

Foundation

The International Review of Science Fiction



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Editorial

Paul March-Russell

Just as this issue was being put to bed, along came the EU Referendum, and I was reminded of Harold Macmillan's alleged comment regarding 'Events, my dear boy, events'. Brexit dominated the conversations and several of the papers at this year's SFRA conference in Liverpool – as many of the delegates remarked, sf writers and critics are probably best placed to consider the dystopian and apocalyptic effects of the result. Joan Haran prefaced her keynote with the following response from the Green Party MP, Caroline Lucas:

It's difficult to be hopeful this morning but it is our responsibility. Because giving in and giving up is not an option when we still have a climate to protect, workers' rights to uphold and our broken politics, as well as our broken communities to mend. [...] We must recognise that in our love and our anger, we affirm, rather than deny our fellowship with one another.

The utopian sentiments of this reaction, coming amidst political, economic and social turmoil, chime perfectly with this issue's special section. For, as Paul Kincaid emphasises in his opening article, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) was borne from the intellectual and political crises of his day.

Utopia carries extra resonance for me since, down the hill from where I work in Canterbury, More's head is contained in the family vault housed beneath St Dunstan's Church. There is something appropriately utopian for More's head to be present yet hidden from prying eyes. 'A ghost city', as Paul Ricoeur once described the idea, utopia exists just beyond the seeker's gaze. As Oscar Wilde once observed, 'a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at', it is the siren's call constantly beckoning the traveller. (And like the siren, the dream of utopia may also dash us on its rocks.) Despite the contentious genealogical relationship between sf and utopian fiction, that same impulse of constantly looking beyond underwrites much of the attraction of sf. In the 500th anniversary of the publication of More's seminal text, it seemed appropriate to explore the relationship between sf and utopia in a special issue.

How More imaginatively responded to the controversies of his time, and above all adopted an orientation towards the future, underline Kincaid's claim for the novel to be read as a progenitor of sf. Nika Šetek focuses on the role of leisure in More's text to explore how this utopian pursuit in More's original becomes an instrument of dystopia in the three great works of early to mid-twentieth century utopian fiction, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949). David Seed examines a near-contemporaneous utopia, Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia* (1942), to unpick its maze of colonial and sexual politics. Selena Middleton, the Foundation Essay Prize-winner for 2016, follows Seed by offering a postcolonial reading of Greg

Bear's utopian novel *Queen of Angels* (1990). Ivaylo Shmiley ranges widely through one of the key sequences of contemporary utopian fiction, Iain M. Banks' Culture novels, to consider the ethical uses of warfare in terms of the uneasy negotiation between the Culture's utopian aspirations and its covert imperialist designs. Anindita Banerjee examines not only Dmitri Glukhovsky's novel, *Metro 2033* (2005), but also its online and videogaming incarnations to argue how the immense popularity of this publishing phenomenon dramatizes the post-utopian imagination of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Lastly, we have a special edition of The Fourfold Library, a previously untranslated essay from 1975 by Zoran Živković on Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953).

If contemporary science fiction is dominated by dystopian horrors (*The Hunger Games* et al), then hopefully this issue might suggest other ways of depicting future society that are not anodyne, Pollyannaish or banal. And hope – that essential ingredient of the utopian promise – can still win through. Last November, I stopped outside St Dunstan's Church in the company of Bill Campbell, the director of Rosarium Press, a small imprint in the U.S. dedicated to the work of African, Asian and Latin American writers, illustrators and comic book authors. In April, Bill launched an online campaign to raise \$40,000 dollars so as to keep the press in business. At the time, I wrote to Bill, hoping he would be successful. He replied: 'Hope is all we have.' With the generosity of hundreds of donators, most notably the fantasy author Rick Riordan, Bill reached his target with just hours to spare. Hope endured.

Note: I would like to thank the eagle-eyed correspondent to the June edition of David Langford's *Ansible* for spotting a missing comma in Andrew M. Butler's history of the Arthur C. Clarke Award (*Foundation 123*). The fault was mine, not the author. The devil, as they say, is in the details...

***Utopia* in Context**

Paul Kincaid

It is not love of liberty that makes men write Utopias.
(C.S. Lewis)

One day, late in August 1485, Thomas More joined the crowds along Cheapside to watch Henry Tudor, fresh from his victory at Bosworth, arrive in the capital. More was just seven years old, but Henry was the fourth person to ascend to the throne of England in his short lifetime, and two of them had died violent deaths. The accession of Henry VII would bring to an end thirty years of sporadic fighting, betrayals and usurpations collectively known as the Wars of the Roses and initiate a period of peace and prosperity. But none of the people along Cheapside that day could have known that: for them, this was simply the latest stage in the turmoil with which they were all too familiar.

That early awareness of chaos, and of helplessness in the face of such chaos, seems to have left an abiding mark on More. One of the consistent themes of his later writing is the desirability of order. Both *Utopia* (1516) and *The History of Richard III* (1557), for instance, specifically contrast just and unjust government and the order of the new Tudor rule with the disorder of Richard's reign. Of Richard's reign, for instance, More says:

And so they said that these matters bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied upon scafoldes. In which pore men be but the lokers on. And thei that wise be, wil medle no farther. For they that sometyme step up and playe with them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play and do themselves no good. (qtd Baker-Smith 1982: 375)

In contrast to such disorder, in *Utopia* 'Everyone is to have [...] a job which is to be willingly and joyously performed because the result will be individual and collective happiness and harmony precisely because of the order imposed' (Sullivan 1983: 36). As Chris Ferns puts it: 'for More, with the memory of the Wars of the Roses still relatively fresh [...] the notion of a sane, orderly, rational, and above all peaceful society must clearly have exerted an almost irresistible appeal' (Ferns 1999: 14).

The disordered realm brought about by the Wars of the Roses, just one of a number of dynastic struggles across Europe at a time which also saw the expansion of France, the Holy Roman Empire, Muscovy and Poland, was only the most immediate of the changes going on in the world around him that would come to affect More and his writing. In 1453, Constantinople, the bastion of Christian Europe since time immemorial, finally fell to the infidel Turks. It was the start of a new wave of Ottoman incursions into Europe as the Turks extended their rule around the Black Sea and the Aegean, capturing all of

Greece, even invading Italy. The Genoese were beaten in battle in 1475 and Venetian sea power in the Adriatic was severely eroded. Among the refugees that were sent fleeing west were many Greek scholars, bringing with them documents previously unknown in Europe, or at least known only in translations of translations, and providing a new impetus to learning eagerly taken up by the nascent humanist movement.

Known more commonly as the New Learning, humanism originated with Petrarch in Florence in the fourteenth century. Petrarch's ideas inspired a generation of scholars to seek out Roman and Greek works that had been forgotten in monastery libraries, their efforts boosted by the influx of classical scholars from Constantinople. Humanism (its name was derived from the Latin *humanitas*, meaning 'culture') began to spread across Europe, bringing with it a form of critical enquiry that quickly became associated with anticlericalism and religious reform. Although many humanist scholars were, or had been, churchmen, and most would remain devout followers of the Church, their critical approach nevertheless would eventually foster the most serious challenge of all to the authority of the Universal Catholic Church.

But if Islamic power was expanding in the east, in the west it was in decline: in 1482 the newly united kingdoms of Castile and Aragon began their conquest of the Moslem kingdom of Granada. Their new power established, the rulers of Spain and Portugal began to turn their attentions further afield. With old-established trade routes blocked by the expansion of the Ottoman empire, new sea routes were sought, aided by developments in naval technology which allowed European sailors to make ever longer voyages. Under the patronage of Prince Henry the Navigator, Portuguese explorers sailed south along the mysterious coast of Africa until, during his voyage of 1497–8, Vasco da Gama finally rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, the Spanish sponsored Christopher Columbus who, on his first voyage in 1492, found an entire new world, unimagined by Europe before that moment. Columbus and his successors, notably Amerigo Vespucci, would bring back tales of these new lands that combined bizarre curiosities with notions of perfection. In his account of his third voyage in 1498, in which he identified the mainland of South America, Columbus said: 'I believe that the earthly Paradise lies here, which no one can enter except by God's leave.' He went on to say: 'I believe that this land which your Highnesses have commanded me to discover is very great, and that there are many other lands in the south of which there have never been reports' (Columbus 1969: 221).

Thus the world in which More grew up was very different from the one his parents had known. Old certainties were undermined: Christendom was under siege, new powers were emerging, the very shape of the world had changed, and with that change came tales of extraordinary beings and extraordinary riches to be found in Africa or the Americas. At the same time an intellectual revolution was under way; dramatic rediscoveries of classical texts led in their turn to the development of new ideas in education, politics, culture and

religion. The Universal Catholic Church was not only seeing its geographical reach restricted by Ottoman expansion, but its very authority challenged by new religious thinkers such as John Wyclif in England and the Hussites in Bohemia. Eventually, these various challenges to the secular might of the Church would lead to the Protestant reformation.

Above all, the intellectual, political and cultural turmoil that More would find on every side was more widely and more rapidly disseminated because of perhaps the most important invention of the period. In Mainz, in 1455, Johann Gutenberg produced an edition of the Bible using moveable type. Other entrepreneurs quickly spotted the opportunity this new technology presented and set up their own printing presses, among them an English cloth merchant, William Caxton. In 1475 Caxton printed the first book in English. A year later he established, within the precincts of Westminster Abbey, the first press in England. Caxton would publish a hundred titles in little more than a decade, while the impact of this new technology can best be judged by the fact that by 1500 in Europe '40,000 separate editions of all kinds of works had been issued – roughly nine million volumes from more than a hundred presses' (Barzun 2001: 4–5). More, who would become one of the leading humanist scholars of the age, was to benefit from all of these changes, but at the same time he was unsettled by them. This tension between the excitement of new ideas and the dis-ease they generated found expression in his most influential work: *Utopia*.

The creation of a utopian

More trained as a lawyer and by the time he was in his twenties he was already developing an international reputation as a scholar and a wit. A complex, contradictory character, he was humorous yet scathing, so intensely pious that he habitually wore a hair shirt next to his skin yet he was fond of scatological language; he had a gift for friendship but could be a difficult man to get along with. Nevertheless, his fame as a scholar drew other like-minded men to him, and from that would develop lifelong friendships. In the summer of 1499, still only a twenty one-year-old law student, he met the Dutch churchman, Erasmus, who was already on the verge of being the most renowned scholar in Europe. Both were phenomenally well-read and quick-witted, with the same sceptical approach to the ways of the world. The two struck up a friendship that would last the rest of More's life. In 1506 they produced a joint translation (from Greek into Latin) of a selection of the *Dialogues of the Gods* and *Dialogues of the Dead* by the second-century satirist Lucian of Samosata:

[More's] translations of Lucian became by far the most popular of his productions; estimates of the number of editions within his lifetime vary from nine to fourteen but on any count they outdistance the sales and general reputation of the now more famous *Utopia*. (Ackroyd 1998: 91)

This is significant for two reasons. First, it illustrates the weight given to all forms of Greek literature and culture among humanist scholars, and also the enjoyment of satire, jokes and puns that Erasmus and More shared. Secondly, it points us to one of the most important forebears of *Utopia*:

In the work of the satirist More discovered the possibilities of dialogue as a way of exploiting the dramatic possibilities of the world; most of his own prose works would eventually assume the same form.
(Ackroyd 1998: 92)

There is another possible reason why dialogue plays such an important part in More's work: his training as a lawyer. As part of More's studies at the Inns of Court, he would have learned to argue either side of a question. This ability to carry an argument from opposite positions finds a natural literary expression in dialogue, and certainly the debate between More and Raphael in the first part of *Utopia* allows both sides to make telling points. Nevertheless, More does acknowledge a debt to Lucian in *Utopia* when he includes 'Lucian, whom they find delightfully entertaining' (More 1965: 100) on a list of authors that Raphael introduces to the Utopians.

An even more important model for *Utopia* would be provided by Erasmus himself. In 1509 Erasmus published *In Praise of Folly*, a sharp and comic satire on monasticism that shows the humanists feeling free to criticize some of the old habits and traditions of the Church. The first part is a lightly told story (following the pattern of a colloquy, a form which Erasmus had also made his own); the second part is more overtly political, a lecture rather than a story. In other words, from its structure to its satirical intent, *Utopia* precisely follows the pattern of *In Praise of Folly* (cf. Jardine 1995: 111–22; 180–7), though there was one important difference: Erasmus, after leaving holy orders, remained outside the institutions he satirized, whereas More remained a part of the court, which explains the characteristic 'double-faced apprehension' (Baker-Smith 1982: 373) and the complex irony of his work.

At the same time that More's reputation as what we would now call an intellectual was growing, so was his involvement in public policy. In the same year that *In Praise of Folly* was published, a new king, Henry VIII came to the English throne. Although Henry VII had brought peace and firm government, he was not mourned for he was seen as a miser and an extortionist: he turned round the fortunes of a country ravaged by war to the extent that he passed on an estimated £1,250,000 to his son, a tremendous sum in the sixteenth century, roughly the equivalent of £375M today. His son was as unlike his father as it is possible to imagine: large, exuberant, cultivated, romantic, handsome. He wrote poetry and music and loved the company of brilliant men. In a letter to Erasmus, Lord Mountjoy, a humanist and distant cousin of Henry VIII, described the new king as:

a prince with whose extraordinary and almost divine character you are acquainted? When you know what a hero he shows himself, how wisely he behaves, what a lover he is of justice and goodness, what affection he bears to the learned, I will venture to swear you will need no wings to make you fly to behold this new and auspicious star! If you could see how here all the world is rejoicing in the possession of so great a prince, how his life is all their desire, you could not contain your tears for sheer joy. (qtd Weir 2002: 1)

When, in a coronation address, More says: 'What may we not expect from a king who has been nourished on philosophy and the Nine Muses?' it is clear that Henry VIII is being seen as a philosopher king on the model of Plato, yet within twenty years Henry would be 'the most loathsome tyrant ever to sit on England's throne' (McLynn 2002: 16). For now he represented a golden future, the very embodiment of every humanist dream, the harbinger of utopia.

One of the ways in which the new century marked a change in the character of English history was the contrast between the New Learning and the old knightly traditions. As late as 1484 Caxton was still promoting the medieval order with his *Order of Chivalry*, but by the time of the coronation of Henry VIII the new king could be presented in medieval terms as a perfect knight (though Henry's ever more elaborate armour, some of which survives, suggests that such knightly virtues were more play-acting than an everyday reality), and at the same time in modern terms as a wise and learned ruler who surrounded himself not with champions but with courtiers, diplomats, learned men. More was typical of this new breed.

In Bruges

In 1499, not long after their first meeting, More had taken Erasmus to visit the young prince, which, if nothing else, suggests that More was already moving in royal circles. Indeed, Henry and More, both young, creative, fun-loving yet learned, seem to have taken a shine to each other. In 1510 More entered Parliament and in the same year was appointed under-sheriff of London. Other official posts followed: More had caught the eye of the most powerful in the land and his route to high office was now assured. So it was that in the spring of 1515, at the age of thirty-six, More was invited to join an important mission to Flanders to renegotiate commercial and diplomatic treaties. It was a delicate mission, but not an arduous one; in fact, for the first two weeks after their arrival in Bruges in May More's party had nothing to do at all since the commissioners from the Regent of the Netherlands had not yet arrived. More was one of those people who seem to find it hard to do nothing and during this forced inactivity he began to think of other projects.

Erasmus visited him at this time, having himself just completed *The Education of a Christian Prince*, which promotes the wisdom of being a philosopher king

as a means by which a virtuous society might be created. Their conversations must have touched on the book, and at the very least we can see it as one more impulse pushing More's thoughts in the direction of *Utopia*. Another such impulse came in July that year when More went to Antwerp to visit a close friend of Erasmus, Peter Gilles. More had a talent for friendship, particularly with those who shared his humanist interest in what Peter Ackroyd calls 'the nature of equity and civic duty' (Ackroyd 1998: 165), and the two men clearly hit it off; this meeting would be immortalized in the first book of *Utopia*. Everything was now clearly in place for the writing of one of the founding texts of British science fiction. More had a subject: the creation of a virtuous society, a hot topic among humanists, and like his fellows he would not be afraid to criticize the status quo as a way of approaching that better state. He had an idea: order, the peaceful and desirable opposite of war, which is almost by definition a non-virtuous state. He had a structure: the combination of dialogue, as practised by Lucian and another Greek model, Plato's *Republic*, and which he had learned while studying law; and treatise, following the model of his great friend and exemplar, Erasmus. He even had a starting point: Amerigo Vespucci had written a pamphlet about his voyages, *New World*, about 1505, and another piece, *Four Voyages*, in 1507, both of which More (and much of his audience) would have known. Vespucci reported that he had left twenty-four men at a fort at Cape Frio, and in a move calculated to add verisimilitude to his story, More made Raphael Hythlodaeus one of these twenty-four men, while Cape Frio is where his journey to Utopia begins. As Ferns puts it:

In an age of exploration, such narratives had a particular immediacy. Indeed, for More and his circle, one senses that this was not simply part of the appeal, but also part of the joke: it was actually possible that someone might take it seriously, as a factual account. More's Raphael Hythlodaeus, in the account he gives of his travels, is hardly less credible than many other visitors to exotic parts who returned home to tell the world of the wonders they had witnessed. (Ferns 1999: 19)

More wrote the second part of *Utopia*, the treatise which describes in detail the character of Utopia and the nature of its society, while he was still in Bruges. It was originally described on the title page as 'concerning the best kind of commonwealth and the new island of Utopia', which clearly illustrates the intended social comment of the work. More showed this portion of the book to a number of his humanist friends who 'were so enthusiastic about the modern parallel that nine of them, with Erasmus most prominent, contributed letters or poems for inclusion at some convenient point in the story' (Barzun 2001: 118). Some or all of these additions, including a Utopian alphabet devised by Gilles, tend to be omitted from modern translations of the book, but they do show a prototypical science-fictional intent to make the imaginary world as real as possible.

Encouraged by this positive response, More wrote the first part of the book, the dialogue between More and Hythlodaeus, after his return to England. Amy Boesky sees this portion of the book as introducing ‘the complexity of constructing a new category of utopian readers and preparing them to receive this novel form’ (Boesky 1996: 50), in other words as a way of softening up his readers for the unusual task of abstracting a serious message from a fictional work. The complete book was published by Thierry Martens’ press in Louvain, in Latin, in November or December 1516 (perhaps allowing More to present the book as a New Year gift to friends), with More himself producing the first English translation, of the second part, two years later. It was an immediate success: ‘Four editions quickly appeared in different cities. Nevertheless, the satire of Part I was felt to be so biting that it could not be published in England for another forty years, fifteen years after More’s death’ (Barzun 2001: 118).

The book of nonsense

More considered *Utopia* to be a comedy, describing it on the title page of the first edition as ‘a truly golden book, no less beneficial than enjoyable’ (qtd Jardine 1995: 119). It is, perhaps, difficult for a modern reader to recognize a book like *Utopia* as a comedy, unless we think of More’s claim as protective coloration, allowing him to say hard things by pretending they are light jests. But we must remember that More had a reputation as a wit; as Erasmus pointed out, he had ‘from earliest childhood such a passion for jokes’ (qtd Turner 1965: 8). There is, after all, a certain playfulness in the pun embedded in the title, which was made explicit in one of the poems appended to the book: ‘The ancients call me Utopia or Nowhere because of my isolation. At present, however, I am a rival of Plato’s republic, perhaps even a victor over it. The reason is that what he has delineated in words alone I have displayed in men and resources and laws of surpassing excellence. Deservedly ought I to be called by the name of Eutopia or Happy Land’ (qtd Ginzburg 2000: 3). There is a similar playfulness in More’s naming of places:

Thus, if I had done nothing else than impose such names on ruler, river, city and island as might suggest to the more learned that the island was nowhere, the city a phantom, the river without water, and the ruler without a people, it would not have been hard to do and would have been much wittier than what I actually did. Had I not been bound by a fidelity to history, I am not so stupid as to have preferred to use such barbarous and meaningless names as Utopia, Anydrus, Amaurotum, and Ademus. (qtd Ginzburg 2000: 10)

As to our guide to Utopia, Raphael Hythlodaeus: Raphael is Hebrew for ‘God is healed’ and in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit the Archangel Raphael is instrumental in curing Tobit’s blindness, so ‘the name is quite appropriate for

a character who tries to open people's eyes to the causes of social evils, and the sources of prosperity' (Turner 1965: 8). But that seriousness is offset by the surname, Hythlodaeus, which means 'dispenser of nonsense'. How can the criticisms sting, one imagines More saying, when the book is nonsense dispensed about no place?

The camouflage is effective: as late as the 1950s the historian Geoffrey Elton could describe *Utopia* as 'on its own both in literary merit and in irrelevance' (Elton 1955: 185). Later generations of historians, however, have recognized in the book a distorted but very revealing mirror of its age. Alison Weir, for instance, notes that the humanists advocated a Platonic society in which learning was not the province of the Church, but rather laity and princes alike were educated to a high standard as preparation for public service. So in *Utopia*, for instance, 'the description of the perfect courtier [...] could be that of the ideal Tudor gentleman' (Weir 2002: 147). More's friend, John Colet, had founded St Paul's School in 1509, one of a flood of secular schools being opened for the children of the emergent mercantile classes rather than the aristocracy. Here children were taught not religious virtues but the more practical ones of diligence, discipline and nationalism. The timetable at Colet's school is eerily reflected in the timetable of daily life in *Utopia*. Many commentators have noted how More's *Utopia* directly mirrors More's England:

The dimensions of this island are the same as those of England and the number of its city-states equals the number of English counties together with London. It is also approximately the same distance from the equator as England. Its principal city, Amaurotum, is itself like some reversed image of London; it has the same expanse as the city [...] and is situated below gentle hills from which a river flows as does the river Fleet [...] It is London redrawn by visionary imagination. (Ackroyd 1998: 167)

It is this element that helps to persuade me that *Utopia* is a work of science fiction. It is the fantastic detailed as if real; it is the displacement in space and time in order to look more clearly upon the here and now. The grotesque, the unreal, are dispensed with: 'We did not ask him if he had seen any monsters'. More reports with a nod toward the fantastical tales coming from Vespucci and other voyagers, 'for monsters have ceased to be news. There is never any shortage of horrible creatures who prey on human beings, snatch away their food, or devour whole populations; but examples of wise social planning are not so easy to find' (More 1965: 40).

One thing that makes *Utopia* a modern work, and indeed a work that stands in direct line to the subsequent development of sf, is More's 'great discovery' that human institutions, that politics and society, can be instrumental in 'eliminating misery, sickness, and injustice' (Suvin 1979: 58). This is in opposition to earlier medieval satires and wishful tales of the land of Cockayne. Cockayne was the

utopia of medieval imagination, a translation of ancient ideas of the Islands of the Blessed or the Elysian Fields into a place of sloth and plenty. It is a Paradise on Earth precisely because it is the exact opposite of the popular experience of life on earth, which was one of hard labour, plague, shortage of food, the disruptions of war and of want. It is, in other words, heaven but available here and now, by magical rather than human means. More's more rational Utopia shares some of the desires of Cockayne – peace and plenty – but More rejects their ahistorical, magical framework. Where Cockayne (along with other medieval fantasies such as *Hy Brasil*) is a pastoral world, people having space amid a beautiful landscape bursting with all the good things of life; More's Utopia is essentially urban, a place where the good things of life are earned through the proper working of human society, where living together rather than living apart is what produces plenty. His Utopia is precisely placed in space and in time; in other words it is accessible. And it is not a simplistic heaven on earth, for there are wars, there is work; it is just that the application of human rationality makes these non-threatening and comfortably sustainable. Where Cockayne dreams of a future magical transformation of everyday experience, More posits a transformation that can be achieved by human intervention here and now.

But if we don't have monsters, we do have technological innovation, such as the artificial incubation of eggs: 'they hatch out dozens at a time by applying a steady heat to them' (More 1965: 71). Hence of agriculture, the most important and widely practised industry of the day, Hythlodaeus says: 'Thus, by scientific methods, they've done wonders with a country that's naturally rather barren' (99). We also have medical and sociological innovation: at a time of plague in England the newly reintroduced ideas of Galen (recently translated by More's friend, Thomas Linacre) proposed that health is the result of harmony, in both the humours of the body and the body politic, and More repeatedly stresses this aspect of Utopian society. In addition, with such ideas as effective sewerage systems (among his other appointments, More was made Commissioner of Sewers in 1511) Utopia was, according to the very latest medical opinion, better protected against plague than anywhere else. Treatment of the sick was also far in advance of medical practice, with four well-designed, spacious and well-equipped hospitals for every Utopian city. London, by contrast, would not even have two far more cramped and unwelcoming hospitals for at least another century (cf. Totaro 2005). However, what makes this most clearly a work of science fiction is the engagement with time, and with the notion of change.

One of the things we recognize most strongly in sf is that it is a literature of change in which difference, otherness, progress and the future are such fundamental assumptions that we often take them for granted in our considerations of the genre. Yet the generally accepted view is that utopias are static. This, after all, is why so many of them make such dreadfully unengaging fiction: in a perfect society there is no reason for the opposition which makes for drama. More, however, is careful to make clear that his Utopia is not perfect:

'what you can't put right you must try to make as little wrong as possible. For things will never be perfect, until human beings are perfect – which I don't expect them to be for quite a number of years' (More 1965: 64). There is, moreover, an awareness of change inherent in the Utopian prayer: 'If I am wrong, and if some other [...] social system would be better and more acceptable to Thee, I pray Thee in Thy goodness to let me know it' (128). Utopia presents a better commonwealth, an ideal towards which one might aspire, yet it is still a land in which the Utopians must deal with criminals within and wars without. In part, this is because a land without criminals or wars would have seemed too fantastical for belief for any of More's readers; but More also wanted to show that there are other, perhaps better, ways of dealing with these disorders in the body politic. Though it is important to note that the powerful dialogue in Book 1, in which More argues that only by serving a prince and compromising one's standards could one hope to make changes for good, and Raphael argues that an honest man could not compromise like that and so could not enter public service, actually reflects a debate within More himself. More does not question Hythlodaeus's assumption that kings are tyrants, but says a counsellor must still work with them: 'If you can't completely eradicate wrong ideas, or deal with inveterate vices as effectively as you could wish, that's no reason for turning your back on public life altogether. You wouldn't abandon ship in a storm just because you couldn't control the winds' (63). Behind More's argument here is the principle of public decorum that Renaissance writers derived from the Romans, which prescribes that each element of an artwork or oration should be appropriate to its context. It presupposes that circumspection will be more effective than tackling errors head-on; Cicero pronounced: 'if at some time stress of circumstances shall thrust us aside into some uncongenial part, we must devote to it all possible thought, practice, and pains, that we may be able to perform it, if not with propriety, at least with as little impropriety as possible' (qtd Warner 1998: 54). Despite arguing for circumspection, More and other humanists, including Erasmus, believed with Hythlodaeus that it was better to abandon public life rather than compromise one's beliefs. Already in 1510 More had published a translation of *The Life of John Picus Erle of Mirandula*; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola had refused to enter public life so he could give himself wholly to philosophical contemplation, and when it was suggested that he enter the service of a prince he rejected the idea as a betrayal of his liberty (see Baker-Smith 1982: 378). By the time he came to write this part of *Utopia* (it was finished around September 1516) More was faced with just such a choice: he had already been offered a place on the King's Council, which he would accept by mid-1517 and which would lead directly to his Lord Chancellorship. Hythlodaeus' views are also the views of Erasmus, and when More did join the King's Council he kept his promotion a secret from Erasmus for a year, rightly suspecting that Erasmus would be baffled by the move.

There is another sense in which Utopia lacks perfection. Among the ideas of

European culture that Hythlodaeus brings to the Utopians (an early example of a canon of great works with which, More is suggesting, any civilized ruler should be familiar) is Christianity. The Utopians offer us the example of tolerance, and Hythlodaeus is allowed to make many caustic remarks about the English clergy along the way, but More, who would within a year be transformed into one of the most intolerant defenders of clerical powers, was not about to admit that any society could be perfect and yet ignorant of Christ. On the contrary, as E.D.S. Sullivan points out: ‘Not only did [More] not intend [Utopia] as an ideal state – an unattainable goal – but, indeed, he was pointing out that, by combining reason with divine revelation, the Christian nations of Europe should not only be able to attain to Utopian excellence, but surpass it’ (Sullivan 1983: 35). Or to put it another way, as Sullivan does, quoting Edward Surtz, More’s purpose ‘is to demonstrate that “conditions in Christian Europe are worse, not better, than those in pagan Utopia” and thus to shock Christians into a recognition that they, “fortified by revelation and grace” plus natural reason, could and should remedy contemporary evils and surpass the Utopians in “high morality, intellectual culture, and benevolent government”’ (40).

The idea of perfection

Book 1 of *Utopia* is a satirical attack on England’s social ills, an attack which focuses particularly upon the greed and the non-Christian negligence of the nobility of both Church and State. It is in answer to this attack that Book 2 presents ‘a radically different model of sociopolitical life’ (Suvir 1979: 91), and the difference lies in the extreme way in which it mirrors contemporary European practice, literally a world turned upside-down. Thus gold is used for chamber pots, there are no elites, living is communal (based on an idealized form of monasticism), and war is conducted not through bravery and glory but through bribery and assassination. Because the aristocrats of the Church are the subject of so vicious an attack in the first part, the Utopians are ignorant of Christianity, the satire lying at least in part in the fact that, though they are ignorant of Christ, the Utopians are more Christian in their behaviour than the Church fathers.

To an extent, despite all this awareness of change within the book, the society with which we are presented is still static. We are told that the Utopians organize their society in certain ways, many of which still seem liberal to us today: a six-hour working day, equal education for men and women, the notion that rather than execute a man for theft it would be better to change the economic system so that a man had no need to steal in order to survive. Some ideas, however, would be considered slightly too idiosyncratic even today; for instance, the notion that prospective brides and grooms should examine each other naked before making a decision (though it must be remembered that in More’s society marriage was usually arranged for dynastic or business reasons,

and to suggest that sexual compatibility should be part of the mix was radical indeed).

These patterns have been in place since time immemorial, and we are told they are so sensible that there should be no need for change. Many aspects of Utopian daily life would have been familiar to More's contemporaries precisely because they copied a pattern of life that had indeed been in place since time immemorial: the monasteries. As Northrop Frye has observed: 'the monastic community, though not intended as a utopia, has some utopian characteristics. Its members spend their whole time within it; individual life takes its pattern from the community; certain activities of the civilized good life, farming, gardening, reclaiming land, copying manuscripts, teaching, form part of its structure' (Frye 1965: 35). Such a community would have been especially familiar to More, who had spent part of his youth in a Carthusian monastery, an experience that informs the book: 'Certain features such as the regular exchange of houses, the material uniformity of life, the communal meals, the public reading and moral conversation reflect a monastic ethos. All are designed to wither egotism. Since there is no privacy there is no property, all goods are held in common' (Baker-Smith 1982: 376). According to Krishan Kumar, the 'community of work' was 'embraced as a necessity which also dignifies, and which is central to the whole communal purpose' (Kumar 1987: 27) that has seen More's book taken up by a wide variety of political theorists as a model for communism. Though it is certainly communistic to some degree, the main thing that would have made Utopia utopian, to More and to most of his readers, was not the sharing of property, the commonality of life, the lack of an aristocracy, but the result of these novelties, the consistent, unchanging character of the society:

In a Renaissance context, where the notion of a static society seemed neither implausible nor undesirable, this presents few problems: while with hindsight we may see the process of historical change leading to the emergence of the modern world as well under way, neither process nor change would have seemed inherent features of society to the writers or readers of the period. While the Renaissance imagination was quite capable of conceiving of alternative, indeed better forms of society, there was less concern with the process of how they might come into being. (Ferns 1999: 20)

In fact, a static society would be part of the attraction in an age where change was mostly associated with war and disorder. Yet I think it would have been impossible to write *Utopia* without such an awareness of process and change, and that, as Kumar says, what makes it such an indelibly modern work, is 'a novel and far-reaching conception of the possibilities of human and social transformation' (Kumar 1987: 24).

Utopia was a young man's book, an optimistic book, written in the belief that a better way of ordering society was attainable and indeed might be close

at hand under a learned and energetic and powerful ruler such as Henry VIII. It was a book written in the knowledge that the world had changed. Without Columbus finding his earthly Paradise, without Vespucci sending back stories of this strange new world, there would have been nowhere on this Earth for Utopia to exist, except in the fantastical lost lands of Cockayne or Lyonesse or Hy Brasil, though such locations would have changed the nature of the book from a politically relevant lesson to a dream. Instead, it was a book written as part of the process of the change. Without the new technology of printing, ideas would not have spread so rapidly among the educated of Europe, providing the fertile soil in which the new humanist thinking developed. And the new humanist thinking grew from an awareness of what was happening across the continent, indeed across the globe, and was spurred by an awareness of a changing political balance within Europe in which the idea of Christendom, of all Europe united under the Church, was giving way to a rise in national consciousness. Although no one seems to have realized where all this would lead within the next few years, it gave rise to a climate in which criticism of the Church and its institutions became acceptable as a way of prodding at the monolith to change and become better. Satire became part of the literary arsenal of the new intelligentsia. And *Utopia* would not have been possible without that atmosphere. It was a book that grew from, fed upon, and presented to its readers the intellectual, social, political and cultural changes that the world was going through.

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More's Legacy of Leisure in Dystopian Science Fiction

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Whether Thomas More's account of a perfect society is in earnest or if it is a satire is a topic under continuous discussion. Are we to consider seriously, for example, the suggestion that families that grow over sixteen members simply give a few of their children away to a smaller family, or are we to disregard at least some of Hythloday's narrative? The critics are split on the subject, as summarized by Warren W. Wooden:

One side sees Utopian society as an ideal and/or practical model for human society while the other regards it as either a trifling jeu d'esprit which happened to strike the taste of a public hungry for news from the New World or as a dystopian proto-Fascist state in which individual liberties are circumscribed at every juncture. (Wooden 1980: 97)

So, while the genre of utopia was named after More's 1516 book, the work has often been identified as having dystopian characteristics. The title is a play on words combining the Greek *eutopos*, meaning 'good place', and *outopos*, meaning 'no place'. A 'utopia' is therefore both a good place and a non-existent place, pointing to the impossibility of a perfect society. The word 'dystopia', on the other hand, combines 'utopia' with the Latin prefix *dys*, meaning bad, and comes to signify a bad place. In Wooden's own view of More's *Utopia*, 'the utopian and the dystopian are of twin birth, each vital to the appeal of the work, each a constituent element of the new genre it inaugurated' (100). Therefore, the interpretation of a society as being one or the other often depends entirely on one's point of view, and oftentimes in dystopian fiction, those who created the world would judge it as utopian. More's great influence on dystopian science fiction is therefore not surprising, as the ideas presented in *Utopia* can be both inverted and highlighted to create a dystopic environment.

At the core of *Utopia* is the relative sameness of all its inhabitants. Limiting choice in order to achieve such a sameness is the goal of most dystopias, and the relevance that More accords leisure does not go unnoticed. After all, what people choose to do with their spare time is an essential element of culture, as it is closely related to self-identity and self-actualization. To create model citizens, who are always improving themselves and their country, More imagines leisure options that are ideal but limited, generally including some form of learning. It is largely by shielding themselves from other types of leisure that the Utopians maintain their ideal state. Twentieth-century dystopias take a similar approach as More's *Utopia* as they build their nightmarish worlds around controlling their characters' free time and their leisure activities, but with the goal of limiting their personal growth. Susan Currell notes that:

We hold certain presuppositions and errors that are still apparent in everyday culture: that commercial entertainment is ‘bad’ leisure, that leisure should be used to construct a ‘whole’ and balanced personality, that the ‘proper’ use of leisure can counteract the deficiencies of capitalist culture. (Currell 2005: 186)

Regardless of their validity, these long-held beliefs inform our views of leisure, and are taken to an extreme in dystopian science fiction.

To talk about harmful leisure, Wesley Burnett and Lucy Rollin use the term ‘anti-leisure’ which they explain is ‘neither anti-social leisure nor leisure’s supposed opposite: work, labour or occupation. It is something else, something closely akin to our own acceptable leisure but perverted to suit dystopian ends’ (Burnett and Rollin 2000: 79). Anti-leisure, unlike leisure, harms the individual and his or her hopes of self-actualization. While the worlds in the dystopian novels *We* (1924), *Brave New World* (1932), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) are structured differently, they all share the feature of disabling their characters’ access to proper leisure activities, and instead providing them with anti-leisure, which is ‘both distractive and non-voluntary’ (Burnett and Rollin 2010: 86). Instead of the function it has in *Utopia*, of betterment of individuals and their community, ‘dystopias use leisure as a means of retaining the power of the elite by regulating identity, suppressing individual thought, manipulating self-sufficiency and moderation, providing distraction and requiring non-voluntary and often vicious forms of leisure’ (79). The dystopias of Bradbury, Huxley, Orwell and Zamyatin can be read as both a satirical exaggeration of *Utopia*’s leisure and its polar opposite, inevitably resulting not in the self-realization or bettering of an individual but in their loss of individuality.

