

ContactZone

Rivista dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della fantascienza e del fantastico

Mutazioni e metamorfosi: linguaggi e modelli narrativi della fantascienza Prospettive critiche in Italia



(2020) Vol. N° 1 (marzo) – ISSN 2723-8881

PAOLO 
LOFFREDO



ContactZone

n. 1 (marzo) 2020

ContactZone

*An International Peer-Reviewed
E-Journal*

CHIEF EDITOR

Oriana Palusci

aisff.starfiction@gmail.com

ADVISORY BOARD

Esterino Adami,

University of Turin, Italy

Silvia Albertazzi,

University of Bologna, Italy

Giuseppe Balirano,

University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy

Maria Teresa Chialant,

University of Salerno, Italy

Bianca Del Villano,

University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy

Vita Fortunati,

University of Bologna, Italy

Paola Gorla,

University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy

Giulia Iannuzzi,

University of Trieste, Italy

Carlo Pagetti,

University of Milan, Italy

Patrick Parrinder,

University of Reading, UK

Salvatore Proietti,

University of Calabria, Italy

Eric S. Rabkin,

University of Michigan, USA

Umberto Rossi,

Independent Scholar

Darko Suvin,

McGill University, Canada

Nicoletta Vallorani,

University of Milan, Italy

COPY EDITOR

Emilio Amideo eamideo@unior.it

Antonio Fruttaldo afruttaldo@unior.it

Federico Pio Gentile fpgentile@unior.it

PUBLISHER

Paolo Loffredo Editore srl

via Ugo Palermo 6

80128 Napoli - Italy

P.IVA 05014040876

R.E.A. NA 931959

+39 3248382362

www.loffredoeditore.com/it/

paololoffredoeditore@gmail.com

GRAPHIC LAYOUT

Nexus Advanced Technologies, Milano

www.nexusat.it/digital-editing

ContactZone is an international double-blind peer-reviewed e-journal which publishes scholarly work on Science Fiction and the Fantastic connecting different languages, non-mimetic genres, and fields of study. It is the journal of the Italian Association for the Study of Science Fiction and the Fantastic. The areas of research range from literature to cinema, from media to comics and video games touching a wide spectrum of critical approaches, which includes literary criticism, ecocriticism, film studies, gender studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, linguistics, translation studies, critical race studies, queer studies. The journal welcomes papers from scholars, authors, teachers, and librarians supporting an innovative insight into texts written in English, but also in other languages, in order to promote a lively dialogue among critics and other specialists on an international level. *ContactZone* will focus on themes and topics dealing with the representation of imaginative and/or alternative worlds in the realms of science fiction and the fantastic.

Director: Luca Sarti

Authorisation n. 60 issued by the Court of Naples on 16/04/2019

INDICE

- 4 Introduzione
 Oriana Palusci
- 7 “I experience past and future all at once”: storicità ed etica degli universi
 alternativi
 Carlo Pagetti
- 20 H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*: una narrazione a più voci
 Maria Teresa Chialant
- 30 “One mystical opalescent void”: suggestioni poesche in *At the Mountains of
 Madness* di H. P. Lovecraft
 Francesco Marroni
- 39 Cantata per vinile e nastro magnetico: Philip K. Dick e la riproduzione del
 suono
 Umberto Rossi
- 49 SF delle donne e cyborg nel terzo millennio in America
 Salvatore Proietti
- 58 Lo spazio che non c'è: nuove mappe per la città delle donne
 Nicoletta Vallorani
- 68 Ci sono mondi in cui tutto è luminoso. La narrativa di Maggie Gee nella
 tradizione politica della fantascienza inglese
 Domenico Gallo
- 77 Il traduttore e la signora Brown: Riccardo Valla traduttore e corrispondente
 di Ursula K. Le Guin
 Giulia Iannuzzi
- 89 Leclissi dello spazio profondo: 90 anni di fantascienza a fumetti
 Daniele Barbieri
- 97 Antichi futuri, mondi post-apocalittici e alchimie testuali nel *graphic novel*
 Rāmāyan 3392 a.d.
 Esterino Adami
- 106 Verso un uomo nuovo: il *graphic novel* della mutazione. I casi di *Akira*, *Ronin*,
 Aâma, *Golem*
 Matteo Rima
- 117 Oltre il déjà vu: fantascienza, inquinamento cognitivo e società mediatizzate
 Elena Lamberti
- 124 Il Centro di studi sull'Utopia di Bologna: presentazione e storia
 Vita Fortunati
- 131 Mars in the Title
 Eric S. Rabkin and Rainer Hilscher
- 148 Autori/Autrici

Dal 16 al 18 novembre 2017 si è tenuto a Napoli il Convegno intitolato “Mutazioni e Metamorfosi: linguaggi e modelli narrativi della fantascienza. Prospettive critiche in Italia” in onore di Carlo Pagetti, che va considerato il decano degli studi critici sulla fantascienza in Italia. Il Convegno, che si è svolto presso la splendida Sala del Capitolo del Complesso di San Domenico Maggiore, gentilmente concesso dall’Assessorato alla Cultura e al Turismo del Comune di Napoli, è stato organizzato da Paola Gorla e Oriana Palusci come iniziativa del Dipartimento di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Comparati dell’Università degli Studi di Napoli ‘L’Orientale’ ed ad esso hanno dato la loro adesione, a ribadire l’importanza di un dialogo con il territorio, la Scuola italiana di Comix di Napoli e il Museo Mann, grazie alla collaborazione di Mario Punzo, direttore del Comix e di Paolo Giulierini, direttore del Mann. I pannelli della Mostra “Cyborg Invasion”, che rivisitano le statue classiche del Mann con i linguaggi della fantascienza e del fumetto, sono stati allestiti nella sede del Convegno.

