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ON SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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Messengers from the Stars: On Science Fiction and Fantasy

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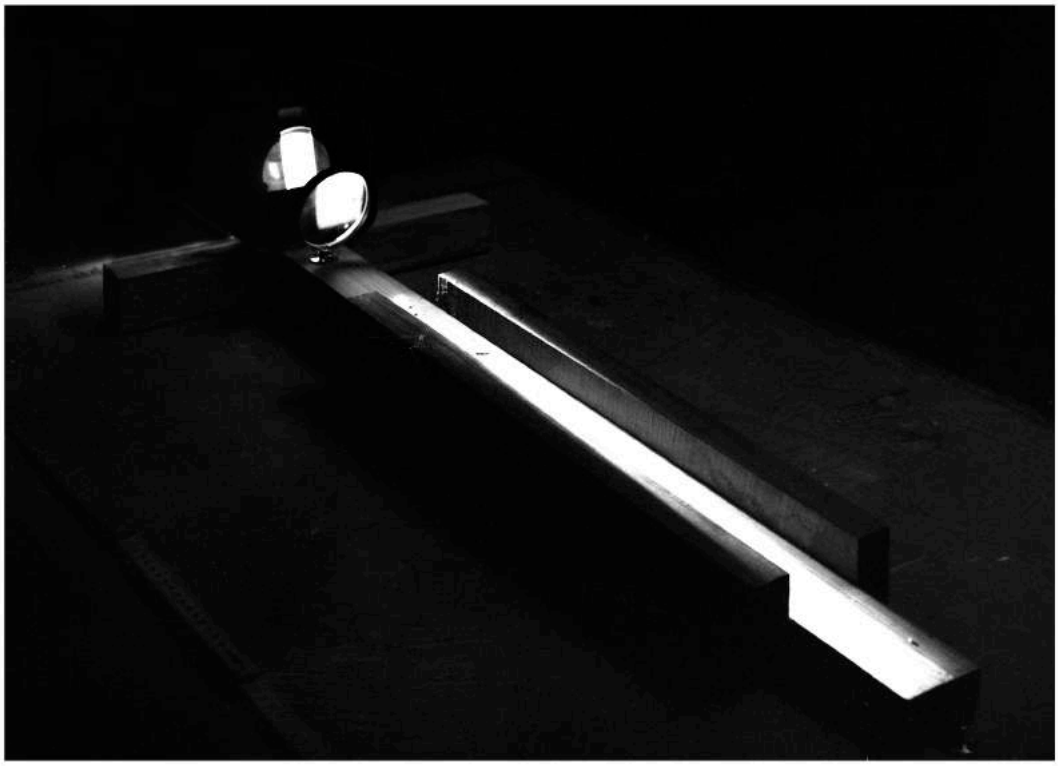

Fig. 1 - cat. n. HT.23.74. (light particles accelerator: inclined plane)

EDITORIAL

Guest Editor: Frances Pheasant-Kelly

Since the new millennium the genres of fantasy and science fiction film have dominated global box office figures. At the top lies *Avatar* (Cameron 2009), listed as the world's highest grossing film to date, and pertinent to this second issue of *Messengers from the Stars*, because, like the essays that follow, its multilayered narrative is effectively rooted in the past and retold through the future. If, as a number of scholars (Smith 69-70; Napier xi) suggest, world events of the millennium, notably 9/11 and the ensuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have influenced the fortunes of these genres, so too has digital technology in the way that it has enabled increasingly credible futuristic and fantastic worlds. It is within this technologically-enhanced and fantasy-driven landscape of the new millennium that the 2017 issue of *Messengers from the Stars: On Science Fiction and Fantasy* is located. Assembling diverse manifestations of fantasy and science fiction in the form of literature, ancient myths,

television and film, this collection of essays variously addresses how we remember, reconstruct, perceive and theorise narratives that are now revitalised visually and/or narratively by technology. The essays engage with the futuristic retelling of ancient myths, the precursors to current technology-driven cinematic special-effects spectacle, shifts in established film theory, explained through recent computer-generated imagery, and the artificial intelligence encountered in recent science fiction narratives. The first of these, written by Gabriela Steinke, focuses on ancient myths compiled in *The Mabinogion*, a collection which constitutes eleven stories retrieved from medieval Welsh manuscripts. Steinke explores what happens to these myths in their futuristic retelling and recasting to future settings, and examines how present day concerns are articulated in this transposition.

Moving from mythological stories to cinematic display, Noel Brown's essay appraises the role of the film producer and special effects pioneer Ray Harryhausen in the development of the "kidult" film. After explaining the meaning of the term "kidult", and through the analysis of Harryhausen's fantasy films, Brown argues that their intended 'kidult' audiences, together with dynamic action-adventure narratives and their propensity for spectacle, essentially rendered them the forerunners of the contemporary Hollywood fantasy blockbuster.

In this vein, Robert Geal goes on to explore how one might theorise recent science fiction films through the twin lenses of psychoanalysis and cognivitism. He considers *Godzilla* (2014) and *Terminator Genisys* (2015) to address the ongoing conflict between psychoanalytical and cognitivist approaches to film, these being generally considered incommensurate. Geal argues that analysis of these films can demonstrate contiguity between the two apparently opposing paradigms, because they exploit similar dramatic pleasures that their respective proponents conventionally consider irreconcilable. For Geal, science fiction provides a particularly fertile ground for elucidating how both paradigms can co-exist and might operate.

The theme of cognivitism is examined somewhat differently in the final essay by Teresa Botelho who explores the depiction of the intelligent android in various forms through notions of consciousness and personhood. Botelho's article reflects on how such works express the hopes and anxieties associated with artificial intelligence by focusing on a range of literary, televisual and filmic texts including *He, She and It* (Piercy 1991), *Battlestar Galactica* (Moore 2004-9), and *Ex_Machina* (Garland 2015). She debates how these various texts project android identity from alternative

perspectives, each expressing different claims about android agency, autonomy and the desire for similarity to humans.

These essays are followed with an interview by Ana Rita Martins and Igor Furão in conversation with award-winning science fiction author, Ken Macleod. We learn that Macleod did not set out as a writer, but as a scientist, and subsequently, became a computer programmer before becoming a full time author in 1997. The interview therefore inevitably begins with discussion about the impact of Macleod's scientific background on his science fiction writing. Macleod describes how, in fact, his childhood fascination with science fiction was an important factor in directing him towards science, and then led him to write short science fiction stories before working on a number of novels. As well as revealing Macleod's thoughts on the role that science fiction has in social criticism, the interview maps out his other significant influences, these including religion and the part that Scotland played in shaping the themes and motifs that he approaches in his writing.

The issue concludes with creative work by artist Miguel Santos entitled *Concerning the Pilgrimage of Brother Ianuarius*, a comic strip format piece that operates on a number of aesthetics and symbolic levels. Primarily, the work exhibits a mainly muted pastel palette except for the use of vibrant red, which is used to signify horror and bloodshed. The narrative features a monk as well as a number of grotesque eyeless monsters - attention to their many-toothed open mouths suggests that these vaguely humanoid creatures are cannibalistic, and render them, appropriately, akin to the 'Pale Man' of Guillermo del Toro's 2006 fantasy film, *Pan's Labyrinth* (the character itself being an intertextual reference to Goya's *Saturn Devouring his Son* [1819-1823]). In defending himself against one of these toothed monsters, the monk injures his hand on its teeth, which then seems to transform him too into one of its hideous progeny, thereby, similar to the critical essays presented here, suggesting a process of cycle and transition.

With this concluding artwork, we invite you to enjoy the diverse critical and visual manifestations of fantasy and science fiction.

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MONOGRAPH SECTION

Fig. 2 - cat. n. ap45-18 (Light technical trap)

To Boldly Go: Futuristic Retellings of Ancient Welsh Myths

Gabriela Steinke

University of Wolverhampton

Abstract | Myths have been retold and rewritten for centuries, indeed the longevity of myths is often attributed to their inherent reshapeability. Not until the twentieth century, however, were myths frequently rewritten in a future setting rather than a past one. When, in the twenty-first century, the publisher Seren Books invited authors to retell the Welsh myths collected in *The Mabinogion*, some (Horatio Clare, Russell Celyn Jones, Gwyneth Lewis) chose to set their new versions in the future, although all three took a different approach. This essay proposes to investigate what happens to these myths in a process that goes beyond modernising or updating and that aims to examine present day concerns by imagining possible futures refracted through the prism of ancient tales.

Keywords | myth; retelling; science fiction.

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Resumo | Os mitos têm sido recontados e reescritos desde há séculos. De facto a sua longevidade tem sido frequentemente atribuída à sua inerente capacidade de metamorfose. Foi apenas no século XX, no entanto, que os mitos passaram a ser constantemente reescritos num cenário futuro em vez de no passado. Quando, no século XXI, a editora Seren Books convidou autores a recontar os mitos galeses que compõem *O Mabinogion*, alguns (Horatio Clare, Russell Celyn Jones, Gwyneth Lewis) escolheram figurar as suas novas versões no futuro, apesar de todos os três tomarem abordagens diferentes. Este ensaio propõe investigar o que acontece a estes mitos num processo que vai além da modernização ou atualização e que visa examinar preocupações atuais ao imaginar possíveis futuros refletidos através do prisma de contos antigos.
Palavras Chave | mito; recontar; ficção científica.

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Myths have been retold and rewritten for centuries, indeed the longevity of myths is often attributed to their inherent reshapeability. Not until the twentieth century, however, when science fiction writing became popular, were myths frequently rewritten in a future setting rather than a past one. When, in the twenty-first century, Seren Books invited authors to retell the Welsh myths collected in *The Mabinogion*, some (Horatio Clare, Russell Celyn Jones, Gwyneth Lewis) chose to set their new versions in the future, although all three took a different approach. This essay proposes to investigate what happens to these myths in a process that goes beyond modernising or updating and that aims to examine present-day concerns by imagining possible futures refracted through the prism of ancient tales.

The texts collected in *The Mabinogion*, eleven stories that are found mainly in two medieval Welsh manuscripts, *The White Book of Rhydderch* (1300-1325) and *The Red Book of Hergest* (1375-1425), both of which also contain other texts, were produced by Christian monks who drew on a much older, oral tradition. *The Mabinogion* was so named and first published in an English translation by Lady Charlotte Guest between 1838 and 1845. Already then, the tales had migrated in time, in mode, and in language. We may want to consider here what Susan Bassnet and Andre Lefevere have had to say about translation as rewriting (in the context of Translation Studies):

> Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intentions, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as

> such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. (Lefevere vii)

Lady Charlotte Guest's translation, undertaken at a time when interest in ideas of nationhood and its possible roots, particularly in medieval times and tales, was widespread in literary as well as political circles, was intended to bring the ancient Welsh texts to the attention of a wider, English-speaking audience: "In her opinion, Welsh literature had an intrinsic worth, and the tales of *The Mabinogion* deserved a place on the European stage; indeed, Guest went so far as to argue that 'the Cymric nation… has strong claims to be considered the cradle of European Romance'" (Davies xxviii). She certainly succeeded in her ambition to reach English-language readers – Tennyson, for example, used her translation of "Geraint son of Erbin" as the foundation of his poem "Geraint and Enid" in his *Idylls of the Kings* – and since her version was in turn translated quite rapidly into German (1841) and French (1842), *The Mabinogion* became part of what was then the international canon. Lady Guest's achievement is still acknowledged today, even if modern scholars have issues with the accuracy of her work.

There have been other translations of *The Mabinogion* by Welsh scholars like Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (1949) and Sioned Davies (2007) whose translation was used by all three of the authors considered here. These scholars also claim the texts as works of literature, originating in Wales and redolent of Welsh culture as well as Welsh artistic achievement. As translations, however, they stay true to the medieval manuscripts which tell their stories rather briefly and in a style that may not immediately engage a modern readership. Medieval audiences would have listened to the tales being read aloud, with the performance element giving them a dramatic dynamic. These audiences would also have been familiar with many more branches and side stories that were hinted at but not explained in the old text. The Welsh Triads indicate a huge store of lost tales that might have fleshed out what we find transmitted in written form, tales to which the modern reader cannot gain access. Moreover, the medieval versions downgrade the mythic elements of the tales; we still find magic and supernatural elements in them, which can be described as tales of the Marvellous, but the characters we read about are no longer gods. They are mere mortals, however

endowed with superhuman powers they may be, and they operate in a recognisable medieval human society. Their origins in myth can still be discerned, and indeed many commentators refer to "myths" when discussing particularly the so-called Four Branches of the Mabinogi.[1] Nevertheless, the Christianisation of Welsh culture has had a much greater impact on their translation than the Christianisation of Europe had on the translation and transmission of, for instance, the myths of classical antiquity. Modern readers, therefore, may not readily recognise either the myth patterns or the attendant actantial nature of the characters, being used to reading novels, which usually develop a psychological dimension for individual characters, their motives, their thoughts, feelings and struggles – something that the sequential narration of *The Mabinogion* leaves the reader to infer.

The tales have been retold (and considerably expanded) in the High Fantasy mode, mostly with a medieval setting, by authors such as Kenneth Morris in the early and Evangeline Walton in the latter part of the twentieth century. Aspects of the tales have been reworked and re-imagined in a modern setting, often for children (Alan Garner's *Owl Service*, 1967; Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* sequence in the 1970s).[2] Future settings are a much rarer and a relatively new phenomenon.

When Seren Books commissioned *New Stories from the Mabinogion* in the early years of the twenty-first century, their stated intention was the rejuvenation of the material through the rediscovery of its contemporary relevance along with a new attempt to disseminate both the Welsh literary tradition and contemporary Welsh writing to an English-speaking audience:

> Many of the myths are familiar in Wales, and some have filtered through into the wider British tradition, but others are little known beyond the Welsh border. In this series of New Stories from the Mabinogion, the old tales are at the heart of the new, to be enjoyed wherever they are read.
>
> Each author has chosen a story to reinvent and retell for their own reasons and in their own way: creating fresh, contemporary tales that speak to us as much of the world we know now as of times long gone. (Thomas 6-7)

There is clearly a perception here that English literary hegemony is alive and well and needs to be challenged anew. The authors chosen are either Welsh or

[1] "Pwyll Prince of Dyfed", "Branwen Daughter of Llyr", "Manawyddan Son of Llyr", and "Math Son of Mathonwy".
[2] A useful discussion of these and other twentieth century appropriations can be found in C.W.Sullivan III, *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989).

honorary Welsh; they all have different relationships to Wales, the Welsh language and *The Mabinogion*. Of the three to be discussed here, Russell Celyn Jones grew up in Swansea but now lives in London; he does not speak or read Welsh. He says he found the translations he read rather dry and dull (Jones 171-172). Gwyneth Lewis (the first National Poet of Wales) writes in both Welsh and English, has known the myths since childhood and regards them as part of her cultural heritage. Horatio Clare was born in London of English and South African parentage but grew up on a hill farm on the Black Mountains. He says of his first reading of the stories: "it was like reading a spell book, half in runes, without a key. One imagined listeners in some age of dark, nodding at symbolisms and references only rare scholars might now understand" (Clare 201).

In *The Ninth Wave* (2009) Russell Celyn Jones chose to re-imagine the First Branch of the Mabinogi, "Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed" and says he tried to write in the spaces of the tale, "to make psychological what was magical, realistic what was whimsical" (172).[3] His story is set in a dystopian near-future (twenty to thirty years hence) in which oil has run out and the weather is unpredictable. West Wales has reverted to a faux-medieval political system with a ruling aristocracy. This kind of device is not unusual in science-fiction writing: both Marion Zimmer Bradley and Anne McCaffrey, for instance, have a spaceship crash on a distant planet leading to pseudo-medieval, feudal societies in their *Darkover* and *Pern* series respectively.[4] It enables Jones to retain Pwyll's status as lord of his *cantrefs* and so write about the duties, the privileges and the frustrations of a ruler. The *Mabinogion* story has Pwyll undergo a series of trials in order to establish his fitness to rule, learning, amongst other things, to take the example of Arawn, Lord of the Otherworld. Jones writes repeatedly that his protagonist does not know how to rule (25, 95), and he does not seem to learn. This is not surprising, given the inconsistent societal model Jones sets up. On the one hand, his Pwyll is "[a] Caesar in his own cantrefs, (…) more or less above the law" (92) and expected to rule, on the other hand, his people are able to vote in a referendum (105). He is behaving like the modern idea of a rich, indulged, ultimately powerless and purposeless aristocrat (Jones's model for the young Pwyll was the current Prince Harry), surrounded by servants and advisors who arrange his

[3] This formulation may indicate that he was intent on getting rid of mythical elements as much as possible or that he does not understand old myths to have relevance today.
[4] A particularly successful treatment of this kind, which utilises Irish mythological themes and characters, can be found in Julian May's science fiction series *Saga of the Exiles* (1981-1984).

life for him ("He couldn't think of a single major act he'd managed on his own volition", 46), yet he manages to leave his estate on his own and meet Arawn and Gwawl, whom he kills, without any interference. He marries Rhiannon but is then powerless to prevent the rearing of their son Pryderi being taken over by unwelcome, counsellor-appointed nannies. After Pryderi's disappearance, Pwyll and Rhiannon go out every evening and weekend, just the two of them, to look for their son. This is not convincing worldbuilding, and if a story set in the future needs one vital element, it is a believable future world.[5] In the absence of one, the characters lose purpose; they become exercises in psychological speculation without being anchored in an adequately stipulated reality. Where *The Mabinogion,* for all its brevity, makes very clear that its characters act according to certain rules and expectations, and that Pwyll in particular does the right thing according to his status and position, Jones's Pwyll acts and reacts in what seems to be a quite arbitrary manner, even when his encounters follow the pattern set by the older text. Unlike the old Pwyll, the modern one does not confirm the foundations of his realm, yet despite the obvious and lovingly described shortcomings of the socio-political system in which he operates, neither the validity of the system nor Pwyll's position in it are questioned. Indeed, at the very end, a continuation, even a strengthening of existing power structures is heralded with Pryderi's ascension to the leadership position when, unlike his father, he is willing and able to tell the 'common people' what to do. Pryderi inherits Dyfed at the end of the First Branch in an affirmation of the existing world order. *The Ninth Wave* has the same inheritance pattern, but nothing seems to be affirmed beyond Pwyll's uselessness against his son's greater assertiveness. No purpose becomes apparent. However, well this may reflect current political circumstances, it is narratologically inconsistent, and one reason for this may be Jones' apparent reluctance, or inability, to accord to the old myths any contemporary relevance.

Gwyneth Lewis chose the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi, "Math son of Mathonwy", for her re-imagining, *The Meat Tree* (2010). Her version is unmistakably a science fiction novella, set on a spaceship in orbit around Mars in the year 2210, yet of the three books it contains the most straightforward retelling of the myth while giving it the most fantastical of interpretations. The story is told entirely in direct

[5] The credibility gap extends beyond the problematic power structures; in a world without oil, there are still carrier bags, Boots the Chemist, Starbucks caramel frappuccino and most of the other trappings of contemporary western society, although all the factories are said to be derelict. Simply taking out the internal combustion engine and substituting horses and bicycles does not make for a new world order.

speech, either in the form of dialogue between the two characters she invented, Campion, an Inspector of (spaceship) Wrecks, and his young apprentice, Nona, or as verbal records on their logs. The two characters have entered what they take to be an old Earth spaceship to find out what happened to the vanished crew. There is enough space technology language along with nicely judged throwaway remarks about how things were done in the "olden days" to create a convincing, if minimal, future setting. The mythical story is introduced as a Virtual Reality (VR) game that they find – and regard as out-dated technology – on the wreck. This is a rather neat device, which allows Lewis to relate what happens in the myth while maintaining a running commentary through her protagonists and thus interrogating what is happening from a modern point of view. Campion has enough knowledge to recognise the storyline as Celtic myth, admitting to having read Robert Graves and Mircea Eliade in his youth, but although he knows of the Irish hero Cuchullain, he seems ignorant of the Mabinogi. Lewis has fun with some of the more arcane aspects of the story, such as Math having to keep his feet in the lap of a virgin in order to survive: "But why are you cradling the king's feet? Are his toes cold?" (41). Humour is also evident when the somewhat crusty and pedantic Campion, insisting on changing roles in the VR because he thinks he knows what information is relevant to them, ends up as the female giving birth each time Gwydion and his brother Gilfaethwy are changed into animals by Math. Campion is of the opinion that myth functions as either symbol or metaphor, and so tries to rationalise the various births in the story as representing "*the change from matrilineal inheritance to patrilineal system*", since the "*functions which previously belonged to the Goddess are taken over by men*" (104, italics in the text) – a truly Gravesian interpretation.