According to the *Dictionary of Concepts in Recreation and Leisure Studies*, leisure is in its simplest definition ‘time free from obligations such as work, personal maintenance, housekeeping, parenting, and other nondiscretionary commitments’ (Smith 1990: 179). However, Burnett and Rollin stress that ‘distraction, the mindless employment of mind or body simply to pass the time, is not leisure’ (Burnett and Rollin 2000: 86). In other words, to be considered leisure under their definition, time has to be spent intentionally. As reflected in *Utopia*, to truly be considered leisure, the action also cannot be coercive. More’s Utopians spend up to nine hours a day working, eight sleeping, and the rest of the time, every person is free to spend

as he liketh best himself, not to the intent that they should misspend this time in riot or slothfulness, but, being then licensed from the labor of their own occupations, to bestow the time well and thriftily upon some other science as shall please them. (More 1999: 137)

That is to say, free time is not strictly regimented and it is to be spent well, in

some activity beneficial to the individual and society. It is for this reason that there are lectures available every morning, which many attend, while those who have no interest in the liberal arts may occupy themselves with their trade. Spending one's morning free hours in this fashion is 'praised and commended as profitable to the commonwealth.' The evening hours, on the other hand, are spent 'in music or else in honest and wholesome communication' (137). In other words, the Utopians spend the entirety of their day in self-improvement.

Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* stands somewhere between following the example of *Utopia* and going against its spirit. It describes a world entirely run by logic, where the citizens' enrichment must completely align with the One State's mission. The hero, D-503, begins a diary in which he intends to record the time leading up to the launch of the spacecraft Integral. While the writing is supposed to celebrate this accomplishment – not of an individual, but of the society as a whole, the 'We' of the title – it ends up being the record of D-503's rebellion. This activity, the writing in his free time, which D-503 expects will benefit the system and which he undertakes at the urging of the One State, ends up allowing him to pose questions he would not otherwise consider. Out of the dystopian context of One State, this seems to follow rather closely with the Utopians' habits; engaging in an activity which is beneficial to society as a whole, while working towards intellectual and emotional improvement. However, the journal opens a space for a form of thinking, an intellectual and emotional development discouraged in One State. The reason for which the activity becomes dangerous in the dystopian context is precisely the same reason for which it is beneficial in a utopian context. There is a clear irony in the government suggesting that the citizens write their thoughts while not anticipating the resulting rebelliousness. In *Utopia*, seeing as the society is already perfect, reflecting on it would be neither damaging nor dangerous. In contrast, while One State believes itself perfect, it still fears its citizens' imaginations, which is why the novel ends with state-required lobotomies.

The people, or 'ciphers' as they are referred to, receive no regular exposure to traditional art or to history, which would presumably encourage individualistic thinking. There are no lectures of the sort that More suggests, and the creative and thinking impulse, such as the one driving D-503 to write, is directed towards science, and mathematics in particular. Instead of trying to completely do away with creative expression, the government instead guides it towards the appreciation of geometry. In sharp contrast to Utopia, where the study of literature seems to be discussed in greater detail than any other subject, the literature the ciphers read consists of such classics as *The Railroad Schedule*. The State poets write about numbers and mathematics, which, along with praise to the One State seem to be the only approved topics. The Utopians never spend a day without music, which plays as they dine, while in the One State, music not written by machines is a relic of the past, only performed with the explicit goal of being ridiculed.

The very idea of happiness in *We* is in contrast to what Hythloday describes in *Utopia*, the ‘free liberty of the mind and garnishing of the same, for herein they suppose the felicity of this life to consist’ (More 1999: 141). State-organized leisure-like activities, such as walking in rows of four, all in step, are designed to be limiting, both to the freedom of movement and freedom from ‘the folly of thought’ (Zamyatin 2006: 7). The ciphers believe that ‘the instinct for non-freedom, from the earliest of times, is inherently characteristic of humankind’ (6), and it is precisely this lack of freedom that makes One State the ideal state, enabling the ‘mathematically infallible happiness’ (3) of its citizens. The ultimate physical manifestation of this lack of freedom is the Wall, which keeps nature out and the ciphers in.

Their time is organized according to The Table of Hours; all ciphers rise, eat, and work at the same time. While most other elements of leisure in *We* were the polar opposites of those in *Utopia*, Zamyatin seems to take More’s description of planned work, sleep and leisure hours to an extreme. The idea thus becomes ridiculous, especially when D-503 laments that there are still two hours a day that are Personal Hours, which require decision-making. While D-503 hopes that some day these hours will be planned and perfection will be achieved, for now, some spend this time at their desk, while others are out in the street, walking to the rhythm of the March, again limited and controlled in their movement. One can also observe lowered blinds over the transparent apartment walls, marking the usage of a Pink Slip, that is, a sex day, the only time that can be spent away from everyone’s eyes. The rest of the time, people live in full view of everyone. More’s admiration of Utopians having ‘neither wine taverns, nor ale-houses, nor stews, nor any occasion for vice or wickedness, no lurking corners, no places of wicked councils or unlawful assemblies’ (More 1999: 147–8) is taken to an extreme, as there are no spaces where one may hide, not even in one’s own home.

While More imagines a society in which leisure is equated with activities that aid the intellectual development of the individual and benefit the society, George Orwell, much like Zamyatin, comes up with a system which uses its citizens’ free time as a means of limiting their minds. While in *We*, the characters were at least encouraged to keep growing in their understanding of science and maths, no growth is encouraged in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Language shrinks to limit people’s ability to reason and develop complex ideas. Having unorthodox thoughts is considered a punishable crime as complete self-censorship is the ideal. History is always in flux, as Oceania changes sides in a never-ending war, and yesterday’s enemies become today’s friends, with all records proving otherwise being constantly removed from existence. Rather than money, power and complete control are the ultimate goal, with the Party’s mouthpiece in the novel, O’Brien, stating that the future is ‘a boot stamping on a human face – for ever’ (Orwell 1989: 280). The Party has no illusions about the kind of state it has created. It is not a case of an anti-utopia, a utopia gone wrong, but a

consciously constructed dystopia, a world that is made to be a nightmare on purpose. Therefore, if in *Utopia*, it is ‘pleasure, wherein they determine either all or the chiefest part of man’s felicity to rest’ (More 1999: 155), Oceania works to take away all pleasure from human life. Even more importantly, the ability to think for oneself must be destroyed, since, as O’Brien explains:

Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing. Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined. (Orwell 1989: 279)

While the ultimate goal of this process is the reverse of that of a Utopian betterment through leisure, it is remarkably similar in its basic structure.

Following More’s line of thought concerning lectures, there are assemblies for Party members. Similarly, they serve to develop the individual in the direction that benefits this particular society but, considering this society is explicitly created in opposition of utopia, they are far removed from anything More suggests. Instead of lectures on subjects such as literature – which is no longer acceptable in Oceania – people are expected to attend the Two Minutes Hate, where the goal is to let anger and hate towards their supposed enemy flood them completely, strengthening their devotion to the Party. Winston reports: ‘The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary’ (Orwell 1989: 16). Although one’s attendance at these assemblies is noted, and therefore they hardly qualify as true leisure, that is exactly the point. In the hate and fear-filled world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* there is only the surrogate for leisure: the state-mandated, state-supervised activities.

Oceania, in trying to build the exact opposite of a Utopia, goes entirely against what More describes as well-structured leisure time. All citizens, including the proles, are denied access to intellectually beneficial activities. The Party borrows the idea of transparency from Utopia, as members are constantly watched, or at least, they believe they may be watched. The possibility of being seen means hardly anyone would dare the risk of engaging in a non-approved activity. Instead, they expend much of their energy on their participation in political clubs and societies such as the Junior Anti-Sex League, which is mostly attended by young women. As Margaret J. Daniels and Heather E. Bowen note, ‘women are trained from a very early age to repress their sexual instincts and are given monthly talks conditioning them to hate sex’ (Daniels and Bowen 2003: 432). Some of the other leisure options for Party members include community hikes and games, attending hangings, Spy troops and processions. Most of these activities are meant to turn people against each other or ignite their passion for violence and death. While Hythloday talks about violence being a false sort of

pleasure and the Utopians avoid even the bloodshed of animals, taking pleasure in others' pain is a crucial part of Oceania's culture. This substitute for leisure, this anti-leisure, is a distorted mirror-image of More's idea of free time. The work of spying and (self-)censorship continues outside of work hours, and any intellectual and emotional development that might be kindled by organizations and meetings only leads in one direction, towards Big Brother.

Once again, as in Zamyatin's novel, it is through the writing of a diary, this time, a completely secret and consciously subversive one, that the hero becomes a rebel. In carving out time for himself and for careful consideration of his society, Winston Smith is committing a crime punishable by death. Leisure away from the two-way telescreen is the most dangerous thing he can engage in. Far from being an escape, it is not only the way to face the most distressing facts about his society, but also the only opportunity to do what he wants to do, as opposed to what he is forced to do. Every aspect of his free time, including his love affair with Julia, becomes a part of the rebellion. As desire is considered thoughtcrime, sex is inseparable from politics, becoming 'a political act' (Orwell 1989:133). Although most books have been destroyed, apart from those promulgated by the Party itself and rewritten in Newspeak, Winston and Julia manage to get their hands on *The Book*, supposedly written by the leader of the underground opposition. However, the book turns out to be a hoax, and implicitly, so does the idea of bettering oneself through education and productive leisure. A perfectly dystopic world, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does not buy into ideals of any sort, and reveals More's narrative of leisure as self-actualization as naïve.

While the Party members are extremely limited in what they may do with their time, the proles, that is, the lower classes, seemingly have very few restrictions. Of course, this is largely an illusion, and strict censorship is still enforced. They are kept in line through a strategy opposite to that used with Party members, but which is just as effective: they are flooded with 'film, football, beer and, above all, gambling' (Orwell 1989: 74). Entertained in this way when they are not engaged in physical labour, the proles find no time to devote to thinking. They are kept relatively free and happy, and therefore, passive. This is very much unlike More's Utopians, who, instead of gambling, play one game similar to chess which strengthens their intellect and another where virtues fight vices, which strengthens their ethics. With only anti-leisure and mindless fun available, the proles have no training on how to be or even care about being good citizens. Winston often repeats that, if there is hope, it lies with the proles, but he hardly believes it himself. Since the goal of Oceania is not the improvement of its citizens' lives but persistent misery, going directly against Hythloday's recommendations in *Utopia* and controlling the proles' leisure by only providing poor choices actually benefits the government's agenda. Without any intellectual stimulation, the proles remain disinterested in politics, the Party, and their own improvement.

The proles' lives in some ways resemble those of Ray Bradbury's characters in *Fahrenheit 451*. While Orwell gives detailed accounts of the politics of Oceania and its goals, the governmental structure in *Fahrenheit 451* is less clear, mostly due to the fact that the citizens themselves have very little understanding and almost no interest in how their world is organized. They seem to not even notice the war they are engaged in, and prefer not knowing what is happening around them, fully embracing idleness instead. The vast majority of citizens spend all of their time distracted by television screens that have replaced walls. The entire room is constantly speaking to them about nothing, as pointless, plotless shows go on incessantly, preventing thought and disabling focus. This is exactly what the people want, or what they think they want, while they are plugged into the noise. When the chatter stops, however, the emptiness and loneliness of their lives becomes insurmountable, resulting in frequent suicide attempts such as that of Montag's wife Mildred at the opening of the novel. This lifestyle also prevents close relationships from forming, as people do not speak with one another and pursue entertainment as a life goal. The lack of human connection, apart from leaving the characters severely depressed and inert, aligns well with the government's goal of keeping the population subdued and indifferent, as no wives oppose their husbands' frequent deployments and nobody seems to acknowledge the impending destruction of their civilization, in spite of constant war plane fly-bys.

Idleness has become a way to control the population, which is a twist on More's ideas on free time and idleness. In *Utopia*, one of the problems with idleness in England is that the working population spends unreasonable amounts of time in labour to support the idle; however, in *Fahrenheit 451*, globalization seems to have taken care of that issue. It is unclear who is doing the work in his own country, and Montag comments: 'Is it because we're so rich and the rest of the world's so poor and we just don't care if they are? I've heard rumors; the world is starving but we're well fed' (Bradbury 1996: 73). The idle population that More describes consists of women – though Hythloday is careful to say not all women – religious men, beggars, and the rich. Of these groups, the women of *Fahrenheit 451* fit particularly well in the idle category, as they seem not to hold jobs, while most male characters do spend a part of their time working. However, when it comes to leisure, almost the entire population falls into idleness.

More's work describes true leisure as productive activity, beneficial to the individual and the state. What it boils down to is constant education and development of the mind – reading, lectures, music, and discourse as well as the games that help the citizens make proper moral decisions. If not working on physical labour determined by one's occupation, the mind is always actively engaged, since happiness is the constant improvement of the mind. The danger with that form of happiness is that thinking can lead people to act, and in Bradbury's novel, the government wishes its citizens never to be driven to

meaningful action. This is underlined by the frequent references to people as things. For instance, the two emergency operators who save Mildred explain to Montag that, in a suicide attempt like his wife's, 'all you need is two handymen, clean up the problem in half an hour' (Bradbury 1996:15). Mildred also plugs into electronic devices constantly, preferring to have pretend-conversations with the characters on the interactive screens, referring to them as her family, or listening to the sounds of the seashell to having a conversation with her husband. While she constantly surrounds herself with distractions, Montag tells her: 'We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were *really* bothered? About something important, about something real?' (52). Mildred feels the emptiness intensely but masks it with sleeping pills and constant electronic chatter. Even Beatty, the fire captain who seems to know why the system is the way that it is and seems to approve of it entirely, cannot live happily in the conditions he helps create. After killing him, Montag has the sudden realization that Beatty wanted to die.

When Beatty comes to speak to Montag about why their work of book burning is good, he provides, as Carter Kaplan notes, 'a number of remarkable rationales for burning books and destroying the past, but the undercurrent cause is plainly a broad-based, society-wide quest for emotional and moral numbness, or escape from the human condition' (Kaplan 1999: 206). As the development of mass media pushes books to the margins of interest, preserving them only as digests, the value of reading only remains in keeping up with the Joneses. Beatty then describes the crumbling education system:

School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored. Life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts? (Bradbury 1996: 55–6)

As it is no longer exposed to culture or learning, the mind becomes impatient with intellectual stimulation. Bradbury's characters welcome what the Utopians spend all their free time avoiding; they prefer the dumbing-down and the sports to the contemplation that Hythloday would recommend. The greatest achievement of this process is that the current system, where book burning is the law, 'didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God' (Bradbury 1996: 58). While More suggests that equality in all things leads to a bettering of society, a similar premise leads to the degradation seen in Bradbury's novel. Since reading and learning makes people unequal, books have to burn, to bring everyone to the same plane of ignorance. Bradbury makes it clear that books are just one victim, a symbol of what is lost when reason is lost. It is not strictly about the books, but about what is in them, a reflection of reality that one can take in, digest

and learn from. Montag's mentor Faber, a former professor, understands unlike most of his countrymen what Hythloday means when he says that a pleasure of the soul is 'intelligence and that delectation that cometh of the contemplation of truth' (More 1999: 161). Faber recognizes leisure as one of two crucial elements missing in his society, the other being quality information. Montag argues: 'Oh, but we've plenty of off-hours.' Faber corrects his implicit definition of leisure and says: 'Off-hours, yes. But time to think?' (Bradbury 1996: 84). Time is needed to digest information, which could then inspire actions. Without the first two, no meaningful actions can be taken.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* treats leisure in a similar vein to *Fahrenheit 451*. Out of the novels discussed here, *Brave New World* is the one that seems to actually bring happiness to many of its characters. This is made possible by manipulating fertilized eggs and brainwashing people since birth through sleep teaching, which results in citizens who have so internalized the rules of their society that happiness is only possible by playing along with them. In the World State, humans enter the world with their social positions predetermined, belonging to a certain caste. There can be up to ninety-eight clones made from a single fertilized egg in a test tube; this mass production of humans is reserved for the lowest cast, the Epsilons. All embryos apart from those of Alphas, the highest caste, are poisoned to a certain degree to lower their intellectual and physical abilities, ensuring that they are happy with their social position, since 'that is the secret of happiness and virtue – liking what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny' (Huxley 1994: 13). Desire for intellectual advancement or upward social movement is disabled, which in turn enables the only form of happiness available to citizens of the World State; the country's extreme social stability.

As in More's work, and all other successful or failed fictional utopias, the promise of happiness can only be fulfilled for those belonging to the hegemonic majority. Those who are different, possibly due to failed conditioning, have no chance of achieving happiness in the World State, but even they are even given another opportunity by being sent away to an island. The seeming exile is yet another attempt at building a utopia, as the island is a place inhabited by 'the most interesting set of men and women to be found anywhere in the world. [...] All the people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own' (Huxley 1994: 207). This alternative space presumably resembles More's vision of Utopia, as it by definition only attracts the thinkers. However, their activity, being dangerous to the conformist happiness of the rest of World State, has to be removed and isolated, so as to avoid influencing the masses. The two systems thus remain almost entirely separate from each other, each pursuing its own version of utopia.

While the sole purpose of the islands is to provide a space where one's interests can be pursued freely and where meaningful leisure is the norm, within the World State the only option to occupy one's free time is mindless, state-

provided entertainment which focuses on consumption. Goods are created to be disposable and citizens are conditioned to use as many of them as possible. For instance, Controllers ‘won’t approve of any new game unless it can be shown that it requires at least as much apparatus as the most complicated of existing games’ (Huxley 1994: 26). The society is driven entirely by production and consumption and is built on principles exactly opposing those of More’s Utopia. Artificial needs are constantly created so that they may be fulfilled by a product. In contrast, in Utopia, as all things are shared and materialism is discouraged, the desire for new things is unfamiliar. As opposed to the disposable nature of the World State’s goods, in Utopia, things are built to with functionality and longevity in mind. While in *Brave New World*, one of the lessons is ‘ending is better than mending’ (Huxley 1994: 44), in *Utopia*, ‘they not only find speedy and quick remedies for present faults, but also prevent them that be like to fall. And by this means their houses continue and last very long with little labor and small reparations’ (More 1999: 140). Similarly, their clothes are simple and only judged on their cleanliness, as luxury is not of interest to the Utopians; for example, they shun fine metals and jewels. Along with sports, a favourite pastime in the World State is the feelies, which are movies with tactful effects and mostly pornographic in nature. Sex is also perceived as a pastime, to be had frequently and with as many different partners as possible. When there is nothing else to distract, there is always *soma*, a government-approved drug taken as a vacation from reality.

In the beginning, the war on culture and nature was fought with violence and systematic killings of readers, visitors to museums, and people shunning technology. However, with time, it became clear that conditioning worked better, along with ‘a campaign against the Past; by the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments [...] by the suppression of all books published before A.F. 150’ (Huxley 1994: 45). This complete censorship is mostly influenced by the simple facts that books are old, reading is a solitary activity, and no extra equipment is required, therefore no extra goods are consumed. Moreover, *Brave New World*’s poet character Helmholtz comes to understand, in spite of their beauty, most books are inapplicable in his world. He says about Shakespeare that ‘he had so many insane, excruciating things to get excited about. You’ve got to be hurt and upset, otherwise you can’t think of the really good, penetrating, X-rayish phrases’ (168). In a utopia, where everyone is happy, there can be no poetry, for as the Controller points out, admitting that *Othello* is better than the feelies, ‘that’s the price we have to pay for stability. You’ve got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We’ve sacrificed the high art’ (201).

Another victim of stability is old age and the maturity that comes with it. While the Utopians admire and respect their elders for their wisdom, having them speak to the young daily, ageing is abolished in the World State: ‘Work, play – at sixty our powers and tastes are what they were at seventeen. Old

men in the bad old days used to renounce, retire, take to religion, spend their time reading, thinking – *thinking!* (Huxley 1994: 49). Preventing people from maturing intellectually and emotionally means they are easily controlled by means of incessant pleasure, as ‘the old men work, the old men copulate, the old men have no time, no leisure from pleasure, not a moment to sit down and think’ (49). There is a clear distinction here between real leisure; which would entail activities that nurture the mind, and the mindless entertainment which keeps the mind imprisoned. The goal is, just as it was in *Fahrenheit 451*, the exact opposite of that of *Utopia*. Access to productive leisure is purposefully blocked. The mind remains over-stimulated through sports, feelies and sex, is kept entertained during all free time, and thus prevented from engaging in the consideration of complex ideas.

These texts resonate with today’s readers as they contain parallels to our own world, where leisure is largely, and oftentimes invisibly, mandated. As Karl Spracklen points out, even ‘the entire Physical Education movement, for example, rests on the assumption that the state knows what is best for children’s leisure’ (Spracklen 2013: 220). Perhaps more importantly, various types of anti-leisure have become the norm, be it the mindless distracting entertainment of cat videos and Netflix marathons, or work-required leisure such as happy hours and teambuilding. As Burnett and Rollin point out, ‘white-collar labour has become so blended with leisure that it is difficult to tell the difference’ (Burnett and Rollin 2000: 88). Seeing as culture is largely determined by leisure preferences, influencing or limiting those choices can, according to the works examined, have larger political implications. The concern that More’s *Utopia* seems to address as much as the twentieth century dystopias is that how we spend the time that is supposedly our own has a vast impact on society. More’s message ultimately lines up with that of Zamyatin, Orwell, Bradbury and Huxley, and perhaps the basic idea behind the attention that these works give to leisure is just as utopic in More’s book as it is in the dystopian novels. They all seem to hold that proper leisure will lead to self-improvement, which will in turn benefit society overall. The same message is repeated over and over: when productive leisure is replaced by the pleasure of idleness or by the anti-leisure imposed by the powers that be, the goal of reaching utopia quickly is replaced by the reality of a dystopia.

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Debating Colonization in Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia*

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Although it has taken on the status of a cult classic, Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia* (1942) has received very little critical attention and has only rarely been discussed within the context of utopias. Indeed, there has been little agreement on how to identify the novel's genre: Arthur Ekirch uncritically assumes it to be a utopia whilst Alice Laurence argues that the novel is science fiction on the rather loose grounds that 'it invents everything' (Ekirch, Jr. 2007: 335–40; Laurence 1975: 5). More judiciously, Andy Sawyer places the novel within fantasy, but recognizes that it combines elements of a utopia and is 'one of the last survivors of the pastoral' (Sawyer 2004: 7). The 1958 Signet edition declares it to be a 'great classic of utopian fantasy and epic adventure', although the novel constantly revises and debates its own status.

Born in 1883, Wright began constructing Islandia, his imaginary land in the southern hemisphere, around 1908 and, again speculatively, probably composed his novel during the 1920s. He held chairs in law at the universities of California and Pennsylvania, specializing in maritime law until his career was cut short by a car accident in 1931. On his death he left behind two extensive manuscripts of the novel, one almost 600,000 words long, and another of 167,000 words entitled *Islandia: History and Description, by Jean Perrier, First French Consul at Islandia, translated by John Lang*, allegedly published in The City, Islandia, in 1909.¹ The manuscript of the novel was typed up and edited by Wright's mother, the novelist Mary Tappan Wright, and further edited by his daughter Sylvia Wright with help from Mark Saxton, an editor at Farrar and Rinehart, who published the novel in 1942.² In addition, Wright's brother, the geographer John Kirtland Wright, devised maps of Islandia included in the novel's text.

Islandia traces the fortunes of John Lang, a member of a New York commercial family who in 1907 secures appointment as the first American consul to serve in Islandia. His experiences there gradually induce disenchantment with American culture, although he does return to the USA after performing his duties in the other country. Unable to settle back into American life, he convinces his fiancée Gladys to emigrate with him and the novel concludes with them setting up their new home. In a brief preamble, Lang befriends an Islandian named Dorn at Harvard and so, in its opening pages, the novel follows the method of W.D. Howells' *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894), where a visitor from another society patiently questions all the cultural values the narrator takes for granted. Howells' visitor explains, first through a series of dialogues and then, towards the end of the novel, through formal exposition of his social values, how Altruria is an island where the materialism of late nineteenth-century America has evolved into Christian altruism. Dorn resembles this visitor in being virtually indistinguishable from other Americans in speech and appearance. The only

difference in their behaviour reflects their ignorance of social customs like the obligation of Harvard newcomers to play football. The theme of difference is thus established which will be pursued dialogically throughout *Islandia*.

Islands and Mapping

Islandia was originally conceived as an island, then subsequently modified into a sub-continent. Imaginary islands were something of a preoccupation in the Wright family. On the death of the father, the classicist and archaeologist John Henry Wright, in 1908, it was discovered that he had devised an island with a map dividing it into five areas: Horace, Ruskin, Milton, Bacon and Calvin, with the principal town named London (J. Wright 1968: 51). Similarly, John Kirtland Wright, probably under the influence of Islandia, created the island realm of Cravay, situated on another planet, which has been described as 'more geographical than literary. It was mapped and remapped at varying scales according to the most advanced cartographical methods of the time; road and rail networks were developed; towns and villages grew and declined; and political boundaries were changed continually' (Bowden 1970: 395). This serial recomposition was a form of selective projection: 'Wright distilled in Cravay the facets of reality that piqued his imagination: exploration, landscape, and war' (Keighren 2005: 550). Helped by his older brother Austin, he supplemented his cartography with a history of Cravay in 1903 and later recorded that the whole exercise had been triggered by the Spanish-American War of 1898, which had 'enlarged the historical and geographical outlook of the American nation – and mine' (J. Wright 1966: 1).

Of John Kirtland Wright's maps for *Islandia*, the one headed 'The Karain Peninsula 1907' is a political map, showing Islandia as a small independent region in the south with most of the Sobo Steppes shaded as a German possession, with the area framed on the one side as British and on the other as French. The map thus firmly situates Islandia within the context of colonization. Elsewhere, Kirtland Wright's discussion of the role of geography in history takes as a starting-point the identification of what he calls 'physiographic regions' (J. Wright 1928: 5), not dissimilar to the notion of cultural areas proposed by Ursula Le Guin's father, the anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber. The second depiction of Islandia is a relief map showing the mountain range which serves as a natural border to the north, separating the country from the Sobo Steppes. It also demonstrates the use of rivers as boundaries to regions and how in many cases the tracks or roads follow the courses of rivers, lessons gradually learnt by the narrator of *Islandia* as he moves around the terrain.

Kirtland Wright's geographical interests have an even closer relevance to his brother's novel. In his 1946 presidential address to the Association of American Geographers entitled 'Terra Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography', he examines the psychological pull of such unknown regions.

From primeval times, he argues, curiosity has drawn humanity ‘toward the lands beyond the range’ (J. Wright 1966: 69), using the latter term as a means of conflating geographical expanse and imaginative reach. ‘Range’ could denote a natural boundary like mountains, but also suggests a limit to territorial knowledge. Kirtland Wright goes even further by arguing that ‘the imagination [...] projects itself into *terrae incognitae* and suggests routes for us to follow’ (73). Space, in short, invites a form of cognitive mapping.

Kirtland Wright proposes the term ‘geosophy’ to draw together a range of different cultural perceptions. It involves at once the “study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view” and ‘covers the geographical ideas, both true and false of all manner of people [including] novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots’ (83). The concept is clearly designed to assimilate culturally diverse perspectives but also forms part of a broader argument that a *terra incognita* need not be remote. It could just as easily characterize the Maine interior, which Kirtland Wright surveyed, as the African interior or the South Seas. In the novel’s preamble, Lang and Dorn cruise along the coast of Maine before they separately depart for Islandia. When Lang’s uncle tells him ‘Islandia is off the map for the present’ (A. Wright 1958: 731), he is reminding him of that country’s temporary exclusion from world trade networks. However, Lang’s exploration of that country constitutes a complex process of cultural mapping similar to the notion of geosophy.

Austin Wright’s original conception of Islandia is retained in its name. The country is as it were ‘islanded’ by its position and also contains a number of key locations in the form of islands such as the Dorn farm and The City. In the *History and Description* of Islandia we are told how the latter’s buildings strike the newcomer as ‘rising like an island’ (A. Wright 1909: 262). At the beginning of Part V of the novel, a chart by Kirtland Wright represents The City as an island, one which Lang is leaving at that point. Viewed from his boat, Islandia contracts to a vanishing point while ‘the steamer was a floating piece, all complete, of that occidental civilization which extends from eastern Europe west to San Francisco, with islands elsewhere all over the world’ (A. Wright 1958: 715).

Islands by definition raise the issue of connectedness or its opposite and for that reason, in the course of his discussion of utopia, Fredric Jameson declares, in the interests of conveying the ‘non-communicability or antagonism inherent in its component parts [...] I propose to think of our autonomous and non-communicating Utopias [...] as so many islands: a Utopian archipelago, islands in the net, a constellation of discontinuous centres’ (Jameson 2005: 221). Jameson’s general model is one of isolation, but, as we shall see, in *Islandia* it is less a state of affairs than a central issue which the inhabitants debate. Around the turn of the century, fantastic islands were caught up within the general opposition which informs Wright’s novel, namely a tension between separation and colonial appropriation. Surveying the Wright family papers in 1968, Kirtland Wright states, ‘an archive is a *terra incognita*, a mysterious island,

more mysterious than a library' (J. Wright 1968: 44). His comparison echoes the English title of Jules Verne's 1875 novel which describes American adventurers in the South Pacific discovering and naming Lincoln Island, thereby attempting to assimilate the new territory within the American sphere. In contrast, H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) describes a location used to establish a utopian laboratory for human experimentation. Wells' focus is less on the political fate of the island so much as its status as a refuge for its scientist-ruler. His isolation is not only geographical but also moral, and precarious in that he is liable to intervention, if only from the castaway narrator.³

In the late nineteenth century, narratives of the discovery of utopian worlds repeatedly frame their encounters within the context of exploration, where mapping confers accessibility and often appropriation by an imperial power. In William R. Bradshaw's *The Goddess of Atvatabar* (1892), for example, a group of travellers sail towards the North Pole and descend through a gulf into an interior world where their telescopes reveal 'oceans, continents, mountain ranges, lakes, cities, railroads, ships and buildings of all kinds spread like an immense map' (Bradshaw 1892: 52). Bradshaw's narrative traces out the ultimate imperial fantasy where the explorer-narrator not only discovers an advanced world with sophisticated aerial transport but also becomes its ruler by leading the inhabitants to defeat their enemies. Atvatabar embodies at once a utopia of enlightenment and also a source of unimagined mineral wealth. In his coda the narrator grandly promises a future based on the premise of imperial ownership: 'We purpose to apply a liberal portion of the vast wealth of our kingdom to the pursuit of invention, art, and spirituality [...] It will be our purpose to extend to the utmost limits the empire of mind over matter in developing invention' (317). His language slips constantly between the material and the spiritual as if it is impossible for him to imagine cultural growth in terms other than the imperial acquisition of yet more space.

Landscape

Exactly what constitutes space in Islandia is a central issue for the novel. Austin Wright's scrupulous care to map out the internal terrain is matched by a total absence of specifics that would locate the country externally. In that respect Lang shares the anxieties of the narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), who refuses geographical information about the newly-discovered country for fear of imperial consequences, declaring: 'I haven't said where it was for fear some self-appointed missionaries, or traders, or land-greedy expansionists, will take it upon themselves to push in' (Gilman 1979: 1). Islandia is already under threat from imperial expansion at the beginning of the novel and its inhabitants are defined racially against a 'vast population of Negroes, primitive and savage' (A. Wright 1958: 21). Between the two, lies a 'rampart of mountains' (22) and a buffer zone of the Sobo Steppes, populated by the

descendants of Arab invaders, now administered by the Germans.

Within these ethnic regions, Lang's experience of Islandia consists of a series of encounters with the landscape so detailed that the novel has been praised for containing 'some of the most convincing geographical descriptions in utopian literature' (Porter and Lukermann 1976: 198). Lang's first impression is one of 'ancientness, permanency, quiet' (A. Wright 1958: 41), followed by a more nuanced perception of difference. At one point early in his narrative he is walking through an autumnal patch of woodland, where the smell of the fallen leaves reminds him of New England, but then the landscape opens up and the analogy lapses:

The path turned left, out of the woods and through an arched gate, I saw a vista of broad pasture, infinite miles of level marsh, and level plain, and far haze, and snow mountains. This was not New England for it was too spacious, too immense, too aloof, empty, and indifferent; and when I set out across the grass, I became a mere dot upon it moving slowly – minute and lonely. (139)

The gateway frames a perspective whose sheer extent challenges Lang's capacity to make sense of it. He even inverts the perspective as if seeing himself from such a distance that he fears disappearing into the landscape. The fact that Lang makes his journeys around Islandia on foot, horseback or by boat gives the narrative a sensual, leisurely pace which contrasts strikingly with the noise, speed and insularity of transport once he returns to the USA.

However, as the quotation above suggests, the novel traces out a complex interaction with the Islandia landscape, where Lang has to constantly revise his cultural bearings. Accordingly, when critics argue that Wright 'recreates in *Islandia* the Swiss Alps, the university town of Oxford, the flat seascapes of Cape Cod' (Porter and Lukermann 1976: 209), the assertion is misleading because the intermittent comparisons with Devon, Norway and other locations mark stages in Lang's gradual assimilation of Islandia. Initially, he views places from the stance of 'mere observer' (A. Wright 1958: 480). One town resembles a 'medieval fortress in miniature' (112) while at another point he records that Mora Tower 'ought to have two stars in any Baedeker' (233). Lang's gradual shift from an aesthetic relish for the sights of Islandia towards a more substantial engagement with that culture is signaled by his participation in repairing fences and walls. The national ideology of grounding value in the land reflects at once the Islandian notions of work and ownership. Thus the landscape gives Lang a key to understanding the culture. As Michael Saler has argued, the detailed reality effects of the novel focus on the 'necessity – and the difficulty – of creating an independent "world view" while still being able to relate to the external reality of others' (Saler 2005: 1107).

Lang's participation in the ritual of 'circumambulation', a variation on the tradition of beating the bounds, gives an early example of shared activity in

surveying a farm on Dorn Island. Here space is not threatening because it is divided into cultivated areas:

The island was roughly about a mile and a third east and west and a mile north and south. We rode first to the north through the avenue of trees under which Dorn and I had come the night before, and then turned east into a great meadow, bordered at its lower edge by an embankment on which grew pollarded willows [...] East of this we rode into another large meadow filled with Islandian cattle and emerged on a creek from which opened a little harbor called the 'Fisherman's'. (A. Wright 1958: 137)

We are given a brief narrative of surveying where a local terrain is mapped out precisely and where routes (avenue of trees, creek) harmonize with the natural expanse and supply borders. The action is shared in that Lang participates in a local ritual which tacitly celebrates orderly agriculture.

Sexual Relations

Lang's exploration of *Islandia* is motivated by three romances and the main critical discussion of the novel has tended to focus on its depiction of sexual relations. Like Sheri S. Tepper, who has also described *Islandia* as an early inspiration (Tepper 1998), in her teens Anne McCaffrey was drawn to the narrator 'who learns to see women as human beings entitled to sexual desire and who, like men, need a purpose or career' (qtd Roberts 2007: 51). Verlyn Flieger makes a similar point in praising the novel for its 'recognition of women as human beings rather than as mere adjuncts to men' (Flieger 1983: 96), and she rightly stresses the complexities of Lang's sexual relationships throughout the novel. This argument has been developed by Naomi Jacobs who demonstrates how Wright breaks free of the 'contradictions created when utopian desire is narrated as or through erotic desire' (Jacobs 1995: 75).

Jacobs' analysis helpfully clarifies the different phases which Wright gives to Lang's experiences. Although he travels to *Islandia* in search of novelty, his subsequent emotions are directed towards three young women, the first being Dorn's sister. At one point Dorna symbolically sits on the threshold of a building, as if ushering Lang into a new realm. Indeed, he all too easily slides in his thoughts from the woman to her country: 'Loving Dorna, I adopted *Islandia* as my home. I loved *Islandia*' (A. Wright 1958: 273). At this stage it is debatable how much he understands either. Shortly before the last statements, he compares Dorna to 'Red Riding Hood in dark-blue' (271), fancifully rendering her as a fairy-story image.⁴ However, Dorna dramatically demonstrates her adult sexuality to Lang when they swim together naked. It seems as if she personifies the landscape to his admiring gaze until she refuses to marry him because of a family commitment to the son of the king. For Jacobs, this decision

dismantles the ‘conventional structure of desire’ (Jacobs 1995: 83) and forces Lang to look elsewhere.

His second choice is a weaver named Nattana, different in rank but still identified with Islandia. As the attraction between the two moves towards consummation, Lang plays a role in defending Islandia from invasion and once again identifies woman and land through his adopted role as protector. His persistently pictorial imagination leads him to compose an image of Nattana with the vivid colours of a Pre-Raphaelite painting:

Nattana sat in her usual light way, a compact graceful figure, one knee over the other and her upper foot pointed out. She was sewing with a lamp set near her. Her head was a little bent, and the light on her hair made every red and golden thread glisten. (A. Wright 1958: 503)

It is as if she is posed for his delight, a ‘sturdy little girl’ rather than an adult. However, it is through her actions and voice that Nattana demonstrates her independence of Lang’s static images. She makes clothes for him, which implicitly questions whether his commitment to Islandia is more than superficial, and she asks him to describe American life for her, an account which produces confusion and an ultimate refusal to live there. The romance founders because Nattana is determined to retain her independence. Her craft ties her in with the commercial motifs of the novel since the American methods of mass production would put her out of work. It demonstrates the close linkage between romance and commerce that after his return to the USA, Lang sends her a Singer sewing machine, one of the key implements which helped open up Japan to the American market, a process explicitly referenced in the novel.

