

of that particular volume are free of further instances of typographical laxity. *McLuhan's Galaxies* contains so many errors in spelling, grammar, and idiomatic English usage that it is difficult to distinguish the products of carelessness from those of downright ignorance. This is compounded by unintentional inaccuracies in quotations from secondary sources: to take one example, readers would probably rather mentally rearrange "garhis" into "garish" in the newspaper or online version of *Jumble* than in an academic monograph (Skweres 79). It is also hard to sort out lapses in proofreading from lapses in fact-checking. "Edgar Rice Burrough" [*sic*] is probably a typo; giving the original publication date for *John Carter of Mars* as 1964, fourteen years after Burroughs's death, is a bit more difficult to fathom (77). Ordinarily a reader should subscribe to Oliver Goldsmith's maxim from *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) that "a book may be very amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity," but when a book with numerous errors also has the self-congratulatory tone of *McLuhan's Galaxies*, it very quickly loses its power to amuse, much less inform.

This is unfortunate, because there is certainly cause for credit if not quite congratulation in this work. Skweres's choice to focus on sf movie franchises rather than individual films creates scope for future investigations into broader patterns in the current cinematic and televisual instantiations of sf. When McLuhan suggested, in *The Medium Is the Massage*, that media and culture live in a rear view mirror, he invoked the long-running TV western *Bonanza* as the reflected image that guides their journey. As was the case with *Bonanza* and its kinfolk, many of today's sf film and TV franchises play out in front of a uniformly familiar aesthetic and thematic backdrop. Skweres gestures at this backdrop ten lines into *McLuhan's Galaxies*: "it could be argued that many of the works of science fiction are derivative in nature" (xi). In doing so, he unconsciously points the way forward, while engaging in a peculiar McLuhanesque irony. Whatever galaxy McLuhan may now be looking at us from, he might crack a wry smile at the idea that an experimenter like himself can be deployed as a means of understanding work that sometimes makes a virtue of being recognizably formulaic.—**Rick Cousins, Trent University**

Law as Monstrous Technology. Kieran Tranter. *Living in Technical Legality: Science Fiction and Law as Technology*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh UP, 2018. x+242 pp. £75.00/\$110.00 hc, £75.00 ebk.

Kieran Tranter's book is emphatically not about law *in* literature. Throughout *Living in Technical Legality's* two parts and six chapters, we encounter the formula, "it might *seem* that [insert sf text] is devoid of legal content, but beneath the surface" Instead of being fooled by the apparent "general lawlessness of science fiction" (7) or distracted by "the fleeting jurisdictional and temporal specificities of lawyers, controversies, and doctrines" (9), Tranter's interest is in a literary philosophy of law. In short, his book asks, "What does sf say is law's nature and its purpose—especially in an age of ubiquitous technicity?"

Part I's primary answer is that sf reveals law as a monstrous technology unto itself. Once expected to save humanity from the Frankensteins creating

chaos with their horrific assemblages, law as imagined by sf instead emerges as its own technology, one particularly obsessed with controlling death and time. Chapter 1 puts Shelley's 1818 novel in conversation with technological triumphs such as the 1996 birth of Dolly the sheep, showing how she could only be received via "the negative images, tropes, and narratives associated with science fiction's 'clone canon,'" and that in effect, "science fiction provided the content through which Dolly was transmuted into law" (18). Indeed, whether the discussion is about Dolly, Sputnik, or nanotechnology, Tranter shows how the West, its science fictions, and subsequent legal actions render "the dark of technology" as "human and light" (32). In Chapter 2, we turn to Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) and its five sequels, as well as its franchise films and video games, to understand how global capitalism pushes forward the sovereign as law's embodiment, a figure affording only a mirage of control. Read through Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), the *DUNE* cycle exposes tyrannical messiahs as epitomizing how "might makes right," even if they cannot escape time or their roles as vehicles of death. As Tranter explains,

Dune does more than expose the sovereignty behind law as technology: it shows the essential commitments on which sovereignty and, with it, law as technology, arises. *Dune* not only shows the Leviathanic monster behind law as technology, but shows just how monstrous law as technology is. (64)

Concluding the book's first half, Chapter 3 suggests that this monster's triumph is not as simple as it might seem. This is because the gap between the human and the technological has so fully collapsed, as is evident in the rebooted *Battlestar Galactica* television series (2004-2009). For Tranter, the show illustrates how technology overwhelms Western metaphysics, but also upholds myth, a tool necessary for humans to become responsible agents. The ironic outcome? "Instead of an essential humanity facing a non-essential technology, it seems that all that remains is technology" (105).

