vast game universe" but also the very nature of gameplay. While some titles belonging to this relatively small group are equipped with systems of missions and quests, in many, the experience of playing is shifted from action- and task-based engagement to free-wheeling explo-

# **PAWEL FRELIK**

**UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW**

**PANEL F2: REGENERATIVE PLAY**

**SR34.K2, DEC 8, 9AM**

ration.

In my presentation I will first describe this particular variety of space flight simulators (the name used for such games most frequently), illuminating selected titles and describing their shared characteristics. My main argument will be that thanks to their near-infinite universes, such games dramatically redefine a mode of ludic engagement that is novel for both the medium of games and the genre of science fiction. On the one hand, their focus on spatial exploration can be taken for a throwback to the spatiality of early sf texts. On the other, though, it can be construed as a de-humanizing gesture which helps convey the in/non-humanity of space and the folly of human narrative that permeates much

of space opera in all media. In this, such games truly instigate a sense of alienness, which the genre has long sought to convey, and reflect the ongoing revision of human agency occasioned by Anthropocenic processes.

## **REGENERATIVE MODDING**

The scope of regenerative gaming is fairly broad: from eco-games to non-confrontational gameplay to utopian game spaces. In this panel discussion, I would like to focus on one more form: regenerative modding. While a prominent majority of the world of mods seeks to streamline and/or enrich the game experience aesthetically or functionally, there is a small but definite tradition of mods that could be called “restorative”

# IANA GAGARINA

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ

PANEL C4: ROGUES ONE

SR34.K3, DEC 7, 9.15AM

or “ecological.” These include *Ecology Mod* for Minecraft, numerous environmental mods for *Skyrim* (2011), and *Wasteland Restoration Mod* for *Fallout 3* (2008). At the same time, however, the relative rarity of such game modifications reflects the predominantly exploitative nature of most titles in the medium: given almost unlimited modding affordances, what is modded speaks as loud as what is not.

## WORLDING FOOD: THE FAMILIAR AND THE STRANGE

The “cognitive estrangement” (Suvin) characteristic of science fiction makes possible the stepping-out of a familiar environment and the offering of a new way of evaluating our present

existence. In his novel *Under the Skin* (2000), Michel Faber creates such an alternative (and allegorical) world, where a group of extraterrestrials runs a small animal husbandry that farms humans and produces meat for the rich back on their planet. By focusing on the daily routines of the main protagonist, such as picking up hitchhikers for the meat production, the novel centers on the aspect of (self-destructive) choice both on the side of the aliens and the humans, and thus questions an essential definition of humanity.

In my presentation, I will focus on the ways in which Faber constructs this fictional world by making it at first appear familiar, then bending, perverting, and turning the known into the unknown, the familiar into the strange in an

# LEIMAR GARCIA-SIINO

ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

PANEL E2: UTOPIAN WORLDS

SR34.04, DEC 7, 3PM

attempt to reveal the ambivalent logic behind some of the fundamental choices people make: the human becomes animal, the alien becomes human, the hunted becomes the hunter. I will discuss how Faber explores the conventional understanding of the dominance of the human being in a wider universe and how justifications for farming humans—sometimes expressed as compassion or remorse—question this established assumption.

## BUILDING UTOPIA: EXAMINING STAR TREK'S UTOPIA THROUGH ITS FORMS OF ENTERTAINMENT

No other science fiction television program in history has been as successful in the construc-

tion and portrayal of a working utopian future landscape as *Star Trek*. The Federation's (and by extension the franchise's) claim to have abolished hunger, strife, poverty, war, racism, bigotry, oppression, and greed—and to have established a moralistic ethos of personal and societal betterment—is the foundational premise repeated across the shows and films. Countless articles and book chapters have been written on the subject of the utopian politics and social dynamics of the *Star Trek* universe.

One aspect which seems to have remained unexplored, however, is what the franchise's love affair with our own (pre-22<sup>nd</sup>-century) literature and history reveals about its representation and regards for utopia and utopian ideals.

# SARAH M. GAWRONSKI

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE

PANEL B4: SEX & GENDER

SR24.K3, DEC 6, 5.30PM

In *The Literary Galaxy of Star Trek* (2006), James Broderick analyzes the gamut of literary references made by and through *ST*, and in chapter twenty, “The Quest for Perfection,” he explores the shows’ basis, portrayal, and even criticism of utopia, but he makes no connection between the two. Moreover, the question of whether *ST*’s literary transtext is compatible with idealistic utopian aspirations is left unasked and unanswered.

In this paper, I propose to examine not only how the literary transtext fits in with *ST*’s utopian philosophy, but whether its presence as part of the in-universe modes of entertainment is congruent with a utopian society. Entertainment is shaped by culture and shapes it in turn, so what

do the holosuite programs, novels, and plays reveal about the Federation’s culture? Then, in parallel, I will analyze the subtextual implications of this representation against *ST*’s overall utopian discourse for what it contextually and metatextually conveys to the viewer.

## “THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO SIDES, AREN’ THERE?”: THE LINES THAT DIVIDE US

It is often believed that when women create their own community away from the war-mongering, aggressive nature of patriarchy, it is a community of harmony and peace. Kit Reed counters this argument in her science fiction short story “Songs of War” (1974); however, more fiction

## FRANCIS GENE-ROWE

ROYAL HOLLOWAY,  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

**PANEL D2: BEYOND PETROMODERNITY:  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES I  
SR34.K1, DEC 7, 11.45AM**

than not portrays women as the more peaceful of the two genders. Just because authors represent them as peaceful does not mean, however, that women are passive. To protect their societies from men's war-mongering, they must also become a society of warriors—and a society of mothers.

This paper will focus on Suzy McKee Charnas' *Motherlines* (1978), Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), and Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988). These three texts epitomize the propensity of feminists to fight back against male domination by imagining a world where men and women are physically divided by some tangible means: a desert, a gate, a swiftly constructed barrier. Unlike the nineteenth-cen-

tury feminist utopias, these three post-apocalyptic fictions offer a far more brutal reality should division occur.

I will demonstrate that the three texts probe into all the unique problems that are a result of dividing the genders. Their inventiveness, I will argue, provide an illuminating examination into how women are indeed the foundation of rebuilding society.

### **JUST HOW CAN WE TELL ALTERNATIVES TO PETROREALITY?**

#### **KALADESH: AN INSTRUCTIVE FAILURE**

In 2016, the games company Wizards of the Coast released *Kaladesh*, an expansion to their popular trading card game, *Magic: The Gath-*

ering. *Kaladesh* depicted—via card art, online stories, game mechanics, etc.—the world of Kaladesh, a place of boundless technological creativity, vibrant metropolitan culture, and harmony between civilization and nature. *Kaladesh's* politics were progressive, its world centered around non-white culture and featured same-sex relationships and post-binary life forms, whilst its storyline revolved around political conflict between heterotopian communities of artificiers and a colonial Consulate. Underpinning these elements was Kaladesh as a world brimming with aether, a ubiquitous and seemingly limitless source of fuel, serving as inspiration for artificiers' inventions and shaping the world's biosphere. *Kaladesh's* flagship mechanic (and

in-game depiction of aether) was “energy,” and the majority of cards featuring it were aesthetically aligned with either the rebel artificiers or Kaladesh's animal species, rather than the Consulate.

*Kaladesh*, then, depicted a quasi-utopia of boundless energy, seemingly antithetical to oil capitalist reality. However, *Kaladesh's* progressive politics collapse under closer scrutiny, whilst the energy mechanic was considered “parasitic,” contributing to oppressive, homogeneous gameplay. So long as your deck revolved around accumulating and consuming energy, the mechanic outstripped any alternative. Ultimately, aether/energy behaves like oil, and both the gameplay it engenders and the fictive world it

# PETER GOGGIN

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

**PANEL G4: ONTOLOGIES  
AND EPISTEMOLOGIES II  
SR34.K1, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

overflows are extensions of petromodernity This paper sets out to evaluate both the shortcomings and the possibilities of transmedia storytelling and worldbuilding systems as avenues for creating alternatives to petroreality.

## **MARS: POWER, PLACE, AND THE BUILDING AND UNBUILDING OF WORLDS**

From the earliest recorded observations of the planet Mars in astronomy, myth, and legend from ancient Egypt to contemporary science fictions of alien invasion, colonization, rebellion, and terraforming, Mars has held a special place of significance in the human imagination. The possibility of life on Mars, whether by native organic

origin or human introduction has instigated fictions of planetary construction and destruction in SF film and literature. As such, Mars fiction is rhetorically complex and serves as a mirror on human ambitions, deviances, and endeavors on Earth. Multiple knowledges of engineering and technology, scientific discovery, geography, stereotypes, literary genres, performance, and so forth, are intertwined in co-constructed theories of material and imagined realities.

As theoretical physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad would argue, these constitutive theories and phenomena are intra-active: "Discursive practices and material phenomena do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other; rather the material and discursive are mutu-

# JULIA GRILLMAYR

UNIVERSITY OF ART  
AND DESIGN LINZ

PANEL D4: SF BECOMES REAL(ITY)  
SR34.K3, DEC 7, 11.45AM

ally implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity.” The agency of Mars is thus articulated in both the materiality and fiction of Mars as ontological co-constituents in its existence in the cosmos and in human consciousness. In this presentation, I will discuss evolving rhetorical constructs of power, place and sustainability in selected examples of Mars fictions of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries such as H.G. Wells’ *The War of the Worlds* (1897), Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *A Princess of Mars* (1912), Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Red Mars* (1992), and Andy Weir’s *The Martian* (2011), among others.

## SCIENCE/FICTION— THE MOST PROLIFIC OXYMORON: CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE FICTION LITERATURE AND SCENARIO WRITING

The usually rather quarrelsome science fiction community seems to agree on one declaration: Science Fiction is an oxymoron (see Suvin, Csicsery-Rosnay, jr., Stableford, Sterling). Sf constantly negotiates scientific accuracy and artistic freedom. This negotiation has led to the creation of opposing labels, like hard/soft or extrapolation/speculation. In addition, it has led to an ambiguous public image of sf writers, who are often characterized as eccentrics, writing the most quirky, funky, and improbable books. On the other hand, they are regarded as *the* experts and

public intellectuals of the future.

At present, the idea that sf literature predicts the future is rather frowned upon among sf fans, critics, writers, and academics. At the same time, one can observe a growing trend for bringing together science and fiction for purposes of futurology. “Scenarios” have become omnipresent. Traditionally, scenario texts were simple and short “what if”-thought experiments. Today however, they increasingly assume literary shapes. Futurists in think tanks, universities, and corporations encourage writers, scientists, and the public to write “scenarios” in ways that they become indistinguishable from sf short stories. In addition, more and more acclaimed sf writers engage in the discussion about the near future,

including Kim Stanley Robinson (Everything Change Climate Fiction Contest), Bruce Sterling (*Tomorrow Now* [2002], the Twelve Tomorrows series [since 2014]), and Neal Stephenson (Project Hieroglyph [est. 2011]).

In my paper, I will present first results of the research project “Science Fiction, Fact & Forecast,” which compares these contemporary “scenario” texts to sf literature. Central questions of my analysis are: In which ways does literary extrapolation and speculation relate to the future? What can (sf) literature express about the future, while simple thought experiments fall short? What are the narrative strategies underlying these science-fictional scenarios? What does this scenario-writing trend mean for sf as

# BEATA GUBACSI

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

**PANEL E1: GREENING SF**  
**SR34.K3, DEC 7, 3PM**

a genre?

## **ANXIETIES OF ANNIHILATION AND HUMANIMAL FUTURES IN JEFF VANDERMEER'S WORLDBUILDING**

"Global weirding," a term coined by Hunter Lovins, co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Institute, and popularized by Thomas L. Friedman, columnist at *The New York Times*, is a suggested substitute for "global warming" and "climate change," for these expressions have been hijacked by political discourse, and as a result are no longer descriptive of the complex changes the world is facing. I would argue that "global weirding" should also refer to current aesthetic and philosophical shifts, as a sublimation of fan-

tasies of annihilation. The phenomenon of global weirding signals a crisis of categories—in particular that of the notion of "human."

Global weirding is most visible in the emerging discourse of critical posthumanism and its recent development of turning to animal and climate studies, and advocating the "porous" nature of subjectivity and thought. Blurred boundaries of human and non-human, experimenting with expressions of nonhuman sentience are the key aesthetic and conceptual features of Jeff VanderMeer's work. In my paper, I will explore the complexities of worldbuilding in Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach Trilogy* (2014) and Alex Garland's adaptation *Annihilation* (2018). I will argue that their strategies of worldbuilding are

# SEAN GUYNES-VISHNIAC

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

PANEL F1: AFROFUTURISM

SR34.D2, DEC 8, 9AM

informed by apocalyptic visions, global weirding, and posthuman thought.

## AFROFUTURISM'S SPECTER: ALTERNATE HISTORY, RACIAL CAPITALISM, AND NISI SHAWL'S **EVERFAIR**

In this paper, I will focus on Nisi Shawl's novel *Everfair* (2016) as evidencing contemporary Afrofuturism's simultaneous embrace of futurism and countermemory in its efforts to imagine, create, and embody a world hospitable to black folks and other people of color. In doing so, I want to complicate Kodwo Eshun's understanding, in his essay "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism," of the relationship between futurity and history in Afrofuturism, and argue

instead that *Everfair* achieves its pan-Afrodiasporic framing of a hopeful futurism by remaking the past through the genre of alternate history.

Shawl's novel narrates a socialist revolution in King Leopold's Belgium Congo Free State in the 1890s and the establishment of a free African state comprised of indigenous Africans, African Americans, white and mixed-race Europeans, and freed Chinese indentured laborers. It charts the birth of a utopian Afrofuturist project by asking "what if" the most devastating genocide in modern African history had become the cause for anti-colonial struggle. Like other black writers of alternative histories, such as Steven Barnes and Colson Whitehead, Shawl rethinks a pivotal moment in the history of black oppres-

# NORBERT GYURIS

UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

PANEL D1: ROGUES TWO

SR34.D2, DEC 7, 11.45AM

sion, one that represents a flashpoint in the life of racial capitalism. In *Everfair* she offers a new temporality for imagining utopian possibilities springing from the atrocities of the commodification of black labor, bodies, and life.

Though focused on a reading of Shawl's *Everfair*, this paper will contextualize the relationship between Afrofuturism as a political mode of cultural production and the alternate history genre as a unique articulation of science-fictional worldbuilding. I will show that Afrofuturist alternate histories represent a key textual-political ground for contesting the intersection between discourses of history, power, race, capital, and empire. I will argue that Shawl's *Everfair* makes the claim that the legacy/memory of racial cap-

italism in the history of blackness is what motivates Afrofuturism's constant return to the past even as it demands better futures in the worlds it makes.

## SEMIOTIC CONCEPTS OF GRAVITY: SIMULATION VS. REPRESENTATION IN UPSIDE DOWN

"What if love was stronger than gravity?" The French-Canadian science fiction movie *Upside Down* (2012) is organized around this romantic question—and its utopian answer rejects the rhetoric nature of this proposal. With the juxtaposition of emotion and physics, the film designates a set of more or less precisely articulated problems (i.e., the binary logic of attrac-

## CHRIS HALL

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS  
PANEL D3: SF FROM THE  
FORMER EASTERN BLOC II  
SR34.04, DEC 7, 11.45AM

tion, choice, action and reaction, matter and anti-matter, etc.) and places them into the concepts of both existing and theoretically possible notions of gravity. The demonstration of parallel modes of gravity is self-reflexive in the film: both the scope and the mode of representation are ordered by a binary logic, which eventually dissolves into gravitational unity by the end of the narrative.

As I will demonstrate, *Upside Down* attempts to tear down and de(con)struct the upturned, double iconicity of the mirrored and inverted ways of seeing the world; moreover, apart from juxtaposing the concepts of Newtonian gravity and quantum gravity, the protagonist's simulated gravitational identity seeks to subvert and

relocate the double nature of upside and downside, inside and outside, Self and Other, and the countless miniscule, superficial everyday binaries sustained for practical purposes.

