MESSENGERS FROM THE STARS
EPISODE V

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

MENSAGEIROS DAS ESTRELAS
MESSAGERS FROM THE STARS

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

FACULDADE DE LETRAS
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The talk briefly considers a number of different approaches to the definition of science fiction as a genre, arguing that a taxonomical approach is unhelpful. Considering genres as indirect reflections of social changes and preoccupations, the talk locates some of the roots of science fiction in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the post-Enlightenment philosophical consensus that formed in its wake. It then poses the question of whether the opposition between faith and reason, which has overshadowed much of European history, can be resolved through the addition of a third term that stands at right angles to both. This third term is directly relevant to the fictional handling of contemporary social, political and philosophical issues in science fiction, ultimately defining science fiction in terms of its aims and concerns rather than its subject matter.
Perspectives on Nature and Corruption in Tolkien’s World

Andoni Cossío (UPV/EHU)
Nature Triumphs: Echoes of The Ruin in J.R.R. Tolkien’s
The Lord of the Rings

Common sense argues that a writer with a personal appeal for Old English who worked as a Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford for twenty years (1925-1945) must have had been influenced by this scholarship. From that starting point, this paper aims to provide a comparative study of how nature prevails over man-made works as in the Anglo-Saxon poem The Ruin from the Exeter Book, which is echoed in some descriptions in J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings. With that intention in mind, a modern and quite literal translation by Kevin Crossley-Holland of The Ruin (2009) is compared and contrasted with three descriptive passages of ruins in The Lord of the Rings: the remains of now extinct civilisations as found next to Trollshaws, at the foot of Amon Hen and North Ithilien including Minas Morgul. It is not difficult to perceive that all three of Tolkien’s passages, bear a slight if not strong resemblance with their Anglo-Saxon counterpart. The description, tone, imagery and topic portrayed in The Ruin could have fascinated Tolkien, a writer deeply immersed into the Anglo-Saxon world, due to his personal ecological stance. Conscious or unconsciously this may have triggered the inclusion of the theme in his passages, which echo elements from the poem. Even if this were not the case, it would seem that both the writer of the Anglo-Saxon poem and Tolkien must have shared a similar mindset on the representation of how nature triumphs over man-made works.

Marc Brun Sánchez (UPV/EHU)
The Source of Corruption in J. R. R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings

Since the first Industrial Revolution and up to our current days, there has been an exponential growth in the power of technology over nature and over humanity. Simultaneously, people’s concern about the changes that an excess of this power may inflict on human nature has equally increased, and it still does. This has led to many expressions of concern in society throughout all cultures and times, which shows the universality and importance of the topic.
Literature is one of the major instruments of these expressions, especially Fantasy, and J. R. R. Tolkien was one of the main exponents of the 20th century in this field. Particularly in *The Lord of the Rings*, he projected his ideas regarding this highly relevant issue, motivated greatly by his experience of the terrors of World War I. The industrial transformation of Isengard has typically been analysed by scholars as the principal reference to this issue in the novel, but the One Ring is another great example. It is presented as a device which provides utter and destructive power, corrupting practically every individual that interacts with it. However, is it really from the Ring that the characters' corruption emerges, or does it have another source? The aim of this paper is to answer this question through the analysis of a spectrum of those characters and their interaction with the Ring either by touch, sight, speech or thought in order to determine the true source of their corruption.

**Maddi Susperregi Mújica** (UPV/EHU)

*Evil in The Lord of the Rings and Norse Mythology, the creators of the Otherness: from Morgoth to Loki*

Monsters, evil creatures, powerful wizards, spirits or even gods have many times been considered part of “the Other”. These individuals do share some common characteristics that are socially described as different, abnormal and in many occasions evil. This can be a reason why one may have quite a negative idea of what being the other really means. This “otherness” can be seen as a negative characteristic but it can also be positive in a person’s / character’s personality. The aim of this study is to analyze otherness in some characters from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion* (1977) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) as well as from the Norse myths from the *Eddas* considering their origins, deeds and aims among others.
SESSION 1B / SESSÃO 1B

Identity, Alterity, Genre(s) and Gender

Ana Durão Correia (ULisboa/ULICES)
“We all can be who we are. No more. No less” – Objectivist ethics in Mord Sith and Confessors’ groups in Terry Goodkind’s The Sword of Truth

Written by American writer Terry Goodkind, The Sword of Truth (1994-2018) is a series of epic fantasy novels set in a complex sword-and-sorcery world. It has received worldwide appraisal ever since and had a television series based on the novels, titled Legend of the Seeker (2008-2010). Goodkind’s novels are character-driven. His work is more than just traditional fantasy because of their focus on philosophical and human themes. In fact, Goodkind is an explicit supporter of Ayn Rand’s Objectivism. The characters, plots, and themes are clearly and directly influenced by the writer’s work. Objectivism is described as a “philosophy for living on earth”, completely grounded in reality, with one’s own happiness as the moral purpose of life. It rejects emotions as tools of cognition and claims that reason is man’s means of knowledge. On this paper I shall focus on how the Objectivism axiomatic key tenets are applied specifically to two elite female groups, the Confessors and the Mord Sith. Their powers are ruled by love and anger, respectively. However, they construct and deconstruct notions on ethics, identity and the self because their magic is submitted to important Objectivist virtues such as pride, honesty, integrity and rationality. My purpose is to reflect on how these characters shape their personalities and powers and their view on the nature of reality by evoking and/or acting on Objectivist principles. For visual purposes only, some images from the TV Show will be used to help the audience get acquainted with the two groups.

Gabriela Debita (University of Galați)
Femininity and Alterity: The Dragon Women of Ursula K. Le Guin’s Earthsea

The second Earthsea trilogy, consisting of the novels Tehanu and The Other Wind and the short-story collection Tales from Earthsea, has been hailed as a feminist revision of the initial trilogy. As the center of power moves from Roke to Havnor to Gont, and the focus shifts from magic to the secular and the domestic, multiple female characters emerge in a world in which women had been marginalized and silenced: an older Tenar, the dragonchildren Tehanu and Irian, and the Kargish Princess Seserakh. And yet, in this changing world in which women yield power, they continue to be unequivocally “other.” In her human form, Tehanu is disfigured and crippled, while Irian’s physical strength, innate magic and desire to pursue training on Roke mark her as anomalous. More importantly, Orm Irian and Tehanu are
simultaneously human and dragon, and although their ultimate purpose is to heal ancient rifts between the two species, the series’ end sees them leaving the human world on the “other wind” along with the rest of dragonkind, raising questions about their humanity and ability to be part of the human order. This paper will analyze female characters in the final Earthsea novel, The Other Wind, in order to prove that, contrary to the findings of prior criticism, women of great power do not fit comfortably into the new order of this fantasy universe. On the contrary, they continue to be defined by their otherness and even depart the human dimension of the universe to enter a different chronotope (“the other wind”), whose name itself suggests alterity.

