MESSENGERS FROM THE STARS
ON SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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Messengers from the Stars: On Science Fiction and Fantasy

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One of the fundamental characteristics of fantastic fiction is its capacity to penetrate apparently solidified textures, unravel the threads of canonical tapestries and reweave them into new patterns that complicate and problematize traditional notions of beauty as well as social, ethical and political premises. This inherent elasticity has also proven to be fertile ground for various kinds of generic cross-breedings – indeed, one of the most conspicuous features of such classics as *Frankenstein* (1818), *Dracula* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1897) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) is the suggestive way in which they combine the genres of science fiction, dystopia and horror, to spectacular effect. Out of this generic mélange arise narratives that engage obliquely (albeit not less forcefully than works of social realism or naturalism) with contemporary social maladies. Shelley's tragic tale, written at a time in which the ethical boundaries of science were called into question, revolves around the confession of a haunted scientist who refuses to take responsibility for the powerful

creature he has unleashed; Stoker raises monsters from the dead in his portrayal of Victorian fears of colonial and female emancipation; Wells' brilliantly imagined Martian invasion forces "civilized" readers to redefine the Other from the unsettling perspective of the colonized subject, and Orwell's allegory of the perverse *ménage-à-trois* of totalitarianism, technology and propaganda serves to unveil the ugly reality behind contemporary political discourse.

In an ever-changing world, new social malaises keep appearing and one of the tasks of science fiction and other "fantastic" modes of writing is to provide alternative models and new approaches to such predicaments. Happily, the capacity of science fiction to problematize and subvert hegemonic discourse is far from dead, as the essays of the third issue of *Messengers from the Stars* amply demonstrate. Almost two hundred years after *Frankenstein*, the genre still mutates and cross-breeds with adjacent narrative organisms in order to tear open, expose and revitalize stale notions of reality, forcing us to think twice and look again – for one of the basic premises of science fiction is that the world is never definitely settled, never devoid of complication. The present issue of *Messengers from the Stars* centres on the disruptive, eye-opening and liberating possibilities of mutating science fiction narratives in a variety of media, ranging from novels to comics, films, TV series and photography. Collectively, the essays show that despite heterogeneous plots and settings, the artistic expressions under study all interrogate mainstream conceptions of reality and propose disquieting alternatives.

In the first essay, Katherine A. Fowkes sets the discussion in motion by contrasting the idea of the soulless zombie, this very modern monster, with that of the rebellious "trickster" to show how the subversive "trickster" qualities of fantastic cinema make it particularly apt as a generic vehicle for the purpose of breathing new life into outworn cinematographic discourse and expression.

Zombies are also at the heart of Amaya Fernández Menicucci's analysis of Richard Matheson's dystopian novel *I Am Legend* (1954) and its three movie adaptations. Fernández Menicucci holds that the presence of the undead in this story serves to set off the shortcomings of the traditional role assigned to male heroes, and convincingly argues that each version of the story reveals and dismantles contemporary conceptions of heroic masculinity, as the male protagonist evolves into a mythical Other.

In another reflection on how science fiction can engage with previous referents, Joseph Giunta discusses the Duffer Brothers' suggestive use of science fiction and horror in the first season of *Stranger Things* (2016). In an intriguing reading of the creative forces of nostalgia at work in the Netflix series, Giunta contends that it reimagines the anxieties of an age through the postmodern filter of pastiche, but instead of merely replicating the nostalgized subject matter, the series subverts the tenets of its generic underpinnings (science fiction and horror), and contextualizes the sociocultural connotations of the period by inserting nostalgic intertexts.

The subject of Kwasu David Tembo's essay is how another cultural icon of the recent past, Superman, is deconstructed in Mark Millar's *Red Son* (2003) and played out as an agent of paranoiac horror. Tembo looks at the comic through the double lens of Foucault's reading of Bentham's "panopticon", and argues that the supernatural capacities of the protagonist, together with the panoptic perspective of a "single superbeing", boosts the powerful presence of an Otherness that introduces troubling elements of confinement and perpetual surveillance into the narrative.

Moving from the global to the local, Summer Sutton's "A Narrative of Moral Imagination: Collective Survivance in Indigenous Science Fictions" analyses two recent narratives stemming from widely separated cultural spheres in her reading of Gerald Vizenor's novel *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on White Earth Nation* (2016), set in North America, and Ryan Griffen's Australian television series *Cleverman* (2016). Sutton shows how the world-building dynamics of science fiction can be employed in combination with story-telling strategies rooted in indigenous cultures to give voice to natives who have been silenced by mainstream colonial discourse, and simultaneously articulate a project aimed at reclaiming the land taken from them.

Swedish photographer Thomas Örn Karlsson illustrates the essays of the present issue with a number of harrowing photographs, taken both in Sweden and Spain, in which he attempts to capture elements of fantasy and horror in natural settings. In the interview with Karlsson that follows the essays, he explicitly states that he seeks to "take people out of their comfort zone" – which today is just as much about taking the spectator out of the city as exposing them to the uncanny or

grotesque. The combination of both elements comes through as particularly forceful in Örn Karlsson's art.

Then, in a review of the recent adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* for television (2016), Katherine Connell discusses how the series' dynamics, based on a series of flashbacks from the protagonists' peaceful lives in North America that are contrasted with physical violence of the dystopian present, parallels the current political climate in the U.S. and brings forth an atmosphere of muted but impending terror.

Finally, John B. Kachuba rounds off the issue with a suggestive short story about the lingering presence of the dead among the living and the effects of music on sensitive minds, which surely will incite more than one reader to re-explore Schubert's symphonies in search of beckoning echoes just beyond the borders of awareness.

It is thus a pleasure to welcome the reader to join us as we unlock the gates to the unknown and embark on a journey through both uncanny and mutating spaces in this third report from the *Messengers from the Stars*.

MONOGRAPH SECTION

Screaming undead – Thomas Örn Karlsson

A Deal with the Devil?: Zombies vs. Tricksters as Cinematic Magic

Katherine A. Fowkes

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Abstract | From the beginning, cinema has been intertwined with magic as illusion. The magic of cinema not only provides the illusion of reality, it can also create fantastic creatures, marvelous stories, and imaginary worlds. While movie zombies are currently in vogue – embodying anxieties of soulless, brain dead individuals – the perfect antidote to the zombie can be found in the figure of the trickster. The trickster's role is often to breathe new life into lifeless people and petrified situations by causing mischievous and usually humorous chaos. Although movies can function as "zombies" when they reinforce clichéd ideas, stereotypes or "soul-less" stories, cinema can also operate as a kind of meta-trickster to help us re-imagine ourselves and our world. "Fantastic" cinema (fantasy, sci-fi, gothic horror, etc.) represents the epitome of a type of story that can help re-ignite our imagination and help us re-conceive what we thought we knew. It can also help us re-imagine what we believe to be possible or impossible in the real world. And because cinema itself is founded

on trickery (illusion of motion, etc.) and has its roots in many traditional magical tricks, the trickster can serve as a potent metaphor for imaginative and speculative narratives of cinema.

Keywords | Devils; imagination; magic; tricksters; zombies.

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Resumo | Desde os seus primórdios que o cinema se interliga com a magia como forma de ilusão. A magia do cinema não só cria a ilusão da realidade, como também cria criaturas fantásticas, histórias e mundos imaginários. Enquanto que os zombies cinematográficos estão actualmente em voga - incorporando as ansiedades de indivíduos anímicos e acéfalos – o antídoto perfeito para o zombie pode ser encontrado na figura do *trickster*. O papel do *trickster* passa, frequentemente, por dar nova vida a pessoas sem vida e a situações petrificadas, causando um caos malicioso e normalmente humorístico. Apesar dos filmes poderem funcionar como "zombies" quando reforçam ideias *cliché*, estereótipos e histórias "sem alma", o cinema pode também assumir-se como uma espécie de meta-*trickster* que nos ajuda a reimaginar o nosso mundo e a nós próprios. O cinema "Fantástico" (fantasia, FC, horror gótico, etc.) representa o epítome de um tipo de história que pode reacender a nossa imaginação e ajudar-nos a conceber, de uma nova forma, aquilo que pensávamos saber. Pode também ajudar-nos a reimaginar o que acreditávamos ser possível ou impossível no mundo real. E porque o cinema em si é baseado em enganos (ilusão de movimento, etc.), e tem as suas raízes em muitos truques de magia tradicionais, o *trickster* pode servir como uma forte metáfora para as narrativas imaginativas e especulativas do cinema.

Palavras-Chave | Demónios; imaginação; magia; *Tricksters*; zombies.

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As the title indicates, this essay frames cinema through the metaphorical lens of magic, devils, zombies, and tricksters. All of these terms are particularly relevant to "fantastic" cinema, my preferred term for movies that encompass fantasy, science fiction and gothic horror. Because so many films are hybrids, drawing from more than one of these generic traditions, I find the term fantastic to be a useful umbrella category to encompass all of these types of movies. While pure science fiction extrapolates its "fantastic" elements from technological and scientific principles, pure fantasy needs no such justification, often relying on supernatural or magical justifications for the seemingly impossible. Gothic horror often overlaps with fantasy in that regard with its vampires, witches, and ghosts, for example, but unlike pure

fantasy its main purpose is to be frightening.[1]

To begin, it may be useful to give a thumbnail description of what I mean by devils, zombies and tricksters. Just add a "d" to the word "evil" and you have the essence of the devil (or devils). As with the devil, a trickster is tricky but in a more whimsical way. Unlike the devil, tricksters are usually not outright evil despite their tendency to create havoc. And while zombies also create havoc, they are usually thought of as scary un-dead monsters who travel in ravening hordes to eat people's brains. This essay will consider these figures not *just* as types of characters or creatures *in* fantastic film, but also as apt metaphors for cinema itself. Thus, on a meta-level, I see devils, zombies and tricksters as relating to the tension between the *pro*gressive (hence positive) and the *re*gressive (hence negative) potential of the fantastic in cinema–indeed, as well as *all* cinema in general. Just as there is much overlap and hybridity among science fiction, fantasy, and horror as genres, these three figures likewise share overlapping characteristics that can also be placed along a continuum, thus highlighting some of the tensions between the positive and negative potentials of fantastic cinema.

From the earliest days of cinema, two key conceptions of film emerged that appear to be polar opposites, creating a dichotomy between fantastic and more "realistic" conceptions of cinema. On one end of the spectrum could be found the realist, "slice of life" films such as the Lumière Brothers' *Arrival of a Train in the Station* in 1895 (purportedly the first public projection of a movie), and on the other end of the spectrum formalist or "fantastic" movies such as *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) by Georges Méliès featuring fantastical tales, elaborate sets and costumes, and many of cinema's first special effects. Of course the reality vs. fantasy/fantastic dichotomy that seems to be established by the Lumière Brothers and Méliès so early on, actually proves to be a false dichotomy, since all cinema is in fact a fantasy – a magic trick of technology no matter how "realistic" it may appear to be. As Tom Gunning writes, early filmgoers understood this and considered even early "slice of life" films to be "trick" films (4). Furthermore, as Gunning (1989), Matthew Solomon (2010), Marina Warner (2002, 2006) and others have documented, the technology on which cinema is based has always been intertwined with the supernatural, with questions about reality

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[1] For a further discussion see Fowkes (2010) which includes my characterization of pure fantasy as featuring an "ontological rupture".

and illusion, and the value and limits of the visual. From the beginning, we find a persistent confluence of cinema not just with magic tricks, but also with the wonders of magic as a function of technology (hence a direct link to science-fiction whose fantastic elements are ostensibly rooted in science and technology). And of course magic as a concept in general is associated with the supernatural, further linking cinematic technology to fantasy and gothic horror. Indeed, the magic lantern, a precursor to cinema, was often advertised as a device used to "raise a ghost", thus making this link explicit. So is the magic lantern a technology or a supernatural device?

Méliès, one of the earliest filmmakers, was also a stage magician who not only featured magic tricks in his films, but also explicitly foregrounded the idea of film *as* a magic trick (hence the phrase "trick film" to describe these early short films). Solomon discusses Méliès's film, *The Vanishing Lady* (1896), remarking that the magic is far from just filmed magic tricks or filmed theater, despite the film's very theatrical *mise-en-scène*. Instead, the theatrical setting is merely the "ground from which the figure of the cinematic illusion can emerge" (34). Thus what risked seeming supernaturally "magical" to audiences at the time was actually featured by Méliès as a technological marvel. While traditional magic tricks seek to divert the spectator's attention from the mechanics of the illusion in order for the trick to work, Méliès combined the marvel of traditional magic tricks with the magic of cinema in ways that the viewer could not ignore. Many of the visual effects that Méliès reveled in as technical tricks eventually became embedded in mainstream Hollywood movies as devices to tell what appeared to be more realistic stories. But as Simon During writes: "As far as Méliès was concerned, what would become Hollywood's 'classic' cinema style consisted of magic tricks that did not declare themselves as such" (170).

Through the tricks of film technology, Méliès as a magician positions the filmmaker early on as a kind of trickster, a type of character common to myth, folktales, and fairy-tales around the world, including for example, the ancient Greek demi-God Hermes, the Native American trickster, coyote, and later Brer Rabbit, adapted from African American slave culture and made popular in print by the *Uncle Remus* tales of Joel Chandler Harris (1881). As previously noted, a trickster is tricky, but also usually benign, and comic or whimsical, all characteristics that well describe so many of the whimsical films made by Méliès. In addition, among the many

possible attributes of traditional tricksters is some kind of physical ambiguity and/or the ability to shape-shift or undergo metamorphosis (Hynes 34). Indeed, Méliès (as well as other magicians) delighted in using cinematic techniques to manipulate the physical world being presented, particularly evident in his manipulation of the human body, including his own photographed image, which might, for example, feature his head as impossibly enormous (Solomon 2, During 170).

It should be noted that while Méliès can be seen as a kind of trickster, he also frequently featured magic as connected to devils and imps, an association with a long history related to all kinds of illusions and hallucinations, which were throughout Western history seen to be the work of the devil. In fact both the magic lantern and the *camera obscura* (an optical device which preceded the magic lantern) provide another example of the association of devils with visual illusions, as their depictions in artist renderings frequently showed the devices conjuring up images of the devil (Warner, *Phantasmagoria* 138).

Notably, Méliès, as well as other early filmmakers, frequently drew on the Faust myth, made perhaps most famous by Christopher Marlow in the 1500s, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the early 1800s, and Thomas Mann in the 1940s. In this persistent and popular story, the ambitious Faust makes a pact with the devil who seduces him with magic and illusion. As Inez Hedges writes: "As visual spectacle, the Faust story was a natural for film" (13). Since the devil had long been associated with illusions and magic, it is no surprise then that Méliès began by featuring himself in films as the human Faust, but soon appeared in subsequent films as the devil himself. Furthermore, in many versions of the myth, in order to acquire knowledge or success, Faust does not just make a pact, he actually makes a bargain *to sell his soul to the devil*. Now, is not it interesting that the pervasive myth (wrongly) attributed to so-called primitive cultures characterizes the camera as a device capable of stealing a person's soul? (Warner, *Phantasmagoria* 189-192). So both the devil and the camera become symbols of soul-stealing, which brings us to zombies.

Most likely the most famous (and canonical) cinematic zombies are featured in George Romero's seminal film, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) in which the mutilated undead travel in mindless hordes to attack the living. Zombies are usually thought of as bodily husks; their monstrousness lies, in part, in their lack of "soul". Soul is often equated with spirit, music, and depth, but as Marina Warner writes, the

soul also is often associated with a sense of authenticity and of the individual as being *defined* by his or her soul (*Fantastic Metamorphoses* 39). The soul becomes a symbol of individuality that can transcend the body. But the zombie is then truly damned, because even if the human it once was – *had* – a soul, that soul is not just absent from the zombie, it does not go on to persist in heaven, for example, or anywhere else for that matter. The figure of the devil can thus be seen as a mediating figure in the traditional body/soul dichotomy, which could be represented on the one hand by the soul-less, decaying corpse of the zombie, or the human who in the Faust myth sells his soul (and thus because of the devil becomes *like* a zombie – a body without a soul), and the fluid shape-shifting spirit of many tricksters who can be seen as souls whose bodies can sometimes morph into different shapes or animal forms.

The relationship between shape-shifting and the soul bears some examination. As previously mentioned, Warner discusses the idea that the body is the receptacle of the soul, which leads also to the idea that the soul represents a person's true individuality. However, the soul as individual is thus both ratified by *and* called into question by shape-shifting. It is ratified because in one view the soul can remain intact *despite* shape-shifting. Indeed, in *Metamorphoses*, the eight-century poem by the celebrated Roman poet Ovid, shape-shifting is portrayed as a part of life, a fluidity to be celebrated. But it was eventually called into question over time, because in Judeo-Christian mythology, it came to stand in opposition to what it means to be human, again invoking something devilish and evil. Hence, in Dantes' *Inferno*, it is precisely the lack of stability, coherence and clear categorization that symbolize damnation, in a hell filled with hybrid and mutant beings (*Fantastic Metamorphoses* 35-6).

Interestingly, the earliest filmed versions of the Faust story position Mephistopheles not as an evil to be feared, but instead, as Hedges writes: "the character with whom audiences are invited to identify" (13), hence the fact that Méliès was willing to repeatedly cast himself as the devil. The devil thus "personifies" what Hedges calls "that use of diabolical magic that comes so naturally to cinema" (13), but it is also a type of magic and trickery associated explicitly with rebellion against the status quo (see, for example, Méliès's *Faust et Marguerite* from 1904 and *The Merry Frolics of Satan* from 1906). This positive attitude toward the devil in earliest cinema would soon change as movies became more respectable and

therefore a part of that very status quo. Yet, that more positive attitude nevertheless highlights the continuum between devils and tricksters.

While there are many definitions of what constitutes a trickster, many agree that, like the devil, a trickster uses trickery and deception. But *unlike* most conceptions of the devil he (or it) is rarely evil. As Lewis Hyde writes, "The Devil is an agent of evil, but trickster is *a*moral, not *im*moral. He embodies and enacts that large portion of our experience where good and evil are hopelessly intertwined" (10). While both devils and tricksters may be a cause of fright for certain characters, literary and cinematic tricksters usually create comic havoc, provoking laughter from audiences (Hynes and Doty 7). In many cases, the trickster creates chaos, but in doing so serves a positive function – to question or transform imbalanced power relations, for example, as did early cinematic versions of the rebel, devil-hero.

One function of the trickster is to challenge petrified ideas or situations as found, for example, in the classic film *Harvey* (1950) in which the title character is a trickster who takes the form of a 6 ft. tall invisible rabbit. The film employs the trickster's mischievous pranks to take pretentious characters down a peg, to erase class distinctions, and to create space for a more imaginative and less narrow-minded way of looking at life. It emphasizes the value of imagination, refusing to draw a clear bright line between the possible and the seemingly *im*possible (Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film* 68-80). As Mikail Bakhtin recounts, medieval carnivals provided a ludic space where class and power roles were temporarily inverted, thus linking this rite to the trickster who, as William J. Hynes writes, is often a "situation-invertor" (34). For example, in *Harvey*, the characters try to commit the protagonist, Elwood P. Dowd (Jimmy Stewart), to a mental institution because they believe he is crazy for seeing and talking to a giant invisible rabbit. Yet by the movie's end, the "sane" people are proven to be misguided and Elwood turns out to be one of the sanest characters in the film, thus inverting the dichotomy of sane vs. insane. Furthermore, the rigid authority of the overly rational psychiatrists is completely undermined in favor of a more relaxed and friendly approach to others that relies on friendship and goodwill as opposed to categorization by social class, or a judgment about what is normal or abnormal (Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film* 74).

Another example of a cinematic trickster includes Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* (1988) in which Michael Keaton plays the title role as a lewd over-the-top trickster

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who inadvertently helps the other characters find happiness. In fact, the whole movie operates as a kind of trickster by inverting generic expectations, as the ghost protagonists attempt to exorcise the new (living) owners of their house (hence the living seem to be "haunting" the dead). Furthermore, the living are arguably more ghoulish than the dead and the ghosts are metaphorically filled with more life than the pretentious new owners who care only about money and status and seem "dead" to simple pleasures and honest friendship (Fowkes, "Tim Burton" 238-9). Although Beetlejuice is characterized as being in some state of "undead-ness", and actually looks zombie-like with his dark-rimmed eyes and chalk-white face, here, as in *Harvey*, this trickster-character unwittingly facilitates the spirit of the fantastic itself, namely an appeal to look at the world afresh and to value the imagination, a point made in the movie when most of the characters "can't" see the ghost-protagonists. As *The Handbook for the Recently Deceased* explains to them, the living usually will not see the dead. Only the Goth teenager, Lydia, is able to see them, raising the question of whether the living "can't" or just "won't" see ghosts through a lack of imagination or narrow-mindedness (Fowkes, "Tim Burton" 235-40). The importance of imagination and open-mindedness is related not just to the trickster's function but to what J.R.R. Tolkien called "Recovery", a key benefit of "Faerie" or fantasy stories. Through quality fantasy, a reader (or viewer in this case) can recover a sense of wonder about the world and can be helped to rethink stereotypes and preconceptions (75-87). So if the trickster's job is to overturn stale assumptions and preconceptions through processes of inversion, reversal, chaos and – perhaps most important – through a process of creative imagination and metamorphosis, then the trickster is intimately linked to fantasy as a genre, and to the fantastic in general.

Thus, in imagining a contest between tricksters and zombies, we can see that zombies seem to represent the petrified, mindless (and hence imagination-less) state that the trickster seeks to remedy. Tricksters "animate" stale situations while zombies – although spirit-less and mindless – *are* nevertheless "animated" corpses.

That zombies are animated corpses recalls the fact that cinema essentially works its magic by the animation of still images. Furthermore, we can see the tension between the traditional zombie and trickster as central to cinema itself. As we have seen, it is no accident that Méliès as a filmmaker repeatedly cast himself in his own films as either a trickster-like movie-maker performing cinematic magic tricks, and/or

as the devil, again in both cases performing miraculous illusions through the magic of cinema. But as Hedges and others write, Méliès's focus on causal story-telling helped to spur the formation of the Classical Hollywood film, a type of film with historic and global influence. Furthermore, the desire to better tell the Faust story in particular spurred the invention and exploitation of special effects, effects that would come to be incorporated into *all* kinds of movies, thus also contributing to the creation of narrative conventions that came to be associated with the Classical Hollywood film (Hedges 14). As Hedges writes, "The history of film style is thus inseparable from the Faust story" (42-3). However, this, in tandem with the desire to make movies appropriate for so-called respectable audiences, not only encouraged stories that supported the status quo (thus the devil must be evil, not heroic), but it also codified cinematic conventions and spurred the commodification of cinema as a commercial art form. However, in doing so, the evolution of cinema raised the risk of its own zombification, so to speak.

Thus, a key tension arises. Can fantastic cinema fulfill Tolkien's call to bring to us, in trickster-style, a liberating sense of "recovery" or have we made a Faustian bargain to accept zombification for the privilege of engaging in the cinematic experience? The potential for cinema to steal or kill souls – to zombify – operates on multiple levels – through the mythification of cultural values and norms, including stereotypes of all kinds, through formulaic narrative structures, and through the commodification of the art form.[2] The continuum between magic, devils, tricksters, zombies and cinema itself is relevant to fantasy/sci-fi content, but also provides a way to view the dual-edged nature of these stories. Movies risk zombifying the audience (and hence the culture), and perhaps "tempt" us in devil-like fashion through false utopian promise. But the other side of that coin could be that the trickster-like possibilities in the best stories and movies can re-animate *with* soul. In the best case, their spectacles entrance us, yes, but in a way that elicits wonder, and *not* mindless zombi-ism. Indeed Warner speaks at length of this dilemma, likewise invoking the soul-less zombie as a state of modern alienation untouched by the marvels of our technologies. She refers to what she calls "Ensouling", which requires "an act of self-

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[2] Here it should be noted that for his own part, Méliès resisted the industrialization of movie making, as dramatized not long ago in the film *Hugo* (see also Solomon 58).

consciousness" to reinstate the suppleness of the imagination with a renewed emphasis on fluidity and mutability as guiding metaphors (*Phantasmagoria* 377-9).

To the extent that the conventions of mainstream film themselves also risk becoming zombified (hence a lack of creativity and imagination in cinematic story-telling), we can return once more to the idea of shape-shifting or metamorphosis as the opposite tendency – the ability to change. Shape-shifting and transformation and metamorphosis are also, in fact, common features of fairy tales, which happen to form a central strand of the fantasy genre. Just as the Faust myth seems to have had a major impact on cinematic storytelling, the traditional fairy tale has likewise been hugely influential. It should thus also be noted (big surprise!) that Méliès is responsible for many of the first fairy-tale films, featuring not just shape-shifting, but magic and characters with devilish but usually whimsical trickster-like qualities. For example, Méliès produced a version of *Cinderella* in 1899 featuring the physical transformation of pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, along with the superficial transformation of a young woman in rags into a beautifully dressed woman. In addition, we have the transformation of our protagonist from a degraded scullery maid into a princess by story's end. As Jack Zipes argues, fairy-tales actually provided another key template for the Classical Hollywood film narrative (as defined by David Bordwell and others) *before* that canonical narrative form had evolved in cinema (20). That is, along with the Faust myth, the structure of the fairy tale helped spur the movement away from merely a "cinema of attractions" (to use Gunning's phrase) or "trick" films, towards a cinema built on narrative causality. Specifically, Zipes notes several key elements of mainstream Hollywood cinema that seem to echo the classic fairy-tale template famously offered by Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale*: 1) A protagonist is confronted with a prohibition that s/he wishes to violate; 2) This is followed by a subsequent banishment or departure on a journey; 3) The protagonist then faces a task or series of tasks related to the prohibition or original problem. And then of course, there is the resolution of the problem – a return to equilibrium in some ways, but also some type of transformation linked to a happy ending (21). The happy ending of course ties together mainstream Hollywood films (known for happy endings), fairy tales, and fantasy as a genre, particularly as defined by Tolkien's understanding of "Faerie", where "Escape" is not necessarily negative – not an escape from our problems, but an escape into a world that helps in the process

of Recovery.[3] For Tolkien, the happy ending is not, therefore, a cop-out, but essential (a view echoed by Bruno Bettelheim in his work on fairy tales and children). Zipes writes that in fairy tales or traditional "wonder tales," what is at stake is a struggle between those who can or will experience wonder and those who have become tainted in some way. Those characters have been spoiled by "conventionalism, power, or rationalism […] [T]he villains are those who use words and power intentionally to exploit, control, transfix, incarcerate, and destroy for their benefit" (22). If we see the devil as an evil character who tempts other characters to fulfill their own wishes through an appeal to power and control (among other things), we can also see how zombies exhibit "evil-ness" as symbols of the "transfixed", and the "incarcerated". Like other evil characters in fairy tales, zombies "destroy for their own benefit".

