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SCIENCE FICTION AND ITS PAST RELATIONS WITH THE ACADEMY

BY

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'What was once ... a secret movement has become part of the cultural wallpaper'

SF authors have traditionally spurned the disdain of critics who 'sneer the ineradicable sneer' at SF authors and assert that SF is too shallow for serious consideration, and such critics have been in turn accused of being 'ignorant or afraid of science [...] rejecting [...] the universe in favor of a small human circle, limited in time and place to their own lifetimes'. In some ways, SF partakes of some of the properties of fantastic literature, as defined by Todorov, insofar as SF leads us to worlds that do not exist, and with readerly agreement, the narratee is 'transported to a scenario more magical and uplifting than the real, coarse everyday world'. Tolkien calls this combination of fantastic, miraculous deliverance and poignant eucatastrophe, the sense of evangelium, a means with which authors impart good news and happy endings. This accords with Frederic Jameson's contention that SF 'give us 'images' of the future [...] but rather defamiliarize [s] and restructure [s] our experience of our own present'.

However, until recently, in the eyes of the academy, SF was treated with a degree of disdain by the assemblage of 'serious' mainstream and classical literature. Matters are confused by the fact that SF is inherently dichotomous, both authoritarian and antiauthoritarian, the former due to its traditionally male dominated leanings and its overall hard science slant, and the latter as it is antiestablishment and anticanon.

It was thus for decades that the genre was marginalised and relegated to a subordinate role in literature studies, for being ersatz and escapist. However, 'the real universe is [...] too small [...] for the expansion of escapist dreams, so SF has invented a lot of other universes', and this is a major attraction to the SF writer, who has almost carte blanche for his creations. But despite being perceived as somehow 'inferior' and actively stigmatised and viewed with hostility by traditionalists, many SF

¹Greg Bear, 'Introduction', *The Wind from a Burning Woman* (Sauk City: Arkham House Publishers, 1983), pp. 1-2.

²Todorov Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975).

³Giuliana Peresso, 'Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Quintet and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series: A Narratological and Structural Analysis' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Malta, 2003), p. 12.

⁴J. R. R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflen Company, 1997), p. 55.

⁵Fredric Jameson, 'Progress vs. Utopia, or Can We Imagine the Future?', *Science Fiction Studies*, 9 (1982), 147-58 (p. 51).

works tend to be intertextual and engage recognised and acclaimed canonical texts, as already discussed, and conversely, a multitude of traditionally canonical texts engage icons and tropes that are typically associated with SF. Luckhurst remarks that there is a 'sense that SF has been ignored, ridiculed or undervalued' resulting in repeated attempts by readers and authors alike 'to carve out a 'respectable canon'.⁷

This has been acknowledged by the academy with a relatively recent revival of SF studies, including several journals (such as *Science Fiction Studies*) with a broadening of the margins of the canon in order to deliberately embrace SF works. However, these efforts remain mired in controversy by virtue of their leanings and selections of texts for inclusion within the canon, a ploy that results in the continuing marginalization of many traditional SF works that engage hard science and are not deemed literary enough.

The first serious academic study of the genre was by the British novelist Kingsley Amis, who also famously championed other marginal writings including Fleming's *James Bond* series. Amis 'was clearly inspired by the idea of making science fiction appear 'respectable', by giving it a distinguished ancestry and by giving it a clear social purpose'. This arguably constituted an attempt at rehabilitation from a genre born within particularly lurid pulp covers of the 1930s and 1940s magazines that frequently depicted scantily-clad maidens attired in brass underwear, menaced by repugnant, bugeyed aliens while being liberated by square-jawed heroes, the covers were invariably far more lurid than the magazines' contents, paralleling contemporary prejudices. Indeed, the perpetrator, Earle K. Bergey, was quite renowned for his magazine cover art that frequently portrayed implausible female costumes, including the classic brass brassieres. SF's image of the time was strongly associated with his *Startling Stories* magazine covers for 1942-1952. The strong strong strongly associated with his *Startling Stories* magazine covers for 1942-1952.

