

the discourse of the fantastic that approximates China Miéville's contribution in his Epilogue to *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction* (2009). Echoing Miéville's Marxist-inspired claim that the best way to counteract the fantasy world precipitated by the society of the spectacle is to treat the fantastic as real, Gabor Szuücs argues that "[s]elf-contradictory as it may seem, a story of imagined lands, decade-long winters, zombies, magic, and dragons proves to be markedly realistic" (219). He goes on to argue that "in reality there is much less distance between a fictional depiction of a world of political instability and a realist science of politics than is suggested by the political realists themselves. Thus, it would be unfair to exclude even a fantasy novel from the legitimate subjects of a theoretical discussion of political realism" (221). This chapter, I think, does the greatest justice to the collection's mission to treat literature as a genuinely political object in the context of utopian discourse.

Gabor Szuücs's chapter synthesizes the essays that make up the collection, bringing them together as a whole and negotiating the messy continuum between the dialogic opposites of utopia and dystopia or, in Gabor Szücs's terms, the real and the fantastic. In his Afterword Czigányik writes "[t]hat the endeavor of this volume subscribes to the *organic* view of knowledge," including "the cooperation of the various disciplines" (240; emphasis added). And indeed, it is this organic view that is most valuable. Although I was at times rather bored, occasionally frustrated, and sometimes estranged from some of the content, I was nonetheless energized, intrigued, and productively perplexed by many of these chapters. They are extremely well researched and many are eloquently written, which is not always the case with academic writing. That being said, some of the essays in the second section read as if they were in need of expansion, while some read more like encyclopedia or literary review articles. Nevertheless, this is a wonderful collection and will appeal not only to specialists, but also to readers interested in how to make the world a better place without letting it go to hell.—Cameron Ellis, University of Toronto

Media Scholarship in the Age of Franchise. Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest, eds. *STAR WARS and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2017. 328pp. €39,95, \$49.95, pbk.

Many of the essays and interviews included in *STAR WARS and the History of Transmedia Storytelling* explicitly concern themselves with how and why the *STAR WARS* franchise has changed over its forty-year history, and how such change has affected the various and varied groups of fans who continue to immerse themselves in a galaxy far, far away. The volume's introduction tells us that *STAR WARS*'s "multiple transformations make it not only a vivid case study of media-industrial history, but also constitute a unique, widely shared, and constantly evolving storyworld that has developed across every available media platform" (11). Indeed, these transformations serve both to maintain fan interest in the franchise and to divide fan loyalties with regard to this vast and heterogeneous storyworld and its mediated expressions in film, television, video games, novels, comics, toys, and live experiences. In the afterword to

the volume, editor Dan Hassler-Forest asks Will Brooker, author of the BFI FILM CLASSICS volume on *STAR WARS* (2009), about how Lucasfilm's 2012 acquisition by Disney has affected his fandom, and whether it has increased or decreased his love for and engagement with the franchise. Hassler-Forest thus elicits a succinct statement of one of the problems this volume elucidates: "The meanings of 'being a fan' and of 'Star Wars' (and therefore of 'being a Star Wars fan') have changed so much during my lifetime that it's hard to answer in terms of more or less" (289). In short, "Star Wars" is an endlessly shifting signifier, pointing simultaneously to innumerable individual narratives and objects, not to mention that vast storyworld *in toto*. Likewise, fandom apart from *STAR WARS* (and very much *because of STAR WARS*) can no longer be simply defined.

In his contribution to the volume, Gerry Canavan offers a Foucauldian reading of the ruptures and discontinuities within *STAR WARS* and suggests how we, as consumers of this franchise, are transformed in their wake. In his consideration of *STAR WARS* post-Disney and, especially, post-*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016), Canavan writes that "[w]hile Star Wars remains Star Wars both before and after this moment, our relationship to it as a system of knowledge is entirely different; indeed, in this strange early moment of transition between one episteme and the next, we might even say the current Star Wars episteme finds itself in a period of civil war" (277). It is this civil war—whose conflicts manifest amongst fans of different generations, amongst fans loyal to one understanding of the larger storyworld or another, between creators within a single medium, between creators across media, amongst stakeholders in the cultural and economic capital that the franchise represents, and more—that this volume captures so well. As its title implies, *STAR WARS* occupies a privileged space within the development of the franchise model of media production, serving both as a case study of a larger phenomenon and as one of the most significant points of origin for that larger phenomenon.

As such, perhaps it is not surprising that one of the most interesting aspects of the volume is its dramatization of the very complex history it seeks to examine and clarify. Although the volume will be officially released in North America in mid-2018 and although it carries a 2018 publication date, a PDF of the volume was made available in late 2017 (available for free via a Creative Commons license at the Amsterdam University Press website). Given the mechanics of academic publishing and the content of the essays included in this volume, one can easily see how the very object in question here shifted beneath the feet of the writers and editors even as they researched, wrote, and edited their individual contributions—as if they had landed in what appeared to be a stable cave within a normal asteroid and only then discovered the true nature of their environment. Few of the essays mention *Star Wars Episode VIII: The Last Jedi* (Rian Johnson, USA 2017) and those that do mention it in the future tense. In his interview with Hassler-Forest, Brooker mentions the latest installment of the ongoing *STAR WARS* saga, but winds up wrong about all of his speculations (Leia [Carrie Fisher] does not die, but Luke [Mark Hamill] does, for example). For some writers, *Rogue One* appears just over the