L’intenzione del Convegno è stata quella di chiamare a raccolta gli studiosi italiani che nelle varie discipline e specializzazioni, ma soprattutto in ambito letterario, si sono occupati di fantascienza. Anche se la letteratura e la critica letteraria sono al centro dei nostri interessi, abbiamo pensato di creare uno spazio specifico per le arti visive e i fumetti. Da tempo la fantascienza non copre più solo una vasta area della letteratura, ma, nelle sue varie ramificazioni, ha invaso il territorio del cinema, della televisione seriale, dei *graphic novels* e della pubblicità. Questo fenomeno di diffusione ha riguardato soprattutto la cultura americana, e ha avuto ricadute significative in molti altri paesi, tra cui l’Italia.

Durante il Convegno di Napoli, l’uso della lingua italiana è stato funzionale a un progetto che voleva mettere assieme studiosi italiani appartenenti a varie discipline e a vari contesti culturali. Il passo successivo è stato quello di scegliere l’italiano nella preparazione del primo numero di *ContactZone*, in cui sono confluiti molti degli interventi presentati a Napoli. In seguito, *ContactZone*, la rivista dell’Associazione italiana per lo studio della fantascienza e del fantastico (Aisff), nata nell’aprile del 2018, impiegherà l’inglese come lingua franca muovendosi in un contesto internazionale.

In Italia la fantascienza ha sempre avuto vita difficile e riconoscimenti incerti, soprattutto quando la si è voluta studiare a livello narrativo. Anche il contributo risalente agli anni ’60 di nomi importanti – Sergio Solmi, Umberto Eco – ha dato esiti piuttosto limitati. I tempi stanno cambiando. Permangono difficoltà e resistenze, perché, a parte il Centro di Ricerca sull’Utopia di Bologna, rappresentato a Napoli dalla sua fondatrice Vita Fortunati, non sono mai esistite autentiche iniziative scientifiche con il corredo di biblioteche specializzate, insegnamenti uni-

versitari, riviste di critica. Va ricordato, comunque, il lavoro del collettivo dell'*Ambigua Utopia*, guidato da Antonio Caronia (1977-1982) e il costante impegno accademico di Carlo Pagetti confluito, tra l'altro, nei fascicoli della rivista *La Città e le Stelle. Studi e ricerche sulla fantascienza* (1982-1987). Oggi la situazione è migliorata grazie all'attività di due riviste periodiche, *If*, diretta da Carlo Bordoni, un altro fondatore degli studi SF nel nostro paese, e *Anarres. Rivista di Studi sulla Science Fiction*, diretta da Salvatore Proietti.

Ho finora parlato della fantascienza, come se questo termine avesse un significato univoco, sempre uguale nel tempo. Naturalmente non è così, e affrontare nel 2020 un discorso sulla fantascienza vuol dire anche interrogarsi sulle strutture narrative, le incursioni, le contaminazioni di un genere, che ha rafforzato la sua contiguità con l'utopia e la distopia, il fantastico, il gotico, l'horror, e poi anche con la divulgazione scientifica, il dibattito ecologico, le proiezioni socio-politiche.

Il titolo *ContactZone*, scelto per la rivista, rinvia sia alle problematiche degli studi antropologici sulle modalità del rapporto tra culture diverse, sia a quello spazio fantascientifico cruciale in cui gli esseri umani entrano in diretto contatto con le creature aliene. Quello che oggi è ormai evidente rispetto al passato è che i confini sono porosi e arbitrari anche in ambito letterario. Quanto più la letteratura fantascientifica – di qualunque 'cosa' si tratti – rivendica la dignità dei suoi statuti e delle sue proiezioni immaginative, tanto più essa richiede un approccio critico serio e rigoroso. In questa prospettiva, fondamentale è stata l'esperienza del primo Convegno internazionale sulla fantascienza svolto nell'ottobre del 1978 presso l'Università di Palermo, per iniziativa della cattedra di Estetica, tenuta da Luigi Russo, in cui il genere veniva inteso come fenomeno culturale e letterario, con caratteristiche formali, linguaggi, temi, degni di un serio approfondimento critico. Quel Convegno non sarebbe stato possibile senza la presenza di illustri studiosi stranieri, che facevano capo alla rivista *Science-Fiction Studies* (Darko Suvin, Marc Angenot e Peter Fitting), che partecipavano al dibattito più avanzato sul postmoderno (Jean Baudrillard, Frederic Jameson, Michel Maffesoli), o che collegavano riflessione critica e ispirazione creativa (Brian Aldiss). La rappresentanza italiana, che pure abbracciava un ampio arco disciplinare, pur privilegiando il campo dell'estetica (Gillo Dorfles, Mario Perniola, Ugo Volli), era solo una componente minoritaria, tanto è vero che il discorso letterario veniva approfondito solo in alcuni casi isolati (Carlo Pagetti e Riccardo Valla). Gli Atti del Convegno di Palermo, pubblicati parzialmente da Feltrinelli due anni dopo a cura di Luigi Russo con il titolo *La fantascienza e la critica*, avrebbero confermato l'esigenza di sviluppare una critica italiana, in grado di offrire un efficace contributo al dibattito internazionale, così da ribadire il carattere interdisciplinare degli studi fantascientifici, e valorizzare sia la sua componente squisitamente letteraria, sia l'impatto sempre più massiccio della *science-fiction* sul cinema, sulle serie televisive, sui *comics*. Sempre nel 1980, attraverso una serie di Convegni, vengono poste le basi del già citato Centro di Studi sull'Utopia di Bologna. Nel 1985 viene pubblicato in Italia *Metamorfosi della fantascienza* di Darko Suvin, risalente al 1979, che è il testo fondativo della critica contemporanea sulla fantascienza e l'utopia. Nel 1990 il Convegno Internazionale "Cronache del futuro. Fantascienza e immaginario scientifico nel romanzo inglese contemporaneo" viene organizzato presso l'Università degli Studi di Torino, a conferma del ruolo che Torino ha avuto nello sviluppo di una via italiana alla critica sulla fantascienza e sull'utopia, grazie a Ruggero Bianchi, Riccardo Valla e ad altri studiosi tra cui lo stesso Pagetti.