### TARKOVSKY'S SOLARIS: SETTLING THE OTHERWORLDLY SELF

In the closing moments of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 film *Solaris*, the camera rises from a scene of apparent homecoming for protagonist Kris Kelvin, who had spent a traumatic and interminable portion of the film aboard a space station based at the planet Solaris. As this final shot retreats into the atmosphere, it becomes clear that Kelvin has not returned to Earth, but has in fact entered a replication of his memory of

# MAGDALENA HANGEL

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

PANEL B2: URSULA K. LE GUIN

SR34.K1, DEC 6, 5.30PM

home, one produced upon the liquid surface of the planet through a collaboration between Kelvin's memories and the planet's capacity for materially manifesting human remembrance. The event is a colonization of Solaris, a homemaking with an other-world, whereby Kelvin territorializes the planet by taking flight into himself. This process allows for the male reproduction of the unknown self—the reinsertion of Kelvin into the Lacanian imaginary through a re-presentation of the mirror through which we begin to become aware of ourselves as individuals in the world of signs.

In my reading of the film, I will treat Kelvin's settling of Solaris as a colonization of the planet that is also a colonization of his own mind, the

setting-forth of a world that allows a glimpse at the essence of being in the imaginary. In this way, I will bring Lacan together with Heidegger to reframe how we world the unconscious, and how entering into co-becoming with the non-human reveals the processes of imposing epistemological worlds on spatial ones, as we witness Kelvin's creation of a world that is also a mirror.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN THE WORK OF URSULA K. LE GUIN

My paper will approach the construction of sexualized violence in literary representations of alternative societies. While these types of societies may be found within the genres of science

fiction, utopian literature, fantasy, and feminist fabulation, I will argue that Ursula K. Le Guin laid a great groundwork in her approach of anthropological science fiction when it comes to thinking alternative societies and their hierarchies.

Accordingly, I will analyze the relationship between power and discrimination and the narratives of rape cultures in literary works. I will use of the term “rape culture” as the understanding of a culture that does not only trivialize and discursively erase the existence of sexualized violence, but also accepts it as a “normal” expression of human sexuality. Furthermore, due to the binary construction of gender, which conceptualizes one (woman) as “weaker” and the other (man) as “stronger,” the weaker one is victimized

much more frequently and, thus, sexualized violence is deeply entrenched in the structure of such a society. To stress the direct connection between sexualized violence and violence and power, I prefer using the term “sexualized violence” to “sexual violence” or “sexual abuse.”

I will explore sexualized violence to identify the relationship between the oppression of individual characters and the worlds they inhabit. I will discuss several novels and short stories by Le Guin: *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974), *The Word for World is Forest* (1972), and “A Woman’s Liberation” (1995). My paper will not only highlight Le Guin’s feminist criticisms of sexualized violence/rape culture, violence, colonialism, and

# DAN HASSLER-FOREST

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

PANEL A1: FRANCHISING

SR34.D2, DEC 6, 3PM

sexism, but also try to establish an intersectional approach to sexuality and consent in her work.

## TRANSMEDIA WORLDBUILDING AND INDUSTRIAL CONVERGENCE IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

In a media landscape where the most profitable media franchises are based on comic books and the most vocal audiences are gamers, every entertainment conglomerate is reaching for the brass ring of accessible and immersive transmedia worldbuilding. The Disney Company has mastered this game more than any other, as *Star Wars* and the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* have become the most profitable global media franchises. Every other transnational media corpora-

tion is trying to replicate this set of interlocking narrative, industrial, and communicative strategies, albeit with varying degrees of success.

In this talk, I will discuss the implications of this media strategy from the perspective of political economy. Using the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* as my primary case study, my paper will foreground how the complex ecosystem that has been carefully cultivated around this central media property combines communication strategies and narrative conventions from the comic book industry, while adapting its communications and promotional tactics to a media environment where gamer culture has become a powerful online subculture that must simultaneously be courted and condemned.

## GEROLD HAYNALY

INDEPENDENT

**PANEL F5: ROGUES THREE**

**SR34.K3, DEC 8, 9AM**

## CHRISTINA HEINEN

UNIVERSITY OF OLDENBURG

**PANEL A2: WORLDBUILDING**

**BEYOND STORYTELLING**

**SR34.K1, DEC 6, 3PM**

### **PERRY RHODAN: THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SCIENCE FICTION BOOK SERIES EVER WRITTEN**

Aliens, faster-than-light ships, time travel, colonization, and war—the universe of Germany’s longest-running science fiction series has always been a mirror of its time. *Perry Rhodan* author Gerold Haynaly will discuss 57 years of ongoing adventures.

### **MUSIC OF BLACK HOLES AND SOUNDS FROM SPACE: LIGO SONIFICATION AND THEIR CREATIVE SIDE-EFFECTS**

In 2016, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) detected cosmic gravitational waves. Scientists used sonifica-

tion processes to turn two black holes spinning around and smashing into each other into acoustic data. Soon, these sound phenomena were presented as astronomic acoustic proof and paraphrased as sounds from space, such as “Einstein’s Unfinished Symphony” and “Sounds from the Distant Universe”—titles which mis-communicate the original scientific aims, but sonically made up stories of distant black holes, closely linked to science fiction.

Although most people know that what they are listening to is not physically “astronomic sound” or “the sound of black holes,” these acoustic representations and the prospect of listening to something from space is a popular idea which fires up people’s imaginations and

# ERIN HORÁKOVÁ

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

PANEL A3: PERFORMING WORLDS

SR24.K2, DEC 6, 3PM

inspires creativity. While music producers present their LIGO remixes on YouTube, which invite the listener to go “beyond,” scientists create new genres of literature and blog posts, in which science and fiction get intermingled. This paper will engage with these aesthetic side-effects by illustrating both the creative manipulation of LIGO sound data and the figurative discourses of “astronomic sound.”

## IV, IV \$, V

Many entertainment options involve prerequisite purchasing decisions, but gaming is unique in being deeply economic in the actual activity of play. Resource and project management, engine building, and worker placement become

the stuff of playbor. Science-fictional themes are the most popular subject of eurogames. How do science-fictional board games realize their economic themes differently than other forms of science-fictional media? What are the potentialities of this developing form?

The title of my paper is taken from popular space opera empire builder *Race for the Galaxy* (2007), which allows players to produce a variety of resources on appropriate planets (move option V), harvest these for double victory points (option IV), or turn them into cards (option IV) that, when played (or spent/discarded to enable another card to be played), will allow players to settle worlds (option III) and construct a variety of mechanical “developments” that will build

# ERIN HORÁKOVÁ

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

PANEL C3: SCARCITY & ABUNDANCE

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their tableaux-engine (option II).

This survey will look at a variety of thematic and mechanical gaming “subgenres” and explore titles like the cyberpunk card game *Android: Netrunner* (2012–18), with its corporation vs. hacker duel system. It will also touch on the more “hard SF” corporate wrangles of *Terraforming Mars* (2016) and the agrarian steampunk area control resource generation game *Scythe* (2016). To my knowledge, these titles have yet to be conceptualized and discussed as economic play systems, or considered alongside other science-fictional media. This is perhaps something of a lacuna, for while board games are hard-pressed to compete with, for example, novels in terms of narrative, they offer SF some-

thing quite unique as vehicles for iteration, involving experience and thought experiment.

## THE FUTURE—WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE?

How does sf television imagine the post-economic? In *Doctor Who* (1963–89; 2005–), the title character is a free agent almost entirely beyond reliance on resources. He dips into various situations to perform labor or skim experiences and materials, but does not lastingly enter into the chain of consequences associated with given places and times. But is the Doctor, a Time Lord, truly post-economic, or does he simply occupy a privileged role familiar from many classic swashbuckler narratives, which relegate the responsibilities involved in their protagonists' aris-

tocratic positions to the background in favor of presenting them as agents with limitless opportunities for movement and intervention? It is, at least, an individualist treatment of post-scarcity.

The more communal *Star Trek* presents us with an economy that, after *TOS* (1966–69), transitions beyond the use of currency, yet is still energy-reliant (replicator use is rationed) and dependent on the acquisition of difficult or impractical to replicate materials. Causality and consequences remain important in this future, and people almost universally elect to perform jobs according to a utopian News from Nowhere logic (though with less transient and voluntary labour conditions). It's not clear whether a Federation citizen can opt out of pursuing some

employment, but it is fairly evident that this society could support its citizens' basic subsistence with negligible labor; that the Federation "makes work" for itself (*TNG* [1987–94] suggests as much). While we briefly see punitive prison labour in *Voyager* (1995–2001; which drifted far from the logic of *TOS*), we don't get much insight into how the Federation sources its sanitation engineers, how people gain or lose the right to live on Earth itself, and what motivates colonial settlement.

While neither program requires its core protagonist(s) to work to live, these characters choose intensive vocational work to give their lives meaning. More people will see series like these than will read, for example, Iain M. Banks'

# MIRANDA IOSSIFIDIS

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

PANEL D4: SF BECOMES REAL(ITY)

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*Culture* series. The television series' lengths give them a chance to show their economic paradigms playing out in a variety of (sometimes jangling and mutually unintelligible) ways. Thus, by talking about these major depictions of "post-economic" futures, we can discuss what sf, pretty much the only artform dealing with the question, presents to mainstream, non-fannish audiences as possible ways for people and societies to operate after scarcity.

## USES OF SCIENCE FICTION: EVERYDAY READERS, AMBIGUOUS HOPEFULNESS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This paper will explore creative and interpretive responses to Octavia Butler's *Parable* series

and Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach Trilogy*. These texts have been mobilized by artists and activists in relation to urban and environmental justice activism as well as approaches foregrounding the centrality of racial capitalism to ecological devastation (Pulido & de Lara 2018), but they are also objects of more private, mundane, and low-key readerly interest and pleasure.

My paper will draw on data from the *Prospecting Futures* online project. This research has focused on everyday online reading practices, exploring how readers are invested in discussing science fiction, and the different possibilities that online spaces create for readers to collectively, creatively, and critically (re)imagine them-

# MLADEN JAKOVLJEVIĆ & MILAN M. ĆIRKOVIĆ

UNIVERSITY OF K. MITROVICA  
& ASTRONOMICAL  
OBSERVATORY OF BELGRADE

PANEL A4: COHERENCE  
AND DECOHERENCE  
SR24.K3, DEC 6, 3PM

selves, the world, and futures. Focusing on the ways in which these books are nourishing and generative for different readers, the articulation of ambiguous hopefulness, distinguished from “confidence” through its careful grounding in the material conditions of the present.

## DE/COHERENCE IN PHILIP K. DICK'S *UBIK* AND *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*

Philip K. Dick's worldbuilding mechanisms call for the deconstruction and reconstruction of the idea of reality by pushing the horizon of expectations far beyond the classical set of genre tropes. His novels *Ubik* (1969) and *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) confront both the char-

acters and readers with a plurality of realities, which are (potentially) fictional. The existence of alternate worlds in these two novels, their relationships, and the concomitant disintegration of borders can be interpreted by applying the scientific principles of decoherence, as formulated by H. Dieter Zeh and Hugh Everett III. This set of solutions to the perennial ontological puzzles of quantum worlds is characterized by the rejection of the observer's special status in physical reality and the perpetual, fractal branching of the state of the universe.

According to the scientific principle of decoherence, not only would all parallel worlds within the multiverses of *Ubik* and *The Man in the High Castle* be equally real and actualized, but

# MAXIMILIANO JIMÉNEZ

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

PANEL A2: WORLDBUILDING

BEYOND STORYTELLING

SR34.K1, DEC 6, 3PM

there would also be no need to “choose” the final state of the protagonists and to single out one reality as actual, or more real than the others, as they would all be equally real in a never-ending sequence of a universe-splitting process. Furthermore, the disintegrating borders between realities and the contact points between them challenge the principles of decoherence and inviolability of boundaries among parallel worlds, which turn *Ubik* and *The Man in the High Castle* into fictional examples of realities that have, at least at certain points, de-decohered or re-cohered, thus becoming far more coherent than they seem on the surface. In more than one sense, it is possible to draw a literary parallel with the thought experiments constructed in sci-

entific discourse in an attempt to indirectly test the quantum multiverse theory.

## “GRATIFY THE DESIRES OF THE PEOPLE WHO VISIT YOUR WORLD”: IMMERSION AND FICTIONALITY IN **WESTWORLD**

Starting from the notion of cybertexts and ergodic literature (Aarseth), I will analyze the HBO TV series *Westworld* (2016–) in terms of its overt engagement with worlding and the limits of fiction. I will argue that this series aligns thematically with other works that, by means of a blurring of the boundaries between fiction and reality, bring to the fore relevant considerations about world construction and engagement.

*Westworld*, which dramatizes the interactive,

immersive experience of literally visiting a fictional world overtly explores the concept of worlding and fictionality through its different narrative levels and arcs: the “hosts” of the park—human-like androids unaware of their ontological status—gradually gain consciousness thanks to the painful recollection of what they are forced to endure, while the “guests”—visitors who pay to enter and play in this simulated reality—rely on the thrilling, unmediated, and seemingly improvised narratives of the park to be freed of “the real world.” Tellingly, the series also focalizes on those in charge of running the park, and the motif of the writers that design the storylines of the hosts is presented in relation to the exploitation and commodification of pleasure and desire so

as to perpetuate the success of the park.

Accordingly, I will analyze how the narrative strategies of *Westworld*—through a metafictional lens that is prominent given the evincing of fictional elements in the park’s stories—manage to involve the viewer in a “game” similar to that played by the guests, for the series alternates between different narrative arcs that echo common takes of literary texts as labyrinths (Aarseth). Ultimately, by exploring how the visitors engage with and experience the park, I will draw parallels with the experience of the viewer as “immersed” in the narrative of *Westworld* and the overall implications of blurring the reality-diegesis dichotomy for contemporary notions of fiction.

# STEPHEN JOYCE

AARHUS UNIVERSITY  
PANEL A1: FRANCHISING  
SR34.D2, DEC 6, 3PM

## RIGHTS REGIMES AND FRANCHISE GUARDIANS

Why do some transmedia franchises succeed and others fail? This paper will examine the relative success and failure of *The Terminator* and *The Walking Dead* as transmedia storyworlds. While *The Walking Dead* has broken new ground across a least three different platforms, with critically acclaimed comics, TV series, and video games, *The Terminator* has repeatedly tried to relaunch as a viable transmedia franchise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and three times met with failure. My paper will focus on three aspects of these franchises: rights regimes, world paradoxes, and franchise guardians.

*The Terminator* has struggled due to an un-

stable rights regime, with rights passing from the original creator to several external parties, each of whom has had a different creative vision for the franchise's development, leading to confusion and contradiction. *The Walking Dead*, in contrast, has benefited from the zombie apocalypse's open rights regime, which has made the zombie a public domain monster rather than valuable intellectual property. In terms of worldbuilding, *The Walking Dead* benefits from a primary focus on the world's ethos, so expansions are judged by fidelity to the series' characteristic moral dilemmas rather than plot continuity, whereas *The Terminator* is defined by the grandfather paradox created by the canonical first two films in the series. Finally, fan

## VICTOR KENNEDY

UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR

PANEL F5: ROGUES THREE

SR34.K3, DEC 8, 9AM

acceptance of transmedia expansions has been strongly influenced by the role of the franchise guardians, figures that fans look to in order to protect the integrity of the storyworld. Whereas James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger have overshadowed attempts to expand *The Terminator* beyond their influence, Robert Kirkman is a nearly ideal franchise guardian who supports *The Walking Dead* expansions across multiple platforms. These comparisons illuminate some factors influencing the success of transmedia franchises.

