

## **Book Proposal**

# **'Lost in Space'**

## **Geographies of Science Fiction**

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### **Brief Synopsis**

This book will be the first to explore the literary and cinematic geographies of science fiction: how space is used as 'literary', metaphoric device; how the geographies of SF relate can be used to explore contemporary geographies; how theorists like Jean Baudrillard, Donna Haraway, and Fredric Jameson have drawn upon the tropes of SF to develop new ways of thinking about spaces and social relations; and how SF represents many of our hopes and fears for future geographies.

Contributions will be drawn from authors from Geography, English, and Urban Studies.

The book will be divided into four main parts. Part 1 will bring together contemporary theorists and science fiction authors in dialogues which shed light on both. Part 2 will explore the extent to which science fictional spaces are doubled, contradictory, unsettling, as well as considering the efforts made to map and therefore understand these spaces. The chapters in Part 3 will critically evaluate the work of 'cyberpunk' and other SF authors as they imagine future cities, communities and social (human-technological) relations.

## 1.2 Justification

Geographers have long been interested in literature, from studies which used novels as sources of geographical 'data' (Darby, 1948; Jay, 1975) to humanistic interest in literature's apparent success in capturing the subjective experience of place in print (Tuan, 1976, 1978; Pocock, 1979, 1981). Following criticism of both approaches (Thrift, 1978; Gregory, 1981), and a closer engagement with literary theory as part of geography's cultural turn (Brosseau, 1994), representations of space in novels and non-fictional forms are once again being interrogated. Attention is now given to the sociological and geographical imaginations of writers (Daniels and Rycroft, 1993; Foster, 1994); the textualisation of movement, routes and other spatial narratives (Carter, 1987; Cresswell, 1993; Brosseau, 1995); and the place of literature in the production and consumption of geographical knowledges and cultural differences (Sharp, 1994; Phillips, 1995). At the same time, increasing attention is being given to space by those working in cultural studies, anthropology, literary theory and elsewhere and this has also emphasized the spatiality of literature (Davis, 1987; Morretti, 1998). Geographers are also asking similar questions of other media, principally film (Aitken and Zonn, 1994; Clarke, 1997).

Science fiction is one the most popular of literary, cinematic and televisual genres though its geographies have so far received little attention. The genre became academically respectable in the 1980s and early 1990s, as writers like Fredric Jameson (1984, 1992), Jean Baudrillard (1991) and Donna Haraway (1991, 1992), drew upon the tropes of SF in their writing, and it was argued that novels like William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and films like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* appeared to have contracted the postmodern 'condition'. SF also possesses "a treasury of powerful metaphors and icons" (Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., 1991:306) for a number of important themes: otherness and identity (the alien), human-technological relations (the cyborg), the production of new information communication technologies like the Internet (cyberspace), and so on.

Like other fantastic genres (horror, fantasy, the gothic), SF produces new or unfamiliar spaces: "it is the spatial that determines the realm of textual dynamics, particularly in the context of fantasy forms" (Armitt, 1996:5). Rosemary Jackson (1981) follows Freud to find in fantasy the repressed fears and desires of modernity; science fiction's new worlds defamiliarise the reader's understandings of the everyday (Suvin, 1979; Malmgren, 1991, 1993); utopias rely upon the relationship between imagined

worlds and their referents to criticise or satirise the assumptions of the societies in which they were written. The distance between the reader's world and the fictional one creates space for experimentation, a place to speak from, a site for reflection, criticism and pleasure.

Given the lack of attention and the importance of science fiction as a genre a book exploring its geographies is timely.

### **1.3 Market**

It is anticipated that the book will consist of a multidisciplinary audience, predominately composed of researchers and teachers in Geography, English, Cultural Studies and Media Studies. The main markets will be the UK, United States and other Anglophone countries. Given the specific focus and advanced content level, sales will be predominately to academics and libraries. However, because it will be the first book concerning the geographies of science fiction, and because of the relative lack of texts concerning Geography and Literature/Film/Television, we anticipate that the book will feature heavily on the reading lists of courses concerning cultural geography, science fiction, and film and media studies. The number of expressions of interest in contributing to the book (we had offers by 37 prospective authors) and the level of enthusiasm generated amongst colleagues within our own discipline both suggest that the book will be well received.