Occorre un salto di quasi tre decenni per arrivare al Convegno di Napoli e agli ulteriori passaggi che hanno portato alla nascita dell'Aisff e di *ContactZone*.

Non intendo certo suggerire una prospettiva autarchica nello studio della fantascienza. I contatti con studiosi di portata internazionale come Darko Suvin (che da tempo vive in Italia), Patrick Parrinder, Eric S. Rabkin, Tom Moylan e Marleen S. Barr sono essenziali per approfondire il discorso critico. Personalmente ricordo di aver accompagnato a Bologna, nel 1989, Judith Merril, la promotrice di quella che allora era la Spaced-Out Library di Toronto, oggi Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation & Fantasy, situata in una sede della Toronto Public Library, per presentare *Il richiamo e altri racconti*, appena apparso nella collana della Tartaruga Blu di Milano, da me diretta, a conferma che nel frattempo le scrittrici di SF avevano cominciato a occupare uno spazio preciso nell'immaginario scientifico.

Per quanto riguarda il primo numero di *ContactZone*, il titolo "Mutazioni e Metamorfosi: linguaggi e modelli narrativi della fantascienza. Prospettive critiche in Italia" è lo stesso del Convegno di Napoli del 2017. Gli articoli toccano le narrazioni dell'immaginario scientifico e il loro rapporto con il tempo storico (Pagetti), l'invasione dello spazio culturale da parte della fantascienza (Lamberti), la forza di una tradizione letteraria che passa attraverso il gotico americano (Marroni) e il dibattito novecentesco sull'utopia (Chialant). Non potevano mancare interventi su P.K. Dick, l'autore più significativo degli ultimi decenni del Novecento (Rossi) e sulla fantascienza femminile (Proietti, Vallorani, Gallo). Tra le scrittrici di fantascienza, spicca il nome di Ursula K. Le Guin, indagata per il suo legame con l'editoria italiana tramite gli scambi epistolari con Valla (Iannuzzi). La cultura italiana ha un ruolo non secondario nello sviluppo del graphic novel (Barbieri, Rima), che a sua volta trova nuovo alimento fuori dai consueti percorsi occidentali (Adami). Gli ultimi due interventi intendono valorizzare da una parte l'esperienza della già citata istituzione accademica bolognese (Fortunati), dall'altra, a confermare la collocazione internazionale della rivista, l'analisi quantitativa e statistica applicata da Rabkin e Hilscher all'uso del termine 'Marte' nei titoli delle opere di fantascienza.

“I experience past and future all at once”: storicità ed etica degli universi alternativi

Carlo Pagetti
DOI: 10.26379/1381

Abstract

SF explores History in terms of alternative realities and future societies. The present is just a time zone suspended between an uncertain past and an imaginary future. Human beings, clones, androids, aliens belong to the same narrative spectrum as it happens in XXI century British novels (Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Ian McEwen *Machines Like Me*). The subjective experience of an active narrator, resembling H.G. Wells' Time Traveller, becomes a crucial device leading the readers towards a problematic unknown. Such a voice reclaims the urgency to tell its personal story. *Telling* is the relevant word in Ursula K. Le Gui's novel *The Telling*. Yet, the manifold facets of the future cannot obliterate a political and ethical awareness of the past. In P.K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and in Philip Roth's *Plot Against America* – and before in Asimov's prophetic short story *Nightfall* – the memory of the genocide of the Jews is a powerful reminder that an evolutionary or alternative idea of history has no ethical, ultimately literary substance if its narration does not face the dark shadows of our shared past.

H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*: una narrazione a più voci

Maria Teresa Chialant

DOI: 10.26379/1382

Abstract

A Modern Utopia (1905), one of Wells's favourite books, was his first approach to the dialogue form that he acknowledged as his debt to Plato's *Republic*. This work, in the form of a travelogue, is shaped as a hybrid between a philosophical discussion and an imaginative narrative, and is peculiar at two distinct, interrelated levels: it has a complex structure made of two paratexts – "A Note to the Reader" and an Appendix, "Scepticism of the Instrument" –, eleven chapters and an introduction entitled "The Owner of the Voice" (who is both the narrator, one of the two characters of the novel, and Wells's probable *alter ego*); it questions the very Utopian genre from the inside, as the author declared he had conceived it on "sound pragmatic lines" and from a skeptical outlook. Wells prospects, here, a new kind of Utopia, which is kinetic, does not pretend to be an alternative perfect world, and it is not situated in an enclosed space, but is a World State. The present article argues that the most original aspect of this book is the presence of a plurality of voices: the narrator, his double (his "Utopian self"), the botanist (who embodies the Owner of the Voice's opposite), and *the intrusive chairman* (the author himself). This narrative feature contributes to the dialogic character of *A Modern Utopia*, which has been aptly defined as "a self-conscious rewriting of the utopias of the past".