### THE ICONS OF SCIENCE FICTION AS DEPICTED IN ANIMATED CARTOONS

Conventions commonly associated with science

fiction include the future, “futuristic” science and technology, time machines, time and space travel, other worlds, robots, and aliens. All of these icons repeatedly appear in sf novels and films and have become a part of mainstream culture. During the twentieth century, these sf icons reached a wider audience through animated cartoons, including several Warner Brothers Bugs Bunny cartoons featuring Marvin the Martian and Frankenstein’s monster (1937–64), time travel in the Peabody and Sherman segments of *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* (1959–64), “futuristic” technology and weaponry in Wile E. Coyote’s fascination with Acme Corporation’s gadgets (1949–64), the future in *The Jetsons* (1962–63), and all of these, plus mad scientists,

## **WOJCIECH KLEPUSZEWSKI**

**KOSZALIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**PANEL C1: ROGUES ONE**

**SR34.K3 (SKYPE), DEC 7, 9.15AM**

## **MIRIAM KÖBERL** **UNIVERSITY OF KLAGENFURT**

**PANEL F4: POST-/  
TRANS-/NONHUMAN WORLDS**

**SR34.K1, DEC 8, 9AM**

in *Dexter's Laboratory* (1996–2003). Most of these cartoon representations poke gentle fun at science and scientists, but their ironic flouting of conventions reveals deeply-held anxieties about the direction our technology-driven society is taking.

### **BOOJLY, BANDY, AND RED BIDDY: THE FUTURE OF DRINK IN KINGSLEY AMIS' FICTION**

Alcohol plays a dominant theme or appears as a highly charged image in numerous sf works., including Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* (1979), Lois McMaster Bujold's *Vorkosigan Saga* (1986–), and William Gibson's novels. However, some of Kingsley Amis' science

fiction stories focus entirely on alcohol. In his four short stories, "The 2003 Claret" (1958), "The Friends of Plonk" (1964), "Too Much Trouble" (1972), and "Investing in Futures" (1987), Amis employs the concept of time travel in order to fictionalize the future of alcohol. My paper will investigate this particular aspect of Amis' fiction within the context of sf literature penned by other writers.

### **CROSSING THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE HUMAN AND THE ALIEN IN SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI**

*Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* (1999) begins with a human-alien contrast, with humans arriving on an alien planet. In the ending with the most

## **RICARDA KRENN**

**UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ**

**PANEL G1: STAR TREK II:**

**BEFORE DISCOVERY**

**SR34.04, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

narrative support, this stark human–alien contrast is resolved. By uploading themselves into the planetary consciousness, humans become a part of their new world and the boundaries of humanity are extended to include what would previously have been thought to be completely alien. This paper will examine the representation of the alien planet in the game and will focus on how humanity alters the planet and the planet, in turn, alters humanity.

### **EVERYBODY COMES TO QUARK'S: LOOKING AT STAR TREK: DS9 THROUGH THE LENS OF CASABLANCA**

Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942) has been described as an “accidental masterpiece” and

remains a beloved cult classic to this day. In a way, the same label could be attached to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1993–99), which was intended to more or less play second fiddle to the very successful *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–94). It was an experimental project that turned into an unexpected classic.

The similarities between *Casablanca* and *DS9* are neither tidy nor exact, in large part because of the extreme disparity in the length of the material. *Casablanca* runs under two hours, meaning that there is not even one minute of film for every episode of *DS9*, which lasted for an impressive 176 episodes. Yet, there are a number of similarities and parallels and this paper aims to view *DS9* and the way it constructs a (nation-

al) identity for its characters through the lens of *Casablanca*. Even though *Star Trek* posits a post-national future, its worldbuilding bears latent albeit clear national(ist) imprints and this affects both the individual characters and the setting in which they exist. *Casablanca* takes place in a world at war, with people of many different nations trying to come to terms with the changing world and how it affects them personally, not only in terms of security, but also identity.

The paper will examine the general setting as a place where none of the characters are truly at home, yet where they have to create a home for themselves, whether through choice or circumstance. The large number of refugees and people passing through, as well as those trying

to take advantage of them is also taken into account. Subsequently, I will discuss the correspondence of individual characters to those featured in *Casablanca*, with particular attention to their choices when it comes to negotiating their often divided loyalties and senses of belonging. This takes into account the fact that in their own way, none of the human protagonists in *DS9* share in their home world's dominant narrative, which is particularly true of Sisko, who ultimately makes a choice similar to that of Rick's and decides to take a stand in a home that became his through happenstance rather than choice.

# MOJCA KREVEL

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

PANEL D1: ROGUES TWO

SR34.D2, DEC 7, 11.45AM

## THE PERIPHERY OF THE FUTURE; OR THE FUTURE OF PERIPHERY:

### WILLIAM GIBSON'S *THE PERIPHERAL*

Repeatedly asserting that in the new millennium the reality changes with a rapidity that prevents extrapolation of the present into a specific future, William Gibson positioned his *Blue Ant Trilogy* (2003–10) in realistic, contemporary settings, which, however, exhibit distinctive sf features. The shift of temporal focus has been largely attributed to the collapse of futurity upon present in the techno-cultural societies of postindustrial capitalism, where the future no longer seems “a site of meaningful difference,” and the present, due to its totalizing spatial multiplicity, gains an estranging quality, as Veronica Hollinger has

suggested. Within the ontological framework of the current phase of postmodernity, the shift of extrapolation from the temporal to the spatial axis seems inevitable, making Gibson’s “science-fiction realism” (Hollinger’s term) all but paradigmatic of the development of sf in the new millennium (see also Jameson 2005).

However, Gibson’s *The Peripheral* (2014) is set in the future—two futures, even, which has generally been hailed as Gibson’s return to his sf roots. Conversely, I will argue that the nature of the building blocks of these future worlds, their social, cultural, and economic dimensions, as well as their spatio-temporal positioning and relation actually reinforce and accelerate the main premises of science fiction realism of the *Blue*

# PELIN KÜMBET

KOCAELI UNIVERSITY

PANEL F4: POST-/  
TRANS-/NONHUMAN WORLDS  
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*Ant Trilogy*. The analyses of the properties of the conventional sf structural components in the novel, as well as of its internal structure reveal that the worlds in the novel are firmly anchored within the existing ontological order, and that the temporal dimension in fact serves to convey the categories of spatiality. In a nod to Brian McHale, we might say that *The Peripheral* translates the main premises of science fiction realism from the level of form to the level of content, making the metaphor of the future invading the present (and the ensuing Jamesonian disappearance of the historical past) literal. As such, *The Peripheral* is less an instance of Gibson's return to sf roots, as it is a diversion from them—arguably in the direction of contemporary social criticism of

Atwood, Saunders, or Alderman.

## TRANSHUMANIST WORLD- BUILDING IN RICHARD MORGAN'S ALTERED CARBON

In its transhumanist worldbuilding Richard Morgan's 2002 cyberpunk/detective noir novel *Altered Carbon* features rather dystopian, utterly bleak 25<sup>th</sup>-century far-future, where “the mighty altered-carbon technologies of data storage and retrieval” of a person's experiences, skills, feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories that we define as “consciousness” is viable. This transhumanist enhancement of the human condition is achieved with a device called “cortical stack”—a small chip implanted at the base of the neck of

a person at birth, which later may be repeatedly transferred into new bodies, or “sleeves” as they are newly called. The digitalization and cyborgization of human personality and consciousness through the “stack” also enables “needlecasting” (inter-space data-casting), which is interstellar travel between bodies, virtual realities, planets, and colonies, providing us with a mosaic of different transhumanist worldbuildings. Even though the possibility of uploading the consciousness into a “stack” constitutes the basis of worldbuilding in terms of providing a futuristic vision of biological life in hardware systems, what kind of sleeve one can get is contingent upon one’s positioning and financial status in society. The elite referred to as “Mets” can even

have their own sleeves cloned in clone replacement facilities, while the poor have to grapple with the consequences of augmented technologies, and get what they can afford with their limited budget. That is why their manual identities can end up in the body of an opposite gender, or at a different age, or race, causing complexities, and blurred genders and races.

This paper will explore the great but unequally distributed luxuries among people and the attendant uncanny possibilities at the heart of *Altered Carbon*, a novel struggling with bioethical and biopolitical implications and conundrums. My paper will question the bioconstitutionalism of life where the corporealities, ontologies, bodies, and rights are reframed in this transhumanist fu-

# KAROLINA LEBEK

UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA

**PANEL E4: ONTOLOGIES  
AND EPISTEMOLOGIES**

**SR34.D2, DEC 7, 3PM**

ture which might be ahead of us.

## **SOUND AS A PRINCIPLE OF WORLDBUILDING IN ANNA SMALL'S NOVEL *THE CHIMES***

Imaginary worlds predominantly rely on appealing to vision in their establishment of speculative ontologies, which in literary works means the dominance of the vocabulary connected to the visible, with the remaining senses relegated to the position of accessories responsible for detailing and sensual depth. *The Chimes*, a novel published in 2015, offers an unprecedented exception to this representational and communicative principle by employing a complex sonic and musical imagery, ranging from the merely

sensual to highly technical vocabularies in its dystopian worldbuilding and storytelling. With its emphasis on listening and the immediacy of experience, the novel creates a world that unfolds in the dynamics of everyday sonic events and the experience of the characters in the present, which results in the radical truncation of the past and the future (enhanced by the first person narration done in present tense).

The aim of my paper is to explore this aural complexity to show how author Anna Small translates the aesthetic experience of the phenomenological onto metaphorical language. In terms of perception and affect, the acoustic world serves as a means of cognition, orientation, spatial exploration, and inhabitation of the

# ALEXANDER LEHNER

UNIVERSITY OF AUGSBURG

PANEL F2: REGENERATIVE PLAY

SR34.K2, DEC 8, 9AM

world including participation in forms of togetherness (relying on the phenomenon of phonemesis in the readers); metaphor, in turn, frames understanding of ethical, social and political dimensions. In such resonance between the actual and the metaphorical, Smaill achieves a high degree of world coherence and consistency of her dystopia, with a strong imperative to rebel against such forms of oppressive power as expressed, surprisingly, in the notions of harmony and attunement. Instead, the novel champions subversive categories of noise, cacophony, and dysrhythmia as liberating sonic forces.

## REGENERATIVE PLAY AND EMPATHY: PREY AS AN EXAMPLE OF—AND REFLECTION ON—THE AESTHETIC POTENTIAL OF VIDEO GAMES

My talk will deal with the regenerative power of videogames, exemplified and reflected upon by *Prey* (2017) and supported by the theoretical approaches of Hubert Zapf (2016) and Alexa Weik von Mossner (2017). The game's narrative and gameplay are intertwined to advocate the aesthetic potential of video games: in a final twist, it is revealed that the whole narrative was set-up to teach an alien mimic empathy via a game-like simulation. This is examined according to the player's emphatic level; did she show compassion or did she go on a mindless killing-spree?

## PASCAL LEMAIRE

INDEPENDENT

PANEL C3: SCARCITY & ABUNDANCE

SR34.04, DEC 7, 9.15AM

If successful, the player can become the ambassador between the two species; or decide to kill everybody.

This evaluation becomes meaningful in this context through *Prey*'s open design which allows the player a tremendous amount of freedom in her choices. Thus, the act of play becomes a way to achieve understanding for an unknown entity by inhabiting it and acting as it. *Prey* engages in a rhetoric which sees video games as a means to facilitating empathy and, consequently, with the potential to breach the gap between the human and the non-human. Of course, this needs to be accepted by the player. She can voice this through her last decision: if her actions have been approved, she can neglect this concept

and kill the researcher or take his hand in affirmation of the (potential) future.

While offering insight into broader issues like human greed, capitalism and its terminal impact on the world, *Prey* presents video games as an opportunity for the player to learn about the Other by inhabiting their role and, in turn, to create empathy with the formerly unknown, which can be understood as a step towards a utopian society—if it is accepted by the player.

### STEAMPUNKING ROME: ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGY IN ALTERNATE HISTORY—THE CASE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

While the steampunk genre is mainly concerned

with the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, one can find a number of uchronic texts trying to introduce new technologies and sciences to the Roman Empire, either in its historical context or in descriptions of its evolution past its historical downfall. This is in part due to the relative popularity of ancient engineers such as Hero of Alexandria, whose description of steam-powered marvels open the tantalizing question of what if they had been transformed into operational machinery.

Elements such as the fall of the Roman Empire are often linked to the use, or lack thereof, of technology, especially mass production technologies in uchronic texts—the underlying idea being that more means of production would have

helped the economy and would have been a factor in crushing the barbarians, slavery being the supposed reason for this lack of developpement.

Yet most often the writers of such alternate history seem to have little to no knowledge of historical debates on the place of machinery and technology in the Roman economy, and the work of scholars such as Andrew Wilson is not taken into account in their thinking. This is also in opposition to discourses in a similar uchronic context about the economy of the Confederate States of America and the importance of slavery, where modern scholarship has been more efficient in reaching the general population.

Instead, old economic theories inherited from ideological debates from the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-centu-

# KARIN LINGNAU

ACADEMY OF MEDIA ARTS COLOGNE

PANEL A3: PERFORMING WORLDS

SR24.K2, DEC 6, 3PM

ry still inform the views of most writers and of their readers about the ancient economy. This lack of knowledge is also reflected in the lack of consideration for the importance of the Indian Ocean trade for the Roman Empire, among other issues.

The present paper will thus aim to map Roman technology and economy in alternate histories of various authors from Lyon Sprague de Camps, up to recent timelines and discussion threads published on the site [alternatohistory.com](http://alternatohistory.com). Novels by authors such as Robert Silverberg and Sophia McDougall will also be examined, as will some non-sf historical novels, all with the goal of identifying trends and bias that may also be present in other science fiction contexts.

## SCIENCE, FICTION, AND (ECOLOGICAL) REALITY: THE USE OF GAME ENGINES AS AN ARTISTIC TOOL IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF EXTRAPOLATED REALITIES

In her transmedia installation project *No habrá servicios ...* (2016), artist Nieves de la Fuente Gutiérrez explored ecological and ethical questions relating to the industry of mineral extraction by using gaming and installative elements. Based on her personal connection to the history of mining in a certain region of Spain, scientific and historic events and facts create the background for a general reflection on this topic. The personal stories and images of local people merge with research of NASA simulations

of resource mining on Mars to create a complex narrative about the extrapolation of geopolitics into a science fiction scenario and the critical reflection on exploitation and the abuse of natural resources, terrestrial and extra-terrestrial.

Different expanded formats show further explorations and angles of her approach. For example, a publication which fuses real-world photography with game engine-generated images to produce collages and sequences of landscape photography, mars rover selfies and screenshots, thereby blurring the distinctions of their physical and digital origins and addressing the materiality of virtuality. Fictional and nonfictional elements merge into a state of immediate fuzziness, questioning perceptions as well as the

possibilities to communicate within and through contemporary imagery and content. The artist herself intervenes with her work in a live radio feature by manipulating the virtual landscape in real time on stage.

As I will show, this work exemplifies the use of game worldbuilding and science fiction-based thinking in an artistic context without prioritizing one over the other. This application of science-fictional thinking can serve as a method to understand and reflect contemporary societies and realities.

# SARAH LOHMANN

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

PANEL E1: GREENING SF

SR34.K3, DEC 7, 3PM

## A UTOPIA WITHOUT US: ECOFEMINISM, THE ANTHROPOCENE, AND THE PARADOX OF THE NONHUMAN UTOPIA

Building worlds does seem to necessitate the building of hierarchies—however, this appears to especially be the case for the earliest examples of utopian literature, such as More's genre-defining text and Plato's *Republic*, as well as traditional socialist utopias of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the likes of Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Edward Bellamy. On the other hand, the feminist utopian visions of the 1960s and 1970s that Tom Moylan has dubbed “critical utopias” by authors such as Marge Piercy and Joanna Russ, seem by their very nature to usurp traditional hierarchies in their pursuit of utopian equality. Some of these

novels do so by setting up utopian worlds that can, in fact, be described as examples of self-organizing and self-optimizing systems which are only capable of functioning as flat hierarchies without top-down government and leadership systems.

