The 4th Annual Science Fiction Symposium
Future Forms: The Body in Science Fiction
December 18th, 2016 | Gilman 496

“When I die, I’m leaving my body to science fiction.” –Steven Wright

9:45-10:00 – Gathering

10:00-10:15 – Opening Remarks: Keren Omry

10:15-11:45 – First Panel
The Posthuman Body: Physicality and Mind in Space, Time, and Beyond
Emanuel Lotem: “The n-Body Problem in Ann Leckie’s Ancillary Universe”
Amichai Shalev: “Philip K. Dick’s Posthuman Model”
Eden Kupermintz: “Michael John Harrison and the Body in the Space Age”
Elana Gomel: “Monstrous Time: History, Temporality and Posthuman Narratology”

12:00–13:30 – Second Panel
The Social Body: Science’s Cultural and Social Effects on Bodies
Shalev Moran: “Batman, Jensen, and the Crisis of Augmented Reality”
Liron Sinai: “The Praying Mantis vs. the Fly: Gender Role Metamorphosis through Body Mutation in Popular Culture”
Anat Karolin: Women in Futurism, Posthumanism and Cyberfeminism

14:00-15:30 – Third Panel
The Cyborg Body: Women’s Bodies Through Technology and Science
Yael Maurer: “Embodying Difference: Cinder and the Quest for Cyborgian Selfhood”
Grace Michaeli: “Steampunk, the Victorians, and Us: Mediating the Female Body in Paul di Filippo’s Victoria”
Dana Omer-Shnapp: “The Body of The Female Cyborg as a Means of Resistance”
Raz Greenberg: “Earthly Shell, Heavenly Ghost: Physical Reality and Cyberspace in Ghost in the Shell”

15:30–16:00 – Closing Remarks: Uri Aviv

Launching “Science Fiction Beyond Borders”
A collection of papers presented at the 2014 and 2015 symposia, eds. Shawn Edrei and Danielle Gurevitch
4th Annual Science Fiction Symposium:

*Future Forms: The Body in Science Fiction*

Sampler
Michael John Harrison is a prolific science fiction writer with foundations in both the New Age of Science Fiction (having published his *Viriconium* in the early 80’s) and the current postmodern movement. His Kefahuchi Tract trilogy is an extensive deconstruction of the space opera genre, examining issues of character, narrative time, power-knowledge relationships and more. However, Harrison also manages to go further than most of his irreverent contemporaries by choosing to deconstruct not a certain aspect of the genre, but the defining technologies and delineations of knowledge that are inherent to it.

Thus, his Kefahuchi Tract trilogy asks to dismantle the very basis for space opera, namely space travel itself. Physics becomes subjective, space buckles into itself and, at the very end, time itself is stretched to its last legs. Throughout this exploration and deconstruction, the body plays a central role. It is not a separate entity, a subjective cocoon separating it from the space around it, but rather the means through which one understands, deciphers and interacts with space. These interactions are often destructive to both space and the interacting body but are nonetheless the only ways in which his world enables individuals to parse knowledge and information, and exercise power on the world.

My paper will explore the nature of these bodies and their relationships with space. I will attempt to show how Michael John Harrison upends the usual structure of science fiction’s understanding of the human body, and will claim that Harrison’s “new” body is a much more “messy”, interconnected and central idea in a space age revolution much different than how it is commonly seen. Instead of a defiance or exploration of space, Harrison, via the body, offers a surrender and a negotiation with it.

*Eden Kupermintz is 29 and currently calls Tel Aviv, Israel home. Eden holds a B.A in History and Philosophy and is currently studying towards his M.A in Early Modern History. His thesis explores the relationships between space, power and authority in the English Civil Wars. He’s always been passionate about science fiction, music and culture and has given talks on the Future of the State, Transhumanism and Comics, urban thought and science fiction, and the idea of the singularity within science fiction. He also runs a metal blog, practices karate and (attempts) to write short stories.*
Steampunk, the Victorians, and Us: Mediating The Female Body in Paul di Fillipo’s “Victoria”

Grace Freespirit Michaeli

Often disregarded as pulp, steampunk is a significant intergeneric form that allows us to reflect on our perspective and relationship with the Victorians as well as explore science fiction using other cultural contexts. While science fiction is a broad and many-layered genre, the body and its various mutations are projected and perhaps mimicked in steampunk itself as a mutation of a 21st-century mindset imposed on a Victorian body. Consequently, the modification of body and mind is not limited to the 21st-century reader, but also includes restrictions of past centuries. The paradox both maintains and erases the fine line between then and now, us and them.