If, as Zipes writes, villainous (or devilish characters) in fairy tales wish to "abuse magic by preventing change and causing everything to be transfixed according to their interests" (22), then the trickster has the capacity to disrupt this process, again linking it to the "marvelous protagonist [of fairy tales who] wants to keep the process of natural change flowing" (22). This characterization is highly reminiscent of tricksters who collapse rigid power structures, and who cause what was once static to now be fluid. This again is the fluidity of metamorphosis which is at the heart of so much of myth and magic.

Now zombie movies may be generically pure horror or they may overlap with science fiction in the many cases where the state of zombification is, for example, seen as a kind of infection or virus. But they may also overlap with pure fantasy where they become comic or parodic devices and not purely sources of classic horror. Beginning with George Romero's 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*, and the 1979 sequel, *Dawn of the Dead*, which is set in a shopping mall, it is not hard to see zombies as an expression of postmodern alienation in a consumer-driven capitalist environment. It is also not hard to see the connection between a consumer-driven, mediated world that is all surface (simulacrum), and zombies who themselves are all surface. Even their insides are frequently "worn" on the surface as their guts spill out (Talk about wearing your heart on your sleeve – zombies wear their guts on their face…). So as media representations – hence simulacra in a way – zombies are

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[3] Note that while many view "escapism" as an irresponsible neglect of life's difficulties, Tolkien finds a positive potential in escape from legitimate or intractable problems.

simulacra twice over, pressing home the point that in a postmodern era, we risk understanding the world only as an infinite regress, a *mise-en-abyme* of images. As a symbol of mindless consumption (since zombies consume brains), zombies remind us of the way we so often "consume" mainstream movies, funding the media industry through mindlessly watching the spectacles and "escapist" fare that supposedly either amuse us or distract us from our alienation and from the real world problems we face.

Even the parodic and comedic versions of zombies that are so prevalent now, "animate" this conundrum. Is the comic, self-aware zombie itself a kind of trickster and therefore, in my mind, a positive symbol? Or is it just another example of the perils of the postmodern era? Such movies or T.V. shows are highly reflexive, acknowledging the conventions of the zombie movie, and they are often rife with intertextuality. Do the use of humor, persistent reflexivity, and the idea of a speechless and mindless monster evolving into an articulate, self-aware character (as in the T.V. show *Z Nation*) signal a positive metamorphosis? Or, is it just the same old postmodern-inflected, commercialized impulse to capitalize on what is already popular? Thus we have zombie movies and T.V. shows that metaphorically cannibalize other zombie movies, eating their "brains", so to speak.

As we ponder comic zombies, we are returned to the relationship between metamorphosis and hybridity – because in Hollywood films and beyond, generic hybridity is quite common – more common than many film scholars had once acknowledged.[4] So again we have a conundrum: is the hybrid an abomination, as per the hybrid creatures in Dante's *Inferno*, *or* is it a sign of postmodern capitalist cannibalism? Or, returning to Ovid and tricksters – is it, in fact, a sign of creative re-combination and synthesis? Certainly, in many parodic versions, the zombie essentially *becomes* a trickster. No longer scary, the parodic zombie makes fun of its own rigidity and mindless mechanical motions. It is precisely the humor brought by the trickster that helps to "lubricate" rusty ideas or situations and suggests that such dichotomies as progressive vs. regressive, and comic vs. horror (for example) may not themselves be so rigid. As Lewis Hyde writes, "To treat ambivalence with humor is to keep it loose; humor oils the joint where contradictions meet" (274). The use of humor is thus a key device of the trickster. Perhaps zombies have always operated at the border of both horror and the comic. For example, we might invoke Henri

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[4] See, for example, Rick Altman's book, *Film/Genre*. London: BFI, 1999.

Bergson's theory of the body acting like a machine, as Gregory Waller does (306). As Bergson writes, a comedic response may be elicited upon observing, "something mechanical encrusted on the living" (49). Here we have yet another overlap between horror, comedy, and science fiction, where the horrific body of the zombie elicits laughter by resembling an icon of science fiction, namely a robot or automaton.

Waller notes that in *The Dawn of the Dead*, the raiding motorcycle gangs that attack the zombies at the mall take part in a "gleeful", "exuberant" frenzy of violence. He writes: "With its nonstop, bloody mayhem, this sequence resembles an animated cartoon come suddenly to life or even a silent film comedy, particularly when the raiders begin to throw cream pies into the zombies' faces and squirt them with seltzer bottles" (316). Then they go on a parodic shopping spree, loading up on guns and ammunition, looting for looting's sake. It is comic because it is so absurdly over the top and it also makes a pointed connection between zombies and humans, as the human motorcycle gang mimics the voracious behavior of zombies, and zombies seem to mimic crazed shoppers at the mall. In addition, when two survivors, Fran and Peter, escape at the end of the movie, according to Waller, they "are escaping not only from the immediate threat posed by the living dead, but also from the mall and from a life that was itself becoming a sort of living death" (321). Are these zombies really so far from the snobby, status-conscious family that moves into the Maitland's house in *Beetlejuice*?

As many have pointed out, zombies are not so much a threat in isolation as they are in a frenzied horde. Almost by definition, the traditional zombie wields its horrific threat in a group and thus the "mass-ness" of zombies provides a handy analogy for mass media. And unlike vampires, for example, whom you must invite to come into your home, zombies just invade, also a bit like the pervasiveness and invasiveness of so much of our mass media. Furthermore, because, as Waller writes, zombie movies like this make no clear distinctions between legitimate or illegitimate violence, between offensive vs. defensive violence, or between necessary or gratuitous violence (353), I suggest that these parodic zombie movies can operate in trickster-like fashion to call into question the usual categories that govern not just movie conventions but also those conventions as they echo in our actual lives. Here I refer not only to the often false binary categories such as just cited with reference to violence, but also to the binaries that infuse our understanding of what is normal,

what is valuable, as well as our often binary conceptions of media as either being "realistic drama" or "escapist fantasy".

Indeed the goal of this essay has not been so much to answer the question as to whether cinema and, in particular, fantastic cinema is progressive or regressive, but to show that "either/or" is in itself a potentially false or at least overly rigid binary that, in trickster-like fashion, is constantly "animated" by fantastic stories. As I have argued elsewhere, fantastic stories excel in holding up conflicting or competing ideas to scrutiny, while also showing us that sometimes neither or *both* ideas – both "realities" – can be acknowledged (Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film* 9-10).[5] That is, the progressive vs. regressive tension in fantastic cinema probably cannot be resolved. In fact, perhaps it is this very tension that is the whole point. In short, the dichotomy of reality vs. illusion with which I began this essay, as well as so many other dichotomies, are questioned in cinema through technological trickery, tricksters, devils, zombies, fairy tales, and other fantastic elements – all "animated" by the conundrum that is the magic of cinema itself.

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[5] Also see my discussion of *The Wizard of Oz* in this same book, particularly pages 59-67.

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Hunter home from the hill – Thomas Örn Karlsson

The Subversion of Heroic Masculinity in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* and its Main Film Adaptations

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Abstract | The present essay explores the way in which the main character in Richard Matheson's post-apocalyptic science fiction novel *I Am Legend* (1954) and its three main film adaptations so far – Ubaldo Ragona's and Sidney Salkow's *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), Boris Sagal's *The Omega Man* (1971), and Francis Lawrence's *I Am Legend* (2007) – is represented as the embodiment of a once hegemonic masculinity now on the verge of extinction. In particular, I contend that the four texts in question deliberately subvert expectations of triumphant male heroism in order to question the dominant western discourse which each successive version of the main character represents. This discourse seems to be clearly identified in each of the four texts with a middle-class, heterosexual, still traditionally patriarchal masculinity. Therefore, the differences in the literary or filmic construction of the protagonist's gendered identity can be read as differences in the way each author perceives and depicts contemporary mainstream socio-cultural forces as hegemonic. Not only does each version of the "legend" of the main character's heroic

masculinity challenge the latter's supremacy, but it also subverts his every claim to cultural leadership, as he is turned into a mythical Other.
Keywords | Masculinity; hero; science fiction; subversion; *I Am Legend.*

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Resumo | Este artigo explora a forma como a personagem principal do romance pós-apocalíptico de ficção científica *I Am Legend* (1954), de Richard Matheson, e das suas três adaptações fílmicas – *The last Man on Earth* de Ubaldo Ragona e Sidney Salkow (1964), *The Omega Man* de Boris Sagal (1971) e *I Am Legend* de Francis Lawrence (2007) – é representada como a personificação de uma masculinidade outrora hegemónica, mas agora à beira da extinção. Mais especificamente, argumento que os quatro textos em questão subvertem, de forma deliberada, as expectativas do heroísmo masculino triunfante de modo a questionar o discurso ocidental dominante que cada versão sucessiva da personagem principal representa. O referido discurso parece estar claramente identificado em cada um dos quatro textos com uma masculinidade de classe-média, heterossexual e ainda tradicionalmente patriarcal. Assim sendo, as diferenças na construção literária ou fílmica da identidade de género do protagonista podem ser lidas como diferenças na forma como cada autor percebe e representa as forças sócio-culturais contemporâneas da corrente dominante como hegemónicas. Não só cada versão da "lenda" da masculinidade heróica da personagem principal desafia a supremacia da anterior, como também subverte as suas reivindicações à liderança cultural, à medida em que essa é transformada num Outro mítico.
Palavras-Chave | Masculinidade; herói; ficção científica; subversão; *I Am Legend.*

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Masculinity in Crisis

Since my analysis of the four texts in question is mainly concerned with the differences in the representation of masculine gender, I should begin by addressing the choice of a "Masculinity in crisis" as the starting point for my exploration of gendered individuality as the embodiment of dominant socio-cultural systems in the sci-fi universe created by Matheson in his novel *I Am Legend* (1954), which was further expanded by Ubaldo Ragona and Sidney Salkow in *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), by Boris Sagal in *The Omega Man* (1971), and by Francis Lawrence in *I Am Legend* (2007). Within an academic landscape of gender fluidity and flexible, plural masculinities and femininities, a capitalised Masculinity stands out like a sore thumb:

a controversial allusion to former understandings of gender as a polarised dichotomy (De Beauvoir; Cixous). Yet, by Masculinity I do, in fact, mean one of the dimensions in which the Derridean centre of a hegemonic socio-cultural Discourse is articulated, as Masculine is the gender of the Subject around which the symbolic fabric, practices and behavioural norms of said discourse are spun.

In the wake of Raewyn Connell's groundbreaking book *Masculinities,* favouring the second term in the binomial Masculinity/masculinities has become a standard practice, as gender scholars' interests move towards more eccentric identities on the socio-cultural map of a globalised, post-colonial world. Yet, three of the four texts which concern us here belong in the Euro-American socio-cultural and political atmosphere of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, when First and Second Wave Feminist theories were still deconstructing oppositional definitions of Masculine Subjects and feminine objects. Gender as a cultural construction depends on the synchronic forces that shape it, as much as it does on the diachronic evolution of the paradigms that contribute to the status quo in which a given definition of gender roles and identities exists. All four texts in question attempt to represent and confront canonical configurations of the aforementioned rigid model of Masculinity, as defined by twentieth/twenty-first centuries western hegemonic ideologies in general, and by U.S. mainstream cultural Discourses in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and early 2000, in particular. This means that monolithic, granitic definitions of western Masculinity will have to be addressed as the fundamental paradigms which the four texts explored here re-produce and subvert at the same time. The phrase "Masculinity in crisis" refers to both the crisis that traditional configurations of patriarchal Masculinity were experiencing by the 1950s, and to its deconstruction and questioning in Matheson's text, as well as in its three cinematic versions. As Yvonne Tasker and Paul Watson convincingly argue, the 1980s and 1990s see white manhood wade through an ongoing crisis. According to Carol Clover, films such as *Magnolia* (1999) and *Fight Club* (1999) exemplify the way in which *fin de siècle* "angry white male films" map the "great unmarked or default category of western culture" (qtd. in Watson 16). But "orthodox" western Masculinity has undeniably been under the overt siege of marginal/ised subjectivities for most of the twentieth century (Corber 23-78; Kimmel 318-338).

In each version of the text originally created by Matheson we shall see the collective western ideal of a heroic, triumphant Masculinity being re-presented and re-framed as fantastic, mythical, legendary, and, as such, ultimately extinct. The very existence of various versions of the demise of such a Masculinity could be interpreted as proof of the fact that a western masculinity in crisis might be the actual myth, an undead monster that periodically springs up from its tomb to scare current cultural hegemonies with visions of their destruction, but is then exorcised and buried again. However, the first and most evident subversion put in place by all four authors in their respective texts consists in challenging the dominance of a specific socio-political and cultural Discourse – which in Sci-fi lingo is translated as "civilisation" – by pushing it back into a mythical past, the land of what is gone forever, as well as by configuring the future as a hostile territory for said Discourse/civilisation. What I find particularly interesting in these four versions of the legend of an extinct Masculinity is that they represent the future disempowerment of those who, at the time each text is being conceived, are already in the process of losing at least a portion of their former power. It is as if all four texts were deliberately waving goodbye to their respective versions of hegemonic, and therefore heroic, Masculinity, long before any such thing could actually take place.

Post-Apocalyptic Darwinism

The premise is the same in both Matheson's and Ragon-Salkow's texts. A parasitic bacterium that lives in and off its guests' blood stream turns the latter into vampires in order to guarantee the continued supply of fresh blood cells. The guests, weakened by the bottomless appetite of the bacteria, eventually die. Yet, their mobility and, to some extent, even their brain activity are maintained, as the bacteria keep the heart pumping and the blood flowing. The guests turn, therefore, from living vampires into undead vampires.

The main character in Matheson's novel, Robert Neville, turns out to be immune to contagion, thus dodging the bullet of the world-scale epidemic that has wiped out mankind, and in the process, reaped the lives of his wife and daughter. Year after year, he has heroically resisted the vampiric victims of the plague, as they domineer the city by night, and has devoted each day to seeking and destroying both

living and undead vampires, as they await nightfall hiding away in comatose sleep. Neville is eventually sentenced to death by his enemies, the very monsters he has been so diligent in dispatching. Yet, from the point of view of the vampires, the monster is Neville, a legendary fiend, who is said to amble about by day, looking for sleeping victims whose hearts he stabs with wooden stakes. Once captured, this mythical vampire-slayer will not just go from spilling vampires' blood to spilling his own: he will distil his very essence into the fantastic tales with which future generations of vampires will grow. In other words, Robert, the last man on Earth, the last line of defence for mankind and human civilisations, seeps into the vampires' collective subconscious in the same way in which the Draculas and Nosferatus, the ghosts, zombies and Shuten Dóji of our present and past, rural and urban mythologies have entered our collective imagination.

Sagal's film is the first to represent the infected Others as albino mutants, rather than vampires. Sagal's "Family" of white-pupiled, sore-ridden religious fundamentalists represents a grotesque subversion of cultural undercurrents that challenge and resist the hegemony of imperialist capitalism. By exaggerating and distorting the Others' claims and portraying them as a cultural involution, Sagal is *de facto* forcing the viewer to sympathise with Charlton Heston's heroic character. Spectators may pity him for his hyperbolic and arrogant virility, but will prefer the latter's cultural, political, economic and military imperialism to the dogmatism of previous versions of cultural hegemony, such as the Spanish Inquisition, of which the Family is a caricature. Lawrence returns on the theme of genetic mutation, elaborating on Sagal's approach to and emphasis on cultural, rather than merely physical mutation. However, in this case, cultural involution is so extreme that the new hairless, light-sensitive mutant species is represented as Neanderthal-like cave people, closer to voracious apes than to humans. Robert's nemeses are, indeed, closer to the infected "runners" in *28 Days Later* (2002) than to classic renditions of vampires such as those created by Polidori, Le Fanu and Stoker. In any case, the new species, through cultural and/or physical occupation of the territory once ruled by mankind, will eventually successfully erase human presence from most of – as is the case with Sagal's and Lawrence's films – if not all of the planet – as is the case with Matheson's and Ragona-Salkow's texts.

What I find particularly interesting is the subversion of the Darwinist principles that explain mankind's rise to the top of the food chain. Matheson's text, as well as every single one of its subsequent adaptations, depicts a human species weakened to the point of extinction and ultimately defeated by another species, the new ruler of the global terrestrial ecosystem. Difference, then, is identified with change, and change with evolution. This constitutes, of course, one of mankind's worst nightmares, as reflected in the countless speculative works of fiction on the topic of alien and terrestrial species capable of obliterating human supremacy – *Planet of the Apes* (1968)*, Independence Day* (1996)*, Predator* (1987)*, Alien* (1979), and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)*,* to mention but a few. It is also at the heart of the myth of the vampire as a mutant version of humanity, an idea also explored in Tony Scott's 1983 film *The Hunger*. In it, the character played by Susan Sarandon beholds, in a horrified state, how her own blood cells lose the battle against the mutant cells. Likewise, Matheson's Neville will find his suspicions validated when he peers into a microscope and sees Ruth's blood invaded by the mutant bacteria. However, the exact opposite is to be found in all three cinematic versions of the legend of Robert Neville/Morgan[1], as the latter contemplates how *his* cells overcome and defeat the mutant ones. Here lies then a double subversion: in the 1960s, 1970s and 2000s versions of the legend, what is considered to be the hegemonic version of Masculinity, and consequently of mankind, is to be defeated and sublimated into a myth by a new version of mankind, while, at the same time, it is also represented as humanity's last hope and resort against extinction.

Heroic Masculinity: The Final Act

Robert Neville/Morgan is born a tragic hero, for his destiny is determined by the very polarisation that defines him as the essence of manhood, as well as an epic hero, inasmuch as his destiny is the destiny of his *gens,* his *epos,* his very species. Above all, however, he is an all-American hero: Matheson's is a pioneer, Lawrence's is a patriot, and Sagal's a glamourous Hollywood action man. Vincent Price's Robert constitutes a remarkable exception. His is the least American of the four Roberts,

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[1] In *The Last Man On Earth,* the main character has been renamed Robert Morgan.

practically an antithesis of the various types of action heroes so often performed by Heston and Smith on screen. The fact that the film directed by Ragona and Salkow is an Italo-American co-production both explains the exceptionality of Vincent Price's performance, and, at the same time, seems to confirm that this is not only a critical time for American Masculinity, but for the centrality of manhood in western cultures in general.

Not only is Robert Neville/Morgan the focaliser and, therefore, subject of the textual discourse, but he is also represented as the last specimen of a defunct Discourse, that of the hegemonic socio-cultural system with which western civilisation has traditionally been identified. Robert's death is the death of a U.S. dominated western Discourse, as seen from a post-apocalyptic perspective. Robert is its last great hero, a cultural hero, as well as a hero in a literary and cinematographic sense. When we see his heroism reach a crisis and self-question the meaning and legitimacy of his own identity, we are confronted with a critical scrutiny and discard of a whole socio-cultural system. In each of the texts at hand, subjectivity, heroism, civilisation and culture in crisis are identified as western, male, masculine, heterosexual, and – with the exception of Will Smith's Neville in the most recent adaptation – unmistakably white. In fact, Neville's gender is the central axis around which his whole subjectivity revolves. The four versions of the heroic Masculinity embodied by Robert can be thus interpreted as four versions of a scrutinising gaze into what, in turn, are four different versions of the western hegemonic Discourse. Historical and socio-political events change both the gazer and the object of their gaze (Berger; Crossley). Therefore, the subversive inversion of roles which Matheson, Ragona-Salkow, Sagal and Lawrence all place at the heart of their respective texts suggests that, indeed, gazes do travel in both directions and that no gazer goes unseen. The post-apocalyptic world in which all four narratives are set is still a cosmos built upon and around the polarised oppositions, which sustained and structured Robert's now extinct society.

Robert's version of heroic masculinity re-generates in every successive re-presentation of Matheson's legend. Ragona-Salkow's Robert is already changed, since the world's geopolitical configuration is not the same in the 1950s as in the 1960s, the 1970s, or in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The western socio-cultural map will be shaken by international, as well as intra-national conflicts. In

each new adaptation, Robert resurrects as his undead nemeses do, and with each new reinterpretation of the crisis of western culture comes a new version of heroic Masculinity. Crisis is then equated to change in socio-cultural paradigms, as well as in the representation of Otherness, but above all to a metamorphosis understood as both evolution and involution. Indeed, the first metamorphosis is the one which sees the Masculinity at the centre of the system, and on which the Euro-American discursive fabric is woven, branch out into a blasphemous trinity. Blasphemous not only for its association with the horror of the unnatural subversion to which the world is subjected, but also, and mostly, because it dares question the reign of the homogeneous, monolithic Masculinity conceived as the triumphant apex of humanity: the white[2], heterosexual male, middle-class Subject is now, as Victor Frankenstein once was, a hero, a monster and a victim. He fights for the survival of mankind as becomes a hero; yet, his actions soon reveal his monstrosity, not in his physical dimension, for that is reserved to the infected Others, but from a moral point of view, seeing that he derives sadistic pleasure from the experiments which he carries out on victims of the plague. He is as much a victim of himself as he is of those Others he calls "freaks" (*The Last Man on Earth* 1:24:58).

Matheson's Neville: The Origin of the Legend

Matheson seems to make a point of representing Masculinity as rough in a rather stereotypical way. Paradoxically, Neville, the last defence against inhuman chaos, the last representative of "true" civilisation, cannot be bothered to clean his home or do the laundry "[f]or he was a man and he was alone and these things had no importance to him" (4). In keeping with this stereotypical representation of Masculinity as the strong, untamed sex, violence seems to come easy to Neville. The narrator lingers, time and again, on those scenes in which Neville's uncontrolled aggressiveness lashes out on women, regardless of whether they are vampires or look "human" to him, as is the case with Ruth:

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[2] In Matheson's novel, within an overwhelmingly white cosmos, only one racially different individual is mentioned, a co-worker of Neville's, whom the latter calls a "Negro" (36).

> With a snarl of rage he drove his right palm across her face. She staggered
> back, then looked at him dizzily. Abruptly she started crying helplessly.
> […] "I said I'm not going to hurt you," he told her again.
> […] "What are you afraid of?" he asked. (Matheson 67-68)

Oblivious to the irony of his question, Neville's Masculinity is played against Ruth's vulnerability as a grotesque performance of what is most questionable about patriarchal gender constructions. This could be read as an open criticism of U.S. standards of abusive Masculinity that contrasts with the good-humoured indulgence that sets the tone in John Wayne's and Maureen O'Hara's spanking scene in *McLintock!* (1963). Naturally, a Masculinity such as this cannot but be dominated by irrepressible sexual urges:

> It was the women who made it so difficult, he thought, the women posing
> like lewd puppets in the night on the possibility that he'd see them and
> decide to come out. […] Deep in his body, the knotting heat began again
> […]. He knew the feeling well and it enraged him that he couldn't combat
> it. (Matheson 6)

Still, in various chapters and particularly in chapters ten through twelve, we see this beastly, base manhood elevated into speculative intellectualism. Necessarily rational, as his oppositional construction to irrational Otherness demands, Neville's intellectualism comes hand in hand with a coldness verging on emotional castration. Yet, he does seem to be emotionally, even sadistically invested in his quest for a cure to restore Mankind to the top of the food chain.

> He grabbed the string with tense fingers and swung the cross before her
> eyes. She flung her head away with a frightened snarl and recoiled into the
> chair.
> "Look at it!" he yelled at her.
> A sound of terror stricken whining came from her. Her eyes moved wildly
> around the room, great white eyes with pupils like specks of soot.
> He grabbed at her shoulder, then jerked his hand back. It was dribbling
> blood from raw teeth wounds.
> His stomach muscles jerked in. The hand lashed out again, this time
> smashing her across the cheek and snapping her head to the side.
> Ten minutes later he threw her body out the front door and slammed it
> again in their faces. (33)

This violent, cruel, sexually rampant and still decidedly white Masculinity is, first and foremost, a domineering force, dead set on controlling and exploiting his environment. Like the *Homo Economicus* depicted by Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe,* his heroism is that of the first pioneers, that of the Frontier settler, who can only count on himself and his own resources. Most of the first half of the novel is devoted to providing a detailed description of the practical side of Neville's life: how he turns his house into a sound-proof, inexpugnable fortress; how he grows his own garlic; how he forages for food and fuel. Matheson's Neville is undoubtedly a survivor, a Darwinist triumph right before the fall. And yet, his species will become extinct after his death, despite all of his aggressiveness, resourcefulness and sexual drive. However, in the final chapters, this agonising Masculinity undergoes a striking transfiguration.