And yet, feminism is no guarantee for universal equality in 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary utopias. In novels such as Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) and Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), discriminatory gender essentialism is maintained through an inversion of privilege. Moreover, and perhaps more interestingly from a philosophical perspective, some feminist utopian texts, such as *Memoirs* and Joan Slonczewski's *A Door into*

*Ocean* (1986), display both clearly hierarchical and ethically dubious relationships between the inhabitants of utopia and the nonhuman communities they either explore or co-habit utopia with—be they aliens, nonhuman animals, or the utopian environment itself.

Paradoxically, these ethically inconsistent narratives came about during the rise of ecological awareness in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with its intersectional significance in relation to feminism—a fact which Slonczewski herself went on to note and lament with regard to *Ocean*. This raises the question, then, of whether it is, in fact, possible for humans to fully conceive of a utopia that is also non-hierarchical and utopian for all its nonhuman members when even ecofeminists

struggle to construct such a thing—or whether we are always necessarily bound by our limited anthropic viewpoint and lack of understanding beyond the confines of our own species. Conversely, does our destructive and all-consuming influence on Earth in the Anthropocene mean that the only utopia that counts as such for our nonhuman co-inhabitants must be one that in fact includes no humans at all, as envisaged by Alan Weisman in *The World Without Us* (2007)? And are we even capable of fully imagining such a world?

Exploring the utopian limitations of *Memoirs* and *Ocean* in particular and drawing on Lori Gruen's work on animal ethics, Mick Smith's defense of radical ecology through the critique of

## TOM LUBEK

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

**PANEL G2: BEYOND PETROMODERNITY II:  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES  
SR34.D2 (SKYPE), DEC 8, 3.30PM**

sovereign power, and Val Plumwood's ecofeminist thoughts regarding the inevitability of anthropocentrism, I will in this paper attempt to disentangle the notion of utopia from its hierarchy-laden human roots, thereby investigating the possibly profound significance of a nonhuman utopia—and why this is something we would even want to consider.

### **IMAGINING BEYOND PETRO- CULTURAL ANGST: WORLD- ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN OCTAVIA E. BUTLER'S KINDRED**

This paper will present a case study drawn from my ongoing doctoral research; a world-ecological reading of Octavia E. Butler's SF novel *Kin-*

*dred* (1979). Deploying emergent worlded and energized reading practices that examine the activist “resistive and world-(re)fashioning” (to use Claire Westall's expression), my research explores how what I describe as speculative world-fictions debunk what Imre Szeman has called the “bad faith of the present” that “we can continue to be who we are now” under different work/energy systems. To that end, this paper suggests that Butler's novel roots neoliberal capital's production of a racialized “surplus humanity” as Cheap Labour (Davis 2006) in the material legacies of the capitalist technics of enslavement. In doing so, it stages a coming to world-ecological consciousness which begins the important work of opening imaginative spac-

# CHRISTIAN LUDWIG

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION KARLSRUHE

PANEL B4: SEX & GENDER

SR24.K3, DEC 6, 5.30PM

es from which alternative futures properly attentive to what Jason Moore has called the “singular metabolism of humanity-in-nature,” might be contemplated.

## “WHAT ARE LITTLE BOYS MADE OF?” REPRESENTATIONS OF SEX AND GENDER BEYOND THE BINARY IN THE STAR TREK UNIVERSE AND THEIR POTENTIALS FOR THE EFL CLASSROOM

Science fiction writers have for a long time explored and revised conventional notions of gender. While this may be especially true for women writers or female characters, speculative fiction and science fiction have increasingly extended the idea of gender, today including all forms of

sex, gender, and sexuality from homo- or transsexual humans to gender-fluid or even genderless aliens.

This presentation will focus on the representation of gender in *Star Trek*, suggesting new perspectives on gender in science fiction in general and, more specifically, on how examples from the *Star Trek* universe can enrich a gender-sensitive EFL classroom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, it is surprising that *Star Trek* only plays a marginal role in EFL classrooms (if at all), especially considering the firm place films and TV shows have established in foreign language learning environments around the world.

Against this background, the aim of this presentation is to report on the results of a small-

scale classroom project which was conducted in the context of a seminar on teaching science fiction and fantasy literature. Considering the sheer number of *Star Trek* series and films, spanning more than fifty years, the study was limited to the analysis of three *Star Trek* spin-offs of *The Original Series* (1966–69)—*The Next Generation* (1987–94), and *Deep Space Nine* (1993–99), and *Voyager* (1995–2001). In the context of the exploratory learning project discussed in this talk, students from the University of Education Karlsruhe, Germany, showed selected episodes and scenes from the aforementioned series with students from a lower secondary school in Germany, exploring the multifaceted ways of world-building in the *Star Trek* franchise. In a second

step, the students discussed how *Star Trek* reflects on the concerns, beliefs, and anxieties of our (past as well as present) society. During the main part of the project, students engaged with selected illustrations of sex- and gender-related issues in the episodes. These included, but were by no means limited to, traditional and alternative gender roles, the lack of sex/gender, as well as androgynous, hermaphroditic, and transgender forms and ways of life. By engaging with the examples, students gained the opportunity to decode and address gender issues from an outsider's insider perspective. The talk will conclude with sample responses to the project by both the university as well as students.

# JERRY MÄÄTTÄ

UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

PANEL C2: WORDS & WORLDS

SR34.D2, DEC 7, 9.15AM

## MINIMALIST WORLDBUILDING AND SF POETRY: THE NEOLOGISMS, NAMES, AND ALLUSIONS OF HARRY MARTINSON'S ANIARA

In October 1953, as he was reading the page proofs for his latest collection of poetry, *Cikada*, Swedish author, poet, and future Nobel laureate Harry Martinson started to recite science fiction poetry to his then-wife Ingrid. In the same year, science fiction had been launched on the Swedish book market as a distinct new genre, and Martinson's poems showed some uncanny resemblances to one of the books that had just been published in Swedish, Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), which Martinson would later claim as one of the most important

literary works of the decade.

Within a few weeks, Martinson had enough poems to include them in *Cikada* (1953) as "Sången om Doris och Mima" ("The Song of Doris and Mima"). The 29 cantos were, however, soon expanded into the 103 cantos of the full-fledged epic *Aniara* (1956), which tells the entire story of its eponymous spacecraft, headed for Mars with colonists from an Earth on the brink of nuclear war, but which, after a near-collision with an asteroid, drifts off into space, with its increasingly desperate crew and passengers seeking comfort in various forms of art, entertainment, sex, and religion.

Even though Harry Martinson's *Aniara* is one of the most canonical works of 20<sup>th</sup>-centu-

# GRAHAM MACDONALD

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

**PANEL G2: BEYOND PETROMODERNITY II:  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES**

**SR34.D2, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

ry Swedish literature, adapted numerous times (into operas, musicals, music albums, a graphic novel, and with a film adaptation underway) and still being taught in schools, very few studies have actually related it to science fiction other than in passing. Most scholarly readings tend to view Martinson's neologisms as mostly word play, and his science-fictional elements are most often interpreted symbolically or metaphorically—with the spaceship *Aniara* standing for Earth, and its AI or supercomputer, the Mima, seen as a symbol for the arts.

But what if one were to take Martinson's worldbuilding seriously, and look at *Aniara* from a purely science-fictional point of view? What kind of far-future world do the cantos of *Aniara*

depict, how do they go about it, and what details and clues as to its history, cultures, and languages are we really given in Martinson's frequent neologisms, fanciful names, and their contemporary, often linguistic, allusions? And, perhaps even more crucially, how minimally is it possible to construct a convincing, living sf world, and with what granularity is this really achievable in science fiction poetry?

## **MONSTERS IN THE FORECOURT: SF'S GAS STATIONS AS FUTURE ENERGYSCAPES**

This paper will focus on how sf worlds prove a significant critical fulcrum for imagining a world beyond petromodernity. It will do so by engag-

ing with a crucial space where the powerfully affective experiences of petrotopia are produced—and reproduced—by the image-work of energy infrastructures: gas stations. As enabling and culturally resonant sites bearing both luminous promise and foreboding ecology, service stations figure as threshold worlds throughout copious examples of the (post)oil imaginary. My paper will track a number of examples available in sf fiction, film, and visual culture, and demonstrate how their rendering of this crucial world of the petroleumscape can be interpreted as generative zones for considering energy futures.

Populated by cyborgs, vampires, weird monsters, and humans struggling in a world of Anthropocene disorder, the forecourt becomes an

sf world capable of informing debates over energy's utopian and dystopian prowess; the misguided promises of retrofuturism; the futuristic violence of past and future forms of automobility. It has also registered as a fantasy world of petro-nostalgia and mourning for a fallen petroculture, conveying some of the speculative fantasies—and problems—of the post-oil imaginary as presently conceived. The paper will ultimately consider these scenes as—consciously or otherwise—problematizing any notion of a happy return to the kind of experience identified with the futurological waves of petromodern culture in the twentieth century, its exuberance replaced by the “dread” aspects embedded within the apocalyptic immanence of a high-carbon society

# ROBERA MAIERHOFER

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ

**PANEL G3: AGE & AGING**

**SR34.K2, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

and its climate breakdowns. Despite the considerable PR work of energy capital and its oil-vested features to maintain the semiotics of oil (but also, now, renewables and the future conception of highway infrastructure) within a bright techno-utopianism, these dystopic realms of oil's enduring monsters generate considerable drag. They continue to imbue petroinfrastructure with an unshakably dark ecological aesthetic, but they remain crucial terrain to engage. Nowhere, then, is this struggle between two visions of a future with and without oil better registered than in the image-world of the service station. In order to fully imagine an energyscape beyond petromodernity, I argue that we need better understand the service station's enduringly monstrous

worldbuilding appeal.

## **THE REAL AND THE IMAGINED: SPECULATIONS ON AGE AND AGING AS A HUMAN CONDITION**

Representations of science fiction universes question in radical ways prevalent assumptions, such as our confidence in science and progress, presumptions about the place of (wo)man in the order of nature, and the acceptance of exploitation of others on various levels. When Ursula Le Guin was announced as the recipient of the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2014, the National Book Foundation in America emphasized the power of science and fiction "to challenge readers to

## E. LEIGH MCKAGEN

VIRGINIA TECH UNIVERSITY

PANEL G2: STAR TREK II:

BEFORE DISCOVERY

SR34.04, DEC 8, 3.30PM

consider profound philosophical and existential questions about gender, race, the environment, and society.” In her essay “The Space Crone” (1976), Le Guin suggests an old woman as “an exemplary person” to explain to friendly aliens from the fourth planet of Altair the human condition as a constant form of transformation in order for them to understand “the nature of the race.” In my paper, I will pay tribute to Le Guin’s theoretical considerations of existential challenges and “the incredible realities of our existence” in terms of gender and age. Imagining different worlds allows us—in reference to Le Guin’s definition of selfhood—to understand the matrix of time and experience and our own impermanence.

### IMPERIAL WORLDING: ADVENTURE NARRATIVES, EMPIRE, AND BRAVE NEW WORLDS IN STAR TREK: VOYAGER

In her recent book *Staying With the Trouble* (2016), Donna Haraway argues that practices of worlding are significant in our current era of environmental crisis—she often repeats that it matters what stories we tell other stories with, and therefore it matters what worlds we tell other worlds with, especially through the stories we tell. This paper will use Haraway as a starting point to explore the world building of *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995–2001) and argue that, though set adrift and removed from their home in the Alpha Quadrant, the crew of *Voyager* imposes their imperial Federation/Starfleet directives and

practices, ultimately enabling our imagination of a fully functioning American empire anywhere in the galaxy.

I will begin this analysis by exploring how *Voyager* functions as a dual adventure/imperial narrative. I draw on Martin Green's exploration of how classic adventure narratives were fundamental to the British imperial project in the age of New Imperialism and served as the "energizing myth of empire." Edward Said expanded this diagnosis to other kinds of stories (including Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* [1816]), noting that these stories were fundamental to the actualization of empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the "imagination of empire." I will then explore instances of *Voyager*'s world-

building through the interaction between the crew and numerous individuals and civilizations in their seven years spent in the Delta Quadrant to explore how the crew (and audiences) gradually gain familiarity with their new world to demonstrate how the actions taken by the *Voyager* crew reinforce, recreate, and re-inscribe imperial Federation policies and practices through the "lost in space" adventure narrative. These practices of worlding matter, since this story ultimately projects the ruins of American post-Cold War Empire and imperial politics and culture into the far reaches of outer space.

# LISA MEINECKE

UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH  
PANEL F3: HUMANS AND/AS  
ARTIFICIAL CREATURES  
SR34.04, DEC 8, 9AM

## MY OWN HUMANITY: (POST-) HUMANIST WORLDINGS IN THE STAR TREK UNIVERSE

Gene Roddenberry's decided (and occasionally stubborn) humanism is indubitably the ideological foundation for all incarnations of *Star Trek*. Its humans not only share universal cultural traits and values, but they are characterized as overall just and righteous creatures. They have collectively overcome negative social and political patterns, such as violence and greed, and are now driven by curiosity and the desire to become better. Introducing the posthuman allows for this narrative to become contested in a variety of ways. The android Data desires to be more human in order to fit into his social environment

and thus tentatively examines the boundaries of humanism and the liminal space between human and machine. His brother Lore is less firmly rooted in the federation's anthropocentrism and in turn problematizes Data's narrative: if the posthuman is physically and logically superior, the legitimacy of universal humanism is called into question. The monstrous collectivity of the Borg again stands fundamentally opposed to the core of *Star Trek's* ideology: The Borg are mindless, voracious, ahistoric, and hive-like, they dissolve any individual subjectivity.

This paper will trace and contextualize post-humanist narratives in the *Star Trek* universe in order to zero in on sites of contested (post-) humanities where the ideological structures at

# DIETMAR MEINEL

UNIVERSITY OF DUISBURG-ESSEN

PANEL C1: MOVEMENT IS KEY

SR34.K1, DEC 7, 9.15AM

the root of the franchise are questioned and the boundaries between the human and the technicized Other starts to blur.

## **RUNNING A NEOLIBERAL WORLD: MOVEMENT IN SPACE AND CORPORATE DYSTOPIA IN MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST**

From *Pong* (1972) to *Pac-Man* (1980), from *Space Invaders* (1978) to *Donkey Kong* (1981), video games have always been about movement in (virtual) space. While navigating a digital world continues to be an essential feature of modern-day first-person shooters, open-world games, competitive fighting games, and MMORPGs, movement in space mostly functions

as an appendage to the core game mechanics in contemporary video games. A rare exception, *Mirror's Edge Catalyst* (2016) puts players in the shoes of a female courier runner and asks them to sprint, jump, glide, and climb through a high-tech metropolis of the near future to deliver information at the highest possible speed.

My paper will address experiences of space with particular attention to how the game scripts urban environments via movement, level design, gameplay mechanics, and narrative elements to build a dystopian world. In maneuvering the urban surveillance landscape of a futuristic global city, players experience space as neither 19<sup>th</sup>-century flaneurs nor 20<sup>th</sup>-century drivers or 21<sup>st</sup>-century digital urbanites. Instead, the video

# LOREDANA MIHANI

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ  
PANEL F5: ROGUES THREE  
SR34.K3, DEC 8, 9AM

game fantasy of an able, female body seamlessly traversing a hyper-modern landscape invites questions about the nature of the city of the future and its layering of private, public, and commercial places, transitional spaces, and non-places. As *Mirror's Edge Catalyst* tells a story about resistance against totalitarian corporate control, my presentation will examine not only the scripting of urban space through the (in)ability to move therein but also the intimate links to its vision of a neoliberal self and political revolt. I will argue that *Mirror's Edge Catalyst* builds a dystopian world and its (possible) end by immersing players in digital experiences of space via movement by mediating older, contemporary, and emerging forms of urbanity. In looking at the

spatial topographies in digital texts, this paper aims to contribute to the "eclectic atlases of space" and the (im)possibilities of video games to envision urban scenarios of the future.