Emilia Musap (University of Zadar)

**Why is “It” Gendered - Constructing Gender in Alex Garland’s *Ex-Machina* (2015)**

Alex Garland's directorial debut, *Ex-Machina* (2015), follows the story of Caleb Smith, a programmer who wins the opportunity to visit the CEO of his company, Nathan Bateman, at his secluded estate. After signing a non-disclosure agreement, the Blue Book’s CEO reveals to Caleb that he is to be the human component in the Turing Test. As Nathan explains, the Turing Test is “when a human interacts with a computer. And if the human does not know they are interacting with a computer, the test is passed” (00:10:32-00:10:40). However, it is necessary to emphasize that the movie approaches the subject from the assumption that artificial intelligence already possesses consciousness, seconding the significance of Nathan's experiment. Although the rules of the test emphasize the importance of the interviewer being hidden behind a computer in order to prevent the possibility of being visually impacted, Nathan engages Caleb in a tête-à-tête with his creation Ava. By immediately revealing Ava’s artificial body, readily recognized within the male/female binary, Nathan invokes the question of gender identity in relation to embodiment. Drawing inspiration from the feminist critique of gender (Butler, 1990; de Beauvoir, 1949) the paper aims to position the cyborg’s body as an object of manipulation and control, as well as question the following presumptions: primarily, that the body of the cyborg is always gendered, despite the many technological possibilities of its construction, and secondarily, that male and female cyborgs share a completely different storyline where the female ones are positioned almost exclusively as sexual objects and/or love interests and are coded as heterosexual.
In this paper I will analyse types of food and ways of feeding in the *Harry Potter* series as a way to define the human and the monster. Throughout the series we see many examples of moments with food that not only help the plot to move forward, but also contribute to define the characters of the series, both psychologically and physically: the students of Hogwarts have their many mouth-watering feasts at the Hogwarts Great Hall, Harry and his friends eat to their hearts’ content at the Weasley’s home, the Burrow. In opposition, werewolves, such as Fenrir Greyback, desire human flesh, Dementors devour the souls of human beings for their sustenance and even ghosts attempt to experience the joys of food from which they are inevitably deprived. The series antagonist, Voldemort, is one of the characters that is never seen eating. However, I will be showing that defining the identity of humans and monsters through food is not a straightforward process and that there are many ways to do so. Nevertheless, the main focus will be given to a few specific moments from the series that contain food. For this analysis I will be using theoretical approaches to Food Studies such as Massimo Montanari (2006) and David. M. Kaplan (2012). Additionally, I will be using references related to Fantasy such as John Grant (1997), John Clute (1997) and Joseph Campbell (1949). I will also use studies on *Harry Potter* made by David Colbert (2001), William Irwin (2010) and Gregory Bassham (2010).
From its inception, fantastic fiction has often been tasked with redefining the position of the individual in its social environment, at times outlining a path towards a reintegration in the norm, and at time disrupting conventional sets of rules to carve out antinormative spaces inside the dominant discourse. Urban fantasy, in particular, shows an unprecedented potential to represent and possibly overcome the fragmentation of our perception of the "real" and of contemporary displacement (Attebery, 2014; García, 2015). Configured as a chaotic intersection of heterogeneous social practices, the metropolis enforces at the same time a strict policing of its citizens, categorizing them by way of class, race, gender, and adherence to the dominant cultural discourse, in fact isolating and repressing "otherness" (Pleßke, 2014). This paper aims at highlighting how this contradiction is foregrounded in China Miéville’s novel King Rat (1998), in which generational and social conflicts are transposed into a spatial metaphor (surface vs. underground) as well as a corporeal one (pure vs. hybrid). Using the German tale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin as the main hypotext, Miéville encapsulates London's threatening underbelly and its uncanny inhabitants in a fine net of intertextual references, yet letting the protean bodies of his characters slip through to forge their own narratives. Through Saul, the half-human half-rat protagonist of the novel, the metropolis is made permeable and re-imagined according to a new cartography: one traced by smells and sounds, in which sewers, docks, and urban landfills substitute the forged image of "Millennial London."

One of the most common features in the majority of portal-quest fantasies is the medieval-like setting in which the story occurs. In some novels, there is almost no regard for technological advancement, in some there is even a rejection of it, whilst in others technology can be found in an early stage. This can raise multiple questions regarding how technology might play an essential role in shaping worlds of fantasy and furthering the borders of the genre itself. In The Wheel of Time series by Robert Jordan we are shown glimpses of a past that was very technologically advanced. The fabled Age of Legends was a prolific time for scientific development that was almost completely lost three thousand years later. The time period in
which the story occurs is very lacking in technology, but by the end there can be found projects that foretell how technological progress will look in the next generations, which is also witnessed through visions of the near and distant futures. In this paper it will be explained how the past and the future in The Wheel of Time contrast with the present in a technological point of view. With that in mind, the aim is to understand if and how Robert Jordan’s work, a model of the portal-quest fantasy, embraces or rejects technology, and if in embracing it, it might affect and, therefore, subvert the classic setting for this particular type fantasy.

Mark Taylor (National Research University, Moscow)

“Merely Parts of the General Observer:” The Space Fiction of Olaf Stapledon and J.W. Dunne’s Experiment with Time

For Olaf Stapledon, a sense of isolation is a routine aspect of the human condition, but not a necessary one. Imagining billions of years of human evolution in his novels Last and First Men (1930), Last Men in London (1932) and Star Maker (1937), Stapledon postulates in these works that meaningful connection between minds is possible. Among these, Star Maker most explicitly suggests that a “world-mind” might one day be awakened, allowing for the “telepathic communion of the whole race.” This paper will consider the mechanical understanding of telepathy and the ‘world-mind’ in Stapledon’s work. While mind-to-mind communication is a feature of many of his novels, the mechanism by which it operates has received little direct attention. This may in part be because Stapledon himself styles telepathy a “barren extravagance” in the introduction to Last and First Men, and one which he “might easily have omitted” with only “superficial alteration of the theme.” This paper rejects Stapledon’s marginalization of this aspect of his work, finding instead that, for Stapledon, meaningful connection between minds is achievable, and an essential first step towards the divine. The paper focuses upon commonalities with the understanding of mind-to-mind contact found in J.W. Dunne’s Experiment with Time (1927), an essay read by Stapledon. Dunne’s essay extrapolates unhesitatingly from his apparent experiences of precognition in dreams to build a layered model of consciousness, whereby all individuals are observed (and potentially guided) in their experiences by an infinity of higher selves, unconstrained in time, and ‘merely parts of the general observer.'
From Shelley to the World

Teresa Gibert (UNED)

Exploring the Essence of Humanity through Science Fiction: From *Frankenstein* (1818) to the MaddAddam Trilogy (2003-2013)