Neville, initially so easily aroused that he was even turned on by the "vile" spectacle vampire women put up for him every night to bait him out of his fortress (Matheson 6), by the end of the novel has completely lost his sexual appetite; he has lost the will to reproduce his genes. In fact, he has turned into an ascetic, asexual hermit, an autotrophic entity, protected by his very isolation, as the guest body protects the anaerobic bacteria by isolating them from oxygen. Yet, it may be objected, the bacillus is not autotrophic: it kills to ensure its survival. And that is exactly what Neville does: he kills to keep his identity up; he kills to avoid surrendering to Otherness; he kills to keep up the opposition against the Other. However, empathic identification with the Other is still possible when a third party breaks the oppositional configuration of normativity versus Otherness. A surge of grief and rage overwhelms Neville as he witnesses his old friend and undead vampire Ben Cortman, his sworn enemy for the past several years, shot down by the unfeeling machine-guns of the living vampires, the new rulers of the world (89). As soon as the strongest type of Others takes over Neville's ethnic cleanse, he suddenly empathises with those poor, clumsy, undead vampires hunted down by the living vampires, victims of the latter group's desire to build a new world in which the dead do not rise from their graves to harass the living. His empathy does not emerge from compassion, but from a sense of ownership and entitlement. The Other, in this version of heroic Masculinity, is actually redefined over time so as to be inscribed into the hegemonic

Discourse, Neville's Discourse; Cortman constitutes an identification mechanism, a reminder of Neville's humanity, of his Sameness.

Ultimately, Matheson's Masculinity is defined by its brittle rigidity, by its unsustainable inflexibility. Masculinity in the original legend of the last man on Earth is thus necessarily gone, lost, mythical. Yet, Matheson's seems to almost pay homage to this extinct model of Manhood, as his Neville dies proud of who and what he is and stands for, of his individuality, of *his* Otherness. Even when the members of the emerging civilisation confront him with his mindless brutality, far from rejecting his monstrosity, Neville congratulates himself on having achieved immortality, even though this is due to his being perceived as the abject Other by a rising dominant Discourse, that of the society of the living vampires, a new mutant humanity.

Ragona-Salkow's Robert: *The Last Man on Earth*

If Matheson's Robert Neville was a Frontier man, his first filmic reincarnation definitely leans towards the *pathos* of a tragic hero. Contrary to the rude, brutal, even cruel Robert created by Matheson, iconic B-movie actor Vincent Price plays an almost aristocratic version of the last "true" man on earth. Dishevelled, even uncouth in the opening scenes of the film, this black-and-white Robert progressively recovers his aplomb and poise as the story progresses. In the flashbacks with which we are revealed how a plague has led to Robert's current condition as the only survivor, as well as in the scenes that follow Robert's seemingly fortuitous encounter with Ruth, he is impeccably groomed. Price's Robert dies in the end, as all the other Roberts do, but he dies in shiny shoes and with his vest and jacket on. In fact, the only difference between the Robert we see in the flashbacks, well-off and satisfied with his life, and the Robert that offers a dainty cup of coffee to a terrified Ruth, is the fact that the latter does not wear a tie and has changed the matching blazer for a more casual two-button jacket. Everything else, from the neatly combed hairstyle to the gentleman-like manners, is still there.

It could even be possible to accuse him of a gentility verging on femininity, evident, for instance, in the almost ludicrous clumsiness with which he wrestles the undead, in the unheroic shuffling of his feet as he tries to run, in his dropping grenades delicately with his finger tips, as if he were sprinkling rose petals. Price's

Robert is the antithesis of an action man. His velvety yet high-pitched voice rises to the point of screeching whenever he is seized by strong emotions. His polished accent and formal diction would better suit a Harvard professor than someone who is a vampire-slayer by day and a depressive alcoholic by night. The pragmatism with which Matheson's Neville would annihilate his undead nemeses or the spectacular stunts of Sagal's and Lawrence's Nevilles have nothing to do with the spectral way in which Vincent Price stalks his victims in their bedrooms. The acclaimed interpreter of many a Gothic fiction, Vincent Price exudes ambiguity. His hollow cheeks, sharp nose, long claw-like fingers and slightly hunched back remind one more of a traditional rendition of Stoker's Dracula, than of an avenging hero. Further subverting the clear-cut difference between the vampire Others and the down-to-earth, all-American Masculinity performed by Matheson's Neville, Vincent Price's deep under-eye circles and haunted facial expressions make him initially look more like an undead monster than the gentleman he becomes again after meeting Ruth.

His gentility and inability to fight his enemies convincingly could be among the reasons for his dying despite his immunity to the plague. However, there might be another, more powerful reason than his failure as a paladin. Vincent Price's Robert dies hating Otherness. Unlike Matheson's Neville, who, resigned to the new world-order, commits suicide in his prison cell minutes before his public execution as a murderer, Ragona-Salkow's Robert rebels against his impending end as a sacrificial lamb. In the final climatic scene, Price's Robert seeks refuge in a church, but finds himself surrounded by the ranks of the avengers of all those vampires he has executed in their sleep. Shivering in panic, he paces the dais where the main altar sits, as he growls at the Others: "You're freaks! I am a man!" (1:25:14-1:25:18). Very much like Matheson's, this Robert, too, defines himself in opposition to alterity; however, Ragona-Salkow's film emphasises Robert's loathing for non-submissive difference, that which refuses to subject itself to a taming, "healing" process. Vincent Price's character dies furious, knowing that the world now belongs to o/Others, and, what is worse, knowing that he, mankind's champion, was powerless to stop them.

Sagal's Neville: the Last Great White Hero

The third Robert steps up the ladder of hegemonic Masculinity: besides being a tough hero and a researcher, he is now also a military medical doctor, this being a combination which takes him to the top of twentieth century western social structures. Indeed, as soon as he enters his fortified abode, we see him chit-chat amiably with a bronze bust of Julius Caesar, the quintessential icon of militarised, imperialistic and patriarchal Masculinity, as if he were his intimate friend.

His Masculinity, imbued in testosterone, is defined by speed, risk, action. The film opens with a wide shot of a deserted American city, down whose avenues a convertible sports car in a fiery red colour flies away at increasing speed (00:00-00:01:03). A close-up soon shows the profile of a smiling Charlton Heston in dark aviator glasses. He gently tilts his head this way or that, evidently enjoying himself immensely, while his hands smoothly veer the wheel to the sensual rhythm of sophisticated jazz music. Unencumbered by traffic rules or other vehicles, a cultivated, white, middle-aged man truly owns the whole city: an obvious allegory of the way in which the Masculinity at the centre of the 1970s U.S. cultural mainstream has been moulded on James Bond's values. Neville's pleasure ride comes to a sudden halt as a shadow swiftly moves behind the curtains of a window (00:01:04). With impossible agility, Neville hits the brakes, and almost in one single movement, produces a light machine gun, shoots and bursts the window into smithereens. Self-indulgence merges seamlessly into Other-oriented aggression, as we are shown the two main sides of this 1970s version of Matheson's pioneer man: a hedonistic yet ruthless alpha male. His embodiment of hegemonic Masculinity is also remarkably narcissistic, with its sensual exhibition of Heston's virile body, as he looks at the reflection of his naked torso in the mirror with undisguised complacence (00:11:34-00:11:36), and displays, unashamed, an uninhibited sexuality (00:52:44-00:53:14). Heston's Neville is the only one to have sexual relations with someone who is not his wife and to actually enjoy the game of seduction. He is also the only one not to have lost a wife and daughter to the plague: as far as the spectator knows, he has never been married at all. His is a free, untamed Masculinity. Finally, this is a masculinity that represents and defends opulence as the apotheosis of western civilisation. If Matheson's Neville is described as a lower middle class man, and Lawrence's will be

represented as middle middle class, Ragona-Salkow's and Sagal's are decidedly upper middle class men who still inhabit the same plush mansion where they lived in the pre-plague days. Unlike Price's Robert, though, Heston's has been systematically collecting western art, taking home priceless paintings, statues and exquisitely carved furniture.

His love for the very best in life contrasts dramatically with the stern austerity of his nemeses, clad in black robes and intent on burning every book they can lay their hands on. In this case, the Others are not vampires but infected photosensitive religious fanatics who have sentenced Neville to death for being "obsolete" – the alpha male turned "omega man" – as well as for his use of "science, medicine, weapons and machines" (00:31:29-00:32:15). With his death, the brethren will "cancel the world you civilised people made, […] erase history from the time when machinery and weapons threatened more than they offered" (00:35:23-00:35:30). Sagal's Neville dies like Jesus Christ: shedding his blood to save humankind from death itself. Charlton Heston does not need a church to materialise his divinity; unlike Price's character, he does not need to stand before an altar to sublimate his heroism into martyrdom. Heston's Neville simply has to abandon his body for it to acquire the stance of a crucified Nazarene, from whose stigmatic wounds blood salvifically flows. Instead of a cross, the fountain in which the hero's corpse floats underscores the idea that his sacrifice is a spring of life for mankind. Even though the smug, consumeristic, chauvinist Masculinity represented by Robert must die for such sins as dropping nuclear bombs (00:10:44-00:10:46), nevertheless, it still constitutes an indisputable improvement over the insane dogmatism of the western Medieval Discourse, represented in the film in the obvious way in which the black robes and ritualistic behaviour of the "Family" imitate a stereotypical version of the Spanish Inquisition. Neville's Masculinity has, indeed, become obsolete, but it still dies in splendour, atoning for his previous destructiveness with the gift of life to humanity. The one to pick up the baton of idealised Masculinity is a young medicine student – and thus a fellow scientist – who, instead of being a military man, is a hippie from the generation of peace, solidarity and universal love. Young Dutch, Paul Koslo's character, is rational, brave, powerful, yet more gentle and caring. With this new model of manhood leading the way, humanity moves forward.

Lawrence's Neville: The Last Father

The African-American Robert in Lawrence's film is still a military scientist, and a virile, muscular man. He constitutes, therefore, a synthesis of the mainstream and the minoritarian – he is, after all, Black. Yet, in this post-apocalyptic context, the mainstream he embodies is *de facto* a minority in itself, or rather, a singularity in opposition to the "normality/normativity" of the new species and their incipient society. Compared to him, the Otherness of the new mutant race becomes even more monstrous, particularly as the script and the special effects magnify the Others' primitive violence. We could say that the aggressive, domineering masculinity of the chieftain of the infected Others stands as a grotesque representation of one of the taboos of current political correctness: patriarchal masculinity at its best/worst. Neville's Masculinity, on the contrary, is represented as a balancing act of intellectual acumen, strength and stamina, emotional intelligence, tenderness and humour, self-discipline and sense of duty, even self-sacrifice for the good of the many.

Like his predecessor in Sagal's film, Will Smith's Neville performs the role of a father figure for those weaker than himself – specifically, dogs, children and women. Nevertheless, this time Neville also comes back as a loving husband, capable of expressing his feelings through cuddling, looks and words, and as a faithful friend, even if his friend is a female German Shepherd dog. Smith's Neville is, in fact, a protector of nature, who will put himself in danger by deliberately failing to shoot a family of lions so as to ensure the survival of their cubs. Hunter extraordinaire, twenty-first century Neville succeeds in merging a role traditionally associated with aggressive masculinity in one of its oldest forms, with the paternal attitude that urges him to protect the nature with which he is familiar from the invasion of "unnatural" life-forms. Needless to say, both aggressiveness and paternalism are unequivocally entwined in patriarchal constructions of Masculinity.

In fact, Will Smith's patriarchal Masculinity is, above all and in a very etymologic sense, mostly evident in his role as a doting father – to his daughter when she was still alive, and now to mankind as his adopted child. As a good father should, Neville sacrifices his life so that two fellow survivors, Anna and little Ethan, may take the vial containing the cure to the plague to a colony of survivors in Vermont. Like the main characters in the previous two versions of Matheson's text, Smith's Robert

manages to synthesise a cure to the plague from a sample of his own blood. Thus, Neville becomes both a symbolic and a biological father for mankind, as his genes give humanity a chance to survive and keep reproducing. This makes him a Christ-like saviour whose sacrificial role is as obvious as Sagal's Robert's had been in his dying scene in *The Omega Man*.

In Lawrence's film, Neville does not become a legend for the "Darkseekers", but for the colonists, those human survivors who will pass on the memory of the new father of humanity from generation to generation. Neville's legend stays, then, well within the boundaries of a collective discourse of Sameness. What is more, in his twenty-first century re-incarnation, Neville, the perfect father and the representative of a model Masculinity now redeemed from its previous emotional rigidity and aggressiveness, is still obviously and openly hostile to any attempt to redefine what constitutes "people". He is incapable of admitting that the Others, far from being merely a corrupted and zombified version of a lost humanity, have their own identity and do not need mankind to define themselves in opposition to it. Neither are they animals, with no control over their instincts and unable to learn. On the contrary, they prove themselves capable of reacting in innovative ways, showing remarkable creativity and a firm determination when it comes to achieving a goal that requires patience, planning and skilfulness. At the end of the film, they even manage to find and break into Neville's fortress. They had never really *wanted* to do so until they had been given a reason powerful enough. From minutes 00:32:37 to 00:32:43, the spectator is offered a close-up of a "Darkseeker", a male who has tried in vain to prevent a female from falling into Neville's trap. For a second, we see his countenance contort with fury, which is consistent with the image of the mutants that Neville's point of view has led us to espouse. Then, his fury melts into despair and despair fades into bereavement. That female is just a lab rat to Neville, but a loved one, perhaps a partner, for this male "Darkseeker". For love, this infected male organises hundreds of mutants and leads them to the rescue. For love, he uses his own body to ram open the door to Neville's laboratory and free his beloved. But it is only the spectator that has been offered a glimpse, however brief, of the utter grief that has spread over the infected male's countenance. Neville has not stayed to look Otherness in the face. Afro-American Neville, the perfect representative of politically correct manliness, still cannot see beyond himself, for he only understands the Others in

relation to and in opposition to himself. He cannot conceive the idea that what has moved the "Darkseekers" to hunt him down is not hatred, but rather love. Because of his blindness to the hues and registers of difference, Neville must die.[3]

Conclusion

Regardless of whether the predominant force in Robert is heroism, monstrosity or victimhood, and regardless of the specific reincarnation of heroic masculinity, the protagonist must necessarily die in the end. The reason for the inevitability of Robert's death is that he simply refuses to co-exist with difference. The original Robert dies because he has turned difference into an enemy, irrespective of which Others are hostile and which, like him, are simply trying to survive. 1964 Robert dies because he is incapable of saving humanity from difference. 1971 Robert dies *in order to* save humanity from difference, as change and difference are equated with extinction. 2007 Robert closes the circle as his death is due, once again, to his inability to distinguish among the Others more countenances than those of the enemy, the deviant, and the inferior. The last Robert dies because he could not see the face of love on the body of difference. The Robert who refuses to change is the Robert who refuses to evolve. And those who refuse to evolve, while having a past and a present, do not have a future. That is why both he and the socio-cultural constructions he represents must die so that a new version of civilisation may guarantee the survival of humankind.

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[3] There is an alternative ending to Lawrence's film, which is only to be found in the special DVD edition released in 2008. In it, Neville realises, at the very last minute, that the leader of the infected and the woman tied to the stretcher are in love. Confronted with undeniable evidence of the fact that the Others are capable of the most sublime, as well as the most human of all feelings, Neville sets the woman free. He does not, therefore, blow the laboratory up with a grenade – as was scripted in the 2007 cinema version. The leader of the "Darkseekers" magnanimously forgives him and lets him go, together with Ann and Little Ethan.

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Wonder – Thomas Örn Karlsson

"Is This Where You Build Space Lasers?": Generic Confrontations, Subversive Reformulations, and Nostalgic Pastiche in the Postmodern Web Series *Stranger Things*

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Abstract | This article explores the intersection of science fiction and horror worlds canvassed by the Duffer Brothers' Netflix series *Stranger Things* (2016-). It examines the series' championing of postmodern pastiche, as well as the text's overwhelming employment of cultural quotation able to transport spectators back to the early 1980s. Through close examinations of the series' use of setting, science, and social anxiety, this article argues that the Duffer Brothers successfully engage the generic structures of horror and science fiction while simultaneously subverting them. It contends that by capturing the cultural, social, moral, and historical milieu of the era, *Stranger Things* infuses further nostalgic intertexts into an already nostalgized

referent, arriving at a new postmodern pinnacle. A mélange of generic tropes, sentimental homage, and contemporary progressive ideology, this piece argues that the Duffer Brothers do not simply draft a love letter to their artistic inspirations, but intelligently contextualize the sociocultural connotations of the cinematic realm *Stranger Things* revisits. In this sense, this essay disputes scholarly claims dismissing the techniques of genre and pastiche, as well as the postmodern on-screen space evolving into a responsible reformulation of nostalgic and generic cinematic frameworks.

Keywords | *Stranger Things*; science fiction; pastiche; nostalgia; subversion.

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Resumo | Este artigo explora o cruzamento dos mundos da ficção científica e do horror apresentada pela série da Netflix, *Stranger Things* (2016-), criada pelos Irmãos Duffer. Aborda a defesa da série do *pastiche* pós-moderno e a esmagadora utilização que este texto faz de citações culturais capazes de transportar o espectador de volta ao início dos anos 80. Através de uma análise atenta do uso que a série faz do cenário, da ciência e da ansiedade social, este artigo defende que os Irmãos Duffer interpelam com sucesso as estruturas genológicas do horror e da ficção científica ao mesmo tempo que as subvertem. Defende-se ainda que, ao capturar o ambiente cultural, social, moral e histórico da década de 80, *Stranger Things* suscita mais cruzamentos textuais nostálgicos num cenário de alusão já por si nostálgico, atingindo um novo pináculo pós-moderno. Sendo uma mistura de tropos genológicos, uma homenagem sentimental e uma ideologia contemporânea progressiva, esta série dos Irmãos Duffer não constitui simplesmente uma carta de amor às suas inspirações artísticas, mas uma contextualização inteligente das conotações sócio-culturais do reino cinematográfico que *Stranger Things* revisita. Neste sentido, ela contesta as alegações académicas que repudiam as técnicas de género e do *pastiche*, bem como as do espaço no ecrã pós-moderno que evolui para uma responsável reformulação dos enquadramentos cinematográficos de nostalgia e de género.

Palavras Chave | *Stranger Things*; ficção científica; pastiche; nostalgia; subversão.

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In any case, it is the trick, used in the most intelligent manner, that allows the supernatural, the imaginary, and even the impossible to be rendered visually and produces truly artistic tableaux that provide a veritable pleasure for those who understand that all branches of art contribute to their realization. (Méliès 4)

In the quotation above French pioneer director Georges Méliès (1861-1938) concludes his short commentary on the use of cinematographic effects and their ability to affect spectators. Over a century removed from this era of a rapidly evolving and transforming cinema style and technique, this rendering of supernatural and imaginary images evokes generic classifications of science fiction. Portraying fictional worlds, whether in familiar settings or light-years across the universe's unknown, the science fiction genre, both printed and on-screen, has transported audiences to fantasy landscapes long before Méliès' exploration of early special effects, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Alexander Veltman's *Predki Kalimerosa: Aleksandr Filippovich Makedonskii* (1836) to Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) and Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). Beginning with Méliès' exploration in the early 1900s, through both "Golden Ages" of science fiction cinema (1950s; late 1970s and 1980s) and to modern day, the genre's on-screen presence is recognized for its exploration of human nature and philosophical questions about social fears, paranoia, and anxiety. These stories are crafted in the mode of fantasy – a symbolic treatment of the real world that seems to involve escapism but genuinely deals with social commentary by employing science and technology. Though science fiction's cinematic presence has always involved a repetition and adaptation of the genre's conventions, more contemporary additions to the expanding library have demonstrated an emergence of another form of intertextuality, as Annette Kuhn notes, "in the form of quotations which purposefully draw attention to themselves, appealing to the audience's 'cultural capital' of prior knowledge of the history of cinema" ("Introduction to Part V" 177). By extending and strengthening the network of affiliations and applications between various science fiction texts, these modern iterations lean on spectators' familiarity with previous installments of the genre (Neale 161). Beginning with *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977; later retitled *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*), the cinematic sphere of science fiction began to unabashedly refer to itself. Combining old genres with new, specifically with a focus on this cinema's content over context, science fiction films were created *about* science fiction films – relating more to each other than to relevant sociocultural issues. This quality of pastiche, now commonly understood as a defining feature of postmodernism, is present in varying degrees throughout all contemporary science

fiction cinema. No more explicitly can this postmodern mélange be examined than in Netflix's recent science fiction-horror web television series *Stranger Things*.

Stranger Things, the brainchild of twin brothers Matt and Ross Duffer, set social media ablaze after its release in the summer of 2016. Tapping into a myriad of cultural content, from science fiction and horror films, Stephen King novels, and Dungeons & Dragons lore to interpretations of quantum mechanics and the *Silent Hill* videogame series, the series' intertextual references are as undeniably meticulous as they are vast. Though nostalgia for references primarily from the late 1970s and 1980s directly appeals to an audience with such cultural capital, executive producer Shawn Levy notes how the series is "about outsiders, and how there's a little bit of outsider in all us, and how we try to fit in" (GoldDerby 10:34). Engaging with the audience's outsider status, whether real or imagined, as well as "wanting episodes to feel dense, filled with emotion, genre tropes and twists, and characters you're leaning into" (GoldDerby 9:51), *Stranger Things* is able to construct a world that stands on its own, regardless of the viewer's understanding of its pastiche application of film, literature, philosophy, and history that its mélange style pays homage to. However, this additional layer of synthesis, as Méliès' quotation contends, "provides(s) a veritable pleasure for those who understand that all branches of art contribute to their realization" (4). While as a stand-alone original series *Stranger Things* is entertaining, thought-provoking, and intelligent, the barrage of nostalgic citations (the creators' self-aware winks at knowing spectators) provide an entirely separate, yet inextricably linked, degree of gratification. The series' seemingly boundless cultural quotations call for manifold examinations, including, but not limited to, feminist readings, interpretations of visual style, fan culture research, children's film studies, and issues of spectatorship. In this essay, however, I will explore *Stranger Things* and its intersection with science fiction, horror, and fantasy genres – particularly its employment of setting, political and social fears/paranoia, the dichotomy between good and evil science, and how the Duffer Brothers' encyclopedic knowledge of nostalgic cultural reference grant them the ability to subvert the generic structures that the series is synchronously established upon.

The "Unsatisfactory" Demarcation of Science Fiction, Horror & Fantasy

In his deliberations on postmodernism Fredric Jameson states, "intertextuality, then, functions as a deliberate, built-in feature of the aesthetic effect of postmodernism's weakened historicity" (72). Under the impression that science fiction cinema's turn to nostalgic intertexts "constitutes pseudo-historical depth," he argues these quotations' "aesthetic style displaces real history" (Jameson 72). While the dissemination of revisionist history in genres like the western and children's films certainly raises troubling issues of appropriation, xenophobia, and patriarchy, science fiction cinema's recycling of the past does not set out to revise history books. The genre's inherent confrontation of historically pertinent social, cultural, and political issues shifts alongside said concerns. Sensible viewers do not comprehend the events of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956), *The Thing (from Another World)* (Christian Nyby, 1951), or *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) as historical actualities, but instead as works representing fantastical interpretations of the social panics of their times. Hollywood's "accusation" of science fiction cinema's use of pastiche (King and Krzywinska 55) has an implicit negative connotation, as if the genre's recycling of past themes, narrative arcs, character archetypes, and moralities is indicative of its incapability to adapt or evolve. Instead of denoting it as a stylistic decision or creative practice, scholars – though often analyzing and interpreting film directors who utilize this compilation style such as Quentin Tarantino, Wes Anderson, and George Lucas – often ridicule their technical and aesthetic choices critically. Science fiction cinema, similarly derided until the 1990s in terms of intensive scholarly examination and significant genre criticism, was immensely popular in the public sphere, but was difficult to pin down precisely by scholars.

Kuhn believes the reason science fiction took as long as it did to be seriously investigated by film academics is due to its overlapping with other film types, "notably horror and fantasy; and efforts to draw lines of demarcation between science fiction and neighboring genres have proved on the whole unsatisfactory" ("Cultural Theory" 1). While horror and science fiction, after further critical examination by scholars, are now considered distinct genres, they do still share characteristics, and often films can be categorized under both classifications. Prominently, they make use of the larger mode of fantasy, as William Sims Bainbridge denotes, "[…] the culture

of science fiction is oriented toward magic as much or more than it is toward science" (233). Under the larger umbrella of fantasy, these genres can be manipulated as a means of avoiding contemporary reality, and/or a means of elucidating it. These films are able to "draw into a cinematically real content 'copies' which have no originals," thereby creating the possibility of "'what-if' they inhabited our own specular space" (Telotte 152). These fantastic opportunities allow cinema employing this mode to take advantage of special effects, otherworldly settings, and heroic tales of triumph and redemption to influence discussions on paramount contemporary issues.