When invited to Princeton to deliver the Christian Gauss lectures in 1959, Amis chose to speak about SF which he likened to jazz, an underappreciated American art form. These lectures were published as *New Maps of Hell* (1960).¹¹ Amis was particularly taken with the humorous dystopias created by Sheckley and the 'trademark of both Pohl's stories and his collaborations with Cyril Kornbluth to turn capitalist systems against themselves', ¹² as in *The Space Merchants* (1953) which

⁶Stanislaw Lem and Robert Plank, 'Remarks Occasioned by Dr. Plank's Essay "Quixote's Mills" *Science Fiction Studies*, 1, (1973), 78-84 (p. 79).

⁷Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

⁸James Edward, 'Before the Novum: The Prehistory of Science Fiction Criticism', in Patrick Parrinder, *Learning From Other Worlds* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 19-36 (p. 20.).

⁹Larry E. Sullivan and Lydia Cushman Schurman, *Pioneers, Passionate Ladies, And Private Eyes* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 1996), pp. 42-43.

¹⁰For a detailed review of art in fantasy and SF, see Gary Westfahl and others, eds. *Unearthly Visions: Approaches to Science Fiction and Fantasy Art* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

¹¹Kingsley Amis, New Maps of Hell. A Survey of Science Fiction (London: Gollancz, 1960).

¹²Luckhurst, *Science Fiction*, p. 113.

heavily satirised capitalist systems of advertising, marketing and the resulting excesses of the worst possible consumerism.¹³

Such earnest attention from a mainstream figure naturally enhanced SF's reputation, particularly when it was followed by several SF anthologies, co-edited by Amis and drawn heavily from Campbell's *Astounding*. Furthermore, a tape-recorded discussion on SF took place between Amis, Brian Aldiss and C. S. Lewis, and this was eventually published among Lewis's work.¹⁴ It was also around this time that the first SF critical journal *Extrapolation* was launched.¹⁵ Amis also eventually went on to write two alternate-history SF novels, *The Alteration* (1976)¹⁶ and *Russian Hide-and-Seek* (1980),¹⁷ an interesting choice of SF trope as although mainstream fiction is mimetic of the real world, it too occasionally utilises traditionally SF threads, such as alternate endings, as famously shown, for example, in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969).¹⁸

New Maps of Hell, while daring for its time, now seems faintly condescending with low expectations for characterisation and for the very prose itself and while it 'supplied critical depth, [...] lacked breadth [...], high on theory but low on detail'.¹⁹ Amis's rather shallow support for SF became evident with the advent of New Wave SF in the 1960s which centred round the *New Worlds* magazine after Michael Moorcock assumed editorial control in 1963. The most important exponents of this predominantly British movement were Aldiss, Ballard and Moorcock.²⁰ Ballard in particular occupied a 'weirdly undecidable location [...], never fully inside or outside of the SF world', ²¹ in his literature that contrives to be the 'union of speculative fiction and the literary avant-garde'.²²

New Wave did not set out 'to elevate SF from a ghetto, to plea bargain for its status as a 'serious' literature', but rather, was 'a manifestation of a wider move to question the very categories and values

¹³Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants* (New York: Ballantine, 1953).

¹⁴The conversation took place in Lewis's rooms at Cambridge in December 1962 and a transcript appeared in the collection C. S. Lewis, *On Stories – and Other Essays on Literature* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1982).

¹⁵Donald M. Hassler, 'The Academic Pioneers of Science Fiction Criticism, 1940-1980', *Science Fiction Studies*, 26 (1999), 213-31 (p. 223).

¹⁶Kingsley Amis, *The Alteration* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976).

¹⁷Kingsley Amis, *Russian Hide-and-Seek* (London: Hutchinson, 1980).

¹⁸John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).

¹⁹Gary Goshgarian, 'Automata & All That', *Novel*, 8 (1975), 185-187 (p. 185).

²⁰For a review of New Wave SF, see Colin Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British New Wave in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1982).

²¹Luckhurst, *Science Fiction*, p. 153.

²²Ibid., p. 150.

of 'high' and 'low' culture''.²³ The transatlantic embracement and the burgeoning relationship with American SF was evident (as prefigured by Ellison's *Dangerous Visions* (1953)²⁴ anthology).