“One mystical opalescent void”: suggestioni poesche in *At the Mountains of Madness* di H. P. Lovecraft

Francesco Marroni

DOI: 10.26379/1383

Abstract

H. P. Lovecraft wrote *At the Mountain of Madness* with the obvious intent of defining his genealogical ties with Poe through a narrative which establishes both a continuity and a discontinuity with his favourite author. In this sense, the Poe of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* becomes the point of departure for a discourse which Lovecraft develops within a twentieth-century literary context. As my analysis illustrates, *Gordon Pym* and *At the Mountains of Madness* share a common scientific and cultural premise that concerns not so much the geographical exploration of the Antarctic but the descent into its depths in the search for a response to the Hollow Earth theory. In this sense, it would not be incorrect to affirm that, beneath the linguistic surface of *At the Mountains of Madness*, it is possible to recognise both the epistemological and intertextual suggestions of *Gordon Pym* as well as the imaginary of the urban abysmal valence of “The Man of the Crowd”. Thus, Lovecraft’s blasphemous and repugnant city also owes much to Poe’s macrotext in terms of its diegetic circularity since the beginning and the end of the story are signalled by the same assertion concerning the unspeakable: the linguistic untranslatableness of mystery in Lovecraft’s novel is a confirmation of the image of a writer who completely feels the terror and anguish of the twentieth century.

Cantata per vinile e nastro magnetico: Philip K. Dick e la riproduzione del suono

Umberto Rossi

DOI: 10.26379/1384

Abstract

It is quite interesting that Philip K. Dick, before becoming a professional writer of science-fiction, worked as a sales clerk in a record shop in Berkeley, an experience that played a fundamental role in the making of his literary imagination and his perception of the US society. The impact of recorded music (and sound in general) on Dick's life also bears relation to his perception of postmodern or late-modern culture and society in general, well beyond the borders of his own state and country. The reproduction of sound is of course an example of that binary opposition original vs. copy (or authentic vs. inauthentic) which seems to structure much of the PKD world(s). But that opposition may be more a form of dialectics than a dichotomy between irreconcilable opposites.

Therefore Dick's experience as a record salesman made him aware of the commodification of music (and sound), of how a form of art (regardless of its being low- or highbrow) was being turned into marketable goods, an industrial product (interestingly, he uses a music producer as his avatar in *Radio Free Albemuth*). On the other hand, notwithstanding the commodification of music (and sound in general), Dick manages to find a sort of redemptive power in music which obviously bears relation to the counterculture of the late 1960s-early 1970s, but also with his offbeat religious idea of a God that is always to be found in the gutter. These are the issues that this article will try to address, by reading a few novels and stories written by Dick throughout his career.

SF delle donne e cyborg nel terzo millennio in America

Salvatore Proietti

DOI: 10.26379/1385

Abstract

In the mid-1980s, William Gibson and Donna Haraway had attracted attention to the hybrid icon of the cyborg and to its literary and political implications. Starting in the 1990s, women's SF has followed in their steps. Whereas in early cyberpunk some male authors were fascinated by scenarios of disembodiment, as well as by wishful dreams of absolute malleability of the self and the world, women writers including Pat Cadigan, Marge Piercy, and Kathy Acker, and others, have presented a more sceptical, less teleological vision, in dialogue with a tradition going from Du Bois's notion of "two-ness" to recent feminism, from Anzaldúa to Braidotti. As a key part of that new generation of dystopias that Tom Moylan has defined "critical" and Darko Suvin "fallible," these authors aim at problematizing personal and social conflicts, as well as new definitions of identity, without postulating one-sided solutions. This direction, often tinged with irony but no less connected with feminist discourse, has influenced a strand of light-toned adventure SF inaugurated by Lois McMaster Bujold, further developed by other writers in a still-ongoing process of differentiation. The article concludes focusing on two crucial authors emerging in very recent years, Ann Leckie and Aliette de Bodard. Their work offers new syntheses of earlier tendencies (the former with highly sophisticated linguistic twists on space-opera tropes, in the latter alternate history adds an emphasis on race) and, in describing future societies predicated on the full interaction and integration among "humans," cyborgs, and artificial intelligences, with an often radical revision of gender roles, they might be presenting glimpses of utopia.

Lo spazio che non c'è: nuove mappe per la città delle donne

Nicoletta Vallorani

DOI: 10.26379/1386

Abstract

My article reflects on the intersections and mutual interactions between female authorship and the science fiction *formulae*, comparing the Anglophone context and the Italian one. Starting from the seminal volume edited by Oriana Palusci in 1992 (*La città delle donne. Immaginario urbano e letteratura del Novecento*), I explore the changes occurring in the last thirty years, analysing some narratives authored by women, both in Italy and in the Anglophone world, and trying to show how the persistent “flaw” concerning SF novels written by women tends to be still broadly visible in the Italian publishing practices. It is my contention that – particularly when referring to women as SF authors – the situation appears still Janus-faced. On the one hand, women are increasingly entering the field and producing original and effective work. On the other, the publishing market still reflects a resistance to acknowledge female authorship on a peer-to-peer basis when compared with the male one. Such resistance seems to be stronger and more deeply-rooted in Italy.