Differentiating between the science fiction and horror genres, each category reflects varied edificatory roles: horror is principally interested in the individual at odds with society or with an extension of himself, while science fiction is interested in society and its foundations in conflict with one another or an alien other; horror deals with moralistic chaos, the severance of the natural order, and the peril to the tranquility of hearth and home, while science fiction is mindful of social chaos, the disturbance of social order, and the threat to the balance of civilized society (Sobchack, *Screening Space* 29-30). *Stranger Things*, unapologetic in its cultural mélange, championing its complete adoption of the pastiche style, draws from the more expansive cinematic mode of fantasy as well as both the science fiction and horror genres. Unsurprisingly, the series, which can also be understood as an "epic eight-hour movie" (Duffer), illustrates genres' long demonstrated preponderance of range and flexibility (Blake 69). Countering both Hugh Ruppersberg's general condemnation of science fiction films as discouraging the hope in humankind, reactionary, and "grounded in patterns of the past instead of the possibilities of the future" (37), and Anne Cranny-Francis' claim that because "the discursive practice of most generic forms is essentially conservative, the text which is thus unproblematically inflected will usually be politically conservative as well" (219), *Stranger Things* is able to temporally reformulate science fiction's traditional futurism by using the past, along with its respective social, cultural, political, and moral connotations, and concurrently illuminating the characteristic tropes of said era with a topically progressive and subversive ideology.

Transporting spectators back to the small-town, utopian vision of suburbia that is Hawkins, Indiana, in November 1983, the Duffer Brothers, who were not even born until the following year, erect this stage as the pinnacle of nostalgia, invoking images

of Spielberg settings and a sound that merges John Carpenter and Tangerine Dream. As Sobchack notes, "[t]he dominant attitude of most mainstream SF [science fiction] has been *nostalgia*" (229). It is not simply nostalgia in narrative, morals, visuals, or sound, but an overwhelming nostalgia that leaks into every possible crevasse of this imagined past. From the movie posters in the boys' rooms, the original *Star Wars*-themed toys, and the '80s era Eggo waffle packaging to the resurrection of horror and science fiction synth soundtracks by electronica band Survive, the now primitive technology (walkie-talkies, landline telephones, cathode-ray tube televisions), and classic high school fashion, *Stranger Things* does not utilize nostalgia as its dominant attitude, but instead constructs itself as a shameless love letter to the era it ferries its audience back to. This return to history, another goal of the postmodern ethos, becomes "the instantiation of a new form of historicity […] an eclectic one, a historical pastiche. Pastiche is ultimately a redemption of history, which implies the transformation and reinterpretation in tension between loss and desire" (Bruno 193). *Stranger Things*, fully embracing the pastiche technique, employs it not only in its visual style, cultural quotations, and narrative and character arcs, but also historically as well. Without making claims to historical accuracy or factual representations of lived events, the Duffer Brothers are able to *redeem* objectionable aspects of the films, literature, and even societal norms of the period by subverting character archetypes, allowing for multi-dimensional female heroines, reconciled jocks, and unsavory treaties between good and evil; gender roles, a relentless single mother, a female teen who chooses her romantic partner, a female government mercenary; generic tropes, the oblivious parents remain oblivious, society remains the same amidst a suspicious cover-up and near disaster, a friend sacrificed for the protagonist's moral misjudgments […] to name a few. By deploying particular conventions of the science fiction and horror genres and offering audiences a knowing wink at its self-aware methods, the series is able to denaturalize tropes, confront expectations, and negotiate new nuances for the genres, as Cranny-Francis delimits:

> Firstly, such a practice may *de-naturalize* that convention, making visible its discursive operation. Secondly, it may *confront* readers with their own expectations, revealing these as discursively constructed and motivated. Thirdly, as a negotiation of signifying practice and meanings, it may produce wholly *new meanings*, new knowledge. (219)

Presenting spectators with predictable, generic structures and then upending them by either disrupting the expected outcome or substituting the stereotypical gender roles, *Stranger Things* crafts an irrefutably '80s nostalgia environment within contemporary ideological boundaries, (post)modernizing the science fiction and horror genres.

The "Upside Down"-ing of Utopian Suburbia

The utopian suburbia that is Hawkins, Indiana, draws its inspiration most ostensibly from *E.T. the Extra Terrestrial* (Spielberg, 1982). This rhetorical landscape, a comfortable small-town domestic setting, is a perfect "world of material richness and clutter, soft toys and squabbles […] ultimately a celebration of a particular fantasy of late twentieth-century American life" (King and Krzywinska 77). Given this quixotic locale, the majority of the story's action could be overlooked; this quotidian scene is a child's paradise – suburban living, nuclear family, identical cul-de-sac homes. The two texts even share abutting woodlands (mirthfully labeled "Mirkwood" by the boys in *Stranger Things*, after the woods in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937)) to their respective halcyon paradises, inculcating in them the "soft, mysterious inexorability of a classic tale of enchantment" (Kael 264). Consequently, this idyllic environment is commonplace in the science fiction and horror genres – the sense of strangeness evoked is "not always dependent upon the inherent strangeness or familiarity of its actual content" (*Limits of Infinity* 87), as Sobchack asserts. The unsullied, small-town police station featured in *Invaders from Mars* (William Cameron Menzies, 1953) becomes as perceptibly staggering and alien as an invading spaceship. Taking advantage of staging proven successful in the past by both *E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg, 1977), *Stranger Things* also articulates a "widely held longing for a return to moral certainties, in these instances in the form of the traditional values of small-community life" (Kuhn, "Introduction to Part I" 17). Utilizing an already nostalgized referent in the suburban neighborhood (Sobchack, *Screening Space* 274), the Duffer Brothers are able to conceive a universe that is representative of the traditional '80s small-town experience, respect the conventional elements of children's stories, and establish the ambience for a fantasy adventure in which a peculiar feeling of strangeness leads to a potentially apocalyptic disaster for this picturesque setting.

As Chief of Police Jim Hopper (David Harbour) recounts to Joyce Byers (Winona Ryder) in episode one of the series, the only serious crimes occurring in Hawkins in the last two decades are the kidnapping of lawn gnomes and a bird's mistaken identification of a woman's hair as its nest. Hopper's brusque dismissal of Joyce's presumed maternal anguish over her youngest son Will's (Noah Schnapp) disappearance is warranted in this instance – not a soul in Hawkins could have envisioned this to be the "other one out of 100" ("Chapter One: The Vanishing of Will Byers," 00:18:10-00:18:35) exception to their peaceful and mundane existences. However, this stylized intimate and familiar communal setting, compared to a "Norman Rockwell magazine cover for *The Saturday Evening Post*" by Sobchack, conjures up feelings of vulnerability:

> In such a world, from ritual and habit, from warm, friendly, social – even eccentric – Americana will carry the visual force of a Fourth of July fireworks display […] What is chilling about the films, what causes our uneasiness, is that they all stay right at home threatening the stability of hearth and family, pronouncing quietly that nothing is sacred. (*Limits of Infinity* 121)

By depicting even this highly saturated and eccentric slice of small-town Americana as susceptible to disaster by evil scientific or technological experiments, a sense of foreboding slowly shivers down the spines of spectators, begging the question: if this idealized suburban neighborhood is not safe, then what *is*? When the most devastating outcome for a child is a curfew interrupting a game of Dungeons and Dragons, it is difficult to fathom a nefarious government backed national laboratory that is conducting calamitous experiments on children with psychokinetic powers for international spying purposes in your backyard. Science fiction's promise to send viewers to alien worlds, realistic and ordinary yet entirely fantastic and bizarre is administered in *Stranger Things* in the nightmarish version of reality – "the Upside Down".

Taking its cue from early science fiction literature of the 1940s, science fiction cinema's narratives hinge on "the bleakest implications of technology […] 'modern' science fiction […] rather than being a problem-solving literature was a literature of despair" (Malzberg 67-68). The Upside Down, an alternate dimension representative of the series' reality overwhelmed with darkness, decay, and horror, results from

covert tests attempting to unlock the brain's potential at Hawkins National Laboratory, which is run by the U.S. Department of Energy. Taking advantage of the genre's employment of pseudo-science, the science fiction imagination is given a wide berth to explore unfamiliar worlds and temporal curves, whether through worm-holes, warp drives, or in this case, semi-permeable gateways (King and Krzywinska 85). Not fully comprehended by Dr. Martin Brenner (Matthew Modine), the scientist principally responsible for the portal's appearance, nor any of the undercover government agents tasked with covering it up, the group of boys refer to this alternate dimension as the Upside Down after Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) rationalizes it by literally flipping the Dungeons and Dragons game board upside down to describe where their missing friend is trapped. This sinister simulacrum of 1980s suburbia, a consequence of the social fears and paranoia surrounding nuclear energy, the Cold War, and the Watergate scandal, has been the subject of many fan theories. Longing to properly define and explain the phenomenon, the Upside Down has been hypothesized (by fans and cast alike) as a protean representation of each character's subjective darkness, a dystopian future where nuclear war has wiped the planet of any resemblance of the human race, the Vale of Darkness (or the Shadowfell / Plane of Shadows) from Dungeons and Dragons lore, or even the *Silent Hill* videogame series' "Otherworld". The only "scientific" explanation provided is by the boys' science teacher, Scott Clarke (Randall P. Havens), who likens this hypothetical dark version of reality to Hugh Everett's many worlds interpretation, delineated to the children with the "flea and the acrobat" metaphor, also the title of the series' fifth episode. The inclusion of reasonable theoretical reference points to Kingsley Amis' definition of science fiction, in which he expresses these situations as "hypothesized on the basis of some innovations in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extraterrestrial in origin" (18). Instead of being praised for a realistic depiction of science like recent releases *Gravity* (Alonso Cuarón, 2013) and *The Martian* (Ridley Scott, 2015), *Stranger Things* blends familiar nostalgia with paranoia and pseudo-science, illustrating a unique abnormality within this utopian vision of 1980s suburbia.

Regardless of personal theorems, this bleak and inhospitable alternate reality, confronting spectators with a mélange of images both alien and intimate, is commonly adopted in science fiction. As Susan Sontag explains, "this nightmare – the one

reflected, in various registers, on the science fiction films – is too close to our reality"
(113). Drawing inspiration from the xenomorph wall of humans harvested for eggs in
Alien, interdimensional communication via lights in *Close Encounters of a Third
Kind*, and portals in the walls of the victim's home in *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper,
1982), the Upside Down's medley of cinematic quotation, familiar Americana setting,
and alien ambience conspire to visually subvert this imagined past, affecting
spectators with a world "psychologically as well as virtually awesome" (Sobchack,
Screening Space 118). This eerily murky dimension and nightmare structure, an
amalgam of the technological and ostensibly organic, attracts a simultaneous curiosity
and anxiety, longing for explanations to this dark simulacra's presence yet also fearful
of what may be discovered. The Upside Down's emergence, prompted by Dr.
Brenner's instructions to Eleven to reach out to a monster while tapping into her
psychokinetic abilities inside of a sensory-deprivation chamber, not dissimilar to
Altered States (Ken Russell, 1980), results from Dr. Brenner's hubris, recklessly
trifling with an alien unknown and opening this idyllic suburban utopia to a
conceivably apocalyptic force.

Monstrosities

The monster in *Stranger Things*, nicknamed "the Demogorgon" by the boys
due to their discovery of its presence shortly after unleashing said Dungeons and
Dragons' monster in an unfinished game, is evocative of "experiences of a hidden or
transcendent reality" (Wessel 182), in this instance, the shadow simulacrum that is the
Upside Down. Altogether akin to *Alien*'s facehugger creature, the carnivorous plant in
Little Shop of Horrors (Frank Oz, 1986), and the vegetable-based alien in *The Thing
(from Another World)*, this monster, unlike the genre's norms, does not cause social
disaster or disorganization. While the groupings of main characters are both the
primary subjects of the series and also those most affected by this monstrous
presence, the rest of Hawkins does not enter a frenzied panic – in fact, when Joyce
and her oldest son, Jonathan (Charlie Heaton), are arguing in the town's streets over
the presumed loss of Will, the onlookers are taking in this disturbance as a show (as
Jonathan cries after storming off "The show's over!" ["Chapter Four: The Body",
00:14:26-00:15:52]) rather than a threat to their very existence. The monster's origins

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are nebulous compared to the genre's normative structures as well. While the monster in the horror genres has supernatural origins and that of science fiction results from outer space or produced by nuclear testing or the work of a diabolical scientist (King and Krzywinska 50), the Demogorgon's provenance is unexplored, aside from Dr. Brenner's awareness of its presence within another realm. With no face, spindly limbs, and a flower-like head (when sprouted), this seemingly organic monster is introduced, at least, in the style of the horror film. Witnessed for the first half of the series in blurred body parts, grainy black and white photographs, and silhouetted through an interdimensional wall portal, the monster is not fully revealed until the fateful flashback in which Eleven makes contact with it. This strategy, "the manner in which the filmmaker usually introduces the Creature (as) calculated to shock or arouse the audience to terror or fear" (Sobchack, *Screening Space* 44), is characteristic of the horror genre. This inherent connection between Eleven, the tortured girl, presumed to be raised since birth by Dr. Brenner, with psychic abilities whose escape prompts the series' inciting incident, and the monster, though not necessarily literal, shapes spectators' relationship with each of these alien Others.

Remarking about the shift in empathy for contemporary science fiction's monstrosities, Sobchack states "this is not to say that alien Others are never represented as threatening and villainous […] rather to emphasize that if and when they are, it is generally within a narrative context in which other aliens are shown as friendly and 'humane'" (*Screening Space* 293). Eleven, the eventual conqueror (for now) of this monster, begins the series as the alien Other before becoming an essential member of the boys' gang – often saving them from imminent danger, whether it be their pesky school bullies, diving into a quarry, or the entirety of Hawkins from further destruction at the hands of the monster. An empathetic figure, Eleven, who bears a striking narrative resemblance to both Charlie in *Firestarter* (Mark Lester, 1984) and Carrie in *Carrie* (Brian de Palma, 1976), is separated from birth from her parent(s), isolated from the rest of society, put through strenuous scientific experiments and mental torture at Hawkins National Laboratory at the hands of Dr. Brenner, and is hunted down by a covert quasi-governmental paramilitary agency throughout the narrative. She represents the "good" side of the Eleven/Demogorgon dynamic. The Demogorgon, with its kidnapping of human bodies for the incubation of further monsters (*Alien*) and parthenogenetic modes of conception (Creed 215)

(*The Thing* [John Carpenter, 1982]), is unlikely an inherently evil Creature. Spurred by Dr. Brenner's insistence of Eleven making contact with it, the monster could have easily minded its own business tending to one of its eggs in its native dimension. However, granted access to another world, its hunt for energy to create additional alien creatures begins. While the rationale behind its initial capture of Will Byers is yet to be deciphered, with many fan theories abounding, this monster is coded as evil because of the narrative context – compared to Eleven, it is likely that an alien creature would fall on the opposite side of the good/evil spectrum. The Demogorgon is not a villainous invading alien but one representative of the irresponsible actions of government organizations and an audacious scientist synthesized with the social fears and paranoia brought about by the sociopolitical climate of the 1980s.

In her demarcation of science fiction and horror films, Sontag notes the science fiction genre's exploration of the proper and humane use of science versus one rooted in obsession compared to horror films' particular examination:

> In the horror films, we have the mad or obsessed or misguided scientist who pursues his experiments against good advice to the contrary, creates a monster or monsters, and is himself destroyed […] One science fiction equivalent of this is the scientist, usually a member of a team, who defects to the planetary invaders because "their" science is more advanced than "ours". (105)

Stranger Things maintains the strong moralistic message of the science fiction genre but also casts Dr. Brenner in this "mad scientist" role, uniting the two genres in what King and Krzywinska designate as "an unholy marriage" (46). By relating science to its positive or negative social effects, a dichotomy is established between morally sound and evil science. Dr. Brenner and his inhumane experiments, taking place covertly at Hawkins National Laboratory, embraces the role of "scientist as Mother/God" (King and Krzywinska 53), the figure whose hubris releases alien forces into the world which even he cannot control. Delineative of Darth Vader in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980), Dr. Brenner shares a desire to control others and the tragedy of a figure that fancies such grand delusions (Williams 235). Morally opposite of Dr. Brenner is Mr. Clarke, the boys' science teacher and president of the A.V. Club at Hawkins Elementary. Presumably sharing the outsider status of the boys in his childhood, as well as concurrent mutual interests in horror

films and radio technology, Mr. Clarke, instead of wielding his scientific knowledge for selfish and immoral gains, is responsibly sharing his expertise with the boys. Instructing his students to "never keep a curiosity door locked" ("Chapter Seven: The Bathtub", 00:25:55-00:26:07), Mr. Clarke, though he certainly could be more inquisitive about the boys' unusual questions (evil dimensions, sensory-depravation baths), makes himself available at all times of the day to answer the boys' pressing scientific inquiries. It is Mr. Clarke's shared understanding of science, to an extent, that saves Hawkins at the series' conclusion, without his direct knowledge of such happenings. *Stranger Things'* examination of the dynamic between Dr. Brenner and Mr. Clarke, the dichotomy of "evil" versus "good" science, further complicates defining it within the boundaries of a singular genre. Instead, the Duffer Brothers are able to embrace the archetypes, themes, and atmospheres of both horror and science fiction cinema, as well as the sociopolitical climate that influenced an abundance of the films they derived their series from.

"I've Always Had a Distaste for Science"

In addition to crafting a series that investigates the intersection of science fiction, horror, and fantasy realms, the Duffer Brothers set the year as 1983, wholly intent on respecting the social and political anxieties that plagued the American public at the time. Putting a modern socially responsible twist on the generic norms of the period's horror and science fiction films, *Stranger Things* not only interacts with, but also redeems certain qualities of these genres. Holding steadfast to the belief that films of various periods reflect "different sorts of fictional worlds and narratives […] indicative of the problems and issues of the society in which the films were produced and originally consumed" (Kuhn, "Introduction to Part I" 16), the series successfully revisits not only the period's cultural consumption habits, but also its historical perspective. Recreating the social angst and moral fears of the era, prevalent themes in both the horror and science fiction genres, the Duffer Brothers examine several important historical events, more than three decades removed. Chiefly relative to discovering Eleven's origins, Hopper and his fellow police officers visit the local library to research Dr. Brenner's history as a doctor, only to discover his participation in Project MKUltra. This code name, given to an actual program of experiments on

human subjects to develop techniques to be employed in interrogations and torture, was informally referred to as the CIA's mind control program, with official documents released in 1977 under the Freedom of Information Act. Hopper and Joyce visit one of the former patients, Terry Ives, only to discover that she has not spoken a word in years, and that there is a connection between her and Dr. Brenner's current experiments. Before Ives went mute, however, both Hopper and Joyce learn from Ives' sister that she claimed Dr. Brenner had taken her child during his experimentation on her and that "now she's a weapon out fighting the Commies" ("Chapter Six: The Machine", 00:21:17-00:27:49). While Ives' sister brushes this off as deranged, the audience is aware that this claim is factual (though it is left unclear if Ives is Eleven's mother, or of one of the earlier test subjects), as we witness Eleven spying on a Soviet general during one of her flashbacks, projecting his conversations taking place thousands of miles away on a speaker in Hawkins Lab and arousing Cold War anxieties. The science fiction genre portrays science as important, but also as something that "must not become dominant or threaten the prevailing definition of humanity" (King and Krzywinska 17). Science must be respected, as it has the potential to permanently alter these idealized suburban communities.

Energy emerges as another prevailing theme present throughout *Stranger Things*. Whether it is the U.S. Department of Energy running Hawkins National Laboratory, Dr. Brenner's government agents shielding their surreptitious operations inside vans labeled "Hawkins Power and Light", or Mr. Clarke's claim that in order to create the interdimensional portals that the monster uses to cross realms, it must have access to incredible amounts of energy and the insinuation that this creature chooses Hawkins Lab as the access point for its primary portal because of the nuclear experiments taking place there, energy remains prominent throughout the narrative. Even as the boys introduce Eleven as their Swedish cousin, their nickname for Eleven, El, is Swedish for electricity, and after using her psychokinetic powers they refer to her as having a "drained battery". The monster is not attracted to blood, as Nancy Wheeler (Natalia Dyer) and Jonathan theorize, but energy: whether the presumed power covertly located at Hawkins lab, or Eleven's psychic energy (it does not capture humans for energy, but as a means of reproduction). In both the first and second Golden Ages of science fiction, nuclear power was placed at the forefront of the science fiction genre (with varying levels of scientific knowledge regarding its

destructive potential). The discovery of "some fundamental alteration in the conditions of existence of our planet" (Sontag 101) was almost entirely brought about by some form of nuclear experimentation, expressive of society's immense terror. This fear, combined with society's distrust of the government after the events of the Watergate scandal, evoked most notably in the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Philip Kaufman, 1978), creates a very particular public anxiety. Hopper, waking at home from his drug-induced sleep after sneaking into Hawkins Lab, trashes his trailer home only to discover a listening device, confirming his suspicions about Hawkins Lab's expansive operations. From that point forward, the audience witnesses the government's agents, "faceless, silent, and extremely threatening... abstract figures of evil" (Kael, 265), privy to their murderous intentions as the boys obliviously journey forward on their hunt for their missing friend with Eleven, the agency's target. Though Will is found in the end, and none of the main characters are severely injured, the portal to the Upside Down is still growing inside Hawkins National Laboratory – the threat of nuclear power remains.

Conclusion

Following the tradition of many films in the catalogues of the science fiction and horror genres, the first season of *Stranger Things* leaves characters and audience alike posing the question, "Where do we go from here" (Clarke 180)? After another basement Dungeons and Dragons session, the boys even ask questions regarding loose narrative ends, including "What about the lost knight?", "and the proud princess!?", and "the weird flowers in the cave?" ("Chapter Eight: The Upside Down", 00:45:45-00:46:01), referring to Hopper, Eleven, and the monster and its hatched eggs in the Upside Down. These inquiries, demonstrating the Duffer Brothers' self-awareness during their crafting of the series, are yet another instance of subversion in *Stranger Things*. Making known the generic practices, confronting viewers with their own expectations, and then subverting these assumed outcomes, they are able to simultaneously employ the genre's characteristic structures while upending them. From Eleven's defeat of both Dr. Brenner and the Demogorgon, subverting science fiction's fixation on narrative closure necessitating masculine virtuosity over macrocosmic creation, to Nancy's sardonic praise of her parents'

settling for a lackluster nuclear family ("My mom was young. My dad was older, but he had a cushy job, money, came from a good family. So they bought a nice house at the end of the cul-de-sac and started their nuclear family […] Screw that." ["Chapter Five: The Flea and the Acrobat", 00:30:35-00:30:59]), Matt and Ross Duffer make known their exhaustive knowledge of 1980s cinema evident. Constructing a series with varying levels of "veritable pleasure", spectators' recognition of seemingly countless cultural quotations will only contribute to their realization of *Stranger Things'* all-encompassing nostalgic intertextuality.

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Snowflakes in the wind – Thomas Örn Karlsson

A Brain in a Vat, An Earth in a Bottle: Paranoiac Horror and the Latent Panopticism of Superman in *Red Son*

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Abstract | This paper will explore the paranoiac horror elicited by anthropic science fiction superbeings, using DC Comics character Superman as a case study. In it, I argue that the character's power and Otherness have unavoidably dystopian consequences within the remit of the Many Earths of the DC Comics Multiverse. Referring primarily to Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, this paper explores the dystopian consequences of the combination of the invisibility afforded Superman by the character's triplicate identities (namely Kal-El, Clark Kent, and Superman respectively), and the omnipresence and omniscience the character's power and Otherness allow it. Using Mark Millar's *Superman: Red Son* (2003) as a primary text, I will demonstrate how the most radical consequence of the combination of Superman's power and Otherness, and the ideological mediation of their deployment, produces a global panopticon overseen by a single superbeing. The goal here is to explore one possible reason for the unease and paranoia evinced by the idea of a superbeing on a diegetic representation of an earth that uses the disruptivity of its power and Otherness to discipline and punish human beings and,

furthermore, how Superman, as a type of super-subject, exacerbates a sense of confinement and constant surveillance in a system governed by idealized dialectical arrangements.

Keywords | Superman; *Red Son*; paranoia; panopticism; Foucault.

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Resumo | Este artigo explora o horror paranóico provocado por super-seres antrópicos de ficção científica, recorrendo à personagem da DC Comics Super-Homem como caso de estudo. Neste artigo argumento que o poder e a alteridade da personagem têm inevitavelmente consequências distópicas dentro dos limites das Muitas Terras do Multiverso DC Comics. Recorrendo principalmente à análise de Foucault do panóptico de Jeremy Bentham, este artigo explora as consequências distópicas da combinação da invisibilidade assegurada ao Super-Homem pela identidade tripla da personagem (nomeadamente Kal-El, Clark Kent e Super-Homem, respectivamente) com a omnipresença e omnisciência que o poder e alteridade da personagem lhe conferem. Fazendo uso de *Superman: Red Son* (2003) de Mark Millar como texto primário, demonstrarei como a consequência mais radical da combinação do poder e alteridade do Super-Homem, e a mediação ideológica da sua utilização, produz um panóptico global supervisionado por um único super-ser. O objetivo aqui é explorar uma razão possível para a inquietação e paranoia evidenciadas pela ideia de um super-ser numa representação diegética de uma Terra que faz uso da ruptura do seu poder e alteridade para disciplinar e punir seres humanos e, para além disso, como o Super-Homem, como um tipo de super-sujeito, agrava um sentido de isolamento e vigilância constante num sistema governado por acordos dialéticos idealizados.

Palavras-chave | Super-homem; *Red Son*; paranoia; panopticismo; Foucault.

