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A Note from the Editors

WELCOME to the latest issue of the Eaton Journal of Archival Research in Science Fiction. This issue features articles that reflect on the politics of archival finds. Drawing on traditional archival scholarship, forging new frontiers in science fiction archiving, and reflecting back on the legacies to be found in the science fiction archive, these articles offer a glimpse into the future of archival research.

Jennifer Lieberman’s article performs an act of literary resurrection, recovering the literary legacy of early twentieth century Harvard physicist John Trowbridge. Drawing on extensive archival research, Lieberman makes the case for Trowbridge’s place in the history of science fiction. Though not previously considered an early science fiction author, Trowbridge’s stories for boys feature precise scientific experiments and explanations that serve both as instruction and encouragement for future scientists and engineers. Though not particularly speculative, these stories fit very neatly with Gernsback’s later claims for scientifiction’s political and pedagogical value. Lieberman makes good use of archival sources to situate Trowbridge’s fiction and nonfiction in the political and generic currents of early twentieth century science fiction.

Next is Sean Matheroo’s interview with filmmaker Craig Baldwin. In a philosophically freewheeling discussion, Matheroo and Baldwin talk about history, politics, science fiction, and, of course, the archive. Baldwin’s irreverent approach to filmstock—cutting, pasting, reversing, and remixing—offers a radically different approach to archival work, one that is coherent with his historical and political philosophies, and evident in his films. As a nod to the filmmakers’ approach, the article makes full use of its medium, with numerous embedded links to cut up and enliven the reading experience, pushing its readers towards multimodal immersion.

David Ian Paddy’s missive from J.G. Ballard’s archive takes us on a journey through Paddy’s discoveries. This brief report explores the relationship between the items Ballard preserved—more than one might have expected, given his views on archiving—and the sort of work to which a scholar can put these items. Along the way, we are treated to some surprising sentimental discoveries, offering us not just a great insight into Ballard’s archive and Paddy’s project, but also into his view of Ballard the man.

Finally, we have two Spotlight essays reflecting on important Science Fiction milestones. First, Lisa Mikhaylova chronicles the traditions and communities of Star Trek fans in Russia. While many retrospectives have been written in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the original 1966 premier of Star Trek, Mikhaylova focuses on an understudied community within Trekkie and Trekker culture, describing the food, games, and community-building activities that take place at the week-long camping convention RusCon. Mikhaylova’s archive of photos, stories, and other fan materials explores how Roddenberry’s utopian ideals can be transformed into local
practice. The second of these Spotlights takes a different approach to local Utopianism. Irene Morrison, in collaboration with Klein Librarian J.J. Jacobson and the Eaton Archive, curated an exhibit on “500 Years of Utopia,” commemorating both the 500th anniversary of Thomas More’s *Utopia* as well as the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek*. Morrison’s spotlight includes images and information about the exhibit, arguing that the principles and genre conventions of Utopia are reworked and remixed within contemporary science fiction by writers of color. The exhibit, with its showcases of rare books, illustrations, maps, ephemera, and realia, is currently only viewable at the Eaton Archive in Riverside, CA, but we hope to offer a glimpse of this archive for the wider public.

The publication of this issue sees some changes in how we are structuring the sections for the journal, along with some changes in our editorial personnel. Lisa Brown-Jaloza has stepped down as Managing Editor, and the responsibilities of helming the journal have been taken over by Stina Attebery and Taylor Evans. Brittany Roberts will join Lisa in retirement from Journal duties after this issue. We wish Lisa and Brittany the best in their future careers in the field, and thank them for all of their enthusiasm and hard work.

We are delighted to introduce an entire cadre of new editorial talent. Skye Cervone and Jeshua Enriquez will be taking over as editors for scholarly articles with a significant archival research component. Skye Cervone is a PhD Candidate in Comparative Studies at Florida Atlantic University whose current work focuses on science fiction’s disruption of the human/animal boundary. In addition, she currently serves as the Public Information Officer for The International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts. Jeshua Enriquez is a Ph.D student in English at the University of California, Riverside. His research revolves around Science Fiction and American literature, with a focus on the ways technology affects ideas of modernity, community, and culture.

Miranda Steege and Dagmar van Engen will be helming the newly created Methods and Transformations section, a sections we have designed to replace the former Pedagogy and Methodology section. “Methods and Transformations” will serve as a space for articles that seek to expand the bounds of the SF archive, exploring new mediums, materials, or discourses as sites for speculative fiction scholarship with particular attention to understudied archives, underserved communities within science fiction, and SF performances, practices, and participatory events that challenge traditional archival methods. Dagmar Van Engen is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at the University of Southern California. Their research focuses on American science fiction, queer theory, transgender studies, race, and animality. Miranda Steege is a Ph.D. student in English at the University of California, Riverside. She works in Victorian literary and cultural studies and queer theory; her research includes Spiritualism and the supernatural, queer intimacies, selfhood and subjectivity, and transhistorical fan practices.
Finally, Daniel Creed and Kameron Sanzo will be taking over the Spotlights section. Daniel Creed is a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Studies at Florida Atlantic University. His current research is focused on developing a theoretical model for secondary world fantasy literature through postcolonial theory, epistemology, and a postmodern understanding of the imagination. Kameron Sanzo is a PhD student in English at the University of California, Riverside. Much of her work considers science fiction literature, bioart, and posthuman discourses in order to grapple with the possibilities and limits of science to describe our social condition.

Looking ahead, we will be holding an Eaton Journal sponsored roundtable discussion about archival work, fantasy, and epic at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts in March 2017. After the success of our previous Eaton roundtable (transcript published in Issue 3.1), we look forward to turning our attention to a more overtly fantastical, rather than speculative, archive.

As always, we would love to have your voice both in and beyond our pages. Email any submissions to eatonjournal@gmail.com. If you should find yourself tweeting about the journal or a conversation it inspires, mention us with the hashtag #eatonjournal. Feel free to follow our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/eaton.journal/ for announcements about our publication.

Best,

Stina Attebery
Taylor Evans
Managing Editors
Introduction: Recovering John Trowbridge

DURING the turn of the twentieth century, electricity was the life force and death spark of the day. It signified sympathy and cutting-edge science. It rewired how Americans understood their own bodies and their status as “moderns”. Although electricity was studied and celebrated in previous centuries, the social meanings of this energy changed appreciably in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The electricity of this era was no longer the static energy Benjamin Franklin had studied. The “imponderable fluid” that the founding father identified in lightning and in Leyden jars had since been “tamed” by industry and discovered everywhere in nature—from the crackling atmosphere surrounding Yellowstone Park’s “Electric Peak” through the electro-chemical reactions of human neurons. The old social meanings of electricity were not overturned by these discoveries and applications. They were overwritten, like a palimpsest, with new and sometimes incommensurate connotations. As the cultural meanings of this energy accumulated, one luminary adopted electricity as his primary object of study and as his guiding metaphor. As a professor of physics at Harvard University and a novelist, John Trowbridge examined electricity from multiple angles throughout his kaleidoscopic career. By recovering Trowbridge, this paper examines the capaciousness of electricity as a cognitive metaphor at the turn of the twentieth century.

Trowbridge represents a salient case study because he was prolific as both an author and a physicist. According to the National Academy of the Sciences biography of the professor, he published *The Electrical Boy* (1891), *Three Boys on an Electric Boat* (1894) and *The Resolute Mr. Pansy* (1897), along with popular science books about his field of study, *The New Physics* (1884), *What is Electricity?* (1896), and *Phillip’s Experiments in Electrical Science* (1898). He wrote these books during the prime of his academic career. In fact, he published at least seven articles—in the *American Journal of Science*—in the years between the release of his first and last novel. He simultaneously undertook his literary and technical experiments, and the trace of his concurrent writing practices remains apparent today. His technical know-how suffused his novels, and his literary proclivities inflected his scientific writing.

In this respect, John Trowbridge’s fascinating body of work demonstrated the permeable boundaries between art, literature, and science during the turn of the twentieth century. His catalogue of fiction and non-fiction works likely fell between the literary-historical cracks for precisely this reason: studies of this era typically emphasize specialization rather than cross-disciplinary play. Although art and science were seen as mutually enriching modes of cultural production during the early nineteenth century, scholarly accounts of the *fin de siècle* have examined how the formation of disciplines like electrical engineering, changes in the American university system, and the rise of objectivity as a value in science all worked together to sever art from science in the American cultural imagination. Trowbridge complicated this conventional narrative by specializing and still insisting upon the relevance of literature in science and of science in literature.
Trowbridge’s work confounded expectations in more ways than one. During his lifetime, libraries classified his novels as juvenilia intended for a fifth- or sixth-grade audience. But these texts were published by presses with a significant market share, including Little, Brown & Co—a fact which suggests that he may have attracted a wider reading base. More importantly, Trowbridge used rhetorics that we now associate with divergent generic traditions. He wrote sentimentally and sensationally, but he also wrote with mimetic exactitude. Indeed, his scientific descriptions were more than realistic—they were technically accurate. While his contemporaries were writing utopias and dystopias that exaggerated electricity into a nearly magical force, Trowbridge wrote novels that described how to build actual circuits.

Since Trowbridge stood apart from writers of his day, we must confront the limitations of our current categories for classifying (and, concomitantly, analyzing) nineteenth-century fiction if we wish to comprehend his texts. For example, I identify Trowbridge as an early science fiction writer because his novels offered detailed explanations about how to build electrical apparatuses. Yet they may not meet the more nuanced and reader-focused definition of science fiction that Darko Suvin, Samuel Delany, and Paul K. Alkon proffer. Trowbridge did invite his readers to interrogate their values, as these students of science fiction would expect. But the physicist-writer did so in a manner more closely associated with sentimental novels than with sf. Rather than defamiliarizing language or imagining a world of heretofore unimaginable possibilities, Trowbridge asked his audience to sympathize with characters who just happened to be electrical experts. If the author “estranged” his readers in Suvin’s sense of the word, it was by focusing on the perspectives of children who saw the world in a different way than cynical adults did. Alkon, Suvin, and Delany’s definitions of sf are thus necessary but not sufficient for interrogating Trowbridge. To analyze this author, we must also read him alongside sentimental fiction, Edisonade dime novels, and other popular forms of the day.

Although he has been difficult to taxonomize, it is worth noting that Trowbridge was not completely forgotten. His novels were not annotated in Thomas D. Clareson’s authoritative bibliography of turn-of-the-century science fiction, but the polymath professor was remembered by at least two recent scholars. In *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern American*, Carolyn Thomas de la Peña mentions the author briefly to illustrate a larger point about all that electricity could signify in the late nineteenth century. She explains: “In John Trowbridge’s *The Electrical Boy*, a young orphan manages to climb electric wires to reach his mother in heaven” (107).

That summary was not strictly accurate. In the first chapter of *The Electrical Boy*, the orphan protagonist, Richard Greatman, climbs a telegraph pole with the hopes of finding his mother. As a result, he is expelled from his tenement home and forced to find shelter with an electrical toy maker. This mentor (whose name Richard does not yet know) begins molding Richard into an “electrical boy” by teaching him “how to connect wires to batteries, how to set up batteries, and how to manipulate electrical keys” (*The Electrical Boy* 39). That apprenticeship ends abruptly, when the police raid the toymaker’s home and arrest him for stealing power from city lines. Alone again, Richard’s abandonment serves as a plot device: it places him in situations where he can use electricity to hone his skills. Many of these episodes resemble dime-novel literature of the day. By the end of the novel, the child savant has used electricity in a gambling den, a doctor’s office, a circus, and
many other typically adventurous settings. Peña’s mention of this novel highlights the youthful innocence with which Richard idealized electricity; her study does not examine the more technically accurate descriptions that pervade the novel. In fact, she did not need to dig into greater detail. Her brief mention was sufficient to prove that, in fiction and other cultural fantasies of the era, “a bit of electrical know-how allowed one to transcend physical limitation” (Peña 107).

Roger Luckhurst shed more light on Trowbridge’s first novel in his encyclopedic study, *Science Fiction*. In a chapter about pulp fiction and the Edisonade, Luckhurst mentions *The Electrical Boy* briefly, noting: “The affinity of boyhood and electricity was made explicit from the earliest days of this fiction: John Trowbridge worked out the whole typology of the orphaned boy-inventor in *The Electrical Boy* in 1891, suggesting an equation of the ‘electrical influence’ with ‘the quick and natural intelligence of the child’” (54). As Luckhurst insinuates, Trowbridge shared with other speculative fiction and children’s literature writers a preoccupation with educational themes. Indeed, I will argue that the correlation Trowbridge drew between primary education and electricity is one of the most interesting and consistent elements of his oeuvre.

Luckhurst and Peña’s brief citations are the only two references I could find, after searching for scholarship on Trowbridge for almost a decade. (Unfortunately, my search for information on Trowbridge was complicated by the fact that he published alongside a more prominent American author who shared his name: John Townsend Trowbridge. In several libraries, their works are misfiled, shuffled together.) This singular author left too faint an impression on our histories of American literature or science fiction; most of his work has been forgotten in the last century, despite his interesting perspective on literature and science. The few scholars who remember the man mention only one of his novels—and they discuss this small fragment of his work only cursorily. Luckhurst and Peña both invoked Trowbridge brusquely in the service of their larger arguments about American literary and technological culture. Yet what stands out about these citations is not their insufficiency; it is their evocativeness. Neither scholar needed to cite *The Electrical Boy* to make their broader points. They referenced this book because it was too unusual to be elaborated upon and too interesting to remain unmentioned. In other words, these passing references to the book are beacons, pointing future scholars to an artifact that demanded attention from a different angle.

These beacons sustained my interest in *The Electrical Boy*. They indicated that some small community of scholars had cared enough about this text to cite it, if only glibly. This fact helped guide me to the Eaton Collection, where I read widely in various genres in my attempts to make sense of Trowbridge’s experiments on the boundaries of science and fiction writing. Here I explored the Edisonade, sentimental children’s literature, and inventor’s biographies. I found no definitive analog for Trowbridge. He fit in all and none of these subgenres simultaneously. In each class of literature, I found resonances that helped me understand his unique interventions as a writer-scientist. These resonances suggest that we should open up our categories of study to account for such unusual artifacts that defy our conventions of historicization.
The Art and Science of Trowbridge’s Novels

Trowbridge’s most popular book, The Electrical Boy, represents more than a scientific practitioner’s dalliance in literature. The fact that it was popular enough to remain in print for multiple editions suggested that a (presumably young) reading public was interested in a blend of adventure and usable scientific detail. This unusual text announces its cross-disciplinarity the moment a reader encounters it. Its very cover promises interesting depictions of literary sentimentalism and electricity (see fig. 1). The title appears in a playful, lightning-bolt font. The binding is further adorned with a stylized sketch of power cables, a drawing of a cherub, and the Shakespearean verse, “I’ll put a girdle round about the Earth in forty minutes.” This book embodies more than a text to “close read”; it is an artifact designed to announce its marriage of literary taste and technological fancy.