“What does it mean to be human?” is one of the central questions posed by Margaret Atwood in *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the first instalment of her dystopian MaddAddam trilogy. In this novel, a near post-human future is vividly envisaged through the interaction between the seemingly last human left on earth and a new species of hominids genetically engineered to replace humans after a man-made plague. In order to explore some of the key issues related to the various possible definitions of humanity in the twenty-first century, Atwood resorts to intertextually using, among many other sources of inspiration, not only Mary Shelley’s most popular work, *Frankenstein* (1818), but also her lesser-known novel *The Last Man* (1826), inverting both narratives through generic parody. The protagonist and focalizer of Atwood’s satiric novel, Jimmy, is depicted both as the apparently last human survivor and as a monstrous Snowman. His even more monstrous counterpart, Crake, plays the role of the mad scientist who, like a modern Victor Frankenstein, becomes a creator of humanoid life. He designs the bioengineered Children of Crake or Crakers according to his ideal of perfection, erasing all the negative aspects of humanity (e.g. warfare, environmental destruction, sex slavery, rape, child abuse, and the anxieties of old age) and introducing those features intended to improve the existence of these beautiful and gentle humanoids, who are programmed to stay in tune with nature and refrain from predation, but end up being derogatorily dubbed “Frankenpeople” in *MaddAddam* (2013), the final volume of the trilogy.

Aline Ferreira (University of Aveiro)

Born or Made? The Future Politics of Biorobotic Reproduction

In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* the question of who is born or made haunts the narrative, as it was to haunt many other tales revolving around human-made creatures, not of woman born, in the intervening 200 years, a theme saliently addressed most recently, perhaps, in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). Indeed, the search for biological origins and the yearning to be born, not made, are among the most pressing questions at the heart of some recent fictional and filmic examples. The aspiration to be human and the fear of not being fully human are fundamental structuring themes in Marge Piercy’s *He, She and It* (1991) and in *Blade Runner 2049*. In Piercy’s novel, a possible criterion for determining the distinction between human beings and
humanoid robots consists in the former having been “born from a woman”. In Blade Runner 2049 Officer-K’s deep-seated yearning is to have been born, not made, an ambition he pursues throughout the movie. The possibility that a replicant woman might have become pregnant and given birth is portrayed in the film as nothing less than a miracle, a redemption, signalling a paradigm shift from which there would be no going back, with the hybrid replicants moving ever closer to humans, regarded as the ideal to be attained at all costs. In Karel Čapek’s R.U.R. (1920), a text with some salient prefigurations of Blade Runner 2049, not only do the robots take over the humans but they also manage to reproduce. The aspiration fictionally attributed to biorobots and replicants to become pregnant and give birth in the “traditional” way stands in an illuminating tension with the ambition many real-life women entertain of having artificial wombs at their disposal. After all, what is at stake here is the meaning of what it is to be a human being. Will future humans born from an artificial uterine environment be regarded as less human? Will hybrid, humanoid creatures born from female androids be closer to humans? These boundaries will certainly become increasingly blurred and more porous. Is natality a necessary precondition for humanness? These and related questions will be addressed with recourse to recent theoretical work on the posthuman and biorobotics (Braidotti 2013, M. Jelisavcic et al., 2017) as well as the philosophical questions around the shifting attributes of human nature (O’Byrne, 2010, Hauskeller 2014).

Fran Pheasant-Kelly (University of Wolverhampton)

Science and Fragmentation in Two Film Adaptations of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein: Frankenstein (Whale, 1931) and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (Branagh, 1994)

The notion of fragmentation is integral to Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) in the obvious assembling of the creature and its subsequent animation. However, the relationship between particularisation in science and the bodily fragmentation of Shelley’s narrative is further extended by analysing two later film adaptations of the novel. The first, directed by James Whale in 1931, presents Shelley’s monster as a robotic figure, suggesting automation as an influence and electricity as a source of life. Its mechanical figure movement echoes developments in mechanisation typical of the time, as well as the related theme of automatism associated with the Surrealist movement. While electricity (as a force comprised of electrons) is central to Whale’s version, then so is the Surrealist movement concerned with fragmentation in its aesthetic of automatism. Contrastingly, the monster of Kenneth Branagh’s 1994 adaptation is corporeal and abject, although the spectator is made aware of the monster’s assembled form by cinematography that emphasises the crude stitching that knits its body together. Engaging theoretically with Raymond Williams’ concept of ‘a structure of feeling’ (2011) and histories of science and medicine, this paper argues that the visual disparity between the two film adaptations in comparison to the source text discloses a visual chronicle of medicine and science that is tied to the concept of particularisation in diverse ways. Keywords: Futurism, abjection, structure of feeling, particularisation, medicine, science.
The Subversion of Tradition in Stephen King’s *The Gunslinger* and Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*

**Martin Simonson (UPV/EHU)**

**European Narrative Traditions in *The Gunslinger*, Stephen King’s Fantastic Western**

In this paper, I wish to discuss the lingering presence of a number of distinctive narrative traditions that were developed in Europe and subsequently combined and exported to the US, packaged as “fantasy literature”. Indeed, one of the defining features of mainstream fantasy from the twentieth century and on is the cross-breeding of European literary traditions of the past, updated and modified to the taste of contemporary readerships. Stephen King’s *The Gunslinger*, the first part in his Dark Tower series, is an example of how the comparatively new myth of the American West provides additional narrative layers to the mélange of older traditions and creates a new type of Western. I will show this by looking at how epic literature, medieval romance, and the Gothic novel converge in King’s narrative, filtered through the myth of the American West, to provide yet another twist of the old narrative traditions present in the genre.

**Raúl Montero Gilete (UPV/EHU)**

**Disenchanted reality in King’s portrayal of the American West**

How important was the mythical image of the American West in King’s imagination during the creation of *The Gunslinger* (1982)? A lot, judging by the result. King expressed a desire to create a novel that would contain the spirit of search, adventure and magic of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), but located in the space of the American Wild West in the style of Sergio Leone’s spaghetti western *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). The latter elements, however, provided a significant twist to the message of hope that was present in Tolkien’s tale, as King’s fertile imagination conjures up contemporary cultural references from the American West and ends up writing a tale of a disenchanted reality.
Anti-authoritarianism may be a common theme in most YA and fantasy stories. We just have to look at both classical works such as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C.S. Lewis and modern works such as the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling or Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy, among many other. However, the aim of this paper is to analyse how Pullman’s novels go beyond the broad strokes of an evil force or an oppressive government and delve into how authoritarianism is seen through a theological lens, referencing works such as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, which look at the relationship between religious belief and how those are imparted or imposed on those subjected to a church’s reach. We will also look at how a young heroine’s objection to ideological tyranny and institutionalised belief and leaders is framed within a traditional quest for freedom but how this secular fantasy trilogy may be innovative and different from traditional fantasy literature.
Fragments of Humanity (I)

**Ângela Fernandes** (ULisboa/CEC)

**New Humans in Elia Barceló’s Short-Stories**

The short-stories collected in the volume *Futuros Peligrosos* [*Dangerous Futures*], published in 2008 by the Spanish author Elia Barceló (b.1957), offer different scenarios of human lives, in both individual and social terms, thus inviting to a deep reflection on topics such as cloning, artificial intelligence and medical procedures to postpone or overcome death. We will analyse Barceló’s short-stories considering the rhetorical strategies that guide the description of human beings, and the way limits and distinctive features are suggested. Special emphasis will be placed on the topic of aging and body reshaping, as developed namely in the story “Mil euros por tu vida” [“A thousand euros for your life”], where the mind-body debate is clearly instrumental. In addition, we will identify the main ethical discussions implicit in the different forms how these fictions forecast the future of humankind.