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Like Wings Over Elsinore: A Brief Outline of Superparanoia in Science Fiction and Comic Books

It is not unreasonable to feel uncomfortable at the thought of the presence of a being like DC Comics' Superman on a diegetic earth that reflects hyperdiegetic sociopolitical, historical, and cultural realities. In *Fan Cultures* (2002), Matt Hills describes this third degree of meta – metadiegesis or hyperdiegesis as "the creation of vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text, but which nonetheless appears to operate according to principles of internal logic and extension" (137). As such, when I am talking about

Superman, I am always-already, unless otherwise specified, talking about Superman on the extradiegetic level, the diegetic level, and the hyperdiegetic level. The term extradiegetic refers to the world of the reader, the artist and the writer. The world of Siegel and Shuster, of Morrison, Moore, Ellis and Ennis. The world of you or I where, within our reality and its confines, Superman and its publication history are the result of ink and light on a page or screen that can be read semiologically. As such, simulacra or simulacral elements of the extradiegetic level are reproduced and represented in the diegetic level and, more specifically, in the narratives it sustains or creates. Perhaps the most famous example of this kind of inter-diegesis concerning Superman is found in *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* (1978) written by Dennis O'Neil and illustrated by Neal Adams. In this story, Superman and the heavyweight boxing champion work together to foil an alien invasion of that earth. What is important to note in this text is the composition of the attendees of the boxing match, which range from DC Comics artists, writers, and other comic book luminaries more generally, to various international celebrities, fictional characters from DC Comics and Mad Magazine, through to various internationally recognized literary, arts, sports and political figures. A more recent example of this kind of inter-diegesis can be found in *Action Comics* Vol. 2, No. 14 (January, 2013). In this story, extradiegetic cosmologist and science communicator Neil DeGrasse Tyson appears in a diegetic narrative, in which he determines that Superman's home planet, Krypton, once orbited the extradiegetic red dwarf LHS 2520 in the extradiegetic constellation Corvus, 27.1 light-years from our extradiegetic Earth. Tyson assisted the DC Comics editorial teams in helping them select an extradiegetic star that would be a suitable parent star to Krypton, selecting Corvus also in part due to its symbolic value – Corvus is Latin for "crow", the crow being the mascot of the character's high school football team, the Smallville Crows.

Inter-diegesis forms the narrative and aesthetic loam for DC Comics' hyperdiegesis and is the reason behind the aesthetic, socio-political and historic-cultural resemblance between the diegetic world of Metropolis and the extradiegetic world of New York City, for example. The diegetic worlds of the DC Comics Multiverse reproduce a variety of versions of extradiegetic concepts and phenomena including presidents, floods, countries, baseball, corruption, wars, resources, love, planets, solar systems, universes and so on. The diegetic worlds are the worlds of the

characters, their thoughts and their actions. These are the worlds of Superman, Lois Lane, The Justice League, Gotham, The Watchtower and The Phantom Zone in which both radical power and Otherness appear represented by the superheroes and supervillains that both populate them and wield it therein. These diegetic worlds can, in turn, be reproduced and combined on another level or levels, which I refer to as the hyperdiegetic.

The hyperdiegetic can be best described as a story-within-a-story. For Superman, the DC Comics Multiverse itself, with its extensive array of worlds, universes, pocket dimensions and realms, is an example of hyperdiegesis. As with many aspects of the DC Multiverse, the number and nature of its infinite earths has undergone numerous revisions and additions. As noted in *The Multiversity Guidebook* Vol. 1, No. 1 (January, 2015) written by Grant Morrison and illustrated by various artists, including Ivan Reis, Nicola Scott, Gary Frank and Dan Jurgens, DC's current orrery of worlds and spheres include, but are not limited to, the following: Earths 0-51, Wonderworld (which exists beyond the Speed Force Wall), KWYZZ (the so-called Radio Universe), Dream, Nightmare, Heaven, Hell, Skyland, Underworld, New Genesis, and Apokolips (which all exist beyond the Speed Force Wall in the Sphere of the Gods). Beyond these exist the Monitor Sphere, containing Nil. Furthermore, like the infinite degree of onto-existential and phenomenological variance that contemporary multiverse theorems propose, the DC Multiverse and its Elseworlds imprint offers variations of the basic narratological and aesthetic content of any given character. Examples include: post-Crisis Pocket Universe Superboy, post-Crisis The Qwardian, Antimatter Universe and Earth-3 Ultraman, post-Crisis Earth-4 Superman named Captain Allen Adam, Earth-10's Nazi controlled Superman named Overman and the Communist Superman appearing in Mark Millar, Dave Johnson, and Kilian Plunketts' *Superman: Red Son* (2003).

Before moving on to develop my analysis of Superman-as-Panopticon, I need to provide a brief description of another terminological decision brought to bear in the examination to follow. In addition, this essay will refer to Superman as "it". The convention of referring to Superman using the pronoun "he" already performs various kinds of reductive violence that I argue cannot be overlooked. It superimposes anthropocentric codes, qualities, and categories of being onto a being that genetically and philosophically represents the Other to them. Referring to Superman as "he" is an

equivocal inaccuracy. Grant Morrison and Rags Morales highlight this ontological and existential problem in "Superman In Chains" (December, 2012). While incarcerated and tortured under the command of General Sam Lane and Lex Luthor, Luthor insists on referring to Superman as "it". Upon viewing the experiments Luthor and Lane are conducting on Superman's body, which involve subjecting it to 30,000 volts at 10 amps in an electric chair in a chamber filled with Sarin gas, Dr Irons states that "torturing a man on U.S. soil, or anywhere else, is UNACCEPTABLE!" (Morrison n.pg.). Luthor, reminding Dr Irons that "he" is more accurately "it", responds calmly, stating "those laws apply to HUMAN BEINGS, surely. [How can we] TORTURE a so-called man with STEEL-HARD skin and hair that can't be cut?" (Morrison n.pg.).

I agree with Luthor. I argue that the terms superbeing or the third-person neuter pronoun "it" are the most accurate and basic terms with which to discuss any ontological or existential aspects of Superman. The fact that Superman is an alien stands as a first principle here. It is an extra-terrestrial creature that expresses many seemingly identical superficial traits to human beings that, however convincing, must not overlook the fact of Superman's essential difference from anything and everything human. Furthermore, "he", when considered fully, only accurately refers to one third of the personae "worn" by Superman/Kal-El, namely Clark Kent. I have privileged the use of the pronoun "it" in order to allow the being in question a greater degree of existential licence, which I argue better allows us to apprehend what it is or can be without violently inscribing anthropocentric privileging and its various agendas onto the power it possesses.

Superbeing-induced paranoiac horror is a recurrent theme in numerous works of science fiction. The concept of society-as-petri dish for example, in which a specific population or group or topological space with heterotopic qualities, as well as the attendant ideas of surveillance and paranoia exist, have been addressed in numerous works of fiction and science fiction. The petri-dish scenario can emerge as a direct result of a particular group's agenda (not always human), advanced technology, or in heterotopic spaces such as dreams and virtual reality. Some particularly good examples include but are not limited to *Dark City* (1998), *The Matrix* (1999), *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), *Existenz* (1999), *Inception* (2010), *The Signal* (2014), and *Miracleman* No. 21 (1991) written by Neil Gaiman, illustrated by

Mark Buckingham. Throughout its history, the figure of the science fiction superman has acted as, amongst other things, a conceptual space through which writers and artists have addressed humanity's fear of domination and subjugation by an entity or entities both superior and fundamentally different from itself. The essence of these narratives is the question of what power is, who or what has access to it, and how it may be deployed, deterred, or distilled. In numerous human societies, diegetic or extradiegetic alike, the possession and expression of heightened and/or supernatural psycho-physical abilities is a mode of being that is consistently met with, amongst other things, fear. The presence of such a being is typically perceived and interpreted as either a radical questioning or a direct threat to the sovereignty and survival of the human race as the pre-eminent species on the diegetic earths that reflect the viewers'/readers' extradiegetic realities. The appearance of a new and undeniably supreme affective agent disrupts this history by de-centring and subsequently revaluing the pre-existing dynamics and hierarchies of power. Simply by being within the multifaceted structures that produce and reproduce a human being, the superbeing and its power disrupt the anthropocene and unbalance humanity's understanding of itself, setting everything within the affective range of its disruptivity into a state of flux in the same way that introducing a new apex predator into a foreign habitat can catalyse a radical destabilization, sometimes the total dissolution, of a pre-existing ecosystem.

The physical potency and seeming indomitability of a character like Superman constructs a paradigm in which the liberty to exist as it wills cannot be allowed. The typical reactionary response to science fiction superbeings decrees that "whether [the being] becomes an outcast, a pathetically lonely creature who is ostracized, or a tyrannical monster so dangerous that [it] threatens to enslave the world," it must be "either [eliminated] or robbed of [its] power" (Andrae 88 qtd. in Coogan). In this way, any human attempt to eradicate or neutralize the superbeing is ultimately an attempt to redress the power disequilibrium caused by the disruptivity of the superbeing being on a diegetic earth. Seeing that exhaustive profiles of the onto-existentialisms of these science fiction superbeings are often occluded in some way or other, this hypothesis does not rely on the maximal expression of said superbeings' power, or any total definition or understanding of what such a phenomena might be, or how it might manifest. By simply being superpowered on a diegetic earth in some way, and acting

as a superpowered entity, the disruptivity of the superbeing produces an inextricable link between the concepts of superiority, visibility, invisibility, horror and fear. Unlike the implicit danger of the science-heroes of 1960s and 1970s, American comic books like the re-imagined Flash and the Green Lantern, who notably championed a socio-political ethic that upheld the idea of a strong centralized government that represented a successful middle class, older characters like Superman still maintain the explicitness of their pre-war truculence and destructive aptitude. As Christopher Knowles notes in *Our Gods Wear Spandex: The Secret History of Comic book Heroes* (2007), "the new science heroes were proud servants of the military industrial complex" (Knowles 138), who by reversing the socio-political ethic of their 1940s forbears that championed a liberal Rooseveltian ideal by vilifying covetous corporate executives, attempted to dissemble the fact that the existence of creatures like Superman in diegetic worlds resembling the sociopolitical and historical reality of the reader carries with it latent paranoia and fear. While the emergent and re-imagined veteran heroes of this period could be described as obtuse, Knowles argues that these new interpretations of comic book superheroes offered readers two things lacking in American popular culture at the time, namely a positive and optimistic vision of society and, simultaneously, heroes worth emulating. This ostensibly also applies to Superman, however, beyond the iconic smile, the bright colour of its livery, and the elegance of its form, the salutes and waves, the flag billowing proudly behind the ur-god of the atomic age – all the iconography and symbolism that once acted as a protective screen shielding the consumer of Superman from the truth concerning the disruptivity of the type of being it represents – is the persistence of a fundamental anxiety about the figure of the comic book superbeing as a god in a cape.

I argue that the combination of Superman's power and Otherness is enough to diegetically induce global malaise, horror, and paranoia. Both of these irreducible aspects of the character invite pressing questions: what does it want? How does it view the diegetic representations of humanity? When and how is it looking into the diegetic representations of our lives? Is the character's agenda truly benevolent and altruistic? Being a powerful alien with no essential biological or socio-cultural responsibility to a diegetic earth or its people, what guarantee is there that it would not one day stop being a hero and become a conqueror? Similarly, Danny Fingeroth asks:

do superheroes provide an image of 'friendly-fascism'? Is the very idea that they know when and how to do the right thing inherently instilling a misguided sense of dependence on authority in those who partake of these fantasies? Is a society that idealizes a Superman one that will fall prey to the myth of an Aryan Übermensch? (Fingeroth 21)

In response to Fingeroth, I argue that the sense of paranoiac horror and fascistic subtext inherent in the disruptivity of Superman's power, body, and Otherness is not only expressed by the fact that the character is a super-powered agent of a particular ideological program predicated on a strict and narrow world view based on Judeo-Christian morals, but is also inherent in the *fact* of a being as powerful as Superman existing on a diegetic earth: one whose power and the range thereof also expresses a decidedly *penetrative* quality. Such considerations are made all the more demanding when one considers the comparative omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence the character's power allows.

No Shadow in the Watchtower: Superman as Panopticon

The incorporation of the term "Watchtower" here serves two prefatory purposes: first, as a reference to the central watchtower in the panopticon as described by Jeremy Bentham and secondly, the Watchtower is also the name of various bases of operation used by the Justice League of America, appearing in various media DC Comics hyperdiegesis. It is typically depicted as a large building comprised of nodes arranged in a circular formation around a central tower either situated on an earth's moon, or as a space station in low earth orbit. The centre of power of Justice League functions, I argue, in much the same way as the centralizing power of Bentham's panopticon's central tower through the dialectic of visible/invisible.

The theme of the paranoiac horror caused by Superman's presence on a diegetic earth is examined in depth in Mark Millar's revisionary Elseworlds story *Superman: Red Son* (2003). The premise of *Red Son* is that Superman's rocket crash-landed twelve hours later in Communist Russia instead of the Kansas wheat belt. Instead of growing up in the familiar setting of Smallville, the Superman of *Red Son* grows up on a communist collective farm in the Ukraine, Soviet Russia. The character grows to diligently serve all over that earth in the ways one typically expects of

Superman, namely preventing catastrophes, saving lives and so on. In this capacity, the character also acts as the upholder of Communist ideals, the champion of the common worker, Socialism, and the expansion of the Warsaw Pact under Joseph Stalin.

In *Red Son*, Millar conflates the underlying paranoiac horror associated with Superman's power and Otherness (particularly its powers of observation), with McCarthyism, and the Second Red Scare of the Cold War. This paranoia can be noted in the opening scene of the text. In a national address, the U.S. president, modelled on John F. Kennedy, declares that the existence of "a costumed INDIVIDUAL more effective than [America's] HYDROGEN BOMB", whose "very EXISTENCE threatens to alter [America's] position as a world superpower FOREVER" is enough to initiate wide-spread paranoia and psychological terror (Millar 11). In other words, the existence of a being with "SUPER-HEARING: IMPENETRABLE SKIN: EYES THAT CAN SEE THROUGH WALLS and fire LASER BEAMS" disaffects America's standing as a preeminent democratic world superpower. The president underscores the pervasive sociopolitical, particularly militaristic, implications thereof stating, "the feds, the army and the C.I.A are all OFFICIALLY OBSOLETE" (Millar 11; 13).

Similarly, in an exchange with Lois Lane, Perry White vocalizes the resultant paranoiac hysteria of the public disclosure of the existence of such a being, stating: "GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST! Superman spotted in DENVER! Superman sighted in NEBRASKA! Superman seen HOVERING OVER A FIELD in ARKANSAS! What the hell's GOING ON here, Lois? It's like the whole damn country's seeing RED CAPES under their beds" (Millar 12). From televised eyewitness accounts to personal conversations, Millar gives a cross-section of the type of paranoiac malaise the mere existence of a being like Superman elicits in the general public. This is exemplified by a traumatized night-watchmen who states:

> I was just coming OFF-DUTY when I saw a human-shaped FIGURE zip past me and then I heard LAUGHING up there in the clouds. They say he can see us from SPACE with those super-eyes of his and that he's watching our EVERY MOVE. Just biding his time for the PERFECT MOMENT to STRIKE. Rumour has it his bosses back in MOSCOW are pushing for a FULL-BLOWN INVASION in a matter of WEEK'S now. (Millar 12)

It is later revealed that Stalin is poisoned and subsequently dies. Shortly afterwards, an encounter with Lana Lazerenko (the Soviet version of Lana Lang, Superman's long-time canonical confidant and love interest) reveals to Superman that she, her children, and much of the Soviet population are victims of extreme privation. Spurred on by the basic needs of the people, Superman declares that it "COULD take care of everyone's problems if [it] ran this place, [and finding] no good reason [not to]" and subsequently succeeds Stalin to become Premier of the Soviet Union (Millar 54). It is later revealed that under Superman's supreme control of not only the Soviet Union, but also of its allies under the Warsaw Pact:

> the Soviet Union was just a FRAGILE ASSEMBLY when Superman first came to power. TWO DECADES LATER AND THE WHOLE WORLD is [its] ally. Only the UNITED STATES and CHILE choose to remain independent: The last two Capitalist Economies on Earth and both on the brink of fiscal and social COLLAPSE. The rest of the world was GLAD to volunteer total control to Superman and watched in awe as [it] rebuilt their societies, running their affairs more efficiently than any HUMAN could. POVERTY, DISEASE and IGNORANCE have been VIRTUALLY ELIMINATED from WARSAW PACT STATES...DISOBEDIENCE to the PARTY has been VIRTUALLY ELIMINATED. (Millar 62-3)

After jointly thwarting Batmankov's (the Soviet version of Batman) plot to assassinate Superman, Wonder Woman (Superman's closest and most steadfast ally) is left de-powered in a catatonic state. Following this incident, Superman's views on power, the people, and their control are radicalized whereby the character's influence on the fate of *Red Son*'s Earth-30 and its people becomes more direct and extreme. Superman confesses that:

> barely any decision was made across the length and breadth of the Soviet Union without my permission in SOME form or another. The population was largely GRATEFUL and OBEDIENT but the freedom fighters, inspired by the death of Batman, remained something of a PROBLEM. My desire for ORDER AND PERFECTION was matched only by their dreams of VIOLENCE AND CHAOS. I offered them UTOPIA, but they fought for the right to live in HELL. (Millar 101)

What is most important here is precisely *how* Superman maintains discipline and control in its global regime. It is revealed by the re-programmed Brainiac, one of Superman's most dangerous and longstanding canonical enemies, that Superman

maintains obedience through "a steady hand and some pioneering neurosurgery [through which] even the most persistent trouble-makers can become productive workers", going on to state that "if [Brainiac's] OWN *rehabilitation* isn't proof enough, surely [Superman's] other former enemies cleaning toilets in Bombay is a tribute to the success of [Superman's] initiatives" (Millar 108). In effect, Superman uses coercive and horrific neurological technology – depicted as a type of lobotomization – to turn dissidents and enemies into productive, albeit Will-less, drones with eerie smiles and execrably jovial dispositions. Under the aegis of this regime, it is revealed that at the beginning of the last third of the narrative:

> the world now contained almost six billion communists [where] Moscow tick-tocked with the same Swiss precision as every other town and city in [its] global Soviet Union. Every adult had a job. Every child had a hobby and the entire human population enjoyed the full eight hours sleep which their bodies required. Crime didn't exist. Accidents never happened. It didn't even rain unless Brainiac was absolutely certain that everyone was carrying an umbrella. Almost six billion citizens and hardly anyone complained. *Even in private*. (Millar 106-7, italics mine)

What is most important in considering the paranoiac horror caused by Superman's power here is how Millar addresses the consequences of the character using said power in a singularly totalizing manner by allowing its disruptivity to be assimilated into institutionalized technologies of power. In so doing, the disruptivity of Superman's power and Otherness becomes the physical *embodiment* of the panopticon as analysed by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). I argue that the paranoiac horror of the character's existence and activity on a diegetic earth is predicated on the fact that the penetrative nature of its being disrupts the seeing/being seen dyad in a radical way. Due to the combination of the character's power and its ability to sublimate its Otherness in the uncanniness of its body, Superman can operate with immunity both visibly and invisibly. *Red Son* emphasizes the importance of the fact that though Superman may dedicate its powers toward ostensibly humanistic teloi, the oppressively panoptic aspects of the character's powers cannot be nullified by the so-called benevolence of the way in which they are used.

In order to understand the panopticism of Superman's power and Otherness, let me first define what a panopticon is. The panopticon is a type of building designed

by English social theorist and philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. It consists of a circular structure arranged around an observation or inspection tower at its centre. From within the tower, a single observer is able to watch the inmates, who are assigned to individual cells arranged around the perimeter, without being observed in turn. The underlying premise of the panopticon's design in this way is to turn visibility itself into a trap or enclosure that sustains a particular type of power relation. As Foucault describes:

> Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. Another primary effect of the design of the Panopticon is that the inmates themselves are unable to tell whether or not they are being observed at any given time. (201)

Without the aid of recording and surveillance technology, it would be physically impossible for a single human supervisor to simultaneously observe all inmates in every cell. However, the fact that the inmates cannot definitively know how and when they are being observed produces an effect whereby all inmates behave as if they are being watched at all times, effectively surveilling and controlling their own behaviour constantly. Bentham describes this phenomenon of self-surveillance as the idea of the inspection principle. As such, the panopticon is a biopowered mechanism for producing "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind" that automatizes and disindividualizes power; or as Foucault describes:

> the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (Bentham n.pg.; Foucault 201)

The design of the panopticon emphasizes a dialectic of visibility/invisibility which reverses the principle and three primary functions of the dungeon, namely to hide,

enclose, and deprive of light. This design is so effective that it presents polyvalent applications. This means that:

> it does not matter what motive animates [the watchman]: the curiosity of the indiscreet, the malice of a child, the thirst for knowledge of a philosopher who wishes to visit this museum of human nature, or the perversity of those who take pleasure in spying and punishing [...] The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power. A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. (Foucault 203)

As a result, such a design and the concept of its functioning can be applied to any institution that employs surveillance as a method of discipline and punishment, including prisons, day-cares, asylums, schools, hospitals, and sanatoriums. Foucault states that:

> the arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order. If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, bad reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time; if they are workers, there are no disorders, no theft, no coalitions, none of those distractions that slow down the rate of work, make it less perfect or cause accidents. The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities. From the point of view of the guardian, it is replaced by a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised. (202)

The panopticon describes a material technology of disciplinary power predicated on the opposition between the visible and the invisible. This tension is practised, maintained, and situated primarily in an architectural, inanimate construction. The panoptic structure is first a building before it subsequently becomes a psychological structure and means of exerting the power of psychological discipline, punishment, and control. Unlike Bentham's panopticon, which functions by individualizing those interred therein by subjecting them to a disindividualized form of (?) power, Superman is *radically* individual, in terms of both power and

Otherness. I argue that the combination of Superman's powers of surveillance and its actions as a corrective moral agent, whose function as a superhero is to discipline and punish aberrant, unlawful, and "bad" behaviour, *embodies* this type of panoptic power. Though the character claims "truth" and "justice" as the teloi of its actions, Superman's power ultimately produces horrifically homogenous effects regardless of the reason behind exercising its power. For the sceptic, moral relativist, or horrified/paranoid individual, Superman's powers of surveillance could very well be motivated by an the indiscreet voyeurism of a stranger in a strange land, the malice of a being who does not belong anywhere completely, a being's thirst for knowledge about a species entirely other yet uncannily similar to itself, or simply the pleasure of exercising its power over inferior creatures by playing the role of a god amongst mortals.

Red Son suggests that the panoptic principle used to monitor, discipline, and reproduce docile bodies is not only inherent in Superman's power, but also embodied by it. The combination of the character's protean onto-existential Otherness and its radical power provide it with total panoptic access to human beings. Its X-Ray vision and super-hearing allow Superman an absolute purview over humanity in the same way that the occupant of the central observation tower of Bentham's panopticon possesses. While Bentham's panopticon is an architectural configuration of forces in such a way that one supervisor may observe, discipline, and control hundreds of madmen, patients, workers, pupils, or the condemned, Superman's observational powers represent the radical embodiment, expansion, and *refinement* of the same coercive apparatus because through Superman's powers, this principle is applicable to a diegetic representation of an entire human race. Unlike the inanimate and static panoptic structure bound to a single locale that can be torn down, Superman is not only radically mobile, but also radically invulnerable. As such, the panopticism of Superman's disruptivity becomes a mirror of the type of power it simultaneously makes redundant. In this sense, both Superman's disruptivity and the panopticon serve as signs for one another that reflect the same concept of the idealization of power. Both present "a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction" (Foucault 205). As such, I argue that Superman's Other version of power does not *change* anything because its

ideological principle remains the same: to control, subjugate, discipline, and punish lives and bodies. Consider the following cover image:
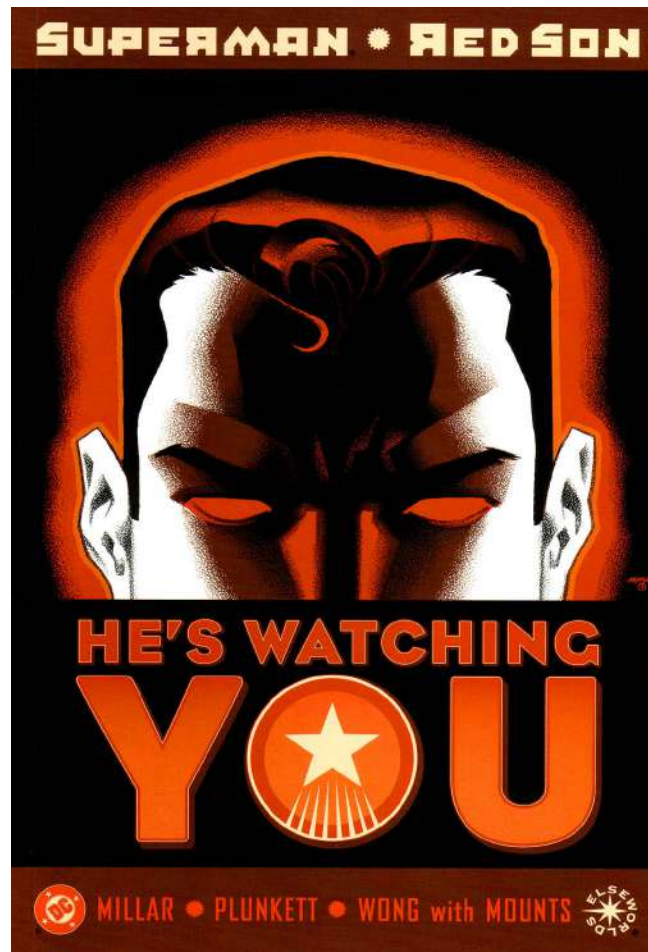

Figure 1. Taken from *Superman: Red Son* Vol. 1, No. 3 "Red Son Setting" (August 2003) written by Mark Millar, illustrated by Dave Johnson.