## THAT "MOST SEVERE EVIL": THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE AT THE PERIL OF SOCIAL ESTRANGEMENT IN MARY SHELLEY'S **FRANKENSTEIN**

Brian Aldiss identified Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as the "origin of the species" that is science fiction. This paper will analyze the novel's central concern with the relevance of social community in the individual's life and the detrimental effects of pursuing a type of scientific achievement which leads the individual away

from affectionate bonds with their fellow beings

In order to highlight the novel's implied worldview and norms, the paper will address the three different yet intertwined narrative layers (that of the scientist Victor Frankenstein, the creature/"monster," and of Captain Walton) that make up the novel. I will suggest that Shelley condemns a kind of quest for knowledge which carries individuals increasingly away from society and frustrates their thirst for social love. However, *Frankenstein* does not uncritically condemn the use and achievements of science; it seeks to convey a more nuanced message, as the flaw in Victor Frankenstein's (and Captain Walton's) thinking lies in assuming that the quest for knowledge is a greater good than the love or

sympathy provided by one's affections, and that it can be pursued in isolation from one's social community. Frankenstein's downfall, therefore, is a result of his stepping over the moral and social order, where what is initially conceived with a benevolent intention, turns into an egotistical pursuit aimed at glorification of the self, rather than at the social fulfillment of the larger community.

Through the comparison of different characters, through the novel's allusions to the myth of Prometheus and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), and by situating it within the larger historical-philosophical setting of 19<sup>th</sup>-century British Romanticism, this paper will interpret and reflect on the aesthetics of sociality proposed

# EFTYCHIA MISAILIDOU

INDEPENDENT

PANEL F3: HUMANS AND/AS

ARTIFICIAL CREATURES

SR34.04, DEC 8, 9AM

and defended consistently throughout the novel. These concerns, feeding into ideas of how real life and scientific pursuit can meet, at times happily, and other times in contradiction with each other, are ever more pressing and important to discuss in today's highly scientific and technological world.

## REJECTING REALITY: WHAT THE NONHUMAN HOSTS OF **WESTWORLD** TEACH US ABOUT THE ETERNAL QUEST FOR SELF-DISCOVERY

What can a fantasy world reveal about our true selves and our sense of identity? Science fiction tends to intensify our fascination with the mysteries of our mind and soul. As an essayist

mentioned, "we are drawn to the weird, because it is showing us something about ourselves." On the other hand, the increased sense of global political, social, and climate crisis constitutes an essential factor for emotional discomfort and existential distress, leading humans to a constant quest for liberation through personal gnosis. There is a desire to connect with a human truth, a journey of self-discovery.

This talk will look at the case of *Westworld* (2016–), as its main heroes, the nonhuman hosts of the theme park, roam into the contours of freedom. In this futuristic society, humans go into the park to engage in activities not acceptable in the real world. They are drawn to *Westworld* like Philip K. Dick was drawn to the

# SABRINA MITTERMEIER

INDEPENDENT

PANEL B1: **STAR TREK I: DISCOVERY**  
SR34.D2, DEC 6, 5.30PM

notion of a false world: by the idea that our reality is somehow an illusory one and only Westworld can reveal to you who you really are. Yet, it is the hosts, tortured and killed by humans time and again, who experience the true quest for free will. While constantly (re-)living the traumatic events they are programmed into believing that are actually happening to them. They feel pain, both physical and emotional, and even when their memories are being wiped, they still remember.

Does it matter that their pain is simulated? What makes you feel alive? Belonging to the human race or feeling and remembering pain? Dolores, the protagonist host, demonstrates that she is experiencing her memories as a kind of awakening. She does not care what she is made

of: "There is only me. And I think when I discover who I am, I'll be free."

## CAPTAIN'S LOG: EXPERIENCING STAR TREK'S UNIVERSE FROM THE CAPTAINS' POINT OF VIEW

"Captain's Log"—this phrase marks the beginning of many *Star Trek* episodes. Whether it is one of the *Enterprise* class ship's captains (Kirk, Picard, Archer), Captain Janeway, or Commander (later Captain) Sisko, it is usually their logs which provide viewers with a narrative frame. While some episodes, particularly in the later series, stray from this template, it is usually the highest-ranking officer's point of view from which the stories are told. It thus could be argued that

# APARAJITA NANDA

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

PANEL F4: POST-/

TRANS-/NONHUMAN WORLDS

SR34.K1, DEC 8, 9AM

these characters set the tone for each series and consequently immensely contribute to worldbuilding in the *Star Trek* universe.

The newest installment in the franchise, *Discovery* (2017–), is the first show that has shifted the point of view to a different character, the First Officer (and later mutineer) Michael Burnham. However, I would argue that while Michael remains the narrative's moral compass, the series' captains very much still set the tone. The show's two-part pilot episode reflects the strength and optimism of Captain Philippa Georgiou, echoed in the last two episodes by the resilience of Acting Captain Saru, while the rest of the season's feeling of uneasiness and overall darkness result from the presence of Captain Gabriel Lorca

(who is later revealed to be an impostor from the Mirror Universe).

In my presentation, then, I want to look at how these central characters quite literally steer the narrative point of view across series (focusing on *Discovery*) and thus highlight how the *Star Trek* franchise interweaves character- and worldbuilding.

## TRANSNATIONAL WORLDBUILDING: CREOLIZED FUTURES IN OCTAVIA BUTLER'S LILITH'S BROOD

From Heidegger to Malmgren the “worlding” project looks at a creation of a world that is stratified and required adept navigation on the part of its inhabitants in order to survive. For Heidegger

“worlding” is reserved for humans only and he goes on to specify that “plants and animals have no world; they belong [...] to the [...] environment into which they have been put.” In other words, nonhuman entities are denied powers of world-building.

Octavia Butler’s science fiction trilogy *Lilith’s Brood* (1987–89) debunks Heidegger’s ideas by proposing a unique world-building project possible only by a hybridization of two species, the alien, animal-like Oankali and the humans. Butler’s text opens in the wake of a human-led nuclear apocalypse where the Oankali, a gene-trading alien species, rescue the few surviving humans to interbreed with them to create a superior breed of Human-Oankali constructs.

The Oankali justify their mission by stating that the humans need to be rid of their Human Contradiction—a combination of intelligence and hierarchical thinking—and accept a genetic elimination of the violent trait to produce a creolized third identity. This third identity, a product of the human/animal interface, birthed of human intelligence and alien-animal connectivity to all species (as Oankali interbreed with all living beings) is Butler’s only hope for the creation of a sustainable universe.

This paper furthers this concept of a hybrid entity as it offers a reading of Butler’s third identity based off Hindu philosophy— a philosophy built on the concept of a Life Force that flows through humans, animals and plants emanating

**RIA NARAI**  
**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**  
**PANEL C1: MOVEMENT IS KEY**  
**SR34.K1, DEC 7, 9.15AM**

from and going back to its essential source in Godhood—and some of its seminal texts, the Vedas and the Upanishads. It expands the concept of worldbuilding by opening up a conversation between Western and Eastern philosophy—a conversation possibly exclusive to a science fiction world.

**BOLDLY GOING: TRAVELING TO  
FICTIONAL WORLDS THROUGH  
IN-UNIVERSE REFERENCE TEXTS**

When it comes to understanding how fans construct and inhabit the vast story universes of science fiction, our existing theoretical frameworks for narrative and textual analysis are sadly lacking (Kelleter 2017). What is it about these

immense fictional worlds that draws people in? After decades of expansion, many have become so complex and contradictory that they require fan-made guides to outline the easiest points of entry. Yet their continuing popularity speaks to the satisfaction of desires that our current models for thinking about fictional worlds cannot quite account for. *Star Trek*, of course, is a prime example.

In this paper, I will suggest that there is a pleasure in inhabiting a fictional world that drives fans to engage with these vast story universes. Their vastness and complexity is their appeal (Jenkins 2009; Johnston 2015), as it mimics our experience of inhabiting our own vast, complex, real world. This pleasure is separate from the

pleasure of engaging with a narrative—how else can we explain the existence of non-narrative, in-universe reference texts, such as the Hidden Universe Travel Guides *Star Trek: Vulcan* (2016) and *Star Trek: The Klingon Empire* (2017), which utilize the travel guidebook genre to allow fans to “travel” to the fictional worlds of the *Star Trek* universe?

Through textual analysis, with an emphasis on reader experience, I will examine how these in-universe reference texts position the reader in relation to the fictional world. I will focus on the way in which these texts’ structure of dual address—to a fictional narratee who inhabits the *Star Trek* universe and to an implied reader who is a *Star Trek* fan—makes possible particu-

lar textual effects and readerly pleasures, such as: a blurring, dissolving, and playing with of the boundaries between the texts, the fictional world, and the real world; and a literalizing of the idea of “travelling in fiction.”

This paper ultimately seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of fans’ desires to inhabit the fictional world of *Star Trek*, and other vast story universes, by suggesting new models for thinking about fictional universes which account for the desire for a world without story.

# MANUELA NEUWIRTH

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ  
**PANEL A4: COHERENCE  
AND DECOHERENCE  
SR24.K3, DEC 6, 3PM**

## **BEAM ME INTO BEING? STAR TREK'S NOVA OF (DIS)APPEARANCE AND/ AS THE EXISTENCE AND ESSENCE OF A COHESIVE MULTIVERSE**

If Martin Heidegger sets art apart from his understanding of “technology” (i.e., the anthropocentric view of the world existing for humans to consume), the present paper investigates technology in the true sense of the word as a constitutive part of worlding one of the most popular artistic sf creations—the television franchise *Star Trek*. Multiple publications on the physics behind *Star Trek*’s futuristic technologies are testament to the central role such nova as the transporter, Holodeck, Universal Translator, and warp drive play in the creation of a feasible *Star Trek* uni-

verse. As Alan N. Shapiro argues in his *Star Trek: Technologies of Disappearance* (2004), these technologies are largely instruments of disappearance and reappearance. It is in this act, Shapiro argues, that a self-reflexive investigation of the self and transformation from object to subject takes place.

This paper will argue that the representation of nova (and especially accidents such as in *The Original Series*’ “The Enemy Within” [1966] and *The Next Generation*’s “Second Chances” [1993]), by self-reflexively considering its own worldbuilding, attains the “capability of instituting its own real” (Shapiro 19), thereby creating a cohesive multiverse.

# ELENA-BRINDUSA NICOLAESCU

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

PANEL E4: ONTOLOGIES  
AND EPISTEMOLOGIES I

SR34.D2 (SKYPE), DEC 7, 3PM

## WORLD(ING) TRANSITIONS IN HARUKI MURAKAMI'S 1Q84 AND BOUALEM SANSAL'S 2084: THE END OF THE WORLD

This paper will discuss various instances of border-crossing in novels which broadly deal with the same dystopian setting, that of a tightly controlled society. Both 1Q84 (2009–10) and 2084 (2015) showcase the influence Orwellian themes still exert upon contemporary fiction writers. The transitional space fraught with ominous symbols was used by Zamyatin in *We* (1924): the Ancient House was the place where the protagonists consumed their love and also the space that preserved the remnant of the old world. It inspired Orwell, who in 1984 (1948) created

the mysterious antique shop where Julia and Winston found an illusory haven. In 2084, the religious totalitarian regime is defied by Ati who perceives the “cracks” in the system and tries to escape, to look for a “mythical Border.” In 1Q84, the Metropolitan Expressway has an emergency stairway in 1984, the year of the narration, but no one in 1Q84, an alternative chronotope the protagonist Aomame enters without being aware and where she is constantly watched by a Big Brother. A possible modulation of ethical and aesthetic distances can thus be rendered by the presence of the passageway. In other words, liminality contributes to the creation of worlds in various ways, for readers can accordingly infer the existence of an alternative possible uni-

# HUGH O'CONNELL

UNIVERSITY OF  
MASSACHUSETTS, BOSTON  
PANEL F1: AFROFUTURISM  
SR34.D2, DEC 8, 9AM

verse similar to the “salient worlds” described by Thomas Pavel in his seminal book *Fictional Worlds* (1986).

## THE DIALECTICS OF AFRICAN- FUTURISM BETWEEN SF WORLDBUILDING AND NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENT

Afrofuturism has recently enjoyed a well-deserved surge in critical attention from critics both within and outside of the academy. However, one of the often unremarked aspects of Afrofuturism is its grounding in Americentric experiences and discourses. Indeed, this unintentional Americentricism can be traced back to Mark Dery's 1994 theorization of Afrofuturism as “specula-

tive fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future.” While Dery's inaugural work has been influential in setting the agenda for Afrofuturist studies over the last 20-plus years, a newer generation of critics and artists, including Noah Tsika and Nnedi Okorafor, have begun to bristle against such explicit Americentrism.

This paper will attempt to limn a discourse of African-futurism, foregrounded in the recent explosion of African science fiction since 2010, drawing especially on the Ivor Hartmann-edit-

# CHRIS PAK

**SWANSEA UNIVERSITY**  
**PANEL G4: ONTOLOGIES**  
**& EPISTEMOLOGIES II**  
**SR34.K1, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

ed volumes of African SF (2010–), the Ayodele Arigbabu-edited *Lagos\_2060* (2013), and Nnedi Okorafor's novel *Lagoon* (2014). More specially, it will focus on sf coming out of Nigeria as one of the most prominent sites of production and content for this new boom in African sf. Significantly, as Lagos serves as the neoliberal financial and commercial center for Nigeria and western Africa, it provides a rich source of inspiration for the utopian and dystopian dialectics of the African-Futurist imagination. My paper will examine African-futurism as mediated through the complex dialectical interaction of sf world-building alongside neoliberal developmental schemes, thus marking the distinctiveness of African-futurism as a critical concept.

## **MODELING WHAT COULD BE: SCIENCE FICTION'S ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURES**

Science fiction can be seen as a modelling enterprise, in which the worlds that are portrayed function as models of or for the future. What kind of model, however, is science fiction, and what kinds of modelling activities and practices do they portray? This presentation builds on research conducted as part of the digital humanities project, "Modelling Between Digital and Humanities: Thinking in Practice," and my own research into science fiction's environmental futures to delimit the boundaries of a research project designed to tackle these questions.

# ANIA PALUCH

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

PANEL D5: INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGIES

SR34.K2, DEC 7, 11.45AM

## MÉTIS FUTURISM: ROSALIE FAVELL AND MÉTIS IN SPACE SET THEIR PHASERS TO DECOLONIZE THE SCIENCE FICTION UNIVERSE

Science fiction is a seemingly borderless genre of media, opening up possibilities of representation and acknowledgment of various identities. In fact, Daniel McNeil has stated that “there is always a super culture that allows for connections outside ones’ Indigenous culture,” a kind of *lingua franca*, such as sf or popular culture. *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966–69) introduced Spock, a little “m” metis, or mixed-race character—which for the 1960s, was a revolutionary identity to introduce in mainstream American television. The depiction of cyborgs

in sf introduced a more complex representation for mixed identities, connecting themes of contemporary mixed-race issues and corresponding them with the fictional cyborg characters. Cyborgs are symbols of societal fears of mixing peoples, races, religions, and languages; they are the threat of what may become of humanity, when mixing bloodlines of historical and colonial enemies. To soften the “shock” of seeing someone from a mixed background, representations of mixed race characters in sf have been often whitewashed.

In my paper, I will show the interconnections between the aforementioned themes and issues in relation to the work of Métis artist Rosalie Favell in her series *Plain(s) Warrior Artist* (1999–

## DAMIAN PODLESNY

PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY OF KRAKOW

**PANEL B3: SF FROM THE  
FORMER EASTERN BLOC I  
SR24.K2, DEC 6, 5.30PM**

2003) and *Cultural Mediations* (2003–08) alongside the experiences of podcasters Métis in Space at the 2014 Montreal Comic Con. My paper will explore how Favell uses popular culture, specifically fantasy and sf to address her mixed ancestry, and how podcasters Molly and Chelsea address the lack of positive Indigenous representation at the convention, and the invisibility they felt dressing up as Métis space aliens.