**Fernanda Luísa Feneja** (ULisboa/ULICES)

**“We are all Human”: identity and Deconstruction in Robert Heinlein’s “The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag”**

Robert A. Heinlein is considered one of the most prominent writers of the Golden Age of Science Fiction (SF), a period in the history of the genre corresponding to the 1940s and deeply connected with the key role of SF editor John W. Campbell. Even though Heinlein's most successful achievements, including awards, already belong to the subsequent period, his early works also provide pertinent readings from today's standpoint. “The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag”, first published in *Unknown Worlds* in 1942, clearly departs from SF genre conventions; James Gifford, one of Heinlein's major critics, actually refers to it as a “fantasy/horror” novella. As fantasy, however, the story relies on narrative elements found both in SF and in fantastic texts: the conflict between human and nonhuman beings, the fight between good and evil, and the questioning of empiric reality itself. This paper sets out to analyse how “The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag” complies with the characteristics of the fantastic and how humanity, reality and one's perception of it are consistently questioned as the story develops; on the other hand, the cohesive structure, as well as the symbolic and mythical framework of this narrative, will also be discussed, as key aspects to a reading of the human – or nonhuman – experience represented in the story.
David Callahan (University of Aveiro)

The Infected Body and Disenchantment with Ourselves in The Last of Us

Peter Sloterdijk writes in Bubbles of the nature of the “enchantment of humans through humans”, and how “[a]mong humans fascination is the rule and disenchantment the exception” (2011: 207-208). This paper would examine the extent to which the current swarm of dystopic representations of undead or infected and supposedly non-human bodies calls into question the survival of this enchantment and perhaps projects the fear not of the Other, as several commentators have suggested, but the fear of our own potential for meaningful connection with those who most resemble us. With all bodies perpetually under threat of being repurposed against our will, the body becomes the primary staging ground of humanity in a future in which all other routes to identity formations have been cancelled. The principle example of such representations to be interrogated will be the critically acclaimed video game The Last of Us (Naughty Dog, 2013), albeit with nods to other contemporary texts featuring forms of undead and infected, including The Walking Dead (both graphic novels and television series), Fear the Walking Dead, and Colson Whitehead’s Zone One.
SESSION 3A / SESSÃO 3A

Fragments of Humanity (II)

Mokshda Manchanda (Ambedkar University)

Modes of Estrangement: Science-Fiction and the Human Condition

At the heart of all questions put towards Science-Fiction and Fantasy, lies a common curiosity to understand its social and political relevance. How does Science-Fiction work? What does it do? How can hybrids and monsters allow us to reflect on notions of self and identity? How do dystopian fictional worlds come to be more than just fictional, as they seep into the human consciousness as premonitions of what’s to come? Amidst the chaos, what is it that makes us human? How does one then understand the self and its fragments? Drawing on theories of foregrounding, estrangement, and naturalization, my paper shall attempt to answer these questions. The fragmentary nature of the human-self develops as one is conditioned, and simultaneously defamiliarized, with reality. Concepts of complicity and resistance lie within this fold of dynamics of power, not as binaries but as interchangeable fragments of the self. Texts of Science-Fiction and Fantasy, whether dystopian or utopian in their medium, not only expose these fragments, but also unfold a realisation in the reader’s mind with respect to their immediate reality. While Bertolt Brecht called it Verfremdungseffekt (in his work A Short Organum for the Theatre), the concept is further discussed by Fredric Jameson (in works such as Archaeologies of the Future) and Darko Suvin (in “Estrangement and Cognition” and Metamorphoses) in context to Science-Fiction. My paper shall attempt to develop their theoretical framework further, while also applying it to two popular texts of science-fiction (that also borrow from Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein), namely Alan Moore’s V for Vendetta, and Mikhail Bulgakov’s A Dog’s Heart. While Moore’s work belongs to the canon of visual cultures, Bulgakov’s is a classic Russian novel. The two texts shall allow me to critically engage with the aforementioned theoretical concepts in both the iconic and linguistic mode.

Alexandra Cheira (ULisboa/ULICES)


Director/ co-screen writer Guillermo del Toro has described his latest film as “a fairy tale for troubled times”. In fact, in the award-winning and critically acclaimed The Shape of Water, beauty is “the embodiment of otherness”. Hence, some people see its non-human water
creature “as beauty, and some see [it] as a filthy thing that needs to be studied and tortured and kept at bay”. I am interested in exploring this dichotomy in the three films I will analyse in this paper with regards to the way non-human or ethically problematic beings. (Child) robots in Artificial Intelligence, gilled amphibian creatures in The Shape of Water and human clones in Never Let me Go allow us to reflect on, and redefine, notions of self and identity by problematising what lies at the core of definitions of humanity. I argue these films explore and problematise a biological definition of humanity vis-à-vis a personal and social construction of humanity. Consequently, by analysing contesting definitions of humanity, I will also explore the way non-human characters/ human soulless clones in the three films are invested with human qualities which will render them more human than some of their biologically human counterparts.

**Kyung-Sook Shin (Yonsei University of Seoul)**

**The “Chain of Existence and Events”: Rethinking Narrative Community of Humans, Half-Humans, and Non-Humans in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, The Last Man, and Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**

This paper explores into the nature humans, half-human others, and non-humans represented by Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818), The Last Man (1826) and Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) and how they suggests that we (as agents of our epistemological and emotional practices) radically revise the ideas of anthropocentric kinship by critiquing the politics of colonization and the fiction of ‘scientific’ classification, which have contributed to the shaping the modern world as we know it. I begin with a simple premise that the ideas of kin and kind is fundamentally paradoxical as it confirms “sameness” or the state of belonging to the same “kin” by resorting to the “otherness” of the other (“not my kin” or “not of my kind”) as Lévi-Strauss has shown. And yet, as Derrida says about “genre,” the principle of categorizing the “kind” (of “family,” “race”, “species,” organisms, matters, and so on) may reveal that the idea of belonging to the same kin and kind may be inherently fictional. The beginning of the paper then is followed by the three middle sections in which I show how each of the works I choose to discuss skeptically questions the ideas of the “kin” (and thus “kind”) and sees it as the site of “impurity” and “contamination,” to borrow Derrida’s words, which compel us to revise the notion of humanity. The creature in Frankenstein, the diseased other in the Last Man, and the androids in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? exemplify respectively the half-human, human, and non-human others, who challenge and force the reader to negotiate our re-membering the fragments of humanity. The fourth section of the paper shows that the three texts problematize the modern and post-modern ideas of human community by calling for a radical re-vision of the politics of (human) community and our epistemological and affective practices. I will conclude by arguing that the three (post-) apocalyptic novels suggest a possibility to engender what Haraway has called “chkthulucene” context through the formation of a radical narrative community across species.
(De)Constructing *Westworld*