Johnson's depiction of Superman makes the theme of surveillance and its subsequent paranoiac horror clear. The image centralizes the penetrative nature of Superman's Gaze by emphasizing its glowing eyes that not only meet and follow the reader's gaze, but are also known to be able to see *through* it. The notion of absolute penetration is underscored by the image's accompanying text because in *Red Son*, Superman is not watching what one typically construes as threats to one's personal liberty in the form of the subjective violence of criminals and villains. Instead, Superman's powers of surveillance are dedicated to the monitoring and control of the *general* public. Johnson's aesthetic – from the composition of Superman's face, the stark tricolour palette, the centralized Gaze, and the accompanying text buttressing the

theme of surveillance – recalls Winston Smith's description of a poster of Big Brother on the first page of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Winston states, "on each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran" (Orwell 3).

What is one to conclude from Superman being viewed as an embodied panopticon? For one thing, there is a radical *economy* in the character's panopticism, one that the economy of a traditional panopticon cannot match. The traditional panopticon reduces the efficacy of its functioning to purely architectural, optical, and geometric arrangements. In contrast, Superman is able to travel at super-sonic and subluminal speeds, to hear clearly, and discreetly, over immense distances. The character is also able to see *through* any substance (save lead) to the electromagnetic and even the atomic level. In *Superman: Birthright* (2003), Mark Waid even posits that Superman is able to see the "aura" surrounding all living things that dissipates and disappears at the moment of death, described as a type of "soul vision" (Waid 3; 22). The theme of Superman's penetrative Gaze is inadvertently taken up in *Action Comics* Vol. 2, No. 1 "Superman Versus the City of Tomorrow" written by Grant Morrison, illustrated by Rags Morales. In the story, detective Blake, his officers, and a squad of tactical personal attempt to arrest Superman, resulting in a momentary stand-off. Superman uses its X-Ray vision to look *inside* Blake's stomach, flippantly cautioning, "you need to call your doctor about that ULCER, detective Blake. I can see it throbbing fit to BURST from here" (Morrison n.pg.). This scene further highlights the invasive nature of the character's Gaze as well as the fact that with the possession of these powers of surveillance, Superman's presence is *always* possible both on the smallest and largest levels of being. The character's ability to see into one's heart, veins, brain, or stomach, and based on where and who one is with, allows it to synthesize this data in such a way as to have accurate and penetrating insights into one's life, health, habits, vices, weaknesses and so on. In view of the radical extent of Superman's panoptic Gaze, there can be no privacy because one would never definitively know when one was being watched or how one was being watched by it. As such, Superman's powers of observation contain a panopticism, willed or not, benevolent or not, that is as irreducible to its being as its Otherness or power.

When compared to the architectural panopticon, the disruptivity of Superman's power, body, and Otherness make its panopticism more efficient in every way.

Figure 2. Taken from *Superman: Red Son* Vol. 1, No. 3 "Red Son Setting" (August 2003) written by Mark Millar, illustrated by Dave Johnson.

Consider Figure 2 Johnson's depiction of Superman concretizes the concept of Superman as an embodied panopticon as I have described it. From this image, one can conclude that Superman's Gaze is not theoretical or static in *Red Son*. Johnson's composition emphasizes the notion of Superman as a dominator. This is achieved through suggestive composition, a visual pun, specifically the placement of the satellite subtending the upper left part of Earth-30's circumference. This placement has the effect of alluding to the idea that Superman, while standing on the satellite, is simultaneously standing on Earth-30 itself. This visual pun is complimented by

Johnson's use of the green areas, which ostensibly refer to Superman's concerted projects of reforestation and the reification of other similar solutions to various ecocritical concerns. While these areas resemble the symbolic demarcations of colonial jurisdictions, they also resemble the papules and macules of a rash, as if to suggest that Superman is the vector of a foreign, viral, and malevolent Kryptonian influence (further compounded by the shade of Krytonite green used, a colour synonymous with poison in the character's *mythos*). Furthermore, Superman is shown to use its powers of surveillance to turn Earth-30, and all life therein, *into an object of observation*. While the character may use satellites and other devices like the reprogrammed Brainiac to collate and store data, as the image shows, Superman's Gaze is panoptic and embodied because the character does not *require* any technological means of surveillance in order to exercise its Gaze and deploy its perspective to oversee the entire planet. The above image effectively depicts how the panoptic efficacy of the gaze of the watchman in Bentham's panoptic tower is exploded, perfected, and embodied in Superman. Unlike the watchmen in the tower who can only observe cross-sections of a populace at a time, Superman can simultaneously and consistently observe everyone everywhere, watchmen and observed alike. Regardless of however objectionable one may find such a realization, I argue that it is *precisely* the panopticism of its power that also facilitates its actions as a superhero. Through its powers of surveillance, Superman is able to perceive danger, hear, smell, see, and taste, for example, a fire, a mugging or an earthquake, in such a way that allows it to react decisively in allaying said dangers and, in some instances, in pre-emptying said dangers. However, the character's surveillance abilities are reducible to the same principles of panopticism and material praxes of totalizing power inherent in Bentham's panopticon. As such, Superman's seeing *into* danger is inextricable from seeing *into* the lives and beings of those at risk of said danger. In this way, the paranoiac horror haunting Superman's omniscience and omnipresence is indivisible from the character's power and its activity as a superhero, whose task, ironically, is to allay fears, threats, and danger.

While humanity for the supervisor in a panoptic tower is *visible*, humanity for a superbeing in possession of Superman's powers of surveillance becomes *transparent*. Like the panopticon's second principle of power, namely the invisibility or unverifiability of the observer, Superman is able to dissimulate its power through

the aesthetic apparatus known as Clark Kent that allows the character to disappear amid the terrestrial and human *milieu*. By "storing" its power in, underneath, beside, or behind Clark, humanity can never unequivocally know when or how they are being observed. Its fractured identity makes verification of this power, its localization in a single, clear identity, impossible. The fragmentation inherent in Superman's 'tridentity', namely being simultaneously but never fully either "Kal-El"/"Superman"/"Clark Kent", becomes a means of "dissociating the see/being seen dyad" whereby being Superman/Clark means that the superbeing can see totally without being totally seen in turn (Foucault 202).

As such, a pervasive paranoiac horror is always-already at play in any and all narratives involving Superman on a diegetic representation of an extradiegetic terrestrial reality. This horror is latently emergent as the human beings of said narratives cannot solely take succour in the fact that they feel they are potentially always being observed, not just by the State, but by Superman as the Eye of the State; one that is always threatening to spy out transgressions and express itself so as to correct, discipline, and punish such deviations from the morally and ethically determined norm as the Fist of the State. As such, Superman is, like Bentham's panoptic structure, both actively (as Superman) and passively (as Clark Kent) involved in the observational penetration and administration of bodies and lives. In this way, being Clark Kent or Superman does not matter because the panoptic principle and the power of its functioning works both through presence *and* absence. Human beings cannot verify when this extra-terrestrial power is being exerted, where, how, for whom, against whom, or truly why it is being exercised as it is at all. All diegetic humanity has to go on is Superman's word and the values the character endorses. While the character's credo of "truth, justice, and the American Way" may be enough to appease a portion of the diegetic populace, I argue that the point is not the ways Millar shows Superman's Soviet self to be different from its conservative jingoistic self in *Red Son*, but rather the ways in which they are the *same*.

Superpanopticism & Kryptocolonialism, by Any Other Name: Superman as Repressive Onto-Existential Agent

The numerous Elseworlds stories featuring Superman present the character in alternate diegetic realities, times, and worlds by re-imagining the most basic and familiar aspects of the character's aesthetic and narratological content. These narratives typically elicit a sense of novel excitement, yet mostly do not offer anything radically new and, instead, read as recapitulations of longstanding ideas. For example, John Byrne's *Action Comics* Annual Vol. 1, No. 6: "Legacy" (January, 1994) and *Superman: A Nation Divided* (1998) written by Roger Stern, illustrated by Eduardo Barreto, show Superman participating in the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars. In *Superman: Kal* (1995) written by Dave Gibbons, illustrated by José Luis García-López, Superman's spacecraft crash-lands in Medieval England, where the character grows to become a blacksmith, forging the future Excalibur and a special suit of armour from the wreckage of its ship. In *Superman's Metropolis* (1997) written by Jean-Marc Lofficier, illustrated by Ted McKeever, Superman fights against Futura, disguised as Lois Lane, in Fritz Lang's German Expressionist Metropolis. *Superman/Wonder Woman: Whom Gods Destroy* (1997) written by Chris Claremont, illustrated by Dusty Abell sees Superman and Wonder Woman fight against Nazis and Greek gods in an alternate future. In *Superman: War of the Worlds* (1999) written by Roy Thomas, illustrated by Michael Lark, a 1940s inspired re-incarnation of the character encounters and defeats H.G. Wells' Martian invaders from *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Ultimately, it does not matter how aesthetically or narratologically disparate the Supermen of the DC hyperdiegesis may be, be they socialist, jingoistic, or Nazi. "Truth" and "justice" cannot extenuate the fact that the idea of Superman is used as an ideological tool, weapon, and icon of the praxis of the superpowered administration of human lives and human bodies, in the last instance. As such, Superman, as a panoptic moral enforcer, becomes a potently amenable strategy of human biopower as an alien technology of biopower. The idea that an extremely powerful alien exists in and amongst human beings, watching them, affecting them both visibility and invisibly, produces an effect of panoptic paranoiac horror in human beings on an earth whereby:

he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes principle of his own subjugation. (Foucault 203)

While in *Superman/Batman* Vol. 1, No. 3, Batman notes that: "it is a remarkable dichotomy. In many ways, Clark is the most human of us all. Then...he shoots fire from the skies, and it is difficult not to think of his as a god. And how fortunate we all are that it does not occur to him", *Red Son* highlights the consequences of this realization in Superman (Loeb n.pg.). With Superman on a diegetic earth, there is *something* in the tower watching us, looking *through* us, and this something is like a god. Millar's narrative in *Red Son* makes explicit that the concept of humanity for Superman ultimately becomes an object of information, never a collective of subjects in communication whereby our inescapable visibility becomes a trap. In this way, "from the point of view of [Superman], [human being] is replaced by a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised" (Foucault 201). This panoptic paranoiac horror implicitly exposes the siege efficacy of the character's ostensible benevolence, producing an atmosphere in which Superman acts as a lone watchman in what now feels like not only a decidedly penitential Metropolis, but also a bottled earth. In this sense, the so-called "City of Tomorrow" becomes indistinguishable from the perfect prison of yesteryear.

While the panopticism of the character's power and Otherness produces a fear of Superman's ability to observe and catalogue the human species, inherent in this fear is also the concern that Superman has the power to turn an earth and all life therein into its own petri dish/experimental space. Ultimately, *Red Son* suggests that human agency is not applicable or actionable at Superman's level of being. As such, Superman's disruptivity can be used as a total and devastating effect of biopower through which the concept of "the world" and human being can be miniaturized, remade, and controlled. *Red Son* also speaks to the fear that with Superman, there is always the unsuppressed possibility that observation will become direct participation whereby the Earth becomes its laboratory of power; a:

machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals. To experiment with machines [and various other apparatuses of

control] and monitor their effects. To try out [alterations in being], to seek out the most effective ones. To teach different techniques simultaneously to [beings], to decide which is the best. To try out pedagogical experiments […] One could bring up different children according to different systems of thought, making certain children believe that two and two do not make four or that the moon is a cheese, then put them together when they are twenty or twenty-five years old; one would then have discussions that would be worth a great deal more than the sermons or lectures on which so much money is spent; one would have at least an opportunity of making discoveries in the domain of metaphysics. (Foucault 204)

This theme can be noted in *Superman* Vol. 1, No. 174, "The End of a Hero Part II" written by Edmond Hamilton, illustrated by Al Plastino. In this pre-*Crisis* story, Superman "plays God" in the Frankensteinian mode when it takes to its Fortress of Solitude and creates "a synthetic android," replete with "artificial nerves", that can think and feel, possess a mind, with consciousness and emotions and a "conscience factor" (Hamilton 5-6). In disregarding the codes and procedures governing such radical creativity, Superman "carries out whatever scientific experiments [it] wants, without regard for any ethical committees" due to the immunity its power and Otherness allow (Lloyd 190).

Conclusion: An Earth in a Jar

In view of the above analysis, I cannot help but conclude that Superman's panopticism miniaturizes human being in its dialectical approach and appraisal thereof – as either good or evil – in the same way Brainiac does Kandor. This theme of miniaturizing is used as a metaphor to describe the scales of power and the panoptic application of an omniscient Gaze against an entire population in *Red Son* No. 3. In one notable scene, Luthor pens a letter he knows Superman, with its panoptic Gaze, will be able to read. The letter states: "why don't you just put the whole world in a BOTTLE, Superman?" (Millar 136). Superman's active enforcement of human ideology, which is tantamount to the lobotomization of dissident elements of the human populace, in order to establish a top-down utopia in the denizens it literally and invasively controls incites the resistance of Lex Luthor's amoral genius. Luthor's active resistance against the dystopian autocracy inherent in the panopticism of Superman's power and Otherness troubles the dialectical

arrangement of hero (Superman) vs. villain (Luthor). Luthor's letter is important because the only way to resist the adverse effects of both Superman's panopticism and its punitive use is to present the fact thereof in a way that transgresses any deferring capabilities Superman's naiveté or ideological interpellation may facilitate. Luthor's caustically insightful letter is shown to be more effective than any weapon because it uses Superman's penetrative Gaze as a mirror against itself through which Superman cannot help but recognize the fear and oppression its paradoxical existence as an alien moral champion/overseer on Earth-30 produces. As such, Luthor's seemingly simple letter creates a monumental psychic break within Superman by uncovering the *aporia* of Superman, having always-already changed an earth by being in it, and yet using the disruptivity of its power and Otherness to preserve an idealized version thereof. After reading the letter, Superman breaks down, stating "OH MY GOD! What have I DONE? All I wanted was to put an end to all the WARS and FAMINES! I only wanted the BEST for everyone, you've got to BELIEVE me... [...] I'm just as bad as YOU were Brainiac. I'm just another alien bullying a less developed species and it's MORALLY UNJUSTIFIABLE" (Millar 136-7). As such, *Red Son* presents the rivalry between Superman and the character's nemesis Luthor in a way that is less about the conflict between communism and capitalism. While the clash of these two ideologies is embodied by Superman and Luthor – the former becoming premier of the Soviet Union, the latter subsequently becoming the president of the United States – who form the narratological and aesthetic grounding of the story, Millar's text ultimately presents this antagonism as a human being's resistance against the horror of the panoptic power of a superbeing acting as overseer and oligarch of an earth.

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Winter – Thomas Örn Karlsson

A Narrative of Moral Imagination: Collective Survivance in Indigenous Science Fictions

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Abstract | Science fiction troubles common assumptions about the nature of contemporary society by either imagining new, future worlds or offering a drastically altered depiction of the present world. Two recent indigenous efforts in this vein, Gerald Vizenor's novel *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on White Earth Nation* and Ryan Griffen's television series *Cleverman* exemplify how the world-building characteristic of the SF genre, when placed in an indigenous context, can be used to question the narrative of progress on the frontier that colonialists use to de-value native presence and claim indigenous spaces. *Treaty Shirts* sets Native American treaty disputes in a future world in which a group of exiled natives create a new society rather than continue in the pseudo-democracy of the United States, while *Cleverman* imagines an altered present day world in which aboriginal mythological creatures, the Hairies, exist as an exiled population within Australia. This article in turn expands on the scholarship of John Reider, who traces the persistence of colonialist narratives in early Western SF works, and Grace Dillon, who sees the creativity of contemporary indigenous SF as a space of resistance, by considering the ways in which both *Treaty Shirts* and *Cleverman* re-imagine indigenous relationships to

colonized space in order to enact a type of collective survivance through storytelling, ultimately asserting cultural imagination as a more enduring connection to land than governmental legislation.

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Resumo | A Ficção Científica põe em causa suposições comuns sobre a natureza da sociedade contemporânea, por um lado, ao imaginar mundos novos e futuros e, por outro, ao oferecer uma representação drasticamente alterada do mundo actual. Nesta linha de ideias, dois esforços recentes de origem indígena, o romance de Gerald Vizenor *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on White Earth Nation* e a série de televisão de Ryan Griffen, *Cleverman,* exemplificam como a criação de mundos característica da ficção científica, quando colocadas num contexto indígena, pode ser usada para questionar a narrativa do progresso na fronteira que colonialistas utilizam para desvalorizar a presença nativa e reivindicarem espaços indígenas. *Treaty Shirts* coloca disputas de tratados Nativos Americanos num mundo futuro no qual um grupo de nativos exilados cria uma nova sociedade em vez de continuar na pseudo-democracia dos Estados Unidos, enquanto que *Cleverman* imagina um mundo presente alterado no qual criaturas aborígenes mitológicas, os Hairies, existem como uma população exilada dentro da Austrália. Este artigo expande o estudo de John Reider, que traça a persistência de narrativas colonialistas nas primeiras obras de ficção científica ocidental, e de Grace Dillon, que vê a criatividade da ficção científica indígena contemporânea como um espaço de resistência, ao considerar os modos como *Treaty Shirts* e *Cleverman* reimaginam relações indígenas com o espaço colonizado de forma a pôr em prática um tipo de sobrevivência colectiva através do contar de histórias, em última medida afirmando a imaginação cultural como uma ligação mais duradoura à terra do que a legislação governamental.

Palavras-Chave | Ficção científica indígena; sobrevivência; Gerald Vizenor, *Treaty Shirts*; *Cleverman*.

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Decolonizing Science Fiction

Colonists tell poor stories. The United States' story of Columbus' discovery, for example, erroneously frames pre-contact native land occupation as illegitimate. The governments of other settler states, such as Australia and New Zealand, have similarly relied on manifestly false, imperialist narratives to continue denying land

rights and reparations to indigenous populations (Foley n.pg.). Though indigenous peoples have faced such abuses for centuries, scholars have only recently started discussing Euro-American histories as fictions. In literary studies, postcolonial scholars point to the popularity of the Western in twentieth century North American literature and cinema as evidence of colonialist narratives' prevalence in early American culture (Churchill 175). Western narratives romanticize progress on the frontier and the rugged American cowboy out to kill "Indians" (Simmon 9). However, literary scholars generally fail to recognize early science fiction (SF) works as equally the result of colonialist ideologies, even though the discovery of a strange, new world central to many early SF narratives echoes European narratives of contact. Further, the available scholarship on the connections between SF and colonialism focuses primarily on mass-market Euro-American SF films, such as *Star Wars*, thereby ignoring the recent proliferation of SF works by indigenous writers (Wetmore 20). This essay seeks to fill the gap in indigenous SF scholarship by examining two recent texts: Gerald Vizenor's 2016 novel, *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on White Earth Nation*, and Ryan Griffen's 2016 Australian-New Zealand-American television series, *Cleverman*. Both engage the SF genre in order to critique the historical displacement of their cultures, the Anishinaabe peoples of the White Earth Reservation and the Aboriginal peoples of New South Wales, respectively, from their original lands. Through science fictional premises, Vizenor and Griffen present sovereign first nations, whose collective cultural imaginings counteract the colonialist mythology of indigenous disappearance. Ultimately, they demonstrate that the act of storytelling is crucial to the fight for native land rights.

Much like the supposed discovery of North America, the roots of science fiction are inextricable from a colonialist mindset. John Rieder's groundbreaking study, *Early Classics of Science Fiction: Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2012), traces the presence of colonialist ideologies in early SF works and shows that, "the complex mixture of ideas about competition, adaptation, race, and destiny... forms a major part of the thematic material of early science fiction" (15). Pulp Euro-American SF, which dominated the early twentieth century literary market, relies on simplistic, action-driven narratives that frame cultural imperialism positively and non-Western cultures as uncivilized (Rieder 28). Narratives that emphasize the inferiority of other cultures, such as the glorified depiction of alien genocide in Joseph

Campbell's 1947 *The Mightiest Machine*, read as particularly harmful alongside the myth of the disappearing Indian prevalent in the North American imagination up until the late twentieth century. An Indian removal bill signed by Andrew Jackson on April 24, 1830, stated that Native Americans unable to assimilate should be transported to a designated sanctuary west of the Mississippi, effectively setting the disappearance of native peoples as an American goal (Stanciu 29). Subsequently, nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists saw documenting the last living members of specific tribes as a point of pride and competed over who had found the last Indian (Stanciu 29). Further, the myth prevailed in the artistic realm; nineteenth-century audiences treasured Metamora, a Native American stock character represented as the "last of the Wampanoags", and, alternatively, "the Last of the Pollywogs", in different theatrical adaptations of his story, as he acted out the drama of the disappearing Indian on stage (28).

Similarly, in Australia, a policy emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century known as "Smooth the Dying Pillow", which assumed that the Aboriginal population would soon die off; the Australian government in turn established the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909, which effectively established concentration camps, where police would transport the last remaining Aborigines (Foley n.pg.). The politicians behind the policy saw mixed-race peoples as assimilable and full-blood Aborigines as doomed. As a later conference, called "Destiny of the Race", that took place on April 21, 1937, asserts, "this conference believes that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth" (The Commonwealth of Australia, n.pg.). The narrative of doom surrounding Aboriginal culture also made its way to the stage; in Peter Scrivener's popular puppet musical, *Little Fella Bindi*, which toured in Australia as late as the 1970s, the young Bindi, the last of his tribe, frolics amongst animal friends until he realizes he must join 'human' society and marches off, in full uniform, to a Euro-American school as the show's finale (Tredinnick 60). The destruction of alien species by Euro-American protagonists in early twentieth-century SF thus mirrored a prevalent North American and Australian cultural belief in the disappearing native.

Yet, while many early SF works supported imperialist narratives, the genre also notably evolved from the desire for social critique. For example, SF writers of

color have used the imaginative nature of SF to critically comment on inequities in the contemporary world. Mary Bray argues that Samuel R. Delany's ironic treatment of his amnesic half-white half-Native American protagonist, Kid's struggle to establish an identity in the decaying planetary society of *Dhalgren* represents Delany's experience of double-consciousness as a black writer working in the predominantly white SF community of the sixties (Bray 58). Moreover, in a speech she gave at MIT on February 19, 1998, "'Devil Girl From Mars': Why I Write Science Fiction", Octavia Butler describes her motivations for writing *Parable of the Sower*, a novel about a young girl named Lauren and her journey establishing a new religious system for a crumbling world facing similar problems as contemporary North America, but magnified. Butler says that when she writes SF, "I kind of look around and see what's going on and take it a few steps further" (Butler, n.pg.). For Butler, and other SF writers troubled by contemporary politics, the process of re-imagining new worlds is inseparable from understanding the present one. Euro-American SF thus demonstrates two competing impulses: escape into unrealistic fantasies that evade the complexity of reality or reflection on current societal problems through re-imagined worlds.

As indigenous communities do not have the privilege of indulging fantasies that gloss over issues of land rights, environmentalism, and diversity, the purpose of indigenous SF often corresponds to Butler's goal of using new futures to shed light on old problems. In her introduction to the indigenous SF anthology *Walking the Clouds* (2012), Grace Dillon describes four prominent themes of indigenous SF: experiences of time that display the present moment as a mixture of past memories and current experience, the moment of contact between two cultural groups, indigenous forms of science and environmental sustainability, and narratives of healing from colonialism (3). Each challenges a specific colonialist narrative found in Euro-American SF; indigenous science and sustainability, for example, emphasizes the importance of environmental knowledge, rather than the technological knowledge glorified in Western SF that wreaks destruction on the environment. While Western SF often follows a colonialist logic to its harmful ends, such as the fractured and hopeless society that results from an obsessive reliance on surveillance technology in George Orwell's *1984* (1949), indigenous SF more often looks towards a healing world: a

refreshing reversal for a culture whose literary productions have necessarily but unfortunately been dominated by continual returns to historical traumas.

Moreover, outside of the more recent emergence of indigenous SF, the act of storytelling has been and remains integral to Aboriginal and Native community-building. Although oral storytelling traditions also persist in contemporary European cultures, indigenous scholars view oral storytelling as particularly crucial to their cultures, as it helps protect the community bonds that the governmental possession of indigenous lands threatens. In her book, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (2008), scholar Lisa Brooks employs the metaphor of a common pot to describe the role storytelling plays for Native Americans, as both are ways for, "whatever was given from the larger network of inhabitants […] to be shared within the human community" (3). For Native Americans oral and written stories are seen as a collective practice of sharing individual experiences of a specific environment with the larger community of its inhabitants. Storytelling is thus an active process of cultural contribution; the Anishinaabe term, "Awikhiganak", meaning "a tool for image-making, for writing, for transmitting an image or idea […] not only [emerges] from particular place-worlds but [engages] them as active participants" (Brooks xxii-xxiii). Native American stories are both community-driven and place-dependent. Oral stories passed down through generations thus critically serve as a way for new generations to understand cultural histories. As Lisa Smith argues, "*Coming to know the past* has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization" (34). For Natives living in contemporary North America, a country that denied the continuing existence of Native cultures up until the late twentieth century and continues to deny the extent of its past abuses, storytelling is crucial to retaining the histories of Native peoples and places.

