

Introduction to Science Fiction

Prof. Andrew Goldstone

(andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

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

December 7, 2023. VanderMeer, concluded; Chiang.

what *isn't* strange here?

This uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed.

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McClintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 148. Repression in Freud's sense is not a real thing.

Armed with a baseball bat, I left the bedroom and turned on all the lights in the house. I found my husband next to the refrigerator, still dressed in his expedition clothes, drinking milk until it flowed down his chin and neck. Eating leftovers furiously. (56)

He drank deeply from his orange juice—really drank it to savor it so that for a minute or two nothing existed in the house but his enjoyment. (80)

“And there before me, *myself*. I walked so stiffly.” (165)

Armed with a baseball bat, I left the bedroom and turned on all the lights in the house. I found my husband next to the refrigerator, still dressed in his expedition clothes, drinking milk until it flowed down his chin and neck. Eating leftovers furiously. (56)

He drank deeply from his orange juice—really drank it to savor it so that for a minute or two nothing existed in the house but his enjoyment. (80)

“And there before me, *myself*. I walked so stiffly.” (165)

“*Nothing* we brought with us is from the present. Not our clothes, not our shoes. It’s all old junk. Restored crap. We’ve been living in the past this whole time. In some of *reenactment*. And why?” (86)

Armed with a baseball bat, I left the bedroom and turned on all the lights in the house. I found my husband next to the refrigerator, still dressed in his expedition clothes, drinking milk until it flowed down his chin and neck. Eating leftovers furiously. (56)

He drank deeply from his orange juice—really drank it to savor it so that for a minute or two nothing existed in the house but his enjoyment. (80)

“And there before me, *myself*. I walked so stiffly.” (165)

“*Nothing* we brought with us is from the present. Not our clothes, not our shoes. It’s all old junk. Restored crap. We’ve been living in the past this whole time. In some of *reenactment*. And why?” (86)

Then, as an adult at university, a few months before he’d joined the navy, he had gone to a classic film festival . . . and there, up on the big screen, my future husband had seen his nightmares acted out. (136)

it's people

I reached a point—a single infinitesimal moment—when I once again recognized that the Crawler was an organism. (179)

it's people

I reached a point—a single infinitesimal moment—when I once again recognized that the Crawler was an organism. (179)

Staring back at me amid that profusion of selves generated by the Crawler, I saw, barely visible, the face of a man, hooded in shadow and orbited by indescribable things I could think of only as his jailers...

I recognized that face. I had seen it in a photograph. *A sharp, eagle's eye gleamed out from a heavy face, the left eye lost to his squint. A thick beard hid all but a hint of a firm chin under it.* (186)

who narrates?

I was adapting to it, but at times like this, I remembered that just a day ago I had been someone else. (75)

Somewhere in the heart of me I had begun to believe there was no place I would rather be than in Area X. (138)

who narrates?

I was adapting to it, but at times like this, I remembered that just a day ago I had been someone else. (75)

Somewhere in the heart of me I had begun to believe there was no place I would rather be than in Area X. (138)

“Tell me your name!” she screamed. (146)

Chiang: who narrates?

- ▶ How does the narrator's apparent position change in the course of the text?

Chiang: who narrates?

- ▶ How does the narrator's apparent position change in the course of the text?

I was an everted person, with my tiny, fragmented body situated at the center of my own distended brain. (749)

Though I am long dead as you read this, explorer, I offer to you a valediction. (756)

science fiction, science fact

- ▶ Which parts of this text are true?

science fiction, science fact

- ▶ Which parts of this text are true?

$$\Delta S > 0$$

tough luck!

With every movement of my body, I contribute to the equalization of pressure in our universe. With every thought that I have, I hasten the arrival of that fatal equilibrium. (752)

He [Penrose] notes that we usually say that we eat food because we need the energy it contains, but that's not completely accurate. We radiate energy at pretty much the same rate that we absorb it; we're not actually increasing the amount of energy we contain. We eat food because we're radiating a high-entropy form of energy, and we need a low-entropy form of energy to compensate; we're entropy generators. I thought that was an interesting observation, and I wanted to try presenting it in a more concrete form.

Chiang, interviewed by Adam Liptak, "Author Spotlight: Ted Chiang," *Lightspeed* 47 (April, 2014), lightspeedmagazine.com.

Annihilation! Annihilation!

- ▶ How are you supposed to feel about the heat death of the universe?

Annihilation! Annihilation!

- ▶ How are you supposed to feel about the heat death of the universe?

All my desires and ruminations are no more and no less than eddy currents generated by the gradual exhalation of our universe. And until this great exhalation is finished, my thoughts live on. (754)

estrangement and cognition

It has long been said that air (which others call argon) is the source of life. (743)

next

- ▶ bring back the *Wesleyan* for general review