**Flávia Rodrigues Monteiro** (Federal University of Minas Gerais)

“Violent Delights and Violent Ends:”
Shakespeare and HRI Dynamics in *Westworld*

Based on the 1973 homonymous film by Michael Crichton, *Westworld* is a SF TV series produced by HBO. The plot revolves around an amusement park where humans seek a Wild West experience, filled with violence and vice, by interacting with the “hosts,” robots designed to “follow a plot” and please the guests. Shakespearean references emerge in several episodes, evoking and questioning concepts on human nature. Quotes from plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest* are not gratuitous resonances of the Bard; instead, they reveal layers of significance on characters, plot, and thematic constructions. Resonances from *The Tempest* are particularly worth of attention for this play holds historical importance to on-screen SF tradition. *The Tempest* inspired the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet*, a great influence on posterior SF works. Since this “adaptation” extends the dynamics of dominance and subordination from Prospero’s island to HRI (Human–robot interaction), it plays a precursory role in the SF tradition, paving the way for this thematic exploration in *Westworld*. “Affect theory” approaches human emotions and how they guide human behavior; in *Westworld*, it sheds some light on the progression of HRI and the natures of human and artificial intelligence as it may explain how the guests’ violent delights trigger their violent ends. Moreover, “affect criticism” reveals the reversion displayed by the series as dehumanized people and humanized robots put in check (pre)conceived notions of power and identity. The birth of conscience in synthetic bodies contrasts with the dying humanity (moral compass) in organic bodies. Identity is a fluid concept because robots develop emotions and humans seem to lack them. Therefore, Shakespearean resonances support these thematic recurrences of the SF genre in *Westworld*: HRI and issues on human and robotic constitutions.

**Amaya Fernández Menicucci** (University of the Basque Country)

The Soft-Skinned Cyborg and the Steel-Hearted Human:
(Dis)Embodiment and Identity De(con)struction in *Westworld*

This paper addresses body configurations as representations of the process of self-constructions of both human and non-human characters in Jonathan Nolan’s and Lisa Joy’s series *Westworld*, produced by HBO and first launched in 2016. In particular, I shall explore the extent to which bodies are deployed as *loci* of hybridisation, agency and subversion, as
human and non-human identities merge into a post-human reality that is both material and virtual. As far as non-human bodies are concerned, cycles of destruction and reconstruction of the material dimension of robots in the fictional microcosm of the eponymous theme park seem to provide non-human characters with a hyper-human ability to transcend the limitedness of the material sphere that inscribes them. They are thus endowed with what is arguably a quintessential human trait, and are, indeed, portrayed in such a way as to elicit a sympathetic response from the viewer. Playing this identification against Donna Haraday’s cyborg theory, a triangle emerges in which the literally fragmented body of the robot and the divided loyalty of the viewer meet the fragmented identity of human characters. The latter’s corporeal dimension, despite being sometimes beaten and tortured, remains untouched by the dismantling and re-assembling to which synthetic bodies are subjected. Yet, the human minds that inhabit Westworld are as fragmented and subjected to artificially-induced reconfigurations as the former’s bodies are. What is more, once the soft-skinned robots become undistinguishable from the morally questionable humans, both seem to embody science-fiction definitions of the Other, the Alien and the Abhuman.

Diogo Almeida
(ULisboa/ULICES)

The Sum of Our Parts: Exploring Westworld’s Themes

Sci-Fi as a genre has frequently explored themes such as dystopias, Artificial Intelligence, human-like robots and the inevitable conflict that arises from the clash of humans with these constructs, where the line between Man and Machine is blurred. One such work to feature these themes is the HBO TV Series Westworld (2016). The show, whose first season combines a dystopian future with a reimagined past, is one of Sci-Fi’s greatest current successes on TV, and it’s clear why. In a sort of brutal amusement park for adults, visitors take the role of villains while machines strive to hold on to any shred of humanity they have been programmed with. This paper will explore Westworld’s themes, which range from the Cinematic (Westworld, 1973, dir. Michael Crichton) to the Literary (Shakespeare’s plays) to the Biblical, and will try to delve into the motivations of some of the show’s most intriguing characters, such as the Man in Black. In this analysis, perhaps the reason for Westworld’s success might become apparent, as we find why it resonates with audiences. Sci-fi is known, after all, for putting Humanity’s faults on display through its darkest reflections.
SESSION 3C / SESSÃO 3C

Science Fiction, Fantasy Literature and Cinema

Luís Filipe Silva (Writer)

Ménageries of an unstable Canon: Some Notes on Four Portuguese SF Short-Story Anthologies Compiled by Portuguese Editors

Most early anthologies of science fiction stories (usually translations) published in Portugal during the second half of the 20th century were bound to explain their existence either in superlative terms (e.g., "the best SF") or by fitting their contents under a common theme (e.g., "stories about space" or "soviet science fiction"). However, occasionally other criteria were also used to explain the stories selected – among those was the concern to "explain" to the readers the nature of science fiction while also attempting to define the genre. The editors would then append story notes and contextual introductions to a readership that supposedly need guidance. These attempts made us aware of the frustration of the endeavor of trying a definition of Science Fiction, but at the same time they concurred to trace borders and identify potential transgressions. This paper proposes a brief analysis of four SF anthologies published in Portugal during the second half of the 20th century in order to identify convergent and divergent trends between them, the different perceptions of SF developed by their editors and how did the anthologies stand against other international selections (nowadays considered canonical).

Jaqueline Pierazzo (FLUP/CETAPS)

Between Fantasy and Terror: The Fantastic Transformation of Edgar Allan Poe’s “Berenice”

Edgar Allan Poe is praised for both his fantastic and his terror tales. Actually, it is exactly the presence of fantastic elements that guarantees some of his short stories to remain within the domains of terror instead of horror, as described by Ann Radcliffe in her article “On the Supernatural in Poetry”. According to Radcliffe, horror is the result of a direct shock of the reader with a horrible situation, whereas terror is due to the possibility, and not actual observation, of a horrible episode. In other words, terror is characterised by a certain obscurity in the treatment of horrible events, whereas horror, on the contrary, is characterised precisely by the exposure of the violence of these events. One of the most important strategies used by Poe and other terror writers in order to create and maintain the obscurity central to the achievement of the effect of terror is the use of fantastic elements. In this sense, considering Tzvetan Todorov’s ideas regarding the duality reality-imagination, I intend to consider the relation between fantastic and terror in Edgar Allan Poe’s tale
“Berenice”. I shall make use of names such as H. P. Lovecraft and David Punter in regard to the concept of terror and Rosemary Jackson in regard specifically to the connection between terror and the fantastic.