Beyond their bindings, Trowbridge’s books betray their cross-disciplinarity by blending technical and fictional illustration styles. The Electrical Boy includes four plates drawn by George Brant Bridgman—a life-drawing expert who mentored Norman Rockwell, among others (see fig. 2). Such plates were common in popular literature of the time. They were designed so that they may be removed from the book and hung on a reader’s wall. Yet this novel also includes illustrations in the body of the text that resembled technical drawings (see fig. 3). Note the stylistic similarities between Figure 3 and the electromagnet illustration from his technical book for adults, The New Physics (see fig. 4). This blend of visual rhetorics codes The Electrical Boy as a hybrid between inventor-adventure fiction and scientific, educational literature. Each of Trowbridge’s novels included hybridized scientific and literary rhetorics in this manner.
piece of copper wire with the iron pole of this battery. The carbon pole he connected with the water pipe in the attic. The dead wire was thus in circuit with the

by which, with the expenditure of mechanical work, we could produce strong currents of electricity. Suppose we should wind a ring of iron with wire continuously (Fig. 111), and then revolve this ring between the poles of a permanent horseshoe magnet, the plane of the ring being perpendicular to the axis of revolution, which in turn is perpendicular to the plane in which the poles of the permanent magnet are placed. While one of the spires of the wire on the ring is ap-

Fig. 4: John Trowbridge, The New Physics (New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1888): 238
These parallels are textual as well as visual. Each novel includes a title page that announces the writer’s impressive day job: “Professor of Physics, Harvard University.” This detail lent his books cultural credibility. It also prompted readers to attend more closely to technical details. Those who did so would not be disappointed. Unlike many other early science fiction writers, Trowbridge did not narrativize the potentials and limitations of speculative scientific discoveries. Instead, he described how to build simple electrical apparatuses. He wove these instructions into chapters that pragmatically paralleled the young-adult literature of his day. While Edisonades imagined young people building usable flying machines to embark on adventures, Trowbridge’s young protagonists marveled at flying toys that his readers could learn how to build.

For example, when “the electrical boy,” Richard, first encounters an electromagnet, the narrator explains: “An electro-magnet is simply a number of turns of copper wire on a spool, -- like a spool of thread, with a nail thrust through the hole in its middle” (The Electrical Boy 82). He also details how to build a battery with simple objects like flower pots (74) and how to build a galvanometer (202). Such asides enable inclined readers to build devices as they read along. Indeed, Trowbridge wrote fiction, in part, to help his audiences master basic electrical principles. But his novels were more than embellished technical manuals. The Electrical Boy and The Resolute Mr. Pansy, in particular, develop engaging plot-lines and round characters. More importantly, they discuss art and electrical science together, helping readers to see how these fields of knowledge grew in tension or in tandem with one another.

At times, Trowbridge seems to pit literature against electrical science. In The Electrical Boy, a role-model character, Henry Gresham, “gave Richard some of [James Fenimore] Cooper’s novels to read. He was amused to find that the boy preferred a book on electricity” (258-259). Twenty-first century readers, living amid “two cultures” contestations like the infamous “Science Wars,” might find such passages dismissive of literature. But Trowbridge invests in the literary tradition by writing for readers who would enjoy the thrill of literary fantasy and usable, technical knowledge.

An Electrically Charged Pedagogy
The complex relationship that Trowbridge draws between literature, art, and science becomes most apparent in his discussion of pedagogy. Trowbridge does more than explain electricity; he also characterizes the learning process as electrical. In the process, he develops a pedagogy that is broad-minded enough to imagine, first, that scientific knowledge would be enhanced by artistic and humanistic study and, second, that children should be exposed to every type of human endeavor so that they may discover their own proclivities. Thus, although Richard’s mentor George Greatthings is himself an electrical inventor, he deems Richard’s love of electricity to be an accident of fate or opportunity. He explains:

Your mind…is probably becoming set upon the subject of electricity. I doubt if you will ever devote yourself to another subject. I believe that a boy gets a turn for a certain thing earlier than we generally suppose. I believe that it would be a good thing to have large arcades, radiating from a central station, through which we could be trundled when we are beginning to observe things. These arcades could be
covered with pictured paper representing the various arts and the history of the world. A bent could thus be given the boy very early. (170-71)

This passage obliquely alluded to electricity: the structure of Greatthings’ edifice of knowledge resembles power plants of the day, which were often called “central stations.” In this idealized model, young boys would pass like electrons down conduits in search of a type of knowledge that would spark their interest. This passage frames electrical science as only one of many exciting options for study, while it models the ideal learning process in terms of power-transmission infrastructure. It suggests that children should learn like an electric plant, even if they do not want to learn about these systems.

In The Electrical Boy, Trowbridge develops this distinctive pedagogy in his descriptions of Richard Greatman. Richard is an electrical savant, and his adeptness represents a convergence of form and function: this character has a knack for electrical science because he is physiologically electrical. The narrator first portrays Richard’s brain with an analogy: “The quick natural intelligence of the child strangely resembled the electrical influence which was also at the beck and call of the old man [George Greatthings, an electrical experimenter]” (41). Here, Richard’s mind appears electrical in that it is like a switch that a mentor can turn on and off. Greatthings, Richard’s anti-heroic mentor, later reiterates this characterization by describing the boy as a “Pretty small battery” with a “Big electro-motive force” (113).

Trowbridge elaborates upon these analogies by describing all children’s minds as electrical. He explains:

Greatthings had decided views in regard to the education of boys. He would have them know how to use their fingers in the first place, in order, as he expressed it, to draw off the charge in the brain and dissipate it through the fingers. It did not matter much what kind of a charge was put into the brain. The way to make the charge strong was to keep turning a crank of some sort and to put in the same kind of charge. The study of electricity, said Greatthings, was a suitable subject for boys. It interested them, kept them from the low pleasures of the street; and the result might in time benefit mankind. (173)

As Luckhurst recognizes, this understanding of the child’s mind extrapolated upon timely electro-medical descriptions of the human body to make a case for studying electricity and for teaching children to work with their hands. For example, in 1881, electro-medical doctor George Miller Beard (famous for coining the diagnostic term “neurasthenia”) described the human body as functioning much like “Edison’s electric light.” Beard teased this analogy out for two full pages, indicating the significance of this comparison.

Beard was not the first or only expert to identify the body as functionally electrical. As Laura Otis and Timothy Lenoir have argued, Hermann Helmholtz and Emil DuBois-Reymond had understood the body as functionally electrical since 1851. Otis explains that “these comparisons between organic and technological systems were not mere devices for popularization but became incorporated into the
scientists’ own vision and understanding of the nervous system” (“Metaphoric” 106). In this context, Trowbridge’s descriptions of the child’s electrical mind could appear to contemporary readers as both scientifically accurate and metaphorically appealing. Glimmers of this medical metaphor—and of its applications to pedagogy—pervade Trowbridge’s larger body of work, especially including his final novel, The Resolute Mr. Pansy, and his quasi-nonfiction text, Philip’s Experiments.

Trowbridge explicitly reveals his pedagogical reason for linking fictional situations with electrical knowledge in Philip’s Experiments, a book that exemplifies his fascinating blend of fictional and scientific writing styles. He explains that he uses apparently nontechnical details about the world to elicit interest in physics, and he suggests his readers follow a similar program. Addressing fathers, he reasons that it might be easier to teach children a passion for physics than for natural philosophy because the laws of physics are encoded in everything a child might do: “The illustration of the working of natural forces lie about us on every side, and are involved in stretching the arms, in breathing, in riding the bicycle, in swimming, and in sailing a boat” (4). According to this worldview, every thoughtfully crafted action scene might be said to pique his reader’s interest in underlying physical phenomena.

While cultivating interest in physics, Trowbridge also advocates for the “ascetic ideal” that was popular in didactic children’s literature at the time. That is, he constructs industrious heroes who succeed by prioritizing educational enrichment over idle entertainment. He does more than teach children how to learn about electricity or other arts; he models how an idealized learner should behave. Historian of technology Eric S. Hintz notes that a similar emphasis upon ascetic education was conventional in one popular subset of children’s literature: the inventor’s biography. Hintz adds that, “While biographers confidently encouraged reading, they had to be careful about how they presented the attainment of formal education. Certainly, highly literate authors appreciated the advantages of their own schooling and desired a population of educated readers to consume their books. On the other hand, biographers did not want to offend any readers who may not have attended a traditional school” (201). Trowbridge balances similar concerns in The Electrical Boy and in his later work. Although he focuses on pedagogy, he pens underprivileged, often self-educated protagonists. In this way, the professor-writer repeatedly insists that education could best be considered transformational when it occurs outside of formal institutions. The metaphor of electricity underscores this point. According to Trowbridge, the child’s brain was naturally charged and awaiting any outlet for its electrical energy.

Trowbridge’s investment in the subtheme of autodidacticism was most apparent in Philip’s Experiments. This seemingly non-fiction book imparts a series of lessons to improve the reader’s skills for studying art and science. However, Trowbridge couched these lessons within a fictional narrative frame. In this volume, he invents an ideal wife character who was ancillary to the book’s content, but who betrays the writer’s investment in sentimentality—a topic I will return to below. (Despite Trowbridge’s idealization of an ascetic work ethic, the writer did not advocate an unemotional severity.) Trowbridge also invents the son, Philip, and the persona of the father-tutor, for Trowbridge never had children. This cast of fictional characters created an occasion for the book. It enabled the author to structure his lessons as a long-form response to the inquiry of a purported admirer.

The rhetorical convention of the epistolary response was common in fiction and autobiography of the day, and Trowbridge misleadingly coded this book as
autobiographical. Speaking only in the first person, he encourages the reader to imagine that this book outlines a teaching regimen that he used with his own son. Reader expectations for technical literature also play a role here: since Trowbridge offers lessons in supposedly factual fields of knowledge, readers were unlikely to approach the book as a fiction.

Throughout Philip’s Experiments, Trowbridge fictionalizes his own educational and familial experiences in order to encourage parents and children from different educational backgrounds to undertake the study of physics and art in their spare time. In the Preface, the narrator lays out an educational program that defies or supplements institutionalized education. It begins, “Many boys think that they can not [sic] acquire knowledge in any subject outside a school. It is the object of this book to show that a few moments devoted each day, at home, to simple investigations can result in habits of self-reliance and in the acquirement of a modern language and in the study of the art of drawing. I endeavor also to show how to cultivate a taste for mathematics by studying practical problems...” (v). The Preface goes on to explain that educational institutions are inevitably inferior to independent study—a disingenuous claim for a writer who gained ethical appeal by announcing his position at Harvard on the title page of his every book.

While The Electrical Boy and Philip’s Experiments both celebrated the ascetic upstart’s willingness to learn outside of any formal institution, Trowbridge focuses on the theme of formal education most closely in his last novel, The Resolute Mr. Pansy. Where his earlier stories followed young protagonists who use electrical know-how to find adventure and middle-class respectability, this novel offers a fictionalized proposal for reforming middle school curricula in small-town America. Mr. Pansy is enthusiastic about electrical science and committed to improving the infrastructure of his small town by preparing his students to harness this energy. The unconventional teacher inspires disaffected youth to recommit to their education by infusing electrical knowledge and service work into their daily training. He trains his students to illuminate their hometown with hand-made electrical lights. In the process, Mr. Pansy cultivates the teens’ excitement for electric science along with their civic pride.

These plotlines and their attending technical details distinguish Trowbridge’s novels from other didactic children’s literature of his day. Above, I mentioned how Trowbridge’s fiction resonates with children’s books about inventors, like the one that Hintz describes. But the professor-writer’s novels also diverge from this better-established subgenre in one important way. Hintz has noted that texts in the latter genre “provided children with moral rather than technical instruction” (209). In contrast, Trowbridge emphasizes technical accuracy alongside his moral lessons. To the professor-author, technical details are never trivial. They give him a warrant for writing, and they deepened the accuracy of his otherwise romantic stories.

Reciprocally, fictional details were germane to Trowbridge’s technical content. Philip’s Experiments offers an idealized educational program within a fictional storyline about a perfect family; The Electrical Boy explores the moral and technical lessons we might learn from a protagonist with an imperfect home life and limited access to educational resources. In contrast, the entirely technical What Is Electricity? addresses adults and lacked the fictional narrative frame of Philip’s Experiments, but even this book examines the use of metaphor in science: it begins by discussing the insufficiency of the fluid metaphor in popular understandings of
electricity (19). Each of these books suggest that familial and personal contentment will follow from the thoughtful consideration of art, morality, and science, as interwoven pursuits.

In retrospect, we might say that this marriage of science and fantasy was unintentionally injurious. Trowbridge, like other writers of his day, misled readers to imagine that learning about electricity would be enough to bring a poor, orphan child to the middle-class.\(^\text{18}\) In this way, Trowbridge’s ideological investments come to the forefront. His sentimental plots enhance his depictions of electricity—and our understanding of his literary legacy.

**Sentimentality, Science, and Supremacy**

While Trowbridge consistently wrote about an electrically inflected pedagogy, his body of work cultivated other notable nontechnical themes. Aside from didacticism, his most prominent theme was sentimentality. As I suggested above, the writer’s sentimental themes appear most arresting in *Philip’s Experiments*, since this book was marketed as a textbook of sorts. Despite its ostensibly technical agenda, this volume recapitulated ideas from the early nineteenth century sentimental novel about “The Cult of True Womanhood.”\(^\text{19}\) Such incongruous images reveal the extent to which Trowbridge reinscribed the conventions of sentimentality into his understanding of science, and vice versa.

*Philip’s Experiments* includes an invented mother/wife character who meets all of the ideals that were common within the nineteenth-century domestic novel. Like the stereotypical sentimental heroine, this character enjoys ruling the private sphere as a natural-born nurse and mother: “Philip’s mother has never been willing to delegate her offices to a nurse, except at rare intervals… My wife said that she was willing to leave to men the public rostrum and suffrage, if she could have the formation of the character of the coming man” (9). This passage is all the more provocative because it has no relation to the larger premise of the book. *Philip’s Experiments* was a guide for the study of art, mathematics, and electrical science. Since it is packaged as a non-fiction guide, its invention of an idealized mother character reveals Trowbridge’s assumptions about the underlying value of a scientific education. He believes that technical expertise enables men to differentiate themselves from women and to stake a claim to the public sphere.

The flat female character is not the only trope that Trowbridge borrows from sentimental literature. The most sentimental of his texts, *The Electrical Boy*, focuses intently on the protagonist’s electrical and emotional connections with older male characters.\(^\text{20}\) Whether we read the protagonist’s emotional connections as queer or asexually sympathetic, the tone of these scenes in a largely technical text warrants attention because they were published during a historical moment when emotionality was becoming increasingly dissociated from rationality and science. During the early nineteenth century, electricity was closely associated with sympathy. Both were considered invisible, tangible forces that influenced human life.\(^\text{21}\) This association becomes less prevalent in the late-nineteenth century, in part because of the masculinization of science and technology.\(^\text{22}\) Mark Twain famously ventriloquizes this purported schism in his *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), by developing a protagonist who introduces himself as being, “practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose—or poetry, in other words” (20). As readers familiar with this book know, the Yankee did not excel at self-assessment; he overstates his ability to separate his practicality and
sentimentality. Nonetheless, this example establishes the fantasy that reason and sympathy could be disjointed from one another.

Despite the perceived divergence of science and sentiment at the turn of the twentieth century, *The Electrical Boy* persisted in framing sympathy in scientific terms. It suggests that learning to empathize with the poor would constitute “an interesting experiment [...] and one well worth trying,” since treating the poor unsympathetically is “an experiment, the origin of which is lost in the dark ages, and which has never been successful” (69). By identifying sympathetic and unsympathetic behavior as alternative “experiments,” the narrator advocates kindness. According to him, it would be irrational to reproduce an experiment—in this case, austerity towards the poor—that has repeatedly yielded failing results for centuries.