### **1.4 Format**

With the exception of an extended introductory chapter (10,000), each chapter will be 5,000 words in length. The anticipated word length of the book is approximately 100-120,000 words. A limited number of plates will be used.

### **1.5 Timetable**

We have agreed with authors that we will deliver the manuscript within 18 months of signing a contract. Authors will have 12 months to write their chapter, with 6 months for editing and re-writes. Assuming a contract is signed by August 1999, we would hope to have the manuscript delivered by January 2001.

## **1.6 Book Outline**

### **Preface**

1. Introduction: Geographies of Science Fiction

### **Part 1. Making Connections: SF and theory**

Part introduction

2. Alternative Histories, Contingent Geographies

*Barney Warf (Geography, University of Florida, Tallahassee).*

3. World-Making Fictions: Between STS & SF

*Nick Bingham (Geography, Open University).*

4. Proliferation

*Nigel Thrift (Geography, University of Bristol)*

5. Murray Bookchin on Mars: The Production of Nature in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy

*Shaun Huston (Anthropology, Geography and History, Portland Community College)*

### **Part 2. Spaces of Otherness**

Part introduction

6. Science Fiction Cities and Men from Space

*Stuart C. Aitken (Geography, San Diego State University).*

7. Between Two Worlds: Early Cinema, Science Fiction, and Space-time

*Dave Clarke (Geography, University of Leeds) and Marcus Doel (Geography, University of Loughborough)*

8. What we can say about nature: familiar geographies, science fiction and popular physics

*Sheila Hones (Geography, Keisen University, Tokyo)*

9. Cinema and Science Fiction: The Hysterical Materialism of Pataphysical Space  
*Paul Thomas Kingsbury (Geography, University of Kentucky)*

### **Part 3. Critical Futures**

Part introduction

10. Typology of imaginary Los Angeles  
*Mike Davis (Southern California Institute of Architecture)*

11. Geography's Conquest of History in *The Diamond Age*  
*Michael W. Longan and Timothy Oakes, (Geography, University of Colorado at Boulder)*

12. Space, Technology and Neal Stephenson's Science Fiction  
*Michelle Kendrick (English, Washington State University)*

13. Geographies of Power and Social Relations in Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It*  
*Barbara J. Morehouse (Geography, University of Arizona).*

14. Bleedthrough: The Spatial Imaginary of Philip K. Dick and Christopher Priest  
*Jeremy Crampton (Geography, George Mason University)*

15. The Subjectivity of the Near Future: Geographical Imaginings in the Work of J. G. Ballard  
*Jon Taylor (Geography, University of Kentucky)*

### **Part 4: Conclusions**

16. Rob Kitchin and James Kneale

### **Chapter Details**

## **Part 1: Making connections: SF and theory**

### **2. 'Alternative Histories, Contingent Geographies'**

#### **Barney Warf (Geography, University of Florida, Tallahassee)**

Contemporary social theory has forcefully demonstrated the creative potential of human beings in the construction and reproduction of landscapes. Largely in response to structural overdetermination and its teleological implications, i.e., that history rolls on a single "track" through time toward some predestined end, post-structuralist views, including structuration theory and phenomenology, emphasize the contingent nature of social life, the fact that history could always have occurred "otherwise," that the current organization of society and space could have unfolded along lines that, for one reason or another, did not materialize in fact. Broadly, to "know" to a society is to know how it could have been different. The philosophy of realism elevates this concept to an epistemological level, noting that what is taken to be "real" (ontology) includes not simply what is observable, but what is possible. Thus reality includes events that never happened in fact, but could have happened. Among the various species of science fiction, alternative histories reflect this notion, albeit in somewhat less lofty philosophical terms. Whereas most science fiction is concerned with the future, alternative histories center upon the past. Typically, such works explore critical junctures and profound events (e.g., wars) that may have unfolded in several possible ways, leading to varying subsequent trajectories. The genre includes speculative interpretations about how history "might have been," e.g., with the victories of Nazi Germany or the American South during the Civil War, or more broadly, ruminations about what the world today would look like had the Franks converted to Islam or if the computer had been invented in the nineteenth century. This form of science fiction can serve as more than simply entertainment; properly done: within the bounds of probability, it emphasizes the contingent nature of the present; improperly done, it toboggans off into fantasy. The geographical correlates of this type of literature, however, have never been uncovered.