Lang’s third and final choice for partner is the American Gladys Hunter, like him already disenchanted with her life. In a new reversal, ‘Lang himself becomes the Islandian guide and Gladys the sceptical stranger’ (Jacobs 1995: 85). Like her predecessors, she forcefully challenges every assertion of Lang’s, making their exchanges far more dramatic than the usual expository dialogue of older utopias. It is in this section that the discussion of love becomes the most involved as Lang attempts to explain the different terms in Islandian culture for friendship, sexual passion, love of place and desire for commitment. Gladys’ dress recalls Victorian decorum and elaborate concealment of her body. She refuses to swim naked and, when dressed in the USA, ‘nothing of her appeared except her head above a high collar and her hands out of long wristbands’ (A. Wright 1958: 796). Apart from signalling cultural difference, the clothes pose a question for Lang: how well does he actually know Gladys? His mental habit of pictorial imaging is blocked by the fact that she is a painter and even after their marriage she refuses the emotional comfort that might bring. All three of Lang’s relationships are used as a medium for accessing and debating the nature of Islandian society. Marriage thus represents a goal of integration rather than a romantic aim.

Trade and the Debate over Change

Islandia is initially perceived by Lang's uncle as opening up a 'wonderful market' (25) for trade rather than overt military conquest, and Lang's appointment as consul is designed to facilitate trade. However, his hesitancy and clear lack of progress bring him to the verge of dismissal. Lang's foil in the novel is Robinson, a young American who, far from being troubled by the ethical implications of trade, approaches the new country in a crudely acquisitive spirit. Not only does he acquire a girl from a local brothel, he also assembles an Exhibition Ship of western products designed to whet the Islandians' appetite for new machines. The project never succeeds, partly because the locals have no conception of advertising. Apart from that, Dorna rejects the promise of electricity, which had become a standard feature of turn-of-the-century utopias, by extending the power network into a metaphor of captivity:

'Of course it is simpler to just press a button to make a light, but all the complications of wires stretched everywhere ...' She sighed.

'There are two sides to it,' I said. 'You would get used to wires.'

'Never!' she cried with a laugh. 'Threads going everywhere tying everyone to someone else.' (166)

The conceptual crux in Islandia comes when the assembly debates the 'nation's right to be individualistic' (437), specifically whether to open the nation to overseas trade. Lord Mora makes the case for increased commerce by summarizing western culture as follows:

This civilization is still growing and changing, and for those who accept it, life is vivid, active, and various. It is spreading through the world, peopling its waste places; primitive peoples are drawn within its culture, and other civilizations have felt its impact and adopted it. It is a great stream of irresistible power. Conscious of its strength, it knows no barriers to its extension, and, conscious of its rightness, it sees no other civilization but as its inferior. Shall Islandia stand alone against a force so strong and so full of promise for mankind? (444)

His proposal resembles the opening of Japan in the 1850s in proposing designated treaty ports for western trade. When Lang discusses the proposal with the French consul, the latter reminds him of America's imperialist policy in seizing the land for the Panama Canal.

Lord Mora describes civilization as an irresistible force of nature with a life of its own in assimilating other cultures, whereas it falls to Lord Dorn to put the counter-case, specifically to reject the suggestion that the outside world is a unity. For Lord Dorn the 'disease of commercialisation and industrialism' (462) has to be resisted in the name of 'family and place' (471). His argument is literally conservative in proposing methods for retaining the cherished values

of the nation. His critique of novelty, speed and opportunism is enthusiastically endorsed by Ursula K. Le Guin who comments that ‘this speech might have been made in the council of any non-Western nation or people at the time of its encounter with Europeans in numbers’ (Le Guin 1992: 94). In place of the rhetoric of force Lord Dorn deploys tropes of depth and rootedness when he accuses the pro-western group of being ‘far from natural things’, insisting that ‘the soil that we have is so natural and so deep that we, satisfied with our aim, are content to leave mystery mysterious’ (A. Wright 1958: 472).

Although Lord Mora’s proposal is voted down in the Islandia council, it is the counterargument rather than the decision which brings Le Guin’s praise for its resistance to ‘this matter of “Westernization” or “progress,” which is perhaps the central fact of our times’ (Le Guin 1992: 95). Le Guin’s analogy is drawn between indigenous, relatively isolated cultures and Europe, but Islandia is not at all untouched by western influences. There are hints within the novel of centuries of contact, further fleshed out in the *History and Description*. Here Wright assembles a lengthy and detailed narrative of internal and external conflict with Islandia placed on the edge of Christian expansion.⁵ By the sixteenth century European exploration had expanded round the world and Wright sums up recent history at the turn of the nineteenth century in terms which anticipate the action of his novel: ‘The events of the last hundred and five years [...] mark an effort [...] of European and American cultures to force themselves wholly unsought on Islandia, and a counter effort by the latter [...] to retain its own systems and individuality. The answer is not yet’ (A. Wright 1909: 170). Islandia is located within a network of steamboat routes and close to the British colony of St Anthony. Accordingly, as Lang sails towards his destination he reflects: ‘I was at the edge of empire’ (A. Wright 1958: 29).

Le Guin’s endorsement of the action of *Islandia* contrasts starkly with Aldous Huxley’s 1962 take in his novel *Island*. For Jerome Meckier, Huxley uses the island location as a conscious anachronism through which he ridicules the latent authoritarianism in Wells’ utopias and Wright’s resistance to empire. Meckier argues that ‘Huxley parodied the plot governing Wright’s first five hundred pages by darkening the success for Islandia remaining un-westernized into catastrophe for Pala.’ When the latter is overrun by forces backed by western oil companies, Huxley exposes ‘Wright’s naivete [in seeming] oblivious to an island utopia’s fragility in an age of imperialism’ (Meckier 2012/13: 329). Contrary to this charge, according to Porter and Lukermann, utopia in *Islandia* is not a social given so much as a field for constant debate: ‘It exists in the real world of the first decade of the twentieth century; it is in communication with other countries; it is bordered by German and British protectorates; its people have a profound sense of history [...] the economy functions in a world of particularized resources influenced by the friction of distance.’ In short, the novel is the ‘antithesis of the normative model of utopia’ (Porter and Lukermann 1976: 217).

Allusions to utopias within the novel form an integral part of its debate over social forms. At one point Lang wonders 'how the Islandians came to reason in terms of the doctrine of evolution, propounded by Darwin not so very long ago' (A. Wright 1958: 504). The fact that they have assimilated a notion of evolution, combined with the many references to the historical past – the Christian missionaries, the incursions of the Saracens, and more recent colonizing incursions – all suggest that Islandia is not a static culture, however tenaciously they may want to cling on to cherished values. In short, it harmonizes with Wells' assertion, in *A Modern Utopia* (1905), about the differences between classical and modern utopias: 'Change and development [in former utopias] were dammed back by invincible dams for ever. But the Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage, leading to a long ascent of stages' (Wells 1967: 5). Wells' evolutionary model of utopia appeared during the first years of Wright's composition of *Islandia*, whilst the Wright family was further excited at reading Wells' *Outline of History* (published 1919–20, around the time when Wright would have been starting work on the final manuscript).

Shortly after arriving in Islandia, Lang is recommended by his future fiancée to read a book by John Carter Carstairs called *Travels in a Modern Utopia*, about which Gladys writes: 'I study and study his quaint maps and pretend I am there' (A. Wright 1958: 52), in effect warning Lang not to yield to fancy in his reaction to the new country. John Carter is, of course, the serial protagonist of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars novels. To conflate his name with an echo of Wells' *A Modern Utopia* might have been a covert signal to the reader not to expect violent adventure or complex administrative discussion in Wright's novel. More importantly, Lang reads a history of Islandia by the French consul Perrier, where two broad perspectives on its culture are summarized as follows: 'the Utopians were extravagant in their praise of Islandia, wishing to change their own nations to be like her. The Alterators wished to change Islandia to be like themselves' (67). Lang frankly admits that he is an Alterator, initially bringing with him cultural presumptions of progress.

In a more overtly negative spirit, his uncle dismisses Islandia as a hedonistic, 'emotional Utopia' (790) which has ignored higher goals of behaviour, although Lang accuses his uncle of being incapable of separating sinfulness from pleasure. Part V of *Islandia* describes the repeated difficulties Lang experiences in trying to re-adjust to American life. Apart from the incessant noise of the city, when Lang travels to Nantucket to meet Gladys, he becomes pointedly aware of the censorious observation they are both subjected to. Ironically Lang has become a success in the family business, but he figures this as a state of confinement: 'I saw the picture and placed myself, John Lang, within the frame' (787).

It is within this context of estrangement that Lang's discussion with his uncle takes place. The latter attempts to undermine Lang's allegiance to Islandia by

declaring: 'you are still one of us' (789), challenging the presumptions behind his statements. His uncle accuses Lang of having a prejudice in favour of the simple life: 'the Brook Farm, the Charles Wagner, the Rousseau fallacies!' (790). In effect, he accuses him of the same Romantic naivety which Nathaniel Hawthorne satirized in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and which had been further popularized in the English translation of Charles Wagner's *The Simple Life* (1904). Lang's uncle sneers at one of the main characteristics of Islandian life, namely its simplicity, as demonstrated in the style of clothes and their relaxed attitude towards nude bathing. In that respect he functions as a hostile reader of Lang's memoirs, attacking the supposed utopian dimension of Islandia as delusion. Thus, when Lang refutes the charge by arguing that, despite its appearances, Islandian society is actually complex, his words implicitly warn the reader to look beneath the surface.

From the very beginning, Lang's perceptions of Islandia are mediated through western accounts of its culture which are brought into question as the novel progresses. In her survey of late nineteenth-century American utopias, Jean Pfaelzer shows that these works draw on the 'narrative structures of the contemporary sentimental romance, which traditionally celebrates a reconciliation of natural and social growth' (Pfaelzer 1984: 6). It sounds superficially as if Wright were presenting some such reconciliation at the end of the novel when, after the discovery of Gladys's pregnancy, Lang declares: 'We are Islandians' (A. Wright 1958: 940). However, the narrative closure is only partial. The novel has established so strongly the currents of social and political change that this withdrawal from the bustle of industrial America into an apparent agrarian idyll will only be temporary.

Endnotes

¹*Islandia: History and Description* is deposited among the Wright papers in Harvard University Library and has been fully digitized, as has the original typescript of the novel.

² Saxton went on to publish three Islandia novels himself: a sequel, *The Islar: A Narrative of Lang III* (1969), and two prequels, *The Two Kingdoms: A Novel of Islandia* (1979) and *Havoc in Islandia* (1982).

³ John Rieder sees the novel as a 'literalization of the racist ideological fantasy that guides much colonial practice' (Rieder 2008: 106).

⁴ The story 'Little Red Riding Hood' appears in *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889), edited by Andrew Lang, who may have suggested the name for Wright's narrator.

⁵ An excerpt from this chronicle has been published under the title 'The Story of Alwina' in Terri Windling and Mark Alan Arnold, eds. *Elsewhere* (New York: Ace, 1981). A brief summary by Sylvia Wright of Islandia's history features as an afterword to *Islandia*.

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Foundation Essay Prize Winner 2016

Utopia and the Colonized Pastoral: Africa, Myth and Blackness in Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels*

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What combined elements create and sustain utopia? While Raymond Williams places science fiction utopias into four distinct groups, this article will bridge a gap between the first and third definitions; between 'the paradise, in which a happier life is described as simply existing elsewhere' and the 'the willed transformation, in which a new kind of life has been achieved by human effort' (Williams 1978: 203). I argue that paradise – a sustained, internalized mythology of a secure and happy life – is essential to utopia by 'willed transformation'. Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels* (1990) is set in the year 2048 in a futuristic Los Angeles which M.F. Blatchford calls 'utopian' (Blatchford 1994: 61). This utopia clearly has undergone a 'willed transformation' as it is upheld by extensive external and internal nanotechnologies that allow people to arbitrarily change their appearance and – on a deeper level – undergo a techno-psychiatric process through which people are rendered psychologically innocuous, or 'therapied'.

From the very beginning of the text, however, Bear introduces a crack in the façade, a suggestion that this utopia may present as such for some and not for others. Emmanuel Goldsmith, a poet and a man of mixed race in a world where people (of a certain wealth and status) can choose their skin colour, has murdered eight of his young acolytes, cutting their throats and dismembering the bodies with his father's Bowie knife. Goldsmith is part of a small segment of the population who are voluntarily 'untherapied' as a sacrifice for art or a protest against government intrusion. Through investigation of Goldsmith's crime, it soon becomes clear that government-mandated therapy, while creating a present utopia, not only does not begin to heal the brutal histories of imperialism in the formation of the West but also creates a stark contrast between utopian 2048 and Goldsmith's psychological dystopia. This dystopia springs directly from a complex creation mythology attached to Goldsmith's fractured concept of home on the African continent. In Bear's binary millennium, therapy has not healed but buried the prevailing problem of slavery and colonialism – a problem that persists, manifesting in Africa transformed 'into a charnel house [of] plague and war and famine' (Bear 2010: ch. 43). In Goldsmith, this history coincides with the death of his personal paradise; Goldsmith's idea of origin and the origin of his ancestors was destroyed along with the African continent. The death of this mythology and the pastoral ideal through Goldsmith's internalization of colonial history culminates in a loss of identity that stimulates a drive toward death. Goldsmith's murders, then, are the physical manifestation of the psychological impact of a long and unresolved history of genocide, slavery and dehumanization

that persists both in Bear's so-called utopia and our own modern world.

As a writer, Emanuel Goldsmith relies on the established set of images and narratives, or mythologies, which express truths about human history and our persisting human condition. One such narrative is the creation myth, a story in the pastoral mode – and, as such, both connected to and removed from present society – that suggests a divine human origin, or a perfect state from which humanity came and to which it will someday return. Inside and outside the realm of creation myth, the pastoral mode has been used to draw attention to imperfections in society by removing the reader from that society, ostensibly providing a vantage-point from which to view society's flaws. Terry Gifford writes about the variations of pastoral – the first being the more traditional variety that sprang from the poetry of Theocritus and Virgil, and continued with poets and playwrights throughout the Renaissance, such as Sir Philip Sidney. In those pastoral works, Gifford emphasizes that retreat or return is the fundamental pastoral movement, either within the text, or in the sense that the pastoral retreat retrieved some insights relevant to the urban audience. Also prevalent, however, is a sceptical use of the term – "pastoral" as pejorative, implying that the pastoral vision is too simplified and thus an idealization of the reality of life in the country. Here, what is "returned" by retreat is judged to be too comfortably complacent to qualify as "insight" (Gifford 1998: 2). A deeper look at pastoral poetry, however, brings an awareness of an inherent pejorative in the form. Virgil's pastoral makes the pejorative especially apparent. Leo Marx notes that 'the first eclogue certainly represents more than a simple wish-image of bucolic pleasure. No sooner does Virgil sketch in the ideal landscape than he discloses an alien world encroaching from without' (Marx 1964: 21).

Queen of Angels functions within a similar cynical use of the pastoral genre while also suggesting that the natural elements of pastoral speak to us on a fundamental level. In this way, the pastoral can appear not only in literature concerned with shepherds or simple rural life, but also in highly speculative technological narratives. Gifford writes that 'The idea that our mind is not only a product of nature – indeed, is our "exquisite" connection with it – but is designed to help us understand our place in nature, is perhaps an explanation of the persistence of the pastoral impulse, in which, as well as the mind, "the progressive powers [...] of the whole species" are at work' (Gifford 1998: 96). If the pastoral does indeed attempt to represent an 'exquisite connection' between mind, body, and the land upon which we were all created, then abuses to these three elements of the human experience should appear within a pastoral landscape, or some version of it. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley isolate the ways in which colonialism transforms the pastoral, so that its landscape is barely recognizable as such:

Addressing historical and racial violence is integral to understanding literary representations of geography, particularly because the land is 'saturated by traumas of conquest.' [Édouard] Glissant argues that this

is why a post-colonial ecology cannot be interpolated as a pastoral but rather an untranslatable historical record of a ‘fight without witnesses’. Since it is the nature, so to speak, of colonial powers to suppress the history of their own violence, the land and even the ocean become all the more crucial as recuperative sites of post-colonial historiography. (DeLoughrey and Handley 2011: 8)

The idea of the pastoral landscape as a witness where there are no witnesses, that the land becomes a record for the violations of imperialism is in line with the underlying suggestions of the pastoral mode. For example, the paradise of Genesis 2 presents readers with an isolated world in which the first man and woman exist in a state of harmonious interdependence with their environment; and yet, this creation story, like many others, must inevitably move its protagonists out of the protected isolation of the pastoral microcosm and into exile. The impetus for such movement or return invariably involves a traumatic act, such as Adam and Eve’s transgression against God and subsequent expulsion from paradise. Such suggestions of trauma are built into the form. In Virgil’s first eclogue, Tityrus invites Meliboeus to put his cares aside and take advantage of the peace of the present moment – but both Meliboeus’ past and future are uncertain. Meliboeus is in exile, removed from his land and, therefore, disenfranchised. Similar feelings of alienation were expressed through pastoral form after the widespread trauma of World War I. The pastoral became a way for Georgian poets to ‘resist return, to stay out there in the safely comforting location of retreat, in their case in the countryside of a mythic Old England where stability and traditional values were located’ (Gifford 1998: 81). While the trauma of war forced poets into Arcadia, the grim reality – and the inevitable movement in the pastoral mode – is to return to urban life where one is forced to confront demolished cities, death and a fundamentally changed humanity. It is this traumatized pastoral that is at work in *Queen of Angels*. In Goldsmith’s character, Bear invokes the exilic state of a man forever removed from his country of origin – so removed that he does not and cannot ever recover his ancestral memories of place and belonging. Bear creates this ravaged pastoral through a mixture of Vodoun religious iconography and colonial history in order to hint at the injury done to an entire people through the loss of Africa both as an actual landscape and as a symbol.

For Goldsmith, Africa stands in the place of the pastoral Arcadia, and Guinée in particular is a mythical land possessing, in its landscape and people, a ‘sweetness of air [...] and well tempered minds’ (Sidney 1999: 4). The imagined landscape that Goldsmith calls Guinée replaces the real continent that has been lost. Africa has been plundered and destroyed – yet the use of the generic continent name, save for when Goldsmith refers to the mythical Guinée, casts doubts upon the authenticity of this claim. Even so, Goldsmith believes – and has incorporated this idea into his psyche – that the continent no longer exists as a homeland, a fecund place of creation. In order to maintain a sense of

identity, Goldsmith idealizes Africa through Guinée, an imaginary place that he and other blacks claim as a mythological homeland in place of a real ancestral landscape. Mythologizing Africa creates an Arcadia of an entire continent and displaces the people for whom the villages, cities, and countries that make up the African continent is, in actuality, their real world. This is one of many colonial strategies, to usurp not just a land or a people but also the creation stories the colonized once held as their own. In *Decolonization of the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o quotes from Cheikh Hamidou on the chief means of colonial education. Hamidou states that 'on the Black Continent, one began to understand that [the colonist's] real power resided not at all in the cannons of the first morning but in what followed the cannons. [...] [The school] made the conquest permanent. The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul' (Thiong'o 1986: 9). It is through the colonial school that the language and internal cultural narratives are usurped. Through the colonial school, a new language and culture is assigned, fracturing internalized narratives that once provided cohesiveness to a community.

In *The Idea of Africa* (1994), V. Y. Mudimbe describes the way in which colonial power consumes the individual narratives of various regions throughout the continent and erects a monolith in its own honour:

Two types of societies confront one another in the colonial experience, each with its own memory. The colonial system is coherent, seems monolithic, and is supported by its expansionist practices. It faces a multitude of African social formations with different, often particularist memories competing with each other. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, colonization cohesively binds the diverse, often antagonistic, collective memories of many African cultures. [...] This newly circumscribed social 'body' was composed of Africans who were supposed to incarnate an absolute beginning of history. (Mudimbe 1994: 129–30)

Goldsmith, being a descendent of both the colonized and the colonizer, experiences his own history as something alien. His constructed African Arcadia – Guinée – is a place that 'looked something like [...] Africa, where no white man has ever set foot and blacks live free and innocent' (Bear 2010: ch. 39). His identity is rooted in this non-existent place, a place he considers home, but to which he can never retreat because of the traumatic histories not only of his ancestors but also of the land. In *Queen of Angels*, Africa is alternately depicted as a dead continent – emptied through plague, famine and slavery – and as a kind of blank slate which colonist Sir John Yardley has set in the cross-hairs of his colonial-era elephant gun. Even in the far-future of *Queen of Angels*, the idea of Africa persists. This shifting, unstable Africa remains a home to no one (but 'savages') and a land rich with resources for Europeans to plunder. This convenient empty space recurs in the writings of the colonial anthropologist who

objectifies and thus removes indigenous inhabitants (Pratt 1985: 127) and in the eyes of the new colonialist, moving into spaces corporations see as *terra nullius* (Shiva 1997: 3), unoccupied space waiting to be discovered by the European settler.

Goldsmith's mind fractures on the point of intersecting and incompatible identities made 'real' by the acceptance of the stand-in African Guinée as the mythological symbol of home. He simultaneously acknowledges that Guinée does not exist and yet it figures largely into his personal origin mythology. He acknowledges that Africa is dead, but ultimately a part of him still lives there; through rooting himself to a dead continent he is rendered undead, struggling with impulses of desire for both penance and retribution for that loss. In his interview with a team of psychologists in preparation for the more invasive psychiatric nanotherapy he undergoes later, the following exchange reveals Goldsmith's internal battle with myth, reality and identity:

'Where is Guinée, Emanuel?'

'Lost. We lost it centuries ago.'

'I mean where is your Guinée?'

'That's a name the Haitians, the Africans on Hispaniola use for their homeland. They've never been there. It isn't real. They think some people go there when they die.'

'You don't believe in a homeland?' [...]

'Home is when you die. There are no homes. Everybody steals our homes. Nobody can steal what's left to you when you die.'

'You don't believe in Guinée?'

'It's a myth.' (Bear 2010: ch. 39)

This exchange between Goldsmith and the psychologist illustrates Goldsmith's poignant struggle with a colonized identity made so by his lack of an identifiable homeland. For Goldsmith, home – and, thus, belonging – is not real but mythological. This fractured experience of internal associations is reality for many people of African descent whose documented lineage has been interrupted by the slave trade. The increasing affordability of DNA testing has allowed such people to pinpoint their origins by region or tribe; though in many cases, the learned details provide not tangible evidence of the desired home but instead add richness and depth to the constructed mythology of Africa and African countries of origin as the descendants of former slaves continue to live, as Goldsmith does, quintessentially American lives removed from their ancestral ways of knowing and being. The idea of 'going home', however, to an unknown or imaginary Africa is nearly as old as the colonial project itself, 'As early as 1714, one New Jersey resident suggested that slaves "be set free [and] sent to their own Country"' (Burin 2005: 7), despite the fact that by that time there were already many generations of black men, women and children who had never seen any part of the African continent. Interestingly, the pan-Africanism that is

often disparaged as an example of racist generalization by colonial perpetrators was also arrived at by northern American blacks as a show of solidarity between freed slaves of different cultural backgrounds. Eric Burin, writing about the history of the American Colonization Society – a group that advocated for and succeeded in returning many freed slaves to Africa – writes that ‘by the close of the [18th] century, the divisions between Igbos, Coromantees, and other cultural groups had receded. For the most part, black northerners now saw each other simply as people of a generalized African ancestry living in the United States’ (Burin 2005: 8–9). It is possible that Bear had this project in mind in the use of Guinée as Goldsmith’s mythological homeland, and a place of return, as the American Colonization Society was responsible for (re-) introducing freed American slaves to a new home in Liberia, which shares its north-eastern border with Guinea. The vague, encompassing idea of Africa in *Queen of Angels*, however, is reinforced by the use of the place-name Guinée. The name itself comes from the Portuguese word for the black inhabitants of the region (Zurara 1899: 99), connecting even this mythological utopia with a history of colonialism.

Queen of Angels as a social critique of colonialism and its persistent and echoing effects throughout even a near-utopian future society would not function quite as well without the potent horror that is Goldsmith’s ‘Country of the Mind’ – another level of abstraction in the connections between place and belonging. Through a nanotechnology link between Goldsmith and two psychiatrists, Martin and Carol, the reader is exposed to the images and symbols that populate Goldsmith’s personal mythology. Entering into Goldsmith’s ‘Country’, Martin and Carol initially find nothing but desolation and destruction. Eventually, however, they discover a complex and disturbing mythology – a troubling conglomeration of Vodoun religion, slave trade history and Goldsmith’s personal family traumas. Quickly discovering that Goldsmith’s latent personality has been completely overrun by a dominating figure called ‘Sir’ – who alternately stands in for a mythological ‘King of Africa’, the colonizer Sir John Yardley, and Goldsmith’s own abusive father – Martin and Carol experience a myth sequence in first person as they are placed in the story of the twin sons of Sir and the Vodoun Goddess Erzulie. It is during this sequence that one of the most insidious weapons of colonization is used as Carol – standing in for the pale and feminine son of Sir – is raped. The rape effectively consumes her, erases her body though her mind remains in Country. When she appears again,

Carol’s image was a pale pink fog beside him. He concentrated on her, trying to resolve the shape. She formed beside him, naked. With a start he realized he was naked as well. She wrapped her arms around her breasts and regarded him with a narrow, miserable expression.

‘Please take us out.’

[...]

She tried to shrink into herself and Martin reached out to her. Her

flesh felt warm and real beneath his fingers. [...] She pulled down a red box and grabbed for the visible ripcord but it came away in her hand. The box became a blank red cube without displays or controls. Martin pulled down his own tool kit and saw the same useless red cube.

'It will kill us', Carol said. 'It will eat us'. (Bear 2010: ch. 56)

The multiple images used in this nightmare-like sequence all point to a distinct and poignant loss of control and power. Carol, whose body has been consumed, reappears only tentatively – not as a solid body but as gaseous. Not only does she not have a concrete and definable form, but she is denied the dignity of clothing, reappearing in a vulnerable state of nakedness. Carol's lack of control is made even more tangible by the fact that her control cube that enables her to navigate the space inside the Country is blank, the emergency ripcord dangling and useless. Importantly, Bear also makes a point of noting the fluctuating skin colour of the characters in Goldsmith's country. While the children's bodies that Martin and Carol inhabit begin with dark skin, at the time of the rape Carol's twin is white. For Goldsmith, a white identity is associated with weakness as he sees his own mixed whiteness as an undesirable acquiescence to the dominant American culture (Bear 2010: ch. 15). The white twin, therefore, is Goldsmith's weak and feminine identity that allows not only an insipid existence among a population of oblivious colonizers, but also – on a more personal level – the childhood abuse that drove him to patricide and the severing of the link between himself and his ancestral land.

The link between colonial violence and domestic violence is complex but explicit in *Queen of Angels*. The violent figure of destruction and death in Goldsmith's Country is named Sir, a figure that is analogous to the father who demanded his children address him by that name, but also to the other Sir in the novel, Sir John Yardley, the colonizing tyrant of Hispaniola. The sexualization of the relationship between Goldsmith and his father links Goldsmith's dysfunction to the idea of the 'abject' and 'docile bodies' (Butler 1993: 111) of the oppressed and further complicates Goldsmith as simultaneously a victim and perpetrator of violence. Even the figure of Sir both commits and is subject to violence through the myth sequence that stands in for colonial history (Bear 2010: ch. 56). The seemingly endless cycles of violence present in Goldsmith's psychological landscape hints at yet another effect of colonialism on the colonized – the desperate scrabbling for power that the oppressed perform, often against themselves rather than those that truly hold power (Freire 2007: 45). According to Jane Freedman, the disruption of pre-contact societies and the resulting struggle for power has been especially difficult for women. In colonial society, women's traditional roles are largely without worth, but men who feel disenfranchised find it easier to take what little power has been left to women than fight a monolithic system. It is even easier still for men to award themselves the privileges of the new masculinity of a misrepresented and generalized African culture (Freedman 2012: 28). Freedman, referencing the

work of Hannah Arendt and Sara Meger, goes on to state:

Sexual violence, as with all forms of political violence, must be understood not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. Violence is instrumental and requires an objective to guide and define its function. Violence is a coercive mechanism by which to exert or enforce one's power, making power the end for which violence is one of the means. Sexual violence becomes a form of political violence when it is used as a means of affecting a change in social relations or destabilizing existing structures. (Freedman 2012: 41–2)

The violence Goldsmith experiences and perpetrates upon others is destabilizing violence – the violence of colonialism that upsets the structures it encounters in an effort to seize power. Confronted with a powerful system, further acts of violence become the means through which the oppressed believe – as they have been taught – that they may destabilize the stratifications of society and reclaim some of their lost power. The imagery of struggle in Goldsmith's Country of the Mind – an endless cycle of violence resulting in pervasive death and decay – reveals the utter corruption of his ancestral mythology. Instead of a place of creation, Goldsmith's mythology is a narrative of destruction, death, and absence. Goldsmith is unable to retreat from what he considers his inauthentic life because the pastoral microcosm offered by Guinée has been breached by a reality tainted by colonialism.

Goldsmith's struggle to reconcile a life in which the pastoral ideal of home has been extinguished, in which his land of ancestral origin has been exploited and destroyed, and with it his identity as a black man, is sharply contrasted in the character of Mary Choy. Mary is a police detective and so-called 'transform' – a person who has undergone voluntary nanotherapy to change her appearance. Mary has chosen to change her skin colour to a deep, uniform black. Mary's voluntary blackness is contrasted with Goldsmith's diluted coffee-coloured blackness. While Goldsmith's colour – which he perceives as impure – comes with a history that, gives his identity meaning, Mary's uniform blackness comes without conditions or responsibilities. Very open about the lack of meaning behind her choice of blackness, Mary is asked about her colour three times – twice by other black characters and once by the wife of a dictator and colonizer. The first time that Mary's colour is questioned is during an interview in the investigation of the Goldsmith murders. This first interview at once connects Mary to Goldsmith's struggle with race, pointedly placing her very much outside of it:

'Because of Colonel Sir, there is no home in Hispaniola,' said the immensely fat black man. [...] 'The faith is weak, the shrines ignored; like all the others, Yardley he plays at being Baron Samedi, but he is not. We thought he was a noir blanc, black white man, black in his guts, but he is a blanc de blanc, white clear through, and now

Hispaniola is blanc.' The fat man again made his lip curl appraisal.
'This woman is not black,' he said matter of factly to Ernest and the large woman. 'Why does she want to look black? She fools nobody.'
Ernest grinned at Mary. He was enjoying this. 'She likes the color.'
(Bear 2010: ch. 22)

The connection between Mary's chosen blackness, the destruction of the African homeland, and the legitimacy of Yardley's colonial rule over Hispaniola all work to underscore both the emptiness of Mary's colour and the intricacies of race politics that persist in Bear's future world. Blatchford writes that in *Queen of Angels* 'we see nothing of black American society in 2048, but Mary Choy has had her skin turned black, which seems to hint that in 2048 black is at least cosmetically beautiful' (Blatchford 1994: 61). The suggestion that Blatchford seems to be making is that the complex socio-political dynamics resultant of colonization can be reduced to a question of aesthetics. Thiong'o, on the other hand, writes that 'Imperialism is the rule of consolidated finance capital and since 1884 this monopolistic parasitic capital has affected and continues to affect the lives even of the peasants in the remotest corners of our [African] countries' (Thiong'o 1986: 2). It seems unlikely, then, even in Bear's utopian 2048 that a system which had, for the benefit of an elite few, mortgaged an entire continent would have been overturned in such a way as to allow a dominant social group to forgive a freedom that results in the reduced privilege of that group. Mary's embodiment is completely devoid of this history – a fact which is recognized by both the fat man and Yardley's wife later in the novel. Her experience of blackness is not equivalent to Goldsmith's, but negatively contrasted to it.

Mary's external and internal transformation, while removed from the socio-historical context of the slave trade, is not without its own personal meaning. Bear opens *Queen of Angels* with a scene in which Mary submerges herself in a vinegar bath in order to counteract a tendency toward piebaldness in one small area of her otherwise uniform black skin. As she soaks, she contemplates the affinities and incongruities of her inner and outer self. Bear writes, 'Why did she do her transform and choose such an exotic design in the first place; to get advantage, or to match inner her with an outer appearance that had never satisfied?' (Bear 2010: ch. 1). The suggestion that Mary was unsatisfied with her appearance prior to undergoing the transform procedure underscores Mary's role as seeker. Mary seeks Goldsmith unsuccessfully in her role as a police detective but she is, perhaps, more successful in the task of seeking personal insight. While she seems incapable of answering anyone who questions her 'design' beyond claiming a preference for the colour black – such as when she cites mere aesthetic preference, but concedes to Madame Yardley's assertion that she may be 'a spiritual noiriste' (Bear 2010: ch. 51) – Mary does seem to find meaning in her appearance during her time in Hispaniola. After Mary rescues Goldsmith's brother from the torture of the punitive hellclamp in a Hispaniolan prison, the pair seek temporary asylum in a church with their guide

Soulavier. The priest, who eagerly provides food and shelter from the coming political storm, explains the icons above the altar – a visual expression of the religious amalgamation of Catholicism and African Vodoun. When Mary looks up and is confronted with the vision of a holy mother figure with down-turned eyes and ‘a mysterious smile of private pain and joy’ (Bear 2010: ch. 63), she is seemingly looking at an image of herself. Indeed, when the prét’savan enters with the requested food and drink, he is alarmed to see Mary, who he believes is the Holy Mother Marie-Erzulie. This scene is the first tangible connection between Mary’s blackness and Goldsmith’s disturbed inner mythology. Unlike in Goldsmith’s world, where Erzulie is simultaneously a powerful and powerless figure – a mother who is resigned to the abuse of her children – Mary’s lack of traumatic history enables the channelling of a potent care and mercy for the man she has pledged to rescue. Although Mary is unable to find Goldsmith, she finds his brother and is able, in this way, to bring a kind of justice to Goldsmith’s narrative. The leniency that Mary offers is more than what she brings to the situation as a police detective. Indeed, Mary’s outer and inner selves finally merge in her act of mercy toward Goldsmith’s brother. When she allows him the possibility of suicide, it is her inner self that acquiesces:

‘All right,’ said another voice within her. ‘I promise.’ She shivered, hearing those words, seeing the person inside her that spoke them: tall and nightcolored. Her highest and best self. The young oriental woman remained; but like a mother become daughter to her own child, accepted her, deferred to the new. (Bear 2010: ch. 69)

This shift from two separate beings – the outer black and the inner pale – to one uniform blackness is confirmed again at the end of the novel as Mary looks into the mirror and thinks, ‘I am one not two as before’ (Bear 2010: ch. 72). In the act of mercy and justice Mary finds that her two selves are now one in singular blackness. What this means for Goldsmith’s narrative is not made entirely clear, given Mary’s status as one who will always stand outside of the colonial history that proved so damaging to Goldsmith and his own black identity. While Bear could be accused of a dangerous subsuming or appropriation of culture, an optimistic view might be to surmise that Mary’s role as merciful mother points to a need for mercy and especially a need for justice as we move into the future – that we acknowledge the histories that we bring with us into that future and acknowledge that history, for some, is also the present.

