

Victor Grech
Avatar Dances with Wolves



Dances with Wolves is an epic western movie adapted by writer/director/star Kevin Costner from a novel by Michael Blake in 1990. The film cost \$22 million, grossed \$424 million, and won seven Academy Awards (Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Director, Best Film Editing, Best Music Original Score, Best Sound, Best Writing Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium) and the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture—Drama.

Avatar (Cameron 2009) is an equally epic sf movie that cost \$237 million, grossed \$2.7 billion (the highest-grossing film of all time), and won three Academy Awards (Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, and Best Visual Effects).

Several critics have commented on the similarities between these two movies, which share themes of frontier exploration, interactions with natives, and a hero who befriends the natives and eschews his own kind (Der Derian, Edwards, Sutherland). In both narratives, the hero partakes to a varying extent of the Campbellian monomyth wherein a protagonist sallies forth into a “region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won” (Campbell 30).

Dances with Wolves was one of the most (financially) successful exemplars of the genre of the New Western. Aaron Sutherland aptly summarizes the chronological progression from Western to New Western:

The Western resurrects the American frontier and America’s colonialist past in order to celebrate and justify this past as a collective (white) project necessary for the construction of a nation.... Native Americans are assimilated or exterminated.... [The] New Western resurrects the American frontier and America’s colonialist past to de-center white collectives, re-center the individual white hero and a primary concern with his happiness, and attempts to show audiences, through the hero’s cross-cultural interactions with Native Americans, that Native Americans were, rather than are, not the “savages” that the Western would have its audiences believe in.... [The] New Western acts as American apologetics for its colonialist past (Sutherland 1-2).

Examination reveals an abundance of similarities and only two significant differences between *Dances* and *Avatar*: the science-fictional aspect of one film as opposed to the other, and the positive, happy ending of the sf film as opposed to the Western.

Some aspects of narratological analysis will also be recruited to aid in this effort. Narratology is derived from both Russian formalism and the more recent French structuralism in that it constitutes a critical literary method with tools that permit the scientific analysis of plot structure and prose form in an attempt to extract insights about the meaning and the very nature of a single work or a group of literary works.

Vladimir Propp was one of the earliest scholars to attempt to analyze stories (in his case, Russian folktales) and break them down to their basic plot components. Propp posited 31 functions to a tale, terminating in a successful resolution, usually with a punishment for the villain and a wedding, that is, a happy ending.

Algirdas Greimas created the simpler and complementary *actantial* model. Greimas contends that each human action commences with the establishment of a goal, creating a subject such as the prince who may or may not wish to be united with the objective such as the princess. A sender instigates the action and a receiver benefits from said action. A helper is usually present, and this may be a person or even an object. Likewise, an opponent is usually present, and this too may be a person or an object. This model will be used along with some other narratological considerations that will deal with concepts related to the type of narrator and the manipulation of time within narratives (anachronies). This analysis will utilize concepts derived from Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal, Seymour Chatman, Herbert Grice, Wayne Booth, and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan.

Narratives

Dances with Wolves

Dances is set in 1863 during the American Civil War. Lieutenant John Dunbar is severely wounded and is labeled a hero after he accidentally leads Union troops to a victory while riding a horse called Cisco. After his recovery, he is given a choice of posting, and he elects for a transfer to a US Army fort in the remote west with Cisco. He confesses, “I want to see the frontier ... before it’s gone,” acknowledging the hegemonic forces of Western civilization on the West. The fort is found abandoned and in disrepair. His posting is undocumented, and he finds himself abandoned and interacting with a Sioux tribe. At one point, John comes across an injured white woman (Stands with a Fist), the adopted daughter of the Sioux medicine man (Kicking Bird). Her family had been killed by a raiding Pawnee group. John returns her to the tribe, earning respect, and he gradually also gains the trust of all, including a brave who is initially suspicious of him (Wind in His Hair).

Dunbar is drawn to the lifestyle and customs of these nomadic plains Indians who live in harmony with nature, and he abandons the fort and moves in with the tribe, eventually marrying Stands with a Fist. He also befriends a wolf that he names “Two Socks” for its white forepaws. When the tribe migrates to winter camp, John returns to the Fort to retrieve his journal. However, he is captured by newly arrived army soldiers who shoot and kill both Cisco and Two Socks. He is tried and convicted as a traitor, and he is transported back east to be executed. However, the convoy is raided by his Sioux friends, the soldiers are killed, and John is rescued. He

reaches winter camp but soon decides to leave as he knows that troops will unremittably search for him, endangering the tribe. An epilogue narrates:

Thirteen years later, their homes destroyed, their buffalo gone, the last band of free Sioux submitted to white authority at Fort Robinson, Nebraska. The great horse culture of the plains was gone and the American frontier was soon to pass to history.