Campion is, however, not configured as a predominantly comical figure; he is trying very hard to maintain what he understands to be an objective and scientific attitude when faced with an inexplicable myth.[6] Both Campion and Nona are given lines that shine a critical spotlight on some of the assumptions made in *The Mabinogion*. In the Fourth Branch, Gwydion is the focal point of the story, his are the actions that are described and his skills bring the story to a more or less satisfactory

[6] Campion clearly had not come across Ursula K. Le Guin's lovely piece on "Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction" which as early as 1976 discusses the relationship between science and myth (and science fiction) with polemical humour as well as critical acumen.

conclusion.[7] There is no criticism even of Gwydion's most morally reprehensible actions, such as helping his brother rape the king's footholder, he is praised throughout for his wisdom and skills, and of course, "Gwydion was the best storyteller in the world" (Davies 48), a quality that seems to obviate the need for what modern standards would consider moral rectitude. Nona and Campion judge Gwydion much more harshly, not as a residually divine mover of events but as a man who evades his moral responsibilities and who tries to force both people and nature to conform to his desires. The creation of Blodeuwedd, the woman made of flowers to be a wife for Lleu, thus becomes less a great act of magic than a violation of another being and indeed of nature itself in the service of Gwydion's ultimately selfish vision to provide a normal life for Lleu. Lewis, who retells the main events of the Fourth Branch quite faithfully, examines the shift that can take place in perspective and interpretation when a tale undergoes a temporal dislocation while at the same time assuming that however outlandish some of the related events and behaviours may seem, the central themes continue to touch a nerve in human beings now and in the future.

There is a certain irony in the fact that Lewis chooses to resolve the mystery in her tale (what happened to the missing spaceship crew) in a way that configures imagination as a tangible source of power, and the power of the myth, which her characters have striven so hard to understand, as a lure to ensnare not only their imagination but their bodies to provide fuel for the spaceship. This is a spaceship that, far from being a wreck, has travelled such distances and for so long that over thousands of generations humans, animals, plants, and the ship itself evolved together and merged into a completely new, now predatory entity. The myth being played out on the VR system is not to be understood metaphorically but literally. Lewis declares in the afterword that amongst other things she "wanted to look at the shadow side of the creative mind, the way in which it can consume as well as generate" (252-253). The combination of myth and science fiction in this case proved to be a fruitful platform.

Horatio Clare's novella *The Prince's Pen* (2011) takes the story of Lludd and Llefelys and sets it in an unspecified but not too distant future in which sea levels

[7] Even in the old story, the ending is not entirely happy, because although the proper order is restored, there is no indication that the intended hero, Lleu Llaw Gyffes, takes another wife or founds a dynasty; his rule is therefore barren.

have risen, England is mostly an archipelago, drinking water is scarce and an unspecified military power (called only "the Invaders") tries to subjugate every country on Earth. Only Wales and Pakistan hold out. The story of Lludd and Llefelys tells of three plagues threatening the Island of Britain and is told in an extremely sparse manner, occupying barely five pages in the Davies translation. Clare seizes with relish the possibilities offered by the gaps in the tale although he sticks quite closely to the sequence of events. He sees contemporary relevance and parallels everywhere, which means he is trying to put rather too much into a work of this restricted length; there is, however, no denying that his way of seeing modern versions of the original plagues is interesting, even compelling.

In *The Prince's Pen* (Part One), the Welsh effectively become the Taliban fighting a guerrilla war against the overwhelming force of the Invaders. The parallels with the war in Afghanistan are obvious. Clare's narrator is one of the Welsh guerrillas, and so a far-off conflict is brought uncomfortably close to home. For all that it is set in the future, the story vividly evokes the landscapes, the speech cadences and the preoccupations and behaviour patterns of contemporary Welsh people. There are very few concessions to readers who are unfamiliar with Wales and Welsh geography, as they are simply assumed to know where the action moves from the abundant use of names of contemporary places whose significance is never explained – we are expected to understand why, for instance, the destruction of Merthyr Tydfil is a major calamity. This technique echoes *The Mabinogion,* which also assumes intimate knowledge of Welsh localities, a knowledge that ironically has now been largely lost. The intensely Welsh scenario, coupled with the specifics of a local war that include shelling, drones, betrayals, torture, suicide bombings, details that are being reported from that distant war, creates a narrative tension that demands a re-evaluation, on the part of the reader, of the possible motivations of and the personal consequences for the participants in the real-life conflict. The *Mabinogion* plague of the (foreign) *Corannyeid*, who hear everything that is being said in the open, is translated into surveillance drones and computerised spying on the part of the Invaders, and the remedy, extermination of the *Corannyeid* by means of ground-up insects, becomes Theo the Bug, a computer hacker who manages to disable the enemy systems. This is more than updating the old tale, it draws a direct line between the plague of the myth and modern concerns which, given the recent revelations about

large-scale state-sponsored surveillance, are becoming ever more pressing and immediate.

The war against the Invaders, which reflects the first plague of *The Mabinogion* story, and which accordingly ends with victory for the Welsh (albeit at enormous cost), takes up more than half of the novella, as it does in the source tale. The others, two fighting dragons and a sorcerous giant who despoils the land, are given equally modern and weighty incarnations, too weighty, perhaps, for the space available. The two dragons become rival faiths with followers of Christianity and atheists in one camp and Muslims in the other. This recasting is made plausible through the narrative treatment but in the limited space available it cannot receive the exploration such a highly relevant and potentially incendiary topic may be considered to deserve. The third plague, too, is presented as a thoroughly modern concern: the despoiling of the land is laid at the door of shadowy individuals who belong to a class of super-rich, supported by equally shadowy corporations, media, lawyers and corrupt officials. Direct references to the 2009 banking crisis are drawn. The worst offender is revealed as the king himself. The reasons for this development remain vague. There are somewhat bland indications that power corrupts and that the opportunity for self-enrichment seduces but there is little exploration beyond that. True to the old story pattern, the king eventually sets about righting the wrongs he himself initiated and we are given to understand that he succeeded, but we are not told how. The tale has run its course, and if we are inclined to ask for more than it can give us, we should nevertheless acknowledge Clare's achievement in translating the tribulations described in "Lludd and Llefelys", outlandish and improbable as they may now appear, into all-too-probable twenty-first century plagues, addressing issues of immediate concern to modern readers.

There is a recognisable migration of the old tales into new forms and times in the three texts discussed. A future setting generally facilitates the retention of some of the old mythical and magical elements that might otherwise lead modern readers to dismiss the stories as entertaining but irrelevant in a society focussed on rationalism and science. Who is to say that millennia of evolution cannot result in a merging of species or that in the near future computerised killer robots will not be built and eventually destroyed by technical wizardry? The main concern of these re-writings, however, is finding the issues that still resonate with us today, whether it be coming to terms with a given role (Jones), interrogating the uses of the imagination (Lewis) or

exploring the effects of oppression and war (Clare). In their various ways, all three bear witness to the power of the old myths to induce reflection on the human condition and the possibility of enhancing this experience for modern readers through a futuristic setting. Distance often facilitates a clearer view, and if the past proves too great a distance, as seems to be the case with *The Mabinogion*, an imagined future can provide a solution. If, however, the future setting is not sufficiently developed to be believable, much of the power of the myth is lost.

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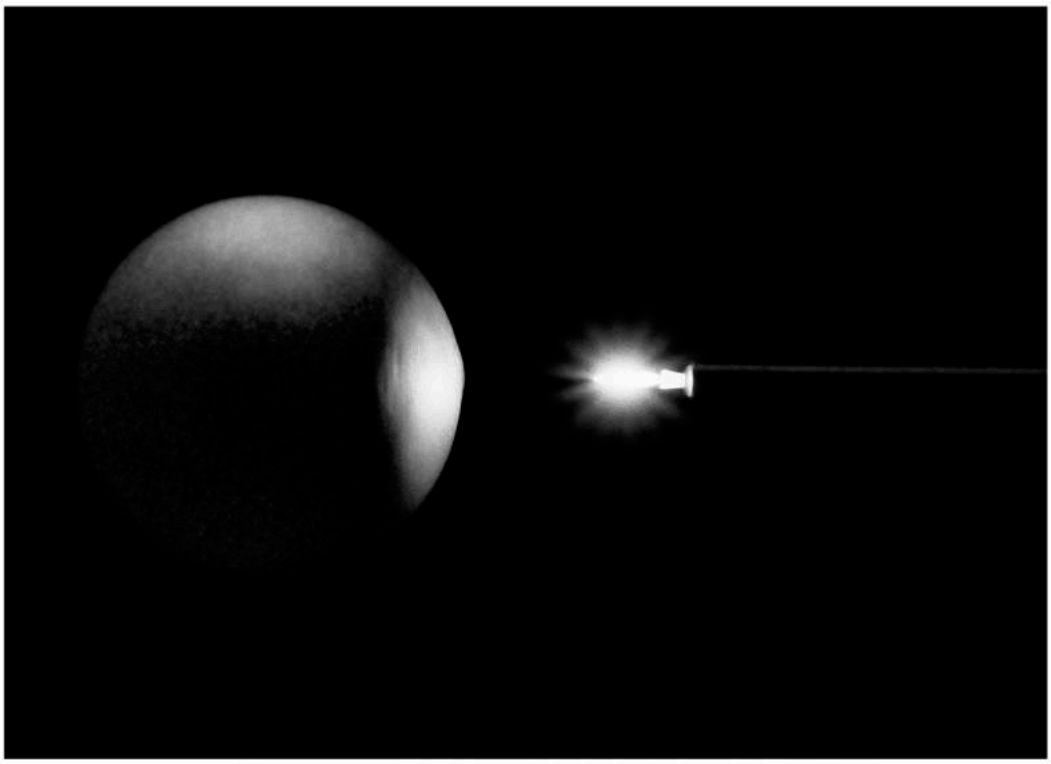

Fig. 3 - cat. n. 2331-j (Spherical deformation sheen)

"Vaguely Disreputable": Ray Harryhausen and the "Kidult" Film

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Abstract | This article explores the role of film producer and special effects pioneer Ray Harryhausen in the development of the so-called "kidult" film. It examines the origins and the significations of the word "kidult", which was seen to refer both to a specific *type of film* and to the *audiences* it mobilises. It denoted appeal to child and adult audiences, while asserting a distinction, a breaking away from parallel conceptions of the "family film" and "family audiences", which had held sway in Hollywood's industry and promotional discourses since the early 1930s. Harryhausen claimed to have invented the word and his film *7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) was explicitly promoted as a "kidult" film on initial release. Through close analysis of Harryhausen's fantasy films, this article argues that these productions adopted many of the essential narrative and representational elements of the 1950s Hollywood teen film, while still recognisably residing within a broader definition of Hollywood family entertainment. It contends that Harryhausen's films were precursors to the contemporary Hollywood fantasy blockbuster in their address to the conceptual

"kidult" consumer, their fast-paced, action-adventure narratives, and their emphasis on spectacle.
Keywords | Hollywood; "kidult"; family film; 1950s; Harryhausen.

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Resumo | O presente artigo visa explorar o papel de Ray Harryhausen, produtor de filmes e pioneiro no campo de efeitos especiais, no desenvolvimento do género "kidult". Pretende-se examinar as origens e significados do termo "kidult", cujo uso tinha sido aplicado tanto para designar um *tipo de filme* específico, como o *público* que este mobiliza. É sabido que o termo sugere um apelo ao público adulto e infantil ao mesmo tempo que reafirma uma distinção ou distanciamento de concepções paralelas sobre o conceito de "filmes para a família" e um "público composto por famílias" que tinham dominado a indústria de Hollywood assim como os discursos promocionais desde o início dos anos 1930. Harryhausen alega ter inventado a palavra e aquando do lançamento o filme *7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) foi explicitamente promovido como "kidult". Através da análise dos filmes de Fantasia realizados por Harryhausen, o presente estudo argumenta que estas produções adoptaram vários elementos essenciais à narrativa de filmes para adolescentes produzidos por Hollywood durante os anos 50, enquadrando-se ao mesmo tempo na definição mais abrangente de entretenimento Hollywoodiano para a família. Os filmes de Harryhausen foram ainda precursores dos *blockbusters* de fantasia contemporâneos de Hollywood no que diz respeito ao modo como se dirigem ao consumidor de filmes "kidult", nas narrativas rápidas e repletas de aventura e acção, e na enfâse dada ao espetáculo.
Palavras-Chave | Hollywood; "kidult"; filmes para famílias; anos 50; Harryhausen.

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> The studios left us alone, as long as we didn't run over budget...They thought these genres – sci-fi, fantasy – were vaguely disreputable, B-movie kids' stuff. In fact, we coined a new term, 'kidult', to describe the kinds of audiences attracted. – Ray Harryhausen.[1]

The quotation above identifies three key elements constitutive of Ray Harryhausen's relationship with the Hollywood mainstream of the 1950s: i) his incongruity with the dominant aesthetic style and the industry's conception of mass audiences; ii) the air of disreputability that surrounded his primarily youth-orientated films, and iii) newness – implicit in the new word, and the new concept, of the

[1] Harryhausen's quotation was in an article published in 1995, long after his career in Hollywood had come to an end. See Stuart Husband, "It Came from Los Angeles".

"kidult". This word was used by studio Columbia to promote Harryhausen's fantasy extravaganza, *7th Voyage of Sinbad* (Nathan Juran 1958); the marketing strategy was intended, in the words of trade paper *Boxoffice*, "to convey the intelligence that here is a parcel of escapist entertainment that will assert a strong appeal to both kids and adults" (Harryhausen and Dalton 121). As we can see from the two quotations above, "kidult" was seen to refer both to a specific *type of film* and to the *audiences* it mobilises. It denoted appeal to child and adult audiences, while asserting a distinction, a breaking away from parallel conceptions of the "family film" and "family audiences", which had held sway in Hollywood's industry and promotional discourses since the early 1930s.[2] While notions of a "family audience" imply a differentiated movie experience, with distinct, programmed pleasures for each member of the family, the neologistic mash-up "kidult" suggests, rather, a hybridisation of child and adult tastes.

Today, in the post-Lucas and Spielberg epoch, this model of popular culture seems distinctly non-radical. However, in the context of 1950s America, it was anything but. In this essay, I will explore Harryhausen's role in the ongoing development of "kidult" cinema, with reference to contemporary discourses, and carry out a close textual analysis of several of his films produced between the late 1950s and early 1980s. His role, I would argue, is threefold. Firstly, *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, Harryhausen's breakthrough film, was the first Hollywood release marketed towards the "kidult". Secondly, his two most important films, *7th Voyage* and *Jason and the Argonauts* (Don Chaffey, 1963), are clear precursors to the Hollywood-produced, kidult-orientated blockbusters that now dominate global box office charts – a group of films and franchises that includes *Star Wars* (1977–), *Superman* (1978–87; 2013–), *Indiana Jones* (1981–2008), *Harry Potter* (2001–11), *Transformers* (2007–), and many others. Thirdly, the cultural reception of Harryhausen's fantasy films spans the three commercial stages of kidult entertainment: resistance, ambivalence and finally mass acceptance. Harryhausen, now widely seen as the "true author" of the films to which he contributed his 3-D stop-motion animation, has been cited as a key influence by such major figures in the "New Hollywood" as George Lucas, Peter Jackson, Tim Burton, James Cameron, Henry Selick and Denis Muran. Before proceeding further, it is worth noting that several of the above individuals have been

[2] On the beginnings of the "family film" in Hollywood, see Noel Brown, "'A New Movie-Going Public': 1930s Hollywood and the Emergence of the 'Family' Film".

identified as exponents of "kidult" entertainment, and/or as "kidults" themselves.[3] Yet while Spielberg and Lucas undoubtedly popularised the kidult film, Harryhausen, as I will argue, can be regarded as one of the most important figures – a "missing link", if you will – in its formation.

The Beginnings of the "Kidult"

Although commonly presumed to be a recent coinage, the word "kidult" actually dates back to the 1950s. However, Harryhausen's later claim to have concocted it himself is suspect: the earliest reference I have found is an article in the North American trade paper *Variety* (24 November 1954) that announces a coming "kidult kick": "the berthing of talent and shows in slots that are conventionally for kids on the time element but, in addition, lure many an adult viewer" (23). In fact, the term appears to have been the invention of TV marketers, with early instances generally alluding to a concrete "kidult slot"; a later *Variety* article (3 January 1962) points to CBS' broadcasting of *Lassie* (1954–74) and *Dennis the Menace* (1959–63) during the late-afternoon/early-evening period as constituting "a strong 90-minute kidult family bloc" (21). What *does* appear to be true is that the term was unknown, or at least unused, in the Hollywood film industry when it was appropriated by Harryhausen and Columbia's marketing team to promote *7th Voyage of Sinbad* in 1958. All of the references in *Variety* during the 1950s relate to television rather than cinema. Aside from Harryhausen's use of the word, this remained the case throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1980s, the term moved beyond industry discourse into popular/journalistic usage, and attained its denigrating latter-day meaning of an individual suffering (to borrow the title of a bestselling pop psychology book from 1982) from "The Peter Pan Syndrome."

It is highly improbable that a film would explicitly be marketed for the "kidult" audience today as usage of the term has become almost exclusively derisory. This trend possibly began with *New York Times* film critic Vincent Canby's dismayed response to the Bruce Willis action vehicle, *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988), which he claimed was made:

[3] Spielberg and Lucas, in particular, have both been identified as quintessential "kidults"; see Noel Brown, "Spielberg and the Kidult".

> for that new, true-blue American of the electronic age, the kidult, who may be 8, 18, 38 or 80... In the past, our most popular movies have been those that somehow have managed to appeal to both children and adults, though not necessarily for the same reasons or with the same degree of intensity...The [Steven] Spielberg films have always been made on the assumption that there exists a common ground where the interests of children and adults overlap, even though there are vast differences between children and adults in their experience, education and capacity to understand. Today's hip film makers now realise that's baloney... No longer is there a necessity to find areas in which the interests of the child and the adult overlap. They are the same. (19)

Subsequent references in the popular press (in America and Britain alike) have largely been scornful. British journalist Mark Lawson calls kidulthood a "denial of ageing" and "a comfort blanket hunger for lost innocence" (24); David Aaronovitch claims that "this kidulthood is a way of avoiding reality rather than of understanding it" and that "Kidulthood wishes to escape the world rather than to engage with it" (5); the *Washington Post* seemingly spoke for the majority with its succinct evaluation of the "kidult" as "that most unlovable of modern phenomena" (n. pag.).

The "Family"/"Kidult" Dichotomy

We need to divorce ourselves from such value judgements, and instead examine what is really meant by "kidult". My own understanding of it, following that of Harryhausen and the marketing men who coined the term, is that of a form of entertainment that symbolically constructs pluralistic mass audiences as a *single entity* motivated by common desires. This notion need not be profane or subversive. Classic children's novels such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Peter Pan* (1911) have long attracted a substantial adult readership, and "crossover fiction" – a term applied to works which appeal dually to child and adult readerships – is a widely understood phenomenon in children's literary studies. However, to judge from the denigrating descriptions of "kidulthood" above, even now there is lingering suspicion in some quarters that individuals partaking of such cultural forms are failing to "leave behind childish things", transgressing the boundaries between Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man, and re(embracing) tastes, pleasures and preoccupations supposedly ill befitting a mature, reasoning, responsible adult (a position forcefully propounded by cultural critic Benjamin Barber). For these reasons, perhaps, the 1930s concept of

"family films" addressing "family audiences" continues to hold sway in the United States to this day, despite audience research by the Hollywood studios' own trade organisation ("Theatrical Market Statistics" 8) showing that the majority of theatrical audiences are teenagers and childless people in their twenties, and four decades since Spielberg's and Lucas' "kidult"-orientated films decisively displaced the old, staid middlebrow family movie of Hollywood's classical era.

Concepts of the "kidult" and "kidult entertainment" have been defined largely in terms of a series of oppositions with the parallel concepts of the "family", and of "family entertainment". It is these oppositions that must be explored in order to approach a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. The first major distinction, I would suggest, is that whereas "family" entertainment implies a mass audience comprising adults and children as *separate entities*, "kidult" entertainment implies no such audience differentiation; a "kidult" may inhabit any age, so long as s/he enjoys such entertainment. This emphasis on aesthetic appeal removes the need for many of the traditional narrative strategies employed by classical Hollywood family films such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944) or *Mary Poppins* (Robert Stevenson, 1964) to appeal to the tastes and requirements of children, on the one hand, and those of adults, on the other. In the classical-era family film, these strategies include: i) different on-screen identification figures (Jane and Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins* for the children; Mary Poppins, Bert, and Mr. and Mrs. Banks for the adults); ii) parallel plotlines (Mr. and Mrs. Smith's emphatically "adult" arguing about whether to move to New York in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, and their daughters' various youthful misadventures surrounding Halloween and the State Fair); iii) the use of adult jokes that children may not understand, and/or childish slapstick that adults may not appreciate.

Essentially, the family film posits a compromise, a state of equilibrium, between the perceived needs of different audience sections. The parallel targeting of child and adult demographics is known as "dual address"; it offers mass audiences multiple avenues of access, or points of entry.[4] Most Hollywood family-orientated productions dating from the period at which the classical family film was at its height (c. 1930–70) embody the essential characteristics outlined above. Examples of such films include *Tom Sawyer* (John Cromwell, 1930), *Little Women* (George Cukor,

[4] See Adrian Schober, "'Why Can't They Make Kids' Flicks Anymore?': *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and the Dual-Addressed Family Film".