In *Queen of Angels*, the boundaries between history, mythology and psychology become blurred into an encompassing, but corrupt, pastoral myth that is meant to sustain exiled identities. The ways in which this mythology fails those it should sustain are explored in Goldsmith’s story, his struggles with an absent idea of home and his increasing alienation in a society that is experienced as utopia by some and not by others. In this way, *Queen of Angels* is a critique of both the damaging idealization of Africa by the western

power that colonized it and also the appropriation of myth through the colonial infiltration of language and story. Thiong'o describes the process by which the children of his village were gradually 'educated': through corporal punishment for speaking their mother tongue, through being forced to wear humiliating signs proclaiming inferior intelligence and, perhaps most insidiously, through a systematic process in which the children were forced to inform on others who spoke Gikuyu and thus were 'turned into witch-hunters and [...] were [...] taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one's immediate community' (Thiong'o 1986: 11). The self-alienating effects of colonization, which are perhaps over-dramatized in Goldsmith's character, are very real. Thiong'o writes that

Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualisation, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. (Thiong'o 1986: 28)

In this passage, Thiong'o uses an image of dismemberment to express the effects of alienation through the imposition of a foreign language and culture. It is no coincidence, then, that these images of formlessness appear when one's concept of origin or home is rife with violence. The imagery that populates Goldsmith's Country of the Mind is replete with dismembered bodies and shadowy, formless wraiths that steal the images of others. Colonization is a dismemberment of the body of a community, of mind and soul through the appropriation of not only wealth and resources, but language and myth. Chinua Achebe writes:

Man is a story-making animal. He rarely passes up an opportunity to accompany his works and his experiences with matching stories. The heavy task of dispossessing others calls for such a story and, of course, its makers [...] Repossession, if and when it does occur, needs also its enabling stories and the singers and writers to compose them. But as we can all appreciate, there will be a wide gulf of difference between the story put out by the first group to explain or camouflage their doings and the reconstitutive annals made up by those who will struggle to reclaim their history. (Achebe 2000: 59–60)

Is Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels* of the first or second party? Is the story of Goldsmith's fractured self-concept and its effects a dispossessing narrative or a story that furthers the goal of repossession? Perhaps the answer lies in Bear's

use of the pastoral mode in the invocation of Goldsmith's Guinée. Perhaps in being removed from society, in which we should plainly see the dismembering, alienating effects of colonial history, and escaping to Bear's supposed utopia (contrasted with the mythological Guinée) we will return to our own place and time and make connections there. In this way, Bear's narrative, through multiple levels of removal, makes the effects of colonization in our own social context even more visible. In *Queen of Angels*, the pastoral is rooted in the mythology and religious tradition of an enslaved people. Attempts to return to the source – to access the security of a mythological original home – become entangled within the various levels of trauma experienced not only by Goldsmith himself but by his ancestors. Colonialism has, in effect, broken the thread of history and prevents escape into utopian Arcadia. The discomfort felt in the inability to escape from the pervasiveness of Goldsmith's corrupt mythology to a place of peace and interconnectivity is the prodding needed to return to our own place and time with eyes wide open to the ubiquitous effects of the colonial legacy. This discomfort serves as an answer to the question of audience for *Queen of Angels*. It is not for those who live this discomfort and fragmentation that this story is written; indeed, the pervasiveness of the violence therein is more likely to invoke despair and frustration than inspire cohesiveness. As such, *Queen of Angels* is only moderately successful in 'explor[ing] other ways of seeing and doing [that] can be positively mobilized to challenge racial stereotypes' (Vint 2004: 120-1). In directly relating the experience of blackness only through the perspective of Mary Choy, a woman who is sympathetic to the plight of blacks both in America and Hispaniola, but possesses a blackness without history, Bear has created a story in which the form, while complex and perceptive, draws from the culture of the colonizer to tell the story of the colonized, all the while acknowledging the importance of stepping back and allowing for the recuperation of narrative and myth necessary to sustain a lasting utopia.

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From a Galactic War to a Hydrogen Sonata: Warfare and Ethics in the Culture Novels of Iain M. Banks

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Beyond its easily recognizable brutality and destructiveness, war is also disturbingly quantifiable: deaths are countable and damage is always measurable in one way or another. Given this calculable and frightening immediacy, can war ever be considered ethical? This article approaches the indivisible issues of war and its ethical justifiability in the well-known Culture series of Iain M. Banks and analyzes the seeming paradox between the Culture's peaceful sociopolitical existence and the wars it chooses to wage.

The Culture novels are often labelled 'space opera'. Perhaps the most famous series in this category is Isaac Asimov's Foundation. Its central novum is the science of psychohistory, developed by Hari Seldon, which facilitates probabilistic predictions of social developments on a large spatio-temporal scale. Seldon creates the eponymous Foundation as well as a secretive Second Foundation to return the galaxy to unity and democracy after the Galactic Empire falls as predicted. Any wars or armed conflicts along the way are justified as either an inextricable part of the Seldon Plan or unfortunate artefacts of its small-scale imprecisions: ethics seem to play only the role of a generalized, overarching justification of the Plan. Similarly, the drug 'melange', a central novum in Frank Herbert's Dune series, enables prescient visions of varying scopes and intensities (depending on the users' compatibility) and is therefore constantly exploited in pursuits of power and wealth. Inspired by melange-fuelled visions, Paul Atreides and his son Leto seek a way to preserve humanity from extinction. The Golden Path they establish proves to be a meandering, millennia-long process whose chief side-effects are brutal imperial tyranny and insanely devastating wars across the galaxy. The Dune series could be considered a depiction of human societies as predatory organisms in a galactic ecosystem: wars are the inevitable violent encounters between them and thus have very little to do with ethics.

Compared to these well-known series, Banks' Culture novels demonstrate the slow socio-cultural evolution of the Culture's ethics of (armed) intervention over centuries. Banks frequently attacked real-world wars and the politics behind them. For instance, he admitted his deep frustration with 'how stupid and barbaric politicians can be and the idea that war and imperialistic aggression will never go out of fashion' (Ward 2008). His expression of strong disagreement with UK participation in the War on Terror was idiosyncratic: 'He ripped up his passport in protest at the Iraq war and sent it to Tony Blair' (Jeffries 2007). The contrast between the writer's public stances and his fictional constructions is both intriguing and productive because the Culture wages both overt and covert wars. To begin with, Banks sees the Culture as a quasi-utopia with a

twist: 'They occasionally resort to dirty tricks, but they can always prove it was the right thing to do because they use statistics' (Ward 2008). For instance, the Idiran-Culture war's justifiability is demonstrated several centuries later when statistical modelling proves that fewer people have died in the war than those who would have died, theoretically, in an unchecked Idiran expansion in the same period (Banks 1988: 465). The Culture's scientific dependability can be observed throughout the series: for example, its strikingly powerful military technology is based on extremely advanced physics and is invariably used for non-military purposes in everyday civilian life as well. Banks rarely fails to mention that the devices for remote matter and energy manipulation called 'effectors' are both the most powerful quotidian tools and most devastating weapons a Culture Mind has at its disposal. In effect, these unimaginably advanced manipulators are basically hyper-developed work tools which can, should the need arise, be used as weapons in war. This already hints at the idea that the Culture is no chaotic and overly simplistic space-faring anarchy, but is guided by identifiable principles – particularly when it comes to warfare. And although Banks frequently reports the ethical reasoning of machine and human Culture citizens alike, most of these direct deliberations will be ignored in the following analysis so that what is shown about the Culture's wars can be weighed on its own terms, without resorting to that which is told.

In the sphere of ethics, both the method for achieving a result (the behaviour I adopt towards a goal) and the final result itself (the ethical goals I set myself) matter equally. That is a direct consequence of the fact that ethics is, to simplify here, a social and/or sociological discipline within philosophy. Peter Singer postulates: 'an ethical principle cannot be justified in relation to any partial or sectional group. Ethics takes a universal point of view' (Singer 1993: 11). Since every planned action starts within the individual, if I am to be an ethical person, I must plan my actions so that they do not negatively influence anyone or anything, or so that any unavoidable negative influence is fully minimized: 'at some level in my moral reasoning I must choose the course of action that has the best consequences, on balance, for all affected' (Singer 1993: 13). That results from the given and irrepressible circumstance of social existence; in the ethical work of Emmanuel Levinas, the self emerges through the actions upon it by already existing others (see Butler 2005: 85–90), or in grammatical terms, the accusative impingement of others upon the yet unformed self. That is also why Levinas sees the interaction between the self and the other as so irreducibly central to human identity and existence, a profound interaction not simply characterized as responsibility but an essential *responsiveness* towards others. Extreme individualism is thus incompatible with the inerasable human social existence: 'For me, the freedom of the subject is not the highest or primary value. [...] As soon as I acknowledge that it is "I" who am responsible, I accept that my freedom is anteceded by an obligation to the other' (Levinas 1995: 438). Rights and freedoms co-exist in a *dynamic* balance with obligations and duties

for the individual who pursues an ethical course.

One must then ask: could the human mind be capable of discovering fundamentally universal ethical principles which will hold no matter where, no matter when, no matter between what species of intelligent beings we attempt to apply them? Perhaps; but even if there is no eternal universality to ethics, then its conclusions can definitely be translated and adapted to new environments and circumstances. Ethics should thus not be understood as inescapably universal and absolutely transitive, but as translatable, applicable only after adjustment to the new localities we have copied its output to. Both the initial considerations of an ethical subject as well as any subsequent adaptations of ethical principles must be carefully planned, even calculated, in order to achieve the best results for everyone affected by the intended action in practice. Singer calls this calculative approach ‘utilitarian’ and notes that it is only one of many available theoretical premises in ethics. Despite that, utilitarian ethical thinking exhibits several fitting characteristics which make it applicable to sf narratives, especially when the protagonists of such narratives, as in Banks’ case, are intelligent robots and machines: first, it is a pragmatically oriented approach, one that scrutinizes the effects of actions in almost the manner of an engineer; second, the very nature of intelligent machines presupposes characters who are designed for calculation and practical evaluations; and third, since utilitarian thinking is interested in outcomes, it can suitably engage in an analysis of warfare.

The current dominant concept about the confluence of war and ethics is called ‘just war theory’. Numerous theorists have written about the idea of just wars and many agree that its beginnings lie in the classical works of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Augustine of Hippo; Paul Christopher lists additional figures with notable contributions to just war theory such as Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, Hugo Grotius and H.L.A. Hart. Anthony Coates and David Rodin, contemporary theorists in the field, discuss several central tenets to just war theory. First, and above all, is the principle of legitimate authority: it posits that a nation-state, and only a nation-state, has the right, in international law, to officially declare war. Second, the tenet *jus ad bellum* insists that there must be a just cause for a war, since the commencing of hostilities with no rightful cause is considered equal to a crime in this theory. Next, the principle *jus in bello* dictates the proper conduct of parties to a conflict during wartime and pertains to the treatment of war prisoners and of the wounded, to negotiations and acceptable political actions on the international arena, to combatant versus non-combatant status in conflict, and so on. Many familiar principles in public discourse derive from these tenets such as the right intentions for warfare (correcting proved or provable wrongs and not pursuing, for example, economic gains); proportionality between the expected destruction and the expected redress of wrongs, as well as the proportionate use of deadly force in military action; non-combatant immunity; good treatment for prisoners of war; duration

of the armed conflict until full redress of the proved damage but no further; and so forth. It is essential to highlight that these central principles relate to nation-states engaging each other in armed conflicts, and that war can only ever be considered just if it is fought in self-defence to redress obvious, well-evidenced wrongs perpetrated by the offending party/parties. Christopher, for instance, describes this principle as military realism: 'the side that initiates [unjust] war commits a criminal act and, in so doing, the members of that side thereby forfeit any right they might have had to protection under the law' (Christopher 2004: 3). The law which governs such relations is then international law, that is, legal constructions which have been in development and evolution ever since the times of their initiators, de Vitoria and Grotius – and this is precisely why just war theory becomes hugely destabilized both on the planet we inhabit and in the science fiction stories we write and read.

Coates produces the following grim statement in *The Ethics of War* (1997): 'However "just", no war is ever so pure or ever so untainted as to be entered into without grave moral misgivings, or to be conducted without continual moral scrutiny and anxiety, or to be concluded without a sense of moral failure and remorse' (Coates 1997: 2). If, however, we imagine our increasingly globalized planet to be a piece of complex latticework with multiple strands interconnecting, intersecting, weaving through, around, between each other, then warfare is more than moral misgivings, scrutiny, anxiety, failure and/or remorse: it is the pulling of a thread which unravels large swathes of the latticework built over centuries. Not only are concepts of nationhood and even statehood constantly being challenged and remade in a globalized world, it is also equally hard to pinpoint the culprit in most armed conflicts. This leads to yet another ethical dilemma, as described by Rodin: 'fighting a war of national defense is deeply problematic, while at the same time leaving open the possibility that failing to resist aggression may have unacceptable moral costs' (Rodin 2002: 199). These issues pose very difficult challenges to the principles of legitimate authority and *jus ad bellum* briefly outlined earlier. Immediate questions would be: do these principles establish statutes of limitations? Can a crime on a national scale perpetrated a century ago be re-mediated by military action today? Can that same crime still be re-mediated by warfare now if the political entity that perpetrated it a century ago is already part of another polity, say a federation? Pursuing a war today could mean the undoing of historical ties built over decades and the involvement of totally unrelated parties. Violently pulling on any threads of Earth's globalized weave threatens to unravel Earth globally. And if Earth has its own enormous and barely imaginable complexity, then pulling on the threads of the Culture's fictional galaxy with its billions of inhabited worlds, millions of intelligent species and uncountable conflicts may amount to unbelievable catastrophes across the vast stellar expanses.

The Culture is a quasi-utopian society in which no one experiences any great deprivations or needs, where peace and safety are guaranteed for everyone

to a maximum extent possible. Why would then such a civilization wage war, especially when any act of war risks destroying so much of the intricately interwoven coexistence in the galaxy? It is highly unlikely that anything other than moral imperatives might move a post-scarcity society to armed violence. Critics, however, suggest otherwise. Patrick Jackson and James Heilman consider the Culture and its meddling as a metaphor for the Western liberal-democracy nation-states and their interventionist policies (Jackson and Heilman 2008: 235–8). Patricia Kerslake compares the war in *Consider Phlebas* (1987) to the Cold War: ‘the warlike Idirans violently oppose the Culture, a position highly reminiscent of the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War, where the aggressive technology of both sides was frighteningly similar and equally adept at the task of destruction’ (Kerslake 2007: 176). Similarly, William Stephenson opines that the Culture ‘can be read as the analogue of the contemporary West, with its refined expertise in violence and its rapacious desire to hold onto global dominance and material prosperity’ (Stephenson 2013: 166). Alternatively, Farah Mendlesohn considers the Culture to be a decadent society because of ‘its expansionism, imperialism and attempts to “civilise” the barbarians on its borders’ (Mendlesohn 2005: 116). For Mendlesohn, the Culture expands economically via appropriation of memory and knowledge, i.e. *information*, since these are building blocks of identity; she finds support in Horza, one of the most unreliable narrators in the Culture series, who thinks the Culture is an ever-expanding, cancerous civilization quite unlike his employers the Idirans (who wage a religious war for total hegemony and betray him by murdering his lovers (Banks 1988: 304–5; 426–30). Mendlesohn concludes that the Culture strongly resembles the post-Stalinist Soviet Union (Mendlesohn 2005: 122).

Such statements fail to take into consideration several vital characteristics of the Culture as a political entity. Banks highlights numerous complexities in his fictional universe such as:

- (1) the almost completely peaceful long-term history of the Culture and the extensive negotiations around its founding;
- (2) the multiple space-faring civilizations at diverse levels of technoscientific development (the Sublimed Dra’Azon in *Consider Phlebas*; the Affront and the Excession in *Excession* [1996]; the Morthanveld and the Nariscene in *Matter* [2008]; the Nauptre and the Pavuleans in *Surface Detail* [2010]; the Gzilt in *The Hydrogen Sonata* [2012]) with whom the Culture manages to establish peaceful contact and/or maintain peaceful relationships;
- (3) the extensive transformation of warships into civilian ones during times of peace;
- (4) the Culture’s ethical framework of self-determination and its highly modular and mobile political structure which allow it to effortlessly part

ways with ethically compatible internal groupings such as the Peace Faction and the Zetetic Elench; and
(5) the Culture's post-scarcity disdain for any social, economical, political, ethical or other ideologies based on scarcity, summarized in the oft-repeated phrase 'money is a sign of poverty' (Banks 1993: 11).

The most important among these points is perhaps the last one: as an actual post-scarcity society, the Culture possesses the scientific understanding and the technological prowess to both access practically inexhaustible resources, such as asteroids, gas giants, gas clouds, stars and the hyperspace energy grid, and automate its labour to the extent that intelligent beings spend near-zero time working in any type of production. In this hyper-advanced society, production and distribution no longer obey any familiar Earth-bound economic theories of value, labour, consumption, capital or market. The objects of the *non-living* universe, including information, are free to copy and own since the cost is infinitesimal, every copy is absolutely identical with the original and multiplication preserves a thing much better than any other process ever could. *Living* beings are a vital exception because they *ceaselessly change with time*, the only thing that *cannot* be controlled or multiplied: clones cannot be identical with the cloned (but will have rights nonetheless). Hence also the Culture's strict line of privacy around the mind of each and every individual: the uniqueness and inviolability of the person must be guaranteed for everyone. The only people who can lose this guarantee are criminals such as murderers. The reputation of individuals (and of the Culture as a whole) is the only value which is measurable, namely by their deeds: as artists, entertainers, inventors and scientists, as thinkers, creators, ambassadors of their society, even as Special Circumstances (SC) agents and brilliant strategists like Fal 'Ngeestra in *Consider Phlebas*. The Culture is a true socio-political novum of post-scarcity which turns its attention not only to art endeavours and diverse pleasures but also to the challenges its ultra-developed status poses, such as the Subliming enigma, the Excession encounter and the interactions with other civilizations. It is towards this highly advanced technoscientific and socio-political state that the interventions of the Culture aim to nudge other societies. Unsurprisingly, representatives from allegedly more advanced cultures, for example the Homomdan Ambassador Kabe Ishloear in *Look to Windward* (2000), sometimes acknowledge the Culture's socio-political value and become citizens. These deliberations indicate that the Culture's complexities are not explained or analyzed by the rather simplistic equations critics provide. The narrow approach of equating a fictional entity with an existing historical entity amounts to seeing a metaphor in each and every element of a sf story and, thus, to an excessively one-dimensional equivalence between observable reality and fiction.

In contrast with this allegorical reading of sf, Kerslake makes the following observation: 'While it is possible to see a genre which writes about empire as

serving a form of social absolution, it is far more productive to see SF novels as ‘what if’ experiments, as they engage with incidents of empire and the results of such cultural forays’ (Kerslake 2007: 174). The Culture novels (as well as sf narratives in general) can be more productively considered as large-scale scenarios or complex world simulations which pursue not only entertainment and aesthetic achievements but also political, social, economic and philosophical hypotheses. Comparing the fictional scenario of a sf story to historical reality can yield more insights than simply equating elements of the first with those of the second.

Unlike Earth-bound polities, Banks’ fictional civilization follows three unique rules which define its relationship to warfare: (1) war may be waged when, and only when, it is done with the utmost of extreme precision; (2) war may be waged if, and only if, it targets destructive and tyrannical socio-political ideologies and systems which directly assault the Culture’s anarchist, syndicalist, socialist and hedonist ideals; and (3) despite strictly adhering to the two previous requirements, the Culture must deal with the certainty that it will occasionally fail. These are the reasons why, first, SC’s work is kept secret, never openly displayed, let alone appreciated, and second the Culture very rarely engages in open interventions, even if, or especially if, they are entirely non-military and completely benign. Playing teacher, parent and/or deity to another species is a very dangerous business and can end up causing much more damage than good, as the Gzilt revelations in *The Hydrogen Sonata* confirm. Following this line of thought, *Use of Weapons* (1990) can be said to depict an epitome of Culture strategy: deploying a highly skilled agent (Zakalwe) again and again, the Minds adjust and calibrate not only their pre-planned computations for minimizing casualties, but also their finely tuned calculations of their own agent’s behaviour. Singer would probably agree that the Culture strategists are supremely utilitarian in terms of their interventionist ethics: although they know they often cannot prevent a conflict, or are simply arriving too late to an ongoing clash, their sole task is the reduction of damage. Consequently, Banks tends to characterize Contact and SC (as well as Culture people generally) as smug and self-satisfied, although the actual outcomes of covert and overt interventions vary in unexpectedly emotional ways. For example, when Diziet Sma and Skaffen-Amtiskaw finally discover Zakalwe’s true identity, Sma is utterly shocked while Skaffen-Amtiskaw seems oblivious to the fact that the Culture has used an insanely brutal and perverse murderer as their weapon of choice in numerous interventionist missions (Banks 1992: 390–4). The drone does not find this revolting since Zakalwe acts only as a highly useful instrument in SC’s political games. The Culture machines recognize such dark irony but consider emotions unnecessary under these special circumstances. The obverse of this situation can be observed at the end of *Surface Detail*: Lededje Y’breq’s revenge on her killer is a profoundly intense episode (understandably), but to the Mind-Ship the covert operation counts simply as a job well done: most

virtual-reality Hells are deactivated, the person who enabled the monstrous torture of the millions upon millions trapped in the Hells is eliminated and the final analysis shows measurable benefits for all involved; an ethical victory in utilitarian terms (Banks 2011: 604–18).

Similar clean-cut victories have yet to be achieved on Earth. The recent attacks on countries who have been deemed to support terrorism, such as Libya and Iraq, have resulted in the deaths of many thousands of innocents and long-term destabilization and ruination. Although the dictators of Libya and Iraq have been deposed, the price in both cases has been enormous. In stark contrast to this, the Culture's agents infiltrate tyrannies and assassinate only their figureheads. Before *Surface Detail*, Banks depicted similar interventions in *The Player of Games* (1988) and *Matter*: in the former, the eponymous player Jernau Gurgeh manages to literally beat a tyrannical emperor at his own game and so cause the downfall of the oppressive empire; in the latter, the SC agent Djan Seriy Anaplian sacrifices her life to save a Shellworld of incredible diversity, beauty and technological sophistication from a recently reawakened murderous machine. More often than not, civilizations which have experienced Culture interventions emerge from the transitional chaos better off than comparable Earth counterparts (see, for example, the finales to *The Player of Games*, *Matter*, *Surface Detail* and *Inversions* [1998]).

A surgical strike of extreme, undreamed-of precision also occurs at the end of *Look to Windward*: we observe the nameless E-Dust Assassin mercilessly, brutally, monstrously and incredibly efficiently slay the Estodian Visquile and his enforcer Eweirl. This killing constitutes, above all, retaliatory action for the murder of a Culture citizen (scholar Uagen Zlepe, killed by Eweirl while departing the Oskendari airsphere) and the obliteration of unique creatures within a unique ecosystem (the murder of the dirigible behemothaur and its entire retinue). The surgical strikes which real-world militaries boast about remain such only in name when compared to the utmost precision of the Culture's enemy identification and execution. In addition, the retaliation only becomes necessary due to the preceding socio-ethical miscalculation and interventionist failure: individuals like Visquile and Eweirl constitute the unchangeable, ultra-sadistic, trigger-happy core of socio-economic oppression in the Chelgrian civilization, and that is exactly what the Culture underestimates in its earlier intervention. The Chelgrian ruling caste upholds the philosophies of persisting social division, of oppression and exploitation in the Chelgrian caste system, and of slavery on the Chel worlds, especially with regard to the servant caste. It is then no wonder that the brutal slaying of Eweirl at the hands of the E-Dust Assassin resembles so much Eweirl's earlier murder of a blind servant (Banks 2001: 256–60); what readers witness here is a perfect example of a military campaign against ideological principles: the Culture is at war with the philosophical, ideological and religious tenets such people embody and daily apply. Since it is impossible, say, to imprison these oppressors due to the impossibility of presenting an SC

agent (Huyler) as witness, and since they continue to do as much harm as before, the Culture responds by reversing the roles and killing them. This is still killing and nothing can change that fact; but it is part of a war, however unjust, waged by ethical principles of equality, liberty and democracy against unethical philosophies of inequality, oppression and slavery.

Gradually, it becomes clear that there cannot be such a thing as a just war. All wars are always unjust because they undo the intricate networks and organizations of intelligent life, no matter if we choose to call these interconnected civilizations, global latticework, multidimensional socio-economic, politico-ecological systems, or anything else. The prime example of an unjust war in Banks' novels is the Idiran-Culture war. Quoting the death toll alone – over 850 billion sentient creatures – is quite enough to categorize this war as unjust. The reasons for engaging in it, then, would have to be extremely serious. Banks writes that the 'Culture went to war to safeguard its own peace of mind: no more. But that peace was the Culture's most precious quality, perhaps its only true and treasured possession' (Banks 1988: 451). That 'peace of mind' is the central ethical principle behind the Culture's existence: the idea that any political entity which has achieved a stable post-scarcity state of peace, equality, freedom and security must necessarily make itself useful to those who have not reached such a state. Banks describes this as 'the urge not to feel useless' (451); it produces a philosophical justification for the continual existence of the Culture. Moreover, this imperative to be useful is something the Idirans have completely inverted in their religious ideology: they consider themselves superior to all other intelligent life and so proceed to enslave everyone they encounter. The vast majority in the Culture can see no way to co-exist with this conquer-and-enslave strategy. Only those groups in the giant society of the Culture who place the principle of non-violence above all else decide that it is generally better to be enslaved than to kill others in a war, and split off before or during the conflict. It is essential to emphasize that the Culture engages in this unjust war to stop another galactic force which possesses the actual weapon and logistics capabilities not only to destroy the Culture, but to obliterate any other political entity which supports the philosophical principles of democracy, equality, liberty, and mutually enriching galactic coexistence. This constitutes the first and foremost ethical consideration for engaging in an unjust war.

Nevertheless, Culture Minds sometimes do lose all touch with the philosophical principles of their civilization. A typical example would be the way certain Minds attempt to lure the Affront into a war in *Excession*. This attempt is foiled due to the actions of the GSV *Sleeper Service* and the encounter with the Excession itself; the situation presented by an Outside Context Problem gives rise, however, to interesting thoughts about the actions the Minds undertake. Central here are the considerations of the GSV *Sleeper Service* about the ethical dimensions and repercussions of its actions, as well as, quite importantly, the connections between interactions in the familiar four-dimensional reality and

the process of Subliming. The Mind asks itself: 'how long [does] it take before you really [know] the full moral context of your actions?' (Banks 1997: 421). The answer seems to lie within the mysteries of Subliming:

Perhaps, indeed, that was the real attraction of Subliming. Real Subliming; the sort of strategic, civilization-wide transcendence that genuinely did seem to draw a line under a society's works, deeds and thoughts[...]maybe it was just ... accounting.

What a rather saddening thought, thought the *Sleeper Service*. All we're looking for when we Sublime is our score. (421)

If entire civilizations aim only at the calculation of a final ethical score, then Subliming itself becomes a mere mathematical trick for psychological relief, a clownish accounting balance act. Subliming thus cannot be counted as a utilitarian ethical action because it simply produces a score and attaches it to the Subliming entity exclusively; this is only a selfish action whose sole result is the foreclosure of possible ethical trajectories and, simultaneously, vain bragging. Although Subliming is everyone's right and might be seen as both a reward at the top of the techno-scientific ladder and an escape from a tiresome reality, it is also an entirely unethical betrayal of that very same reality, and more properly, a complete, irreversible detachment, a final separation from that reality still echoing with the suffering of too many innocent souls. This detachment would be an ultimate act of selfishness and as such goes against the ethical core of the Culture. A curious parallel with *Inversions* emerges here. If one considers it (very much in line with its title) an inverted Culture story in which the narrative presents viewpoints of people whose societies are infiltrated by gently intervening Culture agents, one can observe that the two agents in the novel are thoroughly attached to those societies and contribute everything they can to their slow improvement. They resort to violence only in moments of self-defence and extreme need, although they could easily usurp the power in the technologically less advanced civilizations they inhabit. Their (and the Culture's) core ethical philosophy is succinctly summarized in the opening sentence of the novel: 'The only sin is selfishness' (Banks 1999: 1).

Sometimes, precisely to help those who are suffering, we have to remain unselfish and refrain from intervention. This is exactly the predicament in which the Culture finds itself with the Gzilt in Banks' last Culture novel, *The Hydrogen Sonata*. Culture ships discover a brewing inner conflict in the Gzilt society, an incoming civil war in a civilization on the brink of Subliming. This time, however, the Minds are wary of straightforward interference. The memories of Chel are too fresh, and the knowledge about the Sublimed too limited (for instance, a Mind returned from the Sublime proves impossible to reason with) to allow precise simulations and calculations of possible intervention scenarios. When the friendly Gzilt begin chasing and killing each other, Culture Minds are compelled to act: in Levinas' ethical framework, they are the ones who turn towards the

face of the Other, who listen to their misery and respond accordingly. Refusing to undertake such action is equal to dismantling the unspoken social contract: ‘The other haunts our ontological existence and keeps the psyche awake, in a state of vigilant insomnia. Even though we are ontologically free to refuse the other, we remain forever accused, with a bad conscience’ (Levinas 1995: 438; cf. Morgan 2011: 82–4). Not acting constitutes a general, profound sin of omission while acting risks other errors and failures. The Culture chooses the second path and so its urge for usefulness finds itself transformed from mere potential into surprising action. In a stunning twist, the warrior ship *Mistake Not...* chooses not to engage its Gzilt counterpart in combat, but to perform a near-impossible rescue operation at the site of a fresh attack by that same counterpart (Banks 2013: 478–94). This action symbolizes the Culture’s policy in this case: the Minds choose not to reveal the secret information they have acquired about the Gzilt so as not to disrupt their society catastrophically at the time of Subliming. It is imperative to highlight this decision to stay attached, connected to the habitual reality, not to abandon its troubled denizens, despite the fact that one’s actions will sometimes result in failures, injustice and even more troubles than before. At this juncture, the Culture proves it has evolved beyond knee-jerk urges to interfere at all costs: in the Gzilt case, its intervention is reined in and limited to administrative and rescue operations because armed action and full disclosure of the ancient Gzilt secret would cause unpredictable harm. The Gzilt protagonist, Vyr Cossont, symbolizes the same self-control, attachment to reality and ethical evolution through her choice not to Sublime. The titular Hydrogen Sonata she slowly and painstakingly learns to play is a symbol of attachment to a limiting, painful, sometimes even torturing reality which nevertheless brings rewards. These rewards, however, do not emerge from some sort of ‘mastering’ the sonata or the instrument it is played on – on the contrary, one must first be physically altered and then become familiar with both the instrument and the musical piece in order to perform it. In a parallel to this, the old four-dimensional non-Sublimed reality is not something to conquer and master, but something to grow used to, learn its limitations in order to better appreciate the sweet rewards it supplies. One needs to fully attach oneself to this kind of limited existence because detachment in the form of Subliming would mean a complete severing of long-term connections, the irreversible introduction of an existential and ethical distance that cannot be turned back.

This choice, in the end, is what matters most: does one choose an escape, a reward, a transcendence resulting in total disconnection, or does one prefer attachment, continual involvement, the rejection of an overly simplistic final score? The Culture knows the answers and has already made its choice. Here, it wages the only possible just war: a war on the principles of detachment, isolation, disengagement, separation and disconnection. *The Hydrogen Sonata* is then – just like every one of Banks’ sf novels – not a tragedy, but a tribute to the unbroken engagement with the limitations of reality and to the triumphs of

those who, under the direst of circumstances, persevere in this engagement.

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JGB DAY 2016

J. G. Ballard and the Natural World'

School of English, Birmingham City University,
Curzon Building, Saturday 29th October

'Is there such a thing as authentic "Nature" these days? Or is it now merely an adjunct to the electronic media, almost a TV gimmick? Is it rapidly turning into a theme park?'

J. G. Ballard's fictions famously explore the meeting point between the inner world of the psyche and the outer realm of 'reality'. Ballard called this convergence 'inner space', a dimension which, in a Romantic echo, is half perceived and half created. This one-day, interdisciplinary symposium seeks to understand the importance of Ballard's works as we enter into (or continue on in) the age of the Anthropocene. What do Ballard's vivid depictions of flora and fauna, or their disturbing absence, have to say to a world that is obsessed with images of plant and animal life, but is destroying the same at an unprecedented rate? How do Ballard's landscapes, transformed by human mismanagement and/or the imagination, speak to concerns about our rapidly changing climate? What hope does the power of the imagination, central to so much of Ballard's writing, offer in terms of anthropogenesis – and what dangers might it disguise?

250-word abstracts for 20-minute presentations are invited, and both creative and critical responses are welcomed. Themes might include, but are not limited to:

- Ballard and ecology
- War and the environment
- Animals/plant-life/the natural world in Ballard's fiction
- Ecology and the city
- Ballard and the weather
- The mind/world dyad
- Sight and sound in a changing world
- Nature and mediation

Please send proposals and any questions to thomas.knowles@bcu.ac.uk.
The deadline for abstracts is the 4th of September 2016.

From Fallout Fantasy to Bunker Bildungsroman: Nuclear Imagination after Utopia

Anindita Banerjee (Cornell University)

Narrating the Nuclear at the End of Utopia

Towards the end of Andrei Tarkovsky's science fiction film *Stalker* (1979) there is a brief sequence that seems so utterly banal it has largely escaped the attention of critics. Just before the last iconic scene in which the apparently disabled young girl, Monkey, moves a number of vessels across a table using telekinetic powers, her mother, the Stalker's wife, speaks directly to the camera. Shot in stark black and white without any background sound, the mother's testimony is something of a realistic aberration in a film otherwise replete with Tarkovsky's signature special effects. The conversation resembles footage from a documentary interview with a victim of disaster, with one crucial difference: instead of speaking about a singular catastrophic event, the woman records in ordinary tones the risks and compromises of everyday life in the Zone, including the embodied labour of childbearing and childrearing: 'My mother was against marrying him, you know. Everybody knows how the children of stalkers turn out. But I was in love [...] And there was happiness, too.'

In retrospect, this fictional interview could as easily have been culled from the over two hundred hours of videotaped conversations that provided Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich with material for her internationally acclaimed book *Voices from Chernobyl*, released in 1996 on the tenth anniversary of the nuclear meltdown. Alexievich's voices, especially those belonging to women, also deal with disaster in terms of small-scale spaces and the quiet rhythms of quotidian life, labour and love – be it in the hospital nursing a husband who is literally falling apart, or living with radioactive detritus in one's own backyard:

The first time they told us we had radiation, we thought: it was a sort of sickness, and whoever gets it dies right away. No, they said, it's this thing that lies on the ground and gets into the ground, but you can't see it. [...] But that's not true! I saw it. This cesium was lying in my garden, until it got wet with rain. It was an ink-black color. It was just sort of lying there and dripping into pieces. [...] About the size of the kerchief on my head. (Alexievich 2006: 28)

Although Tarkovsky and Alexievich's works are not the principal texts to be examined in this essay, their aesthetics of slow catastrophe provide two central concepts. The first is scaling down the nuclear in terms of both space and time. In the cultural imagination of the Cold War, nuclear apocalypse was the ultimate planetary 'hyperobject', to use Timothy Morton's evocative term for the contemporary phenomenon of climate change. Like the irrevocable atmospheric transitions of our time, the nuclear was perceived to be simultaneously too

large, too pervasive, too intangible, and too inevitable to access through either cognitive or narrative means. In 1984, Frances Ferguson proposed the term 'nuclear sublime' (Ferguson 1984: 5) while Jacques Derrida wrote eloquently of the nuclear beyond the limits of representation (Derrida 1984: 22). In contrast, Tarkovsky and Alexievich's masterpieces make the nuclear physically proximate, viscerally tangible, and an integral, embodied component of lived reality.

The second concept, admittedly influenced by my own reading of Tarkovsky and Alexievich together, is that of contaminated fiction. By this term I mean the particular capacity of nuclear narratives and events to penetrate each other, enfold the future in the past, and thereby inform each other's interpretations and representations across the boundaries of genres, discourses and media. Nowhere in Tarkovsky's film is the Zone diegetically named as a nuclear disaster area like the vast exclusion zone set up around the Chernobyl reactor. After the 1986 meltdown, however, *Stalker* was revisited and indeed recanonized as a prophetic prefiguration of the catastrophe, and its scenes provided templates for visualizing the actual zone of exclusion inaccessible to both the camera and the human eye. Contaminated fiction thus provides a powerful way of bridging the discursive spheres of the real, imagined, lived, and speculative potentials of nuclear power. This article examines a new nuclear imagination that has emerged in Russia over the so-called Putin decade of 2000–15. Although operating with the same logics of dispersal and contamination, it bears little relation to Tarkovsky or Alexievich's earlier brands of nuclear humanism. Instead of reflecting on the techno-political institutions of a monolithic state or providing sites for individual and collective acts of conscience, it deploys the nuclear in an intimate set of relations that help make sense of the world after utopia and define what it means to be a subject in the precarious new order of the twenty-first century.

In 2005, approximately twenty years after Chernobyl, a phenomenon called *Metro 2033* took Russian and international audiences by storm. Set in the terrifyingly proximate future of 2013, among the ruins of the Moscow underground, after a series of nuclear attacks by unknown enemy states has rendered the surface uninhabitable, *Metro 2033* had been circulating as an online novel since 2002 as the author, Dmitri Glukhovsky, had failed to find a print publisher. Its interactive format, however, inspired an impressive number of readers scattered across the post-Soviet space to supplement and intervene in the initial text with their own fictions of dispersal, isolation and survival, transforming it into a growing network of cross-referential stories. In a recent interview, Glukhovsky recalled that it was the proliferative presence of *Metro 2033* on the web that enabled its spectacular debut in 2005 simultaneously in two forms, or more precisely platforms. In the domestic market, it was released as a print book that became an instant bestseller. The global market, however, embraced it not as genre fiction per se but as an immersive experience across multiple media. Even before the book was available in print, the Ukrainian company

4A released *Metro 2033* as an enormously successful multiplayer videogame explicitly tied in with the online novel and its complex network of fan fiction. (Notably, 4A also released the *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* game in the same year, followed by *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl* in 2007.) ‘They came to me [...] when it was still an Internet project’, recalled Glukhovsky. ‘A website with text, free to read – they discovered it there. [...] Then it took a long time to actually make the game’ (Rosenberg 2013). Since 2005, the book itself has been translated into thirty-five languages, generated tens of thousands of pieces of participatory fiction on the web and in print, and has served as the basis of several new book and game sequels. The initial sphere of web-based participatory storytelling has correspondingly expanded into a massive presence on the Internet called the *Metro 2033 Universe*, which counts among its members the well-known Italian science fiction writer Tullio Avoledo, who has published two novels under its imprint, and Grant McMaster, who in 2012 expanded Glukhovsky’s prologue into a graphic novel entitled *Metro 2033: Britannia*.