Trowbridge emphasizes sympathetic bonds among characters. He also provokes his readers to feel sympathetic responses. In addition to framing sympathy as a logical response, he adopts a generic convention from domestic fiction: he emotionally appealed to his readers with leading rhetorical questions. To amplify the reader’s sympathy for the orphan protagonist of *The Electrical Boy*, his narrator asks questions like: “Could the tears on the swollen eyelids, and the trembling tender lips be false?” (97). When narrating these sentimental moments, Trowbridge does not employ metaphors drawn from electricity in the same way that he did when describing education. Although sympathy and sentiment were coded as electrical in the early nineteenth century, this late-nineteenth-century novel uses less-charged language to convey its moral lessons.

Nonetheless, the technical electrical details of *The Electrical Boy* amplify the sentimental storyline in two significant ways. First, Richard forge his emotional connections by working with electricity. He entices a wide cast of characters with his technical expertise, attracting admiration that develops into friendship or queer affection. Second, Trowbridge’s descriptions of electrical circuitry—much like his direct address to readers—encourage the audience to empathize with Richard. In other words, by enticing the audience to build electrical circuits alongside Richard, the narrator helps readers identify with him.

To twenty-first century readers, these emotionally appealing rhetorical devices might seem to contrast the jarring racism of Trowbridge’s description of nonwhite characters. For example, in the above-mentioned scene where Richard expresses his disdain for James Fenimore Cooper, his mentor sinisterly agrees. Greatthings recites American-imperialist and white-supremacist ideals, telling Richard: “I read Cooper’s novels when I was a boy…and thought that Chingachgook was a real character. Look at these vagabonds sitting under their blankets, for all the world like poisonous lizards. Do you see any Chingachgooks among them? I wish I could clear the earth of them” (259). This casual paean to ethnic cleansing, juxtaposed with Richard’s preference for technical manuals, suggests that romantic visions of masculinity and racial harmony have no place in the fin de siècle. Instead, this passage hints that modern literature should emphasize white technological prowess over romanticized, humanistic, or pluralistic themes. In *The Electrical Boy*, electrical tinkering helps to forge material and sympathetic connections between white men, who work together in this episode to antagonize stereotypical American Indian characters.

Trowbridge was not alone for representing nonwhite characters unsympathetically within a largely sentimental novel; this popular genre aspired to
help readers learn how to “feel right” and who to feel for.23 Here, too, electricity plays a subtle role in the sympathetic subplot. According to popular mythology of the time, electricity forged connections between white men while leaving indigenous people disconnected and unable to cope with the modern world.24 This was a common trope in western literature and art, exemplified by the early-twentieth-century painter Henry F. Farny, whose “Song of the Talking Wire” (1901) (and related works) juxtaposed somber, lonely native figures with telegraph poles and icons of technological modernity to suggest that the rise of the latter had contributed to the perceived decline of the former. Notably, this mythology, like the ideologies presented in Trowbridge’s novels, was just one story white Americans told themselves to rationalize the racial violence that persisted in the face of supposed progress.

Although it was published years after The Electrical Boy, Eugene Ware’s autobiographical history, The Indian War of 1864 (1911), can provide twenty-first century readers with a useful context for understanding how Trowbridge’s “emplotment” of racial superiority emphasized some historical details while leaving others out.25 First, Ware explains how settlers used telegraphs to assert their superiority over indigenous peoples:

> In order to give the Indians a profound respect for the wire, chiefs had formerly been called in and had been told to make up a story and then separate. When afterwards the story was told to one operator where one chief was present, it was told at another station to the other chief in such a way as to produce the most stupendous dread. No effort was made to explain it to the Indians upon any scientific principle, but it was given the appearance of a black and diabolical art. The Indians were given some electric shocks; and every conceivable plan, to make them afraid of the wire, was indulged in by the officers and employés [sic] of the company, it being much to their financial advantage to make the Indian dread the wire. (110-11)

Ware’s account demonstrates how the white settlers used their ability to control electric power as a means to shock the native population—literally and figuratively. The telegraph operators deliberately withheld scientific explanations, mystifying the wires in order to protect their financial investment. Trowbridge mimics these exact racial and technological dynamics. His characters ridicule the Indian characters who do not understand electricity, and they set up circuits specifically to shock and trick racial Others—including Mexicans and Indians (250-54).

Ware’s history eventually undermines this early image of technological superiority. By the end of his account, his military company has completely lost its superficial control over the electric network. No longer amazed by the wires, Native Americans from the Southern Confederacy “cut down telegraph poles, and camped from time to time, and burned the telegraph poles for a long distance,” destroying more than seven times the number of telegraph poles than a recent electrical storm (510). Ware recalls that:

> Those were the days when there were no railroads and no rapid mail communications, and the telegraph wire was in very great demand, and as there was only one wire to do the business through on each
route, it was busy every minute of the day, from the end of one month to the end of another; and so when the line was down, great interests suffered, as did also many private and personal matters.

(530-31)

Throughout this history, the telegraph is described as aiding the settlers as they continue westward. It was their only way to ask for help and to stay connected with the East. Yet their dependence on this system and their inability to improvise by modifying the system or working without it, became a liability. Trowbridge omits any discussion of similar vulnerabilities: his protagonists can control electricity absolutely, without fear of shock or mistake. Their technological prowess symbolizes their racial and social superiority. Texts like Trowbridge’s, which rehearse narratives of racial and social superiority, helped white readers to imagine that electrical developments inevitably bolstered their racial superiority. The education that Trowbridge offers in his novels and nonfiction works was ideological as well as technical.

Conclusion: Comparing Trowbridge to His Contemporaries

Trowbridge—like other writers of early science fiction—imagined how electrical inventions could help a specific set of men gain control of the public sphere. In some cases, these male characters were traditional, and virile adventurers, but more often their inventiveness compensated for some sort of physical weakness. The protagonists in these Edisonades were often young, weak, disabled, or effeminate white men. In The Electrical Boy, Richard Greatman “made rapid progress in intellectual aptitude,” but in the process he “grew pale and thin” (174). According to prevailing medical orthodoxies, this could be an indicator of neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion.

In this cultural milieu, the nervous frailty of white men could be perceived as a problem because it could enable nonwhite men to embody an idealized masculinity that threatened existing cultural mores. However, within The Electrical Boy, Richard’s feebleness is not a problem. The protagonist sublimates his youthful energies and desires into electrical invention—an act that the narrator codes as exciting, sympathetic, and healthy. By demonstrating his prowess over the electrical current, Richard grows into an idealized young man. The analogies Trowbridge draws between the human mind and electrical power reinforced this point. This character’s facility with electricity seems to convey the compensatory adroitness of his brain and nervous system.

By idealizing weak male characters like Richard, Trowbridge develops sentimental subplots that engage with popular culture ideas about electrical devices as prosthesis.26 Similar representations were common in the Edisonade dime novel, an increasingly popular class of adventure literature that focused on invention and technical expertise.27 Trowbridge’s novels cannot be classified as texts in this subgenre, exactly; his novels were designed to be displayed on bookshelves, while Edisonade dime novels were printed on newsprint and intended to be replaced with each new installment.28 Nonetheless, the resonances between his novels and this more-recognizable form of early science fiction are worth outlining as we draw conclusions about Trowbridge’s body of work. The similarities and dissimilarities between these texts can further elucidate Trowbridge’s place in cultural history.

Specifically, reading Trowbridge alongside Edisonade dime novels can help to throw
his texts into relief, enabling scholars to differentiate common tropes from more unique rhetorical decisions.

The subgenre we now associate with the Edisonade emerged in 1868, before Edison’s name had become an analog for modern inventiveness and before Trowbridge composed his first novel. Edward S. Ellis’s *The Huge Hunter, or, The Steam Man of the Prairies* was successful enough to inspire an onslaught of similar storylines. By the turn of the twentieth century, young characters like Frank Reade, Jr. and Tom Edison, Jr. were embarking on weekly adventures that any reader could enjoy for a nickel. These tales were among the first that we correlate to today’s science fiction. While they did not typically share the same level of reproducible technical detail that Trowbridge’s novels did, they too re-inscribed themes from romantic children’s literature into technical terms by suggesting to generations of young readers that heroes always win because of their superior technical savvy. In this way, Trowbridge and Edisonade dime-novel writers each translated the belief that “machines are the measure of men” into legends for children—and in the process they perpetuated (and perhaps even co-constructed) that deterministic and racist bias. Trowbridge’s debt to this subgenre remains imprinted on the titles of his first two novels. *The Electrical Boy* conjures the image of a younger, up-to-date model of the once-popular “Steam Man”; *Three Boys on an Electric Boat* fits the common Edisonade algorithm: Child hero + New Invention = Adventure. In fact, the latter novel was derivative of the Edisonade in terms of its plot and character development, as well as its title.

Throughout his career, Trowbridge adapted multiple elements from these dime novels. Like Frank Reade and Johnny from *The Huge Hunter*, Trowbridge’s characters fought racialized Others with high-tech (often electrified) apparatuses of their own invention. And, while each of these texts bent towards the sensational, they also channeled sentimentality in ways that warrant attention. For example, this class of children’s literature, like the feminized sentimental novel that came before it, frequently addressed readers directly to guide their emotional responses. Trowbridge might have been the only writer to address his reader as “gentle” in the conventional sentimental fashion, but emotionality and sympathy played a salient role in most Edisonade stories; the physicist was not alone for bringing adventure, science, and sentimentality together.

*The Huge Hunter* exhibits a specific brand of sentimentality that would become a hallmark of its subgenre and a model for Trowbridge’s work. It illustrates how an invention could create a strong emotional bond between “The strong, hardy, bronzed trapper, powerful in all that goes to make up the physical man” and the “pale, sweet-faced boy [Johnny the inventor], with his misshapen body” (Chapter IV). Hump-backed and dwarfed, young Johnny’s inventive genius allows him to transcend the limits of his body and effectively become a “hardy” frontiersman himself. He forges emotional connections and contributes to his family and small town by using his inventions to help others. He creates toys and solves problems for his mother and fellow students. He also uses an enormous steam robot to protect a group of virtuous prospectors from flat, villainous Indian characters, who cannot produce or understand complex devices like “the Steam Man.” In this case, Johnny’s inventions underwrite the novel’s sentimentality, because they create and protect certain social and emotional bonds—and because they appeal to the reader’s emotion by erasing the bodily differences between Johnny and the trapper. Ellis originated a theme that Trowbridge would elaborate upon repeatedly in his body of
work: inventions and electrical power can supplement the masculinity of effeminate or disabled young white men, allowing them physical and social power (including power over indigenous characters) that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Although Trowbridge cannot be classified as an Edisonade dime-novel writer, the resonances between his texts and works like *The Huge Hunter* can prove to be mutually illuminating. For example, the prevalence of sentimentality in both types of work can complicate Hintz’s account of the “ascetic ideal.” Trowbridge and other early science fiction writers imagined a technically adept masculinity that was also deeply emotional, suggesting that science and sentiment did not depart as early or as completely as historians have often imagined.

Trowbridge also drew upon the Edisonade dime novel’s mystification of electricity—even though he also instructs his readers how to use this energy. In *The Electrical Boy*, Richard and his friend Bill muse over the fact that they can see what electricity does but that they cannot know quite what it is (54). Trowbridge’s technical volume *What is Electricity?* elaborates upon this philosophical conundrum. It explains that an expert could describe electricity mathematically, and that he could demonstrate its effects, but that narrating its qualities would prove more difficult (v-vi). Trowbridge never fully answer the question he posed in the title to this non-fiction volume. Instead, he invites readers to continue to ponder electricity—to wonder where the metaphors they drew from it ended and where its physical realities began.

Trowbridge’s wide-ranging body of work can help us ask new questions about better-studied genres like the Edisonade dime novel or sentimental fiction; it can also challenge existing narratives of literary and cultural history, by complicating our understanding of genre or of the social meanings of electricity. This fascinating writer-professor has remained inscrutable to twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars because his writing defied the generic conventions we now use to categorize historical literary texts. As long as we approach the archive of this era looking for science or literature, for sentimentality or technicality, works like Trowbridge’s, which challenge these still-permeable boundaries, will continue to escape our scrutiny and theorization. By approaching the archive expansively—or by lighting beacons so that future scholars may do the same—we can help to recover authors like Trowbridge, who can offer today’s readers a richer sense of the cross-disciplinary world of the late-nineteenth century.

Notes


2. Hall, 204. I have encountered three books that were not attributed to Trowbridge in Hall’s biography, including *The Advance in Electricity Since the Time of Franklin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), *Franklin as a Scientist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1917), and the pseudonymously printed *The Great Match, and Other Matches* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1877). I focus on the books the National Academy of Sciences records in his biography because only these six are positively verified as Trowbridge’s work. These three unlisted books are also outliers in other ways. *Franklin as a Scientist* is not exactly a book; it is a short pamphlet that was reprinted from the publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. XVIII. *The Great Match* is attributed to “Noname.” *The Advance in
Electricity is more historical than technical or literary in its tone and construction.

3. Trowbridge was a prolific writer. According to the NAS biography, his earliest scientific article was published in 1872, his latest in 1911.

4. On the professionalization of electrical engineering as opposed to popular or business-oriented understandings of electricity, see Nye, Electrifying America, 158-169; on specialization and mechanization, see Trachtenberg, 42-46.

5. See Delbourgo, 199-200; Gilmore, 62-3; Tresch, 29-59.

6. On the development of engineering education, see Layton, 1-19. On the rise of objectivity, see see Gallison and Daston, 11-53.


8. Trowbridge was not the only scientific practitioner to take on literary pursuits in the nineteenth century. James Clerk Maxwell wrote poetry, for example. On Maxwell’s poetry, see Clarke, 89-93. Indeed, Laura Otis compiled an excellent anthology on the intersections between science and literature in this time period, Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century. Still, as I discuss, The Electrical Boy is unique for its form and its popularity.

9. Trowbridge’s middle novel, Three Boys in an Electric Boat, includes fewer technical details and is less innovative in many ways than his first and last novel.

10. C.P. Snow lamented the perceived antagonism between science and art in “The Two Cultures,” a 1959 lecture which is now available as a book. “The Science Wars” were a public disagreement regarding the public discussion of science, often attributed to Alan Sokal’s publication of a phony paper in Social Text during the 1990s.

11. In fact, Richard Greatman and George Greatthings visit “the whizzing dynamo electric machines of a central station” in an earlier episode (132).


14. On the theme of asceticism in inventor’s biographies, see Hintz, 205.

15. See Hintz, 200-01.

16. It is worth noting that the “drawing” Trowbridge describes is not necessarily technical draughting; he describes drawing sailboats and other images. For more on the role of draughting in national technological identity, see Brown, 195–238.

17. Trowbridge discusses these plans in The Resolute Mr. Pansy on pages 48-81.

18. Jack London was among the young people who were duped by this ideology. He describes how he was tricked into believing that technical skills would help him work his way up from poverty in London, 187-193.

19. See Welter, 151-174. As a postbellum writer, Trowbridge penned his novels after the heyday of the true woman that Welter describes, but his conservative and flat depictions of angelic women correspond to the domestic ideals she identifies.

20. Some of these relationships are utilitarian, but most are homosocial and arguably queer. For example, when the protagonist reunites with his friend Bill after a brief separation, the latter “let Richard caress his hand, feeling glad that there were none of the other boys round to see” (59-60). Later in the novel, Richard befriends an effeminate giant named Leap who describes himself as “a sensitive, shrinking spirit, almost like that of a girl, enslaved in a frame that grew to be a
giant.” This character stares at Richard with an “intense yearning gaze” that signifies both devoted friendship and desire (190).

