

<b>Institution: Anglia Ruskin University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA29 English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Title of case study: Science Fiction: Science, Religion, Society, Humanity</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Science fiction facilitates the exploration of pressing social, technological, cultural, ethical and philosophical issues, and our research engages with topics such as religious identity and what it means to be human, and also identifies and analyses changes in the way science, as a discourse and practice, has been defined and perceived. Our research, both critical and creative, has had impact through providing cultural enrichment to a range of individuals and groups, transferring the insights gained from this research to a wider audience. The dissemination of our research has challenged social assumptions, as well as created and interpreted cultural capital.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Jeannette Baxter joined the department as Senior Lecturer in 2007. Her work on J. G. Ballard focusses on the relationship between post-1945 science fiction, history and literary-visual culture. Her recent research explores Ballard's science fiction in the context of Surrealist historiography and post-Holocaust aesthetic, as well as contemporary discourses of political extremism, exile and migration.</p> <p>Sarah Brown has published widely on science fiction in relation to social and cultural concerns. Since joining the Department of English, Communication, Film and Media (ECFM) as a Professor of English Literature in 2006, she has published 'Plato's Stepchildren', included in the <i>Blackwell Companion to Classical Receptions</i> (2008) and an article on science fiction and classical reception in contemporary women writers in the <i>Oxford Classical Receptions Journal</i> (2012). Both pieces identify cyclical patterns used by science fiction writers to warn against meliorative models of human history. She has also published on responses to Shakespeare's magic in science fiction (REF2), focusing on the links between poetry, magic and religion. An article on human/insect relationships was included in <i>Transformative Change in Western Thought</i>, eds Gildenhard and Zissos (2012). This analysed what changing perceptions of human/insect hybrids can tell us about humanity and posthuman identity. (Posthumanism and fantasy are also the focus of Zoe Jaques's forthcoming Routledge monograph on posthumanism and children's literature.)</p> <p>Professor Farah Mendlesohn was appointed Head of Department (ECFM) in 2012. She has an established track record as a leading researcher in fantasy and science fiction. Since 2012 she has published on Mervyn Peake's place in British fantasy writing, and has given a keynote paper, 'The Disassociated Hero: sociopath and narrative structures' at the New Genre Army conference (Lincoln 2013). This analysed the relationship between reader and protagonist within a range of sf texts which explore both religious and political themes.</p> <p>Much of Dr Una McCormack's work is focused on social concerns such as political extremism, religion and gender identity. This stems in part from her background in sociology. She joined the department as a Lecturer in Writing in 2011. McCormack is a prolific writer of science fiction, and has also published criticism on science fiction. Since joining Anglia Ruskin she has published two <i>Star Trek</i> novels and a <i>Doctor Who</i> novel as well as short stories. She has published an article on Ursula K. Le Guin and two articles on <i>Doctor Who</i>, one of which focuses on political and religious authority in the series. <i>Chicks Unravel Time</i>, the volume in which one of her pieces on <i>Doctor Who</i> was published, was shortlisted for a Hugo Award in 2013.</p> <p>Religion is central to Professor Rowland Wymer's research into science fiction. Since joining Anglia Ruskin in 2004, Wymer has written a chapter on time and tragedy, with particular reference to the novels of Mary Doria Russell in the context of post-Holocaust theology. This was submitted to RAE 2008. Since 2004 he has also published on Ballard, Blish's 'After Such Knowledge' sequence and the representation of John Dee in science fiction. All three pieces are included in REF2, and the</p>

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last two articles both analyse shifts in the perceived relationship between science and the apparently opposed forces of magic and the occult.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Professor György Szőnyi, who co-authored an article on Dee with Wymer (reference 6) was a Leverhulme Visiting Professor attached to our UOA in 2009. The value of this award was £54,396. <http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/files/seealsodocs/340/2008.PDF>

1. Jeannette Baxter, 'Encountering the Holocaust in J. G. Ballard's post-war science fictions', *Textual Practice*, 26.3 (2012), pp. 379-98.

DOI:10.1080/0950236X.2012.684935

This item is included in REF2 and appeared in a well-regarded peer reviewed journal.

2. Sarah Annes Brown, 'Shaping Fantasies: Responses to Shakespeare's Magic in Popular Culture' *Shakespeare*, 5.2 (2009), pp. 162-96.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17450910902921591>

This item is included in REF2 and appeared in a well-regarded peer reviewed journal.

3. Una McCormack 'He's Not the Messiah: Undermining political and religious authority in new *Doctor Who*.' In Bradshaw, S., Keen, A. and Sleight, G. (eds.) *The Unsilent Library: Adventures in New Doctor Who* (Science Fiction Foundation, 2011)

This was included in a book from a leading publisher of critical work on science fiction. It can be supplied by the HEI on request.