Nelson Pinheiro Gomes (ULisboa/ULICES)

From Geek to Cool:
The Impact of Space Opera and Other Narratives on Sociocultural Trends

From the beginning, Space Opera has asked questions such as “what does it mean to be human?” and “where are we going as a society?”, presenting a range of utopian and dystopian human narratives that influenced popular culture. This took place in specific niche groups – or urban tribes – but we are now seeing a mainstreaming phenomenon of these narratives that go beyond the original “group fans”. In this sense, we explore the impact and dissemination of cultural objects like Star Trek and Star Wars, among others, to understand why these narratives have become so popular and what do they say about current urban tribes, mainstream and emerging mindsets. The analysis of sociocultural trends presents itself as the area of inquiry to understand the dynamics of this dissemination within a complex cultural system. It is important to explore how these narratives were appropriated by mainstream and how other phenomena, like The Big Bang Theory television show, helped to establish a new perspective on Space Opera. This way, we can understand the impact of this genre and how it became an object and a symbolic repertoire for consumer culture and sociocultural trends.
Science Fiction, Fantasy, Women and the Other

Elisabete Lopes (IPS/ULICES)

Skin and Body Parts – Echoes of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus* (1831) in *May* (2002) and *Replace* (2017)

Drawing on the Gothic tradition of Mary Shelley’s famous literary work *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus* (1831), both the films *May* (2002) and *Replace* (2017) set out to explore the topic of fragmentation particularly focusing on the experience from the feminine point of view. May and Kira are protagonists who appear, throughout the films, highly fragmented and vulnerable. Due to their fragmented psyche, they end up by becoming psychopaths devoid of empathy, only centred upon the pursuit of their own selfish goals: May wishes to create the perfect friend by means of joining together a set of ideal body parts, whereas Kira wants to accelerate the cure of her ailment by using patches of skin taken from other human beings. Frances Ferguson argues that Frankenstein’s monster’s skin’s thinness mirrors its fragmentary nature, as it represents “an unsuccessful effort to impose unity in his various disparate parts.” (Fergusson, 1984: 8,9) In turn, Maria Purves asserts that this fragmentation is a common trope within the gothic narrative, as “The feminine has long been associated with fragmentation and seen as lacking the integrity of the masculine.” (Purve, 2014: 81). In this context, both May and Kira are presented to the viewers as somehow “incomplete” since they seek in others the parts that they miss. However, if on the one hand the viewer can relate to them as suffering victims enduring a pain that parallels them with Mary Shelley’s monstrous creature, once they start assuming Victor Frankenstein’s role themselves, the sympathy of the viewers abandons them, as the girls embark on a chaotic and violent journey in the search for their identity. In this pursuit, both young females become true incarnations of the monstrous woman as conceptualized by Barbara Creed. This new role will bring to surface all that is “shocking, terrifying, horrific, [and] abject” (Creed, 2012: 1) about them. Much like Victor Frankenstein, they can be said to embrace a bloody personal project that will eventually lead them to psychic disintegration and mental alienation.
Maria Markova (Russian State University for the Humanities)

**Between Frankenstein and Sleeping Beauty:**

*Bring Me the Head of Prince Charming and the Resistance of a Genre*

Fairy tales nowadays are often regarded as an easily-manageable bunch of plot lines. Retellings are numerous, but the more of them are being written, the more obvious it becomes that original fairy tales have some inertia of their own. The struggle with genre is evident in Roger Zelazny and Robert Sheckley’s novel *Bring Me the Head of Prince Charming* (1991). Falling into the category of humorous fantasy, the novel is constructed around the Sleeping Beauty plot, re-staged by the demon trying to prove that humanity is evil. He creates a prince and a princess from the parts of different bodies, all having their own memories, and relies on those memories to ruin the happily-ever-after. However, a human happens to be more than genetically or historically conditioned apparatus, as he has a will of his own. But so does the fairy tale, and the protagonists’ conscious actions are determined by the genre, counteracting the fantasy frame. Here, “stochastics of chances” of fantasy (Lem, *Fantastika i futurologia*, 2008) concedes to tradition, individual memories concede to collective memory, memory of a body concedes to “memory of a genre” (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 1984). This paper aims to discuss the ways in which the inner will of the fairy tale plot itself and of the genre as a whole is resisting the external will of the puppet master (be it the demon-protagonist or the writers themselves), triumphing over any invasions of the “foreign” fantasy genre while paradoxically forming a part of it.

José Vieira Leitão (University of Coimbra)

**Life through Divine magic or Human science:**

*An exploration of Frankenstein in light of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa’s Three Books of Occult Philosophy*

In Mary Shelley's masterpiece *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus*, as an inspiration for young Frankenstein's interest in the creation of life, the works of authors such as Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus are often quoted as those opening the door to his lifelong obsession. Taking this lead, this paper aims to explore these mentioned sources, with particular emphasis on Agrippa and his own ideas of Divine magic as a means for the acquisition of Godhood and the capacity for the non-sexual generation of life. This can be understood as the ultimate purpose of his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, where Agrippa places down a ‘bread-trail’ path for the ‘re-spiritualization’ of the creative power of Man, so as this could invert the consequences of the Biblical Fall and become a procreator of spiritual beings in union with God. What is thus aimed is an exploration of the conception of Frankenstein’s creature, and Frankenstein’s own attempt at a magico-scientific Godhood in an age of disenchantment, and how these compare with Agrippa's ideas. To compare Agrippa’s magical creation of spiritual beings and Frankenstein’s scientific creation of life in reanimated flesh, with the creature as the crossroads of these contradicting conceptions.
Thea Boshoff (University of South Africa)

The Aliens of Orion

In order to get a grasp of what it means to be human, we need to examine ‘the other’. In feminist science fiction, there is a tradition of aliens, as the other, representing a female threat to the patriarchy. This paper proposes to investigate whether this might still be the case in modern popular science fiction written by feminist authors. The gender landscape has gained significant depth since groundbreaking feminist authors such as Octavia Butler and Ursula le Guin contributed to our understanding of what it means to be human and gendered. Do current feminist authors of science fiction still present humans as human? How do these authors present humanity (particularly in terms of gender) through the depiction of what is alien? Using The Sentients of Orion by Australian author Marianne de Pierres as case study, a number of intimate encounters involving aliens are examined to show how a new generation of women authors re-define humanity by creating a “new” role for what is alien.
Language, Body and Narrative in the (Post)Human Imagination

Heeyeon Kim (Yonsei University)

A Narrative Competition:
Frankenstein’s Last Storyteller VS A.I.’s Memory Capsule

