

**Narrative Mode and Fiction**  
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**Lecture -50**  
**Science Fiction - III**

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative mode and fiction. So, we are discussing science fiction.

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## Science Fiction and Speculation

- SF evince how technological developments can function to further propagate racist assumptions and colonial practices, drawing attention to processes of racialization that continue to mark Asian bodies, reducing them to **instruments of scientific exoticism** . **Techno-orientalism** – imagining Asians as hypo- or hypertechnical in terms of cultural productions and political discourse deeply interests sci-fi.
- Eg: how ideas of racism are integrated into the technology: Japan is given an alienated and dehumanized empty, dystopian image of capitalist progress. The Japanese people are perceived as **unfeeling aliens**.

Science fiction evinces how technological developments can function to further propagate racist assumptions and colonial practices. So, this is in continuation from our earlier lecture I was talking about how science fiction's conjectures extrapolation speculations can make a very rich and meaningful commentary on post colonialism on feminism they can have you know, the feminist and the post colonial perspective.

And you know, or feminist and postcolonial interventions of the common social practices the naturalized you know, hierarchies and hegemony that we experience the social institutions that are naturally and inherently unequal in nature. Science fiction in this respect is not very different from magical realism other than for the fact that it has at its core, some scientific assumptions. So, the improbable the implausible, almost impossible, you know, is used towards criticizing some form of social political, religious practice, gender practice.

So we see for example, we were talking about the techno-orientalism. So it draws attention to processes of racialization which are naturalized and that continue to mark the Asian bodies and how the Asian body is seen by the western part of the globe which reduces the Asian to instruments of scientific exoticism. They are seen as exotic as radically different other almost very different from the standardized you know, human values that shape the Western world the Western Cosmos.

So, techno-orientalism imaginations as either hypo or hyper technical in terms of cultural productions and political discourse. And so, science fiction is deeply interested in how Asians become aberrant. Through the treatment of techno-orientalism Asians are either lacking the technical knowledge or they have become so obsessed with technology as to turn into robots into automatons. For example, we see how ideas of racism are integrated into the technology.

Where Japan is given an alienated and dehumanized almost an empty dystopian image of capitalist progress, such that the Japanese people are perceived as unfeeling aliens there. They cannot almost be you know, they almost cannot be measured in terms of human values, human parameters, they are technologically so advanced as to behave like or seem like aliens. This is a very racist Western perception.

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## Science Fiction and Speculation

- The Afro-diaspora has a long history of engagement with the genre. **Afrofuturism** deploys utopian perspectives to critique dystopian realities.
- Suggesting alternative possibilities of future that are **contradictory and complex** rather than **unilinear and destructive**, Afrofuturism is a model for how the indigenous people and people of colour view and produce futuristic art in a technoscientific culture, thereby resisting the erasure of their narratives in the ecosystems of techno-science.
- Vandana Singh, "*A Speculative Manifesto*": While speculative fiction has **not yet fully realized its transgressive potential**, dominated as it has been by white, male, techno-fantasies...there is still a strong undercurrent of writing that questions and subverts dominant paradigms and persists in asking uncomfortable questions...about **technological and social issues, nuclear war, or genetic engineering**.

So the Afro diaspora has a long history of engagement with the genre of science fiction. Afrofuturism deploys utopian perspectives in order to critique dystopian realities. Suggesting

alternative possibilities of future which are both contradictory and complex rather than unilinear and destructive. Afrofuturism makes a model for how the indigenous people and people of colour view and produce futuristic art in a technoscientific culture in a technoscientific milieu, thereby resisting the erasure of the narratives in the ecosystems of technoscience.

So, what preceded science what preceded the technoscientific culture, which whose epicenter is the Western world, the African society had its own belief system, its own worldview. So Afrofuturism is trying to you know, marry the in a way the indigenous people's way of life and their viewpoint with the technoscientific culture, what kind of futuristic art will such a marriage such a combination produce.

According to Vandana Singh and you know, according to Vandana Singh in a speculative manifesto while speculative fiction has not really fully realized its transgressive potential, dominated as it has been by white, male, techno-fantasies. There is still a strong undercurrent of writing that questions and subverts dominant paradigms and persists in asking uncomfortable questions about technological and social issues nuclear war or genetic engineering.