Several works attempted to transpose the emphasis of SF criticism back to breadth and detail, including Sam Moskowitz's, *Explorers of The Infinite* (1963) and *Seekers of Tomorrow* (1966),²⁵ Knight's *In Search of Wonder* (1956),²⁶ Donald Wollheim's *The Universe Makers* (1971),²⁷ and Sam J. Lundwall's, *Science Fiction: What It's All About* (1971).²⁸ The self-proclaimed 'first history of the genre' was Aldiss's *Billion Year Spree* (1973)²⁹ 'which names as its seminal ancestor Mary Shelley's Frankenstein "in which lie the seeds of all later creation myths" from automata to clones.'³⁰

A plethora of critical works pertaining to SF have arisen, and it is therefore challenging to comprehend the academy's past fractious condescension, disparagement and unease with the SF genre, and an attempt to achieve a clarification and possible understanding was been made by several critics, such as Hollinger who has averred that SF's

ongoing generic "metamorphoses" have been at least partially responsible for the increasing heterogeneity of the contemporary critical enterprise. "SF" no longer refers only to a literary subgenre: it is also a particularly popular kind of cinema and television; it provides the visual stimulus for a whole range of video games; it spills over into slipstream fiction; its aliens and spaceships feed into some of our culture's most acute millennial anxieties.³¹

SF's unexpected metamorphosis and appropriation by diverse disciplines can easily be explained by its rich and varied tropes, and by how in its turn SF is influenced and finds itself ramifying into new and not altogether expected directions. Critical studies abound, and for example, Westfahl and Slusser have produced a series of works that scrutinise various aspects of the genre, and in this essay, we will consider *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization, and the Academy* (2002).³² This conflation of

²³Ibid., p. 146.

²⁴Harlan Ellison, ed. *Dangerous Visions* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

²⁵Sam Moskowitz, *Explorers of The Infinite* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1963) and *Seekers of Tomorrow* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1966).

²⁶Damon Knight, *In Search of Wonder* (Chicago: Advent, 1956).

²⁷Donald Wollheim, *The Universe Makers* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

²⁸Sam J. Lundwall, Science Fiction: What It's All About (New York: Ace, 1971).

²⁹Brian Aldiss, Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction (London: Corgi, 1975), p. 2.

³⁰Goshgarian, 'Automata', p. 185.

³¹Veronica Hollinger, 'Contemporary Trends in Science Fiction Criticism, 1980-1999', *Science Fiction Studies*, 26 (1999), 232-62 (p. 261).

³²Gary Westfahl and George Slusser, eds. *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization, and the Academy* (London: Greenwood Press, 2002).

essays extensively analyses the viewpoints and perceptions of the academy and its consequent treatment of SF which is contrasted with SF's growing public popularity, exploring a broad range of topics related to the place of SF in literary studies including the responsibilities of journals, particularly those dealing mostly or solely with SF, and their role as cultural gatekeepers in canon inclusion and formation, along with the marginalisation of specific authors by literary critics. This collection also deals with multiculturalism and feminist issues in SF and elucidates the wider issues relating to the politics and policies of literary studies and academic inquiry.

The anthology is divided into three parts: firstly, an overview of SF and the academy, secondly, an examination of the mechanism of canonization, and finally, case studies in marginalization. This essay will now briefly comment on this work and the issues that it raises.

The introduction by Westfahl explains away the delusion that authors are the forces that define, guide and canonise literature. Westfahl argues that members of the academy are trained critics and that 'they are the ones who largely determine the authors and works that stay in print [...] and are taught in school curricula', 33 thus becoming somehow enshrined and regarded as appertaining to the canon of English literature, while other works are marginalised and denied scholarly appraisal.

These decisions are not consensual and indeed, cannot be consensual as there are no objective criteria as to which qualities are required for works to enter the pantheon of what literary critics come to laud as classical SF. The ongoing struggle lies between conservative traditionalists and insurgent rebels who may, in their turn, unite under the aegis of feminism, postmodernism and other fashionable movements. Tom Shippey's goes further, lambasting literary critics who despise SF 'seemingly without awareness of self-contradiction [...] hated science fiction and [...] they never read it'. He also wonders whether the academy may have disdained SF due its inherently labile nature, prone to chaotic and unpredictably hideous progenies, conflating the future with the present as the former relentlessly displaces the latter. Indeed, in a later chapter, Miller compares other genres whose 'tropes [...] are static [...] the Cowboy, the Vampire, the Detective, the Wizard [...] the Pirate', and compares them with the constantly changing and evolving tropes of SF, from golem to robot to artificial intelligence to cyborg. The compares of the constantly changing and evolving tropes of SF, from golem to robot to artificial intelligence to cyborg.