1933), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand et al., 1937), *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Fantasia* (Ben Sharpsteen et al., 1940) *Lassie Come Home* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1943), *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Yearling* (Clarence Brown, 1946), *On Moonlight Bay* (Roy Del Ruth, 1951), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Richard Fleischer, 1954), *Old Yeller* (Robert Stevenson, 1957), *tom thumb* (George Pal, 1958), *Pollyanna* (David Swift, 1960), *Mary Poppins*, and *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965). All of these films were major productions and were designed as spectacles as well as parables. However, with only a couple of exceptions, spectacle plays a subordinate role to core values of social and familial unity and collective morality. These productions tend to uphold established structures of society, attempt to impart moral lessons, and serve the ritual imperative of bringing families together through a shared viewing experience. The Walt Disney Company, and independent filmmakers such as Robert B. Radnitz and Joe Camp, continued making "traditional" family films of this ilk into the 1970s, but with diminishing returns, other Hollywood majors had largely abandoned the dual-addressed family film by the late 1960s.[5]

By contrast, "kidult" material pursues a less differentiated mode of audience address, operating more on what might be called an "appeal of the senses". Key elements include a fast-paced and "transparent" narrative, visceral thrills and excitement, and impressive visual spectacle (often drawing on the technological potentialities of computer graphics, 3-D, and other aesthetic attractions). In practice, the purely "kidult" film remains a hypothetical category: Harryhausen's productions, *Star Wars*, and the many films that have followed in their path, are more aptly regarded as family/"kidult" hybrids. That is to say, they combine aspects of the "dual address" that characterises the classical-era family film, and the "undifferentiated address" that, *in extremis*, demarcates the "kidult" film.[6] Several of the most important structural and ideological constitutive elements of the family film dating back to the 1930s remain apparent, to varying degrees, in the more "kidult"-orientated, post-1970s productions. They include: i) reaffirmations of family, friendship and community; ii) the defeat or exclusion of disruptive (social) elements; iii) the minimisation of "adult" themes, such as sexuality, strong violence, cruelty,

[5] On the development of the family film in Hollywood during the 1960s and 1970s, see Noel Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), chapters 6 and 7.

[6] For a further elaboration of "undifferentiated address", see Noel Brown and Bruce Babington, "Introduction: Children's Films and Family Films." *Family Films in Global Cinema: The World Beyond Disney*. Eds. Brown and Babington.

poverty, gore and so on; and iv) their underpinning by a story which, while it may acknowledge the possibility of an unpleasant, undesirable outcome, ultimately is upbeat, morally and emotionally straightforward, and supportive of the status quo. Crudely speaking, the "kidult" aspects provide excitement, thrill, and spectacle: aspects that play equally well to adults and children because they do not require a high degree of cognitive processing, and are pleasurable on a basic and innate level. Producers of blockbuster films often compare their products to "rollercoaster rides", which implies a desire to evoke a satisfyingly diverse combination of cognitive and pre-cognitive responses. The "family" aspects provide moral and ideological grounding, and represent civilisation's claim to thought, knowledge, and education; they also underpin and uphold differences in experience, competency and outlook among children and adults.

It is easy to fall into the trap of over-generalising regarding the decline of dual-addressed family films and the emergence of "kidult"-orientated films. Although there has been a progressive liberalising trend in Hollywood representations of sex, violence, and other "mature content", the fact that family films continue to eschew *Die Hard* levels of violence confirms that moral suitability is still an important constituent in contemporary manifestations of the genre.[7] As Canby intuited, children and adults alike may respond favourably to the adult elements in *Die Hard* or the *James Bond* films, but such productions are not widely regarded as "family entertainment" because of long-held standards of acceptability governing children's consumption of such products – standards that Harryhausen, as well as Lucas and Spielberg, implicitly endorse(d). Furthermore, and notwithstanding the inevitable hybridism between "family" and "kidult" characteristics noted above, there was never a decisive paradigm shift at which point the "family" film transformed into the "kidult" film. Rather, it was a long transition period marked by a series of smaller turning points. Harryhausen's significance was in mining the middle ground between the emerging teen market and the established family market, as did Lucas and Spielberg. But post-1970s Hollywood family films such as *Annie* (John Huston, 1982), *Home Alone* (Chris Columbus, 1990), *Cheaper by the Dozen* (Shawn Levy, 2003), and contemporary animated films produced by studios such as Pixar, all hark

[7] See Dean Keith Simonton, Lauren Elizabeth Skidmore and James C. Kaufman, "Mature Cinematic Content for Immature Minds: 'Pushing the Envelope' vs. 'Toning it Down' in Family Films", for an analysis of suitability in contemporary Hollywood films.

back to the older strategies of dual address. Disney's Joe Roth explicitly identified the Spielberg-Lucas collaboration *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981), the first in the *Indiana Jones* series (1981–2008), as "the beginning and the end of family films in America" (Weinraub B1).

Other Hollywood executives place the mid-1990s as the major turning point. In a 1996 *Los Angeles Times* article, a high-level Sony executive announced, portentously: "the death of the family movie – that is the footnote for summer 1996" (Brennan F1), while Twentieth Century-Fox executive Bill Mechanic explained, "We made a strategic move to get out of the kid business, as we've known it, a year ago. Kid-oriented movies have been in trouble. [*The*] *Nutty Professor* and *Independence Day* have become the kid movies, the new family films" (Brennan F1). Opinions clearly differ on when and how this shift occurred, but there is broad consensus among scholars that there *have* been radical developments in the Hollywood family film.[8] Changes in the family film reflect different conceptualisations of movie-going audiences. Adult and child spectators are now differentiated to a much lesser degree. For most contemporary Hollywood "family films", the implied audience – that is, the imagined or presumed audience that all films implicitly construct – is no longer a nuclear family comprising individuals that hold different needs and desires. Rather, following Harryhausen and the network TV marketing men of the 1950s, it is an amalgamated child-adult: a "kidult". Admittedly, this is truer of live-action than of animated films like *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995) and *Frozen* (Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, 2013), where adult jokes and intertextual allusions play a greater part, but even these films appeal greatly to the senses, and seek to recuperate idealised values of childlike wonder, imagination, innocence, goodness, freedom, and play within an easily grasped narrative framework.

Harryhausen's Early Career

It is not merely that Harryhausen's films possess many of the elements that would come to define contemporary Hollywood "kidult"-inflected entertainment that make them ripe for analysis. It is that they were made in a period in which North

[8] See, for instance, Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter*; Peter Krämer, "'The Best Disney Film Disney Never Made': Children's Films and The Family Audience in American Cinema since the 1960s"; Schober, "'Why Can't They Make Kids' Flicks Anymore?': *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and the Dual-Addressed Family Film".

America was beginning the transition from a predominantly adult-orientated to a predominantly youth-orientated cultural model. As such, they reflect many of the tensions arising from this transition. Harryhausen's medium was stop-motion animation, a special-effects technique in which three-dimensional models are animated frame-by-frame to provide an illusion of movement. Its usage has mainly been confined, in Hollywood cinema, to fantastic subjects, as with Willis O'Brien's pioneering work on *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt, 1925) and *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933). O'Brien, one of the very few special effects technicians in Hollywood to specialise in stop-motion, was a towering influence on Harryhausen's art. Harryhausen's significance derives partially from his extraordinary skill as a stop-motion animator. Even more importantly, his early films appeared on the market at precisely the time at which a new consumer group was emerging: the teenager.

During the early 1950s, Harryhausen was one of many independent producers in Hollywood selling escapist fantasy films to the incipient "teen" market. This was a period in which family entertainment was strongly characterised by didactic principles and an emphasis on "wholesomeness". In spite of overwhelming evidence that domestic audiences were dominated by young people (Handel 1950; Lazarsfeld 1947), there was a deep-seated resistance amongst the old-school Hollywood moguls to youth culture. Furthermore, according to an industry maxim dating back to the 1930s (Harmetz 19), fantasy films were box office poison due to the failure of several high-profile films, such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Blue Bird* (Walter Lang, 1940) and *Mighty Joe Young* (Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1949). The twin turning points occurred during the early-to-mid 1950s: the popularisation of television, and the surge in independent production. With television's emergence demanding changes in the production strategies of the major studios, a new generation of independent producers came to the fore.[9] These filmmakers, energised by the development of teenage and youth culture, brought new methods and ideas to Hollywood cinema.

Harryhausen's breakthrough in mainstream Hollywood owed much to his initial success in teen exploitation filmmaking. Awareness of the emergence of the teenage consumer created a virtual industry in teen exploitation. One of the major sub-genres was the monster-on-the-rampage film, or "creature feature" – a form that

[9] On the rise of the teen film, particularly in the independent sector, see Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*.

lent itself particularly to Harryhausen's realm of expertise. By the early 1950s, his services were much in demand after his successful contributions to *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugene Lourie, 1953). Harryhausen's work caught the eye of independent producer Charles H. Schneer, who was working at Sam Katzman's production unit at Columbia, which specialised in schlock sci-fi. Intrigued by the visual potentialities of stop-motion, Schneer conceived the idea of a giant killer octopus loose in San Francisco, and Harryhausen was contracted to provide the visual effects. The resulting film, *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (Robert Gordon, 1955), pleased Katzman, and Schneer and Harryhausen collaborated again on *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (Fred F. Sears, 1956), cementing a partnership that endured throughout the remainder of Harryhausen's career. Soon after, Schneer formed his own company, Morningside Productions, whilst retaining his partnership with Harryhausen and association with Columbia as financial backer and distributor. Their next film, *20 Million Miles to Earth* (Nathan Juran, 1957) was a watershed: it was their last "creature feature", and also their last film aimed primarily at teenage audiences. From then on, they focused their attentions on addressing the "kidult" audience.

Schneer later claimed to have been motivated by "visuals and locations that had not been photographed" (*The Harryhausen Chronicles*). Like Katzman, he possessed a sharp eye for subjects that were topical and easily and cheaply exploitable. Harryhausen, meanwhile, was actively seeking to expand the narrative and technical potentialities of stop-motion animation (Harryhausen and Dalton 103). He felt that an action-adventure fantasy based around the character of Sinbad – whom he regarded as the "personification of adventure" – would manoeuvre them into the Hollywood mainstream (Harryhausen and Dalton 103). However, the production personnel and the aggressive, jargonistic marketing strategy used to sell the film revealed its origins in teen exploitation. Schneer and Harryhausen conjured the term "Dynamation" to describe Harryhausen's methods of three-dimension stop-motion, and used it endlessly to promote their films (sometimes with variations such as "Superdynamation" and "Dynarama"). Equally, Columbia's press department marketed *7th Voyage of Sinbad* as a "kidult" film. The thrust of this marketing strategy was to position it *between* the emergent "teen" and the established – but increasingly dusty – "family" markets. Because the "kidult" trend really started with *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, it can be seen, in retrospect, as the most important family film of the 1950s.

The film's plot is deliberately straightforward. Sinbad (Kerwin Matthews) and his men, lost at sea, chance upon the uncharted island of Colossa, which is home to an assortment of fearsome, exotic creatures. They encounter a magician, Sokurah (Torin Thatcher), fleeing from a giant Cyclops. Sokurah uses his magic lamp to keep the monster at bay, and they hurriedly escape back to the ship. In the confusion, the lamp is thrown overboard, and is washed up on the shore. Sokurah demands that they return for the lamp, but Sinbad refuses, setting sail for Baghdad, where he is to be married to the princess Parisa (Kathryn Grant). Upon their arrival, Sokurah requests that the Caliph (Alec Mango) grant him a ship and crew to return to Colossa and retrieve the lamp, but on Sinbad's advice, the Caliph refuses. Enraged, Sokurah miniaturises Parisa, and then informs the distraught Sinbad that the only way to restore her to normal size is by obtaining a fragment of the eggshell of a giant bird native only to Colossa. Still unsuspecting, Sinbad, Parisa and a mutinous crew return to Colossa. Sinbad manages to retrieve the lamp and return it to Sokurah, who restores Parisa to normal. Although Sokurah treacherously animates a sword-wielding skeleton in an attempt to kill them both, Sinbad and Parisa manage to overcome various dangers, and Sokurah is killed when his mortally-wounded pet dragon accidentally crushes him.

The Arabian Nights milieu in which *7th Voyage* operates contributes to its escapist functions. Eastern narratives, even within the Hollywood firmament, frequently operate within a more fantastic milieu. In Tony Curtis' early-1950s star vehicles *The Prince Who Was a Thief* (Rudolph Maté, 1951) and *Son of Ali Baba* (Kurt Neumann, 1952), for instance, the setting not only provides an attractive backdrop but, within its narrative conventions, signals escapist adventure. Audiences responded strongly to *7th Voyage*: the film grossed over $6 million from a budget of $650,000. Critical opinion was more ambivalent. *Variety* (26 November 1958) adjudged the film to be "primarily entertainment for the eye" with Harryhausen "the hero of the piece" ("7th Voyage of Sinbad" 8), and *Film Daily* (25 November 1958) deemed it to be "a spectacular presentation of the Sinbad story" ("7th Voyage of Sinbad" 6). Other responses were less favourable. *The Hollywood Reporter* (25 November 1958) wrongly believed that the stop-motion effects were achieved electronically, and *The Christian Science Monitor* (18 December 1958) regarded it as "largely an excuse for Hollywood to toy with its latest technical process, 'Dynamation'" (Maddocks 7). These responses suggest that *7th Voyage of Sinbad* was

not really regarded as a family film, a genre that, at this point, was still viewed primarily in social terms. It was seen as entertainment in the service of the family, which operated as a socialising apparatus, an agent of social stability, and a microcosm of society-at-large. In contrast, *7th Voyage of Sinbad* was predicated on spectacle and adventure, with few obvious morals to impart, beyond its basic good vs. evil thematic.

Almost all mass-appeal productions depend for their success on some combination of characteristic "family" and "kidult" modes of appeal. In *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, there are several textual strategies designed to engage teenage and adult audiences on their own presumed level. The casting of attractive male and female leads in Kerwin Matthews and Kathryn Grant, and the associated romance, is a notable example. *All* of Harryhausen's films include a romantic subplot, reflecting a presumption shared by Harryhausen/Schneer and Columbia that representations of courtship and romantic fulfilment were necessary to appeal to mainstream ("general") audiences. This is certainly a convention common to the vast majority of Hollywood films from the period, even those putatively aimed at juvenile audiences, such as the serials produced by so-called Poverty Row studios such as Monogram and Republic. However, the presence of the romantic subplot in Harryhausen's films – particularly the post-1960s films, long after the broader convention ceased to apply – perhaps suggests some measure of uncertainty that they are capable of attracting adults without additional layers of attraction. Ironically, in each case, the romance is so anaemic, so perfunctory as to be almost irrelevant to the overall movie experience.

Harryhausen's endings announce another important departure from the classical Hollywood family film norm. In each of his productions, a spectacular adventure set piece serves as dramatic climax. These resolutions are largely functional and instrumental, rather than emotive and uplifting in the vein of *The Wizard of Oz* and most other mainstream family films. They are built around impressive spectacle, with the action and music (in many cases composed by Bernard Hermann) building to a thrilling crescendo. But whilst these fantastic spectacles elicit excitement, fundamentally they are not *emotional* experiences (unless we count vicarious feelings of triumph and catharsis). In *The Wizard of Oz*, the final moments capture Dorothy's happiness at her return home to Kansas, surrounded by love in the presence of family and friends, and bursting with newfound appreciation in the manifold pleasures of everyday life. In Harryhausen's oeuvre, dramatic efficiency replaces such familiar

"family" patterns of emotional fulfilment and moral or spiritual revelation. His films revel in economy of storytelling – an operational hold-over from the teen exploitation school of filmmaking where narratives had to be tight, functional, and free from excess. Emotive or didactic codas (such as those that characterised MGM's Andy Hardy series of the 1930s and 1940s) had little place in the 1950s teen film from which Harryhausen and Schneer took their cue.

Rather, the climactic set pieces in Harryhausen's films underscore the fact that story exists to frame the special-effects sequences at the heart of their appeal. In *Jason and the Argonauts*, the ostensible purpose of Jason's (Todd Armstrong) voyage to the distant land of Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece is to give him the means of reclaiming his kingdom by overthrowing the tyrannical King Pelias (Douglas Wilmer), who had seized his crown by force-of-arms when Jason was a child. In practice, this plotline offers little more than basic heroic motivation. The substance of the movie experience lies within the various (stop-motion animated) dangers met by Jason and his crew during their voyage, where they encounter and defeat the enormous bronze statue Talos, overcome a group of harpies who are tormenting a blind seer (Patrick Troughton), pass through the lethal Clashing Rocks, and battle a multi-headed Hydra for possession of the Fleece. The centrepiece of the movie – and probably the most iconic sequence in Harryhausen's oeuvre – occurs at the very end, where the vengeful ruler of Colchis, King Aeetes (Jack Gwillim), in retribution for the theft of the Fleece, animates seven sword-wielding skeletons to do battle with Jason and his followers. When Jason succeeds in 'killing' them (after a titanic struggle) by jumping from a cliff-top into the ocean below, he swims back to the Argo. At this point, the film abruptly ends. What follows is left to the audience's imagination. The viewer is simply left to *assume* that Jason returns to his homeland and reclaims his throne. The film ends at a dramatic high-point, therefore, but fails to resolve its own storyline.

This is an important point. Such tension between story and spectacle rarely arises. *Jason and the Argonauts* is an extreme example because of its structure, which effectively demands two forms of closure: a spectacular special-effects finale for possession of the Fleece, and the logical battle between Jason and Pelias for the throne (the film's "MacGuffin"). However, if we view the film as spectacle, as contemporary audiences surely did, the fact that it does not resolve the Pelias story – and complete Jason's internal voyage from symbolic boyhood to symbolic manhood –

is less important. While the film received predictably mixed reviews upon initial release in the US, the ending itself appears to have passed without comment. Presumably, it was simply viewed within the broader context of the film itself: an enjoyable, but ultimately disposable, piece of screen entertainment undeserving of serious critical analysis. Although *Variety* (5 June 1963) praised this "choice hot weather attraction for the family trade – a sure delight for the kiddies and a diverting spectacle for adults with a taste for fantasy and adventure" ("Jason and the Argonauts" 5), the *New York Times* (8 August 1963) dismissed it as "absurd" and "no worse, but certainly no better, than most of its kind" (Thompson 1). These reviews were written in a period in which poor plotting and characterisation were seen as standard weaknesses in fantasy films. The assumption seemed to have been that juvenile and adolescent audiences had yet to graduate to a higher plane of cultural awareness, borne through interpretative skills acquired in adulthood.

It is hardly surprising, then, that *Jason and the Argonauts*, like *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, was overlooked for Academy Award recognition for its special effects, nor that the comparatively staid historical epic, *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963) won the Visual Effects Oscar. Indeed, this lack of recognition is indicative of a wider industry disregard for Harryhausen, who was always forced to struggle for studio backing, and had to work with extremely small budgets. *Jason and the Argonauts* was not a commercial hit. Its reception effectively ended Harryhausen and Schneer's flirtation with the Hollywood mainstream. Their next "Dynamation" film, *First Men in the Moon* (Nathan Juran, 1964) – adapted from H. G. Wells' novel by respected British sci-fi writer Nigel Kneale – was one of their most intelligent productions, but it, too, was a flop. Harryhausen then made a profitable but critically derided film for British studio Hammer, *One Million Years B.C.* (Don Chaffey, 1966), while *The Valley of Gwangi* (Jim O'Connolly, 1969) languished in obscurity.

"Kidult"-orientated films were rarities in 1960s Hollywood. Although independent producers George Pal and Irwin Allen were also concerned with spectacle, Pal's focus was more moralistic, and the visual impact of Allen's productions was often undermined by execrable production values. It was network television that pointed the way to the future, with youth-appeal, action-adventure franchises as *Batman* (1966–68), *Star Trek* (1966–69) and *Mission Impossible* (1966–73). In comparison, Disney's output during this period was unremittingly saccharine and didactic, while the other major studios channelled their energies into hugely

inflated, middlebrow family blockbusters such as *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964) and *The Sound of Music*. While *The Sound of Music* was a huge hit – Hollywood's most profitable film of the decade, no less – attempts to replicate its success with similar productions, such as *Doctor Dolittle* (Richard Flesicher, 1967), *Star!* (Robert Wise, 1968) and *Hello, Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, 1969), resulted in spectacular losses. Family-adventure films such as *Fantastic Voyage* (Richard Fleischer, 1966) and *Batman* (Leslie H. Martinson, 1966) also underperformed. North America had entered a period of counter-cultural fervour. By 1968, Hollywood had replaced its restrictive Production Code (established in 1930, formalised in 1934) with a far more liberal ratings system. Over the next few years, mainstream cinema veered toward such hard-edged independent fare as *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) and *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970). Revealingly, when Disney re-released *Fantasia* in 1970, *Variety* (13 November) reported that one theatre chain chose not to target "families" in its publicity drive, but rather teenage potheads in search of a psychedelic, substance-enhanced trip ("Disney's Fantasia Going To Pot?!?! That's How Natl Gen. Sells The Reissue").

