

Editor's Notes

3. In this Volume: Contributions and Acknowledgments

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It is fitting at many levels that our first article to be published—in a volume dedicated to the notion of personhood in SF—is Jerold J. Abrams's (Creighton University) "Aesthetics in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." Some may recall that 2018 marks the 200th anniversary of the publication of Shelley's masterpiece, which is widely regarded as the beginning of modern SF (or perhaps just plainly SF). Shelley's work is among the very first to portray a modern scientist as its main character; it very explicitly asks the question of belonging to the human species. Surprisingly mature ("post-modern"?) in its approach, the story switches points of view midway, causing us to feel more pity and empathy for the murderous monster himself than for its mild-mannered creator. Abrams' detailed, classically-rich study examines the aesthetic backdrop of the novel, which frames the relationship between monster and creator. Applying theories from Aristotle, Longinus, Kant and Santayana, Abrams identifies as the thesis of the novel that it is not *reason*, as often claimed, that grants acceptance into the human race, but rather *beauty*. Lacking this identifying mark, the highly intelligent but aesthetically horrific monster is condemned to perpetual loneliness and exile from humanity.

From the frigid Arctic Ocean, where Frankenstein recounts his tale of woe to a derelict crew, we travel to the warmer South Pacific islands, where we encounter a radically crueler Frankenstein in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Dan Paul Dal Monte's (Temple University) "Moreau's Law in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in Light of Kant's Reciprocity Thesis" explores a philosophical conundrum posed by Moreau's "Law," a series of prohibitions given to his humanized beasts to prevent their falling back into their animal habits. Can a law be given, and adhered to, by creatures naturally devoid of free will? In applying Kant's reciprocity thesis to the analysis of Wells's novel, Dal Monte delves deeper into the necessary connection between free will and moral practical laws, while also showcasing H. G. Wells's keen philosophical sensibility.

Free will is, of course, a fundamental aspect of discussions about personhood, and we continue exploring its meaning in Taylor W. Cyr's (University of California, Riverside) "Carving a Life from Legacy: Frankfurt's Account of Free Will and Manipulation in Greg Egan's 'Reasons to Be Cheerful.'" Cyr's article addresses a specific objection to Frankfurt's "structuralist" notion of free will, according to which free will depends only on an agent's psychological structure at the time of action. What happens (states this objection) if the agent is being manipulated at the time, in such a way that still accommodates the conditions proposed by Frankfurt? Would this not mean that the agent is un-free, therefore

contradicting Frankfurt's account? Not so, says Cyr, and brings up, to support his argument, Greg Egan's "Reasons to be Cheerful," one of those personal, close-to-the-heart stories that remind us that SF is not only about worlds needing saving and galactic-sized odds.

Our venture into the notion of personhood gets greatly enriched by Dennis M. Weiss's (York College of Pennsylvania) discussion of Marge Piercy's 1991 novel *He, She and It*, a lushly philosophical retelling of the legend of the Golem, that raises issues of artificial personhood, transhumanism, feminism and pacifism, to name a few. Weiss's analysis focuses on a discussion of the naturalist view of personhood as expounded by Annette Baier and Marjorie Grene, which emphasizes our embodied and cultural nature. Baier and Grene, Weiss explains, are dismissive of the potential use of SF in philosophical reflection. Weiss, however, argues that the analysis of a narrative such as Piercy's—featuring an artificially constructed cyborg with a *navel*—can actually challenge, and eventually support and enrich such a naturalist view, while forewarning us of possible "new styles of persons" to come.

The online format of the Journal will allow us to continue adding articles throughout the year. It is fitting, however—and more than fitting, almost poetic—that the launch of our first volume, which opened with a scientific expedition in the Arctic north, closes with another scientific expedition in the Antarctic south, facing this time a speechless monster. Bernabé S. Mendoza's (Rutgers University) "The Creolizing Genre of SF and the Nightmare of Whiteness in John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?'" examines a foundational SF story that is perhaps more widely remembered through John Carpenter's film version, *The Thing*. Mendoza's analysis explores the fear of contagion posed by a shapeshifting alien being—"a new type of alien invasion"—as a powerfully influential race metaphor, an expression of the white man's politics of purity, born of a fear of racial mixing. Mendoza then applies his analysis into an intriguing discussion of SF as a genre: whereas SF has been sometimes characterized as a predominantly "white" genre, and possibly used to forward racist ideologies, its "creolizing" hybridity and plasticity subverts such ideological constraints, turning them on their head. Furthermore, Mendoza proposes, it is possible that it is precisely its ungovernable cross-fertilization that has made the genre regarded as "suspect" to academia, and not worthy of the same level of study as the so called "high" literature.

More than a few interesting ideas for our very first issue. We hope these will inspire many more contributions!

Naturally, this volume would not be possible without the help of our many contributors, and we must thank here also those whose submissions did not make it eventually into these pages. The rich dialogue that their manuscripts generated, trying to understand what worked and what didn't, helped us develop a more clear vision for the Journal, and we are profoundly grateful for this.

And while our authors worked the hardest, cheerfully undertaking endless revisions, we must also acknowledge the incredibly dedicated and insightful work of our Reviewers: Stefano Bigliardi (SHSS, Morocco), Taylor W. Cyr (U. of California, Riverside), Alexandre Declos (U. of Ottawa/U. de Lorraine, France), Jason Eberl (Marian), Nathaniel Goldberg (Washington and Lee), Jessica Roisen (St. Ambrose), Kristina Grob (U. of South

Carolina Sumter), Martín Pereira-Fariña (Santiago de Compostela & U. of Dundee), Jonathan Livingstone-Banks (U.K.), Angus McBlane (Indian Institute of Technology), Tanya Randle (St. Ambrose), Jeffrey Snapper (Notre Dame), Sergio Urueña-López (U. of the Basque Country, Spain) and Dennis Weiss (York College of Pennsylvania). That many of them are acknowledged in the articles (as “anonymous reviewers,” of course) shows how much thought they put in their reviews, and how helpful were their comments and feedback (sometimes writing over four pages of commentary). As one body they set up delightfully high standards for the Journal, while providing contributors with the tools and guidance needed for reaching those standards. Collectively they articulated, more clearly than I could, what should be our vision for the Journal in years to come.

A word of thanks too to Eric Schwitzgebel, Jason Eberl and Stephen Clark, who did a magnificent job of getting the word out. Just a few days from our first Call for Papers, we were receiving notes and proposals from every (inhabited) continent!

Finally I must thank St. Ambrose University’s Baecke Grants, which will help defray the costs of the Journal during the coming year; our Editorial Board, Tanya Randle, Jessica Roisen and Matt Butcher, who would encourage me and quickly come to my rescue; our Proofreader, Andrew Nesseler, an undergraduate student at St. Ambrose who doesn’t let a comma pass by unaccounted; and my wife Mercedes, for her patience while I stared at the screen for days without end.

We hope you enjoy the Journal, and thank you for reading!

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