Avatar

Avatar is set in 2154, 290 years later. The Resources Development Administration (RDA) mines valuable resources on alien planets, including the mineral “unobtainium.” The setting is the forested planet Pandora, a habitable planet that orbits a gas giant in the Alpha Centauri system. Pandora’s atmosphere is poisonous to humans, and the planet is inhabited by “Na’vi,” indigenous, 3m-tall, blue-skinned, sapient humanoids who worship a Gaia-equivalent goddess called “Eywa,” their “deity. The Great Mother. The goddess made up of all living things.” They live in complete harmony with nature, to the extent of having direct mental links with animals and even the planet itself, which manifests as Eywa through a vast, planet-wide biological neural network. Human scientists use *avatars*, Na’vi-human hybrids who are remotely operated by genetically matched humans, in order to explore Pandora.

Jake Sully is a paraplegic former marine who replaces his deceased twin as an avatar operator, and as an avatar, he reacquires full mobility. The scientific mission’s head, Dr. Augustine, loses him on his first assignment in the forest, where he is rescued by Neytiri, a female Na’vi. A propitious portent prompts Neytiri’s mother (the tribe’s spiritual leader) to order Neytiri to initiate Jake into Na’vi society. However, the all-too-human Colonel Quaritch promises Jake that the RDA will fund the medical restoration of his mobility if he gathers intelligence about the Na’vi and their abode, a giant tree called Hometree, since this stands above the richest known deposit of unobtainium.

Jake is drawn to the lifestyle and customs of the Na’vi, and despite being initially rejected by Tsu’tey, a brave who is Neytiri’s brother, he befriends the tribe and marries Neytiri. Rites of passage include neurologically linking with and mastering a direhorse, a hexapodal horse-analogue (and indeed, *Avatar* refers to the “horse clans of the plain”), and a flying equivalent known as a mountain banshee. He attempts to stop the RDA’s destruction of the sacred “Tree of Souls,” the planet’s nerve center, and is branded a traitor. Quaritch destroys Hometree, killing Neytiri’s father (the tribe’s chief) and many other Na’vi. Jake is imprisoned but is freed by one of his former colleagues. During the escape, Dr. Augustine is shot and dies. Jake gains the confidence of all of the Na’vi by mastering Toruk, a flying dragon-like analogue that is both feared and honored, and gathers all of the tribes for an all-out battle against the RDA. He also neurologically connects himself to Eywa and asks for intercession during the battle. Quaritch orders an assault on the Tree of Souls and after initial heavy losses among the Na’vi, Pandoran wild-

life joins the Na’vi against the RDA. After winning the battle, Jake’s consciousness is permanently transferred into his avatar via the Tree of Souls; almost all humans are expelled, and Jake remains on Pandora.

Discussion

The historical and narrative roots of the mythos of the West may be traced as far back as the 1840s, when Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term *individualist* to express the novel American frontier pioneer spirit. He defined individualism as

a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; ... he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself (506).

De Tocqueville theorized that aristocracy cannot do this due to a web of social obligations, which would lead to accusations of egotism, a situation that does not arise in democracies where one is expected to advance oneself. These notions were reinforced by others such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, who emphasized the crucial need for each individual to eschew conformity and false consistency, to pursue one’s own instincts and ideas, and to rely on oneself rather on the state or established society.

The valorization of the individual frontiersman also commenced around this time with the elevation of explorers such as Daniel Boone (1784–1820) and Davy Crockett (1786–1836), inflating the iconography of the natural, virtuous, and self-created pioneer (Faragher, Shakford).