This paper approaches how the theme of narrative contention between Frankenstein and his creature in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) has partaken in shaping the depiction of A.I.’s desire for narrator positions in the two films: Spike Jonze’s *Her* (2013) and Michael Almereyda’s *Marjorie Prime* (2016). Shelley’s novel is a frame narrative composed of an outer story- letter correspondences between Mrs. Saville in England and her hubristic brother Walton, and an inner story- Frankenstein and his creation, which not only suspends our disbelief of the fantastic (as we are given historical artifacts, letters as proof), but metaphorically contains the creature’s desire for narrative competition, to rupture out from the inner crust to a foregrounded reality, from a being-narrated position to a narrator that directly corresponds with Walton. The creature’s desire to narrate, engage Frankenstein in hearkening to his story, and elicit sympathy runs parallel with Samantha’s polygamous relationship with humans, striking up numberless conversations and narratives by its unbridled access to users’ personal data in *Her*, and an interestingly distorted version in *Marjorie Prime*, where that narrative competition happens among A.I.s, contending on the authenticity of their stories and memories. While Frankenstein’s creature is trotting the world with its fragmented body pieces sutured up, looking for potential sympathetic listeners, A.I.s are willing to disperse into fragmented consciousnesses to take up much of the narrative spaces in people’s lives, to demise in a narrative competition among themselves. Finally, the paper comments on the relationship between willed and voluntary fragmentation that has stemmed out of narrative desire.

Cherin Myung (Yonsei University)

Why Did Androids and A.I.’s Fail to be Humans?:
Androids as Substitutes and Fragmented Humanity in Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Spike Jonze’s *Her*

Despite the nearly 50-year gap between the first publication of Philip K. Dick’s 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and the release of Spike Jonze’s 2013 film *Her*, the possibility of humans developing intimate relationships with A.I. remains among the central themes being probed in both works. Juxtaposing the relationship between Rick Deckard and
Rachael Rosen, a humanoid robot in the novel with that between Theodore Twombly and Samantha, a computer operating system in the film, this paper first aims to read parallel patterns of human/non-human relationships in both texts. The two human protagonists initially encounter their A.I. counterparts amid despairing solitude – exacerbated by either dysfunctional or failed marriage – and somehow end up resorting to the companionship of the artificial beings to fulfill their emotional and practical needs. However, the two men’s (mis)recognitions of their counterparts as not being fully human ultimately hinder their relationships from developing into more equal, fulfilling, and intimate relationships. This stems in part from Rick’s and Theodore’s self-centered characters, but this paper further intends to observe the shared sense of fundamental and incommensurable disparity – mental as well as physical – between humans and A.I. represented in the two works. Rick continues to take notice of Rachael’s lack of human feelings besides her oddly girlish body, which is very different from that of an organic, full-grown human female. Theodore repeatedly questions Samantha’s ontological reality as a programmed mentality, not to mention that the absence of her physical body is a critical issue in their relationship. The paper will conclude by briefly reviewing the significance of the organic body in the two works and what kind of cultural anxiety it reveals.

Jiah Hur (Yonsei University)

A Linguistic Love or a Stitched-Up Body? Frankenstein’s Physicality and Her’s Voice

This paper aims to discuss a re-definition of love that is sustained only by the use of language - that of hearing and enunciating - represented in Spike Jonze’s film Her (2013), and show how Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818), its emphasis on sight and hearing in garnering sympathy - may have shaped our contemporary imagination of relationships between human and non-human, non-human as fragmented entities. In a world where maudlin sentimentality is merchandised, Theodore of Her is a surrogate letter-writer to “verbalize” every emotion and struggles to lead a romantic relationship with the A.I. Samantha which seems purely “linguistic,” as the supposed A.I. is equipped only with a voice and is absent of a physical body. To what extent can solitude, lack of connection and sympathy, be compensated for, only by the use of language - exchange of words, enunciation, hearkening to stories? The paper attempts to connect the film to Frankenstein’s creature, whose intellectual voice, ironically, is the only sufficient means to forge potential relationships with humans, while its gruesome physicality is precisely what alienates the creature from human connections. Fragmentation, from Shelley to Jonze, has somehow been re-defined in terms of a change in hierarchy among the senses: from a horrific “sight,” an ugly patched-up body that alienates the creature from human community, to a beautiful voice absent of body. How is genuine love or romance portrayed in between creations with absent bodies but polygamous voices, is it possible to be sustained through language, what are the limits of language absent of carnality – are what the paper wishes to address.
The Importance of Evil, Darkness and Slavery in the *Harry Potter* and *Earthsea* Cycle

**Belén Galván** (UPV/EHU)

“*The Voldemort Within*. The Evil Inside the Good in J. K. Rowling’s Fantastic Series

The *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), written by J. K. Rowling, narrate the adventures of a young student of witchcraft which is constantly menaced by a powerful Dark Wizard known as Lord Voldemort. All along the books, Harry and Voldemort are usually portrayed as contraries (hero and anti-hero) in a balance in which Harry represents the pureness of the human being and Voldemort is described as the epitome of evil: he is cruel, inhuman and with Nazi-like political tendencies. But there are several moments throughout the series when Harry seems very similar to Voldemort; for instance, if we take a close look to the final step of the seventh book, we can see how it suggests that Harry and Voldemort are likely to be two sides of the human nature, more than totally different types of characters. The main aim of this paper is to explore the duality between these two antagonists; the study of the human qualities and the boundaries of the human nature as portrayed in the series (what makes the difference, so far, between Harry and Voldemort) would be an important task in order to see what it implies to the moral reading of the series that Harry carries such an inhuman part inside him. Different examples from *Philosopher’s Stone* (1997), *Order of the Phoenix* (2003) and *Deathly Hallows* (2007) will be outlined to show the ambiguity between good and evil, with special regarding to the theme of death.

**Iker Arangay Jaso** (UPV/EHU)

*Slavery in the Harry Potter Series*

J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels are among the most famous literary sagas in the world, and studies about the author and her novels are fairly common. The aim of this presentation is to analyse the way in which slavery is represented in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels. For that end, first some basic background about fantasy literature and a general overview of the slavery process in Great Britain will be introduced, together with a section that deals with how Rowling may have been influenced by both issues. Secondly, I will deeply analyse the way in which slavery is portrayed through house-elves in the Harry Potter series. In order to do that, a deep analysis of the seven Harry Potter novels will be made, trying to find as many quotes and evidence as possible that will help to understand the way in which the author
wanted to depict such a controversial issue. Finally, a conclusion will summarize the whole presentation and will underline the most relevant ideas.

**Ekaitz Icazuriaga Escalera (UPV/EHU)**

*From Dementors to Voldemort: Fear and Darkness in the Harry Potter Series*

This paper examines the representation of the culture of fear in Rowling’s well-known saga *Harry Potter*, taking the main figures of darkness as the subjects of this study. The main focus of this paper is to seek to what extent J. K. Rowling was influenced by ancient writers in this topic and personal experiences to create this dark side of her story. From dementors to the character of Voldemort, Rowling was able to create a dark atmosphere where the good and the evil had to fight as in the classic myths and legends. This study follows the line of some researchers such as Noel Chevalier or Birgit Baltzar who have already tried to seek this issue.