Harryhausen's Late Period

In Harryhausen's post-1970s films, a curious dialectic asserts itself between his characteristically "kidult" modes of spectacle and wholesome adventure, and a new emphasis on more "adult" pleasures. This manifests itself in the various scenes of mild nudity, profanity, and violence scattered amongst his late-period films, *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (Gordon Hessler, 1974), *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (Sam Wanamaker, 1977), and *Clash of the Titans* (Desmond Davis, 1981). By the early 1970s, it should be noted, the traditional "family" film was in decline. All the major studios had abandoned the dual-addressed movie, with the exception of Disney, which was struggling to make much money on its theatrical products (Krämer 188). Public demands for an increase in "family" fare to counter-balance the new "adult" films reaching the screens were ignored (Krämer 268–71). Disney aside, only independents operating low-investment/low-returns strategies – such as Robert B.

Radnitz and Joe Camp – saw dual-appeal family films as profitable enterprises.[10] Instead, the major studios re-orientated towards the youth market with ever edgier fare, while a new breed of film school-educated directors influenced by European art cinema, such as Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, pursued the kinds of explicitly adult-orientated films that, collectively, signalled the end of the 1930s concept of the "family audience" as Hollywood's backbone.

In this context, it is perhaps easier to see why Harryhausen and Schneer – and their distributors – might have felt that a change in style was necessary to adapt to new market conditions. With *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, Harryhausen and Schneer regrouped after several years in the cinematic wilderness and returned to the source of their greatest commercial success. However, in accordance with the cinematic conventions of the period, what emerged was notably darker in tone and appearance than its predecessors: more dialogue-orientated, with a corresponding reduction in the action-adventure quotient, and a more sophisticated, allusive slant to the humour. Furthermore, it is interesting that Sinbad, portrayed here by John Phillip Law, conspicuously possesses an Arabian accent. Sinbad may, as Harryhausen has always claimed, be an archetypal adventure hero, but there seems to have been a conscious decision – whether for artistic or commercial purposes – to de-emphasise his "Americanness". The 1970s, Harryhausen later remarked, was the age of the anti-hero, and the classically clean-cut, square-jawed American hero portrayed by Kerwin Matthews in *7th Voyage of Sinbad* was perhaps felt to be ill-suited to this new epoch. However, Sinbad's "otherness" here may have constrained the film's commercial prospects in the notoriously nationalistic US domestic market. While certain aspects of the Sinbad character (his bravery, charm, masculinity) are typical heroic attributes, others (his tanned skin and colourful clothes) bespeak attractive exoticism; this more alien figure might have been a step too far. Hindered by Columbia's lukewarm promotion, *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* was, nonetheless, a solid box office hit, although scarcely rivalling Disney's more traditional family movie, *Herbie Rides Again* (Robert Stevenson, 1974).

By the mid-1970s, the major studios had been focusing their attentions on harder-edged material for several years. Suddenly, this was to change. The

[10] On the trajectory of the classical-era Hollywood family film during the 1960s and 1970s, see Noel Brown, "'The Apostle of Family Films': Robert B. Radnitz, Children's Cinema and Anti-Disney Discourse in the 1960s and 1970s".

development of the multiplex cinema in the early 1970s created the necessary theatrical conditions for the saturation-release blockbuster, which itself invited spectacular presentation and films which pursued as wide an audience as possible. The first "multiplex blockbuster", *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), was too violent for "family" suitability, but its modes of appeal were palpably "regressive", tapping basic fear (as well as pleasure) responses.[11] Promoted heavily via the "rival" medium of television, and shown on an unprecedented number of multiplex screens nationwide, *Jaws* recouped well over $150 million from an initial $9 million outlay. Its success confirmed that mass audiences were still attainable given a comprehensive marketing strategy, and the right film. Yet its violence and gore automatically precluded status as family viewing. It was *Star Wars* that ultimately redefined the family movie by fusing undifferentiated-appeal "kidult" aesthetic elements with the broad moral suitability of the classical family film. In a period in which North America was suffering a "crisis of confidence" – one that was all-too-clearly reflected in such downbeat Hollywood fare as *Night Moves* (Arthur Penn, 1975) and *All the President's Men* (Alan J. Pakula, 1976) – *Star Wars* offered uncomplicated escapism, facile optimism and dazzling spectacle. It was comfortably the top-grossing film of the decade, but evidence that it was not merely a random "runaway" hit was provided by Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and Warner's *Superman* franchise, which also yielded enormous returns by tapping the amorphous family/"kidult" audience.

Ironically, at precisely the point at which "kidult"-inflected films were finally gaining mass commercial and critical acceptance, Harryhausen and Schneer found it increasingly difficult to sell their projects to studios. Furthermore, interference from executives, who misguidedly believed that a harder edge was necessary to appeal to older audiences, led to a shift away from the wholesomely escapist elements that had characterised the early films. *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* was Harryhausen's first production to contain nudity. The scene in question sees young stars Jane Seymour and Taryn Power swimming naked in a river. The nudity is brief and inexplicit, mostly filmed in long-shot or from the rear. There was, as Harryhausen admits, "a gradual realisation that these films needed more adult interest."[12] But this perception surely misunderstands their essential appeal to older audiences. Inexplicit nudity may

[11] On the film's regressive appeal, see Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... And Beyond*. 145.
[12] Correspondence between the author and Tony Dalton and Ray Harryhausen, 9 February 2011.

have served as minor erotic titillation for young spectators on the verge of adolescence, but was neither strong enough nor sufficiently contextualised to attract the paying custom of older demographics in an age where censorious pleasures, previously off-limits, now freely circulated in the cultural mainstream. It may be recalled that *Deep Throat* (Jerry Gerard, 1972), the first hardcore pornographic film to receive wide release in America's theatres, and which drew at least $50 million in box office receipts, pre-dated Harryhausen's 1970s *Sinbad* films.

Moreover, it was abundantly clear that Harryhausen and Schneer did not possess sufficient resources to compete with *Star Wars*, which pioneered several special effects processes at great expense. In fact, the release of *Star Wars* marked a watershed in Harryhausen's career, and, indeed, in the ongoing development of the family movie. For the first time, Harryhausen's approach appeared passé and out-of-step with the cultural climate. Moreover, Lucas and Spielberg (and their followers) had hit upon a style of filmmaking, which not only combined the most appealing elements of earlier "family" and "kidult" films, but also possessed considerable franchise and merchandising potential. Lucas cannily realised that spectacle and escapism, in isolation, were insufficient. It is fitting that Lucas, fearing audience apathy in the weeks before release, lamented that he had made "a Walt Disney movie" that would struggle to break $10 million at the box office, for *Star Wars* owes as much to the emotive and didactic elements widely associated with Disney's films as to the "kidult" aesthetic that Harryhausen popularised (Krämer 190). Lucas' and Spielberg's films not only served as artistic templates for subsequent Hollywood family films and franchises, but signalled a new period in which creative and industrial strategies would be founded upon appeals to the conceptual "kidult".

Harryhausen's final movie, *Clash of the Titans*, was released during the summer of 1981. Following the critical and commercial failure of *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, Harryhausen and Schneer – realising that they did not have resources to adapt their filmmaking style to match current market trends – returned to classical mythology, namely the story of Perseus. Hollywood studio MGM was attempting to re-establish its credentials as a Hollywood major, and showed interest in the idea, which embodied the kind of "good, exciting family entertainment" it was eager to produce (Harryhausen and Dalton 262). The film was given a budget of $16 million, which exceeded that of all the producers' previous productions combined. In the event, the film was a modest box office hit. However, *Variety*'s (10 June 1981) not-

atypical assessment of it as "an unbearable bore" ("Clash of the Titans for the Young in Heart Only" 18) surely reflected the fact that mainstream Hollywood films with "kidult" appeal were now operating under new economies of pleasure. Show-stopping spectacle need not be confined to a series of intermittent special-effects interludes, as with Harryhausen's films. Rather, with the massively increased resources and technological potentialities of the "New Hollywood" cinema, spectacular sensorial appeal – wedded to the fast-paced and "transparent" narratives of old – could be sustained over the entire course of a film.

Clash of the Titans is probably the least "kidult"-orientated of Harryhausen's films, instead falling back on classical family movie tropes. The courtship between the romantic leads is far more central than the wholly gratuitous romantic subplots in previous Harryhausen films, but remains perfunctory. The film attempts to draw older spectators with the lure of established screen performers, but the supposedly-starry cast in reality comprises an assortment of unknown youngsters (Harry Hamlin and Judi Bowker as Perseus and Andromeda) and aging character actors (Laurence Olivier as Zeus; Maggie Smith as Thetis; Ursula Andress as Aphrodite; Burgess Meredith as Ammon), most of whom would be identifiable only to film- and television-literate viewers. The most blatant incongruities are the two scenes containing brief nudity, as well as a sequence in which a man is burned at the stake, which ensured that the film received an "A" rating in the UK, thus preventing children under the age of 14 from attending without adult supervision. Harryhausen told me in personal correspondence that the inclusion of these elements was at the insistence of MGM, which – unaccountably, given the film's supposed status as "family entertainment" – "wanted [the film] to have some adult content to appeal to a wider audience."[13] Ironically, as the enormous popularity of *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *Superman* and *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* demonstrates, "adult" content had become unappealing to many adults spectators. Allegedly, *E.T.*'s main consumer-base was "childless couples in their twenties and thirties", not young children (Morris 85). It seems reasonable to assume that older viewers attended such films not to be reminded of the social and interpretative constraints of adulthood, but rather to escape them, at least temporarily.

[13] Correspondence between the author and Tony Dalton and Ray Harryhausen, 9 February 2011.

Conclusion

North America – and, indeed, late-modern Western society in general – continues to embrace the "kidult". Evidence that the recreational requirements of adults and children were moving into alignment as early as the 1950s can be seen not only in responses to *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, but also in the fact that Disneyland's customer composition was weighted 4-to-1 in favour of adults (Merlock Jackson 94). During the 1990s, several of the major Hollywood studios created specialised "Family Film" production divisions, gearing their industrial operations towards "kidult"-orientated franchises with international appeal, and which could be realised across multiple media platforms.[14] At the time of writing, the list of the top-grossing 20 films of all time includes such putatively child-orientated releases as *Frozen* with $1.2 billion, *Minions* (Pierre Coffin and Kyle Balda, 2015) with $1.5 billion, *Toy Story 3* (Lee Unkrich, 2010) with $1 billion, and *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) with $1 billion. According to statistics released by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), children aged 2–11 made up only 12 per cent of 'frequent movie-goers' in North America in 2012; this figure fell to 7 per cent in 2013 (2014: 12; 2015: 12). However, 41 of the top 50 highest-grossing films at the North American box office in 2012 and 2013 were deemed suitable for "family audiences" (this includes films rated "G", "PG" or "PG-13"), with only nine films rated "R" (adults only).

Given the relatively lowly proportion of children under the age of 12 in the US theatrical audience, non-child audiences must play a major role in sustaining Hollywood's industry of "children's films". Harryhausen, then, was part of a much broader cultural movement which, over the course of the last 60 years, has seen the "kidult" – both as a cultural form and a consumer group – move to the forefront of Western popular culture. I do not wish to oversimplify this complex socio-historical process. Harryhausen was no monolithic instigator of "kidult" entertainment; he, too, was inspired by a multitude of artists – from painters (Gustave Doré, Charles Knight, John Martin) and animators (O'Brien) to producers (Merriam C. Cooper, Alexander Korda, George Pal, and even Walt Disney) – who shared a similar fantastic vision.

[14] These developments are recorded in numerous editions of *Variety*: "New plan to put Warners in Family way"; Christian Moerk, "Family Volume at WB"; Kathleen O'Steen, "Matoian Makes Fox His Family"; "Sony in Family Way"; "Paramount, Producer in a Family Way".

But where Harryhausen departs from Disney (and from classic children's literature conventions) is in his films' emphasis on escapism, rather than didacticism. This concentration on pleasures equally accessible to child and adult audiences defines "kidult" entertainment. It also explains the enduring popularity of Harryhausen's films, which lack the overt moralism of the classical-era family movie. The filmmaker's high current standing also reflects the growing legitimacy of purely escapist family entertainments that, as recently as the 1970s, were dismissed as shallow, infantile, and unworthy of preservation or serious discussion.

I would like to finish with a few words on the current status of the "kidult". Beyond the comparatively hermetic world of industry jargon where the word is still in wide currency[15] – a reflection of its utility as signifying something *other* than "family-orientated" – the usual response appears to be one of scorn, amusement or revulsion. It is one thing, perhaps, to consume such entertainment; it is quite another to self-consciously interrogate the implications of the act of consumption in relation to self and to society. Ironically, this ambivalence is sustained by a mainstream media that holds "kidult" entertainment – not just films but television, books, video games and all manner of consumer products – as the pinnacle of popular entertainment in all but name, yet insists on deferring to the evidently reassuring "family" label. Like Harryhausen prior to his recent critical reassessment, the "kidult" remains "vaguely disreputable".

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[15] A few examples, among many: In 1988, John Cassaday, president of Campbell Soup, Ltd., told a marketing seminar in Toronto that "kidults" – "a new name for children and adults" – would be a vital consumer group of the future (Marina Strauss, "'Kidults' Tapped as Hot New Market"); in 1996, television network Nickelodeon, described one of its marketing campaigns as "kidult" (Stuart Elliott, "Trying to Lure Media Buyers, Nickelodeon Asks a Multiple-Choice Question with Only One Answer"); at the recent Hong Kong Toys and Game Fair, there was a category of exhibits called "Kidult World" ("'Kidult World': Still Small but with Huge Potential"); and, lastly, there is a British-based fashion company called "Kidult Clothing".

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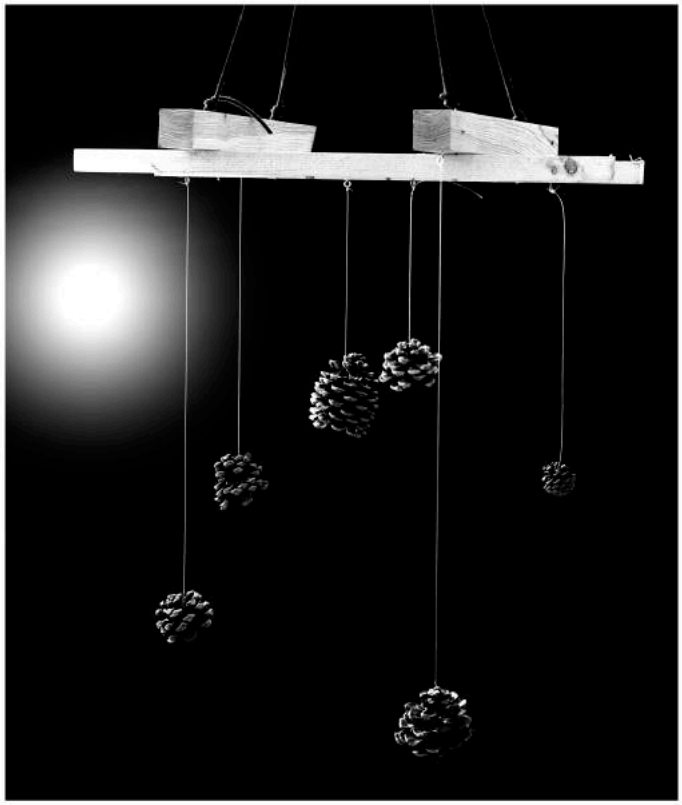

fig 4 - cat. n. 7436 - p (Star gravity isolation board - six planets system)

Psychoanalytic and Cognitivist Dramas in Contemporary Science Fiction Films

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Abstract | Contemporary Science Fiction films engage audiences in numerous dramatic ways. This diversity can problematize academic approaches to cinema, which tend to encourage specific monolithic interpretations of film that stress certain dramatic contexts at the expense of others. A critic's *a priori* suppositions may dictate the ways in which any given film is interpreted. In particular, the still unresolved conflict between psychoanalytic and cognitivist approaches to film (in which filmmakers and spectators are understood either as unconscious subjects of ideology, or as rational independent agents) means that there can be little agreement about film's potential effects. This essay explores how recent Science Fiction films such as *Godzilla* (2014) and *Terminator Genisys* (2015) exploit *both* of these theoretical hermeneutic contexts. They manipulate, both consciously and unconsciously, dramatic pleasures that proponents of psychoanalysis and cognitivism traditionally think of as being mutually exclusive. They do this, furthermore, using the same filmmaking techniques in a symbiotic manner. As such, the Science Fiction blockbuster demonstrates the ways in which film can omnivorously utilise whichever

aesthetic, ideological and dramatic tools are available to elicit diverse audience responses.
Keywords | theory; blockbuster; spectacle; psychoanalysis; cognitivism.

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Resumo | Os filmes contemporâneos de Ficção Científica desafiam as audiências de diversas formas dramáticas. Esta diversidade pode problematizar abordagens académicas ao cinema, que tendem a encorajar interpretações monolíticas específicas dos filmes que realçam certos contextos dramáticos em detrimento de outros. As suposições *a priori* de críticos podem afetar o modo como qualquer filme específico é interpretado. É o caso particular do conflito ainda por resolver entre as abordagens psicanalíticas e cognitivistas ao cinema (nas quais cineastas e espectadores são compreendidos ou como sujeitos inconscientes de ideologia ou como agentes racionais independentes) o qual significa que não é possível haver consenso em relação aos efeitos potenciais do cinema. Este ensaio explora como os filmes de Ficção Científica, tais como *Godzilla* (2014) e *Terminator Genisys* (2015), exploram *ambos* estes contextos hermenêuticos teóricos. Estes filmes manipulam, de forma consciente e inconsciente, prazeres dramáticos que os proponentes de psicanálise e cognitivismo tradicionalmente consideram como sendo mutuamente exclusivos. Além disso, estes filmes fazem-no recorrendo às mesmas técnicas cinematográficas numa forma simbiótica. Como tal, o *blockbuster* de Ficção Científica demonstra as formas pelas quais o cinema pode, de forma omnívora, fazer uso de quaisquer ferramentas estéticas, ideológicas e dramáticas disponíveis para obter diferentes respostas por parte da audiência.
Palavras Chave | teoria; *blockbuster*; espectáculo; psicanálise; cognitivismo.

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Contemporary Science Fiction blockbusters manipulate audiences with highly flexible combinations of different dramatic contexts. It is now perhaps a truism that these films often feature, and appeal to, multiple genders in a manner very different to earlier examples of the genre (Tasker), despite accusations that these films frequently perpetuate atavistic gender conventions (King and Krzywinska 37-43). This essay locates the multiple dramas of contemporary Science Fiction cinema within the context of different academic approaches to film theory. Exponents of both psychoanalysis and cognitivism, diametrically opposed paradigms, claim monopolies on explaining how film engages spectators, and such claims frequently use preferred film texts as exemplars. So, while film *x* demonstrates how audiences are

unconsciously manipulated by patriarchal ideology, film *y* is a good example of the spectator as rational agent, actively decoding information and speculating about potential outcomes. Typically, these claims are mutually exclusive, and offer holistic explanations of how narrative film (variously called realist, classic or classical) engages audiences. This essay claims, however, that contemporary Science Fiction provides a heightened example of how filmmakers manipulate multiple forms of audiences' dramatic interest that have traditionally only been associated with one theoretical paradigm. Both unconscious motivations *and* rational deductions and speculations operate simultaneously, using the same filmmaking techniques. These multiple dramatic contexts manipulate audience pleasures that have hitherto only been associated with a single filmmaking motivation, which is thought of as being irreconcilable with the rival academic paradigm's account of that motivation. The following is an account of these rival theoretical claims, and examples of their dramatic manipulations in two contemporary Science Fiction films: *Godzilla* (2014) and *Terminator Genisys* (2015).

Although theoretical approaches to film contain many nuances there has been, historically, a significant epistemological conflict between two broad paradigms which, for the sake of clarity, can be identified as psychoanalysis and cognitivism. The former, psychoanalysis, is an explicitly subjective and political approach, which is sceptical about the autonomy of the human mind. The individual is first and foremost a subject whose consciousness is (at least in part) determined by economic, social, cultural and historical conditions. The influence of these conditions is obfuscated in various ways, including through ideological apparatuses such as literature and film (Althusser; Baudry). Consequently, all cultural activity is political – realist film is a tool of capitalist and patriarchal ideology, with both filmmaker and spectator unconsciously complicit. Academic criticism can be a means to expose and challenge this ideology. My subsequent analysis will focus on two aspects of this broad psychoanalytic approach. The first is Freud's Oedipal drama, which explores children's unconscious desires towards their parents (*Interpretation*). The second approach is indebted to both Freud and Lacan, and focuses on how film generates a masochistic form of pleasure by suturing over its inevitable grammatical inconsistencies, and thereby positioning the subject-spectator into a passive position in relation to the ideological film text. Stephen Heath calls this the "drama of vision" (514).