Narratives of frontiersmen are among the earliest novels written by Americans, dating back at least to James Fenimore Cooper’s novels of Natty Bumppo, the deerslayer. Frederick Jackson Turner amalgamated these concepts through the frontier thesis which argues that the distinctive features of the traditional American character are a reverence for equality, democracy, self-reliance, and individualism along with the notion of freedom. These concepts were underscored by the Old West’s moving frontier line, a signifier for liberation from distant European governance and the effect that this had on these pioneers. To this day,

Americans like to imagine themselves as rugged pioneers, exemplars of antiauthoritarian individualism and resourceful self-reliance ... champions of the underdog, the harbingers of freedom for all, and the nemesis of effete aristocrats, pompous elitists, powerful bosses, and privileged exploiters of all sorts. (Lundeen and Wagner 175)

The 1960s counterculture phenomenon interrogated and reinvented much popular culture, and the Western, still a major genre across various entertainment media, was no exception. The loss of individualism in an age of corporate organization and social conformity resulted in the emergence of the New Western.

Gregory M. Pfitzer has pointed out that SF perpetuates the myth of the frontier and the valorization of the frontiersman, from Edgar Rice Burroughs’s flagrantly Western-based John Carter, Warlord of Mars, series (1912–1950), to Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (1950). Indeed John Carter finds himself almost magically teleported to Mars where he fights and kills red Martians, having just escaped from Earth after killing hordes of “red” Native Americans. Carter then befriends the Martian natives and marries their princess. Thus, “[j]ust as the frontier, both literal and metaphorical, is the favored setting of American mythology, the Native American is our premier model of the mythic Other” (Lundeen and Wagner 177). Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence have proposed an “American Monomyth,” a subset of the Campbellian monomyth in which

a community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil: normal institutions fail to contend with this threat: a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task: aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisaical condition: the superhero then recedes into obscurity (xx).

This definition differs from Campbell’s overarching monomyth in that the redemptive hero is Messianic, suffering for the good of the community, a trope that is not reflected in these two narratives. Science fiction’s cognitive estrangement permits a form of dybbuk whereby a mind may take over a physical body as occurs in *Avatar*. This is prefigured in Poul Anderson’s “Call Me Joe” (1957), a short story about a paraplegic who telepathically connects with an artificially created life form in order to explore the harsh surface of Jupiter and who eventually migrates to the Jovian body. Similarly, Ben Bova’s novel *The Winds of Altair* (1973) involves a hostile planet with local animals controlled remotely. However, the ultimate abandonment of humanity is arguably depicted in Clifford Simak’s short story “Desertion” where humans transform themselves into Jovians in order to explore Jupiter’s surface, in one case, along with an explorer’s dog, and fail to return to the human base. “I can’t go back,” said the dog. “Nor I,” said his human owner. “They would turn me back into a dog,” said Towser. “And me,” said Fowler, “back into a man.”

The similarities and parallels in the two films that this essay studies are legion, and James Cameron himself admitted that

it is very much like that... I just gathered all this stuff in, and then you look at it through the lens of science fiction, and it comes out looking very different but is still recognizable in a universal story way. It’s almost comfortable for the audience—“I know what kind of tale this is.” They’re not just sitting there scratching their heads, they’re enjoying it and being taken along... [The] idea that you feel like you are in a classic story, a story that could have been shaped by Rudyard Kipling or Edgar Rice Burroughs. (qtd in Boucher)

The table (based on Greimas’s actantial model) provides a good start for a point-by-point comparison, and it is obvious that all of the main factors except for the names of individuals and groups are identical.

Moreover, both narratives exhibit a mixture of figural hetero- (third person, impartial) and autodiegetic narrations, with a mixture of camera viewpoints and journal entries. Both use very few anachronies that are analepses (flashbacks) only, and the narrations are reliable. The narratives start *ab ovo*, with plots that slowly build up momentum, and there is no metalepsis (paradoxical contamination between levels of narrative). The narrative duration of both is isochronous with no deliberate distortion in narration time as opposed to elapsed narration time, and the narration frequency is singulative, with the story told once from a single viewpoint. The endings are closed.

Other practical similarities abound, including the hero being a male ex-soldier who has been wounded and who journeys to the mysterious contemporary frontier. The hero discovers noble savages who are under threat from aggressive and plundering colonialists, backed by the military-industrial complex. This is emphasized by statements such as the Na’vi “don’t even have a word for ‘lie,’ they had to learn it from us.” Furthermore, both Sioux and Na’vi speak broken English with similar (stereotypically Plains Indian) accents, have dour-faced elderly chiefs, emphasize matters with war whoops, and use bows and arrows.

