

Introduction to Science Fiction

Prof. Andrew Goldstone

(andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

Office hours: Wednesdays, 12–1 p.m. or by appointment

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review: paper assignment

- ▶ just like paper 1, **except**
 - ▶ secondary sources optional
 - ▶ references to other primary texts from the course **required**
 - ▶ main focus can be on one text or more than one
 - ▶ think: what makes your focus distinctive in the SF tradition?
- ▶ exercise due tomorrow 10 p.m.
 - ▶ draft an introduction; use an example

review: Gibson

She was right there, alive, totally real, human, hungry, resilient, bored, beautiful, excited, all the things she was... (554)

virtual	actual
software	hardware
Bobby	Jack
Matrix	body
data	money
money	love
love	“bundle of reflexes”
Chrome’s scream	Chrome’s imminent death
ICE	“it was hot”
Rikki as emblem	Rikki “right there”
Bobby’s desire	Jack’s love
sjuzet	fabula

virtual?

actual?

fabula?

sjužet?

memory

experience

Vasopressin

memory

Jack's arm

Bobby's hands

Rikki's eyes

Rikki's body

Rikki here

Rikki gone

the big score

the war

SF

history

other frontiers: history

“I [Wells] told you so. You *darned* fools.’ (The italics are mine.)”

The italics are indeed his: the terminally exasperated visionary, the technologically fluent Victorian who has watched the twentieth century arrive...I’ve long since learned to run shy of science fiction that employs them.

I suspect that I began to distrust that particular flavor of italics when the world didn’t end in October of 1962. I can’t recall the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis at all. My anxiety, and the world’s, reached some absolute peak. (“Time Machine Cuba,” 207–208)

Bloodchild

It amazes me that some people have seen “Bloodchild” as a story of slavery. It isn’t. It’s a number of other things, though. On one level, it’s a love story between two very different beings. On another, it’s a coming-of-age story in which a boy must absorb disturbing information and use it to make a decision that will affect the rest of his life. On a third level, “Bloodchild” is my pregnant man story....

There’s one more thing I tried to do in “Bloodchild.” I tried to write a story about paying the rent—a story about an isolated colony of human beings on an inhabited, extrasolar world....Who knows what we humans have that others might be willing to take in trade for a livable space on a world not our own?

- ▶ Focusing on one of these five possible themes, find key moments to focus on with respect to them, and discuss what we learn by focusing on the theme in question.

it's not *Alien*

And she opened him.

- ▶ How does this scene produce its effects?

it's not *Alien*

And she opened him.

- ▶ How does this scene produce its effects?
- ▶ There was movement on the right side (14)
- ▶ His blood vessels contracted, reacting to the chemistry of her saliva (15)
- ▶ It was limbless and boneless at this stage, perhaps fifteen centimeters long and two thick, blind and slimy with blood. It was like a large worm. (16)
- ▶ Paler worms oozed to visibility in Lomas's flesh.... ” (17)
- ▶ I knew birth was painful and bloody, no matter what. But this was something else (16–17)

look away

Then he began running away—until he realized there was no “away.”
(19)

- ▶ How are we meant to feel about Qui?

look away

Then he began running away—until he realized there was no “away.”
(19)

- ▶ How are we meant to feel about Qui?
- ▶ Is it good to be sober, in this story?

backstory

“And your ancestors, fleeing from their homeworld, from their own kind who would have killed or enslaved them—they survived because of us. We saw them as people and gave them the Preserve when they still tried to kill us as worms.” (25)

positive obsession

- 1947 b. Pasadena
 - 1968 AA in History, Pasadena City College
 - 1969 SWGA Open Door Workshop (Harlan Ellison)
 - 1970 Clarion Workshop (Ellison, Delany)
 - 1976 *Patternmaster* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday)
 - 1979 *Kindred* (Doubleday)
 - 1983 "Speech Sounds," *Asimov's SF* (mid-Dec.; Hugo)
 - 1984 "Bloodchild," *Asimov's* (June; Hugo and Nebula)
 - 1987 *Dawn* (Warner)
 - 1993 *Parable of the Sower* (Four Walls Eight Windows)
 - 1995 MacArthur fellowship
 - 2005 *Fledgling* (New York: Seven Stories)
 - 2006 d.
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Source: James Overholtzer, "Octavia E. Butler," in *Short Story Criticism*, ed. Catherine C. DiMercurio (Gale, 2019), [LRC](#).

▶ What good is all this to...?

next

- ▶ bring back “Speech Sounds”
- ▶ “Darmok” (via Canvas)
- ▶ how to watch TV: story and artifact
 - ▶ camera work: angles and cuts
 - ▶ sets and costumes
 - ▶ diegetic and non-diegetic sound
 - ▶ note the timecode for one interesting shot