“We want a better world for everybody”: distopia, razzismo e sessismo nella narrativa di Maggie Gee

Domenico Gallo
DOI: 10.26379/1387

Abstract

Maggie Gee is a contemporary British writer, who integrates science fiction in a narrative mosaic, creating a range of books on the relation between humans and Nature. Her writing is located at the crossroads of the English catastrophic science fiction, of the radical dystopia, of a refined “feminist fabulation”, without neglecting a psychological insight. She narrates stories of men and women, who, due to the aggression of the climate and of society are forced to probe their inner self and their deceitful identities. The novel *The Ice People* (1998) develops a powerful metaphor of Britain under Tony Blair’s leadership as a weak society, in the brink of collapse. However, the weakness of Britain reverberates in the growing insecurity of the main characters, in the questioning of their feelings and in the disintegration of personal relationships. Besides, racism plays a dramatic role in the novel. Above all, what reigns in the novel is an indifferent but increasingly violent Nature, shattering all vestiges of human vanity. *The Ice People* is one of the most effective science fiction novels revealing, through a Swiftian overturn of perspectives, the irrationality of racism, its profound injustice and the great interior pain which drives persons to abandon their home.

Il traduttore e la signora Brown: Riccardo Valla traduttore e corrispondente di Ursula K. Le Guin

Giulia Iannuzzi

DOI: 10.26379/1388

Abstract

Riccardo Valla's activities as a translator, publishing consultant, editor, and reviewer are an excellent case study to foster a better understanding of the speculative fiction translator intellectual profile: specialized in a genre with a recognizable set of conventions and literary genealogies, the translator of science fiction and fantastic genres tends to assume a distinctive publishing and cultural agency. This study, based on a wealth of unpublished documents, concentrates on Valla's work as a translator and editor of Ursula Le Guin's work in Italy, offering a survey of Valla's role in opening the Italian publishing market to new experimentations and forms of critical engagement during the 1970s.

L'eclissi dello spazio profondo: 90 anni di fantascienza a fumetti

Daniele Barbieri

DOI: 10.26379/1389

Abstract

If we go back to the 1980s up to the origins of comic-strip science fiction, through a path that has its starting and ending points in the USA, but crosses decisively France, Italy, Great Britain, Japan and Argentina, we can see how comic-strip science fiction has been systematically characterized by the presence of an *epic* hero, the one typical of adventure stories. Instead, in the comics of recent decades, another kind of hero, which we might call *psychological*, has asserted himself with stories much more focused on the inner dimension. This transformation has also marked science fiction comics, very different today from those of tradition.

Antichi futuri, mondi post-apocalittici e alchimie testuali nel *graphic novel Rāmāyan 3392 a.d.*

Esterino Adami

DOI: 10.26379/1390

Abstract

This article offers a preliminary discussion of *Rāmāyan 3392 a.d.*, a recent graphic novel by Chopra and Kapur (2007), which is structured as an intersemiotic translation of ancient Indian epic, in which the poetic techniques of fantasy and science fiction are used to portray the battle between the human beings, led by Rama, and Ravan's demons in a post-apocalyptic world. Benefitting from an interdisciplinary approach that draws on contemporary stylistics, the semiotics of comics, and postcolonial studies, the analysis will explore the linguistic and stylistic means of a complex project that reshapes elements of the ancient heritage of Hindu tradition into a futuristic apocalyptic imagery. The starting point of my investigation will be the emergence of Indian sci-fi against the backdrop of the cultural inheritance of time-honoured local epics and myths. Specifically, I will tease out the narrative creativity and cognitive processes of science fiction of my case study, bearing in mind the concept of pictorial and verbal complexity of graphic novels recently proposed by Hescher (2016).

Verso un uomo nuovo: il *graphic novel* della mutazione. I casi di *Akira*, *Ronin*, *Aâma*, *Golem*

Matteo Rima

DOI: 10.26379/1391

Abstract

After briefly presenting the point of view of two important and influential authors such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Francis Fukuyama on the topics of globalization and the homogenisation of present and future societies, the article focuses on four graphic novels which deal, each one in its own peculiar way, with the theme of mutation. The graphic novels analysed, belonging to the science fiction genre, are: *Akira* (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1982-1990), *Ronin* (1983-1984), *Aâma* (Frederik Peeters, 2011-2014), and *Golem* (Lorenzo Ceccotti, 2014). The first two, set in a near future that has meanwhile become our past, tell the story of an individualistic mutation that brings only death and destruction to society; conversely the latter two, although narrating a series of catastrophic – and yet somehow salvific – events triggered by the power of a single person, also focus on the importance of human cooperation and on the relevance of a productive connection between individual and society. Both Peeters and Ceccotti end their work with a glimpse of hope, anticipating a future that can be both harsh and utopian.

Oltre il *déjà vu*: fantascienza, inquinamento cognitivo e società mediatizzate

Elena Lamberti

DOI: 10.26379/1392

Abstract

Within our complex and interconnected ecosystems, scientific and cultural discourses are often rendered through the rearview mirror of literary clichés. Within our mediated societies, we are in fact living in a fictional '*déjà vu*', borrowing a taxonomy from a very popular literary genre, as if we were living in a Sci-Fi novel. Today we have become *post-humans* living in *cyberspace* and *smart cities*, surrounded by *robots* and *intelligent machines*, including *intelligent bombs*. Consistently, fake news inhabit our fictionalized reality taking advantage of a media induced cognitive pollution that prevents us from understanding what is going on. Recycling old science fictional jargon turns literature into an environment we take for granted. It is a reassuring process that, however, leads to thought homologation, what media ecology critics call "Narcissus Narcosis". We need to reconsider the ethical dimension of storytelling; we need to claim a different ontology for the Science Fiction genre within our interconnected realities in order to regain free will as empathic but different individuals who truly care for each other.