The prominent presence of *Metro 2033* in contemporary Russian culture has not escaped the attention of scholars. Gernot Howanitz noted the convergences between the aesthetics of the game, the print book and Tarkovsky’s *Stalker*. Comparing Glukhovsky’s novel with the acclaimed author Tatyana Tolstaya’s post-nuclear fantasy *Kys* (*The Slynx*, 2000), Mark Griffiths reads the fictionalized metro as an architectural allegory of the dissolution of Soviet state power. With the traditional form of the book itself as the primary artefact of degradation, Eliot Borenstein has recently located it in a longer continuum of literary narratives that constitute increasingly dire parables of imploding Soviet life in the domestic and public spheres. Even though the material forms of *Metro 2033* do not conform to the normative progression from print book to digital culture and new media, it has been mapped onto a rich tradition of fallout fantasies in fiction and film preoccupied with the twin cataclysms of Chernobyl and the dissolution of the USSR.

Instead of focusing on the deep aura of anteriority generated by the intertextual and intermedial relations of *Metro 2033* with its literary and cinematic predecessors, the following sections explore how its inherent transmediality mobilizes the nuclear into a participatory instrument of future-thinking and future-making. From signalling the dissolution of the state and the old Soviet ways of life, spatio-temporal dispersal mutates into an armature of identity formation in the fluid geo-historical order of the twenty-first century. Contaminated fictions, correspondingly, serve as parables of survival rather than acts of mourning. Through the structures and capabilities of transmedia storytelling, *Metro 2033* transforms fallout fantasy into a new, collaboratively produced and performed narrative that I term the ‘bunker bildungsroman’. Although the term implies a coming-of-age narrative, the forms and functions of the bunker bildungsroman differ radically from the single-author novel that constitutes its literary counterpart. From its very inception, as exemplified by

Metro 2033, the bunker bildungsroman is an example of what N. Katherine Hayles recently theorized as ‘hyper-reading’ (Hayles 2012: 74): dispersed, networked, self-referential processes of co-producing narrative and co-creating meaning. The bunker bildungsroman simultaneously flows through and emerges from physical books, videogames, fan sites, wikis, newsgroups, social media, and, last but not least, participatory links between online and real role-playing communities. Like radioactive fallout, each of these platforms and practices in turn contaminates and irrevocably transforms the others.

Spatializing Time in Futures Past

In the same year as *Metro 2033*’s simultaneous release in print and on gaming platforms, President Vladimir Putin framed his annual address to the Russian Federal Assembly with a stirring formulation that rapidly evolved into an infamous political meme. ‘The collapse of the Soviet Union’, he asserted, ‘was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century’. In the less frequently recalled part of the speech that followed this pronouncement, the President speculated on ordinary people’s experience of the catastrophe:

For the Russian people this was a true drama. Tens of millions of our compatriots and fellow citizens found themselves beyond the borders of Russian territory. [...] Their savings were rendered worthless and traditional ideals were destroyed. (Putin 2005)

Dispersal, isolation, exile, and destitution constitute a strangely felicitous set of tropes that connect the foundational premise of *Metro 2033* with the President’s portrayal of the fallout from the end of the Cold War. Like the symbolic order of the nation itself, the city of Moscow in the science fictional near-future disappears as a cartographic or cognitive referent. Scattered groups of survivors crouch around dim bonfires in the ruins of the formerly resplendent stations of the city’s underground railway system, surviving on pigs and mushrooms. No one knows where and who the other survivors are, and no one ventures out of their own primitive enclaves to find out. Artyom, the twenty-year-old protagonist, has been duly warned of ‘going blind in the dazzle’ of ‘the radiation [that] would fry you within a couple of minutes if you didn’t watch out’ (Glukhovsky 2013: 14). As a result, his community limits its life within the seventieth meter of the platform of the former *VDNKh* station. Even though neither Artyom nor any member of his enclave knows what the name of his home means, the audience recognizes it as an abbreviation of ‘Exposition of the Agriculture and Industry of the Soviet Peoples’, an exhibition ground set up in 1958 along with the eponymous underground station nearby. Beyond the thin line of light at the end of the platform lurks a chaotic, lethal space dominated by a mutant species of ‘dark ones’ who have taken over the surface and are progressively encroaching into the fragile human pockets underneath.

What pushes Artyom beyond the meter – and simultaneously plunges the reader or gamer into the underground universe of *Metro 2033* – emerges from another set of convergences with the less quoted parts of the presidential address. Providing a vivid temporal counterpart to the spatial metaphor of a fragmented and marooned Russian community, Putin equated the loss of ‘traditional ideals’ with the disappearance of a lifetime of ‘savings’ for the future. Artyom is an epitome of both kinds of temporal destitution. Born in the exact year of the disastrous attacks, he is certainly no Saleem Sinai (the protagonist of Salman Rushdie’s celebrated novel *Midnight’s Children* [1981], another fantasy of traumatic dispersal, set against the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947). Artyom does, however, share two salient qualities with Saleem, who was also born in the darkest hour of catastrophe: bad eyesight and a memory full of holes. As an emblematic child of the post-nuclear world order, he is incapable of imagining what Moscow might have looked like before the residents of the city were forced into the bunkers. In the ruins of his station, moreover, no resources exist that can afford him a glimpse into this lost world: ‘I have gaps in my knowledge of history [...] My stepfather was not able to find any textbooks’ (Glukhovsky 2013: 426). Amnesia thus constitutes the temporal corollary of the inability to see, get bearings and generate a picture of the world in relation to the self – the spatial preconditions of ‘imagining oneself as a subject’ in Martin Heidegger’s famous formulation of modernity (Heidegger 1977: 132).

Surviving from day to day within the confines of his isolated community, Artyom remains unaware of his dual predicament of blindness and amnesia. Nor is he particularly eager to find himself in the labyrinthine zones of chaos beyond the confined enclave of his familiar community. A dramatic disruption from outside the meter, however, catalyzes his awakening in two ways, simultaneously alerting him to the tragic loss of the past while opening up the possibility of finding his place and role in the irrevocably transformed world that lay beyond the collapsed shell of *VDNKh*. A mysterious armed man wearing a gas mask makes an appearance in Artyom’s dream and then materializes physically. He is soon identified as one of a small group of legendary humans whose innate survival skills enable them to enjoy the same degree of mobility as the dark ones. To the characters of *Metro 2033* as well as its audience, the new arrival is simultaneously familiar and alien. In an explicit invocation of Tarkovsky’s cinematic hero, he calls himself a stalker.

‘The word, strange and foreign to the Russian language, had caught on very well nevertheless,’ the novel reminds us (Glukhovsky 2013: 30). Appropriately enough, the liminal figure of the stalker – straddling nuclear fictions across the great divide of geopolitical catastrophe, haunting the dreamworld as well as the equally nightmarish reality of the underground, navigating the surface now lost from memory and the tunnels full of unanticipated danger with equal ease – represents a literally and figuratively contaminated version of the catalyst that Franco Moretti identified with the literary bildungsroman:

To have a story, there must be a kind of event [...] capable of disrupting the regular flow of time and ‘beginning’ an unusual and unpredictable sequence. And in order to ‘motivate’ such a disruption, there should be a character who, for some reason, is not contained within prevailing norms. (Moretti 2000: 147)

The man who calls himself Hunter and identifies his origins in the Okhotny Ryad or Hunter’s Row station does not, however, turn out to be the stuff of contemporary legend as Artyom had imagined before the encounter. Stalkers were reputed to be ‘men worth their weight in gold’ who ‘ascended to the surface [...] to bring the people fuel, light, and fire. To bring life’ (Glukhovsky 2013: 30). With a name derived from the patron of hunters and foragers in Greek mythology, it is not surprising that Artyom, consonant with the schema of the literary coming-of-age story, is selected by Hunter for a mission that will send him out to navigate the treacherous terrain of the devastated city’s underbelly. What distinguishes their relationship is the revelation that far from embodying a benevolent force like Tarkovsky’s iconic Christ-like stalker or his more mundane incarnation in 2033 as a heroic figure of salvation for the survivors of nuclear holocaust, Hunter is an unapologetic harbinger of death:

‘Who are you?’ Artyom ventured at last.

‘How can I explain it to you? [...] Imagine that the whole metro was a human organism. A complex organism, made up of about forty thousand cells. I am the macrophage. The hunter. This is my job. Any danger that is sufficiently serious as to threaten the whole organism must be liquidated. That’s what I do.’ (Glukhovsky 2013: 39)

Hunter instructs Artyom to venture out into the tunnels, reach a place called *Polis*, and obtain from its representatives something called ‘the light’, which will be the only defence of his community against the coming plague of the dark ones. The only instruments of navigation he provides for his young protégé are a gas mask, a gun and a supply of ammunition from the secret storehouse of weapons he seems to carry around in his pack. It is with the realization that the only viable currency in the primitive barter system of the underground is ammunition that Artyom begins his quest for light and a picture of the world.

Once he enters the network of forty thousand cells, it soon becomes clear to Artyom that the currency of violence is also indispensable for a completely different project that Hunter had not revealed at the outset: the rite of passage from amnesia to the discovery of the self in time. It is not that history books may be discovered beyond the seventieth meter. In fact, as Artyom’s interlocutor Bourbon announces before falling over dead, books are to be avoided at all costs because they have a half-life far more lethal than radioactive debris: ‘A book ... be afraid ... of truths, concealed in ancient volumes, where ... words are embossed ... slate-black ... they don’t decay’ (Glukhovsky 2013: 101).

Eschewing written words and institutional records, Artyom proceeds instead to immerse himself in a dizzying array of pasts. Each metro station that he manages to reach has been colonized by an iconic earlier era of violent conflict that constitutes a landmark in Russian national history. The Mongol horde reigns triumphant, for example, in the first unfamiliar station that he stumbles upon, ironically situated in the former *Prospekt Mira*, the Boulevard of Peace. The Red Line, the first segment of the Moscow metro built in 1935, is dotted with enclaves proclaiming the triumph of various kinds of leftist ideologies, ranging from social democrats to Bolsheviks and Trotskyites to a strange cult of Che Guevara. Three stations at the heart of the former city, Tverskaya, Pushkinskaya and Chekhovskaya – the two latter names not coincidentally memorializing the nineteenth-century canon of Russian literature – have long since become the bastion of the Fourth Reich with ‘swastikas hanging from every column’ and German songs resonating from its walls (428). Like animated dioramas in a historical museum, each alternative course of events plays in an endless loop, freezing its particular version of futurity in time. And inevitably, each future wants to claim the protagonist for its own.

How Artyom negotiates this labyrinth of futures is what distinguishes the *bildungsroman* of *Metro 2033* from the burgeoning genre of alternative history that has flooded the literary landscape of the post-Soviet period. Examining this phenomenon as the irruption of a much longer history of distrusting official accounts of the past, critics have traced divergent recuperations of Russia’s national identity (Platt 2015) from encounters with the same geopolitical and cultural others that make an appearance in the underground. Despite Artyom’s distrust of ‘books with embossed words’ (Glukhovsky 2013: 101), *Metro 2033* is not invested in recuperating a particular suppressed past. Nor does it provide an explanation for the predicaments of the present, as Maurice Blanchot and others have postulated the primary function of alternative history (to be Blanchot 2006; Hellekson 2001: 35–6). Instead, it imbues the persona navigating the labyrinth with the unique potential of determining the future by making them the agent of the narrative’s subsequent course.

By transforming the architecture of the Moscow underground into an unpredictable field of contending futures, *Metro 2033* disperses a multitude of temporal regimes across an open-ended spatial plane through which the protagonist moves. The significance of this strategy is encoded in a crucial turning point of the novel when Artyom encounters a man reminiscent of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s keenly insightful holy fools. From an anonymous corner of the tunnel, he imparts the following ‘strange theory’ with his dying breath:

If you make the right decision, then the things that happen to you subsequently are no longer just random, to use your word, events. They are caused by the choices you have made [...] If you again were to find yourself at the crossroads and once more made the needed decision, then later you will be faced with a choice that will no longer

seem random to you if, of course you can understand it. And your life will gradually stop being just a collection of random events; it will turn into ... a plot, I suppose. (Glukhovsky 2013: 255)

The spatial skills of experiencing, surviving and, above all, deciding which turn to take at every crossroad of competing pasts therefore become indispensable for salvaging, resuscitating and reassembling a useable narrative, a 'plot', which simultaneously shapes the past while creating an infinite field of possible futures for both the individual and the community. *Metro 2033*, however, does not ameliorate the dual predicament of amnesia and blindness through the conventions of the literary bildungsroman. It fuses the chronological and cartographic coordinates of the journey into an expansive but perilously unpredictable environment of spatialized time. With each decision made at a particular crossroads, causing a shift in the permutation of life-worlds to be encountered in subsequent steps, the bunker bildungsroman offers an array of radically divergent subject positions instead of one particular way of 'imagining the self in relation to the world', as Heidegger put it. Consequently, making a plot out of one's life – the bildungsroman itself – depends on the increasingly complex means of tactical survival through which the protagonist and gamer carves out the possible paths to futurity.

Despite numerous references to literary and cinematic works that contaminate the microcosmic, dispersed spatial relations within and between the stations, influence their localized projections of possible futures, and frame the protagonist's interactions with them, the bunker bildungsroman's parameters of progression refuse to conform with any one those of pre-existing texts. Instead, its 'strange theory' of plot construction, embedded in typically postmodern fashion within the novel itself, can be identified with a much more contemporary cultural form: the immersive environments of transmedia storytelling. In 2004, Henry Jenkins proposed the concept of 'narrative architecture' to capture the unique ways in which videogames negotiate temporality through carefully designed space, and thereby grant players navigating their virtual ecologies an unprecedented degree of agency in determining their narrative trajectory.

Through precisely such dexterous operations of spatializing time, *Metro 2033* fashions itself into a kind of internally contaminated text at the intersections of the narrative form of the novel and the virtual environment of the videogame, augmented further by networks and practices of participatory storytelling among its communities in cyberspace. Incorporating feedback and fan fiction from the members of the Metro Universe, Glukhovsky as well as game developers continue to revise and refine its parameters on multiple platforms. The stations are repeatedly recalibrated by taking into consideration the possible impacts of nuclear explosion on their particular location and construction, and changes instituted to the possible pathways between them. Characters, locations and their interactions similarly metamorphose according to the shifting contours of spatialized time. The protagonist Artyom, killed by a stray bullet in the online

novel, survives across a radically expanded map of the underground for eight additional chapters in the print edition. Nor does his quest culminate in the Polis as originally anticipated: the putative home of light turns out in the 2005 game and novel to be an eviscerated, morally bankrupt incarnation of the Kremlin. Instead of staging an anticipated final resolution of the plot through an armed confrontation with the dark ones, Artyom plunges back at the end of the book into his open-ended journey across the bowels of Moscow.

(Hi)story as Heterochronotopia

By virtue of its multi-way traffic in narrative architectures, *Metro 2033* manages to simultaneously embody the four different kinds of spatial design to which Jenkins ascribes particular narratological consequences:

In the case of evoked narratives, spatial design can either enhance our sense of immersion in a familiar world or communicate a fresh perspective on that story through the altering of established details. In the case of enacted narratives, the story itself may be structured through the character's movement through space, and the features of the environment may retard or accelerate that plot trajectory. In the case of embedded narratives, the game space becomes a memory palace whose contents must be deciphered as the player tries to construct the plot. And in the case of emergent narratives, game spaces are designed to be rich in narrative potential, enabling the story-constructing activity of players. (Jenkins 2004: 129)

The range of narrative architectures that converge in *Metro 2033* offers a provocative lens for examining why the Moscow Metro emerged as the most amenable site for the bunker bildungsroman. In terms reminiscent of Jenkins's 'evoked' and 'embedded' narratives, Glukhovsky recalled his own experience of identifying the capital's underground system as an intimately familiar world awash with memories, which was nevertheless perpetually surrounded by an apocalyptic aura:

I grew up in Moscow, and I used to take daily rides on the subway. One day I discovered that the subway of Moscow is the world's biggest nuclear shelter [...] So I just started imagining what would have happened if the World War III for which [the Metro] was actually preparing broke out. (Rosenberg 2013)

Fascination with the underground and apocalyptic conspiracy theories that surrounded it during the Cold War are preoccupations that Glukhovsky shares not just with his fellow Muscovites and a majority of the aficionados of *Metro 2033*, but also with its characters. In the fictional realm as well, rumours claim that the past remains unchanged in the fabled additional level of *Metro-2*, a

deeper layer added below the system to shelter the political elite from fallout in case of nuclear war (Glukhovsky 2013: 271–4). Even without this additional chimera, the symbolic pinnacle of Stalinist urban planning that rapidly evolved into an iconic space of everyday Soviet life presents a rich field of signifiers for allegorical readings of *Metro 2033*, either as a reflection of geopolitical catastrophe or its resulting condition of post-Soviet nostalgia (Griffiths 2013: 501–2).

Considered in isolation, the evoked and embedded elements of *Metro 2033* – encoded in mirror images of the actual map of the Moscow underground and simulated in the structural remnants, historical associations and cultural resonances of particular stations – seem to conform with allegorical readings of the novel as a comprehensive fallout fantasy. The Moscow Metro, inaugurated in 1935, became the most successful public works project of Stalin's second five-year plan and embodied the inspired participation of architects, planners and workers from all over the USSR in its resplendent, quasi-sacred 'aesthetics of the gleam' (Vujosevic 2012). As Mark Griffiths has analyzed through a rich body of literature dedicated to its history, the dark, violent warrens of the post-nuclear underground represent a dystopian perversion of the empire of light that architecturally extended centralized Soviet power all the way from the surface to the centre of the earth. The primitive survivalism depicted in Glukhovsky's novel, by extension, is not just a reflection of the material privations of post-Soviet life but also a mockery of the idealized dreamworld that Muscovites encountered during their daily commutes (Griffiths 2013: 494–500). Read outside the dichotomy of utopia and dystopia, however, the spatial history of the Moscow Metro proves to be equally conducive for staging the 'enacted' and 'emergent' narratives crucial for imagining a future at the end of the line.

Far from representing a static monument to a particular era of Soviet history, the Moscow underground system from its very inception embodied what I have theorized elsewhere as 'heterochronotopia'. Located at the intersection of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope and Michel Foucault's model of heterotopia – 'places that actually exist, but simultaneously represent, invert, and render illusory' the real spaces and practices of everyday life – heterochronotopias encompass multiple, often conflicting regimes of time within the same spatial paradigm (Banerjee 2013: 116). From the moment the first Red Line of the Moscow Metro began to be constructed, the ambitious project of creating a parallel underground city was simultaneously designated a multilayered site of memory and projected into a science-fictional future. Even before the official opening of each segment, the remarkable architectural features of its stations were captured in photographs and released to the public as a series of commemorative stamps. These renditions of the future as collectible artefact were often augmented simultaneously with a further layer of visionary imagination. The first Red Line commemorative stamps, for example, included pictures of a tunnel under construction opening up to a radiant blur,

as well as an aboveground visualization of a wildly futuristic Moscow street onto which crowds poured out of the underground on automated walkways, under a sky filled with giant screens: the images projected on them, in turn, represented a super-technologized version of the underground from which the citizens emerge.

As the system expanded over subsequent years, this heterochronotopic compression of the past, present and future became the signature architectural principle for some of the most important stations depicted in the *Metro 2033* network. *Ploshchad' revoliutsii* or Revolution Square, for example, literally embodied a museum of the future. Its gigantic bronze figures in the Graeco-Roman style, paradoxically representing not relics of the past but idealized projections of workers wielding fantastical technologies, spurs Artyom to assert that despite a complete lack of historical knowledge: 'I know a little bit about ancient Greece' (Glukhovsky 2013: 428). His own birthplace, and the starting point of the journey, is *VDNKh*, a later attempt at simultaneously archiving the present and projecting it into a science-fictional future with a theme park-like journey through forty years of Soviet achievements in agriculture and industry. The art deco-style station, as well as the exhibition ground (both constructed in 1958), continue to be overshadowed by a gigantic parabolic sculpture of a spaceship disappearing into the stratosphere.

It is not surprising, then, that in the post-nuclear near-future the heterochronotopia of the metro offers the only way out from the geopolitical and temporal stasis of the present. While Hunter equips Artyom with armed violence, the only viable currency, which would allow him to blast out of his enclave and forge his own path, another symbolically freighted character opens up the potentials of the tunnels for overcoming the tyranny of time. The obsession of *VDNKh* inhabitants with their clock, which froze at the time of the blasts, begins to seem patently absurd as Artyom listens to the final descendant of Genghis Khan. Representing the consummate geo-historical Other of Russian ethno-national identity, the figure of the Mongol has been alternately reviled as a relic of the eastern hordes who swept across the steppes in the twelfth century and valorized as the only antidote to cultural colonization by the West (Bassin 1991; Laruelle 2004). Straddling pre-modern deep time and the unfolding future as he inhabits both sides of Russia's proverbial Janus face, one turned towards Europe and the other towards Asia, the monumental Khan proclaims:

See, Artyom, you obviously come from a station where you all look at the clock in awe, comparing the time on your wrist watch to the red numbers above the tunnel entrance. For you, time is the same for everyone, like light. Well, here it's the opposite [...] Whoever needs light has to bring it with them. It's the same with time: whoever needs to know the time has to bring it with them. (Glukhovsky 2011: 108)

With the possibility of reclaiming time, which is also light, the ruins of the

metro once again become a fertile heterochronotopia in which its denizens, prisoners of history isolated in enclaves of primeval survival, are free to script their own narratives of enactment and emergence. Unlike the passive victims of geopolitical catastrophe portrayed in the presidential address of 2005, emancipation from what Walter Benjamin in 1937 called the ‘homogenous, empty time’ (Benjamin 1968: 261) of the clock and calendar imbues them with the power of transforming the darkness of a devastated world into a multitude of collaboratively designed futures.

The Bunker as *Bildung* in the Pedagogy of the Popular

The point at which the post-nuclear underground becomes ground zero for the genesis of futurity is also where we can assess the bunker bildungsroman’s significance beyond the page and the screen. On the eve of the Crimea referendum in 2014, President Putin once again invoked the imagined Russian community as prisoners of a falsely consensual concept of universal history. He justified the re-absorption of the Crimean peninsula into the Russian Federation from Ukrainian territory as an act of liberation from the colonialist underbelly of modern history: ‘the infamous policy of containment led in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries’ by the west (Putin 2014). In the two years that have followed, marked by international sanctions and the slow catastrophe of informal warfare in eastern Ukraine, both the academy and the media have attended primarily to narratives produced by the state and its cultural arms over the long duration of the Putin decade. These consist of restorative scenarios that Svetlana Boym characterized as the ‘aestheticization of the genealogy of power’ (Boym 2001: 49–55), with the widely disseminated photo-ops of the President in various imperial settings serving as its most egregious examples. Pedagogical initiatives following the call in 2007 for ‘promot[ing] respect for our native language, for distinctive cultural values, for the memory of our ancestors, and for every page of the history of our fatherland’ (Putin 2007) have also elicited extensive commentary from scholars (Platt 2009: 6–11). As Mark Steinberg notes, the Kremlin’s veritable fetish of World War II in the era of economic sanctions also constitutes an important move in looking backwards toward the future, translating the memory of ‘surviving it together’ into a mantra of the historical present (Steinberg 2014).

In contrast, little attention has been paid to phenomena such as *Metro 2033* as equally powerful catalysts of public culture in times of turbulent transition. Thirty years after Chernobyl, the new forms and platforms of narrating the nuclear make a compelling case for studying popular participatory culture in Antonio Gramsci’s terms of critical pedagogy: ‘when literature or other forms of art, playing on the deepest desires, anxieties, hopes, and fears of its audience, simultaneously enables them to perceive their world in a new way and provides them with the skills and dispositions necessary for inhabiting it’ (Gramsci

1971: 114). Unlike literature or art, however, the bunker bildungsroman's cultural lives cannot be defined within the boundaries of a single text and its audience. Dispersed across a multitude of media, immersive environments, and participatory communities of reading, playing, and storytelling, its pedagogy emerges through constant cross-contamination between narratives, their consumers and participants, and the world outside.

This pedagogy becomes most visible when *Metro 2033* is considered not as a self-contained text but as a node of hyper-reading and 'multi-local meaning-making' (Hayles 2012: 75). The luminous, continuously updated wiki of the Metro Universe offers a vivid example of the ways in which the bunker bildungsroman facilitates collaborative rewritings of contemporary reality and co-production of visions for the future. Although the geopolitical conditions of the fictional war that provide the point of departure for the novel and the videogame were originally unspecified, the online community draws upon a dizzying array of texts, their associated fan sites and marginalia to fill in the blanks. Putting sources as obscure as informational animations marketing game sequels in dialogue with solidly literary elements such as flashbacks of the first novel's characters, members assert that although the scope of the nuclear war was indeed 'global', 'it is now known that the United States had been a major aggressor against Russia' (http://metrovideogame.wikia.com/wiki/World_War_III). Consequently, the graphic counterpart of the text, which had previously depicted an array of flags from Middle Eastern countries, has been recently revised into two columns: Russia occupies one side alone against 'NATO', consisting of the United States of America, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the French Republic.

Hyper-reading transforms the science-fictional bunker into a heterochronotopia from which participants and gamers can then begin to compose their own narratives of emergence. What was fictional apocalypse is reopened into a future of perpetual conflict, while the virtual community metamorphoses into stalkers whose job is to rediscover the self even as they carve out ways of surviving in the world. The multidirectional, dialogic interpretation between the real, the imaginary, the lived and the speculative potentialities of the nuclear mobilizes the bunker bildungsroman into a powerful handbook of living in the new Russia.

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The Fourfold Library (3): Zoran Živković, ‘Utopia in Childhood’s End’

Since the Fourfold Library is itself a temporal anomaly, it is no surprise that the appearance of wormholes is an occupational hazard for the staff who work there. Indeed, they have even been incorporated as part of the cataloguing process. The wormholes have the tendency of making random donations to the Library and we have been granted access to one such recent acquisition, an essay on Arthur C. Clarke originally published in 1975 by the Serbian writer, Zoran Živković, and translated by Irene Mirković.

No Utopia can ever give satisfaction to everyone, all the time. As their material conditions improve, men raise their sights and become discontented with power and possessions that once would have seemed beyond their wildest dreams. And even when the external world has granted all it can, there still remain the searchings of the mind and the longings of the heart. (Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood’s End*)

The novel *Childhood’s End* resulted from a voluminous expansion of the novella ‘Guardian Angel’ which originally appeared in two versions: a somewhat shorter American one which appeared in the April 1950 issue of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and was edited by James Blish who condensed it and made minor alternations, and Clarke’s original version – which was published in the Winter 1950 issue of the British journal *New Worlds*. This latter one was subsequently used as the basis for the first three parts of the future novel.

The novel occupies a special place in Clarke’s sf writings, among other things because it presents the most complete axiology of the author’s view of the world through a highly indicative sample of scientific Utopia. One of the advantages of treating this motif in *Childhood’s End* is witnessed in the fact that it does not hold a key position in the structure of the plot but rather it occurs in a broader reference where conditions are amenable for studying it from external and internal perspectives.

In placing the scientific Utopia in the coordinate of a cosmic history of the human race and not in an earthly one, Clarke found himself obliged to re-examine the plausibility of the function on which it is founded as well as the worthiness of the goals which it supports. Indeed, this re-examination did not essentially belittle science as a key factor in the development of civilization, but it did point to certain general inadequacies in the Utopia founded upon it – with regard to a much more relevant and general system of values than the ephemeral ideals of ‘the childhood’ of mankind.

The scientific Utopia depicted in *Childhood’s End* has a significant feature. It does not represent the fruits of human zeal, but rather comes as the result of external intervention by non-Earthly beings, whose degree of scientific advancement is incomparably higher than Man’s. The motives of the Overlords

are not directly pertinent to our deliberation; furthermore, the human actors do not manage to grasp everything by the end of the novel, when it becomes clear that in the plans of the newcomers Utopia is only a temporary and secondary phase whose background is devoid only of altruistic motives in the stricter sense of the word.

Clarke cites three conditions which enable the Overlords to fundamentally change Man's world in a mere fifty years: 'a clearly-determined goal', 'a knowledge of social engineering' and 'power'. From the description of a subsequent realization of 'the new world', however, it becomes clear that the first two conditions actually represent only prerequisites for the creation of a Utopia, while the focal point is exclusively found in power. Clarke understands this term to mean the appropriate volume of scientific knowledge required to set up a positive form of control over the planet on which Man resides.

Just as in all Utopias, this control of Man's world is aimed at creating conditions under which every individual would be free of the obligations which hinder his creative activity. In *Childhood's End*, these conditions are treated in somewhat greater detail on two occasions, in Chapters Six and Ten.

The emancipation of the individual creator takes place on several levels, beginning with direct labour production all the way through to professions in the world of entertainment, such as certain fields of sport. The Overlords first of all enable the complete automatic production of basic consumption commodities, which completely eradicates the struggle for bare subsistence characteristic of all earlier periods: 'The average working week was now twenty hours – but those twenty hours were no sinecure. There was little work left of a routine, mechanical nature. Men's minds were too valuable to waste on tasks that a few thousand transistors, some photoelectric cells, and a cubic metre of printed circuits could perform'.

Idleness, which results from having a great deal of leisure at one's disposal, permits everyone to devote themselves to more thorough and long-term education. In parallel with increasing the general level of education, there is a final break with mistaken notions of a spiritual nature which had burdened mankind, even when there was no real basis for this. Thanks to a device obtained from the Overlords, humans gain a direct insight into their own history, and into the period of the founding of all the more important world religions, which is sufficient to have them finally disappear: 'Humanity had lost its ancient gods: now it was old enough to have no need for new ones'.

The conditions for ideal material prosperity, or rather a very high standard of living, lead to a dwindling of all ideological disagreements and to the disbanding of the standing armies. These global changes, as well as an entire range of smaller actions taken by the Overlords, lead to a chain reaction of deep-rooted secondary improvements. The disappearance of state borders creates 'One World' and begins from the ground up to do away with all race prejudices. Criminals practically disappear as the Overlords have the means for almost

unlimited monitoring. Mankind becomes exceptionally mobile: 'there was nowhere on the planet where science and technology could not provide one with a comfortable home, if one wanted it badly enough'.

Some progress is made without the assistance of the Overlords. With the discovery of a completely safe oral contraceptive, as well as a reliable method for establishing paternity, the human race finally rids itself of the last vestiges of puritan morals. Finally, the majority of people gain the opportunity to spend a good part of their time on various sports and entertainment in general, so that the whole planet slowly begins to look like 'a big playground'.

In precisely this state we see the first cracks in the structure of the scientific Utopia – but cracks only for mankind and not for the Overlords, who never saw the Utopia as being the final goal but rather only the means. Although people had finally acquired irreproachable conditions for manifesting their creative potential, unhindered by the many restraints of the old world, idleness as a creative *conditio sine qua non* begins to slowly transform into its negative correlate – boredom.

The course of this regression is reflected on a number of levels but basically it has a uniform cause. The appearance of the Overlords and their uninterrupted presence have a very inhibiting and de-stimulating effect on Man's fundamental creative agent – curiosity. There is no longer any sense in wasting one's whole lifetime on solving the mysteries of those scientific, artistic and philosophical issues which the Overlords have perhaps discovered long ago. This lack of enterprise becomes most evident in the field of art:

The end of strife and conflict of all kinds had also meant the virtual end of creative art. There were myriads of performers, amateur and professional, yet there had been no really outstanding new works of literature, music, painting or sculpture for generation. The world was still living on the glories of a past that could never return.

Stagnation in the field of science is partially hidden because there is an unprecedented boom in the so-called 'descriptive disciplines' where facts are only collected and collated – so that almost no one even notices the lack of theoreticians who would organize and link up these facts into a system: 'Profounder things had also passed. It was a completely secular age'.

Indeed, the race which had suddenly been guaranteed unlimited freedom and had been presented with inexhaustible sources of various kinds of entertainment – which 'by the standards of earlier ages, it was Utopia' – has been so immersed in 'the satisfaction of the present' that the anxious question of a few philosophers, '*Where do we go from here?*', does not reach them.

While this fundamental issue, just as in all preceding periods, remains on a purely academic level, the cracks in the scientific Utopia of the Overlords begin to evoke suspicion among spiritually-minded people where they are most apparent: in the arts. The fact that stagnation had already turned into decadence

in this field incites new debates on the motives and policies of the strangers from space: ‘Was it possible that despite all their enormous intelligence the Overlords did not really understand mankind, and were making a terrible mistake from the best of motives? Suppose in their altruistic passion for justice and order, they had determined to reform the world, but had not realized that they were destroying the soul of Man?’

This first explicit criticism of the scientific Utopia leads to the formation of a new Utopia which, indeed, is also founded on scientific grounds but whose ultimate purpose is not material prosperity but rather the return of the lost creative potential of people, who have increasingly turned into ‘passive sponges – absorbing, but never creating’.

This new artistic Utopia grows at the point where the scientific Utopia begins to lose its initiative and to close the spiritual horizons of Man. The artistic Utopia acquires its direct embodiment in the founding of a colony called ‘New Athens’. The colony originates as the result of complex and voluminous plans in the field of social engineering, which serve as the groundwork for reliably-defined optimal measures for the size of this community, its population composition, model of social order, as well as long-term goals.

Still, regardless of this scientific guarantee, the founding of New Athens is awaited with a certain amount of scepticism for two reasons. In a certain sense, the thus-conceived colony represents a challenge to the policy of the Overlords, who have never hindered the artistic ambitions of the people but nor did they encourage them. However, just as in many preceding cases, the newcomers do not react at all, remaining completely indifferent to all the activities of the Earth people which do not imperil the general welfare.

The second reason which partially generates suspicion in terms of the tenability of New Athens is founded on experience from earlier periods: ‘Yet even in the past, long before any real knowledge of social dynamics had existed, there had been many communities devoted to special religious or philosophical ends. It was true that their mortality rate had been high, but some had survived’.

The ideal embodied in New Athens is almost without precedent in the past. The basic concept of the founders of this utopian community is ‘to build up an independent, stable cultural group with its own artistic traditions’. The pre-condition for these traditions consists of providing a high concentration of world artists (‘nothing is more stimulating than the conflict of minds with similar interests’), who should achieve the optimum of creative utilization of idleness: ‘Everybody on this island,’ says one of the managers of New Athens, ‘has one ambition, which may be summed up very simply. It is to do *something*, however small it may be, better than anyone else’.

It is obvious that the value of this work simultaneously defines the value of the artistic Utopia itself. The creative endeavours of the residents of New Athens are, first of all, concentrated on discovering original forms of expression, in the traditional as well as in the new artistic areas. It is, however, symptomatic

that this aspiration toward originality, as an affirmation of creativity, is mostly reduced to a number of experiments reasonably described on one occasion as being ‘aggressively modernistic’. As the number of experimental possibilities in the context of known artistic domains of expression is finite, there are rapid premonitions as to the final horizons of all fields of art.

Indeed, this fact does not threaten the creative potentials of the inhabitants of New Athens as generations are needed to finalize the already-initiated experiments. Still, the awareness of the existence of the final borderlines of art have a significant impact on the discreet occurrence of doubt as to the general value of this form of Man’s spiritual expression or rather in its importance outside the narrowly local coordinates of Earth – coordinates which now have their incomparably broader correlate in the cosmic perspective of the development of mankind, a constant reminder of this being the presence of the Overlords.

In this situation, it is highly interesting but in a certain sense irrelevant to hear the opinion of the newcomers on the general value of art and, in the final analysis, on the usefulness of the Utopia called New Athens. An opportunity for this confirmation is shown during the visit of one of the Overlords – a visit which is supposedly intended to analyze the way of life and the goals of the colony but whose real motives are of a completely different nature: ‘There were some on the island who welcomed this visit as a chance of settling one of the minor problems of Overlord psychology – their attitude toward art. Did they regard it as a *childish aberration of the human race?*’ (emphasis added).

The viewpoint of the visitors concerning the value of the artistic expression of the Earth people is indeed difficult to define due to their reluctance to put forward any opinions which could even remotely suggest the final ends of their ‘altruistic’ engagement with mankind. Still, there are two occasions on which somewhat more can be gleaned about this viewpoint.

In the first case, the conclusion is drawn indirectly, on the basis of the reaction of an Overlord when viewing a theatre performance: ‘He might himself be putting on a superb act, following the performance by logic alone and with his own strange emotions completely untouched, as an anthropologist might take part in some primitive rite’.

On the second occasion, a concrete question is posed to an Overlord connected with the traditional dichotomy of the culture of mankind – the dichotomy between art and science – which conceals an intention to discover if, from the perspective of the Overlord, all artists actually represent abnormal individuals embodying ‘the childish aberration of the human race’. The Overlord avoids giving a direct reply, making use of an ambiguous syllogism: ‘So if all artists are abnormal, and all men are artists, we have an interesting syllogism’.