Australian Aboriginal communities similarly use storytelling to maintain relationships to their land and ancestors. In their article on the relationship between Aboriginal stories and place-mapping, Milroy and Revell state that, "for Aboriginal children, to be born into place is to be born into the stories of that place" (5). To Aborigines, their land is Country; however, Country is more than a name for a physical space, Country encompasses one's relationship to a cultural past and current place in the community (Rose 106). The concept of Country is closely tied to the concept of Dreamtime, which posits a world beyond immediate human experience, in

which Aboriginal ancestors live alongside human beings and animate landscape structures, such as trees (Goodall 6). Dreamtime creatures are only perceptible to individuals in the community known as the Clevermen or Cleverwomen, who are able to communicate with them (Beckett). To the community at large, the knowledge of Dreamtime is relayed through storytelling, in which the "audience will follow the story's path across the land in their imagination […] drawing out its meaning for themselves" (Goodall 6). The knowledge relayed in Dreamtime is metaphorical; for instance, the Dreaming stories of Northern Aboriginal communities often feature a Captain Cook figure, despite the fact that the European settler James Cook did not visit Northern Australia (Goodall 8). To Northern Aboriginal communities, though, he embodies a history of oppressive colonialism. The metaphorical understanding of historical events through Dreamtime has resulted in governmental officials dismissing Aboriginal testimonies. Jeremy Beckett notes that, "the experts who wrote about Aborigines up to the 1970s largely ignored [talk of bureaucratic terror and daily oppression], due to […] the belief that people who situated all the formative events of their world in a mythological 'Dreamtime' must be without history" (n.pg.). Though not given authority by the Euro-American government, Dreamtime allows Aboriginal communities to maintain rich narratives of cultural histories and community relations.

Colonialism prioritizes one culture's story over another. The United States' claim to the land region of North America is a story, given power through legislative documents and imaginatively embellished through the fictional anecdote of Christopher Columbus, but a story nonetheless. The hegemony of largely inaccurate European narratives has, in turn, cost indigenous communities lives and histories. However, in the wake of governmental abuses and historical erasure, indigenous people in North America and Australia maintain their cultures through the act of storytelling. Their stories now reach a larger audience of both indigenous and Euro-American/Euro-Australian readers, whose turn it is to listen.

The Power of the Exiled Voice: Gerald Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts*

Gerald Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on the White Earth Nation* follows the journey of seven exiles from White Earth Nation, who sail to New France to establish a new nation in response to the United States' 2034

abrogation of the White Earth treaty. Though set in the future, the novel borrows heavily from Vizenor's experience in the present. In 2009, Erma Vizenor, chief of the White Earth Nation in Minnesota, appointed Vizenor the principal writer of a new constitution for the White Earth Reservation, along with three advisors, Jill Doerfler, JoAnne Stately, and Anita Fineday, to assist with drafts (Vizenor et al. 51). The new constitution aimed to address problems caused by the original federally-imposed constitution, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Constitution (MCT), which lumped together the six reservations of Minnesota into one political body, despite the communities' differing needs (Vizenor et al. 51). In writing the new constitution, Vizenor and his fellow delegates prioritized cultural revitalization and Native sovereignty, meaning the right of Native communities to self-governance. Towards the goal of cultural revitalization, Vizenor removed the blood quantum rule, which required a person be at least one-fourth Native American to obtain tribal citizenship. Vizenor and his fellow opponents to blood-quantum argue that the United States government created the requirement with the aim of ensuring Native disappearance; the government's logic being that, as cross-racial marriages increased throughout subsequent generations, the number of people able to qualify would lessen and tribal numbers would accordingly sink (Vizenor et al. 82). The White Earth constitution in turn proposes a holistic attitude towards tribal membership based on kinship ties within the Anishinaabe community. Additionally, while the MCT constitution gives significant political power to the U.S. secretary of interior, the new White Earth constitution does not give the U.S. any power over the Anishinaabe community, ensuring tribal sovereignty (Vizenor et al. 82). Although voters approved the new White Earth constitution on November 19, 2013, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribal Executive Committee has faced significant difficulties with implementation, due to resistance to the constitution's more radical changes, such as the removal of blood quantum, which more conservative tribal members fear will make citizenship too inclusive (Glass-Moore n. pg.). Vizenor's 2016 publication of *Treaty Shirts,* whose primary themes are self-governance and cultural survivance, represents a SF treatment of the political issues currently dividing the Anishinaabe community.

In *Treaty Shirts*, Vizenor strategically chooses exiles, individuals banished from the nation-state, as his protagonists to act as symbols for the governing principles that would strengthen Native communities, but that U.S. government

interference has prevented. Each of the seven exiles bears an "earned" nickname, meaning a name that captures the spirit of their lives. Waassee, the exile who makes laser shows, means lightning, for example. By choosing personal names relevant to their own lives over the names assigned to them at birth, the exiles employ language as Vizenor strived to in his constitution: "in the spirit of resistance and independent governance" (Vizenor et al. 52). The act of naming is especially significant to the White Earth constitution, as the earlier MCT was a "dubious union of six treaty reservations" (Vizenor et al. 13), through which the federal government effectively named six tribes one, betraying their flippant attitude towards cultural differences between Native tribes. Further, in *Treaty Shirts*, each exile wears the same shirt day to day, known as their treaty shirts, that "[embody] our spirit, sweat, and loyalty to the constitution […] we wore the shirts unwashed at every convention and convocation in the past twenty years" (Vizenor 24). The treaty shirts, "a ceremonial vestment of continental liberty" (Vizenor 11), represent a steadfast commitment to personal autonomy. Both in name and clothing, the exiles embody the principles of Native sovereignty.

Moreover, the contrasts between the MCT and the White Earth constitution parallel those between the federally-appointed leader of the White Earth community, Godtwit Moon, and the leader of the exiles, Archive. Godwit Moon, appointed by the federal government upon the abrogation of the White Earth treaty, "could not wait to exile artists, writers, and the delegates to the constitution" (Vizenor 90) and accordingly banishes the seven exiles upon his appointment. Previous to his appointment, Godtwit was in federal prison for "larceny, extortion, possession of narcotics, and weapons violations", but was "secretly paroled to the reservation through a new and ironic rendition strategy of generous treatment" (20). On the reservation, he became corporate manager of the notorious White Foxy Casino. A corrupt individual with loose ties to the federal government, Godtwit represents the type of leader only a political body unfamiliar and unconcerned with the structure of the White Earth community would elect. Godtwit's election thus acts as a sharp critique of the power given to the U.S. secretary of interior by the MCT.

In opposition to Godtwit, Archive, the leader of the exiles, who "would rather walk the earth as an exile in the company of other worthy native exiles […] than parley for a minute any compromise with the tradition fascists" (Vizenor 65),

promotes dissent to corrupt governmental practices. Archive inherited his disdain of the government's involvement with the Native community from his great-uncle, who wrote the White Earth constitution, and, after its abrogation, "walked alone into the solitude of the red pine forest and vanished near the headwaters of the Mississippi River" (Vizenor 30). Furthermore, Archive's long-time lover, Henry Badge, "became a crony, confidante, and the executive assistant to Godtwit the same week he was named the sector governor" (43). Archive not only sees his great-uncle's bond with the Anishinaabe tribe break due to federal action, but his personal relationship with his partner also dissolves after she pursues Godtwit's federally-given power. Vizenor's portrays Archive as, in turn, troubled; though he puts on a front of deviance as he "[taunts] the toadies of the sector" (53), he often acts "moody and uncertain" (66) and, in contrast to the other exiles, rarely describes himself in his narrations. Archive, like his earned nickname suggests, bears the tragedy-ridden history of the Anishinaabe community within himself, but his knowledge also gives him the conviction to dismiss federal government and trust Native sovereignty, thus fulfilling the intentions of the White Earth constitution.

If Archive personifies the abstract motivations behind the White Earth constitution, Savage Love manifests their expression in words. An "innovative unpublished writer" (10), Savage Love begins her narrative with instructions to the reader to, "Name me a native exile, but not with ordinary words, not suicide similes… I am an exile and write to an absence, not to the cultural nostalgia of a presence" (Vizenor 49). In writing to "an absence" rather than the "cultural nostalgia of a presence", Savage Love gives precedence to overlooked Anishinaabe histories over stereotypical signifiers of Native culture, such as spirit-quests and shamans. Though a "savant with words, she teased but never trusted the masters of words, authors, teachers, and politicians, and never tied words to any sense or presence" (Vizenor 76). Savage Love reads widely in both the Euro-American and Native American literary canons, but upholds an ironic approach to serious literature, much like Vizenor, whose fiction often converses with Western works through an ironic lens.

Like Savage Love, though, *Treaty Shirts* blurs the line between art and politics. The majority of the exiles pursue art: Savage Love and Archive write, and Hole in the Storm paints; however, Waasese follows the untraditional creative pursuit of holograms. The conservative members of the White Earth Reservation "resisted the

very idea that a laser holoscene was the continuation of natural motion and trickster stories" (Vizenor 87), banishing Waasese's father for using them. Their stubborn opposition to holograms rather pointedly speaks to Vizenor's frustration with "tradition fascists" (4), who fear altering traditional Native ceremonies will diminish their cultural meaning. Vizenor, in contrast, considers a flexible approach to Native traditions necessary to cultural survivance. The exiles of *Treaty Shirts* accordingly use their art to tell stories in "natural motion" (Vizenor 87), meaning stories that retain the spirit both of Native culture and of the storyteller's contemporary presence. While traditionalists fear new stories may take away from the power of old ones, stories in natural motion celebrate the act of storytelling as a recognition of continued Native life. Subsequently, exile is the ideal position for a storyteller, as banishment from the governing body frees a person to see their culture underneath the veneer of a political structure. Banishment, "as most natives know, was not the end, never the end, but rather the start of native stories" (Vizenor 108). The government's continual disavowal of the exiles' artistic productions, in turn, mimics the traditionalists' fear of new blood taking away old power. As Vizenor's fictional commentary on his real-life struggle to establish the White Earth constitution, *Treaty Shirts* similarly embodies the political paradox of an indigenous artist fighting for cultural rights from the United States government, which allows art to be the most free form of political dissent only because the hegemony of governmental legislation leaves artistic expression the least authority.

Dreaming an Old Story for a New Audience: Ryan Griffen's *Cleverman*

Ryan Griffen's television show, *Cleverman*, centers around two Gumbaynggirr half-brothers, Waruu and Koen West, who live in a re-imagined version of contemporary New South Wales. In Waruu and Koen's world, Hairypeople, fictional creatures developed from several Aboriginal mythologies, exist as a cultural group within New South Wales alongside Aborigines and Euro-Australians. As their name suggests, fur coats the Hairypeople's bodies, causing the government to deem them less than human and exile them to an impoverished area known as the Zone. A small subset of progressives in turn fights for the Hairies' right to assimilation.

Though the Aboriginal characters are depicted as having basic human rights, the very premise of the exiled Hairies makes a straightforward political reference to the historical marginalization of Aboriginal communities. Both the exiled status of the Hairypeople and their attempted assimilation are grounded in the history of Aboriginal and Euro-Australian relations. Under Australia's assimilation policies, between 50,000 and 100,000 indigenous children, now referred to as the Stolen Generation, were taken from their homes to foster-care facilities between 1910 and 1970. Ron Smith, the 1997 commissioner into the human rights violations committed under Australia's assimilation policies, which included child removal, rape, and physical abuse, referred to the policies as genocide (Schaffer 7). The Commonwealth of Australia justified the forced removal of children from their families because they thought Aborigines inhuman; Gumbaynggirr activist Gary Foley explains that, in the early twentieth century, "Indigenous people in communities all over Australia were subject to inspection by 'scientists' interested in such things as similarities between Aborigines and Chimpanzees, brain capacity and cranium size" (n.pg.). The less than human rationale for exiling the Hairypeople of *Cleverman* thus replicates the racist ideologies that drove mass abuse of Aboriginal populations.

Cleverman in turn offers a nuanced portrayal of the Hairy characters that demonstrates the difficulty of political unification, due to a cultural group's differing attitudes towards resistance. For example, the most radical in his outrage towards the government, the Hairy Maliyan organizes violent boxing matches between Aboriginals and Hairies living in the Zone as an outlet for his political anger. He believes in a resistance of violence. Waruu's Hairy assistant, Harry, on the other hand, chooses to "shave down" and pass as an Aboriginal, so that he can assist Waruu in his public appearances promoting the assimilation movement, thus pursuing a gentle resistance of cooperation. Ultimately, though, Latini, a Hairy character similar in spirit to Archive, provides the clearest insight into the political reality of the Hairy community. As the only member of the turned over family Koen who escapes, she spends the first season in relative isolation, but in a few key scenes voices the truths her fellow Hairies evade. For instance, in the fourth episode, "Sun and Moon", Belinda, a white, female reporter, goes to the Zone to interview Hairies. Characteristically, Maliyan knocks her down and threatens to kill her for exploiting the Hairy community, but Latini reminds him that, "If you do kill her, get ready.

She's white. She's famous, and they'll come back for all of us". An outsider even in the Zone, Latini, like Archive, understands the danger posed by the government, due to the personal destruction wrought on her own family. In the season finale, after the government threatens to exterminate the Zone, Waruu's daughter, Alinta, promises to remain with Latini as an ally, but Latini screams at her to leave, because "This isn't some bullshit political rally. This is my life", thus also criticizing an idealized vision of successful resistance. As *Cleverman*'s Archive, Latini speaks the truth of political disenfranchisement. Her words are powerful in their conviction, but heavy in their implications for the speaker.

However, *Cleverman* bases the heart of its political critique in the West brothers' journey, establishing a unified political front between the Aborigine and Hairy inhabitants of the Zone. Waruu and Koen, as the descendants of the Gumbaynggirr community's former Cleverman, Uncle Jimmy, are at the focal point of the community's politics. At the beginning of the show, their dying uncle must choose which nephew to give his powers. Waruu, the more successful, older brother, who leads the Hairies assimilationist movement, initially seems the logical choice. However, Uncle Jimmy chooses Koen, who works in a shady bar and, in the first episode, "First Contact", turns over a Hairy family to the government for money. Koen's initial unpreparedness for the Cleverman role allows the arc of his character in the first season to center around his journey towards becoming more involved with Gumbaynggirr culture.

Koen's adaptation into the Cleverman role through a gradual understanding of Gumbaynggirr culture and his place in the community also typifies the learning process required to obtain Dreaming knowledge. Heather Goodall explains that, "a fundamental principle of the Aboriginal worldview is that land is seen to embody profound religious and philosophical knowledge. The 'Dreaming' is a widely used Aboriginal English term for this knowledge" (5). As the new Cleverman, with the potential to communicate with Dreaming figures, Koen must first understand the cultural history of the land he lives in. To help Koen, after Jimmy appoints him Cleverman, Kora, a Dreaming spirit appears in the body of a teenage girl. Kora initially frustrates Koen, as she remains mute to his attempts to speak to her. However, as Koen's new responsibilities drive him to spend more time with his stepmother, she explains that Kora contains a trapped spirit. Koen then learns to tune

into Kora's needs and allows her to take him on a journey to an ancient tree, where she is able to return to the Dreamworld. Koen's journey with Kora to an ancient site strengthens his connection to the Gumbaynggirr history, intrinsic to the Coffs Harbour landscape. Through physical exploration of the land, Koen strengthens his emotional bond to the Gumbaynggirr community, exemplifying how, "[Dreaming journeys] teach Aboriginal people to see an animate and enlivened landscape where landforms, watercourses, and trees convey not just their outward shapes but the excitement and power of the ancestral figures whose essence they embody" (Goodall 6). *Cleverman* uses Koen's basic misunderstanding of the Dreaming world in the early episodes of the show to emphasize the land-based nature of Dreaming knowledge.

Koen's subsequent usurpation of Waruu's leadership role in the Zone community acts, like Vizenor's Archive, to frame indigenous sovereignty as dependent on choosing leaders based on the wishes of the community. In the first episode of *Cleverman*, Waruu shines in relation to his half-brother: he is classically handsome, with two children, an intelligent and supportive wife, and a powerful media presence. However, subsequent episodes quickly highlight the flaws in Waruu's pristine image; though well-intentioned at times, he more often makes selfish decisions purely out of ambition. On a personal level, he cheats on his wife with a famous, white news reporter, yet chides Koen for being the mixed-blood son of their shared father's white mistress. On a political level, he fails to place the needs of his community over his own. In the fifth episode, "A Man of Vision", for example, he accepts thirty millions dollars from the white business mogul Jared Slade to ostensibly help the Zone community, on the condition that he delivers Koen to Slade. Slade, fascinated with the potential secrets of Dreaming knowledge and obsessed with immortality, had a vampiric relationship with Uncle Jimmy, giving him money in exchange for insights from the Dreamworld. He hopes to use Koen for the same gain. At this point, the viewer knows Slade is worse than Waruu suspects, as several earlier scenes show Slade running deadly eugenic experiments on Hairies in his billion dollar laboratory; Slade thus pays tribute to the decades of inhumane, scientific experiments performed on Aborigines seen as equivalent to guinea pigs. However, by the fifth episode, Waruu realizes Koen's new position as Cleverman threatens his power, and, hoping Slade's money will help him retain his leadership in the Zone, accepts the

money. In his attraction to power for its own sake, Waruu, like Godtwit Moon, exhibits a tendency towards corruption that is dangerous in a political leader.

Koen, in contrast, through his acquisition of Dreaming knowledge, comes to political power only through an understanding of the Gumbaynggirr community. The last episode of the first season, notably titled, "Terra Nullius", the British legal term for a land deemed unoccupied, and applied inaccurately to many Aboriginal lands to justify British colonialism, features the final showdown between the half brothers (Goodall 126). Though Waruu tricks Koen into accompanying him to Slade's lab and knocks him out, leaving him to Slade's devices, Koen escapes in time for the confrontation with the police, who have decided to exterminate the Zone. Waruu and Koen thus encounter a panicked, disorganized group of its remaining inhabitants. Waruu makes a desperate plea to act as their leader, but, unfortunately for Waruu, a malevolent creature from the Dreaming world appears and starts attacking. Though Waruu attempts to use a Dreaming spirit stick, known as a nulla nulla, to drive him out, he fails. Out of frustration, Waruu tries the equally futile gesture of shooting the creature with a gun. Koen then takes the nulla nulla from the defeated Waruu and successfully slays the creature only he can fully see. The ending of the episode features a unified political front ready to take a stand, with Koen at its head; the final shot tracks Koen upward as he stares defiantly outwards in the direction of the coming police forces. By ending with the Dreaming world's effective designation of Koen as the resistance leader, *Cleverman* asserts indigenous sovereignty as dependent on political leaders elected based on community support rather than manipulation of power.

Dreaming stories communicate information about the history of an Aboriginal community as an explanation for the current family relationships and political structure. Consequently, new story arcs are rarely added to Dreaming oral stories, as they recall only the aspects of the past most crucial to the community. Goodall asserts that, "Whether the initial expression of a new interpretation or story is one of individual or group creation, it will only become a part of the body of Dreaming oral tradition by a process of community endorsement" (8). *Cleverman* in turn replicates the communal tradition of Dreaming oral stories on screen as a form of cultural representation and revitalization for Aboriginal populations across New Zealand and Australia. The lack of diversity in contemporary television first motivated Griffen to

create the show: he wanted an Aboriginal superhero for his son, as a contrast to the overwhelmingly white Marvel superheroes (Griffen n.pg.). Moreover, he worked carefully to tell the *Cleverman* story in the tradition of Aboriginal storytelling; in an article he wrote for the Guardian, he explains that in bringing oral Aboriginal stories to the screen, he followed "protocols put in place by Aboriginal elders who passed the stories over to me for the show. They put their trust in me and the team, and that was one of the biggest breakthroughs that enabled us to go ahead with the series. The elders were trying to achieve something very special that would help to keep our culture growing" (Griffen n.pg.). The production team of *Cleverman*, and the Aboriginal elders who assisted them, offer a message similar to that of Vizenor's exiles: new approaches to cultural traditions, if conducted respectfully and in communication with the larger community, serve as both a celebration of the continuing vitality of indigenous culture and a rebuke to the false notion of indigenous populations as living forever in the past. *Cleverman*'s nuanced and politically charged SF portrayal of an Aboriginal Dreamworld living within contemporary New South Wales brings the reality of a growing, resilient Aboriginal presence to the TV screen.

Towards a Collective Survivance

In his recent essay on the evolution of SF, David M. Higgins pointed out that while recent Euro-American SF frames white protagonists, like Katniss of *The Hunger Games* (2012)*,* as victims of authoritarian societies, indigenous SF refuses victimry (54). *The Hunger Games* glamorizes political marginalization because it is ultimately politically neutral. The ostensibly dangerous world Katniss navigates creates what is nothing less and nothing more than a two-hour entertainment targeted at the relatively secure, movie-going U.S. populace. Indigenous SF writers, on the other hand, must balance the political implications of cross-cultural indigenous representation with the desire to honor the communal storytelling traditions of indigenous cultures. It is important to note that both Vizenor and Griffen, like the majority of indigenous SF authors, are light-skinned and thus likely less subject to racial bias when navigating the white-dominated literary and mass media markets; however, their mixed-race backgrounds also provide them with personal insight into

the paradoxical position of wanting to honor indigenous heritage while facing the reality of whiteness cultural hegemony within artistic representation. Their SF works in turn approach the dilemma of indigenous representation through the lens of sovereignty. Both the White Earth exiles and the Aborigines and Hairies of the Zone use the act of storytelling to assert their right to governance based on the cultural history and current needs of their peoples, in turn delegitimizing manipulative, power-hungry figures, like Godtwit and Waruu, who play to the corrupt aims of the dominant government.

Furthermore, the cynical yet strong-willed characters, Archive and Latini, provide the voice of historical truth that counteracts misleading, dominant narratives. Archive and Latini's histories of personal traumas embody the largely erased history of governmental abuses suffered by indigenous communities; they in turn continually remind the other characters of the need to protect the autonomy of indigenous cultures and reject colonialist narratives that divide and weaken indigenous communities. Similarly, in his writings on survivance, Vizenor often returns to his concept of a fourth person, meaning "not a historical presence, and not hearsay theory, but a persuasive image in a scene created from a visual memory of a situation" (Vizenor 109). As an example of a fourth person narrative, in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, Vizenor relates the story of Charles Aubid, who, in a legislative battle with the U.S. government over the right to harvest rice on the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota, "testified through translators that he was present as a young man when the federal agents told Old John Squirrel that the Anishinaabe would always have control of the manoomin harvest" (2). The U.S. court saw Aubid's verbal testimony as unauthoritative and ruled it not admissible. However, Vizenor points to Aubid's reliance on the memory of Old John Squirrel as a fourth person imagining that stays true to the spirit of recalled event. Archive and Latini in turn represent the fourth person imaginings of Vizenor and Griffen; though not inspired by historical figures, they creatively personify the historical events their SF narratives relive: the controversy surrounding the White Earth constitution and Australia's backwards assimilationist policies.

Both *Treaty Shirts* and *Cleverman* frame the key to survivance as a collective and creative resistance. Vizenor and Griffen employ imaginative SF narratives to not only tell their individual stories as an Anishinaabe and a Gumbaynggirr person

respectively, but also to give voice to the complicated, cultural histories that span the hundreds of years before their births. The truth of their fictional stories works to take power away from the false authority of dominant historical narratives; moreover, the collectivity inherent to indigenous storytelling makes their narratives not a single story, but a resistance movement.

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INTERVIEW

Through the tunnel – Thomas Örn Karlsson

Interview with | Thomas Örn Karlsson
Interviewer | Martin Simonson

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About the Author | Thomas Örn Karlsson started out as a nature and landscape photographer but gradually evolved towards the realm of horror and fantasy. Recent exhibitions include #MEMORYLANE, in which levitation art is combined with music (by Anders Rane), and "Out of this world", a collaboration with writers Martin Simonson and Raúl Montero, which was presented, together with a lecture, at Fotografiska Museet in Stockholm in August 2017. Thomas currently works as ambassador for Olympus.

What do you think about the relationship between nature and fantasy or horror?
Thomas Örn Karlsson (TÖK) | I think the people in general are bit lost in technology like television, internet, video games, you name it. So my personal approach to fantasy/horror in nature is to explore the physical world as a big and sometimes scary playground, almost like a script I'm allowed to mess around with,

using my camera. The reason I choose to explore darker themes is simply that we often get ready-made versions of reality served up to us, and I prefer to upset certain notions about what is beautiful and picturesque and take people out of their comfort zone.

Isn't beauty opposed to horror?

TÖK | I think the old cliché that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder is actually true – where one person sees something ugly, another finds it attractive, both on a gut-level and intellectually. That goes for pictures of monsters emerging from open graves, too.

Is the theme of horror and fantasy well received in the world of photography?

TÖK | It's a very small part of the world of photography. However, I notice that a growing number of photo reviewers appreciate my pictures and more and more commissions and exhibition bookings keep dropping in, so I guess people need a bit more weird horror in their lives.

What is the advantage of photography in this respect, compared to other media, like literature or music or film?

TÖK | The advantage, and the challenge, of photography is that you need to say it all in only one shot. In literature you can build up the momentum of a scene in sometimes a few lines and sometimes a few pages, and in both music and film, you also work with a cumulative effect in mind, carefully preparing the audience for what is to come. In photography you have one frame to create atmosphere, and sometimes even to wrap up an entire story.

How does it work when you illustrate texts? Is it a long way to go from the written word to the image? What is the creative process like?