Part II continues the book's pattern of dedicating each chapter to a single (though often multivolume/episode) text, but now with specific attention to that work's significance for legal subjects, lawyers, and legal scholars. Chapter 4, *Living in Technical Legality*, takes up the central problem revealed by Part I, the idea that instead of simply protecting humanity from technology, law has become technology—seemingly removing any moral barometer and leaving "no rules or measures for 'good' myths against 'bad' myths" (110). Using Octavia E. Butler's *XENOGENESIS* Trilogy (1987-1989; later collected as *Lilith's Brood* [2000]), which again lacks traditional references to legal contexts, Tranter explains how the "malleable, yet also rigid, naturecultural realm" in which Butler's protagonists exist leaves them "neither free nor constrained" (127). (More on this below.) Chapter 5 calls on the BBC's *Doctor Who* television series (1963-1989, 2005-) as epitomizing "a desirable myth-ideal for lawyer-nodes" (135), despite all of the ways its godless protagonists must remain strange within their universes. As Tranter concludes, "To be a lawyer within the modern legal system is a calling to be an alien, a somewhat sad clown-trickster that is not human. It is a calling to be a lord of time and death" (162).

Finally, Chapter 6 works through the film *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* (1981) to encourage legal scholars to adopt “alternative cartographic techniques” that stretch beyond the supposedly salvific Frankenstein myth, instead recognizing how today’s “human-automobile grounds identity, myth, and biopower” (187). Why are cars so important here? Because they promise to “control distance and to render it comprehensible” (171), blocking out or bypassing one’s immediate locale and functioning as a mobile advertisement for the self.

A good litmus test of *Living in Technical Legality*’s fit for a given reader might be the book’s coda, Chapter 7, on deserts. If one starts there and is attracted by its unapologetically high level of abstraction, the whole will prove worthwhile; if those four pages leave one wincing or disoriented, there might be better places to begin examining the shared threads of law and literature. (Elizabeth S. Anker and Bernadette Meyler’s *New Directions in Law and Literature* [Oxford, 2017], for instance, shares Tranter’s interest in reaching beyond a “law in literature” lens, but its wide variety of approaches might prove more accessible.) This hints at the book’s main weakness for this reader: its theoretical bulk sometimes holds its primary texts at such distance that they feel incidental. Chapter 6 is perhaps the greatest culprit, offering fascinating glimpses of how the automobile functions as a “sacrificial altar” (172) and a “billboard, as the stand-in for the self” (175), but leaving me unclear exactly how these patterns connect to legal scholarship. Most importantly, the concluding restatement of Tranter’s thesis—“*Mad Max 2* has been used in the chapter as a cipher through which the multiplicities of the human-automobile of the contemporary West can be mapped as a performative example of how law scholar-nodes can be responsible for becoming through developing cartographies of the nodes, nexuses, and networks of the present” (188)—left me scratching my head. There are real insights here about the literal and figurative identification and sacrifice of the self (as hood ornament and bumper sticker), but the link to the legal scholar’s mapping work feels tenuous.

Still, *Living in Technical Legality* affords an advanced set of arguments about how sf unveils law as technology. Theory enthusiasts will especially welcome its extensive engagements with not just Hobbes, but also Giorgio Agamben, Martin Heidegger, Donna Haraway, Carl Schmitt, and Rosi Braidotti, among others. Personally, I most love the way Tranter constantly looks beyond the obvious appearances of lawyers and courtrooms to unearth the *idea* of law and its technical function in society. Take Chapter 4, where he boldly asserts that “the absence of orthodox law signifiers is precisely what makes *Xenogenesis* a text of technical legality par excellence” (116). There is also a brief but very astute observation here about how “the debate in the secondary literature amounts to differing readings of the strength of the gene theme—whether it tells an authoritative story of essential natures that determine being, or a malleable story of life materials that can be moulded by cultural practices” (119). Most intriguing of all in the era of Trumpism, though, is Tranter’s evocation of the tension between authoritarianism and liberalism. Is one more attracted to “a malleable humanity whose being could be modified,

deleted, and reprogrammed by law” or a more essential humanity that is “the location for rights [and not just permissions]” (121)? As he elucidates, “In the liberal account, the subject is free while the sovereign is constrained; in the authoritarian account, the subject is constrained while the sovereign is free” (124).