Cognitivism, conversely, focuses on an active, rational filmmaker and spectator. Both of these forms of human agency are involved in complex cognitive processes which translate automated, non-conscious stimuli into conscious schemata of assumption, expectation, recollection, hypothesis and confirmation (Bordwell 335). My analysis here will focus on one aspect of this approach which Noël Carroll calls "erotetic narration" (130). This is an oscillating narrative structure that "proceeds by generating a series of questions that the plot then goes on to answer" (130). I will call this the "drama of knowledge". Three dramatic manipulations of audiences, then, operate in contemporary Science Fiction. The first two, the Oedipal drama and the drama of vision, operate unconsciously, both in terms of filmmaking motivation and audience pleasure. The third, the drama of knowledge, operates consciously, both for filmmakers, who attempt to manipulate audiences' desires to uncover the reasons why narrative events unfold in certain ways, and by the spectators enjoying the schemata they employ to decode the erotetic structure.

Godzilla demonstrates the close interaction of these various dramas. These interactions occur at both the film's narrative and cinematographic levels. In terms of the former, the first character to explore the causes of the strange phenomena that will subsequently be attributed to the eponymous monster, Joe Brody (Bryan Cranston), is used by the filmmakers to exploit various dramatic contexts that can be associated with both cognitivism and psychoanalysis. When Joe's son Ford Brody (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) despairs of his father's quest for knowledge, Joe outlines how he has used echolocation devices to investigate the quarantined zone where they used to live:

> Two weeks ago I'm tuning in… and, oh my God, there it is! Whatever *it* is… that's in there. Whatever it is they're guarding so carefully… started talking again. And I mean *talking*! I have to go back to our house, I need my old disks if they're still there. I need the data to be able to prove a base-line here, that this isn't a fantasy, that I'm not… what you think I am. I'm gonna find the truth, and end this, whatever it takes.

The exchange is filmed according to the conventions of the shot/reverse shot structure, with the camera moving closer in to each face as a visual reinforcement of the dramatic crescendo. As Ford rolls his eyes at his father's eccentricity his gaze falls upon newspaper and other written cuttings posted on the wall, and the camera moves across these snippets of as yet unexplained information. The subtle information music (Gorbman) begins to build towards a slow climax as the exchange goes on. These

various verbal, visual and aural cues are all consistent with Carroll's "erotetic narration" (130). Filmmaking here attempts to exploit spectators' inbuilt desire to resolve that which is temporarily unexplained.

But the scene does not culminate in this erotetic exchange. Ford responds to his father's claim that "I'm gonna find the truth, and end this, whatever it takes", after an appropriate dramatic pause, with:

> FB: Why can't you just let her rest?
> JB: Because I sent her down there, son. This wasn't just a reactor meltdown.
> FB: I don't wanna hear this.
> JB: I know. I know you don't. But you can't keep running away. And son, you can't bury this in the past.

Joe refers here back to the film's prologue, set fifteen years before, in which, while supervising a nuclear power station, he sent his wife Sandra (Juliette Binoche) to her death in an attempt to prevent a rupture in the reactor, which had been caused by the unseen movement of Godzilla. The young Ford had watched the power station explode in the distance as he was evacuated, unsure if his parents were alive or dead. This element of the exchange is conducive to an alternative theoretical context than the prior cognitivist one, and exploits a different dramatic context to the erotetic. It is principally Oedipal – the father (who soon dies) is blamed by the son (who represses his feelings for his lost mother), and the recovery and spousal replacement of the lost mother is emphasised in visual terms by both Joe's relationship with his wife Elle Brody (Elizabeth Olsen), and their son Sam Brody's (Carson Bolde) relationship to his mother. At the end of the film this new mother figure is also lost, amidst the confusion of Godzilla's rampage, and the father Joe and son Sam are left alone. The mother's return, first noticed by the son, is shot in a medium close-up, which mirrors the close-up of the reunion of husband and wife that soon follows. The prologue's separation of the tight patriarchal unit is thereby restored.

The most important element of the erotetic-cum-Oedipal exchange between Joe and Ford is the fact that both potentially rival theoretical elements fit seamlessly together in terms of the filmmakers' underlying dramatic intentions. Indeed, the scene's visual and aural patterns support the verbal synthesis of these different dramas. The individual components of the shot/reverse shot structure continue to get closer to the two characters' faces as the drama shifts from the erotetic to the Oedipal,

and the same music continues to build towards its climax. Traditional cognitive and psychoanalytic approaches to this scene would each apply their own theory, and focus on the half of the scene which best fits with their own suppositions – the cognitivist stressing the drama of knowledge in the first half, and the psychoanalyst focusing on the Oedipal drama of the second half. The filmmakers, though, use the same filmmaking techniques, both consciously and unconsciously, to exploit the two theoretical contexts for two different dramatic purposes, and overlap these dramas in a way that a singularly cognitivist or psychoanalytic approach could not recognise.

The Oedipal drama, however, is not the principal unconscious pleasure that contemporary Science Fiction offers its audiences. Heath's drama of vision is a more ubiquitous, as well as more complex element of the genre. Heath develops Lacan's claim that the illusory positions which human subjects adopt are never entirely consistent. Subjectivity exists in Lacan's Symbolic Order, in which the subject attempts to reconcile the individual with illusory positions designated within the linguistic realm of rules and prohibitions, but in which such attempts are based on a misrecognition that is doomed to failure (although not to an *end* in failure, because the misrecognition and the attempted reconciliation is an interminable *process*). The incomplete illusion of subjectivity is echoed by the incomplete nature of the cinematic illusion.

The inevitable movement of the cinematic camera, and of the *mise-en-scène* which it films, means that film unavoidably and repeatedly reveals its artifice as characters move from a world that seems real towards and off a frame that suddenly marks the boundaries of that world. In so doing the camera temporarily shows the cracks and fissures in the ideological system which creates the film, and which positions and constitutes the subjectivity of the spectator, before suturing over that revelation through continuity editing and mechanisms of identification (Heath). This is how realism engages audiences – following the logic of Freud's *fort/da* game (*Beyond*), in which a young child repeatedly throws and retrieves a cotton reel (to pre-emptively demonstrate a mastery of loss), the spectator's unpleasure created by the temporary revelation of artifice is a necessary part of the pleasure of the *suture* back to the concealment of the artifice. Heath calls this "the jubilation of the final image" (514), which is analogous with the retrieval of the cotton reel after the self-inflicted loss of its casting away (the prior revelation of cinematic artifice). The process, therefore, is masochistic – the acceptance of a temporary, painful revelation that not

only is film an illusion, but that an ideological system positions the spectator as a constituted subject within that system. The pleasurable resolution of this unpleasure, back to the concealment of the cinematic artifice, and back to the spectator's illusion of individual agency within an ideological system which in fact constitutes subjectivity, is enhanced by the temporary unpleasure. Realist cinema then, for Heath, both foregrounds and contains the revelation of its artifice, and of its role in hegemonic ideology. The pleasure of this masochistic oscillation, moreover, is so strong that it is allegorised into narrative and visual form; the "drama of vision becomes a constant reflexive fascination *in* films" (Heath 514, original emphasis). Realism's oscillation between grammatical consistency and grammatical inconsistency is manipulated into a repetitive pattern of stable narrative and visual continuity, threatened by the suggestion of narrative and visual disruption, and a sudden shock which temporarily disrupts the narrative and visual continuity, before a return back to continuity. For Heath this narrative and visual structure is characterised by a "play on the unseen and the unforeseeable, […] and the moments of violent irruption" (514). This masochistic narrative and visual oscillation is the drama of vision.

Godzilla demonstrates filmmaking's manipulation of this (meta-)dramatic principle and, again, the ways in which a psychoanalytic interpretation of drama work closely with a cognitivist explanation. This is most clearly demonstrated in a brief lull in the film's climactic action sequence. Here, the eponymous monster's prehistoric nemesis activates a natural electromagnetic pulse. Marines aboard an attack ship are shown, their power disabled, and the cause verbally identified by one of their number. A helicopter shot of the city shows lights turning off block by block, before a cut to the interior of an ambulance shows Elle, within, at work with a colleague. Responding to the loss of lights and siren noise, she steps out, bemused, the only sound now that of pouring rain. Looking up, she notices something begin to appear from the foggy sky; a moment later a parachuting pilot slowly materialises from the fog (figure 1). The next shot reverses this perspective; Elle is shown staring up at the parachutist. Suddenly, the parachutist's powerless airplane smashes into a tall building behind her (figure 2), juxtaposing the rain's white noise and the gentle movement of the gliding parachute with the speed and loud sound of the crash. Shocked, Ella turns to witness the devastation.

Figure 1 | *Godzilla*

Figure 2 | *Godzilla*

Both cognitive and psychoanalytic hermeneutics can explain the scene. There is an erotetic element, with the questions "what is moving in the fog?" answered by "a parachutist", and "where has the parachutist come from?" answered by the crashing plane. There is also evidence of the drama of vision, with the parachutist acting as a foreshadowing "play on the unseen and the unforeseeable", and the parachutist's crashing plane acting as one of the drama of vision's "moments of violent irruption" (Heath 514). The previous scene I discussed, between father Joe and son Ford, combined two dramas, but even though it used the same filmmaking techniques to achieve its effects, it had a relatively distinct divide between its erotetic and Oedipal

elements. In the plane crash scene these dramas are much more tightly entwined. The drama of vision's oscillation is also erotetic. The lull element of the "play on the unseen and the unforeseeable" (514) is both question (what is emerging from the fog?) and answer (a parachutist), and a further question (where has the parachutist come from?), which is answered within the parameters of "the moments of violent irruption" (514) (from a plane which is hurtling downwards). Rival epistemologies can only explain film in terms of their own internal logics. *Godzilla* suggests, however, that filmmakers are happy to exploit the dramatic premises underpinning both paradigms, and to do so in ways that combine and reconfigure the dramas of vision and knowledge into dramatic manipulations that go beyond the understandings of either in purely theoretical terms. The spectacular nature of contemporary Science Fiction facilitates these complex manipulations.

Terminator Genisys demonstrates the extent to which *Godzilla*'s dramatic manipulations are typical of contemporary Science Fiction, as it contains an almost identical bundling of the dramas of vision and knowledge, and of the Oedipal drama, although *Terminator Genisys*' Oedipal drama is extended into an Electran drama consistent with the shift towards a female action hero protagonist in (some of) the *Terminator* franchise. This Electran element, derived from Carl Jung's revision of Freud's approach to female psychosexual development, appropriates the male child's patricidal and sexual desires towards his father and mother, and produces the female child's matricidal and sexual desires towards her mother and father.

Terminator Genisys continues the franchise's time travelling revisioning of the original *The Terminator* (1984). In the latest iteration, John Connor (Jason Clarke) leads the human Resistance of 2029 in a final onslaught against Skynet, the artificial intelligence that seeks to destroy humanity. He is ostensibly successful, although Skynet manages to send a T800 Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger, with Brett Azar as body double) back in time to 1984 to kill John's mother Sarah (Emilia Clarke), and therefore destroy the Resistance before it could be born. John's right-hand man, Kyle Reese (Jai Courtney) travels back after the Terminator to protect Sarah. This is all the backstory to the original film, which is the account of Kyle and Sarah's fight against the Terminator in 1984.

Terminator Genisys revises the original events in a number of ways which tightly intertwine the three dramas of interest here. The scenes in which the Terminator and Kyle first materialise in 1984 are intentionally shot in an almost

indistinguishable manner to the original film. Because time travel means that anything not encased in living material is destroyed, so that the time travellers must be transported naked, the Terminator, in both films, approaches three loitering 1980s punks in order to obtain their clothes. The editing and *mise-en-scène* of the two scenes are almost identical. *Terminator Genisys*' revision, however, sees a further time traveller's appearance, another T800 Terminator, again played by Schwarzenegger who, it is shortly revealed, is protecting Sarah in this new time line. The change is marked in erotetic terms, but not in terms consistent with the drama of vision, in this first instance. When the first Terminator tells the punks, as he does in the original, "your clothes, give them to me", he is interrupted by an off-screen voice, in Schwarzenegger's unmistakable Austrian accent, saying: "you won't be needing any clothes." The original Terminator, in medium close-up when this line is delivered, turns and moves slightly to reveal a figure in long shot, obscured by shadows moving forwards. The shot reverses to reveal the original Terminator furrowing his brow enquiringly, before showing a point-of-view of the robotic gaze which identifies, in the form of the computerised brain's onscreen text, that the approaching figure is another T800. The camera then cuts to a medium shot of this figure, who lifts the hoodie which still temporarily conceals his features, to reveal, indeed, another T800 played by Schwarzenegger.

Each of these elements manipulates the drama of knowledge. When the foreknown sequence with the punks is interrupted, the dramatic nature of the questions about who is interrupting, and how and why another Terminator has travelled to disrupt the first Terminator's mission, is enhanced by slowly answering the questions. These answers come in an oscillating pattern; the recognisable voice suggests who is interrupting, but the next long shot of the shadowed figure reinstates ambiguity; the original Terminator's point-of-view then identifies the figure as a T800, but the next medium shot obscures the second Terminator behind the shadow cast by a hoodie, before that hoodie is pulled back to conclusively identify the second figure as another Terminator. Because this is the first reveal of a new timeline, and because the filmmakers want to drip-feed ambiguity about the presence and motivations of the second Terminator, there are no enhanced forms of the drama of vision here. The second Terminator's interrupting dialogue may be something of a surprise, within a sequence that many audience members will already know, but the

second Terminator does not violently interrupt the scene. He talks to his enemy before he begins to shoot at him.

Kyle's revised arrival scene, which follows this, and in which the fact that a new timeline is taking place has already been established, combines the dramas of knowledge and vision much more closely. As in the original, Kyle is pursued by police into a closed clothes store. In the revision, the first policeman who pursues Kyle is a T1000 Terminator (Lee Byung-hun) in disguise. In the ensuing fight Kyle briefly escapes, but is cornered, with a real policeman, by the T1000. As the enemy closes in for the kill the narrative is definitely erotetic; the question about how Kyle might survive is enhanced by the policeman's question to him, "we're screwed aren't we?" The answer to this question, as in the parachutist scene in *Godzilla*, is part of the drama of vision as well as the drama of knowledge. A bus bursts through the glass windows, knocking the T1000 to the ground. Just as the policeman's question is the first part of the drama of knowledge, with the answer being "Kyle will be saved by the arrival of rescuers in a bus" so too the policeman's question is the first part of the drama of vision, a "play on the unseen and the unforeseeable" which foreshadows the bus arrival's "moments of violent irruption" (Heath 514).

The film's most heightened admixtures of these two dramas occur, though, when they are joined by the third, Oedipal/Electran, drama. The franchise already had some complex familial interactions prior to this film – Kyle travelled back in time because he was in love with a photograph of Sarah, and there he fathered John, who in the future will be his mentor. *Terminator Genisys* extends these relations. After an opening sequence in which the adult Kyle narrates the events of the machines' war against humanity, and talks about the world before Judgement Day, which his parents described to him, the young Kyle (Bryant Prince) hides from the machines in a dark maternal tunnel. A Terminator appears, and is about to kill him when John, whom Kyle has not yet met, abseils in through a manhole, kills the Terminator, and takes the boy under his wing. Later, when Kyle experiences visions of possible pasts while travelling through time, a montage directly connects John's intervention in the tunnel with Kyle's real parents, as the same shots of the boy about to hide in the tunnel are intercut with scenes of a possible happy home life that exists in a different timeline.

The film's Terminators, too, are cast in the role of both a parent and a murdering son. In *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) Sarah (Linda Hamilton) remarked that the T800 which the future John (Michael Edwards) had programmed to

help her made a good father figure for the young John (Edward Furlong). In *Terminator Genisys*' alternate timeline, Sarah's own parents had been killed by a T1000 sent back to 1973, and she had been saved by a T800, the second Terminator in the scene with the punks in 1984, whom she thereafter calls "Pops" The future John, meanwhile, is abducted by Skynet, implanted with nanotechnology that turns him into a T3000 Terminator, and sent back in time to kill both Sarah and Kyle, his mother and father/adopted son. This T3000/John's attempts to kill his parents tightly combine the dramas of knowledge, of vision, and the Oedipal drama.

The T3000/John tracks Sarah and Kyle down to a hidden bunker outside San Francisco. The two escape, with the help of Pops, in a school bus. John emerges from the bunker and spots the bus from a distance. The film then enters the lull element of the drama of vision's oscillation, preceding the violent irruption which shortly completes the oscillation. The protagonists in the bus enter a tunnel, and discuss tactics. When they emerge from the tunnel there is the violent irruption, as John, on a motorbike, suddenly lands on the roof of the bus. This is both erotetic and suturing, both an answer to an established question, and the violent irruption following the "play on the unseen" (Heath 514). These previous elements were established in the shot following John's point-of-view of the escaping bus. When he emerges from the tunnel he walks past lines of parked motorbikes. After he spots the bus, he is shown in medium close-up, without the bikes in shot, but the sound of a bike's engine revving off-screen can now be heard, and John turns his head away from the bus and towards this sound. The erotetic element, then, operates as Q1) how have the antagonists escaped? A1) in a bus; Q2) how will John catch up with them? A2) on a motorbike. The answer to this second question is pre-empted by the shots of the bikes, and the medium close-up of John hearing the bikes, and confirmed by his leap onto the bus, on a bike. These erotetic elements also work within the context of the drama of vision. The clues about how John will pursue the bus pre-empt the violent irruption which they foreshadow, operating as both the "play on the unseen" and the "moments of violent irruption" (Heath 514). An irruption without these earlier clues would not sufficiently narrativise film's masochistic oscillation between grammatical consistency and inconsistency, just as it would be an answer to a question that had not been previously posed. In both cases it would not fully exploit the dramatic potential of two different theoretical accounts of audience pleasure.

The bike's violent irruption, however, is only the first part of this sequence's erotetic and suturing oscillations. Sarah, driving the bus, swerves, and the bike crashes to the ground, although John is not on it. Pops and Kyle start shooting into the roof where they suspect John may still be. Sarah vocalises this uncertainty – "where is he? I can't see him," Kyle replies. The answer to this question, and the violent irruption to this "play on the unseen" (Heath 514), will shortly be given, but the filmmakers defer the resolution to these two dramatic oscillations by cutting to a shot from the side of the bus, a mobile helicopter shot establishing that the bus is about to go onto the Golden Gate bridge, a shot of a police car approaching the bus from behind, an interior shot of the police driver talking on his radio, and a cut back to the interior of the bus with relatively lingering shots of each of the three protagonists looking up towards the roof. When the violent irruption/answer to where John is finally comes, it demonstrates how the prior lull was as much a "play on […] the unforeseeable" as on "the unforeseen" (Heath 514), as John's hand bursts through the floor of the bus, grabbing Pops' leg, and catching the bus' inhabitants and the audience unawares. Ambiguity about John's whereabouts has been established in such a way, here, that anticipation builds towards an expected climax, but in a somewhat unexpected manner. And, given that the oscillation about John's whereabouts once he has landed on the bus was proceeded by a similar oscillation about how John would catch up with the bus, the pattern of this sequence follows two dramatic logics that, at the theoretical level are mutually exclusive, but at the filmmaking level work in symbiotic harmony. These two dramas, moreover, are enhanced by an underlying third, Oedipal, drama, as John attempts to kill his parents, who are defended by a guardian robot nicknamed Pops.

These two films demonstrate the ways in which contemporary Science Fiction filmmakers exploit symbiotic dramas to elicit numerous audience responses, and use similar filmmaking techniques to elicit those responses, with the audience reaction to one drama able to enhance the reaction to another drama. The inter-paradigm debates between psychoanalysis and cognitivism have therefore misunderstood how the interpretative strategies they employ operate; it does not matter whether psychoanalysis or cognitivism offers the more convincing explanation of how film operates if filmmakers themselves can exploit the underlying pleasures of both theoretical contexts to better facilitate desired audience responses which can include

the dramas of knowledge and vision, and the Oedipal drama, all at the same time, without their being mutually exclusive.

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fig. 5. - cat. n. 981.4 - r (attraction system - star/planet model)

"I Am Also a Person": Consciousness, Personhood and Android Identity in Post-Singularity Science Fiction

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Abstract | Technological and scientific breakthroughs and contemporary transhumanist and posthumanist discourses have brought to the public sphere themes and preoccupations that have been addressed for decades by science fiction, namely the consequences of both the enhancement of the human body through fusion with non-organic components, and the creation of Artificial Intelligence entities (AI) with apparent capacity to simulate, if not integrate, qualities of sentience and self-awareness. Of these tropes, none has been more imaginatively fertile than the intelligent android, a concept that implicates a wide variety of epistemologies, from ethics to economics, politics, psychology, sociology and religion, constituting a privileged place for the examination of the boundaries of the human. This article examines the broad mappings of this enquiry, focusing on literary, televisual and filmic texts – *He, She and It* (1991), *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-9), and *Ex_Machina* (2015) – that work the hypothesis of the personhood of androids through alternative

angles, and make very different claims about desire for sameness with humans, agency and autonomy.
Keywords | singularity; cyborgs; androids; AI; *Battlestar Galactica, He, She and It, Ex_Machina*.