This paper explores the contingent geographies that may have emerged in the face of alternative histories. It examines several novels and short stories to reveal this theme in different historical and geographical contexts, including works by William Gibson, Harry Turtledove, John Ford, and others. Throughout, it emphasizes the "realistic" (in both the common and philosophical meanings) alternative spatial forms of social organization that could have emerged had history taken a different

path, the social, political, and cultural landscapes that never were constructed. In this way, alternative histories may illustrate why particular trajectories over time and space never materialized, and so serve to reveal how the present came to be, emphasizing the relatively frail nature of social reality. Thus, in addition to simply blurring the boundaries between the observed and the possible, it sheds light on the politics of the contemporary.

### **3. World-Making Fictions: Between STS & SF**

#### **Nick Bingham (Geography, Open University)**

As recent work within science and technology studies has begun to cast new light on the passages that link stories, desires, reasons, and materialities, the question of how various forms of narrative practice serve as resources for bringing 'possible worlds' into existence has become a topic of some considerable interest. This chapter seeks to think through this same problematic by exploring the attraction of two of the leading STS scholars - Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour - to the sociospatial imaginaries articulated by science fiction writers such as Octavia Butler, Marge Piercy, Richard Powers, and Joanna Russ.

Specifically, I will characterise this burgeoning dialogue as emerging from a shared concern with 'legends'. Legends, on the one hand as stories in their own right. But equally legends as a necessary aid in the reading of a map, of making sense of a world. What is at stake here - especially from the STS side - is far from abstract textual dalliance: as we know, by highlighting very different features or landmarks, competing maps (which is to say world-views), may make certain things much more doable than others. In a very real sense, then, by turning to that style of science fiction which is committed to explicating models of what SF writer and theorist Samuel Delaney has called the 'self-inseparable-from-the-material-universe-and-all-that-we-don't-know-about-it', Haraway and Latour are actively engaging in creating alternative futures.

### **4. Proliferation**

#### **Nigel Thrift (Geography, University of Bristol)**

This chapter will use the biophilosophy of Bergson, Deleuze, Von Uexkull and Ansell Pearson to interrogate Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*. I will argue that an ethological approach is useful and productive as a metaphor for this novel but that its problems as an approach are also mirrored in the novel's disappointing last sections. The theme is, then, promising more than you can deliver.

## **5. Murray Bookchin on Mars: The Production of Nature in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy**

**Shaun Huston (Anthropology, Geography and History, Portland Community College)**

Environmental ethics and the production of nature in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy. Robinson is, I think, using the concept of terraforming to explore the ethics and limits of the human ability to (re)produce nature in its own image. Philosophically and theoretically Robinson has clearly been influenced by the work of Murray Bookchin. In the Mars books, Robinson provides a fruitful exploration of what Bookchin refers to as third or free nature, a synthesis of first (biophysical) nature and second (human social) nature wherein humans "cooperate" with first nature and directly participate in the evolution of life. This exploration is significant because Bookchin has been criticized for failing to sufficiently elaborate on the meaning and form of third nature, especially where the issue of cooperation with first nature is concerned. By taking humans away from Earth, essentially creating a break with our cultural and environmental history on this planet (a notion that Robinson actively explores, especially in Red and Blue Mars), and presenting them with a new, if not exactly blank, slate, Robinson elaborates on the potential for a positive, self-conscious, and ethically aware human intervention in the evolution of life and its environment. This aspect of the trilogy is developed through the trajectories of two of Robinson's main characters, Sax and Anne, and, to a lesser extent, the myth that builds up around a third character, Hiroko.

### **Part 2: Spaces of Otherness**

## **6. Science Fiction Cities and Men from Space**

**Stuart C. Aitken (Geography, San Diego State University)**

The proposed chapter will draw on some of my recent work with Chris Lukinbeal on masculinities and cinema to interrogate the portrayal of men in future urban spaces. In particular I will use the psycho-geographic notions of male hysteria (Aitken and Lukinbeal 1997, 1998; Lukinbeal and Aitken 1998), vertigo (Kirby 1996) and abjection (Kristeva 1982; Sibley 1995) to suggest that the portrayal of masculinity in many science fiction movies requires the creation of a pathological space. Put simply, this space (understood theoretically as vertigo) transforms and transects the main male protagonists search for self (understood theoretically as hysteria) and his connections the "other" (understood theoretically as abjection). I will briefly explore these theoretical constructs in the classic