The narrative concentrates on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist. The hero bonds with local fauna (including an equine or analogue), adopts native customs, and is in turn adopted by the natives. He learns to hunt and kill and discovers that the natives kill only to survive, and then only with regret, thanking nature for its beneficence.

Since the natives live a humbler and somehow cleaner life, unsullied by *techne*, the hero is purified by a process depicted

Film	<i>Dances with Wolves</i>	<i>Avatar</i>
Subject	John Dunbar	Jake Sully
Object	Going native	Going native
Sender	Dissatisfaction with current life.	Dissatisfaction with current life.
Receiver	John Dunbar	Jake Sully
Helper	Stands with a Fist (wife)	Neytiri (wife)
Opponent	US Army	Resources Development Administration

Table 1: Correspondences

as an abandonment of artificial mechanistic principles and a return to a simpler existence, closer to nature, thereby distancing himself from his own people, who are portrayed as barbaric and out of tune with nature. The hero gradually becomes romantically involved with a female of the tribe, a warrior-princess who inducts him into the group and facilitates his learning of the native language. The romance initially arouses ire when discovered by the rest of the tribe, but the hero slowly overcomes the misgivings of the natives, including an important young male who initially vociferously opposes him. The entire tribe eventually open their arms to him after he performs a brave act, and he marries his woman. All of these events are documented by the protagonist who acts as a reliable narrator, providing a voice-over journal (pen and paper or video journal). The hero eventually leads the tribe into battle against his own people, emerging victorious, and it is only here that the narratives diverge significantly, as will be discussed later.

Both films accede to several clichés that center around the “White Messiah fable.” David Brooks points out that this is “a pretty serviceable formula. Once a director selects the White Messiah fable, he or she doesn’t have to waste time explaining the plot because everybody knows roughly what’s going to happen,” as admitted by Cameron above. This trope has antecedents in films such as Silverstein’s *A Man Called Horse* (1970), Babenco’s *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (1991), and Zwick’s *The Last Samurai* (2003), with children’s equivalents being Gabriel and Goldberg’s *Pocahontas* (1995) and Kroyer’s *FernGully* (1992). The consensus is that this trope is “unacceptably paternalistic” (Podhoretz), and displays an unwarranted anthropocentrism. The fable itself can be facetiously summarized as an endlessly recycled story

about a manly young adventurer who goes into the wilderness in search of thrills and profit. But, once there, he meets the native people and finds that they are noble and spiritual and pure. And so he emerges as their Messiah, leading them on a righteous crusade against his own rotten civilization.... He is accepted by the natives and can spend the rest of his life in their excellent culture. (Brooks)

Brooks notes that this trope

gives movies a little socially conscious allure. Audiences like it because it is so environmentally sensitive. Academy Award voters like it because it is so multi-culturally aware. Critics like it because the formula inevitably involves the loincloth-clad good guys sticking it to the military-industrial complex.

The natives are also coolly seminaked and therefore seemingly more at one with nature, and in *Avatar*, even the name of the alien tribe “Na’vi” sounds like the plains Indian tribe name Navajo. The common take appears to be that “[s]cience is robbing us of our humanity, metaphorically expressed as our soul: it threatens to replace the individual, God-given soul with a mechanical, machine-made one” (Schelde 9). The

natives also happen to be “phenomenal athletes and pretty good singers and dancers” (Brooks). However, the messiah shortly somehow becomes

the most awesome member of their tribe. He has sex with their hottest babe. He learns to jump through the jungle and ride horses. It turns out that he’s even got more guts and athletic prowess than they do.... Along the way, he has his consciousness raised (Brooks).

What is more, in *Dances*, John marries a white woman, a convenient escape from excessive, intimate white cultural contamination. Unfortunately, the White Messiah fable adopts the fallacy of “cultural essentialism,” the belief in inherent and immutable traits that define and bound separate cultures, such that “culture” is made over “into a deterministic force by overlooking the complexities of change and diversity within each culture and by emphasizing the exotic and presumably inscrutable character of the cultural Other” (Lundeen and Wagner 181).

Essentialism ignores the potential for individuals as active agents for change within their own culture, with the exception of the narrator’s culture (in this case, the white technological more advanced culture, which is seen as progressive, open, and willing to change and embrace the Other), while envisioning the Other as static and unchanging, thereby lacking in history and unable and/or unwilling to change and adapt in its striving to remain authentically pristine. This also leaves the natives with a binary option: to have their culture forcibly changed by the military-industrial complex or opt for the changes proposed by the white messiah.