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## Science Fiction and Speculation

- **Darko Suvin** argues that the literary quality, which bears the critical and oppositional potential of SF is lost within the media of film that banks on special effects, especially in the Hollywoodized avatars. SF films **substitutes the original desire of the genre – of cognitive estrangement** - in favor of **technological spectacle**.
- **Carl Freedman** (*Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, 2000) argues that the pulp tradition distracted from SF, as the latter's roots trace back to classical utopia as in HG Wells' writings. On the other hand, **Pulp SF** obstructs the critical vitality of the genre. This vitality lies in pointing to and contrasting with the deprivations of mundane reality.
- As a result of the marginalization of non-print SF by literary SF, a separate discourse of SF film in distinction from SF studies proper emerged, which further developed **within the discipline of cinema studies**.

So Darko Suvin argues that the literary quality, which bears the critical and oppositional potential of science fiction is lost, when the media of film you know, in reads it within the media of film which, generally banks on special effects which capitalize the special effects especially in the

case of Hollywood in the Hollywoodized avatars the oppositional potential, the critical potential of science fiction is somehow vitiated.

So that was a win in other words sees that literally you know, productions of science fiction are much stronger, much more powerful in effect than the film make versions the film make renditions. Carl Freedman in critical theory and science fiction published in 2000, argues that the pulp tradition distracted from science fiction as the latter's roots are you know, connected more to the classical utopia such as a HG Wells' writings.

So science fiction connects more with our science fiction creases, HG Wells as one of its you know, forefathers or it is for grounding figures one of its pioneer figures on other hand science fiction obstructs the critical vitality of this genre it is this generous capacity to criticize to comment on social evils is weakened in the avatar of pulp science fiction. The classical version you know, that is you know descending from HG Wells does it in a more efficient fashion.

This vitality lies in pointing to and contrasting with the deprivations of mundane reality. So, the deprivations the lack present in mundane reality is commented more meaningfully by the classical utopia that is originating from HG Wells. As a result of the marginalization of nonprint science fiction by the literary avatar the literary science fiction. So, we see that there is a clash within science fiction works as well. The Literary works claim a superiority to the fiction to the film make versions and as a result, the print versions you know dominate in a way.

The market and the claim as the original versions, the classical you know, the classic versions of science fiction, as a result a separate discourse of science fiction film, which is in distinction from science fiction studies emerges science fiction films bifurcates from science fiction studies proper perceive and it further develops its field within the discipline of cinema studies.

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# Science Fiction and Speculation

- In its creative neologism and fictive novelty, SF aesthetics is sublime and exploits poetic forms of expression. Rather than a self-referential artistic experiment, the SF poetic style is motivated by and relevant to the world it evokes. The poetic quality **invites the reader's inner narrative voice** into a resonance **with the imagined world**.
- A tension between the reader's world and the narrator's world creates a **dialogic pattern** and entails a **constant effort of decoding** on the part of the narrator.
- Very unlike the modernist and post-modern short stories and novels, SF is **end-directed**, so that it **rarely ends in an aporia/gap**.

So in its creative neologism and fictive novelty, science fiction aesthetics is sublime and its exploits poetic forms of expression rather than a self referential artistic experiment. The science fiction posey or poetic style is motivated by and relevant to the world that it evokes. The poetic quality invites the readers inner narrative voice to resonance it with this imagined word of the author. So the tension between the readers word and the narrator's word creates a dialogic pattern.

The 2 words dialogizing leads to the churning out of the science fictional work and it entails a constant effort of decoding on the part of the narrative. So, very unlike the modernist and postmodern artworks science fiction is commonly end directed, its ends are not loosely left open ended or loosely tied you know, it rarely encourages or entities any kind of aporia or gap in the end, the ends all converge are tied. And that is how says fiction that is where science fiction derives its distinct meaning.

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# Science Fiction and Speculation

- SF largely draws on the aesthetic techniques and experiences frequently used in cinema, such as flashback, parallel storyline, presence of a strong third person narrator.
- The **wealth of details** and novelty in a SF, in terms of language, civilization and technological discoveries, may be superficially interwoven with the plot and not indispensable, but together they render a compelling feature through a **richness of world-building**. The author wants to come back to this fabricated world again and again through producing sequels.

So, science fiction largely draws on the aesthetic techniques and experiences frequently used in cinema, such as flashback, parallel storyline, presence of a strong third person narrator and so on. And we see the wealth of details and novelty is symptomatic of the classic science fiction. So, in terms of language, civilization, technological discoveries, and innovations which may be superficially interwoven with the plot and not indispensable, but all these details which some of which you know could be done away with some of which are extraneous.