The residents of the utopian commune can only guess at the real meaning of this syllogism, which simultaneously implies a judgment on the value of New Athens. In this respect, the readers of *Childhood’s End* are in a somewhat more favourable position. They have the opportunity of attending the submission of

the report by the Overlord who carries out the inspection of New Athens – a report which introduces directly, for the first time, a cosmic perspective in the process of assessing Man's attempts to safeguard the artistic form of expression in his creative spirit, something which had never been endangered in the past – at least not in Earthly frameworks. Tantalterresco says that no action should be taken in connection with the colony. Also, 'It is an interesting experiment, but cannot in any way affect the future'.

Now it is completely certain that the axiological judgment, condensed in the adjective 'interesting', is really pronounced from the standpoint of 'an anthropologist taking part in some primitive rite'. From the perspective of the future, or the manifold cosmic usefulness of the human race, the utopian experiment called New Athens, which viewed the highest creative values of mankind in artistic expression, actually represents only 'a childish aberration'.

However, from this standpoint, any other type of Utopia – which represents the end and not only the means for universal cosmic development – is equally ephemeral and has no real impact on the future. Its lack of value follows from the static, non-progressive character of the mythical motif of *Paradise Regained* or the 'Golden Age' which lies in the basis of any Utopia.

In *Childhood's End*, only the Overlords possess an awareness of the transience and instability of Utopia. At the end of the second part of the book, which quite intentionally carries the title 'The Golden Age', the Earth Supervisor, Karella, brilliantly summarizes the whole tragedy of this myth: 'They would never know how lucky they had been. For a lifetime, mankind had achieved as much happiness as any race can ever know. It had been the Golden Age. But gold was also the colour of sunset, of autumn: and only Karella's ears could catch the first wailings of the winter storms. And only Karella knew with what inexorable swiftness the Golden Age was rushing to its close'. The easily overlooked issue of the last philosophers again comes to the forefront in all its monumentality: '*Where do we go from here?*'

The cosmic dimension of the development of intelligent races – according to Clarke's concept – does not recognize Utopia. Those who have cast their lot with the Golden Age, regardless of whether this is founded on science, art or a third element, lose all importance in the order of the universe, turning into beings which inexorably sink to stagnation and decadence. In order to reach higher levels of all-cosmic evolution, Utopia should be accepted only as a means and not as a final meeting of goals. On the other side of all Utopias, petrified in the ephemeral ideals from the period of mankind's 'childhood', there are new dimensions of existence. The road to them sometimes stands in opposition to any altruism or the final end of each Utopia: self-satisfied prosperity.

Nature, though, always creates a prodigal abundance which permits for the prevalence of those races which could not muster up courage to confront this challenge and surpass the level of Utopia: 'They have turned back while there was still time, avoiding both the danger and achievement. Their worlds had

become Elysian islands of effortless content, playing no further part in the story of the Universe'.

Zoran Živković received his M.A. in 1979 for a thesis on the role of first contact in the work of Arthur C. Clarke. He has since become Serbia's leading writer of the fantastic. One of his most recent books, *The Five Wonders of the Danube*, was reviewed in *Foundation* 123 whilst, in 2003, the appropriately titled *The Library* won the World Fantasy Award for Best Novella. The Japanese imprint Cadmus is to reissue Živković's entire oeuvre in English whilst translations of *The Book*, *The Writer* and *The Ghostwriter* are to be published in Turkey by the Istanbul-based press, Minval, in late 2016 and early 2017.

Weird Counsels: The Critic & the Critics

Rhys Williams (Kings College, London)

Carl Freedman, *Art and Idea in the Novels of China Miéville* (Gylphi, 2015,
194pp, £16.99)

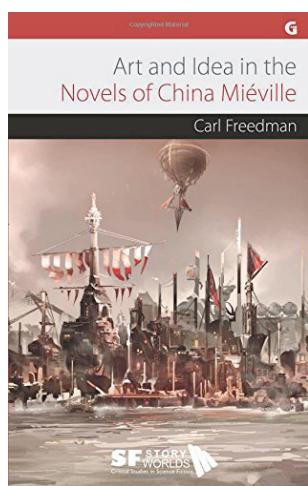
Caroline Edwards and Tony Venezia, eds. *China Miéville: Critical Essays*
(Gylphi, 2015, 316pp, £17.99)

The publication of two books in one year devoted entirely to the work of one young author – the first a monograph by a key authority on sf, the second a collection edited by two of the rising stars of the field – speaks volumes about the importance of China Miéville in the world of fantastic literature. Already the subject of a special issue of *Extrapolation* (2009), and numerous stand-alone articles, chapters, conference papers and one whole conference (from which grew the edited collection here reviewed), Miéville clearly provides scholars with fruitful material for critical work. Both the richness and originality of his fiction, and his acute forays into literary and political criticism have played a part in his celebrity, as well as the resonances of his work with contemporary radical politics, his erudition, and the way his work draws on thick textures of genre tradition as alongside those of avant-garde artistic and political movements. But over six years since that first special issue, and more than a decade since interest began, what is perhaps most striking is the way that criticism on Miéville appears to be tending to a point, circling many of the same moments in his texts, and coming to much the same conclusions. Darko Suvin once claimed that sf must be wiser than the world it speaks to – must criticism be wiser than the works it speaks of?

In his book, Carl Freedman does what the sf community has come to expect of him: richly informed and insightful criticism conveyed in mellifluous and clear

prose. The reader feels in safe hands here, and the book itself is a testament to the guiding theoretical ideal that animates it – that of the necessary sweetness of learning, the *dulce et utile* of any great work. In the preface, Freedman rightly notes the peculiar status of a monograph covering a far-from-finished oeuvre, and proposes not to encompass Miéville, but rather to ‘lay some foundations on which future Miéville critics can build’. In this aim, he succeeds admirably.

Using Miéville’s first book, *King Rat* (1998), as a kind of study in miniature, Freedman lays the conceptual groundwork for the rest of his argument. He claims that Miéville should be read as striving for a ‘Marxist Urban Sublime’, where sublime means



'the precise and powerful expression of lofty thoughts and intense emotions'. The 'urban' stems from Freedman's reading that Miéville revives a tradition of the London urban sublime last conveyed by artists like Wordsworth, Blake and Dickens. Miéville does so by drawing on the resources of fantastic fiction to expand and supplement the realism that (as Freedman argues) no longer suffices to capture London's 'epistemological nontransparency and hybridity [...] structured more complexly and productive of more different kinds of experience than any single individual can truly take in.' The 'Marxist' part is concerned with Miéville's clearly historical materialist approach to reality, his 'thick' descriptions and world-building that draw from that very thorough and elaborated model of social process, and which endow his creations with a sense of 'reality' that *Lord of the Rings* (as Freedman notes) lacks. Finally, while the sublime is typically connected to the effects of the strikingly singular, with Miéville the effect comes from the radically multiple. For Freedman, Miéville presents an Adornian utopian impulse in the valorization of heterogeneity – he draws on Adorno's definition of 'peace' as 'distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other'. Thus, to take *King Rat* as an example, Saul's victory is possible because he is 'a figure of dialectical hybridity', and the novel is 'an Adornian celebration of heterogeneity and complexity, of overdetermined dialectical combination, and, correlatively, an attack on the totalitarian and (in the end) genocidal idea of purity'.

This reading is extended, elaborated, complicated and enriched through the remaining chapters on the Bas-Lag trilogy, *The City & the City* and *Embassytown*. Each novel is considered as treating a different theoretical problem – predominantly from a Marxist perspective – nationalism, imperialism, revolution, or language in *Embassytown* (as well as colonialism). Each chapter is of excellent didactic value as Freedman provides lucid glosses to the necessary background theory and historical context as a prelude to the close-readings. Added to this is the sheer breadth and depth of the literary tradition that Freedman is able to bring to the table – placing Miéville in light of Dickens, D.H. Lawrence, Wordsworth – influences that usually get elided in the ubiquitous Lovecraft references. Having said that, Freedman does not really mention the Weird tradition at all, which is an odd omission and does detract somewhat from the completeness of his account.

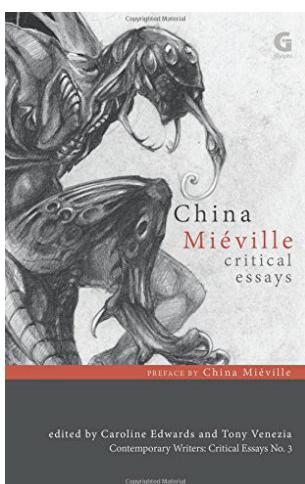
In a final theoretical chapter, Freedman returns to the field for one more sally in the continuing debate over the Suvian model of 'cognition'. More or less a direct attempt to answer Miéville's claims in *Red Planets* (2009) that the 'cognitive effect' is pure ideology and charismatic authority, and not really a form of knowledge as such, Freedman makes yet another ingenious move. He admits Miéville's claim, and counters that this is the best one can hope for from any literature – that this is the particular kind of knowledge that literature is capable of providing – 'knowledge on the level of the *vécu*, of lived experience'. So not some reified objective knowledge, but rather knowledge of how it feels,

or what it's like, to be in the world, and particularly in the capitalist present. Good literature (like Miéville's) provides a model that can help us make more sense of our own lived experience and the larger social forces that inform it, precisely because it presents us not with 'truth' but with something approaching truth from a remove, truth complicated and mediated by the fact of its reception by a living, limited individual; truth as it feels like to us.

The book ends with a consideration of Miéville's critical legal text *Between Equal Rights* (2005). Another characteristically lucid discussion ends with a claim that I want think about as a way of getting to what Freedman, despite the obvious necessity and brilliance of his reading of Miéville, doesn't quite do. The final sentence of the book states 'the Bas-Lag trilogy is just as deeply and complexly Marxist as *Between Equal Rights*'. At the other end, in the opening preface, he states 'my literary-critical interest in Miéville is primarily as a Marxist novelist – with equal emphasis on the adjective and the noun'. As I have said, Freedman accomplishes this reading admirably. This book opens the door onto the rich scope of the Marxist tradition that informs Miéville's work, his outlook, his approach, and his politics. And tradition is the key word here. Freedman is the ideal reader to enrich Miéville's work for us with the history that led up to it. But there is a sense that this reading is not giving us Miéville as such, but rather one – although central and vital – dimension of him. I can't imagine there will ever be a better work published on Miéville and Marxist aesthetics/politics, nor have I read a piece that draws out the non-Weird literary influences so well. To say that this is a foundational work, then, is to both make a claim for its canonical importance in Miéville scholarship, and to acknowledge that it is best understood as the shoulders of a giant, on which future work should stand.

Does the second text here considered begin to do this work? In part, yes. The collection begins with a preface by Miéville. Not addressing – at least not directly – the contents of the collection, it's a semi-playful musing on the idea of

'disavowed' literature. In a by-now-standard move for Miéville, and one which echoes the tendency of the Weird, according to Roger Luckhurst in his essay, to 'build its own archive', he generates a collection of these anti-canonical texts, trying to discern in them a 'fundamental repudiability'. A shadowy world of gnostic knowledge is gestured to, but rejected in a deflating gesture (a nod perhaps to the familiarity of the pattern here invoked from his short stories in particular), before positing the possibility of writing a literature that oscillates between dis- and re-avowal. Is it a meditation on commitment, necessity or faith? or maybe a way of dealing with the experience of your work being rewritten via critical discourse, becoming, perhaps,



unrecognisable (or all too recognisable)? Either way it reads more like an intellectual game than Miéville's usually more textured fictional and critical work.

The preface is followed by a weighty introduction by Edwards and Venezia. It opens with a rather strained and unnecessary attempt to frame itself as an 'unintroduction' but then proceeds to be a very good example of a normal introduction. It lays groundwork important for any reading of Miéville that the collection's essays do not necessarily touch on, and so is all the more valuable for that. It covers the Miéville-Suvin theoretical debate, the importance of London (and other cities) to the author, psychogeography, hybridity and the grotesque, genre and genre-blending, and the Weird tradition. It goes some way towards framing Miéville in the Marxist tradition that is so crucial an influence, draws important links between his work and post-1999 Seattle politics, and rather ingeniously uses the figure of 'breach' to illuminate his oeuvre, both fictional and critical. It ends with a thorough overview of each contribution and stands, I think, as one of the best, short Miéville 101s available.

The collection proper opens with Sherryl Vint's essay 'Ab-Realism: Fractal Language and Social Change', and it is a stunner. In fact, I would rehearse the cliché that if you only read one short piece on Miéville, it should be this one. Vint establishes the notion of 'abrealism', that is 'a narrative logic that simultaneously captures the absurdities of "real" life under capitalism and points to the power of narrative to activate the utopian traces of another world that is possible and coexists with this one.' Vint here gets to the heart of what Miéville is about – she provides clear and strong evidence of abrealism across his work, describes how it works, and gestures to many possible examples. Abrealism as a concept is powerfully generative for understanding Miéville's fiction, and it sits well with Freedman's book, giving a more fully Miévillian picture that certainly leans on historical materialism, but adds some conceptual mechanisms (drawing on Gilles Deleuze, for example) that speak more precisely to the contemporaneity of the author. Vint and Freedman have a history of disagreeing over the core mechanism of Miéville's work but, on the strength of this argument, Vint is the more convincing.

In more or less direct dialogue with Vint and Freedman are the chapters by Dougal McNeill and Mark P. Williams. McNeill reads *Iron Council* (2004) as a project to renew the fantasy of revolution and provides a rich repository of historical events that the text draws on. He claims that the text is both a fantasy and provides a renewed historical tradition in the Benjaminian revolutionary style. Williams goes some way towards making the necessary links between Miéville and post-1999, post-Seattle radical politics – something that is alluded to by others but not drawn out. His basic argument is that Miéville's fiction renders 'material/immaterial abnatural resources [...] visible and comprehensible'. Abnatural resources are 'fantastic extensions of actual cultural practices which reveal shared or communal resources which are not instrumental to capitalism'. This otherwise rich essay suffers a little from a lack of clarity (or concreteness).

It tries to propose something complex and just falls short of the conceptual clarity required to make it startling. Too many examples are given that don't quite mesh, and the core concept never quite resolves into a sharp tool, but the goal is a difficult one, and there is certainly promise of better things to come.

The other chapters approach Miéville in different ways. Raphael Zähringer thinks about maps and mapmaking in *Perdido Street Station* (2000). Claiming that maps should be objects of lust and power, he goes on to argue that those in *Perdido* are not. The positional claims that orient the argument feel thin which in turn makes the argument less convincing. It is a fascinating subject, but the theoretical support on cartography seems a little narrow, and given that maps form such a key part of *Iron Council* and *The Scar*, the reader is left wondering why these were not chosen for exploration rather than the relatively slim pickings of *Perdido*. Joe Sutcliff Sanders gives a clear argument for the importance of Miéville's up-ending of the traditions of children's fantasy in *UnLunDun* (2007), particularly his rejection of the child's need to 'give up' the magical world at the end of the narrative. Paul March-Russell makes an authoritative examination of the trope of invisibility in both Miéville and Christopher Priest. He draws in the history of the trope, looks at the specificity of it in *The City & The City* (2009) and Priest's *The Glamour* (1984) and concludes that 'although both writers demystify invisibility in order to present it as either a natural or a learnt condition to which the individual has to be socialized, Priest emphasizes the subjective experience of his characters whereas Miéville foregrounds their objective social reality – albeit one that is irrevocably split.'

Ben de Bruyn makes an interesting argument for the importance of the rise of institutionalized creative writing programmes to Miéville's work, teasing out with a number of strong examples the critiques of institutionalized creativity that run through it. This is followed by another unusual angle – Matthew Sangster dabbling in Goodreads data to tell us about the audience reading patterns and generic expectations of fantasy trilogies. And this is where the strength of the piece lies – it does not tell us anything much about Miéville's work, other than it confounds these expectations, which one might have assumed, but it's good to have broader evidence. Finally out of the essays proper we have Anthony F. Lang, Jr., placing in dialogue Miéville's legal theory and the way the law plays out in his fiction. While the political and legal theory contained herein is eloquent and authoritative – as one would expect from the author – when it comes to reading the literary texts as models, they are rather obscured by the weight of argument they are made to bear – an unevenness captured by the statement of intent: 'I turn to [Miéville's] fiction to find out whether or not international law can be made to work'. One can't help but question the usefulness of such an investigation.

The book closes with a playful contribution from Roger Luckhurst – an assemblage of scattered quotations from numerous sources, framed as a lost (and 'Weird') konvolut from Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. It's a fun thing to end

on, and Luckhurst's intellectual resources make it interesting. The best part for this reviewer are the seven theses on the Weird that close the konvolut – short and clear insights that distil Luckhurst's considerable knowledge of the genre, and which stretch far beyond Miéville's work while also implicating him – a dense and useful section.

To close, I'd like to consider what these texts tell us about the current state of Miéville (and to an extent, fantastic) criticism. The first thing that emerges from Freedman's book, and the majority of the edited collection, is that everyone seems to be working with an axiomatic assumption that turns out to undergird, without real efforts at substantiation, almost every contribution. That axiom is: that realism is inadequate to the task of capturing or representing contemporary capitalist reality, and that the fantastic is more up to the job (and interestingly, we have pretty decisively moved from lauding the science-fictional to lauding fantasy as a mode). It's important to note that this argument owes its current cachet to a 2002 special issue of *Historical Materialism*, dedicated to the radical potential of fantasy, and co-edited by Miéville. In his introduction, Miéville claims that "real" life under capitalism is a *fantasy* and as such fantasy is an artistic mode that 'mimics the "absurdity" of capitalist modernity' and can offer valuable insights into the 'peculiar nature of modern social reality and subjectivity'. In the same issue, Mark Bould remarks that 'it is the very fantasy of fantasy as a mode that [...] gives it space for a hard-headed critical consciousness of capitalist subjectivity'. This issue, appearing at the start of Miéville's career as an author, was very influential on the scholarly field, and its arguments were cemented by, among other things, the essay collection *Red Planets* also co-edited by Bould and Miéville. Miéville's own argument – in tandem with Bould's contributions – is now the platform from which Miéville's fiction is judged. This is not necessarily an issue; this reviewer certainly has a lot of sympathy for the adopted stance. But when the theoretical position advanced by the author is then used as an axiomatic basis upon which to valorize the fictional work of that same author, perhaps it is appropriate to take some time to dwell on the ramifications.

Miéville is an intellectual and creative force to be reckoned with, and one way of reading the intellectual trend here is that he is creating both the fiction and the stance from which that fiction is then to be judged (and of course, his work cannot help but be the epitome or apotheosis of that perspective). Should we not take the time to consider that, in some important sense, this represents a critical *failure*? Miéville's fiction and his critical stance are both part of the same argument. On the contrary, critical work should be able to tell you something about the text that moves beyond it, that demonstrates its limits and adds to it. Miéville's own argument about the ideological content of fantastic fiction should here be turned back upon his own output – he is *doing things to the world with words*. There is bountiful charismatic authority invested in him, and a powerful cognitive effect that draws its strength from the tight marriage of his fictional and non-fiction work. In order to properly appreciate or criticize what he is doing,

surely we need to find a way to think about it that escapes or at least questions the parameters with which the author himself provides us?

For example, I'll propose one such lacuna that emerges from reading these critical texts. Just as many of the arguments here share the same assumptions, many of them also draw from a remarkably similar pool of examples from Miéville's fiction to evidence them. One glaring omission, though, is that of the Construct Council from *Perdido*. It is important because the valorization of Miéville often concerns the 'reality' of his fantasy, particularly in comparison to Tolkienesque fantasy. But just as Tolkien's Middle-Earth returns to an imaginary pre-industrial period of heroic nobility and honour, and the present as such rears its head only refracted through the horror of Sauron and the labouring Orcs, so Miéville's key Marxist, revolutionary Bas Lag trilogy is one that does not or cannot contain the present reality of the post-digital revolution. The threat that the Construct Council presents is that of the digital, and it emerges only to be quashed. Miéville's world-building occurs in a more-or-less nineteenth century setting, before the information age, the sharp end of globalization and the apparently hopeless present with its specific brand of effervescent but short-lived radical politics. While the pre-industrial imaginary provided the room for fantasy in the mid-twentieth century, it would seem that, after the enormous changes wrought by the digital revolution, industrial capitalism is now capable of being a ground for nostalgia and narratives of a simpler age – narratives that work fine in that setting, but would be *made unreal* under a genuinely modern digital logic. The thrust of this all-too-brief proposal is that Miéville is not as 'realistic' as everyone claims, and that in fact, we need to work harder to distinguish the difference between something that is 'realistic', no matter how fantastic, and something that is rather the close approximation and narrative animation of a critical epistemology that might be palatable to us as critics, but which nonetheless is lacking in the terms we are valorising it. Can we detect a feedback loop here which needs escaping in order to regain a truly useful critical stance? This work will likely become ever-more important the more that the Miéville phenomenon continues to grow. The two texts here are valuable pieces of scholarship: Freedman in particular has given us much to learn from, and many of the collected essays add worthwhile knowledge to that firm foundation, but let us not grow lazy heaping praise on those who agree with us.

Maria Lassnig, Tate Liverpool, 18 May – 18 September 2016

Reviewed by Paul March-Russell (University of Kent)

Somewhat overshadowed by the *Francis Bacon: Invisible Rooms* exhibition, with which it has been jointly curated, this retrospective of the Austrian painter and filmmaker is the first to be held in the UK. Born in 1919, Lassnig came to prominence during the 1950s after visiting Paris where she first encountered the work of abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock. Lassnig developed her own expressionistic style in which she turned the human form into planes of oil paint, typically applied with a palette knife. Whilst, on the one hand, these experiments signal her first articulation of what she termed 'body sensation' (the shifting realisation of the human body in relation to its external environment), on the other hand, her description of these planes as 'shields' and 'cylinders' indicate both an arming and a technologisation of the body.

Moving between these two exhibitions, it soon becomes clear as to why Tate Liverpool has chosen to display Bacon and Lassnig alongside one another. Both are superb – and superbly frightening – artists of the human body, often captured in moments of distress. They express complementary trajectories in how the body was figured after the technological horrors of World War Two. Yet, whereas the breakthrough in Bacon's work, beginning with his first masterpiece *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), displayed here, has been attributed to his experience of the Blitz, the influence of the War on Lassnig's work is less clear. Unlike Bacon, she spent the war years as an art student in Vienna. Nevertheless, she displays a fine sense of encroaching menace in terms of how the human body is 'enframed' (to use Martin Heidegger's concept) by the technological and commercial practices of the outside world. Furthermore, unlike Bacon, Lassnig remained suspicious of photography as a resource to the painter and, although she later experimented with film and animation, mechanical forms of artistic reproduction retain an ambivalent presence in her work; intimations of a greater scepticism with the technological society as a whole.

Returning to Paris in 1961, Lassnig not only experimented with what she called *Strichbilder* (line paintings), she also developed an embryonic feminist consciousness. Whereas Bacon tended to use his friends and lovers as his subjects, Lassnig's perennial subject was herself. Whilst inserting herself into a tradition of self-portraiture, Lassnig also prefigured the work of artists such as Tracy Emin and Cindy Sherman in which the roles of autobiography and fiction frequently merge. Unlike her female successors, however, Lassnig's concern remained the porous relationship between the human body and its environment, a concern now accentuated by the unequal power relations between men and women. In *Armchair Self-Portrait I* (1963), the sitter and the chair become one; in *Kitchen Bride* (1988), the young bride is transmogrified into a cheese grater.

Lassnig's domestic spaces do not become, as in Bacon's work, the stage for existential threat; instead, they act as zones, as for example in Pamela Zoline's celebrated New Wave text, 'The Heat Death of the Universe' (1967), in which the psychological and physical realities of women's lives are jeopardised by the constant interchange of patriarchal relations.

Lassnig's cyborg creations are, therefore, quite unlike the emancipatory bodies of theorists such as Donna Haraway. Moving to New York in 1968, Lassnig became actively involved in feminist collectives and developed a kind of neo-realism, as in *Double Self-Portrait with Camera* (1974), which sought both to critique and to inoculate itself against the technologies of the spectacular society. At the same time, she played with animated films such as *Selfportrait* (1971), in which the human face is supplanted with recording devices (see below) and transmission leads loop out between the female subject and her



lover.

Returning to Austria in 1980, Lassnig not only continued to question the relationship between the authenticity of bodily sensation and the inauthenticity of its representation in art, she also pursued her use of the cyborg as a critique of militarised patriarchy. Whilst Jean Baudrillard was opining on the First Gulf War as the ultimate realisation of the spectacular society, the sinking of

objective truth into the mire of ‘the desert of the real’ (so beloved by the creators of *The Matrix*), Lassnig’s response to the War and its media coverage was to re-imagine herself as the warhead of a missile. In explicitly titled works such as *Small Science Fiction Self-Portrait* (1995), Lassnig adorned her now-aging face and body with a pair of virtual reality goggles; her gaze now transfixed and directed away from the spectator. The appeals of cyberpunk and transhumanism to divorce the mind from the body are given horrific treatment in such paintings as *Lady with Brain* (c. 1990) with the result that Lassnig’s critique – the end-product of forty years of innovation – should be taken into serious account within the posthuman debate.

Visitors to the Lassnig retrospective should not only compare the works with those of Bacon but also exhibits by Richard Hamilton, Pierre Huyghe, Liliane Lijn, Eduardo Paolozzi and Joe Tilson as part of Liverpool Tate’s semi-permanent exhibition, *Constellations*.

Conference Reports

Fictional Maps, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, 18-21 January 2016

Reviewed by Krzysztof M. Maj (Facta Fictia Research Centre/Jagiellonian University, Kraków)

The conference, organised by the Facta Ficta Research Centre in Kraków in cooperation with the Scientific Information Centre and Academic Library in Katowice, took as its guiding principle Stefan Ekman's observation, in *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings* (2013), that there is a clear association between fictional map-making and fantasy world-building, such that the map has become a hallmark for 'world-centred' fantastic fiction. But the conference did not refer to fantasy and sf studies alone. An international group of delegates not only from major Polish universities in Kraków, Warszawa, Lublin Wrocław and Katowice but also from Sweden, China, Canada, Japan, Great Britain, the US, Italy and Brazil, contributed a diverse array of topics, ranging from speculative realism, eco-criticism and postmodernism to utopian, fantasy, science or counterfactual fiction, and world-building studies. (The full list of topics can be found at <https://fictionalmapsdotorg.wordpress.com/programme/>.) Even more importantly, all those scholars successfully found a common ground – and even managed to map it, drawing at the end of the conference a transfictional map that bridged not only most of the addressed topics but also all those distant places from where they came (see below).

There were three aspects to the research presented. Firstly, delegates



elaborated on the functions and forms of maps in science fiction, fantasy and video games, raising questions about the roles of verisimilitude, mimesis, immersion and illusion. Ekman, in his keynote address, delivered a provocative interpretation of J.R.R. Tolkien's maps for Middle-Earth not, as it is commonly claimed, as world-centred but story-centred narrative devices that do not fill most of the blank spaces on the map of Arda. These philosophical and narratological observations were developed by Michał Kłosiński who offered a postcolonial reading of the act of mapping in video games with reference to Jean Baudrillard's thesis on how residues of a map compromise the dichotomy of an original territory and its secondary representation. Grzegorz Czemiel's inspiring talk used Levi R. Bryant's model of 'geophilosophy', derived from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to present a vision of cartography as 'a mapping of assemblages of machines or worlds' and mapmaking as concurrent not only with world-building but also eco-poetics, or home-making (from the Greek *oikos* meaning 'home' and *poiesis* as 'making').

Philosophical similarities between mapmaking and world-building also underlined Jennifer Marquard's sociological project that took a real-world problem, mapped it onto an imaginary place, and then designed a utopian community to resolve that problem. In exploring queer territories in sf, Jędrzej Burszta wondered whether they exist exclusively in alternate, other-worldly spaces or if they occupy those white spaces on the maps of actual worlds, obscured by the dominant heterosexist discourse. This theme was also pursued by Anna de Vaul in her reading of unmapped and unmappable spaces in postcolonial literature as vehicles to discuss moral, ethical, socio-cultural and psychological dilemmas. All five presentations launched vivid discussions about the role of fictional maps in representing not only coherent storyworlds but also this very lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) that we all live in or a utopian one that we desire to inhabit.

The second theme was the history, theory and practice of world-building. Krzysztof Maj was predominantly interested in the way fictional maps interact with the process of reading, encouraging readers to either follow the trail left on the map by others or to wander around the map and explore the imaginary world. Marcin Niemojewski read Tolkien's literary and cartographic output not only as a hallmark of the finest and most ambitious world-building but also as an example of how fantasy literature can preserve real-world values, virtues and beliefs. Literary world-building and mapmaking practice also featured in the papers delivered by Magdalena Wąsowicz, Mateusz Myślicki, Szymon Kukulak and Jessica Miller who showed how, respectively, counterfactual, post-apocalyptic and epic fantasy fiction utilise maps for enhancing the credibility and consistency of either historical or futuristic settings. These problems were addressed with regards to more practical applications of world-building in a series of academic presentations on video games (Meirion Jordan, Miłosz Markocki, Paweł Gąska, Krzysztof Jański), but also a video game designer from

Vesuvius Media Ltd., Dimitrios Xanthakis, who offered a behind-the-scenes look at the actual processes of level design and gameworld mapping. A practical application of mapmaking proved to be a recurring theme in talks by Thomas Scott Dixon, who spoke about the importance of map as a narrative device in his own world-building project, and Sara Luchetta who has traversed a plethora of mapmaking projects on the web to prove the relevance of maps in our fluent and disseminated convergence culture.

Finally, a number of important case studies were delivered, showing that fictional mapmaking cannot be limited to imaginary world-building in fantasy, science fiction or video games since it is a widespread narrative phenomenon used particularly in (so-called) multimodal literature. Anna Lucia Beck showed how poetry can be shaped into a meaningful, polysemic cartography. Miyuki Yamada, in a virtual presentation streamed from Tokyo, analysed Tomás Eloy Martínez' novels, *The Tango Singer* and *Purgatory*, with reference to mapmaking as a metaphor of literary creation, while Wiktoria Wojtyra went further still in her in-depth study on the work of trauma in W.G. Sebald. The idea of mapping the Derridean work of mourning also resonated in Dagmara Staga's talk on the testimonies of child refugees and in Katarzyna Skulimowska's presentation on Abe Kōbō's anti-detective novel *Moetsukita Chizu* ('A Burned Map'). Finally, the metaphor of mapping served Adam Prokop well in describing the storyworld of Dante's *Paradiso* and Maja Starakiewicz in seeking fascinating representations of maps in paintings such as Edward Quin's *At the Death of Constantine* (1830).

Fictional Maps was a unique event, not only due to addressing a rarely analysed though attractive topic, but primarily to the enthusiastic and passionate response from the delegates. The conference showed the importance of encouraging multidisciplinary approaches to the study of how fictional worlds shape our cultural imagination.

Philip K. Dick and the Counterculture, Birmingham City University, 23 April 2016

Reviewed by Thomas Knowles and Charlotte Newman (Birmingham City University)

This was the fifth Philip K. Dick Day in a series of events first established by Prof John Goodridge of Nottingham Trent University. In keeping with PKD Days past, 'Philip K. Dick and the Counterculture' was an interdisciplinary affair and welcomed contributions from scholars, creative practitioners, postgraduates and students. It included a keynote, nine presentations across three panels, and a discussion panel led by BCU's science fiction students on *The Man in the High Castle*. Delegates came from across the UK and from as far afield as Bologna and Rome, and by video-link from New York and California. Between panels delegates were invited to browse Goodridge's substantial collection of

Philip K. Dick publications, manuscripts and ephemera.

In the opening address, Knowles and Newman drew attention to the suitably countercultural nature of gathering to discuss the work of an American science fiction author on the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and on St George's Day too. The keynote presentation, 'Vinyl and Tapes: P.K. Dick and the Reproduction of Sound', was given by Umberto Rossi who began his 45-minute talk by comparing its length to one side of an LP, and so proceeded to a fascinating account of Dick's interest in the technical aspects and philosophical implications of sound recording technology. Using popular music and its reproduction as a way into an exploration of the classic Dickian opposition of original versus copy, authentic versus inauthentic, Rossi argued for a dialectical relationship between the commodified nature of sound recordings and the potentially redemptive power of popular music. Neglected and hitherto seemingly incidental scenes and characters from novels such as *Radio Free Albemuth* and *The Transformation of Timothy Archer* were brought to life through a renewed appreciation for their structural import to Dick's thinking about culture. The ensuing discussion picked up on the political uses of music in rallies, in presidential campaigns, and on Dick's extensive references to songs and musicians, both popular and esoteric. A real sense of music as a form simultaneously available for both *détournement* and recuperation emerged from this session.

The first panel included Pellham Carter and Mattia Petricola. Carter's paper, 'A Maze of Death: Implications for CyberPsychology and Virtual Worlds', drew upon his work as a psychologist in order to diagnose the personality traits of characters in Dick's *A Maze of Death*, reading in their various psychopathological responses to virtual worlds a prefiguring of models of behaviour observable in online communities and groups such as 4chan. Again, the problematic of authentic/inauthentic seemed to underlie the interpenetration of virtual and 'real' worlds, both in Carter's contemporary research and in Dick's novel. Petricola's paper, 'An Advertisement for the Undead: Watching Television in *Ubik*', moved proceedings decisively in the direction of visual representation, an orientation that was to prevail for much of the day. Drawing upon the work of Jeffrey Sconce, Petricola further interrogated the separation between representation and reality with a complex reading of *Ubik*, a novel in which the distinction between screen and world is unsettlingly porous, and in which the ghostly flicker of the small screen speaks to our understanding of afterlives.

Petricola's assertions proved excellent preparation for the second panel, which featured papers by Paul Levinson and Souvik Mukherjee, and which began with a screening of *FilmBites* by Steven Chamberlain. This short film shot on sellotape contained ruminations on the interplay of film and reality – of the recorded image to that of its original – and presented a collage-infused documentary style with a voiceover narration that sometimes coincided with the images on screen. This was a thread picked up by Levinson as he discoursed on the uncanny representations of a Nazi-controlled America in Amazon's serial

adaptation of *The Man in the High Castle*. For Levinson, the shock of seeing the Statue of Liberty giving the Nazi salute was numbered amongst the superior representational effects available to the medium of film, something which led him to go against his own theory of the ‘first love syndrome’ and to prefer Amazon’s adaptation to the original novel. Underlying this discussion of alternative narratives was an appreciation for the rewriting which the counternarrative *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* performs within the novel, and these countercultural and counterhistorical movements were explored further in the student discussion panel that closed the day. Mukherjee’s talk, ‘Philip K. Dick’s Videogames: Seeking Realities that Sometimes Work Out’, took the audience on a tour of a kaleidoscopic array of visual media, critical theory, religion and philosophy. Mukherjee’s demonstration of the recent computer game, *Californium*, informed by Dick’s life and work, suggested intriguing commonalities between Buddhist, Benjaminian and Dickian understandings of alternative histories and narratives, and brought home the compelling correlatives between the videogame medium and subjectively willed alterities.

The creative panel featured readings of poetry from Derek Littlewood and Charlotte Newman, as well as prose fiction from novelist David Wake (New Street Authors) and writer D.B. Mortimer. Littlewood began the session with a specially drafted poem for this conference entitled ‘Kindred’. The poem celebrated the tangential whimsy of Dick’s work and commented upon the idea of replicants and the cornucopia of fruit and flesh. Littlewood explored this idea further in other poems inspired by Dick and science fiction that included astral exploration of dogs and images of ruin. Mortimer followed with a reading of an original short story, ‘The Water Lily Boy’, inspired by Dick and J.G. Ballard that told the tale of the pseudo-human spawn of a gargantuan water lily and a field biologist situated in the Amazon rainforest. The story offered an eco-oriented perspective on identity and transformation, two alienating themes that are featured prevalently in Dick’s own work, as well as the sexual potency of two incompatible beings. The organic and mortal motifs were contrasted with Newman’s poem, entitled ‘Kindred VALIS’, a collage constructed with direct phrases from Dick’s novel. Newman encouraged the audience to mumble ‘the Empire never ended’ on cue, to create an eerie atmosphere with the low groan of a mindless chant. Wake completed the panel with a short excerpt from his novel *I-Phone*, a darkly comic and destructive piece that foresees the inanimate revolution of a pugnacious technology. It discovered the transcendent in the quotidian, and spoke to the Dickian concern for humanity in the non-human, as something equally precious but distinct. It was noted by the panel that Dick’s work had influenced all in various manners, and sometimes insidiously through popular dissemination, but that they also felt themselves to be writing in reply or opposition to Dick in certain ways.

In the final panel, Goodridge chaired a discussion which featured Lori Blackwell and Jordan-Elliot Rainsford, both of whom are studying science

fiction in the final year of their undergraduate degree at BCU. It was heartening to see young scholars fielding questions from the delegates and the audience, and responding thoughtfully to the prevalent and emergent themes of the day. Language was central to Blackwell and Rainsford's take on the cultural transference and countercultural play of *The Man in the High Castle*, and the ways in which it can structure thought and perception provided the impetus for an in-depth discussion of the character Childan's ambivalent relationship to American and Japanese culture in the novel.