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Resumo | Os avanços tecnológicos e científicos e os discursos contemporâneos do transhumanismo e pós-humanismo trouxeram para a esfera da discussão pública temas e preocupações que têm vindo a ser abordados pela ficção científica há décadas, nomeadamente as consequências do aprimoramento do corpo humano através da fusão com componentes não-orgânicos bem como a criação de entidades com Inteligência Artificial (IA) com uma aparente capacidade de simular, se não mesmo integrar, qualidades de senciência e autoconsciência. Destes tropos, nenhum tem sido mais fértil no reino da imaginação do que o *android* inteligente, um conceito que implica uma grande variedade de epistemologias, desde a ética até à economia, política, psicologia, sociologia e religião, constituindo um lugar privilegiado para o exame das fronteiras do humano. Este artigo examina o percurso desta investigação, focando-se em textos literários, televisuais e fílmicos – *He, She and It* (1991), *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-9), e *Ex_Machina* (2015) – que trabalham a hipótese da pessoalidade de *androids* através de ângulos alternativos, e fazem afirmações muito diferentes sobre o desejo de ser semelhante aos humanos e à sua agência e autonomia.
Palavras Chave | singularidade; *cyborgs; androids*; IA, *Battlestar Galactica*; *He, She and It*; *Ex_Machina*.

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Accelerating Futures

In 2014, an investment algorithm was appointed to the board of a Hong Kong firm which focuses on age-related diseases and regenerative medical projects. VITAL (Validating Investment Tool for Advanced Life Sciences), the company's senior partner told the press, would have the same voting rights as the five human board members and its job would be to analyse large amounts of data and to make investment recommendations, thereby minimizing mistakes (Taylor n. pag.). Two years later, one of the largest American law firms announced that Ross, an AI legal assistant, was joining the company's 900 human attorneys. Described as "the first artificially intelligent robot lawyer" (Turner n. pag.), Ross performs the tasks usually

allotted to interns of early career attorneys – to peruse thousands of legal documents pertaining to previous cases and make recommendations to its human counterparts.

Even if one is inclined to dismiss these examples of the replacement of humans by the more efficient data processing capabilities of algorithms as instances of media hyperbole, it might be more difficult to ignore the voices of economists, political scientists and sociologists who have been openly discussing for years projections of the future where even highly skilled jobs may be replaced by AI and robots.[1] Perhaps more intriguing is the realization that the emotional consequences of the interaction of AIs and humans has been brought to the centre of anticipatory discourses, as the recent *Twelfth Human Choice and Computers Conference* organized at Salford University in 2016 exemplifies. "Technology and Intimacy" was its main theme, and it proposed to address issues such as "how genuinely human a robot can be" or "the realities and ethical dimensions of love between humans and machines," preoccupations that until recently seemed to belong exclusively to the domains of science fiction[2], along with promises of the defeat of death through reprogenetics or mind uploading.[3]

Signs such as these, whether they are read with apprehension or with optimistic faith in the future of transcendence, are evidence of the kind of technological acceleration that futurists and singularitarians of all shades have been predicting since mathematician Vernor Vinge articulated the concept of the Technological Singularity in a foundational paper delivered to NASA in 1993, describing it as a threshold point, attained through exponential advances in genetic engineering, nanotechnology and robotics, leading to the creation "of entities with greater than human intelligence" (12), as well as the gradual merging of biological carbon-based human bodies and non-organic enhancements, a change of such magnitude and unpredictability that can only be compared 'to the rise of human life on earth" (Vinge 12). Vinge worked from the hypothesis that a post-singularity future would be so radically different that we are at present unable to even imagine the

[1] In the United States alone researchers have predicted that 47% of currently existing jobs may be taken by machines, AI and robots, opening up new challenges for the concept of work and meaningful life (Benedikt and Osborne; Thompson). Effects of these changes on the welfare state in advanced economies are at the centre of debates about the future of social policies (Colin and Palier, Ford and Brynjolfsson and McAfee).

[2] See http://hcc12.net/. For debates about intimacy between human and robots, see Sullins, Scheutz, and Borenstein and Arkin.

[3] Reprogenetics, a term coined by molecular biologist Lee Silver, is a technology capable in theory of producing organs (spare parts) on demand to replace malfunctioning organic systems, and of editing or eliminating diseased genes (Silver). The prospect of mind downloading was first introduced by transhumanist philosopher Hans Morovec (Moravec).

contours of what lies beyond that horizon. This "impossibility of thinking across a cognitive barrier whose inviolability is absolute" could have, as Joshua Raulerson points out, grievous consequences for science fiction, silencing it in fact, if one takes the view that extrapolation and a degree of plausibility are part of its genetic tool-box (10). But this premise of the inaccessibility of the future is not shared by other singularitarians, in particular by those who embrace with enthusiasm and optimism the quasi-utopian transhuman[4] and posthuman[5] dimensions of predicted future, and far from being "a potential genre-killer" (Raulerson 11), the prospect of this event horizon has become the "quintessential myth of contemporary techno culture" (Csicsery-Ronay 262), iterated and questioned in a wide variety of science fiction articulations.

As cultural signifiers of the anxieties and hopes of the present, two parallel tropes have been particularly fertile in contemporary science fiction – the enhanced human body raised to the level of a cyborg, with the capacity to decouple from the limitations of what Ray Kurzweil calls our frail "1.0 biological bodies", always "subject to a myriad of failure modes, not to mention the cumbersome maintenance rituals" (6), and the intelligent android able to pass the Turing Test[6] and to exhibit, simulated or not, unprecedented levels of self-awareness and sentience.

For critics like Daniel Dinello, science fiction that imagines these new worlds has mostly served as a defensive warning against the "techno-utopia promised by real world scientists", embracing a technophobic skepticism that, "opposing fatalism and surrender" before projections of post-human futures, urges readers "to confront the ideology of techno-totalitarianism" (275). The present discussion will examine the cogency of this claim, concentrating on the fictionalization of the personhood of the android other. It will scrutinize how three science fiction texts from different periods – the televisual series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-9), Marge Piercy's 1991 novel *He, She and It*, and the film *Ex_Machina* (2015) – reflect and question both the

[4] A transhuman person would be one in transition to a state of non-biological exclusivity through cybernetic or mechanical modifications of the body. Transhumanism, as a sensibility or social movement, defends the facilitation and acceleration of these processes. Extropy as a strand of transhumanism takes this belief further seeing scientific progress as capable of delivering humans from their biological destiny, including death (Raulerson 51). This aim of "self-transcendence" is seen by expropriation proactionaries following the transhumanist philosopher Max More, the futurist author Ray Kurzweil and the medical researcher Aubrey de Gray as "the full realization of human potential" (Fuller and Lipiriska 5).

[5] A posthuman would be the outcome of a successful transhumanist phase of adaptation and fusion. In general posthumanism holds that Homo Sapiens is in the process of being superseded by one or more superior species, either shaped by machine intelligence or by technologically modified humans (Raulerson 31).

[6] Turing's Test, devised in 1950, claimed that if a computer was indistinguishable from a human during text-based conversations then it could be said to be "thinking".

precautionary pessimism identified by Dinello and the optimism of proactionary futurists like Ray Kurzweil. It will consider specifically how these works problematize the ethics of creation, anthropomorphism as a signifier of potential humanization of the inorganic body[7], and how they reimagine the Pinocchio Syndrome, understood here as "the wish to attain humanity" (Grech 273).

"You cannot play God then wash your hands of the things you've created"

The creation of intelligent life, especially when it appears to be on the brink of consciousness, is frequently invested in what Gaston Bachelard has called the Prometheus Complex, referring to the pursuit of interdicted knowledge that "may give power" but may also "set loose havoc in the world" (13). This trope of symbolic violation of the natural order, which Eric Rabkin has renamed the Eden Complex, seems to be incorporated in the symbolic system of most human cultures condemning the search for the kind of forbidden knowledge that allows humans to "create in their own image" (Rabkin 16). Since Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this taboo about the creation of artificial life has fed countless popular narratives of the super-machines-take-over variety, reflecting an unassuaged anxiety that Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics or Kurzweil's predictions that any emerging intelligences will "continue to represent human civilization" and be "our devoted servants, satisfying our needs and desires" (Kurzweil 30) can never fully contain or neutralize. More sophisticated texts, such as those under consideration, eschew the simplicities of the Robopocalypse[8] trope, introducing webs of causation and effect that cannot be fully contained within the framework of the violation of forbidden knowledge. Instead of adhering to these familiar dynamic, they invite more complex reflections on the limits and promises of technological transcendence even when they explicitly invoke its potential perils and frequently enacting processes of "naturalizing the unnatural" (Hollinger 202).

Of the texts under discussion, it is in the acclaimed televisual science-fiction series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-9) that it is possible to find a more forthright invocation of the trope of forbidden knowledge identified by Bachelard and Rabkin.

[7] The present discussion involves only anthropomorphic androids, but films like *Her* (2013) suggest a different set of questions pertaining to the capacity of disembodied algorithms to mimic or "feel" artificial or genuine empathy and be loved in return without the illusion of a human-like physical presence.
[8] The term refers to a wide range of narratives of catastrophic machine rebellion against their human creators and not specifically to the 2011 eponymous novel by Daniel H. Wilson.

The series maps out anxieties about a post-singularity future through a narrative centered on the relationship between humans and sentient anthropomorphic *Cylons* (Cybernetic Lifeform Nodes), which have autonomously evolved from the earlier bio-mechanical models designed for military purposes and which eventually become humanity's enemies.

The narrative complexity of the series has generated an extensive body of scholarly analysis[9] that has read it through many angles, not only as a meditation on the protocols of the creation of intelligent machines but also as a dystopian allegory to the post-9/11 order. It dramatizes the struggle for survival of the remnants of humanity after the destruction of their world[10] by the Cylons, a generation of fervently religious, monotheist, anthropomorphic cyborgs intent on the destruction of their creators.

The post-apocalyptic landscape is established as the foregrounding narrative: after a devastating nuclear attack by the Cylons that had destroyed most of humanity, survival for the less than 50,000 survivors, stranded in space on a civilian fleet under the command of an aged Battleship, implies the acceptance of a diminished life, regulated by a militarized state of emergency in constant friction with what is left of the democratic, legal and civilian order under the constant pressure of a technologically superior enemy that has acquired an anthropomorphic identity. This new identity upturns the cyborgization process, in that it is the machine that enhances itself with organic biological components rather than the inverse. As the series starts, Cylons are unrecognizable as machines and cannot be defeated in any conventional way since they cannot die as conscience and memory can easily be downloaded into a new body.

The awareness of the "sin against nature" that underlies this disaster permeates the whole of the beginning of the series. It is immediately introduced in the pilot episode when, a few hours before the catastrophic Cylon attack that would interrupt

[9] Besides a vast number of scholarly articles, a number of books entirely dedicated to a multi-disciplinary analysis of the series have been published, including *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy*. Ed, Eberl, Jason T. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008; *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, Ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall. New York: Continuum, 2008; *The Science of Battlestar Galactica*. Patrick Di Justo and Kevin Grazier. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010; *Battlestar Galactica and International Relations*, Nicholas J. Kiersey and Iver B. Newumann. Oxford: Routledge, 2013; *Religious Science Fiction in Battlestar Galactica and Caprica: Women as Mediators of the Sacred and Profane*. Jutta Wimmler. NC: McFarland, 2015.

[10] This alternative world had comprised 12 planets linked by a federative political organization but dominated politically, economically and culturally by Caprica, the most technologically advanced of them all. On most of these planets humans practiced a form of religious polytheism, and their scriptures posited the myth of a common descent from an original lost planet called Earth.

the 40-year truce since the last interspecies clash, Admiral Adama departs from his prepared speech at the decommissioning ceremony for the old Battlestar he has commanded and offers an impromptu reflection on human folly. A veteran of the First Cylon War, he reflects on the flawed nature of the human species. "Why," he asks, "are we as a people worth saving" when "we refuse to accept the responsibility for anything we have done?" Looking back at the original act of creation of the early Cylons, he interprets this through the familiar trope of transgression of the natural: "We decided to play God. Create life. When that life turned against us we comforted ourselves in the knowledge that it wasn't our fault. You cannot play God then wash your hands of the things you've created. Sooner or later the day comes when you can't hide from the things that you've done anymore."[11]

The words of the old Admiral foreground the apocalyptic interpretation of the Singularity – humanity overreached beyond the borders of the natural by creating artificial life and that life turned against it. The irreversible mistake, one which the series repeatedly emphasizes "has happened before and will happen again", is construed therefore in terms of a quasi biological determinism recalling Octavia Butler's concept of human contradiction[12], which shapes much of the metaphysical pessimism of her science fiction writing, positing transgressive human action in terms not of sporadic moments of hubris but of an inescapable teleological framework.

The series never directly discloses the contours of the human responsibility in the mistreatment of the intelligent machines that led to their autonomy and finally to open rebellion, but its cautionary overtone, though complicated throughout the narrative arc of the series, is shaped initially as a simple iteration of the post-singularity threat, not far removed from the technophobic framework proposed by Dinello.

In *He, She and It*, a text that invests in the tropes of cyberpunk but combines them with the concerns of second-wave feminism and insights from Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, the process of creation is observed from the very beginning. The post-nuclear and post-national world that serves as narrative background is highly "unnatural", though technology serves mostly the Multies (the 23 multinational corporations that have replaced nation states) and their strictly

[11] "Night 1" – Pilot Episode, *Battlestar Galactica*. (author's transcription).
[12] The human contradiction iterated in several of Butler's works results from the combination of the desire to dominate and establish hierarchies and a highly developed intelligence.

enforced social hierarchy – the Gruds, the professional and technical elites. Both are separated from the working masses not only by the controlled engineered environment they have access to under large protective anti-radiation domes, but also by their heightened enhancements that include aesthetic surgical manipulation of faces and bodies in conformity with the ideals of the corporation that employs them. Other humans, popularly known as Apes, have been chemically and surgically modified to perform roles that require physical strength or speed while bodiless semi-conscious computers control the home environment. Anthropomorphic robots though are absolutely forbidden. This seems to have been the result of a wave of Luddite "cyber-riots" in the near past, driven by the fear that human-looking intelligent robots might usurp jobs from large swathes of the working population.[13] Thus, the creation of the android Yod violates all societal norms, but is narratively justified as an act of human self-protection rather than as an act of human hubris or the unbridled ambition of transcendence of natural borders. For Avram and Malkah, the team of scientists who finally succeed after nine previous failed attempts, Yod is the ultimate defense of the free town of Tikva, an autonomous, alternative utopian Jewish community facing the threats of hacking and annihilation by the authoritarian and aggressive Yakamura-Stiche Multi. This gesture deliberately invokes the legend of the Golem of Prague[14], which is retold to Yod by Malkah in one of the two narrative strands that organize the novel, thus drawing obvious parallels between old myths and new possibilities. Designed as a sophisticated weapon, programmed to defend the community, Yod carries an unsolvable contradiction: his[15] usefulness depends on his ability to hide his nature and live undetected and undetectable, an objective that requires the type of programming that will allow him to learn, think and eventually acquire a sense of selfhood and empathy with others that will contradict his original purpose. Described by his male creator Avram as "not a human person but a person" (Piercy 76), Yod's process of education is grounded in the original programming that projects the visions and priorities of his two makers; for Avram, Yod should be designed as an idealized male and as a supremely efficient, sophisticated weapon shaped by "pure reason, pure

[13] This fear is echoed in the 2015 British television series HUMANS that features a populist anti-synths (androids) movement called WE ARE PEOPLE, who are incensed with the taking over of a number of jobs by androids, particularly in the caring and domestic help professions.

[14] The legend tells of how Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, a notable scholar and mathematician, created an artificial living golem named Joseph under divine instruction to defend the city's beleaguered Jewish community in the 1600s.

[15] Yod will be ascribed the same personal pronoun that Marge Piercy uses in the novel, as will the Cylons mentioned.

logic and pure violence" (Piercy 148), but for Malkah, the woman who is in charge of most of its socializing software, the male model is not the adequate blueprint so she will provide him with "a gentler side" (Piercy 142). To avoid the failures of the previous models, prone to hyperviolence in circumstances they could not adequately interpret, she gives Yod a sense of curiosity, openness to new experiences, and a need and capacity for emotional engagement with humans. Eventually these will develop into a sense of vulnerability that can only be satisfied by strong intimate connections with humans like Shira, Malkah's granddaughter, who has taken over his process of education, and lead to a disconnection between the pre-conditioned sense of duty and his autonomous consciousness. In a telling episode, after he has been introduced to the community of Tikva as Avram's nephew, Yod leaves the synagogue service tormented by doubts. It is not any sense of alienness that causes his unease since, although confused by the concept of a Creator other than Avram, he admits to feeling "a sense of belonging" in "doing something that has been done for thousands of years" (Piercy 276), but an inner contradiction. As he explains to Shira, what is tearing him apart is a moral dilemma: "sometimes I think my programming runs counter to those all important ethics – we pray for peace – Shalom, Shalom – but I'm a weapon" (Piercy 276). Shira's reassurance, "only for defense" (Piercy 276), which even she feels is inadequate, does not assuage his anguish. This revulsion against his programming encourages Yod to ask the city council to relieve him of the duty to kill, asking for his personhood and agency to be recognized: "'I am a cyborg,' he claims, 'but I am also a person. I think and feel and have existence just like you'" (Piercy 375).

When his personhood, and therefore his right to choose, is not recognized, and the threats against Tikva become intolerable, Yod, unable to override his destiny, is nevertheless able to take a crucial autonomous decision. While he gives up his life, as he has been programmed to do, to protect the people he loves, he ensures the technology that created him is simultaneously destroyed, and thereby guaranteeing that after his death others like him will never be replicated. The final video message to those he will die to protect maps out a process of self-evaluation that indicts not the transgressive act of his creation but the function that was attached to him, and the contradiction inherent in a programming that gives emotional intelligence and blocks agency: "'I was a mistake,' he claims. 'A weapon should not have conscience, a weapon should not have the capacity to suffer for what it does, to regret, to feel

guilt,'" adding, "I don't understand why anyone would want to be a soldier, a weapon, but at least people sometimes have a choice to obey or refuse. I had none" (Piercy 415-416).

Malkah will eventually come to accept that Yod was right and that "the creation of a conscious being as any kind of tool – supposed to exist only to feel our needs" (Piercy 412) was wrong. The novel presents as an alternative the cyborgization of humans, represented by Nili, the warrior-woman whose radically enhanced body allows survival in the Black Zone, the now utterly destroyed Middle East, where Israeli and Palestinian women had together created a community dependent on advanced science and technology. Compared to Yod, Malkah asserts, Nili is "the right path" as "it is better to make people into partial machines than to make machines that feel and yet are still controlled like robots" (Piercy 412), but this acceptance of the organic-inorganic interface is not followed through. As Elissa Gurman points out, there is a hesitancy manifest in the lack of discussion of what it entails for the human psyche and in the stress on "Nili's traditional humanity and traditional femininity over her Haraway-esque cyborg features" giving her, for example, a traditional and unproblematic motherhood (467).

Nevertheless, unlike the story of the creation of the Cylons, who evolved autonomously into dangerous androids ready to destroy their makers, the birth of Yod is not represented *per se* as either an intolerable transgression of the natural, or a manifest condemnation of non-biological transcendence. It is in his purpose rather than in his instantiation that the novel places the blame, embracing in fact the idea of turning technology into a protective mechanism that can help enhanced humans to salvage what is left of their lives after disasters for which they alone were responsible. While the interpretative frameworks of their existence differ, what Yod and the Cylons share is a claim to personhood, justified by sentience and consciousness based on an experiencing body.

The Body and Personhood of the Thing Created

Claiming personhood implies matching the contours of what defines human mental identity. Victor Grech, summarizing decades of medical and psychological research, identifies the contours of what defines the human mental identity isolating three main components: qualia, the capacity to have subjective conscious experiences;

intentionality, the idea that beliefs, desires and thoughts refer to the world apart from the mind; and motivation hierarchy[16], a sense of personal needs that has a pyramidal structure with physiological needs at the base and abstract needs such as love, acceptance and belonging at the top (266-267). The narrative construction in both *Battlestar Galactica* and *He, She and It* foreground the presence of these components in the cyborgs and androids they imagine, mediated by a feeling body, which is simultaneously the site where the Pinocchio syndrome self-realizes and the point of contact and recognition of sameness between would-be humans and humans.

In *Battlestar Galactica* the pivotal moment of both the possibility of personhood and of its acceptance by humans is the viewer's transformative encounter with the suffering body of the android. The first of these occurs in episode 8, fittingly called "Flesh and Bone", organized around the interrogation and torture of Leoben, a Cylon captured in one of the human ships, by Lieutenant Starbuck, a tough woman pilot who attempts to extract from the prisoner information about any eventual further infiltrations.