science fiction works of Fritz Lang (*Metropolis* 1926), Jean-Luc Godard (*Alphaville* 1965; *Passion* 1981), Ridley Scott (*Blade Runner* 1982) and Terry Gilliam (*Brazil* 1996, *12 Monkeys* 1996) to set a stage for an extended discussion of *Dark City* (1998) by Alex Proyas. Taking place in a transformative city where buildings morph from slums into skyscrapers overnight and prisoner-citizens have their memories unknowingly wiped out every twenty-four hours, this film is an effectively paranoid science fiction thriller that speaks to the essence of representations of masculinities. Its disturbing, dream-like atmosphere combines with paranoia to bring to mind Terry Gilliam's work, whereas issues of conspiracy and control raise the spectres of Lang and Scott. The chapter will conclude with speculation on the dystopian forms of science fiction landscapes and the ways men are inserted into and created out of these landscapes

## **7. Between Two Worlds: Early Cinema, Science Fiction, and Space-time**

**David Clarke (Geography, University of Leeds) and Marcus Doel (Geography, University of Loughborough).**

'To the limited universe of the pre-industrial era', writes Baudrillard (1994, 122), 'utopia opposed an ideal, alternative universe. To the potentially infinite universe of production, science fiction adds the multiplication of its own possibilities'. The evolution of the cinematic medium—and, in particular, its initial experimentation with space and time—similarly marks the cusp of a changed relation to the world, marked by modernity's capacity for production. Just as science fiction derives its energy from its revelation of the possibilities of a future world only inherent in the present, the relation of early cinema to space-time rested on its capacity to project space and time beyond the pre-existing coordinates of the real: as Shaviro (1993, 41) puts it, 'cinema is at once a form of perception and a material perceived, a new way of encountering reality and a part of reality thereby perceived for the first time.' The context of cinema's development is, therefore, crucial. The first wave of the machine age had witnessed a contraction of space-time, rather more than any dynamic sense of unsettling (Schivlesbuch, 1986). Early cinema, by contrast, was animated by a profound unsettling of space-time. It is no surprise, therefore, that Paris, capital city of the nineteenth century, should have provided the context for early cinema's space-time experimentation (Elsaesser with Barker, 1981). As the initial decay of the first dream spaces of modernity set in, but before the destructive potential of the machine age made itself evident in the horrors of the Great War, cinema's harnessing of the 'speed effect of light' (Virilio 1988, 32) set out to explore the multiplication of the possibilities of the world (Hansen, 1987, 1991). Astonishment at the reality revealed by time-lapse photography; the

exhilaration of the visibility of speed in the 'cinema of attractions' (Gunning, 1981, 1983); the incredibility of the 'proximity at a distance' sustained by the hapticality of early cinema (Lant, 1992, 1995); the dynamism associated with close vision (Nahsicht), in contradistinction to the stasis implied by panoramic vision; the introduction of 'the first static vehicle' in the Lumière brothers' (1895) film *L'entrée d'un train en Gare de La Ciotat* (Virilio 1989, 110); and the surreality of the ability to run time backwards all speak of a modern disavowal of non-human forces to the point where space–time itself is no longer taken as external or given. Early cinema thus marked the point in the trajectory of modernity at which the apparatus of production itself disappears, swallowed by the very reality it allows to be perceived for the first time. Caught up in the multiplication of the possibilities of the world, cinema, like science fiction, always amounts to a kind of double exposure—marking the production of the world as a simulacrum. Cinema as science fiction: this is the implication of the experimentation with space–time that animated early cinema, and of the experience of the world it produced. It is in this sense that we propose to examine early cinematic space–time and its relation to the modern world, poised between the utopian imaginings of an alternative world and an era of pure simulation that leaves no room for a fictional anticipation or imaginary transcendence.