horizon, while for others it is an established, if problematic, part of the storyworld—already seen and processed. One essay mentions Phil Lord and Christopher Miller in a way that understands their relationship to the forthcoming *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (Ron Howard, USA 2018) as ongoing, when in fact they were fired from the production in mid-2017. (Canavan, by contrast, knew of this development at the moment he wrote his essay.) More generally, some essays mention the *seven* extant *STAR WARS* films, while others mention eight. Here is a simple difference between writing an essay before *Rogue One* and after *Rogue One*. The first *STAR WARS* story may change our understanding of the franchise and how it works on a fundamental level, but it also challenges our abilities to count the films. Do we categorize them when we count? Do they all count the same? In any case, *all* of the counts in this book are wrong, of course, as there have been nine *STAR WARS* films for more than three months. I am writing this review in March 2018 and *The Last Jedi* was released this past December. And this review will likewise be wrong by the time you read it. By that time, *Solo* will have become the tenth film in the franchise. None of this is to suggest any lack or mistake on the part of the writers or the editors. Rather, I wish to make clear, as this volume does explicitly and implicitly, that *STAR WARS* remains an object in flux made up of smaller objects that are also in flux. Moreover, the changes this flux involves and implies are happening more quickly than ever before.

In this context, I am not surprised that the volume largely steers clear of the most caustic “debates” within *STAR WARS* fandom, namely those over the franchise’s alleged turn toward issues of social justice as represented, for example, by the diversity of the casts in the Disney-era films. Keeping up with these arguments would surely be difficult, if not impossible, for the writers or the editors insofar as they largely take place in dark corners of the internet that most of us refrain from visiting. Only occasionally do they manifest on Twitter or Facebook in front of mainstream audiences (as when the reboot of *Ghostbusters* [Paul Feig, USA 2016] was criticized for its female cast or when *The Force Awakens* was similarly criticized for putting Rey [Daisy Ridley] front and center). Nonetheless, I am disappointed that this issue was not more fully addressed here. Such debates, in the near and long term, will certainly continue to shape cultural production and reception in the United States and Europe, at the very least. (Will Brooker references toxic fandom in his interview, but largely dismisses it as something particularly related to *STAR WARS*, because it does not represent to him the attitudes of true *STAR WARS* fans.) Moreover, by addressing this issue the volume would be in a better position to tie its consideration of the franchise and its fans more clearly to a socio-political history largely absent from the essays here. Megen de Bruin-Molé relates the franchise to shifting notions of popular feminism and Derek R. Sweet thinks through its relationship to the foreign policies of the American presidential administrations under which they were released. Their respective essays represent real engagements with *STAR WARS* in the context of political and social history. Nonetheless, this sort of work does not take place in most of the essays included here. Given the established relationship between Gamergate

activists and the rise of nationalism and populism in the US and Europe since 2015, and given the subsequent relationship between a more generalized toxic fandom and the Trump administration since its start, a sustained engagement with the contemporary political scene, and how it might affect *STAR WARS* or be affected by it, would be a welcome addition to this volume.

That said, the essays included here are thought-provoking and crucial. They cover a great deal of the *STAR WARS* media universe, from its video games to its toys, from its fan experiences to its novelistic adaptations. Beyond the inherent interest these topics should have for fans and scholars, the overall volume does a very nice job of shifting the discussion of the *STAR WARS* franchise away from an engagement with the films—one that tends to ignore how the vast bulk of *STAR WARS*-related texts do not come from the big screen—to an engagement with the multiple media platforms that Lucasfilm and Disney use in constructing the storyworld and a deployment of diverse methodologies required of such a shift in object. As the media objects that make up this universe continue to proliferate, and scholarship on *STAR WARS* struggles to keep up, this volume will surely represent an origin of sorts: a text that consciously inaugurated a new knowledge regime of the *STAR WARS* universe and unconsciously signaled that this regime would be characterized by the impossibility of holding that universe together and addressing it all in one place.—**Benjamin J. Robertson, University of Colorado, Boulder**

Modestly Witnessing the Genome Age. Everett Hamner. *Editing the Soul: Science and Fiction in the Genome Age*. University Park, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, ANTHROPOSCENE: THE SLSA BOOK SERIES, 2017. xii + 264 pp. \$94.95 hc, \$27.95 pbk.

In his introduction to *Editing the Soul: Science and Fiction in the Genome Age*, Everett Hamner approvingly cites Susan Merrill Squire's method of reading contemporary fictions about genetics as "crucial site(s) of permitted articulation for the desires driving these new biotechnologies" (*Liminal Lives: Imagining the Human at the Frontier of Biomedicine* [2004] 4). In his encounters with contemporary genetic fictions, however, Hamner is far less an intrepid decipherer of our collective anxieties and desires about the new life sciences and far more a modest witness to the visions of genetic futures gifted to us by acclaimed authors—their warnings, but also the beauty they perceive in and make out of even the grimmest of prospects. Picking up on Donna Haraway's long practice of writing as witnessing and intimately tied to feminist science studies' critique of universalism, Hamner's critical modesty gives us a humble account that knows how to stay local, respect differences, and honor the acuity of its subjects of study, be they nucleotides or novelists.

Hamner's critical modesty results in a book of surpassing subtlety and nuance. At base a genre study, Hamner's book shies away from genealogical claims, posing questions such as "[h]ow did the gene become a synecdoche for the soul?" less to produce a single answer than to assay the variety of ways that acclaimed authors (including Kazuo Ishiguro, Jeffrey Eugenides, Zadie Smith, Richard Powers, Octavia Butler, Margaret Atwood, Pamela Sargent,