### **POLITICS AND SCIENCE FICTION: THE POLITICAL WORLDS OF STANISLAW LEM AND PHILIP K. DICK**

Political visions have always played a paramount role in science fiction. However, as Stanisław Lem suggests in *Science Fiction and Futurology*

(1970), these visions are only apparently novel, as the authors utilize concepts that have been present in literature for ages. Vera Graaf, on the other hand, has emphasized the wealth of ideas sf writers employ (e.g. political state, corporate rules, empires, and state machinery).

Stanisław Lem, who wrote during the communist era in Poland, is hardly considered to be a political writer, yet, in a number of his works he leans toward social and political commentary, such as in *Eden* (1958), *Memoirs Found in a Bath tub* (1961), *Mask* (1976), and *The Scene of the Crime* (1982). Philip K. Dick stands somewhat in opposition to Lem due to his clear-cut political visions of oppressive realities, menacing social orders, the rule of syndicates, and police

# **AGNIESZKA PODRUCZNA**

**UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA**

**PANEL G4: FROM THE  
MIDDLE TO THE FAR EAST  
SR34.K3, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

state in a vast number of his works, be it novels or short stories.

Both writers, despite writing in two different political realities, and apart from many obvious differences, share some social and political ideas that emerge more or less powerfully in their fiction. The aim of the paper is to draw from the rich sf wardrobe of Stanisław Lem and Philip K. Dick to explore their approaches to oppressive politics with reference to Graaf's awe and Lem's complaints on the quality of political ideas in sf.

## **SITES OF CONTAMINATION, SITES OF CONTAINMENT: LIMINAL SPACES AND PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE IN LARISSA LAI'S **SALT FISH GIRL****

One of the central concepts for both science fiction and postcolonial studies is the notion of space. In particular, they seem to be interested in spaces which elude boundaries and refuse containment: spaces which exist outside or in-between. The exploration of liminal spaces in imaginary futuristic worlds finds a particularly useful realization in the works of postcolonial speculative fiction, which work to re-examine and critically address the ways in which science fiction narratives, rooted in the colonial ideals of expansion and conquest, have historically con-

ceptualized places and spaces.

With that in mind, my paper will examine the sites of containment and simultaneous contamination which Larissa Lai represents in her novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002), emphasizing the transgressive properties of those spaces existing in the futuristic world of 21<sup>st</sup>-century British Columbia. Employing postcolonial theory as well as theory of science fiction as the methodological framework, the paper posits that the liminal space of the Unregulated Zone actively resists its forced containment and contaminates the neo-colonial space of technocratic order that is the city-state of Serendipity. Thus, in bringing the durian fruit from the Unregulated Zone into Serendipity, Miranda's—the protagonist's—mother facilitates

the invasion of the periphery on the neo-colonial center, which destabilizes the hegemonic order and contributes to the further blurring of boundaries between the inside and the outside. Consequently, the durian fruit, which, due to its nature, brings the colonial associations of repugnance and disgust with the Other, stands for the transgressive forces of anti-colonial resistance and serves a reminder of the subversive potentialities of liminal spaces as well as the impossibility of complete eradication of all signs of alterity, which continue to seep through the cracks and contaminate the hegemonic center.

# ALEXANDER POPOV & VLADIMIR POLEGANOV

**SOFIA UNIVERSITY**  
**ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI**  
**PANEL E4: ONTOLOGIES**  
**AND EPISTEMOLOGIES I**  
**SR34.D2, DEC 7, 3PM**

## **HOW READERS WORLD: THE POETICS AND ONTOLOGY OF WORLD CREATION AS NEGOTIATION**

This paper will explore the role of the reader in creating sf worlds. It will situate the discussion within a coordinate system derived from object-oriented ontology and modern ecological thought, but also from more assemblage-oriented theorists like Donna Haraway. Worlds are thus seen as heaps of objects that are withdrawn and only ever partially accessible via their appearances; worlds are ragged, incomplete, and information-lossy; but objects are also organized in complex (world) systems, which exhibit novel and ever-emergent characteristics.

This apparent discrepancy between the two

views is here handled and harnessed through an analysis of the scales at which worlds are apprehended. The paper will use ideas from McKenzie Wark's *Molecular Red* (2015), which discusses worlds and worldviews as the encounter between labor and nature, themselves historically co-produced, and the different levels at which this occurs: the molar and the molecular. The translation of organizational models (metaphors) between different levels and contexts, or the organization of knowledge, is seen as a practice of negotiating between possible worlds; nature and man are read as models as such, whose own metaphors need to be traced back to the origin of their production. This is perhaps akin to Fredric Jameson's notion of "ontological

realism.”

Object-oriented philosophy thus liberates worlds from established hierarchies because it allows models from all kinds of sources and scales to flow up, down, and sideways through worlds; but worlds can also be seen as complex assemblages of objects when an observer tries to access a reality of a different scale—for this is done via a set of interface models, an apparatus for producing worlds out of reality.

This paper will accordingly suggest that the worlding apparatus is a set of models which are used to comprehend unknown worlds, filters interposed between the reader and the other reality. We will exemplify our arguments through three short works, James Tiptree’s “Love is the

Plan the Plan is Death” (1973), Octavia Butler’s “Bloodchild” (1984), and Ursula Le Guin’s “Solitude” (1994). In each of these texts, a radically alien world is read through familiar apparatus with specific material qualities (language, bodies, culture). Both the alignment and mismatch between model and modeled reality are important, as their interaction produces complex imaginative, rationalizing, and affective reactions in the reader; the analyses will pay particular attention to the scales at which the apparatus operate as well.

Thus, we will suggest that the reader carries out a kind of labor against the text and against the reality implied by and beyond the text. Worlds are created in that process of negotiation

# PAWEL PYRKA

SWPS UNIVERSITY OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

PANEL C1: MOVEMENT IS KEY  
SR34.K1, DEC 7, 9.15AM

between models. Only in this conceptual dislocation can the unknown be made somewhat knowable, but, conversely, this transposition of familiar apparatus to unfamiliar settings cannot leave the reader completely the same, either. She herself is worlded by the reading experience.

## CRITICAL RULES: WORLDBUILDING, CHARACTER IMMERSION, AND STORYTELLING THAT MATTERS IN TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAMES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

This presentation will explore the most important aspects of cooperative narrative- and worldbuilding, as well as discussing the key developments in system mechanics and thematic

scope, designed to facilitate creative play and promote character immersion in tabletop role-playing games. Since their earliest incarnations in 1970s and 1980s, roleplaying games have been about constructing and acting out fictional scenarios, set in pre-designed, simulated, or at times randomly generated settings, from the fantasy dungeon “crawls” of *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974) through investigative play of *Call of Cthulhu* (1981) to space exploration, trade, and/or military operations of *Traveller* (1977). The following decades brought numerous innovations into the world of role-playing (both to the mechanisms of storytelling and to the cultural concerns it reflected and reflects, respectively), along with the challenges posed by the rising popularity of

video-gaming (including cRPGs) and numerous other forms of entertainment media. And yet the current success of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of “the world’s greatest roleplaying game” (as the *D&D* advertising slogan states), reflected by its increasing presence in mainstream media and the countless hours of recorded game sessions on Twitch and YouTube, seems to suggest a renaissance of sorts for this once-niche hobby.

The paper will examine the evolution of both mechanics and aesthetics of tabletop roleplaying games, including the departure from “dungeon” settings into broader and more complex worlds and universes (*Runequest* [1978] and *Warhammer FRP* [1986]), the change from “task force” party mentality to focus on individual

character’s development and psychology (*Call of Cthulhu* and *Vampire: The Masquerade* [1991]), and finally the shift from “simulationist” gaming to systems which enhance immersion, drama and narrative (FATE and PbtA families of games). By tracing the practices of worlding and narration, which in tabletop RPGs are inherently intertwined and inseparable, and observing the growing impact of such practices on popular media and culture, the paper will argue that roleplaying is the kind of storytelling, worldtelling even, that matters especially in contemporary digital age.

# JOOST RAESSENS

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

PANEL F2: REGENERATIVE PLAY

SR34.K2, DEC 8, 9AM

## COLLAPSUS; OR, HOW TO MAKE PLAYERS BECOME ECOLOGICAL CITIZENS

Contemporary game and play practices are increasingly used not only to entertain, but also to make a difference at an individual, community, and/or societal level. Ecological games are one kind of such “games for change”—they not only seek to contribute to ecological thought but also to turn players into ecological citizens.

In this paper, I will examine how *Collapsus: Energy Risk Conspiracy* (2010) explores the possibilities of human future action. *Collapsus* is an intermedial, game-like and playful ecological experience. This online counter-discursive production engages users with realistic future scenari-

os (2012–25) about the expected energy crisis and the necessity of energy transition from fossil fuel to alternative energy sources. On the basis of *Collapsus*' underlying logical and dramatic models, this paper will discuss the differences and similarities between the worlding practices used in science fiction-, futurology-, and scenario planning-based game and play practices.

This paper aims to offer a conceptual clarification of the strategies *Collapsus* uses to raise awareness about climate change and to change or reinforce players' worldviews, beliefs, and values. It will discuss how *Collapsus* makes people reflect on the global, political, and cultural implications of climate change and act accordingly.

# PAUL GRAHAM RAVEN & JOHANNES STRIPPLE

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD  
& LUND UNIVERSITY

**PANEL G2: BEYOND PETROMODERNITY II:  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES  
SR34.D2, DEC 8, 3.30PM**

## **“LET’S PUT FOSSIL FUELS BEHIND US”: TOWARD THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF SCIENCE FICTION AS A SANDBOX FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE**

This paper will make a case for the instrumentalization of science fiction narrative production and critique as a rigorous and theoretically substantiated methodology for the ethnographic exploration of speculative reconfigurations of sociotechnical regimes. Or, more simply: we argue that the worldbuilding toolkit evolved by practitioners and critics of science fiction may be fruitfully repurposed by social scientists seeking to reclaim the study of “futures” from the prevailing technodeterministic hegemony.

Sf-as-methodology is not a strictly novel prop-

osition, but examples to date are largely lacking in theoretical grounding and methodological rigour. In establishing the theoretical bases for this enterprise (and building in turn upon the foundational work on social futures by the late John Urry, among others), we aim at the same time to greatly expand the potential of sf as a tool for serious research on social futures, and also to critique its superficial deployment in the production of technoscientific propaganda and boosterism.

By drawing out the parallels between the social-scientific concept of the “technoscientific imaginary” and the sf-critical concept of the “sf megatext,” we will demonstrate the ease with which the tools of both disciplines—construc-

## JOHN RIEDER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I, MĀNOA

PANEL D5: INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGIES

SR34.K2, DEC 7, 11.45AM

tive and deconstructive alike—might transfer across their already-porous boundaries with minimal friction. We will draw upon cutting-edge social-scientific research on sociotechnical transitions toward decarbonised societies as a case study, and argue that sf can be more than a handmaiden to hypercapitalism, serving instead as a sandbox within which alternatives to the perpetuation of petromodernity might be produced, critiqued, and refined.

### THE WAR OF THE WORLDS IN ALBERT WENDT'S **ADVENTURES OF VELA**

Although Albert Wendt's long verse narrative *The Adventures of Vela* (2009) is not adequately described as either "science fiction" or "indige-

nous futurism," it certainly employs conventions and strategies drawn from both in compelling fashion. Situating the printed text of *Vela* at the end of a long chain of storytelling and cultural transmission that stretches across the divide separating pre-contact Samoa from post-colonial contemporaneity, Wendt positions his poem as a grand post-colonial intervention into telling the history and evaluating the consequences of the colonization and Christianization of Samoa. Straddling genres, media, and cultures, Wendt explores the space connecting orality and print, divinity and humanity, myth and realism, anonymity and copyright, unfolding at every level of the text the effects of a centuries-long collision between radically different worlds.

# LARS SCHMEINK

HAFENCITY UNIVERSITY HAMBURG

PANEL C1: SCARCITY & ABUNDANCE

SR34.04, DEC 7, 9.15AM

In this presentation I will describe, in as much detail as the space allows me, the way Wendt stages this collision in his use of language, plot, genre, allusion, image, voice, and irony. In the process, Wendt achieves a blend of realism and fantasy no less vivid than that achieved in H. G. Wells's paradigmatic rendering of colonial invasion in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), with the difference being that instead of Wells's sympathetic imaginative representation of the victims of colonial invasion, Wendt accomplishes a fiercely anti-colonial Native truth-telling that nonetheless finds its way in the end to an ethics of mourning and forgiveness.

## A FUTURE OF EXTERMINISM: CYBER-PUNK'S COMMODIFICATION OF BODIES

In his book *Four Futures* (2016), Pete Frase describes the possible future world shaped by automatization and scarcity, sticking to the concept of hierarchy and inequality, as a world shaped by exterminism. In this future, human lives (i.e., their work and continued existence) become superfluous to the needs of the wealthy elite that dominate society. They become commodities to be traded or discarded as needed. It seems hard to imagine such a future become a reality, but recent cyberpunk fictions have managed to do just that. The presentation will undertake a close reading of recent cyberpunk fictions, such as *Elysium* (2013) and *Altered Carbon* (2018) to show

# ELISABETH SCHNEIDER

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ  
**PANEL E3: IMAGINING  
NON-BINARY FUTURES**  
SR34.K2, DEC 7, 3PM

how the human body has become a commodified object in the lives of the ruling elite.

## **A QUEERING THAT IS NONE: INTER-SEXUALITY IN ROBERT A. HEINLEIN'S "ALL YOU ZOMBIES—"**

Science fiction promises its audiences universes of wonder, excitement, and endless possibilities. Facehuggers, warp drives, proto-molecules, lightsabers, time machines, sonic screwdrivers—everything is imaginable, nothing impossible. That is, until seemingly unshakable socio-cultural concepts come into play. Despite science fiction's immense potential to transport us into a realm of the (im)possible, of stories that transgress, subvert, or even transform societal

norms, some boundaries seemingly just cannot be crossed.

One such line is heteronormativity, a rigid matrix that not only prescribes a binary of gender, but also sex and sexuality. Should "troubling" elements of queerness come into play, they are frequently relegated to the margins, demonized, and/or made invisible. Few science fiction stories dare to cross the invisible line of heteronormative rules and regulations. Stories that celebrate and foreground queerness are few and far between and themselves often niche products that find no place in the mainstream. More often than not, cultural products only toy with that invisible line—and then immediately take a step back, repudiating any intention of violating what

# INDIANA SERESIN

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

PANEL E3: IMAGINING

NON-BINARY FUTURES

SR34.K2, DEC 7, 3PM

is seen as an unshakable fact of nature. What such stories end up accomplishing is a further ostracism of those already marginalized—and a re-inscription of heteronormative boundaries.

For example, at first glance, Robert Heinlein's time-travel short story "All You Zombies—" offers a progressive representation of intersexuality. At second glance, however, it is only all too emblematic of how intersexuality is treated in fictional as well as in real-life environments. The protagonist's intersexuality stays firmly rooted within a binary sex system, a system that is never once troubled. Science fiction's transgressive possibilities are never realized; instead, mechanisms of the genre are used to reinforce heteronormative imperatives. Shedding light on how these imper-

atives are upheld throughout the story will give an insight into how the societal discourse around intersexuality is structured and implemented—and how it can be instrumentalized to uphold that which it troubles.