This proves a constructive way of tackling not just Butler’s anticipation of Haraway’s natureculture, but also the polarization of contemporary America. We live in a time when the purported leader of the free world is offended by any actual or even desultory check on his authority, and when nearly half of our neighbors have repeatedly shown themselves willing to redefine law according to his whim. Tranter’s book and the sf he investigates point to badly needed alternatives, both inside and outside courts of law. *Living in Technical Legality* will be valuable to science fiction and legal scholars alike, including most graduate students and occasional advanced undergraduates.—**Everett Hamner, Western Illinois University**

BOOKS RECEIVED

Critical and Historical Studies

Joseph W. Campbell. *The Order and the Other: Young Adult Dystopian Literature and Science Fiction*. Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2019. viii+191 pp. \$30 pbk.

Ingrid E. Castro and Jessica Clark, eds. *Child and Youth Agency in Science Fiction: Travel, Technology, Time*. Lanham, MD: Lexington (Rowman & Littlefield), 2019. x+294 pp. \$95 hc, \$90 ebk.

Richard Grigg. *Science Fiction and the Imitation of the Sacred*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 254 pp. \$102.60 hc, \$35.96 pbk, \$28.76 ebk.

Matthew Jones. *Science Fiction Cinema and 1950s Britain: Recontextualizing Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 230 pp. \$108 hc, \$35.96 pbk, \$28.76 ebk.

Julie M. Still and Zara T. Wilkinson, eds. *Buffy to Batgirl: Essays on Female Power, Evolving Femininity and Gender Roles in Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019. 252 pp. \$39.95 pbk.

Peter Swirski. *American Utopia: Literature, Society, and the Human Use of Human Beings*. New York: Routledge, 2019. 242 pp. \$149.95 hc, \$39.95 pbk, \$19.98 ebk.

Gary Westfahl. *The Rise and Fall of American Science Fiction, from the 1920s to the 1960s*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019. 311 pp. \$45 pbk.

Gary Westfahl, Gregory Benford, Howard V. Hendrix, and Jonathan Alexander, eds. *Science Fiction and the Dismal Science: Essays on Economics in and of the Genre*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019. 298 pp. \$55 pbk.

Author Studies

Amy Binns. *Hidden Wyndham: Life, Love, Letters*. Hebden Bridge, UK: Grace Judson, 2019. 288 pp. £10.95/US\$14.95 pbk.

Sarah Cole. *Inventing Tomorrow: H.G. Wells and the Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia UP, 2019. 392 pp. \$35 hc, \$34.99 ebk.

Gwyneth Jones. *Joanna Russ*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, MODERN MASTERS OF SCIENCE FICTION, 2019. 234 pp. \$22 pbk.

- Robert Markley. *Kim Stanley Robinson*. Champaign, IL: U of Illinois P, MODERN MASTERS OF SCIENCE FICTION, 2019. 248 pp. \$25 pbk.
- Rick McGrath, ed. *Deep Ends: A Ballardian Anthology 2019*. Powell River, BC: Terminal, 2019. 171 pp. \$39 hc; \$29 pbk.
- Brent Nothohm and Lester D. Friedman, eds. *Steven Spielberg Interviews*. Jackson, MS: U of Mississippi P, 2019.
- Guillaume Pinson et Maxime Prévost, eds. *Jules Verne et la culture médiatique: De la presse du XIXe siècle au steampunk*. Laval, QC: Presses de l'Université Laval, COLLECTION LITTÉRATURE ET IMAGINAIRE CONTEMPORAIN, 2019. viii+254 pp. CAD\$29.95 pbk, CAD\$29.95 ebk.
- Tarshia L. Stanley, ed. *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Octavia E. Butler*. New York: MLA, APPROACHES TO TEACHING WORLD LITERATURE, 2019. 176 pp. \$65 hc, \$29 pbk.

Related Critical Studies

- Chris Carberry. *Alcohol in Space: Past, Present and Future*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019. 217 pp. \$29.95 pbk.
- Patrick W. Galbraith. *Otaku and the Struggle for Imagination in Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2019. 336 pp. \$104.95 hc, \$27.95 pbk.
- Barry Keith Grant. *The Twilight Zone*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP, TV MILESTONES SERIES, 2020. 123 pp. \$19.99 pbk.
- John Gribbin. *Six Impossible Things: The Mystery of the Quantum World*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2019. 104 pp. \$19.95 hc.
- Glyn Morgan and C. Palmer-Patel, eds. *Sideways in Time: Critical Essays on Alternate History Fiction*. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool UP, 2019. 208 pp. £80/\$120 hc.
- Fred Patten. *Furry Tales: A Review of Essential Anthropomorphic Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019. 236 pp. \$39.95 pbk.
- Matthew Schneider-Mayerson and Brent Ryan Bellamy, eds. *An Ecotopian Lexicon*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2019. xvi+327 pp. \$100 hc, \$24.95 pbk.
- John C. Tibbetts. *The Furies of Marjorie Bowen*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019. 235 pp. \$55 pbk.

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