## **8. What we can say about nature: familiar geographies, science fiction and popular physics**

### **Sheila Hones (Geography, Keisen University, Tokyo)**

Reflecting on the assertion of the physicist Niels Bohr, that "there is no quantum world", only "an abstract quantum physical description," and that "physics concerns only what we can *say* about nature," this essay focuses on the role of conventional geographical imagery in the descriptions of abstract landscapes of space-time in science fiction and in popular introductions to "the new physics." The essay begins with an analysis of the abstract multi-dimensional space-time "landscape" created by Frank Herbert in his 1965 best-seller *Dune*, outlining how this almost unimaginable theatre of action is, like the alien planet Dune itself, described and made meaningful by reference to the familiar geographies of an implied reader/writer community. The essay then uses this analysis as the basis for a discussion of the benefits and limitations of the use of conventional geo-spatial imagery in the creation of "new worlds" in science fiction and the parallel explanation of new concepts in popular science. The essay suggests that in its creation of an imaginable landscape of space-time *Dune* not only relied upon shared assumptions about the meaning of place and the structure of physical reality, but also subjected these assumptions to reconsideration, and that this

stretching of conventions probably both reflected and encouraged a popular interest in the implications of contemporary physics developing in the 1960s. The essay concludes with a comparison of this aspect of the novel *Dune* with the ways in which geo-spatial imagery was typically used in the 1970s and 1980s in the presentation (or "marketing") of modern physics to the general reader, thus ending with a consideration of the linked roles of science fiction and popular science in rendering accessible, through conventional text forms and narratives, new ways of thinking about space and time.

## **9. Cinema and Science Fiction: The Hysterical Materialism of Pataphysical Space**

**Paul Thomas Kingsbury (Geography, University of Kentucky)**

Science fiction can be understood as the oscillation between the "metaphysics of presence" and the "pataphysics of absence." The "pataphysical" is term derived from the French writer Alfred Jarry and can be used to map the vertiginous spaces of science fiction. Pataphysical spaces are composed of fictive anxieties and dreams of science. Cartesian spatial certitudes are displaced by objects and events that subvert all previously assigned scientific cartographies.

Echoing the juxtaposition of "science" and "fiction," the science fiction movie is a popular imaginary that depicts familiar places in absurd situations, exemplified by flying saucers that hover above famous North American urban landscapes. Surreal spatial encounters of the pataphysical kind can be mapped as follows:

Sublime reactions to the unmappable can be seen in the "it can from inner space" movies such as *The Andromeda Strain*, *Predator*, *Outbreak* and *The Invisible Man*. Obscene spaces can be analyzed in the gendered anxieties/fantasies of the scientist in the *Gigantic Woman* movies or *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Bestial hybrid spaces can be analyzed in *King Kong* and *The Fly*. Mechanized spatialities of hysterical materialism are manifest "robotic movies" like *Terminator*.

## **Part 3: Critical Futures**

### **10. Typology of imaginary Los Angeles**

**Mike Davis (Southern California Institute of Architecture)**

Full abstract to follow

## **11. Geography's Conquest of History in *The Diamond Age***

**Michael W. Longan and Timothy Oakes, (Geography, University of Colorado at Boulder)**

This chapter presents *The Diamond Age* by Neil Stephenson as a vision of geography's conquest of history. We argue that Stephenson envisions a world where modern subjectivity--based on the historicist ideal of progress and its spatial expression, the nation-state--has been replaced by a hyper-spatialized postmodernism in which subjectivity is marked by discrete spaces and landscapes, rather than historical processes of change. The characters inhabit a truly postmodern world where identities have become so fragmented, so multiplied, that new spaces must be manufactured to accommodate them. Living on islands created by nanotechnology engineers off the coast of 21st century Shanghai, citizens no longer swear allegiance to nation-states, but to *claves*—walled-off communities based on everything from ethnic affiliation to political or occupational persuasions. Although cultural difference is seemingly the only meaningful marker of social differentiation, *The Diamond Age* is by no means a Utopia. While technology creates a seemingly infinite supply of resources (such that windows are commonly made of diamond!), power over these resources is unevenly distributed. However, the climatic battle of the novel points to utopia. Cultural-geographic borders dissolve and a new form of identity emerges from the common experience of creating a history (not geography) within the virtual world of an interactive children's story book. The utopia that emerges is one in which anyone could manufacture diamond windows given the need. *The Diamond Age* illustrates the darker realities underlying post-industrial society's trend toward increasingly fragmented identities and the micro-spaces that accommodate them, but also points the way towards a world of reconstituted identities, geographies, and histories.

## **12. Space, Technology and Neal Stephenson's Science Fiction**

**Michelle Kendrick (English, Washington State University)**

This essay will examine the geographies of both computer created space and the inner geography of the human body as represented in Stephenson's science fiction novels, *Snow Crash* and *The Diamond Age*.