Several points are raised with regard to readers' expectations, an important and specific issue. Miller argues that SF authors and readers have an intrinsically positive and optimistic outlook, genuinely expecting 'betterment of society through social and technological change'. However, Brown raises an interesting point in that readers and fans ultimately purchase works that craft popular appeal, and not works that are necessarily considered to be literary. This leads to the 'recursive fan [...] who reads *only SF* [...] a weirdly stunted and incomplete view of literature, SF and the rest of culture'.³⁷

³³Ibid., p. 1.

³⁴Ibid., p. 7.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

³⁶Ibid., p. 84.

³⁷Ibid., p. 90.

Another reader-related point that crops up repeatedly is that SF fandom constitutes a unique constituency, providing a matchless challenge to academia in being fervently passionate about their seductive genre, tribal, even clannish, zealous and autonomous to an intense and extreme degree, and almost totally independent of critical academic review, rejecting the jurisdiction of literary scholars and critics alike, unlike other genres of literature wherein the academy is a terribly effective gatekeeper and arbiter of the respective canons. Outsiders to the genre may not appreciate '[t]he distress that some enthusiasts for paperback fiction feel when academics begin to move into their territory'.³⁸

This point has been raised by other critics, such as Luckhurst, who states that the lack of 'such criticism remains 'contaminated' by the image of the uncritical, adulatory fan'.³⁹ This point is also raised by Stephen P. Brown (editor of *Science Fiction Eye*) and Arthur B. Evans (managing editor of *Science Fiction Studies*) who also point out that SF works borrow rapidly and heavily from each other in a way that is 'self-referential, exchanging itself only in itself',⁴⁰ with a resultant tendency to 'freeze literary evolution'.⁴¹ The authors therefore suggest that an important function of the critic is to alert mature readers and authors to wider possibilities, both within and outside the canon of SF, preventing a 'decayed form, like recopying a document over and over again'.⁴²

Shippey also posits that SF is a form of fabril literature, commonly depicting fabers, that is makers and creators, forcing such narratives down potentially dark, evil and mechanical paths and therefore the opposite of classical and texts, 'the dark, alien, Other of Pastoral'. ⁴³ Frank McConnell reinforces this thread, claiming that a better label for SF would be 'technological gnosticism'. ⁴⁴ He also emphasises the perceived degradation when academia turns 'the Book (a holy word) into the Text (a shabby one)', ⁴⁵ and expresses disagreement with critics who 'rage to efface what they themselves cannot create, the diffident arrogance of a De Man, a Derrida'. ⁴⁶

The second part of the anthology commences with a history of the British SF Arthur C. Clarke award, which was launched in 1987 and promptly won by Maragert Atwood's *The Handmaid's* Tale

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<sup>40</sup>Westfahl, Science Fiction, p. 153.
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³⁸Thomas J. Roberts, *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), p. 39.

³⁹Roger Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 2.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 91.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶For an exposition on this subject, see Frank D. McConnell, 'Will Deconstruction Be the Death of Literature?', Wilson Quarterly, 14 (1990), 99-109.

(1986).⁴⁷ Edward James quotes John Clute who, on hearing this news, exclaimed that the 'decision was so bad my ears must have deceived me'.⁴⁸ This exemplified the skirmishes within the SF canon and the simultaneous brawl between SF and the literary community in their respective definitions of what constitutes and what does not constitute SF. James outlines the ways in which definitions of SF are often adumbrated by publishers and authors for commercial or critical reasons. This point is repeatedly raised by critics, with statements such as 'cyberpunk differs from SF in that it is horribly plausible'.⁴⁹