But together all these details, the wealth of details in terms of language in terms of technological descriptions, you know, they together interweave and render a compelling structure a compelling feature. And you know a richness of world building happens through the production of the artwork through the act of writing. So, all these descriptions some of which is you know extra do not really contribute to the progression of the plot.

But all of them are contributing towards building this alternative world of science fiction and it engrosses and rivets not only the reader, but the author so much that the author wants to come back to this fabricated world again and again through producing sequels. So, one volume is sometimes not enough because this world itself, you know in a way it wants more it demands more to be explored more to be you know, speculated and extrapolated. It leaves one volume in itself leaves a lot to be desired. And so one volume leads to the other is the kind of quest not only on the part of the reader but also on the part of the author who is producing it.

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# Science Fiction and Speculation

- Seeing SF as a 'sign of its [contemporary] time,' sociologists, psychologists, historians, and political scientists turned to it. Avowed writers of SF in the early 1950s, such as Ray Bradbury and John Wyndham began to attract public attention, as reflected in public journals and classroom discussions.
- SF offers a projection of hopes and fears about the direction in which society is moving.
- Its popularity points to a new apocalypticism and occultism and a general cultural shift.
- With its shifted aesthetic significance, SF marks a changed form of contemporary popular expression.

So, seeing science fiction as a sign of its contemporary time, so, sociologists, psychologists, historians as well as political scientists. have often referred to it have often turned to it. Avowed writers of science fiction in the early 1950s, such as Ray Bradbury and John Wyndham began to attract public attention, which is reflected in published journals and classroom discussions. So science fiction offers a projection of hopes and fears about the direction in which a society is proceeding.

Its popularity points to a new apocalypticism and occultism and a general cultural shift. With this shifted aesthetic significance science fiction marks a changed form of contemporary popular expression. So, from here we will get into a specific discussion on the cyborg which is you know a product of science fiction and imagination science fiction writings.

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# Cyborg

- Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" is a **socialist-feminist work**.
- For Haraway, Cyborg or Cybernetic organism is a product of the modern high-tech world. Haraway's essay engages with how cyborg can be a locus of identification for feminist critiques. She studies the femme as a species and her location with and social relations with modern science and technology.
- **Cyborg** refers to a body that has mechanical/electrical devices, and that can function with greater efficiency than the normal, biological human. Combination of **biological and mechanical** refers to combination of **human and artificial**.

The idea of Cyborg that is conceived by Donna Haraway's in her well known is the Cyborg Manifesto. Cyborg Manifesto is a socialist feminist work for Donna Haraway Cyborg or in other word cybernetic organism is a product of the modern high-tech world, Haraway's essay engages with how cyborg can be a locus of identification for feminist critics. So, Haraway studies the femme as a species and her location with and social relations with modern science and technology is something that Haraway is interested in.

Haraway wants to examine, where does the form the feminist within the larger you know, scientific and technological advancement. Cyborg refers to a body that has mechanical electrical devices. So, an organic body a human body, body of human species that has electrical devices. that has you know, machines that make parts of it function and that can function with greater efficiency than the normal biological humans the Cyborg is socially more efficient than the homo sapiens the biological human. Combination of biological and mechanical refers to a combination or a kind of interface between the human the organic and the artificial the synthetic.

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- Cyborg explores **technofeminism** and **transhumanism** to understand notions of **gender, race, and other minoritized identities**.
- The idea of the cyborg locates the woman and the femme within the rise of the network society and within the technological imaginary positions. It historicizes the female body through a mechanistic lens.
- Rehabilitation of the cyborgs is a way of allegorically resisting the dominant regimes of technoscience.
- Femme as a category is a **conglomeration** of the biologic and the technologic.
- **Cyborg** is a **hybrid of machine and organism, reality and fiction**.

Cyborg explores techno feminism and transhumanism as a way of understanding notions of gender, race, and other minoritized identities. So, the idea of the cybernetic organism or cyborg locates the woman and the category of the femme within the rise of the network society and within the technological imaginary positions, it tends to historicize the female body through a mechanistic lens. So, rehabilitation of the Cyborgs is a way of allegorically resisting the dominant regimes of technoscience.

Femme as a category is a conglomeration of the biologic and the technologic in the new technoscientific world so the power game, in terms of gender, in terms of race, in terms of nationality ethnicity is purely reshuffled through the presence of the Cyborg. Cyborg is a hybrid of machine and organism. Like I said, it is a hybrid it stands at the crossroads of reality and fiction.