Cyberspace liberationists insist that the new computer technologies will eradicate traditional notions of space and time and therefore will radically reconfigure the subject. The terms of such celebration however, are cast in notions of human agency over such spaces and in controlling the effects of time.

Following Fredrick Jameson's lead, I look at how space (particularly technologically created and controlled space) is conceived of in popular science fiction, and how technology affects our sense of the inner/outer spaces of culture, the body and the plot.

Stephenson's cyberspace is textual in nature -- a creation with an alphanumeric foundation and logic. The affect of his asserting such a foundation is ultimately reassuring; cyberspace, at its core, consists of finite information. Paradoxically, however, the creation of such from texts and technologies of inscription is fraught with many of the same problems as recognizing the nature of subjectivity as a product of texts and technologies (as the Human Genome project makes clear).

In this essay I will look at Stephenson's textual "space" of cyberspace against the inner space of the body as "invaded" by nanotechnologies in *The Diamond Age* to demonstrate the paradoxical nature of such constructions and to situate technologies in relation to the geography of the human body.

### **13. Geographies of Power and Social Relations in Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It***

**Barbara J. Morehouse, (Geography, University of Arizona).**

Marge Piercy's novel *He, She and It* offers an intriguing means of exploring geographies of difference, particularly with regard to the advantages and disadvantages of "betweenness." Through Shira's relationships with the cyborg Yod as well as with all those whose bodies are biological in origin but technologically modified, Piercy explores thorny dilemmas revolving around how we define humanness, and how we translate that definition into spatialities of differences. Likewise, through constructing societies that are sharply differentiated both socially and spatially, she reveals the potentialities and dangers inherent in highly spatialized relations of power. In her book, corporate enclaves and free zones, each with their protective wraps, constitute bubbles of survival in the midst of a world destroyed by nuclear holocaust, environmental destruction, and human greed. Elaborate border crossing rules and surveillance technologies dictate who may and may not enter these areas, while sophisticated technologies allow for movement from one bubble to another. Life persists outside these bubbles as well, in an undifferentiated and highly dangerous area called the Glop. Fraught with abjection, disease, and violence, the Glop and its human denizens nevertheless provide workers for the corporate enclaves, inspiration for entertainment products, and resistance fighters. Throughout the book, geographies of power structure individual life chances as well as relations within and across the different societies. The result is a rigid social, spatial and economic

system where everyone knows and is in their place. Yet the system is vulnerable to destabilization, which is exactly what happens when a group of independent thinkers—all cyborgs—cooperate to save the free zone of Tikva. The proposed book chapter will explore the ways in which Piercy uses material and metaphorical space to examine the dilemmas of social and political relations under conditions of extreme stress.

#### **14. Bleedthrough: The Spatial Imaginary of Philip K. Dick and Christopher Priest**

**Jeremy Crampton (Geography, George Mason University)**

This chapter focuses on two writers associated with virtual spaces and reality: Philip K. Dick and Christopher Priest. Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) is probably best known outside the genre the movies *Bladerunner* and *Total Recall*. His genre fiction often examined the bleedthrough of some other reality, especially in his last three books, known as the "VALIS trilogy". Throughout his work Dick explored twin themes: the nature of humanity (ie., what makes us human is compassion lacking in machines/androids; his answer parallels that of Richard Rorty who defines a liberal as a person who cannot countenance giving another pain), and the nature of reality. These are themes with much resonance in our modern world as we face reconstructions of the individual in cyberspace. Cyberspace thus is estranging us from reality. Like Dick, Christopher Priest examines the nature of reality, illusion (and self-illusion) as well as constructed realities such as cyberspace. Priest's books develop "cognitive landscapes" of alternative spaces and places which his characters inhabit in their own heads. They escape into these secondary worlds due to pressures they cannot handle. What level of reality applies in this situation? This theme is also the basis of David Cronenberg's latest movie, *eXistenZ*, for which Priest wrote the novelization. This chapter uses bleedthrough or slippage as a metaphor for what is developing between our own reality and cyberspace. It treats sf as an art-form of cognitive estrangement, and as a fictionalised account of a reality which is not entirely divorced from our own.