Il Centro di studi sull'Utopia di Bologna: presentazione e storia

Vita Fortunati

DOI: 10.26379/1393

Abstract

Il Centro di Studi sull'Utopia nasce a Bologna nel 1989 come Centro Interdipartimentale perché aveva come suo obiettivo quello di convogliare e potenziare la ricerca sull'utopia, un argomento polisemico che necessita una metodologia interdisciplinare e trasversale. I dipartimenti che aderirono al Centro furono il Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture moderne, il Dipartimento di Filologia e Italianistica, il Dipartimento di Filosofia e Comunicazione, il Dipartimento di Storia Cultura Civiltà e il Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali. Numerosi sono stati gli studiosi dell'utopia e dell'utopismo europei e trans-europei che fin dalla fondazione hanno cominciato a collaborare con il Centro che negli anni ha anche sviluppato una fitta rete di rapporti con centri di studio analoghi. Essi parteciparono non solo a Convegni, Seminari, ma anche ad importanti imprese editoriali.

La sede del Centro è nel Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture e per molti anni è stato diretto da Vita Fortunati. Ora il Centro, pur continuando ad avere rapporti e collaborazioni di ricerca con altri dipartimenti è un centro dipartimentale ed è diretto dalla professoressa Rita Monticelli. Il Centro possiede una collezione specializzata di libri che comprende testi primari e testi critici che sono in dotazione presso la Biblioteca del Dipartimento di Lingue , Letterature e Culture moderne. Possiede inoltre una documentazione dei principali centri che a livello nazionale, europeo ed extraeuropeo svolgono ricerche sull'utopia e sull'utopismo.

Mars in the Title

Eric S. Rabkin and Rainer Hilscher

DOI: 10.26379/1394

Abstract

Edgar Rice Burroughs, one of the most financially successful and culturally influential authors in history, future creator of Tarzan, struggled to find a title for his first attempt at fiction. While writing it, he tried *My First Adventure of Mars*, *The Green Martians*, and *Dejah Thoris, Martian Princess*. He used that last when he submitted the first of three projected installments to Thomas Newell Metcalf, the managing editor of *The All-Story* magazine. After revising and augmenting the work on the basis of his own imagination and Metcalf's editorial advice, Burroughs submitted a completed manuscript which Metcalf told him in his acceptance letter would be published as *In the Moons of Mars*. When it began its serial publication in February 1912, however, it was called *Under the Moons of Mars*. It was instantly popular under that title, but when McClurg & Company brought it out as a free-standing book in 1917, it bore the title *A Princess of Mars* (Wikipedia, *A Princess of Mars*). Why all this indecision about a title? Because titles are enormously important.

ContactZone

Rivista dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della fantascienza e del fantastico

Re-configuring Gender in Science Fiction Narratives

Editors: Giuseppe Balirano and Oriana Palusci



(2020) Vol. N° 2 (dicembre) – ISSN 2723-8881

PAOLO
LOFFREDO





ContactZone

n. 2 (dicembre) 2020

ContactZone

*An International Peer-Reviewed
E-Journal*

CHIEF EDITOR

Oriana Palusci

aisff.starfiction@gmail.com

ADVISORY BOARD

Esterino Adami,

University of Turin, Italy

Silvia Albertazzi,

University of Bologna, Italy

Giuseppe Balirano,

University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy

Maria Teresa Chialant,

University of Salerno, Italy

Bianca Del Villano,

University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy

Vita Fortunati,

University of Bologna, Italy

Paola Gorla,

University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy

Giulia Iannuzzi,

University of Trieste, Italy

Carlo Pagetti,

University of Milan, Italy

Patrick Parrinder,

University of Reading, UK

Salvatore Proietti,

University of Calabria, Italy

Eric S. Rabkin,

University of Michigan, USA

Umberto Rossi,

Independent Scholar

Darko Suvin,

McGill University, Canada

Nicoletta Vallorani,

University of Milan, Italy

COPY EDITOR

Emilio Amideo eamideo@unior.it

Antonio Fruttaldo afruttaldo@unior.it

Federico Pio Gentile fpgentile@unior.it

PUBLISHER

Paolo Loffredo Editore srl

via Ugo Palermo 6

80128 Napoli - Italy

P.IVA 05014040876

R.E.A. NA 931959

+39 3248382362

www.loffredoeditore.com/it/

paololoffredoeditore@gmail.com

GRAPHIC LAYOUT

Nexus Advanced Technologies, Milano

www.nexusat.it/digital-editing

ContactZone is an international double-blind peer-reviewed e-journal which publishes scholarly work on Science Fiction and the Fantastic connecting different languages, non-mimetic genres, and fields of study. It is the journal of the Italian Association for the Study of Science Fiction and the Fantastic. The areas of research range from literature to cinema, from media to comics and video games touching a wide spectrum of critical approaches, which includes literary criticism, ecocriticism, film studies, gender studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, linguistics, translation studies, critical race studies, queer studies. The journal welcomes papers from scholars, authors, teachers, and librarians supporting an innovative insight into texts written in English, but also in other languages, in order to promote a lively dialogue among critics and other specialists on an international level. *ContactZone* will focus on themes and topics dealing with the representation of imaginative and/or alternative worlds in the realms of science fiction and the fantastic.