SF's burgeoning public popularity is also repeatedly raised in this book, and this is evinced by everincreasing book, cinema and DVD sales, ⁵⁰ such as *Alien* (1979), ⁵¹ *The Terminator* (1984), ⁵² *Jurassic Park* (1993), ⁵³ *The Matrix* (1999), and their sequels), and as well as income raised (and possibly also prestige). It may well be for this reason that more and more mainstream authors have turned 'slipstream' trying their hand at SF works, and these include Marge Piercy, P.D. James and Margaret Atwood. These films have also managed to aid and abet this conspiracy, with critics colluding with this evolution by the coy use of mendacious euphemisms that would be risible, were they not pejorative and offensive to the genre, such as 'dystopic', ⁵⁶ and 'futuristic horror', in their uneasiness with labelling a narrative as 'science fiction'. ⁵⁷

Hendrix reinforces this thread, explicitly stating that authors must perforce, choose 'to follow one of two paths: "go literary" and write more character-based fiction or "go mainstream" and write aggressive plotty, action-driven fiction'. The former bestows cachet and critical acclaim while the latter is more financially rewarding, albeit with potentially less critically-defined literary value, and

⁴⁷Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1986). For a detailed review of this incident, see Maureen Speller, 'A Judge's Summary of the Clarke Award', *Vector*, 173 (1993), p. 12.

⁴⁸Westfahl, *Science Fiction*, p. 72.

⁴⁹Rosemary Bailey, 'High Heels and High-Tech in a brutal fictional world', *Independent*, 19 May 1992, p. 12.

⁵⁰For a review of the effects of the marketplace on SF, see George Slusser and others, eds. *Science Fiction and Market Realities* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

⁵¹Alien, dir. by Ridley Scott (20th Century Fox, 1979).

⁵²The Terminator, dir. by James Cameron (Orion Pictures, 1984).

⁵³Jurassic Park, dir. by Steven Spielberg (Universal Studios, 1993).

⁵⁴The Matrix, dir. by Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski (Warner Bros., 1999).

⁵⁵A term coined in Bruce Sterling, 'Slipstream', *Science Fiction Eye*, July 1989.

⁵⁶In a commentary on James's *The Children of Men*, see Helen Birch, 'When all agreed to have no more babies', *Independent* September 26 1992, p. 26.

⁵⁷Commentary on Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's tale* by Lesley White, 'Futuristic Horror', *Sunday Times*, August 16 1993, p. 32.

both leanings, if taken to the extreme, may lead to marginalisation from the perspective of the SF community.

It is worth noting, at this point, that a few mainstream authors have willingly contributed to SF, and, for example, Lessing's *The Canopus in Argos: Archives Series* (1979-1983) are outright SF, and acknowledged as such by the author.⁵⁹

Miller also lauds the legitimisation of SF through the inclusion of a Norton Anthology, but questions the authority and choice of texts for inclusion by the utilisation of appropriate mathematical statistical analyses, a choice that is also queried later by Slusser who laments the marginalisation of classical (albeit hard-science biased) grails of SF.⁶⁰ He recounts his experience that 'on first reading the table of contents, I was struck by the absence of such iconic figures as Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury [...] Thomas M. Disch and Kurt Vonnegut'.⁶¹ This is coupled with an excessive and therefore overrepresented selection of works by female authors in a form of reverse sexism, since women, in general, contribute approximately 25% of all recent SF work and appropriately, have won approximately 25% of recent Hugo and Nebula awards.⁶²

At this juncture, it must be noted that the famous 'Hugo' and 'Nebula' SF awards are themselves subject to this dichotomy, with the Hugo Awards (begun in 1953, and named for the early SF magazine editor Hugo Gernsback) chosen by means of a popular vote by fans who attend the annual World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon), thereby reflecting fans' current tastes and interests, while the Nebula Awards (begun in 1966) are awarded by the membership of the Science Fiction Writers of America, and are therefore considered to be subject to a more literary kind judgment, acting as a counterweight to the Hugos.⁶³

While not always internally consistent, the obvious inference from this collection of essays is that SF is an incessantly evolving literature of amorphous, protean and novel ideas, a genre that does not have much regard for critics, and instead, is indebted to science and technology for their power, authority and organisation, even if only as a hanger-on to their coat-tails. In this manner, SF inevitably gains distinction for creating worlds and situations that are nonactualisable at the time of writing but may, simply due to the sheer number of SF works if nothing else, succeed in predicting likely future

⁵⁹Doris Lessing, *Shikasta: Re, Colonised Planet 5* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1979), *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1980), *The Sirian Experiments* (York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1980), *Documents Relating to the Sentimental Agents in the Volyen Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1982), *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1983).