## THE WORLD(S) THROUGH DELANY'S EYES: PERCEPTION, DISTORTION, AND INVENTION IN THE MOTION OF LIGHT IN THE WATER

Samuel R. Delany's autobiography *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village* (1988) is, more than anything else, a portrait of its author's consciousness. Looking and seeing are the central tropes of the text, and—as the title denotes—metaphors

of light, reflection, and refraction serve to foreground Delany's perception in the narrative. Much of the existing scholarship on *Motion* posits the book as an account of Delany's identity in an ontological sense, marvelling over Delany's account of his life as a black, gay, dyslexic, straight-married man. Such readings underemphasize the "Science Fiction Writing" dimension of the autobiography, particularly Delany's meditations on how he perceives and invents other worlds through distortions of his surroundings.

Combined with its fragmented structure, *Motion*'s consistent references to light and vision unravel the world as a cohesive totality while illuminating flashes of other worlds within what Delany calls "the texture of the real." This weav-

ing of other worlds into the fabric of reality corresponds with current meditations on black teleology in the work of theorists such as Michelle M. Wright and Tavia Nyong'o. Delany's account of how he uniquely invents/perceives other worlds within his own present reality, meanwhile, provides a new perspective on the debate triggered by the artist Martine Syms' critique of Afrofuturism in *The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto* (2013). Reading *Motion* as an account of science-fictional world-perception provides a new angle through which we can consider fantasies of utopia and escape as responses to an anti-black world.

# JASMINE SHARMA

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

**PANEL F3: HUMANS AND/  
AS ARTIFICIAL CREATURES  
SR34.04 (SKYPE), DEC 8, 9AM**

## **“DO TIME NOW, BUY TIME FOR FUTURE”: PHALLIC DECEPTION AND TECHNO- SEXUAL AGENCY IN MARGARET ATWOOD’S THE HEART GOES LAST**

This paper will investigate the politics of deception in Margaret Atwood’s novel *The Heart Goes Last* (2015). The novel traces the unsettling journey of an unemployed couple whose quest for a better life is frustrated by false promises and mechanizations of insidious elements. Situated within a landscape of identity confusion and misleading information, female characters Jocelyn and Charmaine pose a threat to the phallic dominance, orchestrated and practiced by those in power. Both the female characters dismantle the technocratic scandal and expose the underlying

reality of the Positron Project. This feminist reading will draw on the works of science and technology theorists like Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding, theorists on “body criticism” like Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti, mobilizing it toward the postfeminist dimension. Philosophies of Michel Foucault, Giles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari will enlighten my argument with critical insights on the discourses of power and hegemony within technocracy. In the end, my paper will discuss the manipulation of technology and its devastating effects on the defrauded individuals. It will unravel the latent forces of resistance in Atwood’s dystopia and unmask the politics of pretentiousness within its speculative structure.

# ANDREW SHEPARD

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

PANEL F1: AFROFUTURISM

SR34.D2, DEC 8, 9AM

## THE HISTORY OF LIONS: CHARLES SAUNDERS' *IMARO* AND THE REVISIONIST LOST RACE TALE

Critics such as Everett Blieler and John Rieder have identified lost race fiction as an important antecedent for the speculative genres as we know them today. Unfortunately, the genre can also be held responsible for a number of pernicious ideas which continue to persist in the science fiction and fantasy tales of our own era, among them: Eurocentrism, xenophobia, and a tendency to romanticize the project of empire. The image of Africa and its peoples, in particular, have suffered considerably due to such ideas, as the colonial romances of authors such as H. Rider Haggard and Edgar Rice Burroughs have

played a major role in promulgating the notion of Africa as “the Dark Continent.” In response, black authors working in the speculative tradition have taken it upon themselves to provide counternarratives—visions in which Africa gets to be something other than the savage counterpart against which the West favorably compares itself.

One such author is Charles Saunders, whose *Imaro* tales transport the “sword and sorcery” fantasy of Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber to a secondary world setting inspired by sub-Saharan Africa in a variant that he has dubbed “Sword and Soul.” The *Imaro* stories thus face the challenge of conjuring a fantastical vision of Africa unconquered by colonialism or slavery while also

# JONATHAN E. SHIPLEY

INDEPENDENT  
**PANEL A2: WORLDBUILDING  
BEYOND STORYTELLING  
SR34.K1, DEC 6, 3PM**

maintaining a recognizable connection to the continent as referent.

In this paper, I will examine this tension as it surfaces in the debut *Imaro* tale “City of Madness” (1974)—a story which satirizes the lost race subgenre so ubiquitous to early sf and fantasy by highlighting the racist logic underpinning its narrative conventions.

## **WORLD BUILDING: THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS**

As a writer and writing teacher of speculative fiction, I am bound to worldbuilding, a staple of the science fiction and fantasy genres that extends to all speculative genres. To reduce the creation of worlds to a construction exercise of consisten-

cy is to ignore the aesthetics of creation. For a writer, this is the opportunity to create the sweep and scope of history, culture, and geography. The creation relies heavily on the assumption of a vast backstory, yet that backstory may be largely unexpressed as the unfolding of the world must be subordinate to traditional plot elements, and the story cannot slow to admire the view. Each world detail must do double or triple duty and imply more than it says in order to move the story along.

For example, lighting in itself, whether by candle, electricity, or some method unknown to modern science can imply a pre-industrial, post-industrial, or futuristic technology. In a short work, that one detail may be enough to es-

# ELIZABETH SHIPLEY

KARLSRUHE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

PANEL B2: URSULA K. LE GUIN

SR34.K1, DEC 6, 5.30PM

establish the technology of the setting, or as Marion Zimmer Bradley establishes in her *Darkover* series (1958–96), interlocking details can express a more complex culture that is both pre-industrial and futuristic. The double art of imagining broadly but writing sparsely is the heart and the art of world building. To do it well, the writer has to construct a dense alternative universe in imagination, then deconstruct the concept down to specific details that still convey the full sense of world. Add in too many details and they encumber the story; too few and the setting is unconvincing.

Balance between the wide and the narrow is the goal. Ursula Le Guin's *Steering the Craft* (1998) addresses many aspects of effec-

tive writing, and the skill of worldbuilding is one more tool in the arsenal of aspiring writers.

## WORLDING GENDER IN URSULA K. LE GUIN AND ANN LECKIE

Ursula K. Le Guin and Ann Leckie are two eminent examples of feminist sf writers who use worldbuilding of a monumental order, re-defining the genre of space opera by spanning huge periods of time across space as a backdrop to create thought experiments about gender.

The mad king of Karhide on the planet Gethen in Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), fears "a nation of monsters" when encountering First Mobile Genly Ai from Earth, for Ai is not only exclusively male but also continuously male, and

thus a monster for the very differently gendered Gethenians. Gender is one of the greatest obstacles to his diplomatic mission, not least because of Ai's dangerous predilection to interpret behavior of an otherly gendered people through binary gender stereotypes. In this novel, Le Guin set out to "eliminate gender," but in the end gender is constantly trouble.

The question of what is human is also a major theme of Ann Leckie's *Imperial Radch* trilogy (2013–15), narrated by a long-living, almost immortal posthuman, a former human enslaved and merged with the consciousness of a sentient ship, who has been part of a long series of intergalactic wars and planetary conquests. In the native language of the narrator's world, there are

no gender markers. This causes confusion and misreadings among the characters as well as for readers, who by reading are forced to world a space in which gender is not. By producing and holding that absence over an entire trilogy, Leckie makes visible the essential role language plays in our perception of gender in the world.

This talk will compare how these works by Le Guin and Leckie demonstrate the practice of enduring a world without binary gender and the way language, in for example the concern with pronouns, is an inseparable aspect of worlding gender or its absence.

# PATRYCJA SOKOLOWSKA

UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA

PANEL E1: GREENING SF

SR34.K3, DEC 7, 3PM

## I CAN FEEL A GREAT AGE ENDING: AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF THE **DISHONORED** SERIES

Even though the video game series *Dishonored* is easy to classify in terms of its video game genre (a mix of stealth and action-adventure), it is harder to pin down the genre of its narrative. Consisting of elements characteristic of fantasy, dystopian science fiction, and weird fiction tropes, *Dishonored* (2012) as well as its sequel (2016) construct an intricate environment of a steampunk-like world of 19<sup>th</sup>-century faux-London which depends on distilled whale oil to function. The narrative relies heavily on environmental storytelling and utilizes multiple ways of conveying the story to the player. One strand

of such storytelling is the site of mythmaking in the game—mythmaking concerning the Void and its representational deity. In *Dishonored*, the Void fulfills the function of an alternate plane, seemingly an afterlife of sorts, and with imagery of all-encompassing water, floating whales, non-Euclidian angles, and destroyed buildings, it opens the narrative to an ecocritical reading. Moreover, elements of said imagery are carried over to multiple locations of the game's core plane, reinforcing this reading. Thus, through the use of an ecocritical framework, I will discuss the ways in which the *Dishonored* series systematizes its lore, that is, the practices and beliefs of the world's inhabitants, and the resulting diegetic elements which can be interpreted as a

# MAREIKE SPYCHALA

UNIVERSITY OF BAMBERG

PANEL B1: STAR TREK I: DISCOVERY

SR34.D2, DEC 6, 5.30PM

metaphor for the anxieties in the Anthropocene.

## MOTHER OF THE FATHERLAND: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE MIRROR UNIVERSE IN TOS AND ST: DSC

In a heavily foreshadowed move, *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017–) takes its characters into the Mirror Universe during the second half of its first season. This alternate reality, which presents the universe as it would look if the ideals of the United Federation of Planets and Starfleet were inverted, has been a recurring narrative location in the franchise since its introduction in “Mirror, Mirror” (1967) during *The Original Series*’ (1966–69) second season.

From its inception, one of the prominent fea-

tures of this alternate reality, and one that is influential in establishing it as the morally corrupt one of the two universes, has been its depiction of gender roles and sexuality. This has also been one of its most criticized features because of the reliance on generic tropes like the “Captain’s Woman,” a tendency to overtly sexualize female characters, and the repeated connection between morally ambiguous or downright evil actions and “deviant” sexual behavior.

This paper will argue that *Discovery* avoids and maybe even upends such tropes in the episodes set in the Mirror Universe. Indeed, it enacts a critique of gender norms, and especially toxic masculinity, by contrasting characters like Captain Philippa Georgiou, Michael Burnham

# SARAH STANLEY

INDEPENDENT

PANEL C4: ROGUES ONE

SR34.K3, DEC 7, 9.15AM

and Sylvia Tilly with their (absent) Mirror counterparts, the Emperor of the Terran Empire and their (former) Captain Gabriel Lorca. Thus, while gender remains an important factor in constructing and contrasting the Prime from the Mirror Universe, *Discovery* avoids and even reverses some of the narrative tropes that earlier iterations of the franchise have been criticized for, and, simultaneously, explicitly includes intersectional feminist perspectives in the hopeful future that *Star Trek* has prided itself on representing since its inception.

## PERFORMING ALPHAVILLE: HIGH-TECH ARCHITECTURE MEETS TECH-NOIR IN THE FUTURIST METROPOLIS

“A book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction. By detective novel we mean that concepts, with their zones of presence, should intervene to resolve local situations,” writes Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), which could well describe Godard’s Alphaville, a fictional metropolis found within the new high-tech area of Paris. The future had arrived, yet inhabiting it required a certain amount of detective work via cinema to be understood.

Tech-noir of the 1980s shares a direct legacy with the territory laid out in *Alphaville* (1965), yet the mixing of detective pulp fictions with sf arrived in the post-war years, yet had never made it into tech-noir until *Alphaville* in 1965. While film noir draws upon the lights and signage of the city at night, Godard adds an in-depth history of cinema and its technology, while exploring the tensions of Cold War-era rocket testing of the arms and space race. Wernher von Braun, the former German Nazi scientist who directed rocket development in America, began to write science fiction, *Project Mars: A Technical Tale*, and hosted a series of TV shows with the Disney Channel, in an effort to sell his manned space stations to orbit the moon and even Mars.

Today, we can still ask, “How does it feel to inhabit older industrial infrastructures, century-old underground systems, 19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture and city plans, alongside Futurist architectures emerging in cities?” The building of unique architectural worlds often create class-based hierarchies, as the classic sf film *Metropolis* (1927) shows. The new structures emerging in Paris during the 1960s, such as buildings dedicated to new communications technologies and jet flight, did indeed resemble visions from outer space. Godard had foreseen the ways global cities depend upon these futurist architectures as branding functions of the capitalist city, and the link these designs continue to share with space flight and space vehicles. Architects began engaging

# JONATAN STELLER

LEIPZIG UNIVERSITY

PANEL A1: FRANCHISING

SR34.D2, DEC 6, 3PM

in sf worlds early on with the novels by Jules Verne, related to visions of new transportation infrastructure built with the same materials and profiles as trains, automobiles, airplanes and rocket ships. Godard's unfolding of the shadows of these urban film histories provide a vehicle to show how these forms have emerged once again in architecture designs of the past two decades.

## **BUILDING A COMMON UNIVERSE: NARRATIVE, COMMERCIAL, AND IDEOLOGICAL STRATEGIES IN THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE**

Inspired by Marvel Comics' print strategy, the success of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* (2008-) has brought the practice of universe building to

various mainstream cinema and TV properties. While academia frequently observes this trend as a commercial strategy, it also needs to be explored in its ideological implications when it shifts from the absolute individual at the heart of a narrative to an assembly of characters who relate to one another. To this end, the paper takes the *MCU* as its prime example for examining narrative, commercial, and ideological strategies of inclusion that go into setting up and maintaining a transmedia universe with a focus on building blocks that allow both future production teams and fans to develop a wealth of stories.

On the narrative level, Marvel Studios' products keep the entire range of studio departments busy by adhering to the dominant blend

of sf and fantasy elements in blockbuster fiction. At the same time, they tap into young directors' sensibilities and different film genres such as spy thrillers and heist movies to avoid audience fatigue.

On the commercial level, Marvel Studios successfully manages to weave its cinema and TV output into a brand narrative where both content and form of films such as *Iron Man* (2008) and *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (2017) is attributed to the studio. Through a collaborative process among directors and writers, the studio has emerged as a hub-like structure that successfully designs and produces various high-budget franchises for different output channels.

On the ideological level, fictional organiza-

tions such as S.H.I.E.L.D. serve as rigid hierarchies against which various collective agents develop. Sf elements in particular allow to negotiate ideals such as relational agency, problem-solving, and democratic resistance, and call up the body of ideas propagated in DIY/prosumer/maker communities that responds well with audiences since the 2008 economic crisis. In the turn towards interconnected storytelling, the representation of small collectives as gravitational centers provides various entry points of audience identification and builds out peer-to-peer interaction as an alternative to the "professional" hierarchies propagated as the imperative in Western countries within the neoliberal paradigm.

## KATIE STONE

BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

PANEL G3: AGE & AGING

SR34.K2, DEC 8, 3.30PM

### THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD: NOVELTY AND AGE IN OCTAVIA BUTLER'S FLEDGLING

The opening passages of Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2004) describe the awakening of her protagonist, who has no memory of life prior to that moment. Forced to begin life again from a position of absolute ignorance, she discovers that her name was Shori Matthews and she has the appearance of a ten-year-old human girl but has in fact lived for over fifty years as a member of Butler's science-fictional vampiric species, the Ina. This paper will explore the ways in which Shori's position as a child—despite her age the Ina, due to their long lifespans, still consider her to be a child—connects her experience to that of

the reader of sf. Like Shori, Butler's readers are unable to draw upon their past experiences in order to orient themselves in the world she has created. And yet this fact does not necessitate a repudiation of knowledge as a potential tool for world-discovery, as evidenced by the fact that much of the novel is spent in tracking Shori's research into the vast body of learning the centuries old Ina have amassed. It is, therefore, the very ignorance of both Shori and the sf reader which provides a catalyst for their subsequent acquisition of knowledge and the questioning of presumed truths which that brings with it.