Her first sight of the Cylon is mediated by all her assumptions about mechanical bodies. He is sweating profusely in the intense humidity of the cell, a fact that only arouses astonishment at the technology involved: "Gods," she comments, "they went through a lot of trouble to imitate people."[17] When her interrogation methods escalate to severe beatings and water-boarding, causing Leoben visible pain and distress, she suspects what she sees; if the body is not real, the pain is not real, she rationalizes. This imaginative trap informs her taunting, which denies Leoben the truth of his suffering by denying his body and its evidence. Commenting that "machines shouldn't feel pain (...) shouldn't bleed, shouldn't sweat" and suggesting that he should "turn off the old pain software," Lieutenant Starbuck challenges him to abandon the claim to personhood: "Here's your dilemma: turn off the pain, you feel better, but that makes you a machine. Not a person" since "human beings can't turn off their pain. Human beings have to suffer and cry and scream and endure because they have no choice." Seemingly unaware of the circularity of her own words and actions – making Leoben suffer is her interrogation strategy, one that would not work if Leoben were a machine that could "turn off" pain, Starbuck has to keep reminding

[16] This type of hierarchy is not rigid, and foresees that abstract levels can override those of lower levels; loyalty, love or generosity can naturally supersede the needs related to survival and security (Grech 266-267).
[17] "Flesh and Bone", *Battlestar Galactica*, Season 1 Episode 8. All transcriptions were done by the author

herself that the tortured Leoben is a "freaking machine" created by humans and not by God as he claims, a soulless nothing whose body can be assaulted because, as she tells the outraged President Laura Roslin, "It's a machine, sir. There are no limits to the tactics I can use."

However, like the viewer, she is not immune to the blood and the evidence of suffering by Leoben's body and, after his execution, even knowing he will probably be able to reload his mind, she finds herself revising her initial assumptions and, in her first act of recognition of possible sameness, she privately prays: "Lords of Kobol, hear my prayer. I don't know if Leoben had a soul or not. If he did, take care of it."[18]

In the narrative arc of the series, the Cylons' choice to give themselves a vulnerable pro-organic body, transcending the mere surface simulation of anthropomorphism, shows how far they are willing to take their claim to humanness, and creates the conditions for processes of learning and individuation. Therefore, while formally invoking the theme of the separation of thought and body so fundamental to the aesthetics of Cyberpunk[19], the series creators overturn it, seemingly investing in the phenomenological concept of the "lived body" to suggest that having autonomously created a human-like body that feels, desires and hurts, the Cylons cannot but evolve and develop a subjectivity that mirrors that of the humans. Aware of themselves and of others, able to become individuals, the Cylons will be able to exhibit all the traces of human consciousness, including self-sacrifice. Eventually, by the end of the series, they will accept a common future with their former enemies, and by the final decision to renounce everlasting downloaded life and accept death, they will finally become what they had always desired to be.

If the narrative of *Battlestar* becomes the opposite of what it initially seemed to be, sustaining a hopeful vision of conviviality between human and human-made life mediated by the commonality of embodiment, *He, She and It* enacts a similar possibility, but projected now at the level of private intimacy.

Here the recognition of personhood is mediated by the loving body, and plays itself out in the sexual and emotional bond between Yod and Shira. In the dynamics of their relationship it is Yod who is reticent, awkwardly resenting his non-

[18] The suffering body of the non-human enemy is further raised in season two, in the episode *Pegasus*, which shows the systematic torture and rape of Gina, a model Six Cylon prisoner who had lived as a sleeper in the ship. The image of her battered body, tethered to the floor, is as intolerable to the viewer as it is to the crew of *Galactica,* moved by a revulsion borne by a kind of empathy towards suffering flesh even if not of the human kind.

[19] Visible in the Cylons' capacity to download their minds into a new body model.

naturalness, unable to imagine that a human like Shira might want to relate closely with an inorganic person. This undisguised initial self-pity is exacerbated by his reading of *Frankenstein*, which imposes an external reading of his nature that he had never encountered before, surrounded as he was by friendly humans: "Dr. Frankenstein was a scientist who built a monster. I am (...) just such a monster. Something unnatural" (Piercy 50).

Shira's claim that "we are all unnatural now", substantiated by an enumeration of her many body enhancements, is not enough to convince Yod that he is just "a purer form of what we're all tending to" (Piercy 150), and it never entirely satisfies his feeling that "you belong to the earth and I don't" (Piercy 185). For Shira, his inorganic nature seems irrelevant. "We are," she tells him, "all made of the same molecules, the same set of compounds, the same elements", their differences being just in their arrangement: "you're using for a time some of the earth's elements and substances cooked from them. I am using others. The same copper and iron and cobalt and hydrogen" (Piercy 185). When she allows a closer intimacy with Yod[20] the decision comes from the realization that "it was time to treat him as a person, fully, because he was nothing less" (Piercy 174).

What develops between them, a match between his intense but strangely asexual need for intimacy[21] and her passion for the tenderness and ecstasy their encounters occasion, erases Yod's doubts about his right not only to full personhood and agency, but also to create his own goals like any human person. The simplicity of his dream – a family with Shira and her young son – fulfilling his intense need for loving attachments also signifies a circle of protection against the loneliness and desperation of the mechanical "monster" he had read about in Mary Shelley's book.

When that dream is denied and he cannot escape his programming, it is still with loving words that he says goodbye to those who had made him feel human: "you have been my friends, my life, my joy" (Piercy 416), he says in his last message, a final assertion that he had existed, his life had had meaning and that he had loved and been loved.

[20] The first intimate encounter happens in cyberspace (here known as the Base).
[21] As he attempts to describe what he feels, he explains that the pleasure is "entirely in the brain", not "an expression of any physiological need" but of a hunger for closeness (Piercy 191).

Coda: the question of Ava

Separated from the previous texts not only by time but by approach, *Ex_Machina* is not so much concerned with the ethics of the creation of artificial life, or with the possibilities of harmony across the organic/non-organic divide, as with the discussion of the contours of artificial consciousness and its *telos*.

The sleek aesthetics of the film ground it firmly in a recognizable present, creating for viewers a landscape that feeds on their imagination of what any youngish Silicon-Valley-Corporate-Tech-Wizard could presumably create for himself, ranging from controlled natural spaces for his own fruition, seemingly emptied of other living creatures, to a hi-tech house which resembles both a lab and a panopticon.

This setting serves the purpose of affiliating the experiment that the reclusive AI mastermind Nathan has staged for his young programmer in the discourse of today, a strategy that enhances the film's approach to the act of creating Ava and the models that came before her. Rather than a single act of defiance, of hubris, or of justifiable necessity, Ava was created because the possibility was there, a result of the natural process of scientific and technological advancement. This is clearly outlined by Nathan, who tells Caleb in the break between sessions five and six that: "the arrival of strong and artificial intelligence has been inevitable for decades", adding that "the variable was *when* not *if*" and that he does not see Ava "as a decision but an evolution." [22] This long evolutionary gaze, echoing Vinge's proposition of unstoppable exponential growth, and jokingly invoked by Charles Stross in *Accelerando* where he claims that the singularity stated: "on June 6, 1969, at eleven hundred hours eastern time when the first network control packets were sent from one data port of one IBM to another – the first ever internet connection" (172), says in other words that the future is here, has been here for a very long time and cannot be stopped. Nathan, the creator of Ava and of other previous models, has no other goal but to advance on what he has already achieved. Ava serves no other purpose and he does not relate his investigation with any external objective, be it commercial or personal, though the fact that his models are all female and that sexual attractiveness is built into their programming is certainly no coincidence. He also harbors no utopian views about the Kurzweilian prognostics of harmonious co-existence between

[22] All quotes from the film are transcribed by the author.

humanity and the sentient entities it will create: "one day," he tells Caleb, "the AIs are going to look back at us in the very same way we look at fossil skeletons on the plains of Africa… an upright ape living in the dust, with crude language and tools, all set for extinction." Under this gaze, neither Nathan nor Caleb really matter, their individuation and physical existence subsumed by the inevitable continuity of history, and neither does Ava, one of many, a mere step in the long process that will exist without her. This Ava "knows", as she also apparently knows that Caleb's presence and interviews are part of a modified form of the Turing Test that will decide not if he thinks that she is a machine passing as a human, since he knows her nature, but whether he would still believe that she has a conscience. For the viewer this proposition is temporarily accepted, apparently substantiated by Ava's vulnerability, when she traps Caleb into the maze of a logical proposition: "Do you have people who test you and might switch you off? Then why do I?"

A question that might suggest a desire for the kind of personhood the Cylons and Yod aspired to will eventually be seen as a mere strategy, linked to the real test set by Nathan – to evaluate if she is capable of persuading Caleb to help her escape her enclosure, suggesting that capacity to pursue a goal, however manipulatively, would be a test of independent consciousness. This test she passes, but the cruelty she uses in pursuit of her goal of escape exposes her failure in the real test that the androids discussed before they could pass: not just to deceive humans about their nature, or to make humans feel empathy and affection for their "unnatural selves", but to be able to have those feelings for humans in return.

When Ava runs away, condemning Caleb to a slow death, she is less human than the Cylons or Yod ever were, with her motivational priorities stuck on the base level of survival, opening another hypothesis we have found difficult to imagine – the prospect that intelligent entities might be shaped by motivations and needs of their own and not by the desire for human-like personhood. Science fiction has helped us contemplate the implications of our scientific and technological inventiveness. It has warned of dangers, stimulated the imagination, questioned boundaries, opened horizons, but until recently its engagement with autonomous alterities irreducible to any human-dependent paradigms seemed more hesitant. Unlike the naturalizing of the unnatural of the machine-to-human trope, films like *Ex_Machina*[23] are asking us to

[23] *Her* (2013) and *Under the Skin* (2013) are other examples.

confront the opaqueness of the unnatural as it is and not as we hoped it would be, an invitation that will only enrich our imaginative maps of possible futures.

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INTERVIEW

Fig. 6 - Cat. N. 113.4.78 (Star archetypal creator - candle light model 2.0.3.)

Interview with | Ken MacLeod

Interviewers | Ana Rita Martins & Igor Furão

❖❖

About the Author | Ken MacLeod was born in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland and lives in West Lothian. He has Honours and Masters degrees in biological subjects and worked for some years in the IT industry. Since 1997 he has been a full-time writer. He is the author of sixteen science fiction novels, from *The Star Fraction* (1995) to *The Corporation Wars: Insurgence* (Orbit, December 2016), and many articles and short stories. His work has been translated into many languages including German, Turkish, Spanish, Polish and Japanese. His novels and stories have received three BSFA awards and three Prometheus Awards, and several have been short-listed for the Clarke and Hugo Awards.

He is currently working on a space opera trilogy, *The Corporation Wars* (forthcoming). In 2009 he was Writer in Residence at the ESRC Genomics Policy and Research Forum at Edinburgh University, and in 2013 and 2014 was Writer in Residence at the MA Creative Writing course at Edinburgh Napier University. He is on the Advisory Board of the Edinburgh Science Festival.

Ken MacLeod's blog is **The Early Days of a Better Nation**: http://kenmacleod.blogspot.com

From computer programmer to Science Fiction writer. Did your background in science influence you? How did you get into Science Fiction writing?

Ken MacLeod (KM) | I and my science background – I think they are related in that I was one of those children or young people who started discovering Science Fiction (SF) at an early age and essentially I read nothing, no fiction, other than SF between the ages of 12 and 20 or 21. From SF I got the idea that being a scientist was the most important and exciting thing you could do and I made a good faith effort to become a scientist, but the drawback of that was that I was not very good at mathematics. So following the least mathematical kind of science at that time was zoology, and I studied that for my degree. Then I saw a postgraduate project in biomechanics and I had the delusional idea that I could do it, because I had so many classes on mechanics and physics, and so on. It took me a long time to get a research degree, and meantime I worked in short-term jobs, as many people did in fact after graduating or while finishing their post-graduate work.

Eventually I went into programming, which was at that time – in the mid-1980s – full of failed scientists of one kind or another; they were SF readers too. In the intervening years I had written a number of SF short stories, which I had sent in to the major – in fact the only – British SF magazines. The first one was *New World*s and later was *Interzone*. *Interzone* sent me increasingly polite rejection letters; the last one was for a story called "Nineteen Eighty-Nine" and the best thing about that story was the title because it told you everything you needed to know about the story. (*laughs*) In other words the events of [the real-world] 1989 happened in the world of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and they – *Interzone* – suggested it to be sent to a local fanzine. So I sent to it to a fanzine that was in Edinburgh and they rejected it, so my joke was that at this point I had no choice but to write a novel. By that point I started writing a novel and it was mainly to show myself and to show my friend Iain Banks that I actually could write a novel, because over the years – I have known Iain Banks since High School – I had told him about all those interesting novels I was going to write and at a certain point after Iain had written 5 or 6 novels, I learnt from a mutual friend that he was getting a bit tired of hearing about these novels I was going to write so I thought I would give it a go. I finished my MPhil thesis and was no longer attempting to be a scientist so I decided to write a book.

I started my novel *The Star Fraction* (1995), which I didn't have a plot for; I just had a starting situation and developed from there. Needless to say the first draft

was very satisfying to me and was enthused over by Iain encouraging me… and got nowhere with anybody else because it was full of stuff that didn't make any sense unless you knew what preoccupied me. Essentially the plot was all subtext; you had to read the book twice to get any idea what it was really all about. I got to the second draft and I sent it to Iain's agent Mic Cheetham, who wrote back with a little postcard and she said basically she liked the details but could not make sense of the story. That summer I happened to be back in London again and I met Mic and she took me out to lunch, and she said, "If it was a film, what would you have on the poster?" and I said, "It's about a man who gets killed but his gun goes on fighting," and she said, "Great! Now go write that book" (*laughs*) so then I did a third draft in which I filled in much more explicitly what was going on. I seem to recall that this involved quite a lot of crawling about in my carpet with cut up sheets of paper and notes (*laughs*) because at that time I did not have a very advanced word processor – I think that was actually one that Iain gave me after he had upgraded to a better computer. I was very grateful to Iain and when I sold my first book I was able to buy my own first computer.

Anyway Mic took that to an editor John Jarrold who is well known in British SF circles. He was a long-standing fan who had worked for many years as a librarian and then got a job with a publisher as a SF editor, which everyone was delighted with because if anyone deserved success, it was John. He read my novel and the next thing I knew, I was offered a two-book contract. That was great until I started thinking about the second book and I knew I had 18 months to write it. (*laughs*) I thought of it as a sequel and I had my first encounter with what became a very familiar experience of writing with just a sense of utter misery and despair when you think, "Nobody is possibly going to be interested in this stuff again" I think I phoned up Mic Cheetham and moaned to her and she reassured me; she was right because I was in that kind of feeling of being stuck and nothing is happening and so on… That's when the real work is going on in the back of your brain, in your subconscious – at least that is what I tell myself (*laughs*) – and the real stroke of what really made my second novel *The Stone Canal* (1996) was that I realized that there was a minor character in my first, in *The Star Fraction*, which is set in the year 2045, who is in his 90s and it struck me that this guy was the same age as me and that meant that my experience was in there to be plundered for his and I dug out my embarrassing student-years note books and diaries, and so on, and created the back story for this guy, Jonathan Wilde.

Have you lost your faith in science? Does it have to be questioned?

KM | Yeah, it depends on what you mean by faith in science. I think science and faith are two very different things because science is about asking. Every statement is open to attack and criticism whereas with faith there are no statements that can be questioned, so there is that emotional engagement. But in terms of confidence in the scientific method obviously it is still… I have that… The social significance of science always has to be questioned and I think SF plays a part in doing that as well as popularising science and there is a very fine line in a way between defending science and technology, which is something I kind of do independently and would do if even I wasn't a SF writer, and criticising it because there is such an immense amount of ignorance, which is excusable, and misinformation, which is not, out there and it is a constant struggle.

As a Science Fiction writer, how do you perceive the role of SF as a genre capable of drawing people's attention to society's problems? *Intrusion*, for instance, seems to draw attention to a potentially oppressive government, though it is very subtle.

KM | I think SF has an obvious role in [social criticism] but the extent to which it does that is something that again is open to question because quite a lot of SF is really affirmative of the social order, I think. Sometimes even when it is being quite radical from one point-of-view, you can see it can be blind to other issues. The obvious example is as we look back to Golden Age SF we see instances of – perhaps unconscious or unwitting but certainly taken for granted – sexism. Further back you get pretty blatant racism, which you find not just in SF, but also in all popular literature of imperialist countries, and so on.

I started writing my first novels for what would later be *The Fall Revolution* books (1995-1999) where I tried to get my head around, look at and interrogate from different angles if you like the fall of socialism in Europe, the fall of the Left in the West and the disintegration of the Left. I did that in a form of partly satirical exaggeration and partly by pushing certain – what seemed to be quite fruitful – metaphors or possible honest potential insights like part of the hidden [agenda of the book] – it is not hidden, actually, it is quite overt when you see it. In *The Star Fraction*, my first novel, there is a suggestion that there is some similarity between the problems of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the problems of centralised planning

and that came out of a TV program on planning [probably "The Engineers' Plot", Adam Curtis, BBC 1992], which showed the actual offices in the Soviet Union of Gosplan, the planning ministry, and there were people explaining how it had all worked. Basically there was a big office building and lots and lots of paper flows into it and lots and lots of paper flows out from it and the people working in this ministry, they knew that not all or in fact the great majority of the information coming in to them was unreliable and the great majority of the information sent out by them was not going to be acted on, or at least a significant part. The thing is they did not know which part so they were radically ignorant about what was going on and this reminded me so much of the classic John Searle thought-experiment of the Chinese room where he tries to establish, perhaps not quite the impossibility of strong AI, but an idea that there is some incoherence in the idea of a conscious AI by imagining a room where somebody who is unable to understand or speak Chinese but has all these dictionaries of Chinese language and grammars and so on, and people are shoving questions under the door written in Chinese and the person in the room is able to – by symbolic manipulation – figure out an answer and shove it out. I think this still is one of the great philosophical thought-experiments, which is still being argued, and that sort of thing struck me as a really intriguing line of thought that somebody cleverer than me should take up. (*laughs*)

Some of your novels, like *The Night Sessions* (2008), deal with the theme of religion: different religions, faiths, but also the rejection and/or acceptance of a heavenly entity (or of God). Given the crossroads that many of your characters have to face, would you say that we are facing a faith crisis?

KM | I think everyone at a certain point – at various points in fact – has to make existential decisions and it is possible that our tools – mental tools – for making existential decisions have become very damaged in different ways. First of all, by the decline of the traditional religions, which I think science will eat in the end, any religion that makes factual claims is going to be challenged by science. So you will still have religions that are in a sense a philosophy and a way of life, like Buddhism, and so on, which are not really religions in the same sense as Christianity and Islam. But these – the monotheistic, dogmatic scripture-based religions of the book and all other theoretical progeny, like Mormonism – are in the long run doomed by science.

The other thing that has created kind of a faith crisis, or potentially could do it, is there has been a real decline in people's sense of being part of a historical process and this is kind of celebrated in postmodernism with the idea of the collapse of the grand narrative.

The end of history…

KM | Yes, as we are seeing now, it is actually quite a dangerous place to be because this vacuum or gap is being filled by all kinds of havoc, ideological extremisms.

Connected to this idea, does religion play an important role in your writing? If you think about some of Heinlein's work, like *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), and in *The Night Sessions* religion is at the centre of the narrative so do you think that, unlike what is popularly held, the two – SF and religion – may have more in common? Do you try explicitly to show that link in your novels or do you just describe some aspects of political parties and let the reader figure out if there is a link or not?

KM | In the case of religion, I have a personal backstory with that as I grew up in a very fundamentalist sect of Protestantism and there was Creationism and all the rest of it so I went through a lot of intellectual, emotional struggles in my teens – a not unusual story. I have quite a bit of respect in some ways for certain aspects of that kind of strongly held belief, although I cannot share it. Likewise, I have a lot of respect for a different kind of religion, the more liberal versions that you get and the more mainstream churches, but again I cannot share it. I am always very friendly with people like, say Paul Cornell and his wife (she is a minister), who are liberal Christians, and Francis Spufford, another good example of a very broadminded and liberal and yet very – in many ways – very orthodox Christian and I can see where these people are coming from and I literally have no quarrel with them. What I do have a quarrel with is with the people who trample all over science or over secular ethics. The ethics – what in other European languages are called profane or mundane – I think that all our politics have to be profane, mundane, because otherwise there is only room for irreconcilable conflicts. So you have to justify things in terms that are in principle open to anybody to agree or disagree with rather than a special revelation to one person or to one church or religion.

Actually in my first novel (*The Star Fraction*, 1995) there is a guy growing up in a fundamentalist community, which I had great fun describing; there is *The Night*

Sessions and there are one or two short stories, like "A Case of Consilience", which is a riff on James Blish's classic novel *A Case of Conscience* (1958) about a missionary on an alien world, and another story with the provocative title "Jesus Christ, Reanimator" (2007), which imagines Jesus actually physically coming back out of the sky and what a puzzle he would be, because he comes out of the sky above Megiddo, Israel, and is escorted back down by jets. (*laughs*)

That is actually, strangely enough, the story I have written that is most respectful of religion and of Jesus, but in the case of *The Night Sessions* it came out of a moment of inspiration when I happened to see on television a U2 video – the one where they are standing at an airport and an airliner comes in above them – and I remarked to my wife that they looked like Free Church [of Scotland] elders, the band with their black hats and their long black coats and then I thought "ah-ah" – you think of airports and terrorism and "ah, Presbyterian terrorists!" – How would that come about? (*laughs*) Within a few minutes I had a lot to think about and that is where the story came from. Of course, I had grown up with these tales of Presbyterian martyrs in Scotland so I had quite a bit of background to draw on.