21. On the correlation between electricity and sympathy, see Gilmore, 116.
22. On the process of gendering technical labor, see Oldenziel, 19-50.
24. For more on how white electrical experts differentiated themselves from racialized and gendered Others, see Marvin, 17-32.
25. Hayden White describes the process of constructing history as “emplotment,” as historians fit details into plots that tell a story—romantic, tragic, ironic, or otherwise. See Metahistory, 29.
26. This fantasy about technological prosthesis mapped onto prevailing medical treatments for men who suffered from nerve weakness. While women were famously prescribed a rest cure, men were prescribed either the “West Cure” (adventures in the outdoors) or energy-supplementing tools such as electrical belts. On this electro-medical tradition, see Peña, 89-136. Notably, the frailty of the “civilized” white man was not necessarily seen as a weakness compared to the stereotypically virile primitive man. See Bederman, 22-23.
27. Like Edisonade writers, Trowbridge drew inspiration from the mythologized persona of Thomas Edison and similar figures. In the physicist’s first novel, the eponymous “electrical boy” rose up from poverty by attracting the attention of beneficent investors with his work ethic and his natural talent for telegraphy—much like the “Wizard of West Orange” himself. Trowbridge’s second novel featured young boys who were also self-taught tinkerers. The image of the young bootstrapping electrical expert captured the imagination of Trowbridge and of his desired audience.

For a complete definition of Edisonade, see Clute and Nicholls, 368 and Luckhurst, 50-75. Since this genre is identified as a predecessor to (or earlier form of) science fiction, it can be left out of U.S. histories of children’s science fiction, which typically begin with Robert A. Heinlein’s Rocket Ship Galileo (1947). On this history of children’s sf, see Esmonde, 3. Hugo Gernsback, the magazine editor largely credited to be the father of science fiction disagreed, tracing the scientific romance back to Edgar Allan Poe’s writing. On Gernsback’s account of the history of sf, see Westfahl, 280. Still, Trowbridge has escaped the attention of bibliographers of this genre.
28. The materiality of these objects bespoke their cultural currency. Trowbridge’s novels were socially sanctioned, whereas dime novels and sentimental fiction were considered dangerous. The physical properties of Trowbridge’s books aligned them more closely with technical guidebooks for children and with inventor’s biographies than with dime novels. Sensational Edisonade weeklies for young readers were listed among influential politician Anthony Comstock’s “traps for the young.” He warns: “Parents and teachers, you may look upon the dumb pages of these story-papers and think there is no harm in them. You may be indifferent, negligent, and careless. But I warn you against these leprous influences.” Comstock, 41. Comstock focuses on weeklies about crime, but his larger concern about the dissipation of youth and the de-emphasis of virtue in children’s literature extends to other dime novels of the day. For earlier versions of this criticism, see “Pleasant and Profitable,” 67.
29. On this prejudice, see Adas, 241-70.
30. For examples of this title style, see Frank Reade and his Steam Man of the
Recovering John Trowbridge

Plains; Robert T. Toombs, "Electric Bob’s Sea Cat," Brave and Bold (25 Mar 1905), or most of Victor Appleton’s Tom Swift titles.

31. The address to the “gentle reader” was a convention of the American sentimental novel, dating back to Susanna Rowson’s Charlotte: A Tale of Truth (1791). Trowbridge invokes this literary tradition explicitly when he addresses the reader as “gentle” in The Electrical Boy, 384. For more on the sentimental tradition that Trowbridge invokes, see Howard, 62-81. Randall Knoper’s discussion of electro-vitalist understandings of sympathy is particularly salient. See Knoper, 715-45.

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Polyvocal Otherness: An Interview with Craig Baldwin
Sean Matharoo

Still from Spectres of the Spectrum

CRAIG Baldwin\textsuperscript{1} is a San Francisco-based filmmaker and subcultural icon whose recombinatory works sample the immense archive of twentieth-century film and television. Baldwin's films may be described as speculative remixes that drive audiovisual language towards its limits, where causal narrative structures collapse, instead allowing spectators to affectively experience the proliferation of what Baldwin—following Gilles Deleuze\textsuperscript{2} and Félix Guattari\textsuperscript{3}—calls “transversal” relations, which may be defined as relations made across distinct (and self-organizing) material systems in space and in time. In other words, Baldwin's audiovisual language, like William S. Burroughs's cut-ups, is materially immediate and tends toward networked collaboration.

In Baldwin's found-footage films, there emerges a polyvocal otherness resistant to discursive compartmentalization and amenable to the generation of new meanings. Spectators encounter the residue of found film, which is creatively reorganized into disorienting and challenging new compositions. For Baldwin, the archive itself is a nonhuman other with which he collaborates to create films that problematize and enrich our understanding of history. Baldwin's audiovisual language is representative of a West Coast punk, DIY ethos that finds joy in vertigo \textit{[ilinx]\textsuperscript{4}}. He embraces an energetic and playful filmmaking style that embodies the schizophrenia of channel surfing and evokes hallucinatory landscapes riddled with the detritus of dead media.

Insofar as they raise many questions \textit{vis-à-vis} unexpected juxtapositions, Baldwin's films are critical of the totalizing effects of hegemonic discourses. \textit{Wild Gunman (1978)}\textsuperscript{5} parodies Western frontier ideology and toxic masculinity by

Baldwin also conceived *Other Cinema*, a thriving microcinema for film, video, and performance in San Francisco’s Mission District, and *OtherZine*, a multimodal zine (that just published its 31st issue) dedicated to showcasing “Artists’ Projects and cinema-related writings that critique, support, influence, and produce high levels of artistic experimentation.”

I met Baldwin in the spring of 2015 at the University of California, Riverside. He gave an exhilarating presentation on the interrogative mode as it manifests in audiovisual language to members of the UCR Speculative Fictions and Cultures of Science research group. Now, I say “presentation,” but it might be better described as a live performance, as he was continuously switching between VHS and DVD to share clips from his archive of film materials. He also brought a pile of print materials for us to explore while he set up. I then caught up with Baldwin on the phone, and we discussed history, activism, archives, anachronisms, subcultures, trash, science fiction, and sound-image relations. Our discussion quickly opened onto a much larger network of adjacent ideas that I’m excited to share below.

With this interview, I have attempted to simulate Baldwin’s filmmaking style and collaborative philosophy—which together evoke a polyvocal otherness—through the use of hyperlinks. I hope these may encourage readers to click around, to drift [*dériver*], and perhaps even to lose themselves a bit to *psychogeographical* exploration.

**Sean Matharoo:** In your films, you critically reappraise the past by recycling found materials excavated from various archives to create new collages. Does interfacing between such materials—for example, between individual samples, between analog and digital technologies, or between found footage and original footage in the cases of *¡O No Coronado!* and *Spectres of the Spectrum*—offer you a unique vantage point from which to address historical processes?

**Craig Baldwin:** Well, I understand history to be a dialectical process. My filmmaking process is both a deconstruction and an analysis of history. I create stories, but they’re self-consciously constructed. My compositional strategies are an effort to simulate the complexity of historical reality—endlessly interrelated, complicated, and not unified in any way. From my perspective, there’s no molar truth. My attempt is to break things down to the molecular, the personal, and, within the personal, the subject itself, which can also be deconstructed. In other words, my process is a granular breakdown or a constantly corroding process. So, I see an isomorphism between my process and historical processes themselves.
Further, my filmmaking is part of historical processes. Collage, for example, precedes me and is part of film history. Collage is major and not marginalized at all, by the way. And, yeah, there are old movies that we can break down for material parts. But, more important than the material residue of cinema is the proliferation of meanings, which can be remixed into historical discourse. Of course, there are many things that are accidental. The heterogeneity of my process tries to live up to the heterogeneity of history.

**SM:** By depicting human struggle in a self-reflexive mode—for example, the geopolitical nightmares *Wild Gunman* and *RocketKitKongoKit*—your films open up spaces for the emergence of alternative meanings and, thus, carry ethical and political valences useful to activism. How important is conducting research to your consideration of historical events?

**CB:** Well, I think that research is my responsibility. As an historian, I’m obligated to do my best to figure out what happened. But, I can’t be an expert on history and make films at the same time, because films can’t come close to the level of nuance and complexity of historical literature. Rather, I put images and sounds together to create beauty and possible meaning. This is the path I’ve taken for myself as a subject of history. And, my skills are particularly adapted to audiovisual language, which I use as a platform to share ideas and perspectives about historical processes. *Wild Gunman* has to do with Manifest Destiny; *RocketKitKongoKit* has to do with neocolonialism in Africa. I approach these geopolitical figures and arenas through audiovisual language, so I’m able to reach a different kind of audience: movie-goers. Cinema and historical literature are different discourses. So, research is my responsibility, but I also acknowledge that history is complex. A film could hardly do justice to that complexity. I just point to larger structures of power.

I suppose I approach journalism, but I don’t consider myself to be a journalist. I’m more of an essayist. I try to make an argument, but, again, through the particular qualities of cinema. Now, history can be told in a physical or beautiful way. I also consider myself to be a poet and, in California, I’m swimming in a vast pool of cinema to which I have access. That is, my work is distinct from straightforward agitprop, such as Dziga Vertov’s montage films or Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* (1942-45). In my work, there’s more play and irony, which agitprop doesn’t always tolerate. There is, as in poetry, more joy in my films. They have internal light; they’re animated in a way. Ideas come to life in motion pictures, and so these parts are all in oscillation against and within each other. There are layers and layers of meaning. But, my films are also blows made against the Empire, and their ideas resonate and extend the discussion.

**SM:** What kinds of archives are important to your process and why?

**CB:** Hmm...it’s about how language is understood, and I’m very much indebted to language. My first film, *Wild Gunman*, doesn’t have a script, but it consists of plenty of language in the form of found sounds that together create a polyphony of voices. My approach is promiscuous, transversal, Cubist, fragmented, refractory, and avoids omniscient narration. As a latter-day Californian, I’m accustomed to the barrage of
pop culture and art. Andy Warhol inspires me and I, too, see that there can be tremendous depth in surfaces.

I create my own ways of breaking up hegemonic discourse, and I’m always hungry for all sorts of material...the world is my archive. Often, I pull things in from the street. This is my proclivity and my choice. Meaning, I don’t limit myself to any one archive. Practically speaking, however, I mainly work out of and frolic in my own 16mm film archive, which has something like 3,333 films. I’m in there everyday. I got most of these films by diving into dumpsters or accepting them from libraries and friends.

Still from ¡O No Coronado!

SM: How do you think dealing with archives differs from collecting?

CB: Well, collectors don’t necessarily cut up film! Of course, I don’t deny that films can be objects of value, but collecting for the sake of collecting is just not my approach. I would much rather screen parts of films or pull out a part of a “bad” film, use it, play it negative, or run it backward. They’re parts of a language that I’m constantly re-conjuring. Obviously, there are official film archives, and I respect those. And, I prefer film to video, as I can work with it with my hands.

I also use public libraries. When I was doing the research for ¡O No Coronado!, for example, I went to my public library once a week for something like twenty weeks. There’s a lot about the history of the Conquest in there. And I believe it’s very important to browse the stacks as an intellectual flâneur to drift through adjacent materials via associational thinking.
Anyway, I’m one collector who chooses to cut up his films. I don’t fetishize objects. I prefer to figure out how things were made, to dissect as if I were performing an autopsy.

**SM:** In *Mock-Up on Mu* (2008), you interweave historical fact with numerous anachronisms, thereby offering revealing and hilarious portrayals of countercultural icons Jack Parsons, L. Ron Hubbard, and Marjorie Cameron. You also place rocket science alongside Aleister Crowley and the occult, challenging the presumed division between “fact” and fiction. What role do you think anachronisms like these play in your films and how do you think intersecting discourses, genres, and modes of thinking affect our understanding of the past?

**CB:** Hmm, your question reminds me of Alex Cox’s film *Walker* (1987) and Bruce Sterling’s theory of “atemporality.” I also think it’s always an anachronism for someone in the present to make a film about the past. This is why, from my point of view, historical period dramas are kind of funny. Take, for instance, Peter Watkins’s seven-hour film *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (2000). Why not seventy-seven hours? Now, a film like this ought to be made insofar as it allows for spectatorial immersion while giving access to large audiences. But, such films necessitate a suspension of disbelief that, as a skeptic, I can’t help but find preposterous. This is why, in my films, I announce—consciously or not—that they’re products of their own time. In other words, one can see the hand of the maker. It’s not like I can fully lose myself and identify with any of my characters, anyway. Of course, Hollywood has nonetheless managed to accomplish this with lighting, camerawork, etc. But, such immersion demands a lot of money, and I’m just working on another plane. I prefer to problematize and to enrich. There’s a difference between my films and historical period dramas, but there’s continuity between them, as well.
With regards to genre, “experimental” and “avant-garde” are problematic terms, to be sure, so I want simply to say that there’s attention given to form in my films. There are many folks who make films about history. What I’m trying to do is generate a principle about history. My films aren’t so much about telling history, but about articulating something useful to the writing and narration of history. They serve, I suppose, a historiographic purpose. In Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film (2005), UC Berkeley professor Jeffrey Skoller writes about my film Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America and asks, “How is it that history is narrated?” As a filmmaker, I ask this exact question in my films.

I’m reminded here of Walter Benjamin’s image of history as a relentless, one-track train and a pile of debris (see “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940) and “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History’” (1940)). For Benjamin, following Marx, revolution amounts to passengers pulling the train’s emergency brake. All of these figments are broken up, but they’re part of us, too. We have, for instance, inherited the tradition of colonialism in our thoughts and in the ways in which we live. Racism. Slavery. These things certainly prevail in our nation and in our political sensibilities. Academics and artists don’t work in circumscribed environments. Because we have insight into these forms and processes at the historiographic level, I believe we can make a difference. Perhaps we can even figure out ways to change people’s thinking.

To loop back to your question, my use of anachronisms plays a Brechtian role of estrangement (Verfremdungseffekt). It distantiates, alienates. It’s not Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming 1939). It stands outside the narrative a little bit. And, it’s critical. It takes a critical position vis-à-vis the flow of images and sounds. I argue that one can see and hear the “cut” rather than the “suture.” Newsreels, without being self-conscious, are “avant-garde,” by the way. Consider, for example, Vertov’s History of the Civil War (1922), which uses variously sourced footage to create coherency. The materials came to him and didn’t necessarily conform to his intentions. Newsreels are a lost art, I think. To put anachronisms together into one is the basic idea of editing...I do this very self-consciously...and I do this to problematize and to enrich our critical understanding of the past.

SM: I first encountered your work in a graduate seminar on digital media and technoculture. Before watching Spectres of the Spectrum, our class read William S. Burroughs’s The Ticket That Exploded (1962) and considered the importance of radio technologies to post-war media culture. When I watched Spectres, its rhizomatic rhythms reminded me of the effects of Burroughs’s cut-ups, although it’s a totally different medium. This got me thinking about how the surface noise of your films might, like Burroughs’s writings, resonate with Beat and punk politics of culture-jamming and re-mediation. This is further emphasized by the frankness with which you treat bigotry, unchecked consumerism, and the omnipresent threat of co-optation. How do you think your films—in both content and form—relate to fringe cultures resistant to the status quo?

CB: Well, thanks for that question because I do prefer to talk about my films in terms of subculture rather than in terms of capital “A” Art categories...though I don’t
outright disavow these categories. My experiences of living with artists in film communities have led me to consider social understanding more than formal understanding, although these are not mutually exclusive.

So Burroughs, of course, is the granddaddy and the lightning-rod of the post-war culture in literary terms, but he broke out of that. While I haven’t read *The Ticket That Exploded*, I do recognize and thank Burroughs for his ideas about the cut-up, which itself came out of his discussions and collaborations with expatriate painter Brion Gysin at the Beat Hotel. I’m definitely interested in Burroughs’s dissection of language into autonomous parts, and also, of course, the cut-up’s generation of new meanings.