By drawing attention to Butler's insistent reiteration of Shori's position as a child and her attendant epistemological insecurity, this paper

# JANIN TSCHESCHEL

UNIVERSITY OF BONN

PANEL C4: ROGUES ONE

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will argue for the significance of childish ignorance in the construction of the sf reader more generally. Philosopher Ernst Bloch—whose writing has often been connected to sf’s utopian potential, most prominently by Darko Suvin—has stressed the radical implications of the child’s “relentlessly curious” approach to novelty. While the need for curious questioning in the face of science-fictional novelty has since been emphasized throughout sf criticism, it has rarely been framed in relation to childhood. This reading of *Fledgling*, therefore, will re-center the child within that critical discourse; arguing that, in both their ignorance and their curiosity, the sf reader’s experience within the many worlds of sf is that of a child.

## A WORLD WITHIN US: DENIS VILLENEUVE’S ARRIVAL OPENS AN OUTER SPACE OF NEW EXPERIENCE

Denis Villeneuve’s movie *Arrival* (2016) gives us an insight into a science fiction world unknown to us which, to draw on Simon Spiegel, nevertheless represents a possible extension of our already existing one. This “throwness” (as Heidegger calls it) into a world that may not (yet) be physically justifiable is always a throwness into another corporeality. For this reason, cinema and especially sf universes become a realm of experience of the unknown and impossible to the recipient (see Casetti).

Against this backdrop, the paper discusses the ways in which *Arrival* creates a corporeal experi-

# AGNIESZKA URBANCZYK

JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY

PANEL G1: STAR TREK II:

BEFORE DISCOVERY

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ence that immerses the spectator in the unacquainted sf world. In *Arrival*, the medium of language and its logogrammatic mediation plays a major role. The movie functions as a door opener to another universe, but also to a new world within our human selves, namely, an unidentified level of consciousness that allows the protagonist to remember her future. By placing a changed perception at its center through learning a new language, the film metareflexively refers to itself as a medium of experience that can bring about a different perception of the world surrounding the spectator. It leads us out of our own self, confronts us with the unknown, with extra-terrestrial life, with a new language comprehension, a related change in consciousness and brings us back

into our innermost being by creating a holistic corporeal experience for its viewers. In this context, the paper will show how the movie works synaesthetically as well as through circular narration to remediate a new level of consciousness that is bound only to the causality of events, but not to the linearity of time.

## WORLD RE-BUILDING: ESCHATOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN THE SCIENCE FICTION GENRE AS EXEMPLIFIED BY STAR TREK

Darko Suvin linked the science fiction genre to variations on utopia. According to him, a work belongs to the sf genre if it conveys the creator's criticism of their contemporaneity translated

into an image of a reality that is different but scientifically plausible. Thus, sf allows recipients to see their environment as shaped by history and, therefore, open to criticism. According to Suvin, only the laws of science are unconditional in sf. A project like this, making the historical materialism its primary paradigm, excludes the presence of any religious and metaphysical rules embedded into the created world.

The genre, nonetheless, is based on an inherently religious thought and *Star Trek* serves as a great illustration of this phenomenon. Although the series would be dismissed by Suvin as an example of space opera, its creators did use cognitive estrangement as a primary narrative device. *Star Trek* is widely considered a deeply

rationalist series, although it is also a document of the paradoxes the science fiction genre faces. Even as the creators of the series consistently depreciated theist religions, negated the transcendent, and strived to naturalize the supernatural, they were unable to escape the eschatological paradigm. The show suggests that growing social injustice, eugenics, and a world war are inevitable. The subsequent establishment of a utopia built on the ashes of civilization is made possible at least partially by an intervention of otherworldly beings with superhuman abilities.

This is hardly surprising considering the reciprocal relationship between utopia and millenarianism, yet it does undermine the didactic and parenetic dimension of the project. The human

# **NADIIA VILKHOVCHENKO**

**LVIV POLYTECHNIC  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**PANEL C1: WORDS & WORLDS  
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agency in *Star Trek* is replaced by catastrophism and awaiting for a rebirth which cannot be achieved on our own. This tension between the declaratively rationalist and materialistic paradigm on one hand, and its underlying millenarianist narrative on the other is crucial to the whole genre, especially its iterations that take place in the future.

## **THE SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES OF SPECIAL VOCABULARY USED IN SCIENCE FICTION**

This paper will focus on characteristic features and functions of special vocabulary (terminology) used in science fiction. The linguistic picture of this world is based on a concept system

which includes both special and quasi-special vocabulary coined by the texts' authors. Quasi-special vocabulary describes virtual reality, an imaginary fantastic world which is based on scientific assumptions. My paper will put particular emphasis on the peculiarities of the semantic structure of terminology used in science fiction texts. The paper will describe the main ways of semantization of quasi-special vocabulary units determined by their interaction with other lexical layers. The variety of ways of semantization of quasi-special vocabulary allows the author's creativity to create an imaginary world. This special vocabulary, I will suggest, shapes the genre of sf.

# AURÉLIE VILLERS

UNIVERSITY OF PICARDY

PANEL C3: SCARCITY & ABUNDANCE

SR34.04, DEC 7, 9.15AM

## HOW THE WORLD OF ALASTAIR REYNOLDS' **REVELATION SPACE** IS BEING BUILT: REVEALING WHAT THE STORY DOES NOT SAY

From its opening, *Revelation Space* (2000) is as enticing as it is mysterious. Like many science fiction stories, it relies on mystery to keep the reader entertained, a technique redolent of both the detective novel and the classical short stories with a twist ending. Such is the mystery of the disappearance of an alien race, the Amaranthins, on a newly colonized planet. Uncovering a megalith—thus hinting at the classical Big Dumb Object topos—Daniel Silvestre, the main character, sets on a quest that will keep the reader hooked until the end.

Just as classical in its form, the diegesis begins in medias res, in so far as, except for the date given, no explanation is presented as to how humanity managed to get the stars. This feels all the more puzzling as some cities and planets evoke places on Earth (Yellowstone, for instance). When the BDO and the mystery of the plot keep the reader focused on the future of the diegesis, the in medias res beginning is making him constantly wonder about the past of the diegesis so the current estranged situation can make sense. Worldbuilding, in science fiction stories, is then mostly done in parallel. It is up to the reader to make up for the missing bits and thus to make cognitive sense of the estranged universe he is plunged into.

# **SANJA VODOVNIK**

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

**PANEL A1: PERFORMING WORLDS**

**SR24.K2, DEC 6, 3PM**

In a very revealing manner, *Revelation Space* relies heavily on what Gérard Genette termed a “paralipsis”: information the narrator knows but does not impart to reader. It can be seen as the contrary to the typical didactic passage where the novum is lengthily explained to the reader so he can make logical sense of the book’s universe. The paralipsis serves to hide “scientific” explanations that would be too tricky to handle, of simply signaling gaps in the world/story for the reader to logically fill, whether they be explained later or not. Thus, for instance, the first description of the damaged ship *Iliia Voylyova*, another main protagonist, is traveling in mentions the dangerously destroyed levels of a ship she does not even appear to know that well, while she

clearly explains that the crew has been inhabiting it for a very long time. It typically makes the reader wonder what could have happened before the diegesis.

This paper therefore means to show to what degree the missing information, the paralipses, are constitutive of the world the author is building, keeping the reader not simply focused on the diegetic present he is telling, but also actively seeking its future and its past, so he can make this world whole.

## **HAVE AI, WILL PERFORM**

This presentation will explore dramaturgical possibilities of staging sf in the theater, looking at plays and productions in which humans perform

## JENNIFER VOLKMER

UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH

PANEL B1: STAR TREK I: DISCOVERY

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intelligent robots and robots perform intelligent humans. It will be an attempt at interacting with technology, trying to convince it to play a part in a conference presentation. It will be a test run for establishing a connection with an inhuman co-actor. Yes, and? A game of following scripts and algorithms written by humans, embodied by humans and machines. An experimental journey through the landscapes they create and inhabit.

### **BUILDING THE FUTURE WITH THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF TODAY: HOW THE ZEITGEIST INFLUENCES STAR TREK'S VISION(S) OF THE FUTURE**

The *Star Trek* franchise has seemingly always been at the forefront of minority representa-

tion on US television. From featuring the first kiss between a black woman and a white man on network television during a time of racial tension and featuring the representation of a main character with disability in *The Next Generation* (1987–94) to a woman in the captain's chair in *Voyager* (1995–2001) and showing an African American single father as lead character in *Deep Space Nine* (1993–99); and finally giving the franchise its first visibly gay couple in *Discovery* (2017–). All these examples are testament to the franchise trying to show a progressively more inclusive future. However, worldbuilding does not only happen through inclusion of certain aspects, but also by the omission of others.

While science fiction is usually about showing

# ANNA WARSO

**SWPS UNIVERSITY OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

**PANEL B3: SF FROM THE  
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the future, it is always rooted in the present, and often carries over the same biases and problems to its world building. This can be seen for example in minor and background characters, and in clothing choices that make up large parts of worldbuilding, especially in visual media. Similarly, there had been earlier efforts to include queer characters on *Star Trek*.

This talk thus aims to explore the futures that are imagined through worldbuilding in the *Star Trek* franchise by representation and lack of representation, particularly focusing on the processes behind the scenes. Looking at the importance of diversity in the writers' room, general structural changes in the TV landscape, and also at the differences that streaming brings to televi-

sion content, to better understand the changes between the different iterations of the franchise.

## **WORLDING RESISTANCE: THE WOMAN'S PLACE AND THE OPPRESSIVE STATE**

This paper will look at the worlds of Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński's *Apostezjon* trilogy (1979–89) and Juliusz Machulski's *Sexmission* (1983). Both texts are meant to critique the dystopian realities of an authoritarian state, the latter in the form of a satire that has since enjoyed a cult status in Poland, the former offering an arguably more nuanced reflection on the environments, institutions and mechanisms of a totalitarian regime and the way they are coordinated to subdue the

# **SIMON WHYBREW**

**UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ**  
**PANEL E3: IMAGINING**  
**NON-BINARY FUTURES**  
**SR34.K2, DEC 7, 3PM**

agency of the individual. In both cases, the protagonists' increased vulnerability (resulting from an induced memory loss or prolonged hibernation) provides an entrance into the strange territories the mapping of which becomes a structural device largely driving the development of the narrative. The main focus of the proposed paper, however, will be to investigate how the setting of these anti-totalitarian tales actually reestablishes and reinforces several oppressive hierarchies, including the patriarchal and often misogynistic framing of the female agency, typical of the anti-feminist attitudes continuously present in the Polish political discourse and social landscape both before and after the transformation of 1989.

## **TRANSITIONING INTO THE FUTURE? AFFECTS OF TRANS-BECOMING IN CONTEMPORARY SF SHORT STORIES**

Since the 1960s, cisgender authors of science fiction have imagined worlds in which trans identities have taken the form of a futuristic or alien mirage. The recent publication of two collections of sf short stories by trans authors represents a significant challenge to this legacy of trans erasure. In this paper, I will study the resistant potentialities of three of these stories—Gwen Benaway's "Transition," Tobi Hill Meyer's "Self-Reflection," and "Treasure Acre" by Everett Maroon. I will show that their exploration of the affective experience of trans-becoming challenges their predecessor ahistoricity and offers

# RHYS WILLIAMS

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

**PANEL D2: BEYOND PETROMODERNITY I:  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES**

**SR34.K1, DEC 7, 11.45AM**

resistant visions of trans lives that challenge traditional, teleological narratives of transgender identity.

## **MAKING WORLDS FOR THE END OF THE WORLD**

The transition from fossil fuels to renewables is urgent.

Beyond the technological and economic necessities of transition, there is a need for believable and persuasive narratives which take us from where we are now to where we need to be. Firstly, the realities of climate change and human responsibility for it need to be sufficiently worlded: the links need to be made and affectively felt by all. This is a question of rendering visible and

in some way palpable an impossibly complex totality and further, locating the subject within it—the very essence of worlding, and a job that traditionally understood “realism” fails at. It fails, according to Amitav Ghosh, because of necessary limits it deploys in order to “world” realistically, limits upon time and space which make a static background of precisely the entangled and shifting nature/culture of climate change, and christens this “believable.” How, then, do sf and the other fantastic genres overcome this blinkered focus, and can they do so in a “believable” way? Which is to say, they can “world,” but can they “world” this world? Secondly, visions of alternative worlds—again, affectively and cognitively persuasive and believable—need to be ren-

# SYLVIA SPRUCK WRIGLEY

INDEPENDENT

**PANEL G3: AGE & AGING**  
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dered in such a way as to give us something to aim at, a sense of what we might achieve, and what might be required to get there; alternative energy futures need to be sufficiently “worlded.” This paper considers the extent to which science fiction, and specifically transmedia world building in the science fictional mode, is capable of such “worlding” work, given the genre’s intimate relationship with the dominant petro-culture that birthed it, and asks whether such “worlding” itself might not be considered a symptom of petro-capital’s excesses, unsuitable literature for a renewed and renewable future.

## **THROW GRANDMA OUT THE AIRLOCK**

As women get old, they gain a superpower: in-

visibility. This has been seen time and again in everything from literature to comic books and, of course, especially Hollywood. We become used to specific roles, starting with the fairy tale tropes of the Fairy Godmother and the Wicked Witch. Fantasy expands on these roles with the Buxom Innkeep and the Wise Old Crone, along with stronger representation from Ursula Le Guin, George R. R. Martin, and, of course, the wonderful parodies of these women in Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* (1983–2015). Young Adult novels go a step further, killing mothers in their prime in order to allow the hero or heroine free rein.

The good news is that science fiction has successfully sidestepped many of the tired old

## ARTEM ZUBOV

LOMONOSOV MOSCOW  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
PANEL D3: SF FROM THE  
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tropes. Instead we have an entirely new set of tired old tropes to explore. Does immortality always begin before wrinkles set in? Are there any lesbians over 50? These and other pressing issues will be considered in this stern look at science fiction authors ranging from Isaac Asimov to Linda Nagata.

### CONSTRUCTING THE CULTURAL IMAGINARY: FACTORY WORKERS READING SCIENCE FICTION IN LATE IMPERIAL RUSSIA

As a popular genre, science fiction emerged in the Russian literary market in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Russian term for science fiction—*nauchnaya fantastika*—first appeared on the

pages of Pyotr Soykin's popular periodical *The World of Adventures* (*Mir priklucheniy*) in the late 1900s and was used as a signifier of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Later, the genre name was applied to a wider range of writers and was recognized by readers.

In my presentation, I will argue that science fiction played an important role in constructing its readers imaginary: it projected certain ways of social mobility and provided the audience with discursive patterns to interpret technological progress. The early readers of science fiction were urban factory workers—young men, “temporary bachelors,” who left villages and moved to big cities in search of better life. In late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia, factory workers became a

new social group distinguished from more traditional urban classes. Unlike the aristocracy, merchants, peasants, and manual workers who had strong connections with their farmsteads or estates, factory workers lived in cities during the whole year—changing jobs, moving from one factory to the other they plunged into the urban environment with its professional opportunities, temptations, and popular culture of entertainment. They were the first technical specialists: work with factory equipment required some level of literacy and technical education. Unlike other lower-class workers, industrial workers embraced the idea of self-education which was popular at that time and was widely advertised, paradoxically, by both factory owners (who orga-

nized evening classes for the employees) and radical thinkers who hoped to awaken the class consciousness of the proletariat.

For its readers, science fiction functioned as success stories. Young and adventurous inventors, the usual characters of scientific novels published in Russian periodicals, became the role models for factory workers and represented the ideas of social mobility. The latter was supported by non-fictional publications in various magazines and newspapers where inventionism was recognized as an honest way to fame and wealth.

Workers' daily routine was inseparable from technical equipment which fast lost its enchantment. Not solely a mode of literary writing, but

also a mode of thinking, science fiction was an amplifier of imagination, thought experiment in abstract thinking, and—as a popularizer of science, Yakov Perelman called it—exercise for the mind. The genre, thus, helped grasp the changing dynamics of technological modernity and gave discursive models of talking about technology to writers and revolutionary thinkers originated from the working class such as Semen Kanatchikov and Alexey Gastev whose autobiographies I will examine closely in my presentation.

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