Director: Luca Sarti

Authorisation n. 60 issued by the Court of Naples on 16/04/2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 Introduction
Gendering Science Fiction: The Inclusive Bodies of Tomorrow
Oriana Palusci
- 10 “A second moon”: Engendering Popular American Science Fiction from
Lilith Lorraine to the 1960s
Carlo Pagetti
- 27 What about Gender in 2137? Marge Piercy’s Androgynous Future in
Woman on the Edge of Time
Luca Sarti
- 46 “You best be using *hir* correct pronoun”: Gender Issues and Pronominality
in *The Worldbreaker Saga*
Roberta La Peruta
- 68 Plural Identities in Sam J. Miller’s *Blackfish City*
Valentina Romanzi
- 87 The Queer Future of Masculinity: Fathers and Sons in *Not Not Not Not Not*
Enough Oxygen and *A Number* by Caryl Churchill
Serena Guarracino
- 103 Gender Troubles in Science Fiction TV Productions: The Queer Gaze in
Star Trek
Giuseppe Balirano
- 120 The Merrill Collection: Connecting the world to the possibilities inherent
in fantasy, science fiction and speculative literature
Sephora Henderson
- 123 Notes on Contributors

Introduction Gendering Science Fiction: The Inclusive Bodies of Tomorrow

Oriana Palusci
DOI: 10.26379/1541

“Why is there no sex in science fiction? Why are there no women in science fiction?”, asked Mary Brizzi in the Launch Pad of the Spring 1982 *Extrapolation* special issue on “Women in Science Fiction”. Nearly forty years later, Anglo- American science fiction has undergone a radical turn especially in the new millennium.

Stepping backwards, although women’s SF has a long history, as Carlo Pagetti points out in his essay, the 1960s were crucial in the definition of a new cultural and literary sensibility enhancing and reassessing the contribution of women to what until then had been contemplated as an enclosed male generic domain. Undeniably, a few events form a timeline in the process of the growth and achievement of science fiction written by women. The 1960s were characterized by the emergence of a new consciousness in the debate on gender and the role of women both in the family and in society at large. The consequences in the SF community were farranging, also because the very same conceptual structure of science fiction as a well-defined genre was overtly challenged. For instance, in 1963, Judith Merril, an avowed proto-feminist and the editor of *The Year’s Best S-F. Science Fiction and Fantasy*, after extensively quoting Frederick Pohl (her former husband) on the subject, writes about the short stories collected in her anthology:

I do not care whether you, or he, or the editor in that corner, or the reviewer in the other, call them “science fiction” or not. They are – like all the material considered for inclusion in this *Annual* – examples of the broad field of S (for speculative) F (for fantasy, fiction, or fact), SF: the literature of the disciplined imagination (Merril).....

1963: 375).

“A second moon”: Engendering Popular American Science Fiction from Lilith Lorraine to the 1960s

Carlo Pagetti

DOI: 10.26379/1542

Abstract

Recent SF criticism has dug up a number of narrative texts belonging to the pre- WWII popular American tradition written by women, most of them employing male or ambiguous pen names. In *Sisters of Tomorrow* (2016) Yaszek and Sharp collect an impressive list of novellas and short stories published from the 1920s to the early 1940s, among them the utopian romance “Into the 28th century” by Lilith Lorraine (1930), whose lively visionary details and striking failures are examined in this essay. On the whole, in less than two decades, opposite generic approaches are developed by other women writers: in “Shambleau” (1933) L.C. Moore mixes gothic features (with unusual erotic undertones) and a Martian landscape reminiscent of the Western setting, while in “Space Episode” (1941) Lesie Perri employs a minimalist space travel plot to stress the heroic role of a female astronaut.

In the late 1940s and in the 1950s fantasy and interplanetary romance on one hand, and a realistic domestic scene, ridden by Cold War and radioactive fall out anxieties, on the other, are favourite modes both in Leigh Brackett’s and in Judith Merrill’s fiction. The role of Merrill, a ‘nurturing mother’ of feminist science fiction is taken into due consideration, and projected into the 1960s, a decade bringing to life a new gendered literary consciousness culminating in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969).

What about Gender in 2137? Marge Piercy's Androgynous Future in *Woman on the Edge of Time**

Luca Sarti

DOI: 10.26379/1543

Abstract

The present study aims to shed light on the reconfiguration of gender in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), hailed as a classic of science fiction.

After a brief introduction to the novel, the paper explores how gender and sexuality play a pivotal role in producing discrimination in two dystopian New Yorks of the same planet, but far away in time – one in the present of the 1970s, the other in a distant future. Subsequently, taking into account the research carried on until now, the focus is on 2137 Mattapoisett, a utopian gender-free society. The ideal androgynous world is gradually discovered by Connie Ramos, the protagonist of the story, who time travels intermittingly into the future with the power of her mind to temporarily escape from her frightening time. Notably, with an eye on the present, gender is investigated as it is reconfigured through language, especially through the genderless pronominal system created by Piercy in order to depict a better future society for all human beings. This reconfiguration is brought about by the author through the creation of an androgynous future society where the links between biological sex and gender identity, sexual orientation, reproduction, and parenting have been broken once and for all.

“You best be using *hir* correct pronoun”: Gender Issues and Pronominality in *The Worldbreaker Saga*

Roberta La Peruta

DOI: 10.26379/1544

Abstract

From Ursula K. Le Guin to Octavia Butler, speculative fiction has often addressed and explored gender norms, challenging traditional social constructions and expanding the notion of gender beyond its conventional boundaries. This paper investigates Kameron Hurley’s gender and genre-bending *The Worldbreaker Saga*, which subverts the role of women in patriarchal cultures on one hand, while blending together science-fantasy elements on the other to construct a richly diverse alternative reality populated by assertive/passive males and females, ungended as well as gender fluid characters. The linguistic analysis proposed looks at the functional expansion of the so-called closed class of pronominal elements, as well as at the interrelated lexical items found in the texts. Moving outside the traditional gender dichotomy and exploring unbiased gender-fair language through a combination of Corpus Linguistics tools and Critical Discourse Analysis, this study speculates on the spectrum of flexible sexuality and gender identities put forward in the saga.