Still from *Mock-Up on Mu*

These meanings aren’t in the ink, by the way, but in our heads. With the cut-ups, codes are broken, and new rhythms, patterns, and orders of letter-forms, phrases, and sentences emerge. So, a lot of readers might not get through Burroughs, though many of his ideas have obviously moved into the mainstream. *The Ticket That Exploded* can be found in a special part of the library. But, subcultures like the Beats or punks pick it up.

With regards to “surface noise,” well, it comes with the territory, both literally and metaphorically. Often, the sounds of my films are noisy, but, in any given montage, the conversations invoked by each element create, by extension, a surplus or excess of meanings. One will never be able to exhaust it all, as in a poem. Poems rub words up against each other for certain kinds of meaning. There’s a musicality or lyricism in poetry that opens up spaces to which one is invited for possible meanings.

I’m part of what I see as a braided strand of a non-linear and multiple history of culture-jamming, and the time for culture-jamming is now. Take, for instance, Don
Joyce’s work in *Negativland*...or Dada artist *John Heartfield*...or Ivan Stang’s work in the *Church of the SubGenius*...Re- mediation is always going on. For me, however, re- mediation itself isn’t good enough. My work aspires to something more responsible, historically.

Yeah, but, how might the center and the periphery work together? Working with the center’s leftovers is an expression of what I call “cinema povero” (impoverished cinema). Here I’m following *Arte Povera*, an Italian art movement of the 1960s. After the War, who could afford to invest in marble for statues? It was so much more appropriate for artists to work with common and distressed materials, such as rebar, concrete, cardboard, paper, etc. We’re able to scavenge the stuff that’s on the side of the cultural road. Cinema povero is an idiolect or specialized language for those who are removed from the mainstream and who look at it in a very critical way. In my case, though I don’t claim to speak for the punks, it’s fair to say that I’m part of that movement. And I’m certainly a marginalized person working with those materials that are available in an urban milieu.

I elected to take this path of poverty, which I call the “masochism of the margins.” This means that, if I weren’t really ready to take a little bit of punishment, I would’ve taken an easier route. There’s certainly a lot of pain at the margins, but I’m happy that there is still fringe culture. From my perspective, however, there really is no center, which is an ideological construction. Only as long as everybody has an idea of consensus, there’s such a thing as the United States.

Look, I’m not a complete nihilist, and I recognize that there are obviously times that call for consensus. But, for the most part, consensus drives consumerism...then again, it’s hard to imagine a more polarized moment in recent American history than now. No one even agrees with each other!

**SM:** You currently reside in San Francisco’s Mission District, a subject about which you write in “*From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link*” (2011). In this essay, you trace the historical developments of the found-footage film with respect to the Bay Area. You write, “Concomitant with a cautionary acknowledgement of—and negotiation with—image overload, ours if a refreshing affirmation of relative autonomy, personal ingenuity, and creative agency to discover and share our own uses for things.” With this in mind, do you think your films respond to and engage with the particular environment in which you are working? I’m thinking of the significance of trash aesthetics to the Bay Area.

**CB:** You know, there were and are trash aesthetics in L.A., too. *Rebecca Solnit* writes about this in her first book *Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists* (1990), which reaches back to the Beat artists, and I’m a big fan of Beat cinema. Anyway, *Trash* did not happen in some global, unified way, as if there were a singular gesture. Trash wasn’t limited to L.A. and San Francisco. The times, however, did allow for the generation of fields of possibility in which certain kinds of art forms could emerge. One was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism, which was considered to have become elitist, humorless, sexless, and devoid of any historical reference

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In response, there was a movement, which in France was called *nouveau réalisme* (new realism). An iconic example would be the crushing of cars into perfect cubes (see César Baldaccini’s “compressions”[37]). Other developments came out of Black Mountain College[38] just outside of Asheville, North Carolina, which offered refuge to European artists fleeing from the Nazis, and was dedicated to fostering freedom of thought and responsibility towards the social. Other rejoinders were made by Fluxus[39] artists Robert Rauschenberg,[40] John Cage,[41] and Ray Johnson,[42] who all worked with distressed materials without fetishizing objects as if they should be on a museum wall. Johnson, for example, is known for his work with mail art, which emphasizes the networking process whereby the postcard moves from hand to hand.

Still from *Spectres of the Spectrum*

The point is that, especially on the West Coast, there was a certain freedom from the academic formalism of Abstract Expressionism...there was an embodied freedom of being outdoors in the city at night. Here, we find again the notion of the drift, of picking things up and understanding them for their beauty. And surfaces were scarred, rusted; these markings were the traces of these objects’ authentic passage through time. By the way, Beat artist George Herms (who was actually born in Northern California and who became famous in Southern California) has a piece called “Clocktower-Monument to the Unknown” (1987)[43] at MacArthur Park in L.A. They’re huge, industrial buoys from Long Beach. They’re all screwed up and show the experience of life itself. That’s part of my idea of beauty. It’s not something we decide beforehand because people have designed a particular color relationship or whatever. It’s beautiful because it’s real. It shows its own passage through space and time.

This notion of realism was taken up by the Beats, another subcultural group, who dropped out of straight Eisenhower society. In San Francisco, Bruce Conner[44] came
to the fore. He had a group called the “Rat Bastard Protective Association,” who would basically dumpster-dive. At the time, the Beats were living on Fillmore and Divisadero Streets because they were the cheapest areas in town. Redevelopment happened in the 1950s and early 1960s, and so these old Victorians were torn down to make way for freeways. When that stuff was thrown into the dumpster, the Rat Bastards would go on expeditions and come back with these magnificent things, which they would piece together. People started to call this kind of sculpture-making “assemblage,” which wasn’t about finding the form in a block of marble, but about going the other way around, by putting together disparate, heterogeneous components together into a new “whole.”

It was also called “junk art.” Most of the material was found and it was used in funny, refreshing, and thought-provoking ways. Conner, you know, was obsessed with sex and death. Very famously, he made an assemblage called CHILD (1959-60) to protest the capital punishment of Caryl Chessman. It wasn’t supposed to be pleasing. Some people would call it ugly. It was supposed to be shocking. So, this is the tradition of “the junk to the funk,” of finding beauty in ugliness. Recall that the word “Beat” itself carries a double meaning. On the one hand, it means “beat down.” And, on the other hand, it means “beatific.” To draw from Jack Kerouac, this is the figure of the holy bum. By looking down for a cigarette butt, he finds something else, such as a beautiful thimble perfect for sculptural use. It’s almost an act of redemption.

This tradition has lived on in the works of San Francisco filmmakers. Take, for example, Conner’s found-footage film A Movie (1958), which is a self-conscious act of parody, or the films of Robert Nelson, who is associated with the West Coast “funk school,” which isn’t necessarily careful or precise, but energetic and embodied. Ingenious art that retrofits, consciously or unconsciously. We’re working from the streets, and we resist academization. We’re interested in outsiders, losers, and visionaries. Collage is possible in San Francisco because the streets are very active here. People are in cafés and on the sidewalks. Often, there’s the material refuse of culture left on the sidewalk just outside my studio. It fills me with joy to retrieve these things from my neighborhood. I use them or give them to friends.

SM: Aside from your sampling of science-fiction film footage in your work—Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America, Spectres of the Spectrum, and Mock-Up on Mu first come to mind—there seems to be a formal dimension in your films one might call speculative insofar as they resist simple mimesis. The speed of your editing, for example, often dislocates traditional cinematic time and permits a wider range of freedom to the spectator. Given science fiction’s emphasis on extrapolation, do you find that the science-fictional images and sounds with which you work affect your negotiation of cinematic time?

CB: Well, my films aren’t really about science or technology. In fact, I want to get out of the trap of fetishizing technology! So, “speculative” is a better word than “science fiction” to describe my films, because they open up other worlds, other possibilities. Mimesis is just not my thing. My films thwart the mimetic mode. They make one think rather than just kick back and let the movie flow over oneself. Instead of diving inwards, as in Abstract Expressionism, they strive towards exteriority.
My films leave behind the notion of the personal diary. I’ve never been able to take myself so seriously as to spend a lot of time mucking about in my own Freudian problems, anyway. Rather, I deliberately go out into not only the material world around me, but also into other times in history, which science fiction does, as well.

This movement could be described as quantum, if you like. It could even be called time travel! As I’ve said before, I reject any kind of permanent, unified, ideal world. Science-fictional *mise-en-scène* invites spectators to extrapolate and to consider raw otherness. In this context, I especially adore the related notions of invention and creativity. Philip K. Dick’s vast powers of imagination help explain why a lot of his books have been made into films. With regards to *Spectres*, I was particularly drawn to Nikola Tesla and Philo Farnsworth. I tend to include in my films historical figures who were basically punished by the larger society for being so visionary. There’s pathos in that.

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

*Still from Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America*

Even if I weren’t working in science fiction, the editing process is not *a priori*. It’s recursive. When I comb and re-comb through my own work, I find new directions to take. It’s very high-speed. Science fiction doesn’t necessarily have a special place in this process. But, it does allow me to take a greater leap. Take, for instance, the concept of time travel, a plot device that appears in much science fiction. Essay films, you know, likewise simulate speculative processes of thinking. Generally speaking, I’m interested in bringing storytelling closer to speculative thought.

**SM:** In *Spectres* and in *Mu*, you argue against techno-utopianism, techno-determinism, scientific rationalism, and positivism. Unlike the more optimistic visions of Gnostic redemption depicted in some streams of cyberpunk and in countless other dreams of disembodiment, your films refreshingly assert the very
real materiality of film-in-itself. What can you tell us about the materialism of your filmmaking process? For instance, why do you prefer 16mm film?

**CB:** Well, my understanding of Gnosticism is that it expresses the existence of another world beyond this one. There's an anti-rationalist, hippie strain in it. But I'm a big defender of Reason. I've never been able to totally enter that world of belief...but it makes for good movies, it's part of storytelling, and I use it as a device. We have the right to get out of our bodies and to go into other historical time periods, and it's definitely part of my cinematic palette. My films require viewers to negotiate cinematic time and space in a very radical way. This is a rebuttal of positivism. I always say that the philosophical flaw of realistic photography (and not just in cinema) is that "seeing is believing."

This brings us to the notion of the interrogative. In language, the writer or speaker can add a question mark or raise her voice at the end of a sentence, and people understand that she is searching for knowledge. In terms of photography, too, perhaps things can be conjugated in such a way to evoke an interrogative mode. Without the interrogative, one runs the risk of reaffirming the status quo.

I edited *Mu* on digital video, but it's still made out of 16mm film, which lives on in live projection performances, you know. The thing about editing 16mm is that you immediately see what you have. There's the freshness, the funk, the gestural, the lived, the explosive, and the energized sense of generosity. It's right in front of your eyes and you hold it in your hands. It's far more sculptural, I suppose.

There are many ways of telling any particular story. I couldn't possibly exhaust all those possibilities! Being in the cluttered, rich environment of my studio, however, the answer is often within arm's reach...my style is additive...my obsessive nervous system is reflected in my filmmaking...working with 16mm found footage is cheap, tractable, and easier to work with than computer-based modes.

**SM:** Recently, I listened to *Coronado* without looking at the images and felt like a narrative formed à la Orson Welles's 1938 radio drama adaptation of H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. This is due, I think, to the meticulous sound editing. In other words, the relations between the originally recorded dialogue, the sound effects, and the music samples create a surge of images on their own. Can you speak to the importance of sound-image relations in your films?

**CB:** I've always just assumed that the soundtrack would have the same rate of cutting speed as the picture track. This is where I cross the line, I think, by asking a lot of the viewer. Now, in the soundtrack itself, there's a self-consciously created architecture of quotations. That is, I quote from musical history and film soundtracks in order to appropriate their meanings. So, my soundtracks have a figurative quality. They stop short of narrative, but there's a development through time in terms of musical figures and motifs.

Sound in my films is discursive. It's not background. It takes the lead in trying to create courses of thought. The conventional approach is that sound is just a reflection of the image. In my films, however, sound and image are often at war with
each other. Sometimes it works, but, often, it’s hard to keep up with both sound and image, and you get asynchronicity. So, there are two things that the spectator has to think about at the same time, which encourages self-reflexivity.

I use music that has an ironic reference. This is what I mean when I say “meta-cinematic.” My movies are compressed or condensed like Castle Films, which I used to order through the mail. With the advent of video, people grew up thinking that sound and image should be married. But, they don’t have to be. I prefer to create just as much activity on the sonic plane as I do on the others.

When one hears a sound sample in a new mix, one hears its original residue and trace, but with new meanings. I sometimes use the metaphor of a fractured mirror to describe the affective encounter with these residues and traces. For me, sound represents another problem because it’s not simply a reflection of the image. It has relative autonomy.

**SM:** Building off of that, what are some of the limitations you have found when negotiating sound-image relations?

**CB:** I’m definitely constrained by material circumstances in the real world! I don’t always have my choice of possible imagery. So, the material that I have in front of me is going to affect the way that I can make films. However, language allows me to fill in gaps by somewhat explaining things in voice-over, dialogue, or even text, as in Coronado.
I generally don’t start with music per se. I start with language, such as voice-overs. I then add more narrative and historical detail to construct space-times from scraps. Sometimes, I find something that increases the humor. This doesn’t add realism but, rather, editing complexity, as if it were another part of the puzzle that helps hold things together.

SM: Alongside your work with Other Cinema, your group’s online journal OtherZine is a multimodal, interactive, and collaborative archive for research on experimental film. Within your group’s sensibility is the Fluxus aesthetic and that group’s mobilization of Dada as a means of combating the sacralization of art. I’m also thinking of Neo-Dadaist art, such as analog zines, photocopy art and, of course, the mixtape. OtherZine, too, resists the format of traditional text-based journals by accommodating, on one hand, informal discourse and, on the other, media-rich entries. How do you think the use of OtherZine and other similar multimodal archives might alter the ways through which filmmakers and scholars do research in light of today’s information surplus?

CB: First, let’s consider the value of collage art today. Now, this isn’t to exclude literature. In Other Cinema shows, we’ve left the idea of the feature behind and moved towards a collage of short films. One can talk about reproductive rights, transportation, or tattooing through a short narrative, a short animation, a short documentary, a found film, an old educational film, a live-action film, scratched-on film, hand-processed film, etc. All modes can be aggregated together in a program so that one would explode and open up themes and questions towards dissonance, pluralism, polyphony, and diversity.

We take the idea of polyphony for granted in urban environments in the twenty-first century, and we refuse to keep the arts ensconced and separate from them...
celebrate multimedia. We don’t put ourselves above minimalism, but it’s hard—if not futile—to keep the world out.

So, OtherZine started more simply and then, as we got a little bit more sophisticated and handy with the internet, we just added picture and then picture and sound and then motion picture and then loops, etc. Having gone to undergraduate and graduate school in film studies, I can see why it would be an attractive destination for media scholars. Visual pleasure is a very important part of art, by the way. Eye candy, obviously, isn’t a substitute for research. But, our focus is on the transversal rather than the vertical. Our moment has to do with cross-disciplines. We don’t wish to isolate people into segregated disciplines and niche specializations. We open up to others.