The narratives in this regard are eerily similar: “You have asked me many times about the white people... you always ask how many more are coming. There will be a lot, my friend... more than can be counted.... Like the stars. It makes me afraid for all the Sioux” (*Dances*). In *Avatar*, Jake exhorts the Na’vi “More Sky People are gonna come. They’re gonna come like a rain that never ends, until they’ve covered the world. Unless we stop them.”

John Podhoretz asserts that “*Avatar* is an undigested mass of clichés nearly three hours in length taken directly from the revisionist Westerns of the 1960s—the ones in which the Indians became the good guys and the Americans the bad guys.” He also notes that these tropes have become

deeply rooted ... standard-issue counterculture clichés in Hollywood” and that producers and directors have “simply used these familiar bromides as shorthand to give ... resonance.... not to be controversial, but quite the opposite: ... would be most pleasing to the greatest number of people.

Interestingly, apologists for Cameron have completely dismissed these arguments, which “miss the point: the film was not designed to show us the intricacies of ... social relations, but to astound and excite, and especially to introduce the new 3D camera technology that Cameron himself helped create” (Davidson 12).

Indeed, in *Avatar*, including truly alien aliens (who would probably be unknowable) would have risked the alienation of audiences and moved *Avatar* away from the mainstream (to which it was very successfully targeted) and into the smaller sf niche market.

Excessive biological liberties have also been taken in *Avatar*. For example, all fauna have been made more outlandish by adding six legs and four eyes. However, the locomotive problems that hexapods face along with the questionable necessity of having four eyes pale to insignificance when one realizes that the Na'vi are the only fauna not to have such attributes, since they are bipedal humanoids with only two eyes. This singular exception is highly unlikely as evidenced by Earth fauna, which exhibit no exceptions. Although there can be no verifiability for such inconsistent depictions, "there must be credibility, and assumptions must not be excesses that lead to inaccuracies that go beyond the boundaries of sensible and reasonable poetic license" (Grech 366). As explicated by Joanna Russ, "error-free science fiction is an ideal ... impossible of achievement ... not that ... the author can be excused for not trying; unreachability is, after all, what ideals are for" (113).

While "*Avatar* fails in its attempts to move beyond the New Western" (Sutherland 2), *Avatar* does exhibit two substantial differences when compared with *Dances*. First and most obviously, *Avatar* is sf, and includes many Suvinian novums that invoke "cognitive estrangement" (372), such as an exotic setting, alien others along with associated flora and fauna, technological advances including space travel, new machines and weapons and new and breathtaking natural phenomena, which are cleverly used to imbue a sense of wonder. This is in accordance with the precepts of "[h]ard sf, linear narratives, heroes solving problems or countering threats in a space-opera or technological-adventure idiom" (Roberts).

The second difference is an almost inevitable progression from the first, and this is related to the nature of the ending. While the final scene of *Dances* depicts the hero leaving the tribe with his wife, the ending is closed by its accurate and negative epilogue—the natives are subjugated and the white military-industrial complex takes over their lands. However, conventions are different in the sf genre, since it has unwittingly supplanted myth and replaced it with a modern equivalent.

To our forebears, nature was a vast, mysterious, dangerous, and uncontrollable chaos, which humans, because they cannot live with chaos, anthropomorphized, ... created a counterintellect to mirror their own. They populated nature with gods, monsters, spirits ... and other humanlike ... creatures. (Schelde 14)

In lieu of ancient myths, sf creates "new 'unknowns' ... outer space and far-away planets ... populated ... with monsters and ogres that could well be the close relatives of the trolls and ogres of folklore fame. In that sense ... sf is modern folklore" (Schelde 4).

Thus, *Avatar*'s ending is also closed but with a positive outcome for the hero and his native friends. This is because sf

narratives are often modern-day morality plays, with a Manichean struggle of easily identifiable good (the protagonist and his allies) versus equally easily identifiable evil (in this essay, the military-industrial complex).

This trope accedes to Umberto Eco's contention that such narratives appeal to the "infantile need of always hearing the same story, of being consoled by the return of the identical, superficially disguised" (Eco 70). This feel-good factor helps the film's promotion, sales, and eventually net profit, a crucial issue when considering the huge initial cost and outlays. Cameron and colleagues would almost certainly not dare to have risked otherwise, with a closed and downbeat ending.