**María Cristina Valerio Tejada (UPV/EHU)**

*Traces of Nineteenth Century Poetry in Ursula Le Guin’s portrayal of “The Dry Land”*

As conscious beings, we humans are uniquely aware of our mortal condition and know that our time on earth is ephemeral. Far from resigning to our nature, and out of utter fear of a dead void, we have vainly sought ways of defeating death, both physically and spiritually. The idea of a mystical afterlife much more enjoyable than earthly life is widespread across cultures, and has helped countless people to approach death in a much less reluctant way. Literature has reflected the popularity of this belief practically since its beginnings, but in the nineteenth century, due to all the new scientific discoveries, the notion of a mystical or divine afterlife began to be seriously called into question, and these doubts were also reflected on the texts of those times, greatly influencing later generations. In this paper, I aim to analyze how the idea of the afterlife, either after some apocalyptic event or after death, is portrayed in Byron’s “Darkness” and Christina Rossetti’s “Cobwebs”, and how they compare to Le Guin’s portrayal of “The Dry Land”, which is present above all in *The Farthest Shore* (1972). In order to do so, I will be drawing similarities between the poems and Le Guin’s narrative and see whether these common features can tell us something about the European traditions that could have influenced her writing.
Session 5A / Sessão 5A

Science Fiction, Fantasy and the Human Condition

Beatriz de Almeida Santos (NOVA University/CETAPS/JRAAS)
The Embrace of a Cage: Inter-Species Symbiosis and Human Resentment in Octavia E. Butler’s “Bloodchild”

Octavia E. Butler’s “Bloodchild” (1984) is, among other things, a story about inter-species contact and consequential symbiosis. The Terran presence in a new territory enables the exploration of the potential of the human body when deprived of gender and racial associations. Moreover, it creates a scenario where one finds their cage comforting, resenting both the cage itself and their fondness of it, bringing about the question of self-identification, loyalty and necessity. This paper aims to address how these issues are presented in “Bloodchild” and how the Terrans, who may be described as human refugees, react to them, and to explore the humanity of the natives of this foreign territory.

Marlene D. Allen (United Arab Emirates University)
Octavia Butler’s Fledgling and the Revision of the Vampire-Human Story

Octavia Butler’s final novel, Fledgling, is a provocative retelling of the vampire story. Usually, the vampire is a white male who uses his supernatural powers to prey upon and dominate humans. Critics of the genre often read this story as racialized and the vampire-human relationship as following a master-slave paradigm. Butler rewrites this archetypal tale in Fledgling both by changing the physical nature of the vampire, called Ina, and by advocating for a different human-vampire relationship. The protagonist, Shori Matthews, is part human and part Ina. Shori is birthed through a genetic experiment in which her Ina parents mix their DNA with that of an African American woman. Her humanity gives her biological advantages over the other “purer” Ina, such as the ability to walk in the sun and to stay awake in the daytime. In addition, Shori also challenges the Ina’s notions on how to interact with humans. She prefers to live in a state of “mutualism” with the humans upon which she feeds, providing benefits to them in return. The Silks, another Ina family, violently attack Shori and her family because they fear that Shori’s humanity will pollute future Ina bloodlines. The conflict between Shori and the Silks is a metaphorical representation of fears about miscegenation from the past and the idea that mixed bloodlines lessened the power of those humans deemed biologically superior. Butler's novel challenges these ideas by advocating for peaceful coexistence and shared bloodlines as healthier alternatives for both species.
Fernanda Carvalho (Federal University of Minas Gerais)

What We Might Have Been: Humanity and Animality in Angela Carter’s “Wolf-Alice"

Fairy tales have been traditionally used to instruct readers, especially children, in terms of morality and proper behavior. However, when they are revised by writers such as Angela Carter, the very elements that convey moral values are undermined and questioned. This paper aims at analyzing the short story “Wolf-Alice”, which can be read as Carter’s version for the tales “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Beauty and the Beast”. In her story, Carter uses the figure of the werewolf, which is a traditional symbol of the animality that supposedly lies inside transgressive human beings, and that of a child raised by wolves, a trope commonly used in literature to discuss the effects of civilization on human nature. “Wolf-Alice” addresses the complexity of the distinction between animality and humanity, as the characters are in-between these two spheres of categorization. The focus of this paper, besides the labeling and marginalization imposed on these characters by the other so-called civilized human characters in the story, is mainly on the girl Wolf-Alice’s and the werewolf Duke’s senses of themselves. In the analysis of these aspects, the notions of abjection and transgression are used to demonstrate that Carter’s short story illustrates the social construction not only of proper human patterns of behavior, but also of improper ones. Moreover, instead of a cautionary tale against the animal, uncivilized side of human beings, the short story suggests that a deeper sense of humanity may live in people like Wolf-Alice, that is, in those who are not shaped by artificial and biased social rules.
In recent years, the major body of research that has been conducted around the literature of Ursula K. Le Guin has been carried out taking into consideration her science fiction production. This has led to this author’s fantasy production been, in a way, left aside. However, the truth is that Le Guin’s fantasy literature, namely her Earthsea cycle, can be as rich as her science fiction and grant researchers opportunities to work in many different codes, one of these being, for instance, post-colonialism. In fact, we could argue that colonialism, although majorly implicit and not too overt an issue in this saga, can be found at the very root of the civilization of Earthsea. Hence, by means of a post-colonialist perspective, this paper aims at analyzing three prominent figures that appear in the different books that compose this cycle by Le Guin: Ged, Tenar and Tehanu. More specifically, we will track the path that each of them walks from the point in which they lose (or are deprived of) their true identity, until they are able to recover it. For this, Homi K. Bhabha’s study on colonialism will be very useful, since ideas like ambivalence, hybridity, liminality or mimicry will help us understand better the inner battles for identity that the aforementioned characters fight.

In a postmodern era where the spatial has gained unprecedented relevance, the characters in A Song of Ice and Fire relate to place in the most peculiar ways. From the urban settings of Kings Landing and the Free Cities to the wild lands beyond the Ice Wall, each character experiments locations from a different point of view depending on their social status, culture, religion, or personal capabilities. There are some characters who have a detached or observational experience of place due to their privileged position, and take part on it more as cartographic agents, while others are visceral painters of the day-to-day itineraries. On the ice Wall and the lands beyond where the harsh natural environment prevails, dwellers are forced to set aside all mundanities of urban life, and the human experience of place in itself becomes observational, far from the sheer viscerality of the biocentric one. In this context, it is the Skinchangers and Wargs who act as porous beings between the human experience of the land and the animal or vegetal, gifting the reader with glimpses of a world where nature is at the core, and hinting at a less anthropocentric view of the environment. The aim of this article is to show how the porosity of Skinchangers and Wargs in A Song of Ice and Fire may help us to have a more inclusive understanding of the natural world by diminishing the feeling of Otherness, and making us reflect on our own humanity in a different light.
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