Like the Lettrists and Situationists, we’re also interested in the materiality of the text. Language, after all, is a way to concepts. The Dadaists did this, too, by the way. In resisting the ideology of spectacle, such artists made collages out of words and text. Take, for instance, Isidore Isou’s film Traité de bave et d’éternité (1951) or Guy Debord’s film essay La Société du spectacle (1973), which is an adaptation of his 1967 book of the same name. Like the Dadaists, Lettrists, and Situationists, we’re not just interested in nihilism. We’re interested in text as a visual form. This is what I mean by materiality. I’m reminded here of the hyperlink and random access memory. Increasingly, video has moved towards the “hyper,” as well. I’m still very much for literature and text, but the twenty-first century human body is used to sensory overload. Other Cinema and OtherZine share a maximalism appropriate to such sensory overload. And, like punk art—also maximalist—we share a belief in democracy and inclusivity.

SM: Finally, what can you tell us about your work in progress, Invisible Insurrection?

CB: Oh, we can easily place Invisible Insurrection in the terms of my previous answers. Ultimately, I want to return to language in the interrogative mode. How might we ask questions using audiovisual language? As I’ve already indicated, what I’m trying to do is develop a critical audiovisual practice. Invisible Insurrection, then, is an essay film about post-war ideas that questions the notion of spectacle while crossing international borders. It’s an opportunity to talk about subcultures of Europe and America coming together around Burroughs’s Naked Lunch (1959) and Debord’s La Société du spectacle (1967). These people were recognized as iconic figures of two countercultures, but were living in miserable, wretched conditions. Invisible Insurrection celebrates the seedy and sordid lives of Burroughs and Debord, who lived in the same neighborhood, but never met. But, I want to use the idea of collage (including quotations by characters from French noir and horror films) and cinematic “ventriloquism” to stage a dialogue between them.

By the way, you should check out the works of Scottish expatriate Alexander Trocchi (and David Mackenzie’s 2003 film Young Adam). Trocchi was a fantastic outsider figure who was a Beat challenge to the old literary guard in Paris. He edited Merlin magazine in the 1950s, later advocating for psychedelics and free universities in the streets. He moved into the literary world in Paris and courted the
new American writers. After the War, people could hang out in Paris, which was a crucible where a lot of weird connections could be forged.

Similarly, *Mock-Up on Mu* is about L.A. and Southern California after the War. Anyway, the idea is to trace a kind of historical genealogy of anti-art that we’ve inherited. *Invisible Insurrection*\(^2\) tries to bring the academic, literary, and textual ideas of Debord back to cinema and to deal with them in an audiovisual way...Debord’s ideas are very corrosive. I’m trying to invent a system to accomplish this through ventriloquism, collage, montage, voice-over, chiseling film itself, etc. With the help of my archival resources, rich in history and affording a spectrum of different rhetorical forms, this will be less difficult to do.

**Notes**

1. For the reader without immediate internet access, we have decided to include the text for each hyperlink in the essay. This is the only use to which endnotes have been put in this interview. For the future reader in a land of rising seas and broken links, we can offer no recourse. We are only as future-proof as the internet itself. This first link is: [http://www.othercinema.com/cbfilmography.html](http://www.othercinema.com/cbfilmography.html)

2. [http://www.rhizomes.net/issue20/reviews/sanyal.html](http://www.rhizomes.net/issue20/reviews/sanyal.html)

3. [http://www.inflexions.org/n4_introhtml.html](http://www.inflexions.org/n4_introhtml.html)


14. [http://www.bopsecrets.org/S1/2.derive.htm](http://www.bopsecrets.org/S1/2.derive.htm)

15. [http://library.nothingness.org/articles/S1/en/display/2](http://library.nothingness.org/articles/S1/en/display/2)

16. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwzcGtuV7Is](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwzcGtuV7Is)

17. [https://www.britannica.com/topic/agitprop](https://www.britannica.com/topic/agitprop)


19. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm3GsSWKyso](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm3GsSWKyso)


23. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KtvQ1nUdls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KtvQ1nUdls)


25. [http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html](http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html)


28. [https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/02/13/specials/burroughs-ticket.html](https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/02/13/specials/burroughs-ticket.html)
Looking Back at J. G. Ballard in the British Library
David Ian Paddy

Blowing One’s Nose in the Archive
I became a reader of J. G. Ballard in the 1980s. Surely there are others like me, who first came to this strange, dark and yet comic visionary writer not down the expected pathway of science fiction, or from the release of Steven Spielberg’s film adaptation of Empire of the Sun, but via the enticingly subversive volumes put out by the independent press Re/Search. The San Francisco-based publisher specialized in an underground culture particular to the moment, appealing to those jazzed by the outer fringes of punk and its alliance with the likes of William S. Burroughs and Genesis P. Orridge. Though these volumes had little ostensibly to do with science fiction, their diagnostics of “industrial culture” certainly tapped the same roots of interest as the nascent cyberpunk movement while leading back to the sharp edges of the genre explored by the writers Harlan Ellison assembled in Dangerous Visions.

This is to say that as I was engaged in those initial readings of Crash, High Rise and the stories in The Terminal Beach, my first impressions were certainly being shaped and framed by the Re/Search anthology from 1982 that was devoted exclusively to the work and personality of James Graham Ballard. A very particular version of the author was being fabricated in those pages, one that must have looked quite different from the version that appeared, for example, in the pages of Michael Moorcock’s New Worlds magazine in the 1960s. The Re/Search Ballard was hewn in a post-punk environment, less the writer of science fiction than emcee of the most dangerous nightclub in town, offering up with total ease and élan shocking observations on a vast array of taboo topics.

The persona I encountered in that volume was the one I accepted as the truest picture of the man I would continue to read for decades to come. In other words, what he said there, for all I knew, had to be true. One bold view in particular that matters most to this current essay can be found in the lengthy interview that kicks off the Re/Search volume. In a section given the heading “Archivism,” Ballard offers publishers V. Vale and Andrea Juno opinions on the act of archiving the work of contemporary writers. It is worth quoting this at some length (though I feel as if in the context of the Eaton Journal of Archival Research in Science Fiction, this requires some kind of trigger warning):

I’m not very good on the archival side of things. I throw away my manuscripts. You’ve got to understand, I can’t take all that stuff. I hate that instant memorializing—your used beer mats and used typewriter ribbons and tax returns—little shrines erected in some university library around the handkerchief in which Graham Greene blew his nose in 1957. One can have too much of that. That’s ‘Eng. Lit’ carried to the point of absurdity.

As he continues, the notion of the literary archive gets mocked even further:

I don’t keep bibliographical information about me around—frankly it’s of no interest to me whatever. All those things that obsess archivists, like different variants of a paperback published in 1963 (on the first 10,000 run something is deleted from the artwork, or
the Berkley medallion is not on the spine)—that sort of thing is of interest to bibliographical people. But it leaves me cold! There’s too much of that going on.

He then takes a turn to make a dig at Kingsley Amis:

The funny thing is that Amis told me that he’d kept not just the manuscript of the preliminary notes for *Lucky Jim*, but the pencils and pens that he’d written it with. I thought, Christ—*this* is the author, one of the original 'Angry Young Men' who refused to *join the system!* That’s life. Keeping the pens—that’s going a bit far, isn’t it?

By the end of this section, though, Ballard does make one concession:

But don’t get this wrong—in America and particularly in American academic institutions, the archivists’ departments (simply because they’ve got so much money to spend) are buying all this stuff all the time. Even a writer like myself, who (let’s be fair, is hardly known at all in America and doesn’t figure in any kind of critical landscape at all)—I get invitations. In fact a man who called himself the archivist at Wyoming University wrote a very nice letter to me asking, ‘Have you got any material I can have?’ I wrote back a friendly note saying that I hate that whole archivist approach. And he, to his credit, said ‘I understood and I sympathize, but as a professional archivist it’s my job to write around.’ (34)

In this last point, Ballard qualifies the bluntness of the earlier statements to claim that he does in fact think archiving is valuable; it is not the literary archive itself that he attacks. The distinction he makes is that while such collections are clearly valuable for the likes of Hemingway, Shaw or Shakespeare (his examples), he wonders about the esteem given to contemporary writers. Will anyone, he asks, in fifty years even remember who John Updike was? Or, implicitly, himself? The problem he raises, then, is with the archive of the contemporary.

Such ideas fit a larger picture that is consistent with many other views expressed by Ballard. It is worth noting, for instance, the frequency with which he voiced his dismay of his English literary peers for continuing to write novels in what he felt was an outdated mode, as if they were still composing in the nineteenth century. In the essay “Fictions of Every Kind,” he stated pithily, “The future is a better key to the present than the past” (205). Again and again, he argued that the future is a better model for understanding society and means for creating fictional characters. The problem, then, of the archive of the contemporary, from this perspective, is that the archive looks back, honors the past, perhaps even worryingly museumifies it, whereas the work he had set for himself needed to leave the past behind. Having said all this, it should be noted that the next novel to emerge after this interview was *Empire of the Sun*, the semi-autobiographical work that looks back, however imaginatively, to his childhood in Shanghai.

Whatever we might make of these arguments, the point here is that from reading this interview an image was firmly set in my mind. “Ballard” and “archives” were two words that somehow could never occupy the same sentence. He was the
man who kept no notebooks and may have even burnt the drafts of his own manuscripts. There would surely be no handkerchiefs with the initials JGB to be held with dust-resistant white gloves.

Time jumps forward. In 2007, I delivered a paper, “Empires of the Mind: Autobiography and Anti-imperialism in the Work of J. G. Ballard,” at the first international conference on Ballard’s work, hosted by Jeanette Baxter at the University of East Anglia. In 2008, on the basis of this paper, I was offered an opportunity to propose a book on Ballard (more on this in a moment). The writing for this book began in 2009. At this point, I still assumed, naturally, it would not involve any archival research.

Then it all changed. First, there was the tragic news of Ballard’s death on April 19, 2009 (he had informed readers in the last pages of his memoir, Miracles of Life (2008), that he had been diagnosed with cancer). Not that long after, in June of 2010, the Ballard estate announced that it was making a donation to the British Library as part of an Acceptance in Lieu scheme (rather than pay £350,000 in taxes). According to a BBC article at the time, “Ballard archive saved for nation,” Ballard had expressed his wish to his daughters Fay and Bea to have his papers donated to the British Library. The contents of this archive eventually became available to British Library Readers in the Manuscripts Reading Room on August 1, 2011.

No archive? Everything burnt? So much for first impressions and the thumbed nose. After all that time, and the assurance of the image of Ballard the anti-archivist came the revelation of a sizable collection. There was an archive after all. Now to see if there was a handkerchief.

What Can Be Found Within
The BBC article, “Ballard archive saved for nation,” informs us that the collection was estimated to consist of fifteen storage boxes, covering nearly twelve meters of British Library shelf space. Drafts and transcripts of Ballard’s novels take up the largest portion of the collection. Most of these are typescripts, and a majority are heavily annotated with handwritten changes and commentary. Although these manuscripts will most likely be the center of attention for researchers, there is also a great variety of other types of material to be investigated. For instance, there are files on personal and family matters, correspondence, a variety of photos, interviews, exhibition-related materials, commentary on his work, posthumous letters of sympathy and notepads. I’ll cover some of these items in greater detail in a moment.

Chris Beckett, curator of historical papers at the British Library, has been in charge of the Ballard papers, and he has also written a number of essays that stand as the defining statements thus far on the collection. His essay “The Progress of the Text: The Papers of J. G. Ballard at the British Library” is the best introduction to what the collection is and is not. For instance, Beckett tells us that while readers will find drafts or typescripts of every novel—excepting Ballard’s first effort, The Wind From Nowhere, and The Unlimited Dream Company (the first two drafts of which can be found in the Harry Ransom collection at the University of Texas at Austin)—there are virtually no drafts of Ballard’s numerous short stories or of the “condensed novels” of his signature experimental work, The Atrocity Exhibition.

Perhaps a bigger gap for some, though, is indicated by Beckett’s statement that “their contents will disappoint the customs officials of biographical research” (3). Much has been revealed and released, but Ballard the person remains guarded.
There is very little here in the way of the biographical and, as Beckett notes, what is there was not necessarily placed by Ballard himself. Material related to Ballard’s time at the Ley’s school in Cambridge (where he went on his arrival in the UK after leaving Shanghai) was unearthed and donated by researcher Raymond Tait, while a huge amount of material related to the Lunghua prison camp in Shanghai was sent to Ballard by a reader of Empire of the Sun.

As already stated, transcripts of his novels dominate the archive. A majority of these are typewritten with layer upon layer of handwritten revisionary commentary. As such they offer readers and scholars wholly new directions in approaching Ballard’s work, as they give us some of the best vistas on his writing process. This is to say that the entire venture of genetic criticism has now been opened to the reader of Ballard. Once again, Chris Beckett has published the first and best pieces of scholarship so far on the archival manuscripts and what they might tell us about his writing and revision process. He has published three essays in this mode, one devoted to an unpublished short story, the second to the draft and screenplay of Concrete Island, while the third concerns the draft of Crash. In his piece on the untitled short story, Beckett provides an excellent example of genetic criticism showing how we might date such an abandoned piece, which seems to have been hastily placed amidst the donated papers. He goes on to show how this story can specifically be contextualized in relation to the stories that appear in the collection Vermilion Sands. The essay on Crash, in contrast, is devoted to analyzing the layers of commentary and what they tell us about how Ballard composed and re-envisioned that controversial work. As should be clear, this is only the tip of the iceberg, and there is so much more that can be done in this direction.

Adventures in the Reading Room

In 2008, Paul March-Russell contacted me to see if I would be interested in writing a book on Ballard for a new series: SF Story Worlds for the Gylphi press, out of Canterbury, England. The series presents new perspectives on the history of science fiction and its impact on the wider world. The first collection to be published was Thomas Van Parys and I. Q. Hunter’s Science Fiction Across Media, which was followed by Carl Freedman’s Art and Idea in the Novels of China Miéville. Forthcoming are Nicholas Ruddick’s Science Fiction Adapted to Film, The Science Fiction of Ian M. Banks (a collection of essays), and Conor Reid’s The Science Fiction of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Of relevance here, Gylphi has also published, in a separate series, essay collections on China Miéville and Adam Roberts.

The aim of my book, The Empires of J. G. Ballard: An Imagined Geography, was to situate Ballard and his work in an historical and international context. Rather than pairing him exclusively with other science fiction writers (say, Philip K. Dick) or cult authors mining subversive terrains (say, William S. Burroughs), I wanted to see what it would mean to read him alongside such “worldly” authors as Graham Greene. The work begins by addressing an article Ballard wrote in 1978 for Magazine Littéraire, in which he professed his admiration for Greene, Anthony Burgess and Lawrence Durrell. According to Ballard, each of these writers “are not only emigrants in the literal sense from England itself, but have taken a large part of their inspiration from the world at large […] who seek their imaginative fortunes elsewhere than in their own countries” (“Memories of Greeneland” 137-8).

Using the essay on Greene as a springboard, I look to Ballard’s biography to raise a series of questions about his work. How might his childhood in Shanghai—

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especially life in the International Settlement and the later collapse of Western powers in the wake of the Japanese invasion—have affected the outlook that shapes his fiction? How did his subsequent move to England in 1946 (a country that he perpetually described as an alien land) affect his view of Englishness? How might his fiction be looking at the politics of this world, especially the transformation from imperialism to globalization? Where did Ballard set his fictions, and what do these settings say about his imagined map of the world? I argue that a longing for a cosmopolitan ideal and a critique of Englishness, which is consistently depicted as parochial and provincial, shapes his body of work. At the same time, his works critique imperial thinking, not just in the limited sense of the British Empire, but in its late twentieth-century transformation into a kind of “psychic imperialism” through new electronic media and forms of consumerism, on the one hand, and globalization, on the other. In his later works, he weighs the desire for a cosmopolitan worldliness against an imperial globalization that homogenizes the world in a new form of parochialism.