#### **15. The Subjectivity of the Near Future: Geographical Imaginings in the Work of J. G. Ballard**

**Jon Taylor (Geography, University of Kentucky)**

Since the late 1950s, British writer J. G. Ballard has penned a wealth of novels and short stories dealing with the near geographical future. From early works, where dramatic changes in the natural environment produced shifts in subjectivity and relations of the self to others ("The Drowned

World", "The Crystal World"), to a series of short stories dealing with reactions to potential social problems such as overpopulation and urban overcrowding ("The Concentration City"), Ballard's early work focused on the changing configurations of space in the near future and the socio-psychological effects these shifts would engender. Continuing in this vein, Ballard's middle period continued to focus on changes in human subjectivity in reaction to changes in spatiality in such works as "High Rise", where the built environment signifies and enables a breakdown in social bonds and resultant turn towards violence. In later works ("Vermilion Sands", "Cocaine Nights"), Ballard explores the new geographical imaginings of an emerging future middle-class oriented solely towards the pursuit of leisure. In the works of all these periods, geography figures as a central theme, particularly in the way in which geographical perceptions play a role in the creation of individual and social worlds, and how changes in external geographies then allow individuals to change their own perceptions and behaviors. Ballard's claim that the central influence on his work is the paintings of the surrealist movement, with their emphasis on symbolizing the imagination of the human mind through the construction of imaginary landscapes, and his pivotal role in the creation of the genre of science fiction known as cyberpunk is also discussed.

## 1.8 About the Authors

**Dr Rob Kitchin** is a Lecturer in Human Geography at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has a diverse set of research interests which centre on culture, space and power; disability; violence; human spatial behaviour; and cyberspace and society. He is the general editor of a new journal for Routledge (*Social and Cultural Geography*). He has recently published two books, *Cyberspace: The World in the Wires* (Wiley, 1998), and *Conducting Research in Human Geography* (with Nick Tate; Longman, 1999), and has four more forthcoming: *Disability and Geography* (Geographical Association, 2nd draft completed); *The Cognitive Understanding of Space* (with Mark Blades, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1st draft completed); *Mapping Cyberspace* (with Martin Dodge, Routledge); *Cognitive Mapping: Past, Present and Future* (edited with Scott Freundschuh, Routledge). He has recently edited a special issue of *Journal of Environmental Psychology* (advisory board member), and has special sections in press for *Area* (Research, Action and 'Critical' Geographies, with Phil Hubbard), *Professional Geographer* (Cognitive Mapping, with Scott Freundschuh), and *Ethics, Place and Environment* (Disability, Geography and Ethics, with Rob Wilton). He is currently undertaking four 'blue-chip' funded research projects: ESRC (geographies of violence, with James Anderson, Peter Shirlow and Ian Shuttleworth), National Science Foundation (geographies of blindness (two), with

Mark Blades, Reg Golledge and Dan Jacobson), Royal Irish Academy (measuring disabling environments)). He organised the recent conference, New Critical Geographies, with Phil Hubbard, and has organised several sessions at international conferences.

#### Selected Articles

Kitchin, R.M. (forthcoming) Science fiction or future fact?

Kitchin, R.M. (1999) Creating an awareness of Others: highlighting the role of space and place. *Geography* 84(1): 45-54.

Kitchin, R.M. (1998) Towards geographies of cyberspace. *Progress in Human Geography* 22(3): 385-406.

Kitchin, R.M. (1998) "Out of place", "knowing one's place": Towards a spatialised theory of disability and social exclusion. *Disability and Society*, 13(3): 343-356.

Halfacree, K.H. & Kitchin, R.M. (1996) 'Madchester Rave On': placing the fragments of popular music, *Area*, 28(1): 49-55.

+ 14 other articles in refereed journals and several non-refereed articles and book chapters.

**Dr James Kneale** is a Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Exeter. His research interests cover a number of themes in cultural and historical geography, including: representations of space in popular fiction, especially the fantastic; geographies of media consumption and circulation; and the awkward place of drinking culture in contemporary and historical societies. He helped set up the Academic Fantastic Fiction Network and helped organise the first three annual conferences at UCL, Reading, and Hull.

#### Selected articles:

Kneale, J. (1996). 'Impossible Geographies', in Littlewood and Stockwell (eds.), *Impossibility Fiction*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 147-162.

Kneale, J. (1999). 'The Virtual Realities Of Technology And Fiction: Reading William Gibson's Cyberspace', for *Virtual Geographies*, Crang, Crang & May (eds.), London and New York: Routledge.

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