TÖK | Of course, the first thing is to read the text carefully to get the feel of it. As an illustrator you need to think in terms of the essence of the story, boil it down to the basics and arrive at what you perceive to be the core quality of the intended experience, and the key moments. In this respect it's obviously it's an advantage to be able to communicate with the writer, if he or she is still alive and available, that is. In the case of the classics, you need to do a bit of research. After choosing the key

moments, you translate them visually in your head and then you recreate that image. You'll never be able to capture it exactly, of course, but that's more or less the process. Sometimes during a shooting session, new elements enter the scene spontaneously. If you're working outdoors, which is frequently my case, it could be the shifting light that suddenly sets off something unexpectedly, or even the sound of a bird, or the wind in the trees, that make you realize something new about the scene. Then you must be prepared to accept or reject them. Gut feeling is key here, I believe.

What makes a photo special, in your opinion?

TÖK | I think when you manage to break some basic rules in photography and still get away with it. For example, in the world of photography it´s a big no-no to put characters in the center of the picture, but I do it a lot more often lately, building up scenes from the center and outwards instead of the other way around. General rules have always annoyed me, in life as well as in art, and I guess I'm a bit of a rebel struggling against them… However, I guess one rule of thumb I agree with is that you need to master the rules in order to be ready to break them, and create your own *signum*.

What are your inspirations?

TÖK | I watch a lot of horror movies and read a lot of horror novels, and in my youth fantasy literature and films were my main inspiration. If I was asked to name a few, I suppose Stephen King, Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe and Fjodor Dostojevskij come to mind. In photography, the black and white pictures of the English war photographer Don Mccullin and the mountain sceneries of Ansel Adams have been important for me aesthetically.

Tell us something about your ongoing projects.

TÖK | I have several projects going on right now. In the first place, a project called Air, Land, Water that I'm doing with two other photographers (Staffan Lundgren and Fredrik Blomqvist). It's an environmental project featuring pure nature photos of ten big rivers in Sweden. I'm also preparing a pretty eclectic art exhibition with four other artists (painter and voice duo Angle & Dawn, music producer Anders Rane and writer Martin Simonson) which is a sequel to the art exhibition #MEMORYLANE. On this

occasion we work together to create a Gothicized atmosphere with levitated art and horror motifs accompanied by music and Gothic horror narratives. Anders is recording in a church to get the exact right sound and Martin provides a general narrative framework. It'll be a serious challenge to stage this, but it's a really exciting project.

Over the pond– Thomas Örn Karlsson

REVIEW | *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017)

BY | Katherine Connell

Towards the end of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale,* its protagonist and narrator – Offred – reflects upon her horrible predicament: the experience of the oppressive and violent dystopia she is trapped in, alongside the memory of her freedom before the creation of this society. It is in this state of tension between past and present that Offred offers this poignant insight: "I would like to be without shame. I would like to be shameless. I would like to be ignorant. Then I

would not know how ignorant I was" (Atwood 304). The desire to revoke shame from political inaction or lack of foresight contains echoes of the current political climate in North America, where *The Handmaid's Tale* locates its dystopian society. Indeed, Offred's observation about the relationship between ignorance and shame might also describe that experienced by the many white voters who expressed shock after the presidential election of Donald Trump and who could not believe how embedded racism and misogyny are into the fabric of American life and its institutional structures.

These connections between Gilead – the theocratic Christian society of *The Handmaid's Tale* and the sociopolitical conditions of present day America have informed most of the recent analysis of Hulu's adaptation of the novel for television, lauding the show's content for a near uncanny timeliness. These comparisons are worth noting, if not to identify that Margaret Atwood's writing has often served as a speculative warning bell. This is true not only of her fiction – much of which is politically conscious speculative fiction, combined with elements of horror or the Weird – but also of Atwood's critical writing as an activist in the public sphere. A recent example is an article Atwood wrote for *Matter,* describing two heavily researched, exquisitely imagined and illustrated futures on Earth without oil, asking that its readers conceptualize climate change as "everything change". This is true of many parts of Atwood's speculative fiction: a critique of the neoliberal tendency to consider social phenomena in isolation, for a more ecological focus on how systems are deeply interwoven and feed each other. One point of analysis in this article sets the tone for much of Atwood's writing, an affective exploration of "the bad things that may happen in that future; also the desire to deny these things or sweep them under the carpet so business can go on as usual" (Atwood, "It's Not Climate Change" n. pg.).

In many ways, this is what *The Handmaid's Tale* is about, and it is highlighted in Hulu's adaptation. Or perhaps, how rapidly business can become *unusual* when "bad things" are ignored: political oppression, surveillance, climate change, and the increased legislation of bodies, especially those historically considered secondary. In both novel and series, we see the creation of Gilead unfold slowly. While the mid-1980s inform the pre-dystopian days of the novel, the series chooses that this period be set in the current moment or very near future, with all of our present technologies. Gilead is created through a militant government takeover by Christians repulsed by

perceived societal moral disorder and responding to a significant drop in the North American fertility rate. This "restoration of order" produces a society ruled by men called Commanders, and governed by Biblical legislation enforced by a secret police called The Eyes. Women are either Wives of these Commanders (those who vocally supported the Christian takeover and who suddenly find the society they advocated for involves the loss of this vocality); Marthas (servants and cooks); and the Handmaids. Handmaids are women with "viable ovaries" who are raped weekly by Commanders, between the legs of their wives, in a lurid interpretation of Genesis called "the Ceremony". While in the novel Offred refuses to refer to this process as rape, the television series is decisive in its imagining of the Ceremony as the camera steadily focuses – for an uncomfortably long duration – on Offred's (Elisabeth Moss) harrowed and numbed expression, as her head violently bobs up and down to the soundtrack of acute thuds dissonantly mixed with a religious choral song called "Onward Christian Soldiers". Yet these sequences are far from fetishistic, as is so often the case with on-screen depictions of sexual violence. In watching these disturbingly choreographed scenes, viewers must actively confront speculative visualizations of misogynistic legislation. It is unsurprising, then, that the show has had ripples in the public sphere, with activists in Canada, America and, recently, Poland, dressing up in the red robes and white bonnets worn in the show by handmaids as an act of political protest against the regulation of women's bodies (Mack n. pg.).

While *The Handmaid's Tale* is considered a classic novel within North American speculative fiction, the show gains its unique *momentum* and tone by producing an atmosphere of muted but impending terror. This affective disquiet is produced by analeptic interplay between flashbacks of a lively contemporary North American society and Gilead's nightmarishly overcast colour palette of browns, greys, and blues (often the only "colour" in this world is red from either the dresses worn by the Handmaids or blood, creating moments of startling visual tension). In addition to visuals, the physicality of the show is intense and watching the performances of the Handmaids is exhausting as they are assaulted, blinded, beaten, or mutilated. The show's characterization of misogyny as not only a horror, but also an embodied horror is powerful. This amplification of the novel, made possible through the televisual and performance medium, positions the series within a

burgeoning canon of "feminist horror" (Towlson 198). This is not to say that the show is saturated in scenes of physical violence. Scenes are often cut off right before or after the moment of peak physical violence has occurred, or the nucleus of this violence is obfuscated by carefully framed shots. As credit to the exceptional direction and editing of *The Handmaid's Tale*, each episode deploys physical violence strategically rather than gratuitously. These directorial and cinematographic choices emphasize significant scenes such as The Salvaging – a forced participatory execution in which criminals are beaten to death. These carefully paced eruptions of violent frenzy highlight the repression of Gilead and graph its rising tensions through moments in which they cannot be contained.

Adaptations are challenging, especially when they are born from a novel that is deeply ingrained into a genre's canon, such as is the case with *The Handmaid's Tale* in speculative fiction and feminist literature. This being said, Hulu's adaptation is successfully managing to remain faithful to its source text while working with the advantages of television – particularly its increased narrative space – to give the original story new life. One of the methods taken by the series to revitalize the novel is believably extending the stories of its minor characters. The novel, written as Offred's oral account of her time in Gilead, is recorded on cassette tapes, ultimately containing the reader within her narrative. The television format necessitates the reworking of this singular perspective, focusing instead on how its dystopia intimately shapes the experience of multiple characters. The most powerful expansion of a character from the novel is Moira (Samira Wiley), a lesbian who refuses to accept Gilead as the new normal and perpetually fights back at the system. While the novel ends Moira's narrative as a burnt out sex worker in an underground nightclub for Gilead's political elite, the first season of the show has Moira escaping to Canada. While much of *The Handmaid's Tale* feels claustrophobically without hope, the story of the eventual escape of a queer woman of colour from an American police state is one that reverberates.

Despite the exhilarating moment of Moira's escape, the show does not cover how inequalities beyond gender and sexuality might function in Gilead. While Hulu's adaptation aims for present day relevancy, there remains a neglect to move Atwood's novel away from feminisms of the 1980s into present day conversations around

intersectional feminism.[1] Although there are Handmaids and Marthas who are women of colour, whiteness totally and completely dominates the ruling elite of Commanders and their wives. In watching the show, there is an immediately noticeable missed opportunity to conceptualize how racism operates in Gilead. While Atwood's original novel factored white supremacy into the totalitarian foundation of Gilead, the series does not go beyond casting in conceptualizing race. Season one presents a missed opportunity to identify and explore the particular difficulties that characters like Moira, Luke (O-T Fagbenie), and Rita (Amanda Brugel) might encounter. Critic Angelica Jade Bastién sums this problem up in a review for *The New York Times*: "if you're going to trade in allegories of reproductive rights and body horror that throughout this country's history continue to harm women of color, especially black women, it's alarming that the actual black women in the narrative aren't granted any consideration for how they're wrestling with these very themes". As *The Handmaid's Tale* enters a second season that extends beyond the novel's ending, it might intensify the way it combines horror with political ideas, by shifting its focus onto speculating rather than ignoring how racism effects the characters of colour both inside and outside of Gilead.

The Handmaid's Tale has much to offer conversation around feminist speculative fiction and its onscreen iterations. Hulu's version of Atwood's text will also be of interest to scholars working in adaptation studies, especially those who have studied the 1990 film. For Margaret Atwood scholars or scholars working in the area of speculative fiction studies more broadly, the adaptation of such a canonical text has both revitalized interest in the novel and created new areas for critical investigation. Finally, fans who hold the novel dearly should be comforted by the fact that Hulu's adaptation has managed a seemingly impossible task, to maintain the familiar spirit of its original: that of being unsettled into action.

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[1] For an analysis of this issue specifically, see Cate Young, "Hulu's the Handmaid's Tale Might Be Race Blind – But That's Not a Good Thing", *Cosmopolitan,* 13 Jun. 2017, http://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/tv/a10001322/handmaids-tales-race-problem/. See also Priya Nair, "Get Out of Gilead: Anti-Blackness in *The Handmaid's Tale*", *Bitch Media,* 14 Apr. 2017, https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/anti-blackness-handmaids-tale.

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MUSIC TO DIE FOR
BY | John B. Kachuba

The lost bride – Thomas Örn Karlsson

Looking in the mirror as she brushed her hair, Louise thought she saw David behind her. She turned with a start only to find herself alone. Again. Eighteen months after his heart attack it was still difficult for her to believe he was gone, still difficult to hear only her voice in the rooms of their condo at the Belvedere. But David was gone, cremated, his ashes scattered to the winds from atop Mt. Desert in Acadia where they had honeymooned almost thirty years ago. Was it that long?

Her buzzing cell phone interrupted her thoughts. "Hello? Yes, Nola, just a few minutes. I'll be right down."

Louise sighed. She and Nola Matthews had been friends for quite some time and she knew that Nola meant well. At fifty-four, Nola did not let her divorce eight years ago keep her down. If anything, she was more energetic and fun-loving, more of a social butterfly than she had been when married to that alcoholic husband of hers. But Louise had never been like Nola and now, with David gone, she was even less inclined to go out, to socialize. But Nola insisted, so now and then Louise relented and let herself be dragged out for the evening. This was one of those evenings. As the elevator opened in the lobby she plastered on her best smile.

Nola and another friend, Renee, stood by the doorman's desk and greeted her with enthusiastic smiles of their own.

"You look great, Louise," Renee said. "Doesn't she look great, Nola?"

Twelve years younger than Louise, if anyone looked great it was Renee LaCosta with her LA Fitness body and stylishly-cut hair.

But Nola answered, "Yes, she does."

"Please girls," Louise said, "no platitudes tonight, okay?"

"You're the boss," said Renee, as they walked to her car.

"I'm not the boss of anything. So, tell me again where we're going."

"To the symphony," said Nola. "Remember?"

Louise shrugged and looked out the window as they headed downtown. She didn't care where they were going. Even the soaring edifice of Cincinnati Music Hall failed to rouse her. After all, she and David had attended performances there many times before. In fact, they had been season ticket holders, but that was then and this was now.

"You know, they say that the place is haunted," Renee said, as they entered the lobby.

"Oh, come on," said Nola.

"No, really. There used to be a potter's field here in the old days. A place where they buried the John Does and homeless people in the old days. Workers dug up a bunch of human bones when they built the place and, apparently, threw them all around and trashed them. That's supposed to be why there are ghosts here." She looked around the lobby as if expecting to see one of its spectral residents.

"I hope you don't tell such stories to your daughter," Louise said.

"Are you kidding? Maggie's the one that told me the story."

Nola said, "The acorn doesn't fall far from the tree."

A piece by Mozart began the performance, a piece Louise must have heard a thousand times before. She found herself wondering halfway through the performance if she had remembered to feed her cat Celine before she left for the evening.

The second half of the performance surprised Louise. The orchestra played Franz Schubert's "Symphonie Inachevée." It occurred to her that despite the many concerts she and David had attended there, she had rarely heard a Schubert composition. Why was that? She settled back in her seat and decided to give the music a chance.

She was not prepared for what Schubert's music did to her. Washing over her like an enchanted sea, she felt a stirring in her heart that she thought had vanished forever with David's death. But here it was again. She could not explain how or why she reacted so strongly, so viscerally to Schubert's music. All she knew as she sat in that darkened concert hall was that the music touched her in a way she didn't think possible.

Afterwards, as the three women sat in a nearby coffeehouse, she spoke effusively about the Schubert symphony. She could hear the lightness in her voice, something she had not heard in quite some time and it surprised her. She was sure that her friends noticed it as well.

Back at the Belvedere she thanked her friends once again for taking her to the concert and she realized that she truly meant it. She opened the door of her condo even as the notes of Schubert's symphony echoed in her head. Celine greeted her by rubbing up against her legs. Louise was relieved to find that, yes, she had fed the cat.

"So, Celine, Mommy can function just fine, thank you very much."

Over the next week, as she taught her composition and rhetoric class at the

university, she found herself now and then humming snatches of that Schubert symphony. She had been able to sleepwalk through her classes over the last eighteen months, teaching by rote. They kept her occupied but there had been little joy in them. Now, the Schubert melody running through her mind made those hours in the classroom less onerous. When she saw a newspaper ad for a Schubert performance in Dayton she called Nola and asked her if she would like to go.

"Now, this is a change," Nola said. "You calling *me*. I think I might be getting symphonied out, but okay. For you, I'll go."

Renee's daughter was sick at home with one of the myriad nasty infections kids pass around at school so it was only the two of them that attended the concert. The orchestra performed Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" and once again, the music hit Louise like an adrenalin shot to the heart.

A week later Nola let herself into Louise's condo at the Belvedere. Louise was attending a weekend conference and Nola had volunteered to take care of Celine, a task she had done often in the past.

Celine watched her from the back of the couch while Nola set out water and food.

"What have we here?" she said to the cat. She stood by the coffee table and picked up three CDs, all Schubert. A weighty biography of the composer also rested on the table, a bookmark stuck halfway through it. "It looks like Mommy has a new hobby."

Shortly after her return Louise called Nola.

"Yes, Celine was a perfect lady. No problems," Nola said.

"I'm glad to hear that. Thanks again."

"By the way, I noticed the book about Schubert. Are you enjoying it?"

"Oh, yes! Such an interesting man. Did you know he was only thirty-one when he died?"

"No, I didn't." She waited for Louise to drop the other verbal shoe with some morbid comment about dying too young, about David dying too young, but she did not.

"Yet in that brief lifetime he composed over one thousand pieces. Isn't that amazing?"

"Yes, that is impressive."

"Unfortunately, his work didn't become widely popular until after his death. Poor Franz."

Nola laughed. "Poor Franz?"

"Yes. He had only a relatively small circle of admirers in Vienna. His genius went unnoticed by the rest of the world."

"Okay, then. Poor Franz."

Only a few months after the Schubert concert at Music Hall Louise seemed a new woman; livelier and more energetic. It didn't take long for Nola and Renee to notice the change in their friend.

"You look fabulous," Renee said, as the three friends met for dinner at a new and trendy restaurant Louise had suggested.

"Thank you," she said, no longer balking at platitudes and fluffing the first stylish cut she had gotten in several months. "I'm feeling great, too."

Nola handed a menu to her friend. "Whatever it is you're taking, you should bottle the stuff and sell it." A bloom of color flashed on Louise's cheek. "Really? Are you blushing? It's like you're eighteen years old."

Louise chatted amiably throughout dinner. "Wait! Is that Franz?"

Nola looked up from her plate. "Where?"

"The music. Listen. Is that Schubert?" She cocked her head to one side, listening. She sighed. "No, my mistake. It's not him."

"You really are stuck on Schubert," said Renee.

"Franz," corrected Nola.

Renee stifled a laugh with her napkin.

"I guess I have become more familiar with him," said Louise.

"Familiar? That's an understatement." Nola set down her coffee cup. "More like an obsession. But if it works for you, then I'm all for it."

Later that evening, as Louise sat in her living room reading one more chapter in another Schubert biography before going to bed, Nola's words echoed in her head. Obsession? Was she obsessed with Schubert? She lifted her eyes to the framed drawing of the composer that sat prominently on her bookshelf. By now she was intimately familiar with the pudgy face and wild, tousled hair, the little glasses

perched upon his nose. In the picture, Schubert sat at a piano but positioned himself off-center on the bench as though waiting for an accompanist to join him. What would that be like, she wondered.

Celine suddenly pouncing upon the arm of the couch startled her out of her reverie.

"You're right, Celine. It's time for bed." She closed the book, turned off the light and went to bed.

She slept fitfully, stirring restlessly beneath the covers as strange images flitted through her brain. Not quite a dream, these disjointed images but more flashes of music, gaiety, and color, as though catching glimpses of an elaborate ball through billowing curtains. At one point someone called her name, a man's voice that at first sounded like David but then not and yet the voice whispered her name once more. A sweet smile curved upon her lips and she slept soundly through the rest of the night.

She could not explain why but over the next few days she could not get her mind off Schubert. On a semester break, she had time to finish yet another Schubert biography. She found herself imagining scenes from his life as though she had traveled back in time and was an actor in his life. What would it have been like to have been seated in a little Viennese drawing room with only a few close friends as Franz himself took his place at the piano to regale them with one of his newest pieces, the notes like divine little birds trilling from the instrument?

Between her purchases at a store and her borrowing from the library, she piled high the coffee table with Schubert CDs, making sure that she had at least one recording of each of his compositions. Her stereo became "All Schubert, All the Time." She would lose herself entirely in the music, letting go of time and space it seemed, moving into a spiritual realm that soothed her soul like prayer. Oblivious to anything but the music, she never heard the ringing of her phone and was surprised to see that Nola had called her three times over the week. She made a mental note to return her friend's call when she could find some time.

But with so much music it would be difficult to find free time.

Nola had left a message for her in the last call, inviting her out for coffee. Her friend sounded anxious, but Louise didn't know why.

"I'd rather stay here," she said to the picture of Schubert. If she didn't know better, she would have sworn that the composer smiled back at her.

Thank you, my dear.

Did she hear him say that? It seemed as though a whisper quietly faded in the room in which she sat alone except for Celine curled asleep on the window sill. Impossible, of course. She smiled. But how wonderful would it be to actually speak with him!

The light faded from the windows as she sat listening to the music, melodies she was beginning to know by heart. How long she sat there she didn't know but when she finally roused herself darkness had fallen and Celine was mewing for dinner from the kitchen.

She set a bowl of food on the kitchen floor for the cat. She thought about dinner for herself but she wasn't hungry enough to bother making anything. It occurred to her that, other than coffee and a croissant for breakfast, she hadn't eaten all day. Well, she could stand to lose a few pounds anyway.

The dark night flooded in through the windows of the living room. As she went to turn on a lamp she caught a sliver of light in the darkness across the room. Moonlight, she thought at first, but there was no moon that night. She stood with one hand poised on the lamp, peering into the darkness, trying to figure out the source of that luminescence when suddenly, it flared brightly, revealing the figure of a man sitting in a chair. Before she could utter a sound, the light winked out and the figure vanished. In that brief interval she had time to notice the curly, disheveled hair and the little glasses perched upon the nose of Franz Schubert.

Her hand froze on the light. Seconds passed, minutes perhaps. Finally, her fingers found the switch and light filled the room. The chair across the room sat empty. Of course.

"Franz?" she whispered.

The room did not answer.

Her heart still beat wildly. She knew what she had seen. She was not prone to hallucinations; she was not that kind of woman. A ghost? Had she not sensed David's presence lingering nearby from time to time? Had he really been there or was she simply so accustomed to his presence in life, his aura if you will, that its memory remained imprinted upon her consciousness? Did it make any difference if he had really been there or not? The sensation felt real enough.

But Franz Schubert?

She sat down on the couch, her eyes never leaving the wing chair across the room, as though she might be able to will the composer back through her gaze. And she knew that she did want him back.

At some point sleep overcame her, despite her resistance. When she awoke in the clear light of morning, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Her coffee-maker was set to turn on automatically and now the irresistible fragrance of fresh-brewed coffee drew her to the kitchen.

She held a cup beneath it, yawning as the steaming brew filled the cup.

Louise!

The cup jerked in her hand, sloshing half the contents across the counter, as she whirled around to see… nothing.

She set the cup down. "Franz?"

Louise.

The voice came from somewhere before her, she was certain, but she could see all the way into the living room. Empty.

"Franz, is that you?"

No answer, but she sensed a vibration of sorts in the atmosphere that shivered her spine, something that felt almost meteorological, like a sudden change in the weather, but it lasted for only a moment before dissipating. At her feet, Celine stared at something Louise could not see, the cat's body tense, ready to pounce or run.

Louise slowly walked through the living room, the cat following her, expecting to find she knew not what, then through the dining room, the study, the guest bedroom and finally her own bedroom. Nothing. She returned to the living room, wrapping her arms around her, as though cold and it wasn't until she had sat on the couch for a few minutes that she noticed the framed picture of Schubert was missing from its customary place on the bookshelf. Over the next hour she combed through her apartment looking for the picture, turning the place upside down, but coming up empty-handed.

He was here; somehow she knew that, and the thought thrilled her.

She felt as though something was required of her, that Franz needed her to do something, but what? She would do anything for him. Uncharacteristically, she felt fatigued and lay down on her bed to take a nap.

Louise slept. Once again she found herself in that candle-lit drawing room

with Franz at the piano. She felt the silk taffeta of her dress against her fingers, smelled the fragrance of the roses in the vase upon the mantle. There were some empty chairs in the room and she had the sense that they had only recently been vacated but now it was just her and Franz. Concentrating on the music before him he looked up briefly and glanced at her, his smile entering her heart like a javelin. She closed her eyes and let the music wrap itself around her like a soft blanket. She opened her eyes as the last notes slowly died and there he was, standing before her, offering her his hand. *Come with me.*

Louise opened her eyes and there he was, standing before her, offering her his hand. *Come with me.* She smiled and lifted her hand to his.

It was getting late. Nola was tempted to drive right by the Belvedere since Louise had not been answering her phone calls, but at the last minute she turned into the driveway. She had been thinking about her friend, worrying was more like it, and since she was in the neighborhood anyway, it could not hurt to drop in on her.

The doorman recognized her and allowed her to go on upstairs. She stepped out of the elevator on Louise's floor and walked down the carpeted hallway. There were only four units on that side of the building and it was deathly quiet in the hallway.

She paused outside Louise's door, reconsidering whether she should barge in on her friend unannounced. Hell, she was there now; why not? She was just about to knock when she thought she heard a voice beyond the door. A man's voice.

A man? Was she sure about that? She listened again, tipping her head toward the door, but she heard nothing more. Maybe the voice hadn't come from Louise's apartment after all. Perhaps it had been radio, or television. She wasn't even sure if it was a man's voice at all. Could she have imagined it entirely?

She knocked on the door. No answer. She knocked one more time. Nothing. Then from behind the door, she heard Celine's plaintive mewing. The cat sounded distressed and her scratching at the door worried Nola.

"Louise!" No answer.

Something was wrong. Nola dug in her purse for the key to the apartment and inserted it in the lock. "Louise! It's me, Nola. I'm coming in."

She pushed the door open and Celine scooted out and ran down the hallway.

Nola entered the condo. Nothing seemed amiss in the kitchen or the living room. She walked into the study.

"Louise?"

She felt her heart pounding as she entered the guest bedroom. No Louise. The only room left was Louise's bedroom. The door stood ajar.

She knocked on it gently. "Louise? Are you in there?"

No reply.

It felt as though her heart thumped in her ears as she slowly pushed the door open. Louise lay supine upon the bed. She wore an elegant ball gown but it was obvious to Nola that her friend was dead; the empty vials of pills on the nightstand confirmed her fears.

Nola stood beside the bed. "Oh, Louise…" was all she could say.
It took her a few moments to notice the framed drawing that lay on the bed beside her friend. It was the drawing of Schubert that Louise had so treasured.

But the drawing had changed. Franz Schubert sat upon the piano bench just as he always had but now beside him sat a smiling Louise.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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