It is worth noting at this point that this project was already heading in a way that broke from those first impressions I laid out at the start of this paper. I argue that despite the presentation of his self and work as always being about the future, there is also in his work a deep sense in which the past is always present and is something that never entirely vanishes. Recidivism is rampant, as is an uncanny return of repressed forces. The project, therefore, was going to involve some looking backward. I was situating Ballard less in the future and more in the history of the twentieth century. It is thus proved only fitting that for a man who told us that he was only focused on the future, there would be a past, in the form of an archive.

Because the news about the archive appeared when I was already a few chapters into the drafting of the book, I knew that the work I could do there would have to be very focused. The rest of this section will discuss the specifics of what I looked at and was able to make use of with the focus of the project in mind. I will conclude by giving some hints as to other resources within the Ballard collection that might be of possible interest to other researchers.

While Chris Beckett is correct to note in “The Progress of the Text” that the archive isn’t necessarily a treasure trove for those questing insights into Ballard’s biography, the materials that are there proved immensely useful to me. Basic materials like birth certificates, his parents’ marriage license and documents from his time at the Cathedral School and “Tudor House” at the Lunghua Academy (certificates, programs from sporting events, and reports on his progress in his coursework) provide entry-level access to Ballard’s childhood in Shanghai, while being able to look at two of his passports opens a small window on some of his later worldly travels. Other material gathered by Raymond Tait was also invaluable, particularly a series of letters exchanged between George Osborn, headmaster of Lunghua Academy, and W. G. Humphrey, at The Leys School, Cambridge, as well as letters from Ballard’s parents to Humphrey. In these we see the case being made for the young Ballard’s admission to the Leys School as well as the story of his transition from Shanghai at the war’s end to a new life in distant England. A particular treat for me was his father’s description of the future author as “a somewhat unusual boy,” who has grown up entirely amidst an international community that also made him somewhat “intolerant of national customs and traditions” (James Ballard, letter to W. G. Humphrey).
Oddly enough, perhaps, I spent a great deal of time with a copy of a Boy’s Own Paper from May 1937. When I asked Chris Beckett about this item at the time of my visit, it was not clear if the copy of this paper was Ballard’s own or something sent to him by a reader. Either way it proved to be of great interest as I examine Ballard’s childhood reading in the book’s opening chapter, with a particular focus on the colonial elements of his education. In his memoir, Miracles of Life and essays like “The Pleasures of Reading,” Ballard repeatedly mentioned the role of magazines like Boy’s Own in his youth, and the strong tension between the imperial, patriotic messages of its pages and the reality of the collapsing empire around him. This particular Boy’s Own fit the bill marvelously as it featured several overly typical elements on the importance of the British Empire and a boy’s duty to working for its cause.

Anyone interested in doing research on Empire of the Sun, especially its historical context, will find a plethora of documents here. After that novel was published, a number of people contacted Ballard. Included in the collection are a series of letters from people who were interned in the Lunghua camp with Ballard and his family. While there are some letters that thank Ballard for bringing this history to the greater public’s attention—the story of the Europeans who were held in the camp after the Japanese takeover of the International Settlement in Shanghai following the bombing of Pearl Harbor—the great majority express dismay and anger at the inaccuracies of Ballard’s novel. Some cannot believe that he seems to praise the character and actions of the Japanese while simultaneously mocking and maligning the English people in the camp. What we are witness to here are the opinions of people who have no familiarity with Ballard’s body of work and were most likely expecting something more realistic in the manner of a docudrama, not the work of imagination deploying an inner space perspective on biographical memory.

Striking in a different manner are a series of documents sent to Ballard from Margaret Braidwood, whose deceased husband Bill had been at Lunghua and close friends with Ballard’s father. The documents she includes are a rich historical record of life in the camp—from descriptions and drawings of the buildings, narratives on the population and committee reports from the British Residents’ Association. In a letter from Braidwood she indicates that Ballard had recommended she donate the materials to the Imperial War Museum. Overall, the materials provide a vivid and detailed portrait of numerous aspects of daily life in Lunghua that can help fill in the background or provide a contrast to the one Ballard portrays in Empire. They also stand as the one significant portion of the archive that could be of great use and interest to a researcher with no interest in Ballard’s work whatsoever.

As stated earlier, I stayed fairly well focused on materials that related to Ballard’s personal life, however thin some of this material might have been. However, there were other areas to which I also devoted a great deal of time. One of the most remarkable treasures in the whole collection, something that received a bit of media attention at the time of the revelation about the archive, is a set of five small spiral-bound notepads, roughly 4” x 6” in size. Here can be found the notes toward the final, incomplete projects Ballard was working on before he died, thus from roughly 2007 or 2008. Four of the notepads are taken up with one novel in development. By the second notepad, he begins to use VUS as shorthand for this project, which goes through a variety of title changes, “War vs US,” “US vs The World” and, most completely and dramatically, “An Immodest Proposal, or How the
World Declared War on America.” Overly written in the context of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the premise that gets developed over these pages concerns a US that invades a Middle Eastern country, ostensibly for democratic reasons but ultimately reveals its true ambition to be the control of the oil in the region, which then has a devastating economic effect on the European economy. Although Britain is initially sympathetic to the US, they eventually join the rest of the world in waging war on the US.

These notepads offer a fascinating window into Ballard’s thought processes, giving us a glimpse of how he might have gone about developing premises for his novels. As notes—with Ballard testing and rejecting ideas along the way—they, of course, offer a quite different angle on the writing process from the drafts and transcripts that dominate the collection. It is also interesting for scholars to see in these notes the way Ballard makes direct connections and references to earlier works, testing the new idea by noting how it links to other pieces like Running Wild or Cocaine Nights, for instance.

For me, personally, the VUS premise helped in the writing of my fifth chapter which concerns Ballard’s treatment of the United States in his fiction (focusing primarily on the novel Hello America, but also the loose-trilogy of post-NASA stories, “News From the Sun,” “Memories of the Space Age” and “Myths of the Near Future”). In these works from the early 1980s, we can see a deep ambivalence in Ballard’s treatment of the States. On the one hand, he is deeply critical of its empty consumerism and hyper-military forcefulness, but, on the other hand, he admires its Wright Brothers’ spirit of adventure and future-looking direction, which was, for him, in strong contrast to England’s heritage-seeking obsessions. By the 2000s, though, when Ballard was jotting these notes, all such ambivalence has vanished, and the story ideas show a real anger; only the negative traits remain. America is a “hamburger and comic-book culture” that gets compared to Nazi Germany and imperial Rome (Working notes for projected writing, fourth notebook, D6). As a way to help reinforce the claims of the chapter, these notes were remarkable for the forthrightness of Ballard’s statements on the imperial nature of the contemporary US.

In the fifth and final notepad, there is also a brief reflection on the possibility of writing “Atrox 2”—that is, Ballard speculates on the possibility of writing a kind of sequel to The Atrocity Exhibition. Looking back to the fragmented society of the 1960s that also forced people like himself to forge radical new connections across disparate materials, he wonders if the present is at all similar, if a similar kind of work could be written today? Ballard seems to conclude in the negative and the thoughts go nowhere else. Still, this brief reflection helped provide me with a useful coda for my third chapter, which focused on The Atrocity Exhibition, and the ways in which it was a pure product of its time.

Because of the nature of the work I was doing, I did not spend a great deal of time looking at the drafts and transcripts of the novels to make detailed analyses across the variations. However, I did look at a handful of the manuscripts and was able to make brief observations that proved useful for my research. Here are two examples. In my second chapter, I look at the legacy of certain colonial narratives that may have shaped Ballard’s imagination in his early natural disaster novels, and so I looked at the typescript of The Drowned World, which is incomplete. What was notable for me, however, given the loaded racial imagery of that novel was to spot where Ballard had made handwritten marks to ensure the capitalization of “Negro,”
but also where, in one passage, the word “archaeopsychic” is written in as a substitute for “racial.” More remarkable was a long handwritten note that was part of a synopsis Ballard had written for *High Rise*. In this note Ballard overtly compares the behavior of some of the tenants in the high rise—those using chaos as an excuse to wield petty power—to the behavior of some of the English people in the Lunghua camp. Such a reference never made it into the novel, but it helps us see how long before he wrote *Empire of the Sun*, he was seeing in his imagined material the real-life experiences of his Shanghai background.

I was also able to make use of other kinds of material in the archive that were not directly part of the actual fabric of the novels but influential in the shaping of those works. A clear example of this is that one can read Ballard’s book report-like notes on Robert Paxton’s *Anatomy of Fascism*. Although these were located in a separate file, they are quite clearly related to the writing of his final published novel, *Kingdom Come*, which concerns the rise of fascism in contemporary suburban England. Such notes, in which we can observe Ballard’s response to Paxton’s analysis, provide a different lens on Ballard’s writing process.

A curiosity in the collection is an undated document, filed under “Occasional Prose,” given the provisional title (by Beckett), “Brief comments on 6 crime novels.” Presumably composed in the mid-1960s, this single sheet is an unexpected bit of satire in which Ballard, assuming the voice of a *Publishers Weekly*-type reviewer, gives quick evaluations of works like Kafka’s *The Trial* and *Crime and Punishment* as if they were newly released crime novels. Although slight and anomalous, I found the piece of some relevance as my seventh chapter looks to Ballard’s turn toward crime fiction in his final set of novels. Here we see something of Ballard’s early, rather dismissive attitude toward the genre, in contrast to his more serious deployment of it later in his career as a means of examining violence in a globalized context.

To conclude this section, let me simply note that there was obviously a great deal of other material that I looked at that was pertinent to my research but which finally did not make its way into the final book. This includes such interesting family correspondence as a letter from Ballard’s wife in 1964 when they were on holiday in Spain. Mary notes how Spain triggers associative memories in Ballard of Shanghai and they are both struck by the international nature of the people traveling around them. Originally I had made reference to the unused *Vermilion Sands* story, but dropped it in the final edit as it was too digressive for the point being made at the time. There was also, in the files of photos, a publicity still of Ballard when he was on the set of the filming of Spielberg’s *Empire of the Sun*, in which he is dressed in a John Bull costume, complete with Union Jack vest. Ballard made reference to this image in his semi-autobiographical work *The Kindness of Women*, which I did make reference to. For a moment, staring at the strange image, I toyed with the idea of using it for the book’s cover.

**The Joy of the Archive: Looking to the Past, Looking to the Future**

Academics are supposed to aim for a kind of neutrality in their work, and we should ideally don a blasé façade as we set to the serious nature of our tasks. Archives, so the image supposes, are serious spaces. But in truth there is always something personal about what we do, and I have to be honest about the sheer thrill of being in the archive, about the frisson produced by being in the presence of the objects of a writer you adore. That’s his handwriting. I’m holding his passport. These are his...
notebooks! While I may not be talking about an early folio of Shakespeare’s or Virginia Woolf’s diaries, if you’re a long-term admirer of a particular writer, there is a pure and simple giddiness that can come from being in the archives. Even the archives of the contemporary.

It was especially exciting in my case to feel like such an early visitor to the collection. It was easy to imagine myself as one of the first to hold this or that document (an illusion, of course, but an illusion that added to the joy). And there are, of course, the usual challenges. The long stretches of looking, reading, waiting, the day that doesn’t add up to much. And there is, as ever, the struggle with handwriting. My personal notes deciphering those final notepads, for instance, are filled with bracketed question marks. As we know, it takes practice, one becomes accustomed, but there remains something about fixing our eyes on the peculiar texture of this writer’s hand that excites and perplexes.

Sometimes the joy is in the small things, in the unexpected items that may not matter that much to your project, but fascinate nevertheless. The majority of readers in the Ballard collection will most likely focus on the typescripts, but there are numerous other little treats sprinkled throughout worth spending some time with. For instance, and here’s an odd one, there is a brief correspondence with a representative from Cadillac, including a press pack for the BLS 2.8 V6 Saloon. The car was to be delivered to Ballard’s home and he was going to test drive it for The Guardian, but ultimately he canceled when he was disappointed to find that the Cadillac was not going to be one of the American behemoths he loved so much, but a mere compact, no bigger than a Ford Granada.

There is also the charming item, “The Domesday Book of Shepperton,” a series of three school exercise books by Ballard’s daughter Bea, written when she was twelve-years old. This is her childhood account of the history and geography of their town of Shepperton, with notes about their house and the local population. At one point, Bea declares that they don’t really have any “proper skinheads” in the neighborhood. The one work of her father’s that she makes mention of is his film script for When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth. The whole thing is like an alternative vision of her father’s ever highly imagined Shepperton.

Given that my book opens with the importance of Graham Greene to Ballard’s writing and geopolitical outlook, it was wonderful to find in the correspondence files a typed letter from Greene to Victoria Petrie-Hay at the publisher Victor Gollancz expressing his praise of Ballard in general, but of the new work, Empire of the Sun, in particular, and agreeing to be quoted as saying so.

Another thing pertinent to my own work, but that should be amusing to all, is some correspondence from 10 Downing Street. I began my article “Empires of the Mind” with an account of the irony of Ballard being offered the C.B.E. (Commander of the Order of the British Empire). It was an offer he refused. Here in the archive is the correspondence from William Chapman, Secretary for Appointments. Readers can see Ballard’s copy of the letter with his handwritten put-down: “Now, is it Tony or Cherie [Blair] who’s my biggest fan?” There is also a copy of his rejection letter: “I confirm that I DO [or] I DO NOT wish my name to be considered for the proposed award.” There is a squiggle across the box for I DO, and a large tick across the box for I DO NOT.

One also can find elements that are much more moving. There are, of course, those notes toward projects that never were. In addition to the VUS project, there are two loose sheets proposing a children’s story, “The Mirror.” Then there is the file

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devoted to “Conversations: Jonathan Waxman and JG Ballard.” Waxman was the physician who worked with Ballard on his cancer treatment. Although ultimately too ill to complete the project, Ballard had seriously considered a book based on these conversations that would have dealt with religion, life after death, cancer, Ballard’s period studying medicine and what illness reveals about our selves. Given that sentimentality is not an emotion one tends to associate with things Ballardian, I must mention that I found myself saddened at a number of times reading through the notepads, as he would stop midstream in his brainstorming to make self-doubting remarks, wondering if he was just repeating himself, if he had another project in him or not. At one point he stops to guess at his legacy: Empire of the Sun, novel and film, Crash, novel and film, some recognition for the last three novels. The brainstorming continues, but, farther along into the notepads, the notes become fewer, and the pages are reduced to aimless squiggles and doodles.

One final thing to remark upon is that I emerged from the archives with a strong desire to see someone produce a full scholarly edition of Ballard’s non-fiction. In the archive, one can look at the essays that would eventually be assembled into his only collected volume of non-fiction, A User’s Guide to the Millennium, which has become such a vital source for Ballardian scholars. What one finds in the archives, though, are mostly Xeroxes of the original essays sent to Ballard by the editor David Pringle, with Ballard’s annotations of these copies. In looking at these notes, one becomes quickly aware of how Ballard edited those essays to avoid repetition across the articles or to refine points he wanted to make, or to change titles. This is why we would seem to be in need of a proper scholarly edition of Ballard’s collected essays. Not only have there been many essays published since User’s Guide appeared, but that volume was also organized thematically rather than chronologically, and a complete edition could make use of the archives to note the differences between the original essays and how they were amended for User’s Guide. Now we just need someone to do the work.

The archive lets us into Ballard’s past, but it certainly opens us up to a new future as well. The drafts, typescripts and notepads let us view his writing process in a way we did not have access to before. But there is much else in there as well, and much work to do. There is a whole future to be found in that past.