Plural Identities in Sam J. Miller's *Blackfish City*

Valentina Romanzi

DOI: 10.26379/1545

Abstract

Sam J. Miller's dystopian novel *Blackfish City* (2018) is set in Qaanaaq, a multicultural city built on the freezing waters of the Arctic after climate change and a series of social collapses forced most of humanity to relocate. Qaanaaq is run by a network of A.I.s and ruled by a secretive group of shareholders with the support of local politicians.

In this essay, I explore the polymorphous identities in *Blackfish City*, with particular reference to two characters (Soq and the orcamancer) and the city itself.

Firstly, Qaanaaq's shapeshifting identity lies in the plurality of its people, in the differences and cultural contaminations that echo throughout the novel. It is a 'city without a map,' to paraphrase a podcast recorded in the novel, and thus its identity is a patchwork of different traditions and habits retrieved from lost civilizations.

Secondly, the orcamancer and other members of her family have a direct connection to an animal to which they are 'nanobonded.' They act in unison and influence each other, forming a posthuman unit of two identities bonded for life into one symbiotic organism.

Thirdly, polymorphism can be found in the character of Soq, a person "beyond gender [...] some days butch and some days queen, but always Soq, always the same and always uncircumscribable underneath it all" (42). Soq is referred to with the pronouns 'they/them/their,' a choice which underlines their non-binary gender and adds a layer to their plural identity, acquired when Soq contracts 'the breaks,' an STD which floods their mind with their lover's memories.

Additionally, I argue that Soq's plural identity also encloses the first two cases of polymorphism mentioned above, due to their family link to the Orcamancer and their deep understanding of the city. This makes them the best representative of a new generation of Qaanaaqians, if not of the city itself, and a layered character whose plural identity ensures they will be fit to understand the shapeshifting nature of the ecosystem in which they live and rule it with awareness.

The Queer Future of Masculinity: Fathers and Sons in *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* and *A Number* by Caryl Churchill

Serena Guarracino

DOI: 10.26379/1546

Abstract

Science fiction is rarely considered as a genre suitable for theatre: new worlds and spectacular scenarios seem oversized for the constraints of the performing space, which is often limited by matters of budget and casting. However, a significant tradition in contemporary theatre explores the relational and intimate elements of science fiction, where gendered identities are a central issue. Caryl Churchill's *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* (1971) and *A Number* (2002) use traditional science fiction *topoi*, such as ecological disaster and human cloning, as a framework to explore traditional family ties, and especially the father-son relationship. The "cognitive estrangement" triggered by the SF scenario makes familiar relationships uncanny in the Freudian sense of both strange and familiar: in this way, both plays stage the de-subjectification and 'queering' of the sons, substantiating science fiction's ability to unravel traditionally gendered subjectivities even in the smaller scale and domestic setting of theatrical performance.

Gender Troubles in Science Fiction TV Productions: The Queer Gaze in *Star Trek*

Giuseppe Balirano

DOI: 10.26379/1547

Abstract

The identity representation of non-binary and gender non-conforming people seems to have found fertile ground in TV Science Fiction which, since its early stages of genre development, has widely explored transgressive sexualities, transgender metamorphosis, transvestitism and androgyny. The Anglophone landscape of SF products embodies an ideal narrative tool through which it is not only possible to imagine alternative times and geographies but also the 'non-place', à la Augé (1995), where fluid identities of gender variant people, in their process of continuous transformation and reformulation, can be freely recognised as real entities. The SF subject is no longer seen as a coherent and unified being but becomes increasingly inevitably mutant, divided and dislocated and, as such, it freely participates in the process of linguistic change in unsemanticised contexts of use. In opposition to any kind of hateful discrimination leading to contemporary hate speech and the consequent creation of biases, fears and prejudices, trans and/ or gender non-conforming people become the fully-fledged protagonists of contemporary SF televised narratives, playing main roles and integrating perfectly into fictional apocalyptic societies. The present paper explores and illustrates how, in the XXI-century *Star Trek* saga, in particular, the very notion of binary subjectivity, as described by the Cartesian cogito, slowly and timidly gives way to contemporary narratives of inclusion, leading to the creation of new characters who naturally inhabit the apocalyptic scenarios, through their often unstable and 'de-gendered' roles.


The Merrill Collection: Connecting the world to the possibilities inherent in fantasy, science fiction and speculative literature

Sephora Henderson

DOI: 10.26379/1548

Abstract

The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation & Fantasy is considered one of the world's finest collections of speculative fiction and related materials. It is housed on the third floor of the Lillian H. Smith Branch of the Toronto Public Library, in downtown Toronto. Established in 1970, the Merrill Collection celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and, despite the turmoil on the world stage, staff have found ways to commemorate and honour this milestone year. With the help of the dedicated volunteers from the Friends of the Merrill Collection, promotion and engagement continue to flourish in an effort to raise the profile of the collection and to increase awareness of its bounty of resources. The Spaced Out Library was established in 1970 when science fiction



Rivista dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della fantascienza e del fantastico

ContactZone n. 2 (dicembre) 2020

Re-configuring Gender in Science Fiction Narratives

Editors: Giuseppe Balirano and Oriana Palusci

Contributi di: Giuseppe Balirano; Serena Guarracino; Sephora Henderson; Roberta La Peruta;
Oriana Palusci; Carlo Pagetti; Valentina Romanzi; Luca Sarti

(2020) Vol. N° 2 (dicembre) – ISSN 2723-8881