Risking the obvious comparisons to Pygmalion, Paul di Fillipo’s “Victoria” tells the story of a male scientist, Cowperthwait, who duplicates the queen of England, Victoria. Di Fillipo’s short story jumps through time – a trope used extensively but not exclusively in science fiction – and presents a young Victoria who refuses to fulfil not only her duties as a monarch, but also as a woman. She is then replaced by an insatiable newt. Both Victorias subvert the conventional perception of Victorian femininity, in the sense that they act on it. More importantly, they are not subject to their men as was expected of Victorian women.

The focalization of a man within a female body (both di Fillipo’s on the level of narration and the scientist’s on the level of plot) questions Victorian gender roles. Furthermore, Dru Pagliassotti’s “Love and the Machine” locates di Fillipo as belonging to the “second-generation steampunk” writers who use the female body as an embodiment of both eras, and reconcile between past and present. In the final sentence, Cowperthwait says to the duplicate: “Much as any man loves his creations, I can only hope that your existence is not further prolonged.” He encompasses the classic science fiction trope of the scientist, the relation with his creation (alluding to Frankenstein and The Island of Doctor Moreau), and the Victorian man who governs women, thus rendering this story the epitome of a largely-unexplored hybrid genre.

Grace Freespirit Michaeli completed her BA in English at Tel Aviv University. She is currently in her final MA year at McGill University. Her thesis studies the supernatural allusions in Victorian sensational journalism covering the Jack the Ripper murders. She intends to pursue a PhD focusing on Neo-Victorian fantasy such as Steampunk, gaslight fantasy and fantasy of manners.
The n-Body Problem in Ann Leckie’s Ancillary Universe

Emanuel Lottem

The award-winning Ancillary trilogy by Ann Leckie, a fairly recent arrival on the SF scene, depicts a universe in which cloning is commonplace – as a matter of fact, the plot’s locus, the Radch Empire, is ruled by a tribe of clones at war among themselves. And the soldiers in this war are AI-controlled re-animated corpses who share a common consciousness. “I saw all of this, standing as I did at various points surrounding the temple, and walking the streets of the town itself. … That accounted for almost half of my twenty bodies. The remainder slept or worked in the house”. The paper will discuss various aspects of this single-personality, multiple-bodied situation, as well as the relationships between AI and natural humans.

Translator and editor Emanuel Lottem, Ph.D., is a founding member and first chairman of the Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy. Among numerous SF&F classics, Lottem also translated into Hebrew the trilogy in question.
Recently, a new mechanism has become pervasive in mainstream sci-fi videogames: enhanced vision (sometimes called “Stat-O-Vision” or “Aura Vision”). First popularized by late-80’s sci-fi films and cyberpunk literature, Enhanced Vision is a fictional technology that replaces a user’s normal eyesight with one layered and imbued with digital information about the scene and objects being observed. Today, this fictional tool is often utilised in digital games, where the seen image and the meta-data about that image are one and the same. Sci-fi games allow the player character, equipped with “cyber-eyes” or some other form of this technology, to quickly switch between viewing the world in its material form, to viewing the world in its meaningful and useful form.

In the contemporary tech world, countless companies and research groups work tirelessly to actualize some of the visions created by cyberpunk literature. Among these, a range of technologies collectively named Augmented Reality is trying to achieve the ideal of enhanced vision, in hopes of allowing people in everyday or professional situations to make better and quicker decisions, learn more, or enjoy more of their surroundings. Advancements in display technology wish to make enhanced vision seamless and more immersive: closer to our own eyes.

In this talk, drawing on examples from literature, film, television, and the many recent incarnations in videogames, I will attempt to show how fictional depictions of enhanced vision problematize this technology. These depictions serve not only to glorify and inspire AR technologies but also to expose their oppressive nature. In games, where the nature of the medium allows players to engage this soon-to-not-be-fictional technology as a tool of choice, we can see the abusive potential of enhanced vision from both experiential and political perspectives.

Shalev is the Games Program Director for Print Screen Festival in Holon. He teaches the course "Narrative and History of Digital Games" at Shenkar College of Art and Design. Shalev curates and produces many game-culture events in Israel, among which was the first mini-conference for Israeli ludologists, in the Tel Aviv Municipal Museum in 2014. Formerly a Game Designer and Narrative Designer for Plarium Global, Shalev is now an independent digital artist developing games for various platforms. More information can be found at www.shalevmoran.com.