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Shore Leave Russia: *Star Trek* Fandom Creativity in Russia

Larisa Mikhaylova

As an organized community, Trekkers (a preferred self-designation) have existed in Russia starting from 2000, but not all of its members are millennials. Parts of the *Star Trek* series might have been brought from the US or elsewhere on VHS cassettes long before that, a series of books had been translated and published in Russia in the 1990s, but still it was not known in all its splendor to people at large here in Russia until later. During the New Year holidays in 2001, it was shown on the all-Russia TV channel STS for the first time, and that is when fans became enamored with it. They started to gravitate together on discussion boards on the Internet and pretty quickly decided to gather for their first convention near Moscow, in the forest.

![Fig. 1 Farewell, thank you for sharing.](image)

Yes, probably the first peculiar feature for the Russian trekkers is our week-long convention in the forest, called RusCon, where we live in tents camping-style. The convention has just celebrated its sixteenth year in a row. The place is carefully chosen, permissions for camping there are gained by the organizing committee, the date is announced some ten months ahead of time on the site trekker.ru, and registration starts three months before the convention. Over one hundred people come not only from Moscow and St. Petersburg, but also from distant parts of the country, including Novgorod, Vladimir, the Urals, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, and Siberia, and other countries, too, such as Ukraine, Austria, and China. People specially arrange for their vacations to meet with old and new friends at the convention, and to spend this week watching *Star Trek*, debating about the principles of the world drawn in all series of the franchise, taking part in competitions and games arranged throughout the week, as well as participating in creative sessions, seminars, and excursions. During the years, there have been excursions to Korolev's Museum of Space Flight, Tsiolevsky Museum in Kaluga, and this past year included a visit to a local village cinema, where we gathered in cosplay costumes to watch the 13th *Star Trek* film that just premiered. Among the entertainment, there is often a Holodeck with cosplay and scenes written and staged...
on site, as well as nature art contests—after ten years, I still remember the cutest Enterprise model, with a dish made from a huge bracket fungus with elegant fir tree cones for nacelles. People come to RusCon also as families, with small children who become a new generation to admire Star Trek and build around it. Five days are thematically organized around each of the series—The Original Series, The Next Generation, Deep Space 9, Voyager, and Enterprise—and at the end of the sixth day, a Banquet night features sketches and an emotional ritual in which people join the flames of their candles together, telling each other what being together has brought them and thanking each other for the special memories.

Though the convention takes place in a forest and the food is cooked over a fire, still Trekkers enjoy a lot of modern technology: after a generator and a large screen were bought to the convention, it became possible to screen Star Trek episodes in good quality from licensed discs, with excellent sound quality due to the skills of a Trekker who is a sound operator by profession. We also have qualified journalists, programmers, and—quite naturally—space scientists in our midst. Though attendees’ ages range from newborns to at least 65, the average age of attendees is between 20-30. Wide canvases are tied above specially arranged birch tree trunks over the clearing with the fire, where people sit during interludes between episodes and also during screenings, eating food and listening to seminars, so that rains do not prevent any of our activities.

Fig. 2: The daily hike to fetch spring water. Though called Rura Penthe, this duty is craved among participants, as it allows us to spend an hour of Star-Trekking across the fields and valleys.

Most important to our convention are the principles of community living, where we depend on each other to perform our voluntary duties of preparing food, transporting food and water in a specially rented minivan, establishing the camp, maintaining ecological balance through the sorting of waste, and keeping watch. Meals are collective, with vegetarian choices, and lovers of mushrooms (such as myself) can gather and cook them, as well. Medical first aid is provided by a hired specialist, who—“infected” by the Trekkers’ enthusiasm—also takes part in common activities.
During several previous conventions, another tradition has also developed: informing all convention participants about the happenings of the day and forthcoming activities through a Radio Bozon. An anchor—the Moscow Base captain Paparazzi, or Papa for short—invites the most active participants for commentaries. Interviews are conducted with those who were in character for the games, and anyone brimming with something of common interest to express is welcome on these broadcasts.

This year, we held a themed game based around the general plot of the franchise and developed by the conference organizers: we were all colonists going to New Vega, but our ship was grounded by an anomaly on the way, and so we were made to explore the planet with limited resources. After finding a tribe of amphibious aboriginals (https://vk.com/photo3901635_426818016), we established contact with them and took part in a complicated interaction with other grounded extraterrestrials, managing to form working relations—even with a haughty Cardassian—to get a transmitter working, and were thus able to get on our route again. The underlying theme of the game is celebrating diversity. In that way, the Trekkers’ ideology follows the legacy of Roddenberry and the internationalism proclaimed and to some extent developed in Soviet times.

Fig. 3: Larisa Mikhaylova with gathered mushrooms (species Boletus edulis).

Each year for the Moscow trekkers starts with TNG—Trekkerskii Novyi God [Trekkers’ New Year], a non-alcoholic New Year’s celebration among friends, which annually gathers 30-40 people, in which each and every person gets a present from under a fir-tree and given away by Papa according to the inscription on the gift of each present. In one of the rooms with a screen, some episodes of choice can be watched, and in another room people play board games, share jokes, sometimes sing, and play specially-developed Trekker Scrabble and a unique Trekkers’ Poker—developed by Moscow fan M’Res—developed by Moscow fan M’Res—with five suits (based on each of the series), married Trek pairs, and Joker cards like Q, Borg Queen, or Tribble, along with special features that make a night at a Poker table into a story of probabilities and amazement, played entirely for the fun of companionship at the table during TNG or beside the fire at RusCon.
On Trekker.ru, one can find the most active forum of Russian Trekkers, with over 4,500 registered users and close to 1,000 active ones, who regularly take part in discussions or post Star Trek news. There are sections dedicated to all Star Trek series, films, books, plays, and debates on various aspects of Star Trek. An online Star Trek game can also be played and discussed there. For a Russian audience, translation is a question of special importance, and “Memory Alpha” is not only translated but also complemented in Russian. RusCon topics—with rules and memories from the previous conventions—can be seen in the next section, alongside sections dedicated to Starbase Moscow and smaller clubs in St. Petersburg and Rostov, a special topic made available for those who are looking for kindred spirits in their regions. All in all, it is a vibrant community eager to share why and what they love about Star Trek, and also why it is less popular here than, say, Star Wars or Babylon 5 among science fiction fans in general. The answers to those questions might serve as a topic for a separate paper, but in short, Star Trek is less popular in Russia because it was not on TV for decades as it was in the United States, and was not even shown before 2000. However, new Star Trek films bring more viewers to get into The Original Series and eventually into the wider Star Trek Universe, and for that one can forget for a while the manifold deviations sanctioned by J.J. Abrams.

Fandom-centered materials have been published during previous years in St. Petersburg- and Ekaterinburg-based fanzines and regularly appear in a special department Trekker.ru of a Russian SF magazine called Supernova (Sverkhnovaia. F&SF), published in Moscow. From inside the group have come at least two “self-research” projects performed by the author of the present paper and a Lomonosov Moscow State University Journalism Department graduate, Tatyana Gomozova, who was writing her graduation paper—which compared Russian and American Star Trek fandoms and which was defended in 2014—under my supervision and who spoke at RusCon-16 on Shakespeare in Star Trek. This research will be deepened for the annual international conference of the Russian Society for American Culture Studies (www.rsacs.org) this year. A special course on “Star Trek as an American Cultural
Phenomenon” has been offered by me for four semesters already, with indications of more research to be done in the future.

Fig. 5: Closing ceremony, RusCon VI in 2006.

Further Reading


“500 Years of Utopia” An exhibit at Rivera Library—Now Open
Irene Morrison

Fig. 1: From top to bottom: Joseph Hall’s *Mvndus alter et idem*, Francis Bacon’s *Nova Atlantis*, Tommaso Campanella’s *Civitas Solis* (bound by Campanella, 1643); Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1517); and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1643)

The Eaton Collection has a new exhibit on display until December 15, 2016. “500 Years of Utopia” commemorates the 500th anniversary of the publication of Thomas More’s *Utopia*, as well as the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek*. The exhibit is curated by Irene Morrison, a PhD Candidate in the English Department, and JJ Jacobson, the Jay Kay and Doris Klein Librarian for Science Fiction.

"500 Years of Utopia" showcases the Eaton’s holdings in the genre, highlighting key utopian texts of the last five centuries, and telling the story of how utopia has long been a site of ideological contention about what a better world might look like. Among the exhibit’s central texts are the 1517 edition of More’s *Utopia*; a 1643 edition of Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, Campanella’s *City of the Sun*, and Joseph Hall’s *Discovery of a New World*, bound and published together by Campanella; and a first edition of Restif’s *Discovery of the Austral Continent by a Flying Man* (1781, French). Important dystopian works are on display as well, including the rare "asbestos edition" of Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1953).

Also on display are some of the maps, illustrations, and cover art that enhance works of utopia, as well as the memorabilia and collectors’ items of popular utopian fiction, such as the children’s utopia, *Dinotopia*. Finally, the exhibit looks at utopia in the present day, focusing on the ways people of color, Indigenous, and non-Western authors—such as Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor and Egyptian novelist Ahmed Khaled Towfik—have taken the traditionally Western concept of utopia, and remixed and repurposed it toward a decolonized utopian vision.
1. **How did you come to work in the Eaton collection?**
I began working with JJ Jacobson, the new Eaton Librarian, after she pitched the idea of a collaboration to commemorate the 500th anniversary of *Utopia* at a Speculative Fiction and Cultures of Science (SFCS) program meeting. She is firmly committed to engaging graduate students with the Collection, and ours the first of many exhibits she intends to curate with grad students. Thanks to JJ, instead of feeling like a cold research space where I went when I simply couldn’t find a book anywhere else, the Collection became a boundless, adventurous opportunity for me. And I think the space changed for other graduate students, too thanks to new initiatives such as summer RAships there; it feels more like a hub for the SFCS community here now.

2. **What sorts of materials did you initially plan on using? How did your plans change as the project took shape?**
The biggest thing that I had to cut was a video element. I wanted to have four short films screening in a loop, including Larissa Sansour’s “*Nation Estate*” (2012) and Nanobah Becker’s “*The 6th World*” (2013). This wasn’t technologically or financially feasible given how little time we had to put the exhibit together, and I intend them to be part of an online exhibit. I hope that the many novels on display that could be classified as post-colonial sf made up for this.

I also hoped to display more than fiction, such as the major works of utopian socialism, but we didn’t have any early or unique editions from utopian socialists such as Fourier. Instead, I found something more obscure but arguably visually more appealing: Restif de la Bretonne’s *La Decouverte Australe/ Discovery of the Austral Continent by a Flying Man* (1781), which was only recently translated into English and is said to have influenced Fourier. The illustrations in it of strange flying contraptions and human-animal hybrids enriched the exhibit beautifully.

3. **Were there any especially interesting items you discovered while putting the display together?**
The Eaton has a TON of memorabilia and realia! The day I came across *Dinotopia* plush toys and children’s watches featuring Bix—one of the main dinosaur characters—I felt like a kid on Christmas. I was able to fill a case with *Dinotopia* books and memorabilia, and we had another case of realia commemorating the 50th Anniversary of *Star Trek*.
Another item that I found, thanks to Lyman Tower Sargent's excellent bibliography on utopian fiction, was 2894, or The Fossil Man (1894), by Walter Browne. It's a sexist satire where gender roles are reversed, and I found it nearly unreadable but interesting in its own way. It was in very poor condition, so I didn't want to display it, but I did learn that it was one of the rarest books in the English language. The collection ended up removing it from the stacks and putting it in the vault at my recommendation.

In terms of intangible discoveries, I learned so much about the ways libraries work and make information accessible. I'm definitely a better researcher now that I've seen, for example, a librarian use the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), model for cataloguing items in databases. I'll now be less likely to miss things during research.

4. 500 years is a long time; how did you choose what to include? What organizational principles did you use?

After talking with JJ, I developed a sort of diagram of the three elements of an exhibit as I saw it: an item has to be part of an overarching exhibit story, it must be visibly appealing, and it must showcase the Collection's uniqueness. I chose to chronologically represent major eras since 1516 in four of the five literature cases, with the help of Manuel and Manuel's Utopian Thought in the Western World (1979), which was extremely useful for pre-20th Century works. We tried to represent each era with 4-9 items. So for example 18th Century Enlightenment case has a beautiful French edition of Robinson Crusoe (1761, 1719), accompanied by text that explained the way the book sparked the robinsonade genre and influenced later utopian works. It also displayed an early edition of Gulliver's Travels (1727, 1726), and three more obscure works that showcased the depth of the Eaton Collection—including some utopian pornography. The 20th Century case contains the major works of utopia and dystopia that visitors would probably be most familiar with, such as our asbestos edition of Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 (1953), and LeGuin's The Dispossessed (1974). The final case featured postcolonial utopian fiction written in (or translated to) English from the last 30 years. I was able to buy or donate some works for this case, which is also where my research is focused; the Eaton has truly great holdings in this subgenre and I'm given to understand it's an area in which they're looking to further expand.

5. What was the biggest challenge in putting the exhibit together?

I struggled most with making the exhibit appealing beyond just text and ideas, especially to an audience non-academics (a lot of students and staff have come to visit). The exhibit had to be visually appealing, so we left out some works that are important to the narrative of what utopia has meant these past 500 years, but that looked dull or were not first/old editions. One example of this was Margaret Cavendish's The Blazing World (1666). We don't have a first or early edition of this or Sarah Scott's Millennium Hall (1762), so as a result there are no women writers displayed until the 20th Century. Also, all text written to accompany objects needed to be at an 11th grade reading level, which challenged my tendencies toward writing in unnecessarily convoluted ways (as we do!). When I was done running my text through reading level calculators, it no longer felt like my writing. But what's the
point of utopian ideas if they aren’t communicable? It was a challenge that has influenced my approach to academic writing.

Finally, it is difficult to provide a sense of an ending to an exhibit on utopia. I was asked to speculate on where the genre is headed in the future but what I came up with sounded twee or unoriginal: essentially I wrote that utopia is “more important than ever,” and postcolonial sf is taking utopia in exciting new directions. This perhaps resembles that time-honored dictum that it’s easier to imagine the end of the world as we know it than a utopian future. For me it was hard to imagine the future for utopia, even though I absolutely believe there is one.

6. What are your future plans for the exhibit/project?
JJ and I plan to take the exhibit online, though we are looking at alternatives to a straightforward image-and-text-based website. We want something that will create a sense of space for visitors to inhabit, and again be attractive to a wider audience. One possibility is to put it on Second Life or a similar virtual environment. We are also thinking through ways of “breaking the exhibit,” of challenging the imperialist-oriented conventions of exhibiting objects (behind glass, in rows, with an attention to chronology, and so on). Public exhibitions originated in the Victorian era and were aimed at displaying the newfound superiority of England and exoticizing the cultures it conquered. This “breaking” might look like exhibits with touchable, moveable objects and opportunities to contribute content to the exhibit as a visitor. It seems that the traditional layout of an exhibit does not lend itself to the utopian or even to the kinds of learner-centered methods of teaching that we tend to adopt in the classroom.

Fig. 3 - William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1926, originally published 1890)
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Irene Morrison is a PhD Candidate in English at UC Riverside, with a designated emphasis in Speculative Fiction and Cultures of Science. Her research focuses on postcolonial and utopian science fiction. Irene is most recently the author of a review of Ahmed Khaled Towfik's *Utopia* (2016), in *Paradoxa*, and “Making Gender Trouble in Early Queer SF: Sam Delany's 'Aye, and Gomorrah’” (2015), in *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*. 