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- Contemporary fiction and medicine are full of cyborgs – a cross between **animal/organism and machine**
- Haraway proposes that by late 20 C, we are all chimeras, and **fabricated hybrids of machines and organs**
- The **'women's experience' derived from international women's movement** is as much a political fact as it is a fiction. As a hybrid of fiction and lived experience, **cyborg changes what counts as women's experience in 20 C.**
- Cyborg manifesto talks about a **postmodernist world** without gender, which has neither a beginning nor an end. Conceptualizing the female body as cyborg implies **dismantling the confines** within which these **categorized bodies** have been **historically controlled and defined.**

So contemporary fiction and medicine have many instances of cyborgs which is a cross between animal or organism and machine, the organic and the automation. So Haraway proposes that by the late 20th century, we all as you know as social existences, we all tend to become chimeras fabricated hybrids of machines and organs. So, the women's experience derived from international women's movement is as much a political fact as it is a fiction.

So, we see that within the political discourse of feminism itself, there is hierarchy, it renders visibility to some, and it transposes the case of the white educated middle class, upper middle class, opulent section women and their notion of oppression, their notions of you know inequality to the black woman, the woman of color, the Dalit woman and so on. So, it becomes a very singular narrative there is a visible hierarchy even within the political discourse within feminism, which is a political movement.

As a hybrid of fiction and lived experience, the cybernetic organism changes, what counts as women's experience in 20th century, who is it goes back to a very fundamental question, who is the woman, what does what constitutes a woman's body, what is the woman's experience in other words, what cannot be considered as the woman's experience? If the woman experiences this, could shares experience that because when we want to incorporate all the realities, all the experiences.

We want to live in a plural world, we need to render visibility to all kinds of women's experiences, experiences of the black the colored you know so, the question of language the question of intersectionality come in and so experiences become very many they become layered, they become more difficult to crack, there is not one experience coming you know, a top down from the white middle class educated working female.

So, Cyborg manifesto talks about a postmodernist world without gender altogether, which has neither beginning nor an end completely seamless society or seamless world. So, conceptualizing the female body as cyborg implies dismantling these you know, watertight boundaries these confines between oppositional categories. So, cybernetic organism is a mishmash of different oppositional categories.

And it criticizes it comments on the categorized bodies that have been traditionally historically controlled and defined as a way of flowing into one another, these categories are kind of liquefied these categories are you know shown as unnatural. So, different classes flow into one another different genders flow into one another human animal boundaries are blurred, human machine boundaries are blurred. And at these you know almost implausible. Crossroads or cross sections emerge the cybernetic body the body of the cyborg.

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- **Cyborg** is a creature in the post-gender world, which has **no 'origin' story** in the Western sense but an ironic *telos* **resulting from Western life's individuation** and ultimate **independence** from everything resulting in **man in space**.
- The **cyborg** is committed to **irony, intimacy** and **perversity**. It is utopian and completely without innocence.
- It exists in a setting where public is no longer opposed to private, but the **technological public space** is based on the **revolution in social relations at home**.

So Cyborg is a creature in the post gender world, which has no origin story like we have in the western biblical sense but an ironic telos is imagined, which results from Western lives

individuation so, that celebration of the individual eye is present in the concept of cyborg as well. And once the cyborg is rid of all traditional historical categories, its ultimate independence from you know gender identity being neither man nor human.

From a species identity being neither human nor animal or partly both being neither human nor machine or we see that this concept of individuation results ultimately in the cyborg being in space in a vacuum in an historical space, I mean, where all the older values will be annulled and new values new rules will be shaped. That is how that is where that is a kind of milieu environment fear Donna Haraway posits the Cyborg in a vacuum in space without any aporia categories.

So, the Cyborg is committed to irony. And innovates Haraway points out that cyborg has some wicked potential stew it could be perverse, it is utopian, and yet completely without innocence, it is anything but innocent. So, it exists in a setting where public is no longer opposed private; like I said, all the oppositional categories are going because they have been conceived in that way through a certain understanding or through certain historical happenings, which is being nullified basically.

And so the technological public space is based on revolution in social relations that start right within the precincts of home, the gender values are reversed gender values and practices reshuffled. And so the game you know the game of gender, race, ethnicity, language, and nationalism all of this start a fresh from the scratch. That is what you know, Haraway very interestingly puts forward in this essay, the Cyborg manifesto. For that, let us meet in our next lecture with another round of discussions. Thank you.