It is for these all of these reasons that *Dances* ends so differently from *Avatar* wherein "the protagonists triumph and 'the sky's the limit'" (Grech 371), a happy ending that is expected and avidly anticipated by sf audiences and even more so, by general audiences. It remains to be seen whether the next instalments of the *Avatar* franchise will follow these same paths. ▲

Victor Grech lives in Tal-Qroqq, Malta.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Poul. "Call Me Joe." *Astounding Science-Fiction*. April 1957.
At Play in the Fields of the Lord. Dir. Héctor Babenco. Universal Pictures. 1991.
Avatar. Dir. James Cameron. Twentieth Century Fox. 2009.
Bal, Mieke. *Narratology*. Trans Christine van Boheemen.
-



The floating head of Stefan Dziemianowicz haunts a KGB reading, 16 Nov 2016; photo by Ellen Datlow

- Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Boucher G. "James Cameron: Yes, 'Avatar' is 'Dances with Wolves' in space ... sort of." *Los Angeles Times*. 14 Aug. 2009.
- Bova, Ben. *The Winds of Altair*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973.
- Bradbury, Ray. *The Martian Chronicles*. New York: Bantam, 1950.
- Brooks, David. "The Messiah Complex." *New York Times*. 7 January 2010.
- Burroughs, Edgar Rice. *A Princess of Mars*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1917.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Dances with Wolves*. Dir. Kevin Costner. Orion Pictures. 1990.
- Davidson, Rjurik. "Avatar. Evaluating a film in a world of its own." *Screen Education* 57 (2010).
- de Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America* (1840). Translated by George Lawrence. Edited by J. P. Mayer. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1969.
- Der Derian, James. "Now We Are All Avatars." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39.1 (2010).
- Eco, Umberto. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Edwards, Kim. "A Study Guide to Avatar." *Screen Education* 60 (2010).
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. "Farewell Address to the Nation." 17 January 1961.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance." *Essays: First Series*. James Munroe and Company: Boston, 1841
- Faragher, John Mack. *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993.
- FernGully*. Dir. Bill Kroyer. Twentieth Century Fox. 1992.
- Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
- Grech, Victor. "Infertility in Science Fiction." Ph.D. Diss. University of Malta, Tal-Qroqq, 2011.
- Greimas, Algirdas Julien. *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*. Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Grice, Herbert P. "Logic and Conversation." *Speech Acts*. Edited by Peter Cole et al. New York: New York Academic Press, 1975.
- Jewett, Robert and John Shelton Lawrence. *The American Monomyth*. New York: Anchor, 1977.
- The Last Samurai*. Dir. Edward Zwick. Warner Bros. Pictures. 2003.
- Lundeen, Jan and Jon Wagner. *Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek in the American Mythos*. Westport: Praeger, 1998.
- A Man Called Horse*. Dir. Elliot Silverstein. National General Pictures. 1970.
- Pfitzer, Gregory M. "The Only Good Alien Is a Dead Alien: Science Fiction and the Metaphysics of Indian Hating on the High Frontier." *Journal of American Culture* 18.1 (1995).
- Pocahontas*. Dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg. Walt Disney Pictures and Buena Vista Distribution. 1995.
- Podhoretz, John. "Avatarocious. Another spectacle hits an iceberg and sinks." *The Weekly Standard*. 28 Dec. 2009.
- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folk-Tale*. Trans. Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas, 1968.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Methuen, 1983.
- Roberts, Adam. *The History of Science Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Russ, Joanna. "Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 2 (1975).
- Schelde, Per. *Androids, Humanoids, and Other Science Fiction Monsters: Science and Soul in Science Fiction Films*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Shackford, James A. *David Crockett: The Man and the Legend*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956.
- Simak, Clifford. "Desertion." *Astounding Science-Fiction*. November 1944.
- Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950.
- Stanzel, Franz K. *A Theory of Narrative*. Translated by Charlotte Goedsche. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Sutherland, Aaron. "Dances with Wolves in Space: Aliens and Alienation in James Cameron's *Avatar*." M.A. Diss. University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan, 2010.
- Suvin, Darko. "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre." *College English* 34 (1972).
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." American Historical Association. World's Columbia Exposition, Chicago, 1893.
- Wister, Owen. *The Virginian*. New York: Macmillan, 1902.

