

Science and Fiction

Editorial Board

Mark Alpert

Philip Ball

Gregory Benford

Michael Brotherton

Victor Callaghan

Amnon H Eden

Nick Kanas

Geoffrey Landis

Rudi Rucker

Dirk Schulze-Makuch

Rüdiger Vaas

Ulrich Walter

Stephen Webb

Science and Fiction – A Springer Series

This collection of entertaining and thought-provoking books will appeal equally to science buffs, scientists and science-fiction fans. It was born out of the recognition that scientific discovery and the creation of plausible fictional scenarios are often two sides of the same coin. Each relies on an understanding of the way the world works, coupled with the imaginative ability to invent new or alternative explanations—and even other worlds. Authored by practicing scientists as well as writers of hard science fiction, these books explore and exploit the borderlands between accepted science and its fictional counterpart. Uncovering mutual influences, promoting fruitful interaction, narrating and analyzing fictional scenarios, together they serve as a reaction vessel for inspired new ideas in science, technology, and beyond.

Whether fiction, fact, or forever undecidable: the Springer Series “Science and Fiction” intends to go where no one has gone before!

Its largely non-technical books take several different approaches. Journey with their authors as they

- Indulge in science speculation—describing intriguing, plausible yet unproven ideas;
- Exploit science fiction for educational purposes and as a means of promoting critical thinking;
- Explore the interplay of science and science fiction—throughout the history of the genre and looking ahead;
- Delve into related topics including, but not limited to: science as a creative process, the limits of science, interplay of literature and knowledge;
- Tell fictional short stories built around well-defined scientific ideas, with a supplement summarizing the science underlying the plot.

Readers can look forward to a broad range of topics, as intriguing as they are important. Here just a few by way of illustration:

- Time travel, superluminal travel, wormholes, teleportation
- Extraterrestrial intelligence and alien civilizations
- Artificial intelligence, planetary brains, the universe as a computer, simulated worlds
- Non-anthropocentric viewpoints
- Synthetic biology, genetic engineering, developing nanotechnologies
- Eco/infrastructure/meteorite-impact disaster scenarios
- Future scenarios, transhumanism, posthumanism, intelligence explosion
- Virtual worlds, cyberspace dramas
- Consciousness and mind manipulation

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/11657>

Zoran Živković

First Contact and Time Travel

Selected Essays and Short Stories

 Springer

Zoran Živković
Belgrade, Serbia

ISSN 2197-1188

Science and Fiction

ISBN 978-3-319-90550-1

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90551-8>

ISSN 2197-1196 (electronic)

ISBN 978-3-319-90551-8 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018943298

© Springer International Publishing AG, part of Springer Nature 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover photo: By courtesy of Nuno Ferreira Santos (Lisbon 2016)

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Dragoljub Kojčić, my dear friend

Preface

The two main parts of this book—essays and fiction—originated during two rather distant periods of my life. With one exception, all the nonfiction pieces were written in the second half of the 1970s, nearly twenty years before I embarked on fiction. At that time, in my late twenties and early thirties, I was a young scholar working on my MA and PhD theses. I hadn't even remotely considered the possibility of becoming an author myself.

Strange as it might seem today, my area of academic interest was then revolutionary: science fiction. Although by that time the SF genre had already abandoned its origins in pulp literature and started to produce works of indisputable artistic value, it was still far from being a favorite subject in proverbially conservative academic circles.

I was very fortunate indeed to have an exceptional mentor, professor Nikola Milošević, who, although by no means an expert in science fiction himself, realized that it possessed the potential to offer new insights into some of the fundamental dilemmas, not only of the art of prose, but also, more generally, in his principal area of interest—the history of ideas.

In my PhD thesis (“The Origin of Science Fiction as a Genre of Artistic Prose,” 1982) I tried to explain a unique phenomenon—how of all genres of pulp literature only science fiction had succeeded in becoming art. In the long run, however, my MA thesis had the quality of a genuinely pioneering study: “Anthropomorphism and the First Contact Theme in the SF Works of Arthur C. Clarke,” 1979. Sir Arthur told me in one of his letters that, to the best of his knowledge, this was also the first academic paper ever written on his SF works. (Although flattered, I never cared to check because I don't feel that precedence is really very important in these matters.)

Apart from first contact, I was also interested in a second theme unique to science fiction—time travel (or, to use Lem’s beautiful neologism, *chronomotion*). In my last, brief essay on science fiction (1995) I recapitulated all the subaspects of this very challenging theme in order to identify those that might have greater literary potential.

For a decade and a half (1975–1990) I tried my hand at every aspect of science fiction—but one. I wrote several books on it including a two-volume set: *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. I translated more than 40 SF books, I was a critic, a reviewer, and a commentator on the SF genre, I hosted a TV series on the history of SF cinema and attended numerous conventions, conferences, festivals, and so on.

But I was never a science fiction writer.

A somewhat simplified answer to the inevitable question as to how I could possibly not become an SF writer with such a background is that by the time I began to write my first piece of fiction in 1993, science fiction had already gone into decline. This is not the place to elaborate on this, but it is my view that science fiction no longer exists. It belongs to the history of literature as one of the two great movements of the art of “*fantastika*” in the twentieth century. (The other is, of course, magical realism.) In the twenty-first century, we don’t write science fiction because we don’t need it. We live it. It is all around us. For better or worse.

In any case, what I write is not science fiction. (Curiously enough, no matter how often I repeat this simple fact, for the great majority of my compatriots who care to have an opinion I will forever remain a science fiction writer. Particularly for those who, for one reason or another, have had neither the opportunity nor the interest to read any of my 22 works of fiction.) I consider myself a writer without prefixes. Simply a writer.

On the other hand, not being an SF writer doesn’t mean that I avoid themes introduced by science fiction. On the contrary, it is precisely through its new approaches to old SF themes that the new “*fantastika*” of the twenty-first century, which still doesn’t even have a name, is slowly but surely taking its final shape.

If I had been an SF writer, I would never have been able to write *Time Gifts* or “The Puzzle”—my variations on the two pivotal science fiction themes: time travel and first contact. It took a long time to complete what I started back in the 1970s as an essayist. But completion would never have been possible without my being a writer.

Contents

Part I Essays

1	The Theme of First Contact in the SF Works of Arthur C. Clarke	3
1.1	Introduction	3
1.2	Three Short Stories	5
1.2.1	“Report on Planet Three”	5
1.2.2	“Crusade”	7
1.2.3	“History Lesson”	11
1.3	“A Meeting with Medusa”	14
1.3.1	“There Is Life on Jupiter: And It’s Big..”	14
1.3.2	Medusae and Mantas	18
1.3.3	Prime Directive	25
1.3.4	Noumen and Phenoumen	28
1.4	Conclusion	34
2	Utopia in Arthur C. Clarke’s <i>Childhood’s End</i>	37
3	Chronomotion	45
4	The Labyrinth Theme in Science Fiction	51
5	Annotations 1	55

Part II Fiction

6	The Bookshop	61
7	The Puzzle	73
8	Time Gifts	83
	The Astronomer	83
	The Paleolinguist	97
	The Watchmaker	111
	The Artist	127
9	The Cone	141
10	Annotations 2	147