⁶⁰Ursula K. Le Guin and Brian Attebery, eds. *The Norton Book Of Science Fiction* (Scranton: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc, 1993).

⁵⁸Westfahl, *Science Fiction*, p. 140.

⁶¹Westfahl, *Science Fiction*, p. 80.

⁶²For a review of women SF authors, see Sharon K. Yntema, *More Than 100 Women Science Fiction Writers. An Annotated Bibliography* (Freedom CA: Crossing Press, 1988).

⁶³See Donald Franson, *A History of the Hugo Nebula and International Fantasy Award* (Dearborn: Howard Devore, 1971).

outcomes. SF therefore presents itself as a modern myth, an avatar of the future, an actuality that is readily recognised by individuals outside the SF camp. This is heralded by sweeping pronouncements like 'science fiction should become science fact before the end of this decade', ⁶⁴ forcing the genre to continually renew itself with fresh ideas in order to avoid being made obsolete by its nemesis, an increasingly science-fictional world that incessantly and persistently irrupts into daily life by dint of successive scientific and technological paradigms, inexorably refabricating reality.

It has also been proposed that the advance of movie special effects has helped SF shed its outcast status while still cherishing its margins. Murray argues that while until recently the literature of the fantastic was looked down upon, with few grudging exceptions such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932)⁶⁵ and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949),⁶⁶ cinema has always been more egalitarian, as can be seen by the wealth of early SF films such as *Metropolis* (1927),⁶⁷ *King Kong* (1933),⁶⁸ and *Frankenstein* (1910).⁶⁹ Murray puts forward the argument that the writer has an unlimited special-effects budget as anything can be described, at no additional cost.⁷⁰ In contrast, SF did not become popular with the general public until spectacular film special-effects caught up with literature in practicality and affordability, starting with Gene Rodenberry's *Star Trek*,⁷¹ Stanely Kubrick's *2001: a Space Odyssey* (1968)⁷² and George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977)⁷³ and indeed, the reason for the decades-long delay for Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954)⁷⁴ to reach the screen in 2001 was that it was technically and technologically impossible to produce earlier.⁷⁵

Furthermore, 'films [...] engage viewers on the plane of ideas and provide occasions for historical, political, literary, and cultural commentary as well as philosophical analysis', ⁷⁶ intersections that have already been critically explored, such as, for example, the detailed philosophical review of SF film by

⁶⁴Steve Homer, *Independent*, 30 September 1993, p. 30.

⁶⁵Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932).

⁶⁶George Orwell, 1984 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1949).

⁶⁷Metropolis, dir. by Fritz Lang (Paramount, 1927).

⁶⁸King Kong, dir. by Merian C. Cooper (RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., 1933).

⁶⁹Frankenstein, dir. J. Searle Dawley (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1910).

⁷⁰Charles Shaar Murray, 'Space Oddities', New Statesman, 24 April 2006.

⁷¹'The Cage', dir. by George Butler *Star Trek The Original Series*, February 1965.

⁷²2001: A Space Odyssey, dir. by Stanley Kubrick (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1968).

⁷³Star Wars, dir. by George Lucas (20th Century Fox, 1977).

⁷⁴J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1954).

⁷⁵The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, dir. by Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema, 2001).

Sanders, *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* (2008).⁷⁷ SF blockbusters are now familiar big-screen news and big business, along with a plethora of TV series space operas, such as *Star Trek* and its spin-offs, and many other series too numerous to include here.

Clearly, this arriviste genre has metamorphosed, and '[w]hat was once virtually a secret movement has become part of the cultural wallpaper', absorbed and embraced by the mass to the extent that many of us frequently utilise it tropes and expressions in everyday language.⁷⁸

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⁷⁶Steven M. Sanders, ed. *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2008), p. 1.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸Aldiss Brian, *Trillion Year Spree* (New York: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988), p 14.

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