After the success of this year's PKD Day, Knowles and Newman plan to issue a cfp for further contributions to a collection or special issue based upon the proceedings. They very much look forward to PKD Day 2017 which will take place on the penultimate Saturday next April.

CRSF / SFRA 2016, University of Liverpool, 27-30 June 2016

Reviewed by Paul March-Russell (University of Kent)

The annual conference of the Science Fiction Research Association returned to the UK for the first time since 2002. US delegates, who thought they might have been leaving behind them the dystopian vision of a Trump presidency, arrived in the wake of the EU referendum, quickly followed by England's elimination from Euro 2016. A state of delirium pervaded the proceedings that served to heighten the themes of social, economic and environmental fragility that dominated the papers. Co-organised by Chris Pak and Will Slocum, SFRA 2016 was held jointly with the sixth annual postgraduate conference held at Liverpool, Current Research in Speculative Fiction (CRSF), which acted as an aperitif to the main course. Although reports and storyfied versions can be found via their respective websites, for the purposes of this report, I shall trace some common threads across the four days.

CRSF began with Caroline Edwards' keynote on what she termed 'eco-eschatological time' in recent post-apocalyptic fiction. Edwards took the Book of Revelations as her starting-point and, in particular, its vision of the New Jerusalem as the template for utopian societies that seek to transcend the natural cycle of birth, growth and decay. Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921) offers an influential, secular model of the New Jerusalem that dissolves into dystopia, partially because of the separation between man-made culture and the natural world, confined beyond the city's Green Wall. By contrast, Edwards argued, post-apocalyptic novels such as Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004) and Emily St John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) seek to recapture the aesthetic beauty of nature in ways that resemble the political scientist Vincent Geoghegan's proposal of a utopia without humans. With reference to the work of Ernst Bloch, Edwards argued for a synthesis between eco-criticism and eschatological narratives that could do valuable political work in reconsidering the relationship

between humanity and the natural environment.

As if in a mirror-image to Edwards' talk, Andrew Milner's keynote to SFRA argued that the template for the recent spate of climate change fictions should not be the Book of Revelations but the Biblical story of the Flood. Instead of exploring the tensions, as in Edwards' talk, between the New Jerusalem and the natural world, Milner's project was to find a climate change novel that could do the same rallying work as Neville Shute's *On the Beach* (1957) had done for the campaign for nuclear disarmament. As I have noted before (in *Foundation* 121), Milner offers a useful taxonomy for analysing the development of world science fiction but – as John Rieder also suggested in what turned out to be his one-person panel – its basis in the work of Franco Moretti tends towards passive description rather than critical intervention. It was unfortunate then, having gone meticulously through the various factors that can contribute to a novel's popular and critical success, that Milner's three candidates (none of them, in his mind, wholly successful) were all white, heterosexual, male writers – Kim Stanley Robinson, Frank Schätzing and George Turner – thereby replicating the hegemony that, arguably, is a causal factor in the socio-economic determinants for climate change. Publication, however, of Milner's database may offset this impression but it is worth nominating here a fourth candidate: Emmi Itäranta's *Memory of Water* (2014). Written simultaneously in English and Finnish, and published by a non-genre press (HarperCollins), it has been translated into several languages – including French – and has won two prizes in Finland and been shortlisted for several more, again both genre and non-genre. If Robinson overdoes on the scientific detail in the *Science in the Capital* trilogy, *Memory of Water* wears its research lightly but Itäranta has also been notable in giving school talks on the science behind the novel.

And so, as if now in a hall of mirrors, Joan Haran's final-day keynote appeared to respond to both Edwards and Milner. Instead of either sublime contemplation or taxonomic research, Haran explicitly called for activism, seeing in sf academics a community that cuts across the institutional frameworks of the university and reaches out to wider public spaces. Sf academics are ideally placed, in Haran's view, to take a lead by informing public debates on climate change and genetic research. Haran took as her inspiration a number of sources, in particular, Starhawk's neo-pagan/eco-feminist novel, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993), and the recent Kickstarter campaign to fund a film adaptation. Although easily dismissed as 'hippy-dippy', 'tree-hugging', etc., Haran's point here was to isolate the conversion of a theory into a form of praxis; we might not agree with the surface trappings of the ideology but it nevertheless suggested a model for activism. Haran looked at other collaborative ventures such as the James M. Tiptree Award, WisCon and the anthology, *Octavia's Brood* (2015) as other possible examples of activism but concluded with the suggestive notion that such enterprises will also entail a new form of love as social relation. The evocation of Jacques Derrida's concept of *aimance* was left tantalisingly unexplored but the

kinds of participation that Haran was calling for would surely entail a practical working-out of what Derrida describes in his *Politics of Friendship* (1997), in stark contrast to the more commonplace, melancholic hauntologies of Derrida's so-called political turn.

Climate change, feminism and literary theory, then, were major areas from the four days. I was fortunate to chair a panel on climate fiction with papers from Gabrielle Bunn, David M. Higgins and Selena Middleton. Bunn offered a solid comparative analysis of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) and J.G. Ballard's neglected *The Wind from Nowhere* (1962) although perhaps over-relied on Brian Aldiss' attribution of the 'cosy catastrophe'. (Despite Bill Masen's Churchillian rhetoric, Wyndham closes his novel on a very open-ended note.) Middleton nicely positioned Tiptree's 'A Momentary Taste of Being' (1975) and Molly Gloss' *The Dazzle of Day* (1997) in relation to the Anthropocene, a concept that Higgins took up more fully in his exploration of Warren Ellis and Jason Howard's *Trees* (2014-) as a reverse colonization narrative or slow apocalypse. Higgins was sensitive in drawing out both the strengths and weaknesses of the graphic novel series, but in suggesting that Ellis and Howard use the alien invasion as a poetic metaphor for what he termed the 'intractable complexity' of climate change, Higgins also hinted at what ultimately might be its conceptual cul-de-sac. Whilst the trees' resistance to human comprehension signals the complexities of real-world conditions, Ellis and Howard's turn towards cosmic horror signifies their own 'Unhappy Consciousness': the self-realisation that they are unable to communicate to their readers the source of these real-life problems. By contrast, the giant phallus that occurs in Tiptree's story skewers what she saw as the source of environmental destruction – a hypertrophic male sexual order.

Another way into this question was offered by Katherine Bishop at the start of a brilliant panel on 'nature's otherness'. Drawing upon the work of plant scientists, Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola, Bishop argued against the non-identical relationship between humans and plants by proposing a common level of sentience. She then explored these basic similarities through a number of examples from early sf. Andrew Ferguson argued for another kind of comingling by focusing on the 'rock books' of Richard Sharpe Shaver. Although Shaver's obsession for finding patterns in rock formations echoes another famous nervous disorder with tinges of sf, the hypochondria of Daniel Paul Schreber, his apparent madness nevertheless gives the lie to humanity's attempt to sever itself from the geological record (now further insinuated by climate change scientists). This last point was given sharper outline in Gerry Canavan's reading of Clifford D. Simak's *City* (1952) which not only considered the relationship between dog and human in terms of Animal Theory but also related that discussion to the broader scenario of the Anthropocene.

Theoretical approaches were a further feature of the week but they were nicely balanced by an emphasis upon practice. This balancing-act was conveyed

in Andy Sawyer's delightful opening keynote to the SFRA. Taking the hashtag 'weareallJonSnow' (which, is to say, we know nothing) as his watchword, Sawyer concocted a persuasive narrative that placed Liverpool as one of the centres of sf history whilst, at the same time, suggesting that it could all be one of Shaver's exercises in pattern-making. In his own witty way, Sawyer argued for an ever more rigorous use of the archive, a point taken up by the daily excursions for delegates into the SF Foundation Collection and by the 'records of the future' panel that featured, amongst others, archivists Jeremy Brett and J.J. Jacobson. To that end, the more theoretically reflexive papers from the four days (for example, those by Jerry Määttä on time travel and narratology, Jo Lindsay Walton's reclamation of Brecht and theatrical performance for an understanding of cognitive estrangement, and Rieder's analysis of sf in terms of genre theory and mass culture) were marked by a rigorous attention to the text, its construction and historical context. At the same time, theories of pedagogy were extended in Tiffani Angus' paper to the structure of creative writing groups whilst practical advice was also offered on the writing and editing sf panels.

This non-formalist approach complemented the papers on feminism and gender studies. Aside from a misguided session on gaslighting, many of these contributions were of high quality, especially from younger academics. Intriguingly, Alex Garland's film *Ex Machina* (2015) appeared as a case study at both CRSF and SFRA. CRSF's second keynote speaker, Pat Wheeler, explored the literary antecedents to Garland's use of the female android (or 'gynoid') including Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Tomorrow's Eve* (1886) and its pornographic rip-off, the anonymously authored *Benumbed Woman* (1899). Meanwhile, Andrew M. Butler on the first day of SFRA examined the mythological bases to the film, mostly the Pygmalion legend but with several allusions to Bluebeard's castle. Both Butler and Wheeler concluded that, on reflection, the film colludes in the misogyny of its male characters. In passing, Josephine Swarbrick gave a very interesting paper on the bodily differences between the two film incarnations of Robocop.

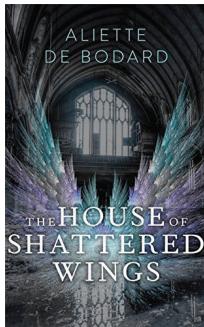
CRSF concluded with a strong panel on female selfhood. Sarah Lohmann pointed out the ethical limits to Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962), contradictions that also undermined the apparent utopianism of the Terran society. Sonya Dyer gave an exuberant overview of multi-media works by contemporary black artists, the most famous of whom is Janelle Monae, whilst also arguing for a new terminology ('aPOCalypso') to supersede the theoretically troublesome concept of Afropfuturism. Lastly, Mylène Branco gave a fine close reading of L.P. Hartley's neglected dystopian novel, *Facial Justice* (1960), highlighting its unresolved tensions with regards to the masking and subjugation of women.

By contrast, the final discussion panel that closed SFRA was a little disappointing. Exploring feminism in relation to Science and Technology Studies, it consisted of three good speakers – Haran, Joan Gordon and Amy

Chambers, a researcher with Newcastle University's Unsettling Scientific Stories project, which also received a panel of its own – but the Q & A petered-out into a discussion of the representation of female characters in sf TV and film. I would have liked to have seen more focus on the panel topic. A brief mention of Virginia Woolf was made but her account of women and education could have been used to explore women's relationship to the professions of science and technology. Equally, Samuel R. Delany's suggestion to Mark Dery, in *Flame Wars* (1993), that the very hardware of techno-science served to alienate African-Americans could have been applied to the discussion, not only to women generally but also, in particular, to women of colour. With so many high-quality papers and panels happening at CRSF and SFRA, only a fraction of which I could attend, this was a missed opportunity on which to finish.

However, that was not quite the end. The conference banquet and SFRA awards ceremony took place in the historical surroundings of The Bluecoat. As reported on the SFRA website, Scott Selisker won the Pioneer Award, Farah Mendlesohn received the Thomas D. Clareson Award, and Mark Bould the Pilgrim Award. Their speeches were heartfelt and passionate; Bould was rewarded with a standing ovation. This was a brilliant occasion with which to close a magnificent week in Liverpool – superb organisation, fascinating papers and a wonderful spirit of collegiality. CRSF will run again next year whilst I hope the SFRA can be persuaded to return to the UK in the very near-future.

Book Reviews



Aliette de Bodard, *The House of Shattered Wings* (Gollancz, 2015, 416 pp, £14.99)

Reviewed by Jeremy Brett (Texas A&M University)

Glory is fleeting, runs the cliché, and Aliette de Bodard's novel plays out that old chestnut on a vividly Gothic scale. Paris in *The House of Shattered Wings* is a sooty, traumatized shell of its former brilliance. De Bodard's powerfully visceral, deeply physical story is set decades after a devastating war (which began in 1914, a fateful year in both our universe and that of the novel) of both magic and more conventional weaponry, which left much of the City of Light (now a city of menacing shadows and easy death) profoundly damaged. Notre Dame is a shattered ruin. The Seine itself has been degraded into a dark waterway polluted with evil magic that brings death to unlucky Parisians. What order there is in the city is centred around several noble Houses, populated and governed by members of the Fallen – angels banished from Heaven and condemned to live among God's more beloved creation, humanity. Peace is tenuous, contingent on the will of the Fallen and their human dependents to avoid another open war. Instead, the various Houses spy, intrigue, and plot in methods reminiscent of those seen in many a historical or high fantasy novel about rival aristocratic families.

Set within this deeply damaged world are several individuals whose lives and fortunes swirl around House Silverspires, the dominant Parisian House, originally founded and headed by Morningstar (yes, *that* Morningstar), the first and greatest of the Fallen. As the story opens, Morningstar has long since vanished and Silverspires is governed in his stead by the Fallen Selene, struggling to thrive in her predecessor's shadow. Among her human dependents are the House alchemist/exile from rival House Hawthorn, Madeleine d'Aubin, and newly-acquired prisoner Philippe. Philippe's backstory is the richest in the novel – he is a Vietnamese drafted by the colonial French government to be shipped to France as a soldier in the Great War (as were, in reality, so many French and British colonials cast into the muddy trenches of World War I), now living in the wreckage of the city that once ruled his nation.

Philippe personifies one of the more interesting threads in the book; that is, the ways in which different cultures live within and amongst each other. De Bodard is perhaps most famous for her Xuya Universe cycle of stories, set in a far future in which a triumphant Imperial China has made it to the far-distant reaches of the galaxy, as has a powerful and independent Vietnamese culture. In *House of Shattered Wings*, de Bodard reinforces the idea of colonial escape (on a less grand scale) while still being quite conscious of the negative and

intensely pervasive effects of imperialism. Philippe is in Paris because colonial masters brought him there, and de Bodard notes that prior to the War, the Fallen had spread out from the west and carried their own particular magical systems to other nations, destroying or marginalizing the native pantheons. In an online essay from 2015, she writes of colonial systems that ‘when push comes to shove [...] when all of this complex equilibrium finally disintegrates – well, it’s going to be messy. There will be blood. There will be violence. There will be massacres and purges’. In the world of the novel, there is, and has been, all of that, due to the collapse of the Houses and their foreign dominance. Philippe himself is a formal Immortal and subject of the Jade Emperor (in traditional Chinese religion the highest deity), cast out years before from the Emperor’s court and forced to continue his interrupted life as a human being. His native culture has been suppressed, yet remnants of it cling to survival far from its eastern home – Philippe discovers in his lowest moment of pain and despair that there is an Immortal kingdom deep under the waters of the Seine, where his traditional theology, magical practices and customs still hold sway. Yet even here, there is a lasting legacy of damage – skin sloughs off the faces of the figures who reside there, and the structures are ageing and weakening: ‘They were under the Seine; and like the Seine they were tarred with the pollution of the Great War, the cancer that had penetrated everything in the city.’

The horrors that war and its aftermath bring arise both from the chaos that conflict inevitably produces – the muddle and confusion and unforeseen consequences of the clashing of armies – and from the deliberate decisions made by individuals. One of the overarching themes that concerns de Bodard is the power and influence of consequences and the legacies that stem from those individual decisions. The Great War began because rival Houses failed to reach a rapprochement during a conclave, and the result was continent-wide destruction. Governments and Houses expanded the War to engulf their colonial empires, which eventually leads to Philippe’s arrival in Paris. Scavenging inside the ruined Grands Magasins, Philippe makes a fateful decision involving a newly-found Fallen that intimately enmeshes him in the life of House Silverspires. And every character in the novel lives with the consequences of the original decision made by Morningstar to rebel against God, an instance of free will echoed again and again as Fallen continue to descend to Earth. Each Fallen lives with the result of his or her individual choice: ‘she [Madeleine] knew what it was now, what Fallen carried in their heart, the unbearable knowledge that there was no absolution that would wash away the taint of what they had done; nothing that would reopen the pathways to Heaven and let them immerse themselves in the Glory of God’. The Fallen choose to rebel, and both they and the world must live with the bloody results.

In a novel filled with darkness and sorrow, the most truly disturbing aspect de Bodard presents is the inevitable objectification of people due to war as well as the power differentials that exist between classes. The revenge plot at the

centre of the novel derives from anger driven by Fallen treatment of human beings as disposable and tradeable assets by, as de Bodard puts it, 'taking students' [that is, selected human dependents chosen by Fallen for special magical instruction] 'like commodities; bewitching them and sending them to slaughter'. Philippe notes at one point, 'Houses all think lives are cheap.' It is the upper classes that drive people to murder each other and occupy another's territory like pieces on a chessboard, that start wars, and that continue to play God with the world long after the wars end.

The system of dehumanization works up as well as down, however. Fallen, as beings constructed of magic and mystical energy, are prey to humans (as well as other Fallen) who harvest their bodies as strategic resources. Dead Fallen may have their flesh removed and preserved, their blood saved, and their breath captured and bottled, all to be utilized as sources of great power. Fallen bones, by House rule, must be destroyed to keep them from being made into 'angel essence', a highly addictive mystical narcotic to which many, including the alchemist Madeleine, are enslaved. New Fallen are prey to capture and harvesting by human street gangs and criminals like (at the novel's outset) Philippe, whose attempt to butcher the newborn Isabelle results not only in his capture by House Silverspires but the formation of an intimate mystical bond with Isabelle that shapes events to come. Sadly, says de Bodard, the cycle of transforming 'others' into the 'Other' is not restricted to a single class or group. It is a hard truth, on grand display in this alternative Gothic setting, but applying equally to our own strife-torn century.

With *The House of Shattered Wings*, de Bodard has given us a wonderfully rich narrative, one filled with lush description of a deeply damaged society on which the deliberate horrors of history weigh heavily. She is both singular and imaginative in her world-building, and the novel rests within the finest sf tradition of viewing some of our great and seemingly intractable human problems through a fantastical lens.



Carolyn Ives Gilman, *Dark Orbit* (Tor, 2015, 304 pp, £17.99)

Reviewed by Maia Clery

To what extent does our attachment to particular ways of seeing limit our perception of the world around us? This is one of the central questions roused in Carolyn Ives Gilman's latest novel set in her Twenty Planets civilization. A group of researchers, all with different perspectives on how information should be collected, board the significantly named spaceship *Escher* for the equally symbolic planet Iris in order to assess its habitability. Some are attempting to combine scientific and

religious thought, some study the universe as a system, while others attempt to divide it into identifiable parts. One crew member, Thora Lassiter, describes herself as a 'Sensualist' and observes worlds through her own perceptions, a practice labelled as spirituality rather than research by the more traditional scientists among the crew. She explains: 'The hypothesis I am testing is that the human mind is sensitive to a wider spectrum than we suspect. It senses things we have never studied, whose origins we are unsure of, and whose meanings we don't know.' The crew are attached to their individual methods and, with the exception of Lassiter, suspicious of, if not derogatory about different ways of seeing and knowing from their own. It is unsurprising then, that on their first expedition to Iris, it is Thora who finds herself separated from the landing party and making first contact with the inhabitants.

The colonization of other planets to parallel the real-life colonization of indigenous peoples is a common trope in science fiction which permits a discussion of the cultural and ethical issues that arise when two societies meet, without them being stifled by historical conflict. Gilman, who works for the National Museum of the American Indian, states online in *Locus* (2015): '[This setting] allows me to write about other cultures without having to navigate around the shoals that surround the real ones.' To the human researchers, the people of Torobe appear to be blind. Because the scientists depend so much on their ability to see, as essential to their perception of the universe, they presume the native people to be disabled, or lacking. While Thora learns about the Torobe people by learning how to live in their culture, the security team shoot and capture the first inhabitant they meet – Moth. Lassiter quickly learns that though the Torobes live underground in complete darkness, they are possessed of other perceptive skills; they not only function perfectly well without light, the absence of which heightens their other senses, but they are also capable of accessing a kind of universal consciousness, 'The Ground', which allows them to travel through time and space via other people's thoughts of them.

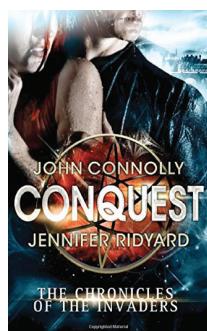
Escher's crew does not have this skill, known as 'beminding'. They travel via coded light-beam, which means that as they go further from home, years pass, their friends and family age, and their societies change dramatically. This method requires complex machines that can, and do, break down. Meanwhile, the more spiritual Torobes' style of teleportation is only possible when nobody is watching. The observer effect here is to stop the process altogether. The scientists deny themselves this method of transportation with their insistence that seeing is believing, and their disbelief in anything that cannot be measured. They fail to perceive what they have to learn from the Torobes and instead assume the dominant position of teaching Moth to see, in a move that echoes the civilizing mission of colonial empires.

In the humans seeking to retrain Moth, Gilman supplies an interesting thought experiment. Moth has the ability to see but doesn't know *how* to see. Having lived in darkness all her life, it has never been necessary to learn.

Likewise, the crew of the *Escher*, having seen all their lives, have never had cause to think about how we visually distinguish one thing from another. When exposed to the light, the Torobes have no ability to exclude unnecessary visual information and the effect is overwhelming. To have such different experiences of the world around them, the scientists realize that they are excluding more of reality than they thought, and are failing to see the universe as it truly is, calling into question their own perception and their confidence in their own objectivity.

Gilman demonstrates that our understanding of different cultures is limited, in that we can only make sense of them through the knowledge we already possess: 'We look at the alien and see only ourselves.' Even in self-consciously wanting to avoid this colonialism, as Gilman clearly does, we cannot fail to appropriate an alien story into our own language and therefore influence its meaning through the very act of trying to understand it. Beminding further emphasizes this idea. Torobes can be transported to places where somebody is thinking about them, but they will only appear as they were judged to be by the thinker. The traveller takes the form of that person's opinion of who they are. This suggests that the identities of people and therefore societies are constructed by others rather than innate – that we only see what we want to see.

It seems that Gilman, like her scientists on the *Escher*, is attempting to teach her readers how to gain understanding of the subjective experience of people from different cultures, through their own, without overwriting other people's stories. Science fiction is the conduit through which Gilman makes these anthropological discussions more palatable. While it can feel heavy-handed and pedagogical at times, the story is entertaining and readable and it is refreshing to be led through a first-contact space opera by three female protagonists. With *Dark Orbit*, Gilman brings an important sense of epistemological uncertainty back into perspective.



John Connolly and Jennifer Ridyard, *Conquest* (Headline, 2013, 408pp, £7.99)

Reviewed by Emma Filtness (Brunel University London)

Conquest is the first book in a Young Adult trilogy, 'The Chronicles of the Invaders', by John Connolly and his partner, Jennifer Ridyard. The second and third parts, *Empire* and *Dominion*, were published respectively in 2015 and 2016. This first volume introduces us to the tall and beautiful alien Syl Hellais and average human Paul Kerr, both teens on Earth, who become embroiled in a war between alien invaders, known as the Illyri, and human resisters, in this case a collection of angry Scots. Conceived aboard a wormhole-hopping spacecraft traveling between Illyr and Earth, Syl is the first of her kind to be born on Earth,

following a long-planned invasion. She is caught between two cultures, and like many second-generation migrants, longs for a home she has never seen whilst simultaneously striving to belong in a modern version of Edinburgh.

The third-person narrative alternates between Syl and Paul, with a few other perspectives thrown in as the story progresses and sides become inextricably tangled, from badass spy Meia to evil Securitat Sedulus. The first chapter, however, is given over to a massive info-dump which, if on screen, would translate to that tilted yellow font on star-spangled black we are all so familiar with – the *Star Wars* crawl. The discovery of a wormhole, an approaching fleet, years of surveillance and stealthy infiltration, a request to surrender – familiar territory to any sf aficionado reminiscent of Wells and Wyndham and hundreds of novels past. Just as my eyes were beginning to glaze over, the second chapter moves to a more immersive scene that opens in Edinburgh Castle, to Syl in her room, pondering the latest attacks by the humans against the Illyri. This is short-lived, however, with the chapter soon turning to yet more info-dumping, this time giving the context not for the invasion but for an account of the recent unrest resulting from it – human resistance to Illyri rule, originally named the, erm, *Resistance*, who like to bomb Illyri seats of power in Scotland. The next chapter begins with Syl on her birthday, cutting class and sneaking out of the castle disguised as a human in oversized sunglasses and mismatched vintage clothing. Ah, the rebellious female protagonist that any avid reader of YA has come to expect and love, but with a twist – this one isn't human. I was intrigued.

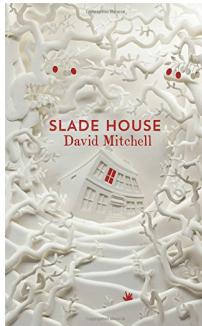
I was also enjoying the nice change offered by the Scottish setting after reading so many similar stories set in cities in the U.S. or, if on home turf, in London. The book's depiction of Edinburgh and the Highlands is one of its strengths; another reason to keep reading. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that the Illyri and humans are not just fighting each other but also themselves. There is threat of civil war between the Illyri, and all kinds of corruption occurring throughout the ranks, with Syl's father pitched against the cruel Corps leader, who is under the thumb of his sinister wife, the Archmage Syrene. The Scots, too, are at loggerheads, the Resistance outmanoeuvred by yet more resisters in the Highlands under the command of the enigmatic Green Man.

The plot is action-packed, and with the alluring female protagonist Syl, bolshy yet aloof best friend Ani, likeable male lead Paul and his younger brother Steven, it seems to have all the right ingredients for a great YA adventure, with the promise of some romance thrown in too. So why, then, was I still struggling at times to keep going? As the narrative progressed, I found myself less and less interested in Syl, and more intrigued by Ani. I couldn't help but think that Ani should have been the protagonist – she speaks her mind, doesn't care what anyone thinks, has a mysterious telepathic gift, and is emotionally sensitive. Syl in comparison, despite getting more coverage, felt flat and boring, almost stagnant, bar one or two developments that are not explored enough to have

the required impact. We are told near the end of the narrative that both girls have changed – but the problem with this is that you can't just *tell* the reader and expect them to believe it. Having waded through near on four hundred pages by this point, readers need to have been sufficiently *shown*. While we can concur that the young people have indeed been through the wringer, the characters lack depth so not as much emotional resonance is achieved as in, say, *The Hunger Games* or *Divergent*, to use two of the better-known examples with female leads.

Meia is also an interesting character who does not get the wordage she is worthy of as well as her nemesis from the Corps, the ruthless Vena, with twin silver stripes on her shaved head and a thirst for blood. The book is peppered with intriguing characters, but there are perhaps too many, meaning we do not get to know any of them as well as we need to in order to form an emotional connection. The same is true regarding the concepts and plot-threads in *Conquest*. This novel grows and grows, and while some threads run throughout, and some that appear disparate come neatly together at points, the overall impression is one of a tangled knot – or to change similes, like a collage where bits and pieces (familiar tropes) have been taken from existing narratives and pieced together. We have AIs with a couple of back-story info-dumps thrown in when we need to know about their existence, we have alien parasites that cling to brains, unethical scientific researchers, the usual advanced tech in the form of pulse-weapons, spacecraft and insects engineered into surveillance devices, we have coups, multiple alien races, a strange, powerful cult, and more. Each one of these aspects could warrant a novel to itself in order for the concepts to be fully, coherently explored, but even in 400 pages each is only given a brief and rather explicit introduction.

Overall, *Conquest* falls victim to its own ambition – it is simply trying to do too much. The end result is of a mash-up and homage to too many familiar tropes from classic sf. Some of the novel's concepts, however, warrant further exploration, such as the sinister and enigmatic Sisterhood, as well as other elements we are told about but are not shown, like the dangerous off-world Punishment Battalions. While I won't be rushing out any time soon to buy *Empire*, I won't rule out reading the second instalment at some point in the future.



David Mitchell, *Slade House* (Sceptre, 2015, 233pp, £7.99)

Reviewed by Rose Harris-Birtill (University of St Andrews)

After the globe-spanning settings of David Mitchell's earlier novels, the action in *Slade House* is surprisingly localized: a single mansion and its grounds, and a nearby pub. But don't be fooled. The novel's location is anything but static as the house becomes a deadly playground of shape-shiftings, time distortions and bodily possessions. This is a novel in which 'souls are as real as gall bladders', a dead moon-grey cat comes back to life thirty-six years later, and the natural becomes supernatural: 'thousands of fallen leaves fall upwards from the grey lawn, all at once, and attach themselves to the tree'. Visit and you'll be compelled to stay; eat or drink and you'll enter into a fairy-tale contract whose terms are fatal. One character's observation of her night in Slade House could equally apply to the novel as a whole: 'Tonight feels like a board game co-designed by M.C. Escher on a bender and Stephen King in a fever'. Hold on to your horror story: you're in for a ride.

Behind the paranormal mischief lies an interlinked plot which extends the mythology from the fifth chapter of Mitchell's previous novel, *The Bone Clocks* (2014), continuing its war between the soul-stealing Anchorites, who take others' lives to prolong their own, and the ethical Horologists who try to stop them. In *Slade House*, the 116-year-old Norah and her brother, Jonah, are the latest predators, luring a fresh victim into their lair every nine years, and consuming their soul to artificially extend their own life spans. Keen-eyed Mitchellians will notice plenty of shared characters and motifs from his earlier fictions, firmly situating *Slade House* in the author's ongoing macronovel, in which his works form a continuous narrative world with its own recurring cast. These include Fern Penhaligon, sister to Jonny Penhaligon from *The Bone Clocks* and distant ancestor of Captain Penhaligon from *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010), the aristocratic Chetwynd-Pitts from *The Bone Clocks*, and the mysteriously reincarnated Dr Marinus, who arrives to investigate the supernatural events in the final section of *Slade House*. Arguably Mitchell's most enigmatic character to date, Marinus first appeared in his works in *The Thousand Autumns* – set at the end of the eighteenth century – and has been returning in different bodies ever since. However, no previous knowledge of the writer's oeuvre is needed to venture into *Slade House*: a chillingly enjoyable, intricately woven spider's web of a tale whose narrative threads will keep you entangled until the final page.

Slade House begins in 1979 as thirteen-year-old Nathan Bishop and his mother Rita struggle to find their way into the mansion of the book's title, having accepted an invite to a 'musical gathering' at the home of Lady Norah Grayer.

When he meets Jonah in its grounds, their game of fox and hounds becomes a terrifying hunt as the garden begins to disappear; as Nathan escapes into the mansion, reality itself becomes disrupted, and he soon becomes the human prey for a deadly pair of predators. The novel's second section jumps forward to 1988, in which Detective Inspector Gordon Edmonds is searching for the mansion in order to investigate a lead following the disappearances of Nathan and Rita. Arriving at Slade House, he meets its latest resident, the newly-widowed Chloe Chetwynd. She knows nothing about the disappearances, but welcomes the sleazy detective, who can't resist her invite to dinner. It is only after he sleeps with Chloe that he realizes he's lost track of time – is this his second visit to Slade House, or his fifth? – and her 'beautiful' country mansion begins to transform into something far more sinister.

The third section, set in 1997, begins with its narrator Sally Timms at her university's Paranormal Society meeting, discussing the disappearances at Slade House. They set out to investigate, convinced of a supernatural connection. They venture into Slade House, now converted to student housing, in the middle of its Halloween party, its blaring '90s anthems, tacky costumes and 'shit wine' a ghostly façade for the real supernatural and time-distorting events that unfold as the night passes. In the novel's fourth section, Freya arrives to investigate the disappearance of her little sister Sally at Slade House. Nine years have passed, and she has used her journalist's credentials to arrange an interview with Fred Pink, uncle to one of the members of Sally's Paranormal Society, and conspiracy theory hobbyist. But when he tells her what's really been going on at the house, Fred's story is more than she's able to stomach. The final section's narrator is Norah Grayer herself, who has hijacked the body of an unsuspecting 'conspiracy theorist' called Bombadil in order to lure another victim to the house. But Norah's victim turns out to be Toronto psychiatrist Dr Iris Marinus-Fenby. A telepathic entity with formidable powers, Marinus becomes part of a metaphysical war in which the house, and all of its inhabitants, must be prepared for a fight to the death.

Slade House is the most overtly fantastical of Mitchell's novels to date. However, this is a haunted house whose characters' concerns are rooted in the same universe as our own, including Sally's experiences of bullying and bulimia, and Freya's struggles to reconcile her 'complex sexuality' with her family life. Its soul-consumption perhaps offers a metaphor for the neoliberal addiction to the pursuit of wealth and the victimhood that it creates; Jonah describes his 'nightmares' about 'Food that makes you hungrier, the more of it you eat'. Its supernatural narrative is driven by a speculative confrontation of human mortality and the fear of dying, and a desire to ask *what if*: what if immortality became available to the rich and powerful ('they'd kick off World War Three'); what if it became universal ('we'd all stop dying, but we wouldn't stop breeding. Would we?'); and what if it remained secret ('ensure your own supply and keep very very very shtum').

The questions raised by the novel interrogate humanity's relentless consumption as part of its compulsive self-destruction, narrating the paradox of a society whose individual survival instincts threaten to destroy it. Each layer of the tale approaches a recurring problem through a different era; it is only in its most recent layer – our own time – that change becomes possible, with the help of all the ghosts who have gone before. With immortality as the ultimate prize, today's all-too-real motives for global warfare – 'Oil; the drug trade; control over occupied territories and the word 'occupied'. Water. God's true name' – become merely the 'squalid, shitty reasons that people murder each other in large numbers now', as the novel uses the topic of 'Life Everlasting' to critique our murderous instincts, and the disappearing boundaries between survival and self-slaughter. With *Slade House*, Mitchell uses the techniques of science fantasy to create an effortlessly immersive, thought-provoking and warm-hearted world-puzzle, whose subject isn't its own mythology, but the natures of those who have built it: 'People are masks, with masks under those masks, and masks under those, and down you go'. If *Slade House* is haunted, it is haunted by human nature itself.



Augustín de Rojas *Legend of the Future* (Restless Books, 2015, 209pp £10.99)

Yoss, *A Planet for Rent* (Restless Books, 2015, 265pp, £10.99)

Reviewed by Carlos Hernandez (City University of New York)

When I visited Cuba in 1997 (legally!), I had the chance to hear lectures and panels from artists of every stripe. Time and again, the discussion about Cuban aesthetics returned to the government edict 'Everything for the Revolution'. Fidel Castro delivered a speech in 1961, *Palabras a los intelectuales*, where he stated that art should only exist for the good of the Revolution, and that artists should be willing to sacrifice even their creativity for the sake of the Revolution. If they were not, well, the Revolution would not be pleased. Cough.

'But what, exactly, constitutes "good?"' every artist I spoke to in Cuba wondered. Wouldn't a satirical work that criticized ludicrous policies and sickening violations of human rights be of enduring service to the Revolution? Cuban artists have had to (and still have to) wrestle with those questions as they work, and not just academically: the possibility of remaining unpublished (since art must be vetted through government channels) or of arrest haunts every act of creation.

Given that environment, *A Legend of the Future* and *A Planet for Rent* provide a fascinating study of the relationship between Cuban politics and literature. The former needed governmental approval to be published in Cuba, and therefore predictably posits a future where socialism has conquered capitalism once and for all and Earth is all the better for it. (When it was published in 1985, six years before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent decimation of the Cuban economy, the idea may have seemed more viable than it does now.) The latter, a collection of interlaced stories published in Spain a generation later, is an unsubtle critique of Cuba's tourist economy, positing a future where Earthlings allow their bodies to be possessed cyberpunkily by rich off-worlders who want to have a vicarious adventure on the bargain-priced planet. Reading these books in conversation with one another provides two distant points on the tow-the-line-or-fight-the-power spectrum of Cuban literature that would serve as an excellent introduction to the bifurcated mind of the island's artists.

A Legend of the Future owes a great deal to that strain of science fiction that favours, and savours, trippy mind-games and plot twists aplenty. It's the story of a crew aboard the ill-fated *Sviatagor* who, while doing survey work near Saturn, are struck by a meteor; before the prologue's over, half the crew is dead. The remaining crew members, Isanusi, Gema and Thondup, physically damaged and suffering from radiation poisoning, have to find a way back home, and the best way to do that seems to be for Isanusi to *become the ship*: i.e. merge his mind with the *Sviatagor* to pick a path back to Earth. Gema does her best to keep Isanusi sane, while half-devil, half-saviour Thondup alternately makes rescue possible and tries to destroy the ship.

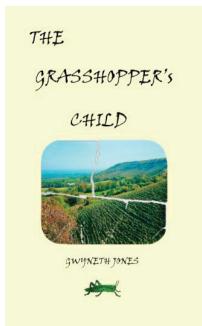
Fans of heady science fiction will find much to enjoy in the long asides discussing politics and psychology, but even the more ardent fans of prolix futurespeak might tire of the flashbacks during the second half – expositions that leave the plot as listless as a starship out of fuel. And while there are other structural and aesthetic points with which I could quibble (don't get me started on the psychobabble 'solution' that serves as the engine of the book's plot, that turns out to be a fabrication of Thondup's, that turns out to be accidentally viable), what struck me most was the sterility of its characters. Were this Anglophone sf, I'd chide it mercilessly for its robotic, not-quite-how-people-actually-say-things dialogue; since it is translated, I might suspect the translation might be the culprit. But it may be that de Rojas is writing specifically against the kind of hyper-lively, Bacchanalian, island-life stereotype that is an unfortunate by-product of Caribbean colonialism. In that sense, the wooden exchanges between Gema and Thondup that fill most of the novel's pages might be, in their own way, a postcolonial act of defiance. Cubans can write novels of ideas, too, argues *A Legend of the Future* – with all the pleasures and problems thereof.