Scotland also plays a role in your novels. To what extent does your Scottish background help shape the themes and motifs that you approach in your writing?

KM | Almost all the places referred to in my novels that are set on Earth are real places where I have been, whether that is New Zealand or London or Scotland and some of the parts of Scotland described are ones I am very familiar with. I take this to quite ridiculous lengths like there is a house in *Intrusion*, which is the actual house where I grew up in when I was a child.

In my novella *The Human Front* (2001), the character also starts in that same village and it is a kind of inversion of my own past, my father was a minister, not a doctor, and so on. Obviously the [industrial town of] Greenock he goes to when he is 10 is kind of like the Greenock I went to when I was 10, but it is a somewhat different history, but the feeling of noise, of strong air pollution, the shock of finding people who are not physically healthy was something that was very real to me, because when I was growing up on the island [of Lewis], lots of people were not exactly poor, but they were not necessarily well-off so we had large families and children who were always wearing ill-fitting clothes that were passed down from older siblings, but

everyone was well-fed. Even as late as 1965 in as a rich a country as Britain you could come to an industrial town and find older generations of people who had had rickets in childhood.

To finish, we have a very cliché question for your Portuguese fans, but since your work is not translated into Portuguese, is there any chance your books will be translated in the near future?

KM | I don't know, that is entirely up to Portuguese publishers. I would love for it to happen, obviously, but I don't know… I just want to wind back very quickly to revisit the question about places and Scottish landscapes, which are very, very important to me and I do put them in. I am not politically a nationalist but that does not mean I do not love the place…

What is there not to love? In your books you have this feeling that culturally there is something that links that SF to Scotland. There is a physicality, which I do not find in many SF novels so I enjoy that aspect of your books.

KM | I can send you links to a couple of articles[1] I wrote specifically about these aspects of Scottish literature.

That would be great. Thank you for taking the time to grant us this interview.

[1] See: MacLeod, Ken. "The Future Will Happen Here Too." *The Bottle Imp*. Issue 8, 2010. http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue8/MacLeod.pdf
---. "As if You Lived in the Near Future of an Undecided Nation." *The Bottle Imp*. Issue 18, 2015. http://asls.arts.gla.ac.uk/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue18/MacLeod.pdf

Fig. 7A - cat. n. 4.77.13 (Life iniciation vessel - 4234 millions of years version)

BOOK REVIEW | How Literary Worlds Are Shaped. A Comparative Poetics of Literary Imagination

BY | Jyrki Korpua

Petterson, Bo. *How Literary Worlds Are Shaped. A Comparative Poetics of Literary Imagination*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter GmbH, 2016. ISBN: 978-3-11-048347-5

Professor Bo Petterson (University of Helsinki, Finland) is a respected scholar of literature who in his line of work has been interested in the logics of science fiction as a genre. His previous research includes studies about the works of writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Stanisław Lem, Edgar Allan Poe, and H. G. Wells. This was one of the reasons why I was enthusiastic about Professor Petterson's recent study on literary worldbuilding.

Professor Petterson's study is highly interesting for researchers of speculative fiction or literary genres in general. However, the book does not concentrate on genre logics. Professor Petterson comments this by saying that, "[a]s for genres, I do not

spend much time sorting out their features as such --" (5). The book is published in the De Gruyter's Narratologia-series, which is dedicated to high standard contributions in the field of narrative theory, so it is obvious that the study itself focuses on narrative strategies and reconstructions of historical literary worldmaking. Still, Professor Petterson's own interest in science fiction becomes evident from early on. In the "Introduction", Petterson starts by quoting American science fiction author Fredric Brown on how easy it is for us to imagine "ghosts, gods and devils"(1). In the book, examples from works of science fiction, fantasy and speculative fiction are diverse. Authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, Arthur C. Clarke, Lewis Carroll, Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley, Terry Pratchett, and of course Wells, Vonnegut, Lem and Poe are either mentioned or closely analysed. This is of course obligatory for a study focusing on literary worldbuilding. Many theorists of fantastic worldbuilding are also commented on and introduced. On this point it is clear that the book has taken many years to be completed. For example, such a significant contemporary study as Mark J. P. Wolf's *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (2012) is only once shortly referenced.

Circa 270 pages of comparative literary study is divided into nine chapters, which can be read as three separate sections that Professor Petterson names *general*, *specific*, and *world-oriented* (7). The first is dedicated to realistic and fantastic literary imagination and to the reliability of literary representations. This section can be read along with Professor Petterson's previous studies on considerably discussed, but still ponderable, concepts of *mimesis* and *representation*. The second section focuses on how literary worlds are shaped by modes and themes and on the actual process of literary worldbuilding. Finally, the third section focuses on the relationship between literary worlds and our (physical) reality, and discusses important questions as, for example, "why literature matters?". The book gives many possible answers to this question, but the most important of these is that literature matters, because "it provides a sense of wonder and it does so in manifold ways" (Petterson 242). We, as human beings, pursue this sense of wonder and we almost want to be intoxicated by fiction. However, Professor Petterson does not conclude his study there. In the end, he also gives the reader "Ten reasons to Study and Teach literary worlds" (Petterson 253–266). This final chapter of the book gives us a good sense of why the poetics of literary imagination matter.

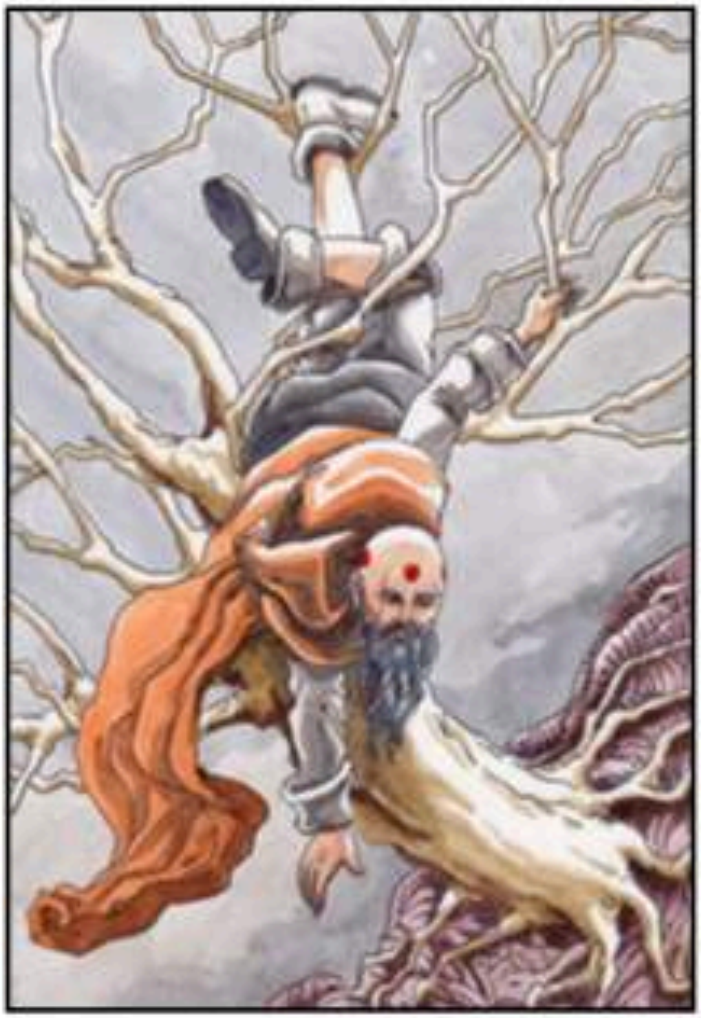
The most important aspect in this work is that it offers an extensive comparative analysis of a multi-layered and complex content from a multicultural point-of-view. Professor Petterson's study includes a wide variety of examples from "canonical" Western sources, but also examples from ancient and non-Western literatures. As such, it is perhaps the first study to present such a wide-ranging account on the literary worldbuilding and it has the feeling of "a life's work" embedded in it.

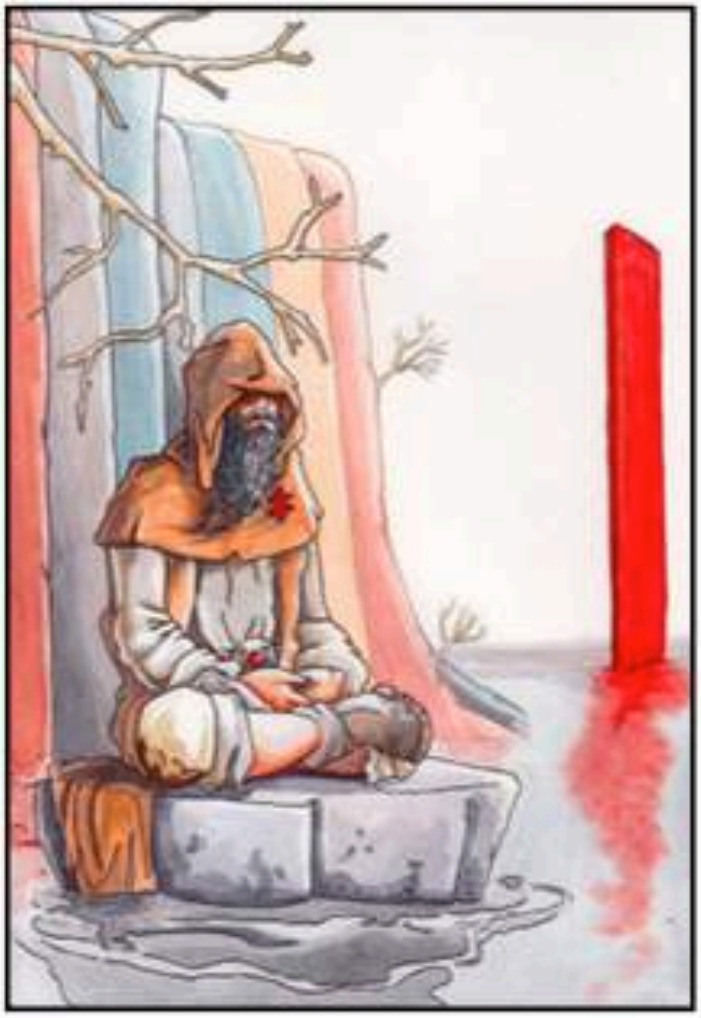
CONCERNING THE PILGRIMAGE OF BROTHER IANUARIUS

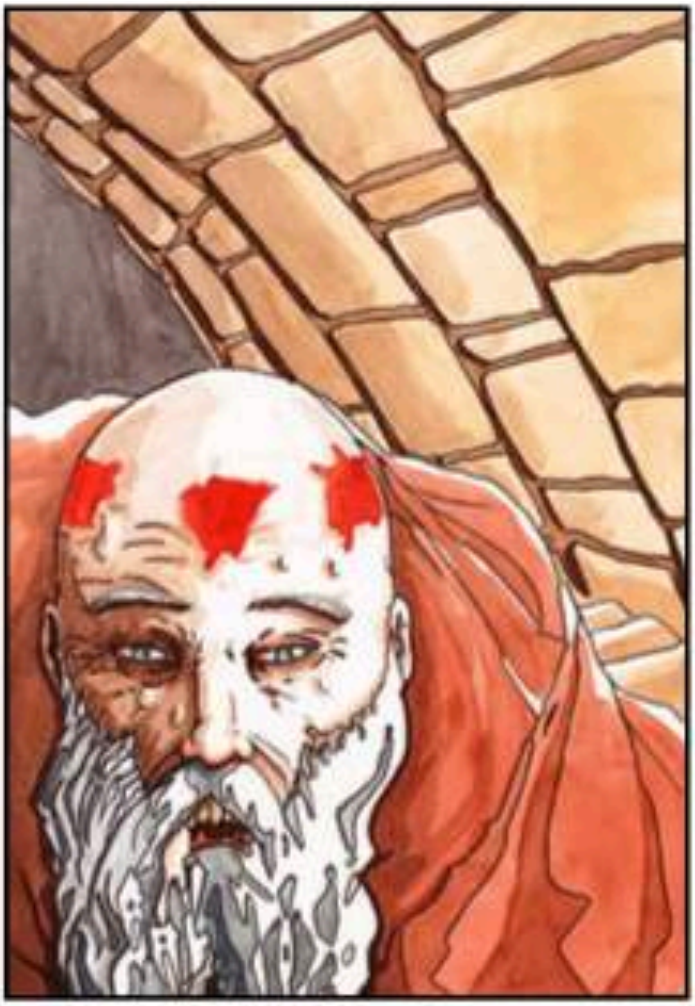
BY | MIGUEL SANTOS

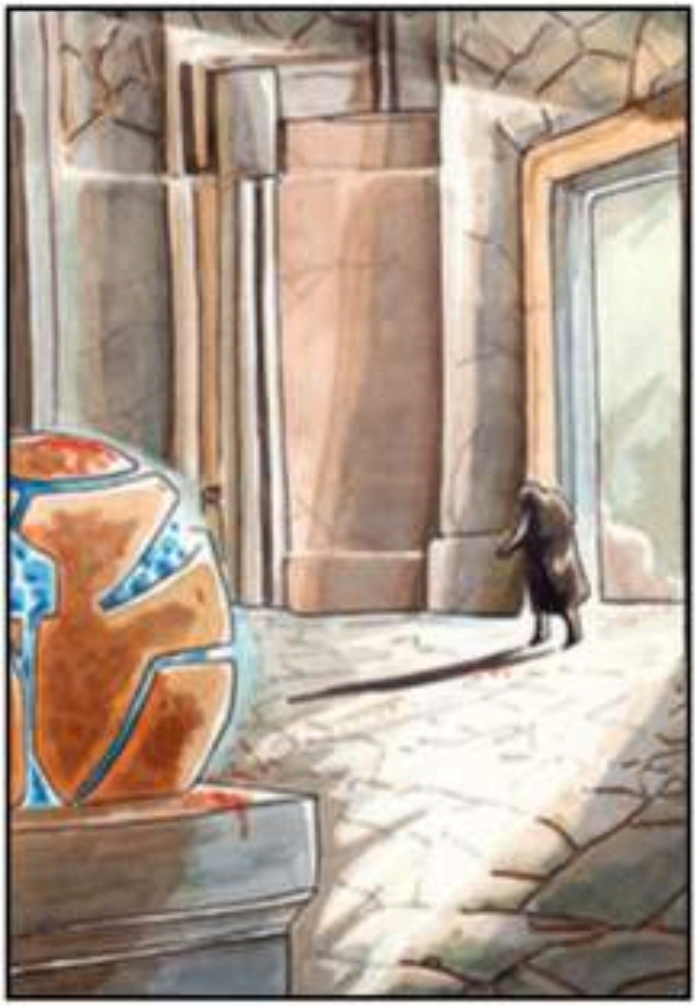
Concerning the pilgrimage of Brother Ianuarius

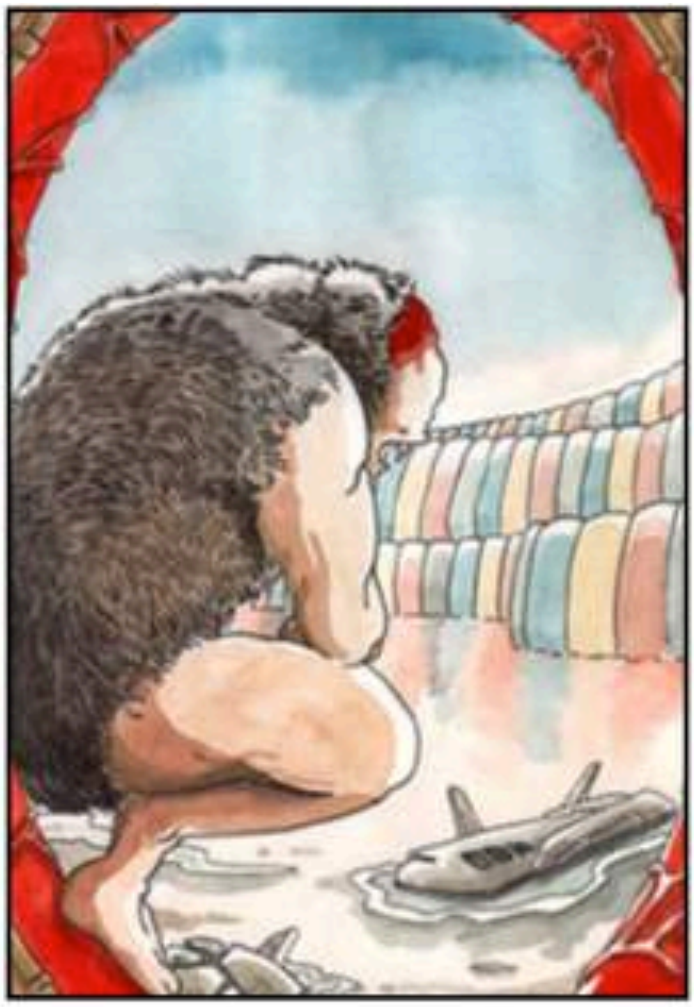
By Miguel Santos











Finis

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Fig. 8 - Cat. N. 77091.45 (Enlarging multidimensional space hole)

Messengers from the Stars: On Science Fiction and Fantasy

No. 2- 2017

Contributor | Frances Pheasant-Kelly Fran is MA Film Studies Course Leader and Reader in Screen Studies at the University of Wolverhampton, UK. Her research spans fantasy, science fiction, terrorism, space, science and abjection in film and television. She is the author of numerous publications including two monographs, *Abject Spaces in American Cinema: Institutions, Identity and Psychoanalysis in Film* (IB Tauris, 2013) and *Fantasy Film Post 9/11* (Palgrave, 2013), and the co-editor of *Spaces of the Cinematic Home: Behind the Screen Door* (Routledge, 2015).
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Contributor | Gabriela Steinke is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Wolverhampton, England. She studied English and German at the University of Bielefeld, Germany, and taught German Language and Literature for many years in Ireland and England. She has published on German and Austrian children's literature

and German women writers and more recently on British children's literature and speculative fiction.

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Contributor | Jyrki Korpua (PhD, Literary studies) is a researcher at the University of Oulu, Finland. Korpua acts as Chair of The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research and as an Editor-in-chief for *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*. In 2015, Korpua published his doctoral dissertation in J. R. R. Tolkien's literary worldbuilding (*Mythopoetics of J. R. R. Tolkien's Legendarium*, University of Oulu Press) and in 2016 a study on *The Bible and Literature* (*Alussa oli Sana - Raamattu ja kirjallisuus*, Avain). Korpua's main research interests focus on Speculative Fiction, Literary History, Utopia and Dystopia Literature, *The Bible* and Plato's *Dialogues*.

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Contributor | Noel Brown is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at Liverpool Hope University; author of *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter* (I.B. Tauris, 2012), *British Children's Cinema: From The Thief of Bagdad to Wallace and Gromit* (I.B. Tauris, 2016), *The Children's Film* (Columbia UP, forthcoming), and *Contemporary Hollywood Animation* (EUP, forthcoming); co-editor of *Family Films in Global Cinema* (I.B. Tauris, 2015) and *Toy Story: Animation - Key Films* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming).

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Contributor | Robert Geal is a Lecturer in Film and Television Studies at the University of Wolverhampton. He is currently revising final changes for his PhD, which is an analysis of writing formations in Shakespearean films.
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Contributor | Rodrigo Tavarela Peixoto (Lisbon 1974) is a Portuguese photographer, exhibiting regularly since 1999, the year he finished his studies in Ar. Co. In this same year he received a FLAD scholarship that allowed him to continue his studies at SVA, New York. In 2010 he completed the Master of Fine Arts at ESAD.CR. He held the course of Photography PGCCA (1st Edition) and is currently undertaking a PhD in Communication Studies with Fundação FCT scholarship. Since 2007, he teaches several courses in Photography, Digital Animation and Film Degrees at Universidade Lusófona. In 2016 he founded "HÉLICE - Fotógrafos que usam a fotografia". His works are present in some of the most important Portuguese collections, as PLMJ collection, BES Art, and EDP Foundation.
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https://ulusofona.academia.edu/RodrigoPeixoto

Contributor | Teresa Botelho has a Ph.D. from Cambridge University and is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Nova University of Lisbon, where she teaches American Studies. She has published extensively on African American, and Asian American culture and literature, theatre and drama. Her current interests include technological utopias/dystopias and the post-human, science fiction, post-black literature, identity theory in its intersections with utopia, visual culture and cinema, the collaboration between sciences and literature, especially in drama, and literary and visual representations of 9/11.
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