Whatever else there is to say about *A Planet for Rent*, it is in no way sterile. Yoss (the *nom de plume* of José Miguel Sánchez Gómez) weaves together fourteen tales set loosely in a solar system where Earth and its inhabitants are

up for rent to the highest bidder in the solar system. This is angry art, only barely obfuscating its rage with presto-chango name-swaps: ‘humans,’ for instance, are ‘Cubans’ really, and the solar system’s ‘xenoids’ are really everyone else in our quotidian world. Xenoids rent out not only Earth for their pleasures, but literally the bodies of humans, who may be (read: will be) badly used by the aliens who mount them via a VR system that isn’t so virtual: since real people are the vehicles for the aliens’ vicarious experience. ‘Some tourists,’ we learn early on, pushed their host bodies (called ‘horses’) to the point of ‘exhaustion, then simply paid the resulting fine. It was so cheap...’

This is clearly an allusion to the widespread prostitution in Cuba, where prostitutes are called ‘jineteras’ (jockeys). All too clear, perhaps. Reading *A Planet for Rent* can feel at times like reaching for the Sunday crossword puzzle at a coffee shop, only to discover someone’s already completed it: once you ‘solve’ the matrix of allusions to circa 1990s *Período Especial* Cuba, you may be left wondering what is artistically left to enjoy. And while it’s true that *A Planet for Rent* benefits from a faster read, I can provide a few answers to that question. The first is the voice of these stories: Yoss is obviously well-read in sf, and his roguish, counterculture charm (he dresses like the lead singer of an ‘80s monster-ballad band) comes through even in translation. Closely tied to his voice are the mercilessly clinical descriptions of the violations of humans (Cubans). The conceits Yoss spins, while politically transparent, are visceral at least and ascend occasionally to all-out squickery, as when the human Moy has his body butchered and cloned and made into art: and then, for the money, plans to repeat the process thirty-six times a month. But if you come for the writing, stay for the anger. The last story, ‘The Platinum Card,’ will disgust you, and make you wonder how close a corollary to life in Cuba it really is. And as you reflect on the rest of the collection and remember how on-the-nose the stories are, you will, if you are like me, have a reaction somewhere between reading socially-conscious literature and reading a disturbing but important work of journalism. That is a worthwhile reading experience.

For students of the genre, these two releases by Restless Books are an invaluable invitation to explore the state of sf in Cuba (where, admittedly, it’s not a particularly large presence). I will be curious to see how these fictions fare with the general reading public. These translations not only come from a different time – and both show signs of temporal wear – but a radically different place than readers encountering them in English generally will know. In a way, that is exactly what sf readers claim to want: to be transported to ‘alien’ ways of thought. But when those thoughts lead to an indictment of our way of life, when they accuse us of exploitation, and dream of a world in which our political systems and ideologies are dismantled, will we remain quite so welcoming?



Gwyneth Jones, *The Grasshopper's Child* (CreateSpace, 2015, 316pp, £9.99)

Reviewed by Nick Hubble (Brunel University London)

In July 2015, Tor.com announced that they had acquired *Proof of Concept*, a new sf novella from Gwyneth Jones due to be published in 2017. This is significant because Jones, who severed ties with Gollancz in 2010, stated as recently as October 2014 that she hadn't 'tried to get another sf contract, and [was] not going to' although she was still clearly committed to offering future fiction to non-sf publishers once

The Grasshopper's Child – a draft of which had been originally completed and passed to her agent in June 2009 – was self-published. The novel did duly appear in ebook format during autumn 2014 and subsequently as a print-on-demand paperback early in 2015 (the book was also made available to reviewers as a PDF). Jones appears to have enjoyed being involved in the trials, tribulations and triumphs of the production process, noting on her blog for 22 September 2014: 'I must say this is far more fun than getting published old style. If you like playing games, that is'. While it is welcome news that Jones will once again be published by a major press, this act of make-and-do self-publishing seems particularly appropriate for the austerity England of *The Grasshopper's Child*, set at some point following the Chinese invasion described in *Rainbow Bridge* (2006), the fifth and last in the sequence that began with the Clarke Award winner, *Bold as Love* (2001). For, as she points out in the notes at the end of the novel, 'the social and political fallout' she depicts is not made up but directly reflects the reality of today's England in which the young, the old and the unemployed are being ruthlessly marginalized by public sector cuts and compulsory training schemes.

The Grasshopper's Child begins with fifteen-year-old Heidi Ryan being escorted from the Indentured Teens Residential Facility by 'Virtual Verruca', the slightly transparent digital projection of her office-bound Placement Manager, who only needs to point a virtual finger in order to trigger 'a Wifi impulse that jerked on Heidi's tag, so she had to come to heel like a dog'. Their destination is a country estate with overgrown gardens owned by the National Trust, where Heidi is to become the live-in cook and cleaner for a septuagenarian sister and brother until she pays off the debts of her dead father. Nearby is the rundown seaside village of Mehilhoc, where every building has floodlines up to their upstairs windows but there is a shiny new Rural Learning Centre where ordinary people can still 'reach out and touch the futuristic world'. Although subtle references to the existence of Agricultural Camps and the use of human kinetic energy – Heidi needs to go for a run to charge her phone – locate us in the world of *Bold as Love* and its sequels, the novel may be read perfectly well as a stand-alone dystopian vision of the near future. Life as we know it has been radically

affected by climate change and an economics of scarcity imposed in the name of a political vision that Jones satirically labels 'The Big Austerity'. Somewhat unwillingly, Heidi is obliged to mix with those local teenagers who are also exempted from agricultural labour, for reasons varying from care commitments to disability, at compulsory weekly lessons at the Learning Centre. Here, her black skin, tag and Brixton background make her both an object of admiration and suspicion on the behalf of some of her peers. Nevertheless, she is quickly integrated into the social life of the 'Exempt Teens' of Mehilhoc and the strange goings-on surrounding local philanthropists and leading couple, George Carron and Portia Knowles.

This depiction of a superficially placid rural England turning out to be the site of widespread criminal activity is familiar to us from sources as diverse as Agatha Christie mysteries or Edgar Wright's film *Hot Fuzz* (2007). Indeed, similar to the manner in which troublesome youth are killed in the latter, the villains of *The Grasshopper's Child* arrange for the Exempt Teens to be kidnapped off the beach by Russian pirates and only the fact that the ship soon runs aground on an artificial reef saves them from the fate of being sold into the slavery of the global black market in agricultural labour. I am not suggesting that there is any direct influence involved but rather that both these texts reflect a twenty-first century desire to critique the inherent inequalities of English society without recourse to problematic grand political narratives. In keeping with the *Bold as Love* sequence, the contestation of the ruling order in *The Grasshopper's Child* is dependent on an employment of the tropes of folk resistance that can be traced back through English popular culture to ballads about Robin Hood. Such resistance is rooted in the everyday values of friendship and camaraderie that Heidi shares with some of her fellow teens and it does not result in great utopian projects but merely the preservation of the hope that there might still be some sort of a future for them.

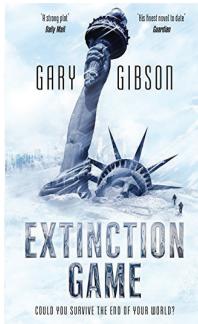
In his entry on Jones for the *Science Fiction Encyclopaedia*, John Clute describes her as combining 'a nearly unforgiving intensity with occasionally slapdash storytelling' but her unique approach to narrative may be seen as a style designed to evade certain structural tendencies of story. Jones' work rarely ends with the happy return of homecoming but rather with a petering-off of narrative momentum that generates a gentle sense of deviation and divergence, offering the different 'rewards' that Clute acknowledges. *The Grasshopper's Child* is no exception in this respect and readers have to align themselves to Heidi's emotional rhythms while only gradually acquiring a sense of what is actually happening around her by building up a picture from the tangential fragments of information on offer. However, rather than focus intensively on these clues, they might be better served by surrendering to the pleasures of Jones' text woven from the references and allusions to everything from the classic children's fiction of Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1881) and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) to the Sussex contexts of the Seven Sisters, Cuckmere

Haven and Sheffield Park Gardens. The price of admission to Jones' own secret gardens, as with the realm of Faerie, is that those who enter are unlikely to emerge unchanged. The reward, however, is the intoxication of a transformed, magical landscape in which the gods can occasionally be glimpsed sitting beneath trees singing while fox cubs play at their feet.

The particular red-headed god encountered by Heidi in this manner is Fiorinda, formerly part of the triumvirate at the head of the Rock and Roll Reich that had ruled England for the nine years between the global crash and the Chinese invasion. In a manner typical of the dreamlike logic of Jones' writing, she is waiting for Heidi in order to pass on a letter from the National Trust announcing that they want to restore Mehilhoc Gardens. However, her appearance also serves to reinforce and extend the bittersweet sensibility of the *Bold as Love* sequence as we learn that she is no longer in contact with her former partners, Ax and Sage (who also make individual cameo appearances in the novel). Earlier, Heidi reflects on her parents' nostalgia for the years of the Crisis when Ax, Sage and Fiorinda had helped everyone through with the free concerts and festivals, before concluding:

But nothing good ever lasts, and there was something rotten at the heart of England that even the music couldn't cure. When the Sacrificer Movement got going nobody could stop it. Sacrificers said the answer to the crisis was to kill off the weaklings, the way the Ancient British used to do it, in hard times. Unemployed, Immigrant; On Benefits, Homeless; Travellers, Disabled. Mental Health Issues, Learning Difficulties; Rights Activist. If you ticked any of those boxes, you were unfit and you had to be sacrificed.

This passage reminds us of how powerful a device fiction can be for stripping away the political and media narratives that normalize and obscure the violence and expropriation that have characterized global society in the twenty-first century. Jones has not received anything like as much recognition as she should have for having written the *Bold as Love* sequence before the 2007–8 global financial crash stripped away – temporarily, at least – the wafer-thin veneer of progressive western society. Indeed, with the benefit of post-crash hindsight, the sequence can be seen as a requiem for a way of life now disappearing rapidly. *The Grasshopper's Child*, which opens with Heidi rereading the fable of 'The Ant and the Grasshopper', is a self-published samizdat indictment of all of us 'human grasshoppers who [...] swarmed like greedy locusts, gobbling, grabbing and laying waste [...] until [we] brought on the terrible years of the crisis'. The world has caught up with Jones' fictional vision and it is the younger generations like Heidi who will have to deal with the consequences of our excesses. Let us hope that the possibility of a future does still lie open for them, hidden safely from the predators and locusts alike, amongst the landscapes of the imagination.



Gary Gibson, *Extinction Game* (Macmillan, 2014, 352pp, £8.99)

Reviewed by Joe Norman (Brunel University London)

Jerry Beche, the only survivor of a man-made disease, ekes out his days on a desolate Earth fighting off wild animals, hallucinating conversations with his dead wife, and contemplating suicide. As Jerry observes: 'so far, so post-apocalyptic', but Gary Gibson's narrative quickly moves beyond this familiar premise. Jerry is rescued by a team of misfits employed by the Authority, an organization seemingly

as mysterious to his new colleagues as it is to Jerry himself. Using 'transfer stages' the Authority can travel across the multiverse to parallel versions of Earth, known as alternates. Each member of the team has been carefully selected from an alternate that – like Jerry's – experienced an extinction event leaving only one survivor. The team are Pathfinders for the Authority: tasked with missions into alternates to assess danger, carry out research and scavenge new technology, in return for eventual retirement into an alternate similar to their home prior to disaster. When missions go tragically wrong from the outset, Jerry becomes sceptical of the Authority, probing its history and that of his colleagues, revealing a web of lies and deceit, and even casting doubt on his own identity.

Extinction Game is an enjoyable, fast-paced narrative that skilfully combines tropes of post-apocalyptic fiction with those of parallel worlds stories. Essentially an action thriller, the premise of missions into various post-apocalyptic scenarios gives Gibson plenty of excuse to imagine various world-ending scenarios, describe ruined cities populated by jaded survivors and the horrific results of chemical experiments, pulled along by the text's wider mysteries as they gradually unfold. While Gibson has been compared to hard sf writers such as Neil Asher, Peter Hamilton and Alastair Reynolds, *Extinction Game* is far from being a work in that sub-genre. Gibson relies upon brief descriptions of pylons, wires and generators to rationalize the transfer stages novum, while the concept of parallel worlds is laid out sufficiently but assuming a degree of familiarity on the reader's part – all of which helps to focus on the intricacies of plot and character, rather than the details of speculative technology that could prove unconvincing upon closer inspection.

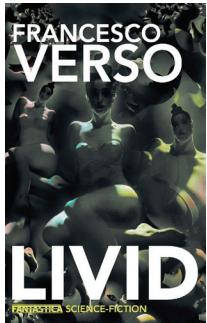
Post-apocalypse and dystopia are currently ubiquitous in print and on-screen – a fact of which Gibson is clearly well aware, acknowledged by playful ironic nods to such sub-genres, while remaining just shy of full-blown self-referentiality. When Jerry is attacked by a horde of ragged, near brain-dead scavengers, Gibson echoes the reader's thoughts: 'It was like stumbling across a fire sale in the middle of a zombie apocalypse'. When they find time to relax, the Pathfinders distastefully watch disaster films like *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961) and *Destroy All Monsters* (1968). On one occasion

they gather to watch footage of a real disaster, captured from the event that destroyed one particular alternate, with their reactions to the footage forming a commentary on the glorification of catastrophe. While many respond with glee and enjoyment – clearly jaded by years of exploring such eventualities – Jerry vehemently exclaims, ‘You have no respect for human life! You can’t treat this as an entertainment!’

While Gibson’s plot is skilfully woven and compelling, *Extinction Game* is not without flaws. The characterization is a little clunky at points, and some of the more minor characters from the total of twelve or so featured in the novel turn out to be more significant than the slightly meagre picture painted of them in my mind would justify. Also, the most significant twist in the novel, while ultimately effective, does raise a few questions. It becomes clear that the Authority sometimes replaces dead Pathfinders with versions of themselves, plucked from similar alternates. Following none-too-subtle hints, it is revealed that one major character is in fact such a replacement, explaining that: ‘I originate from a parallel reality to yours. One so thinly separated from your own that they are, by any measurable standard, identical...’ In a multiverse with near-infinite variations of reality this is possible. Yet surely this would have repercussions for consistency of personality? Even minor changes in someone’s background can have significant effects which those who knew them well would surely notice. Nonetheless, the replacement’s friends and lovers seem to treat him as essentially a carbon copy of his former self, neatly slotted into his new reality, despite initial uncertainty.

Extinction Game is not an overtly political novel yet it does critique the American Right Libertarian mindset that often manifests itself in narratives of post-apocalyptic survival. One Pathfinder, supposedly as clueless to their wider purpose as is Jerry, turns out to be responsible for various acts of sabotage, deception and murder, even planning genocide, whilst working in cahoots with an Authority offshoot, the Patriots – an even more authoritarian organization than the Authority themselves. The reader is made to associate this rogue Pathfinder’s moral failings and political stance with their ‘love for tradition, for the military, for rugged individualism’, as well as the fact that they are ‘a big fan’ of Ayn Rand.

Gibson’s novel ultimately provides optimism for a world obsessed with images of its own destruction, a reminder that there is always an alternative to the status quo, and an avocation of solidarity rather than isolationism. *Extinction Game* is the first part of Gibson’s ‘Apocalypse Duology’; the sequel *Survival Game* is scheduled for publication in August.



**Francesco Verso, *Livid*, trans. Sally McCorry
(Xoum Publishing, 2014, 247 pp., £9.99)**

Reviewed by Salvatore Proietti (University of Calabria)

'I lie down and blend with the kipple [...] at one with the rubbish. Warm, welcoming kipple': the young protagonist Peter Payne is a true genius loci in the post-cyberpunk setting of Francesco Verso's *Livid*. A scavenger and a disabled teen with prosthetic limbs, Peter fits in perfectly with his sprawling city, swamped with (mostly) high-tech garbage. He seems to have scavenged pretty efficiently his own culture as well, developing quite early on in his Bildung a remarkable degree of articulacy. *Livid* is a character-centred novel, and Peter is (apart from a modicum of telling) a satisfactorily oblique filter for the world-building – oblique enough to encourage the reader's imagination.

The city remains unnamed, but the names of neighbourhoods bespeak a multilingual setting: readers looking for 'essential' Italianness will be disappointed – although the failings of garbage-disposal systems in many big Italian cities in the last few years have been a source of inspiration to Verso. Alongside the thriving of smart/augmented technologies, in the 'gamesphere' and in real life, Peter's voice describes the rise of the new economy, parallel to continuing globalized neoliberalism, of 'reconsumerism' and 'trashforming,' the main access to goods for this mid-21st century's global underclass. On the other hand, the allusion to kipple is also an intimation of innocence: above all, *Livid* is about the persistence of hope. And, against the grain of much Italian high culture (as early, say, as Pier Paolo Pasolini, or in Ettore Scola's 1976 film *Down and Dirty*) dealing with the advent of consumer society, the novel locates this hope in a Lumpenproletarian kid, capable of finding his own way to dignity in the attempt to save an Other.

Peter's journey begins with an older woman, Alba, a travel-agency clerk and a 'nexhuman' who uploaded her mind into an artificial body 'to survive biological death' – whether that implies transhuman mystique or a lethal illness, or both, is unclear. Certainly, what for some is superhuman, for others is subhuman, and among the latter are the skinhead-like gang, The Dead Bones, to which Peter's brother belongs (their chant is 'Kill the kipple'). In shock, Peter witnesses The Dead Bones assault and dismember Alba. In a clear take on Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009), the novel's plot follows Peter's coming of age as he pursues his quest to reassemble Alba, hoping to bring her back to life, as well as his own pieces, to rebuild whatever family ties he can.

There's something Huck Finn-ish, rather than high-romantic, in Peter's fifteen-year-long, doubt-ridden obsession. He sees himself 'as a salvager of materials', one who 'can prolong the expected life of everything', who feels that some 'things' carry life, however different, beyond the violence of

commonsense expectations. Hardly a standard male hero to begin with, Peter is not after a standard narcissistic dream. This is what makes his quest, as he grows into adulthood, convincing and grabbing, even somewhat original. With no expectation of living happily ever after, he tries to salvage and reclaim the otherness of his world. Whatever will happen at the end is beyond his control – and the multiple-ending (no spoilers for this novel!) is the best evidence of the author's awareness.

Among the sparse amount of Italian sf recently translated into English, there has been Ian Watson and Roberto Quaglia's collaborative *The Beloved of My Beloved* (2009), a surreal sequence oscillating between the satirical and the downright extreme, and the first volume in 2014 of Leonardo Patrignani's *Multiversum* YA trilogy, a tale of communication across parallel universes. Verso's *Livid* might be placed somewhere in the middle, and his imperfect protagonist is markedly at odds with Davide Longo's 2010 *The Last Man Standing*, a post-apocalyptic novel in which a rising mainstream author staged a disturbingly uncritical crisis of the high intellectual as alpha male. By contrast, the challenging of gender roles has always been a favourite subject of Verso's; for example, in his first two novels, *Antidoti umani* [*Human Antidotes*] (2009), a dystopian thriller about the resistance against the worldwide use of a Huxleyian happiness-inducing drug, and his breakthrough *E-doll* (also 2009), perhaps over-ambitious in its present-tense narration, quite pessimistic about the feasibility of a doll-less world. More recently, Verso has displayed his versatility in his one attempt at fantasy, the gaming Chinese-boxes of the 2013 novelette 'Il livello dell'assassino' ['The Assassin's Level'], and in his veering towards the comedic in *Bloodbusters* (2015).

In post-cyberpunk, starting with Nicoletta Vallorani's feminist noirs in the 1990s, the Italian sf scene found a favourite stage for cosmopolitan futures, hardly encouraged by the mainstream. In the mid-2000s, the subgenre has enjoyed new life, thanks on the one hand to Dario Tonani's skilfully crafted future-noirs (Richard K. Morgan a recognized inspiration), and on the other to the posthuman scenarios of the Connectivist group, with which Verso has been an active fellow traveller, especially Giovanni De Matteo and Sandro Battisti. In the case of *Livid*, the Italian publisher chose me as beta-reader, and I was happy to see my line-edits in the published version; some more editing has been carried out in this English translation: in this as well, Verso can be added to the growing number of world sf professionals. Against all odds, a brilliant group of emerging writers are engaging with the state of the art in the genre: I strongly hope *Livid* will open the way for more Italian sf in translation.



Laurence A. Rickels, *Germany: A Science Fiction* (Anti-Oedipus Press, 2015, 269 pp, £9.99)

Reviewed by Andy Sawyer (University of Liverpool)

Germany: A Science Fiction begins with a preface in which Rickels mentions the ‘provincialism’ with which sections of the sf fan community reacted to his previous *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick* (2010), although it – and indeed *Germany* – has also been extravagantly praised. Part of the problem is that neither are works of conventional literary criticism. Rather, they are explorations of social psychotherapy, which means that they are very specific and particular readings of texts designed to tease out theoretically-focused explanations of what these texts might mean. While I suspect that Rickels might view that summary with suspicion as denoting the writer’s unfamiliarity with the field – and in this case he would be right – that is not to suggest an automatic hostility. The title suggests a particular realization of Nazi Germany as a culmination of certain kinds of science fiction, which leads to a troubling response, almost a denial of the ‘German’ strand: ‘Because Nazi Germany appeared so closely associated with specific science fictions as their realization, after WWII the genre had to delete the recent past and begin again within the new Cold War opposition’. This kind of attribution of ‘National’ psychoanalysis, though frequent in popular accounts of why political movements and wars happen, is, however, troubling in itself, and Rickels’ meaning needs teasing out. He is neither undertaking a collective analysis of the ‘German psyche’ nor – which is what I picked up the book for – *precisely* giving us a history of the German contribution to science fiction which we can see not only in the books of Kurd Lasswitz and Thea von Harbou and the films of Fritz Lang (scripted by von Harbou) but also many of the early stories in *Amazing*.

As such, it is a complicated book, both in its engagement with complex ideas and in the way it is written as a kind of word association or Rorschach test, with ideas echoing and re-echoing through a network of references and examples. Chapter 2 for instance moves between Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Robert Bramkamp’s *Prufstand 7* and the director’s own book on his film (which cites Rickels’ own work in an interview with Friedrich Kittler), Arthur C. Clarke’s essay on space stations and the short story ‘The Sentinel’, the *Whole Earth Catalog*, Hannah Arendt’s essay ‘The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man’, an essay by Kittler on *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Philip K. Dick’s *The Man Who Japed*, Edward Bernays’ 1928 study *Propaganda*, a 1929 essay on the artistic process by Melanie Klein, work by the painter Georg Scholz, the early history of advertising, a psychoanalytic case study by S.H. Foulkes, Daniel Goulay’s *Simulacron 3*, a reference to Walter Benjamin, R.W. Fassbinder’s *World on a Wire*, Theodor Adorno, Jack Kerouac,

Pynchon again, Dick's *Ubik*, psychoanalysis during World War One, Walter Tevis' *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and Pavlov's experiments with conditioning dogs. And I am sure I have overlooked more.

There are two major threads to this network. First, there is the double/doppelganger motif which appears in much Gothic/Romantic literature and seems to owe much to German examples, and which reappears in Sigmund Freud's work on the uncanny. Rickels is not, however, engaged with exploring this motif so much as *using* it, particularly in the way doubling, echoes (and absences, which are another way of drawing attention to things) feature in those aspects of his main thesis which will be of most interest to *Foundation* readers: the way much science fiction is indebted to *precisely the same things* that found expression in Nazi Germany – in particular, the missile technology which oscillates between visionary exploration and weapon of mass destruction. If the 'science fiction dream' can be reduced to one symbol, that is the 'conquest of space'. The pinnacle of the technology designed for that purpose, in the mid-1940s, was achieved by Nazi Germany.

There is a story related in Francis Spufford's *Backroom Boys* (2003) which may illuminate this. In November 1944, a small group of men were meeting in a London pub. They were members of the British Interplanetary Society, the rocket enthusiasts who had promoted space-flight drawing upon the ideas of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Hermann Oberth, Wernher von Braun, Willy Ley and others, who had met to consider the post-War path of the Society. As one of them was relating American assurances that building rockets of any size was impossible and reports of German large missiles were simply propaganda, an explosion shook the building. Realizing from the nature of the explosion (with, for example, no preamble of aircraft noise) that this was a German *rocket missile*, the BIS, according to Spufford, 'rose to their feet and cheered'.

If the story sounds shocking in context, we can also read it as a nervous expression of relief in personal survival coupled with the ideological relief that the assurances that had just been heard were *wrong* and that somehow, after victory over the Nazis, a better world (involving space flight) was possible. Nevertheless, the story illustrates a deep anxiety. After the war, it was no longer possible to associate those science fiction/amateur rocket society utopian dreams of exploration with innocent aspirations. A kind of collective Bad Faith affected science fiction, according to Rickels: 'Because Nazi Germany appeared so closely associated with specific science fictions as their realization, after WWII the genre had to delete its recent past and begin again within the new Cold War opposition.'

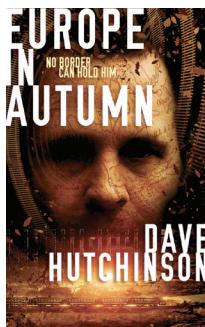
Von Braun was taken by NASA to work on the American space programme after his work on the V2 rockets. Promoted by Walt Disney, his Nazi past was edited out in favour of his pre-war promotion of rocketry as part of the explosion of rocket societies, which included Oberth who worked on Lang and Harbou's *Frau im Mond* (1929).

All this was complicated by the fact that Lang had fled Nazi Germany while Harbou (the couple had by then divorced) stayed behind; Willy Ley had also fled. But ‘German’ images remained a kind of doppelganger within science fiction. *Metropolis* (1927), with its soaring cityscapes and regimented workers, had been admired by the Nazis, and Rickels tells us that it was not until the 1980s that the ‘Metropolis look’ was truly ‘in our faces’. Dick’s novels engage with ‘Germany’ both specifically and psychoanalytically, and Rickels, as might be expected is interesting on Dick throughout. Chapter 1 presents an overlay between Nazi technology and the California of Dick’s novels, although the chapter is also useful on the way Nazi Germany harnessed the energy of adolescents and the kind of post-war ambiguity that might evoke: *The Blob* (1958), about a threatening monster and a good cop/bad cop relationship with teenagers is a useful case study here. But fundamentally, ‘What remained largely unaddressed in post-WWII science fiction was the Holocaust’, and many of these fictions – as indeed, much of the non-sf Rickels refers to in his evocations of ambivalences, gaps, lost causes and parallel narratives – could be read as ways of trying to explore the impact of cataclysm without actually referring to it.

In Chapter 3, loosely structured around a riff on ‘Lost Causes’ which goes back to the Trojan War (Troy, of course, famously ‘discovered’ by German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in another saga of inventions, simulations and conjectures), Rickels compares the rivalry between 1950’s *Destination Moon* (indebted to Robert Heinlein’s 1947 *Rocketship Galileo*) and *Rocketship X-M*, whose inserted footage of V2 tests allegedly beat *Destination Moon* to release, as a fascinating subtext to the entire project. Heinlein’s earlier novel has its boy heroes encountering Nazis on the moon. In the middle of this discussion we have a reference to ‘German science fiction novels published during the Third Reich’: a reference not followed through with example or discussion and an interesting gap in a book explicitly about gaps. Another missing text is William Gibson’s ‘The Gernsback Continuum’ (1981) which famously finds the ‘sinister fruitiness of Hitler Youth propaganda’ in a semiotic future extrapolated from the imagery of Hugo Gernsback’s science fiction magazines (singularly close to the pre-Nazi form of ‘German science fiction’). Elsewhere, though, there is discussion of Norman Spinrad’s *The Iron Dream* (1972) as an explicit argument of what Rickels is pulling out for us in his many other examples.

As I hope I have emphasized, *German: A Science Fiction* is less about sf than about using sf to explore collective psychopathies. Indeed, Chapter 4 begins with other issues of identity and ambiguity by citing the American writer Julian Green, brought up a French speaker but taught English by his mother who opted for Paris rather than Berlin when her husband was sent to Europe in 1895 because the French, defeated in 1870, would understand the mindset of the defeated American southerners. Maybe I have read it as a more prosaic exploration of science fiction than the author possibly intends; instead, there is much in it to recommend. Both Rickels’ subject matter and discursive style

demand careful reading – there are what appear to be frequent branchings-off and digressions. But he brings much ammunition to bear. He is interesting on Heinlein, Thomas M. Disch and Orson Scott Card and in particular on John Wyndham, at one point considering *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) with its erosion of the past and theme of blindness, and in the final chapter argues that Wyndham ‘carried the German science fiction of doubling into the postwar setting’. Only occasionally, as in a reference to *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971) as ‘Le Guin’s only science fiction unadulterated by fantasy’ are we brought up short, when we begin to wonder quite how focused these readings are. *Germany: A Science Fiction* isn’t an easy book for the general reader (and indeed, I found myself wondering at times whether the argument was veering towards the inherent fascism of sf and western culture) but it is a potentially rewarding one.



Dave Hutchinson, *Europe in Autumn* (*Solaris*, 2014, 384pp, £7.99)

Reviewed by Allen Stroud (Buckinghamshire New University)

The shortlist for the 2015 Clarke Award showcased several dystopian genre-crossing stories. *Station Eleven* by Emily St John Mandel took most of the plaudits and the award, but sat alongside it was this little gem of a story from Dave Hutchinson, described as a science fiction thriller. Those expecting either genre to assert itself from the opening may be disappointed, but the characteristics are laid out with calm confidence by Hutchinson, who clearly intends to tell his story irrespective of how many boxes it may tick.

Rudi the Estonian cook finds himself gradually taking on more and more little tasks for his employer, Max: to begin with, serving Hungarians in a Polish restaurant, but later he becomes involved in talk of politics amidst the fracturing European states and agrees to help Max’s cousin cross a border, fleeing the Independent Silesian State of Hindenberg where he has become trapped. This leads Rudi to becoming a member of *Les Coureurs des Bois*, a secretive organization that delivers messages and items all across the increasingly diverse continent.

Hutchinson’s writing is immediately multi-cultural and urbane. There is a casual patience to the story that belies its sf trappings. Whilst the near-future Europe is a disintegrated checkerboard of new countries, Hutchinson doesn’t convey this with heavy expositional paragraphs. Instead, through Rudi, we explore the new continent through the eyes of a man accustomed to his world and to travelling about it. This process never feels forced but familiar, as if Hutchinson is drawing on detailed experience of journeying through these

places. There is significant cultural contrast embedded into this society so as to make it both connected and disturbed. This is a traveller's fiction, written for people experiencing the ritual of airplane travel, customs inspections and train journeys.

There isn't the sense of agency and agenda we have come to expect from characters in science fiction. The traditional quest plot would have worked with the premise of this story, but Hutchinson decides to provide something different. Rudi has goals and objectives, but his struggle is as much to assert himself over events as it is against the gradual fragmentation of society. In part, this causes us to question our present, looking for the seeds of this dissolution, as all good cautionary sf does. At its best, it also freshens the reading experience. New circumstances are introduced throughout the story, unbalancing the reader just as it unbalances the main character, but gradually he asserts himself and the answers arrive.

Europe in Autumn feels real in an understated way that exceeds some of its influences. There is a tangibility to this disturbed landscape and its layers of espionage that goes beyond comparison with Franz Kafka, Len Deighton or George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Specifically, the dystopia is less tragic than others and more meaningful for it. Some social comment is indulged. The Scottish Referendum is played out to an alternate conclusion, but this isn't dwelt on and is a natural part of the wider tapestry of unravelling countries.

Similarly, Hutchinson's scenes take place in a vast array of locations, from the domestic to the cinematic. Science fiction doesn't often visit the laundrette, or the lodgings of hotel porters, but then, spy thrillers don't race through invented countries and use inter-dimensional pathways to avoid the border police. World-changing revelations occur in rented hotel rooms and on cold snowy fields, not amidst romantic destruction, star field vistas or broad utopian cityscapes.

Granted, some of the future technology Hutchinson employs could draw a comparison with the cinematic James Bond, but this wouldn't be fair to the way in which the devices are used. There isn't much of a sense of gadgetry, or children playing with toys. Devices are generally appropriate to need, and innovation is carefully engineered. In some scenes, the technology is as much a mystery to Rudi as it is a marvel to us and his eventual understanding forms a key element to the discoveries of the story.

The final scenes do revert to some action clichés, but after such patient work in developing the elements of this, some rewoven tropes can be forgiven. At this stage, Rudi has developed as enough of a character to seize control of events, armed with the knowledge and items he has acquired along the way. The revelations of this conclusion, though, are far from your usual fare as Hutchinson introduces another genre to confound expectations.

Some readers have criticized the pace and lack of agency in the first half, while others take against its fantastical mechanisms or its domesticity. Certainly, for those trapped in genre-bound ghettos, this book is quiet subversion and an

irritant. Yes, the pace is slow to start, much more accustomed to travel fiction, but this is deliberate, as Rudi struggles to take charge of events, making him a different hero to what we have come to expect. Hutchinson clearly sees the codes and conventions of each as assets in his toolbox.

There is much mystery left to unravel at the book's conclusion and plenty of room for its sequel, *Europe at Midnight* (also shortlisted for this year's Clarke Award). Hutchinson sets up the premise of this without failing to tie-up the plot threads he has already established and the well-drawn pause is just as good as a happy ending.

The Foundation Essay Prize 2017

We are pleased to announce our next essay-writing competition. The award is open to all post-graduate research students and to all early career researchers (up to five years after the completion of your PhD) who have yet to find a full-time or tenured position. The prize is guaranteed publication in the next summer issue of *Foundation* (August 2017).

To be considered for the competition, please submit a **6000 word** article on **any** topic, period, theme, author, film or other media within the field of science fiction and its academic study. All submitted articles should comply with the guidelines to contributors as set out on the SF Foundation website. *Only one article per contributor is allowed to be submitted.*

The deadline for submission is 7th November 2016. All competition entries, with a short (50 word) biography, should be sent to the regular email address: journaleditor@sf-foundation.org The entries will be judged by the editorial team and the winner will be announced in the spring 2017 issue of *Foundation*.

Call for Papers

Special Issue on Science Fiction and Theatre

Compared to film, TV and the novel, science fiction theatre is not a widely discussed topic. But, whilst there is only one book from the 1990s that lists the history of sf plays, there is a long legacy of staging the fantastical, including the importance of Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* (1920) in coining the term 'robot'. With contemporary mainstream plays such as *Constellations*, *The Nether*, *Mr Burns* and *X*, sf theatre may be experiencing something of a revival. There are an increasing number of sf theatre companies worldwide as well as a new anthology in sf plays.

Foundation seeks articles for a special issue on science fiction and theatre, to be published in winter 2017. Why is sf not analysed as often in theatre than other media? What is lost and what is gained when a text is adapted for the stage? Are there any genre tropes that cannot be staged effectively in theatre? What tropes work particularly well for the stage? All topics and methodologies are welcome including (but not limited to) stage depictions of the future, constructions and representations of sf tropes, performing the non- and post-human, space-time on stage, and adaptations of sf films and novels.

Please send submissions of up to 6000 words by 5th February 2017 to journaleditor@sf-foundation.org, attaching the file in either .rtf or .doc format. For questions about formatting, please see the style guide at www.sf-foundation.org; for all other enquiries, please contact Susan Gray at susan.gray87@gmail.com

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In this issue:

Our special section on utopia and science fiction including:

Paul Kincaid on the 500th anniversary of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*
Anindita Banerjee on the post-utopian imagination in Dmitri Glukhovsky's *Metro 2033*
Foundation Essay prize-winner Selena Middleton on Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels*
David Seed debates colonization in Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia*
Nika Šetek on the role of leisure in Huxley, Orwell and Zamyatin
Ivaylo R. Shmiley on the ethics of warfare in Iain M. Banks
Zoran Živković's previously untranslated essay on Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*

Rhys Williams surveys the current state of Miéville studies
Conference reports from Thomas Knowles and Charlotte Newman, Krzysztof M. Maj and
Paul March-Russell
Paul March-Russell also surveys the work of Maria Lassnig at Tate Liverpool

In addition, there are reviews by:

Jeremy Brett, Maia Clery, Emma Filtness, Rose Harris-Birtill, Carlos Hernandez, Nick
Hubble, Joe Norman, Salvatore Proietti, Andy Sawyer and Allen Stroud

Of books by:

Aliette de Bodard, John Connolly and Jennifer Ridyard, Gary Gibson, Carolyn Ives
Gilman, Dave Hutchinson, Gwyneth Jones, David Mitchell, Laurence A. Rickels, Augustin
de Rojas, Francesco Verso and Yoss

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