4. Farah Mendlesohn 'Peake and the fuzzy set of fantasy: Some informal thoughts' in *Miracle Enough: Papers on the Works of Mervyn Peake* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 61-73.

Farah Mendlesohn is an internationally recognized expert on science fiction and fantasy. Her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy* won the BSFA award for best non-fiction book in 2009; the book was also nominated for both Hugo and World Fantasy Awards. In 2010 two of her books were nominated for Hugo Awards in the Best Related Book category. This item can be supplied by the HEI on request.

5. Rowland Wymer, 'Tragedy and the Future,' in *Tragedy in Transition*, eds Sarah Annes Brown and Catherine Silverstone (Blackwell, 2007), pp. 260-76.

This essay was included in our successful RAE 2008 submission, in which 93% of the research outputs submitted were rated at 2\* or better. Blackwell is a well reputed academic publisher and the volume was positively reviewed. The item can be supplied by the HEI on request.

6. Rowland Wymer, (co-written with György Szőnyi): 'John Dee as a Cultural Hero'. *European Journal of English Studies* 15.3 (2011), pp. 189-209.

DOI:10.1080/13825577.2011.626942

This piece was published in a well-regarded peer reviewed journal and has been included in REF2.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

This research has had impact on the personal development of individuals and groups; this has been enhanced through members of the public being given the chance to explore and reflect on moral and religious questions arising from science fiction. Public lectures are one vehicle for this kind of impact. Brown gave a public lecture based on her article on Shakespeare's magic to approximately 70 people (2008). Wymer gave a public lecture exploring the depiction of religion in science fiction which attracted approximately 300 people (2011). This led to further invitations to

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address non-academic audiences, including the Chelmsford Theological Society (2012) and the Suffolk Theological Forum (2013). The relationship between science fiction and religion was also the focus of a panel discussion in which McCormack participated at the British Science Festival in Bradford (2011). She regularly takes part in such events, bringing both her creative and critical work to a wider audience, and participating in the creative and interactive culture of fandom. György Szönyi, was a Leverhulme Visiting Professor at Anglia Ruskin in 2009 and participated, with Brown and Wymer, in a series of events open to the general public which explored the place of science and the occult in literature, and the way in which the relationship between these two seemingly contradictory forces has been constructed and contested.

Colleagues participated in panels on science fiction as part of the 2008 and 2012 Cambridge Festival of Ideas. In the first event Brown and Wymer joined Chris Beckett, winner of the 2013 Arthur C. Clarke award, to share their research into science fiction with members of the general public. At the 2012 event Brown, Mendlesohn and McCormack gave presentations. Brown's talk was derived from her published chapter 'The Parabola Paradox', looking at the ways in which human/insect interfaces can help us analyse society's changing responses to non-human and posthuman identities. McCormack discussed the changing role of Doctor Who's assistants and Mendlesohn spoke about dreams of the future in children's books. This event attracted approximately 40 participants and received excellent feedback, with all participants rating the event either good or very good. Baxter has given two public lectures based on her work at the University of Cagliari (2009) and Anglia Ruskin University (2012). Her first interview with Ballard, 'Reading the Signs' was reprinted as 'Age of Unreason' by the Guardian online (2004), and also subsequently appeared in *Extreme Metaphors: Interviews with J.G. Ballard 1967-2008* (2012).

Many have benefited from the creation of cultural capital aimed at enriching people's lives and imaginations by members of our UOA. As well as sharing her research on *Doctor Who* at the 2012 Festival of Ideas event, McCormack was invited to discuss *Doctor Who* on the Today programme (23.1.13) with novelist Eoin Colfer. This programme attracts an average weekly audience of nearly 7 million listeners. McCormack also reaches a large audience as a creative practitioner. Through the creation of cultural capital McCormack contributes to economic prosperity by producing commercially successful creative works. She wrote a script for the Doctor Who spin-off *Gallifrey* (series 5), based on the further adventures of two of Doctor Who's companions, and starring Lalla Ward and Louise Jameson, original actors from *Doctor Who*. This audio-book has sold over 800 copies. Her book *The Way Through the Woods* has sold over 25,000 copies, and *Brinkmanship* (set in the Star Trek universe) over 11,000 copies. Her fiction engages with a range of social and political issues, thus enhancing public understanding of human rights and ethical dilemmas. Her book, *The Crimson Shadow*, reached number 17 in the New York Times Bestseller list in October 2013, making it a strong potential source of future impact.

Colleagues create and raise awareness of cultural capital through social media, thus enhancing enjoyment of culture and personal development for a wider international audience. Both Brown (2009) and McCormack (2012) have written about their favourite fantasy novels for the award winning 'normblog'. Brown has also written numerous science fiction reviews for other blogs and for Amazon, where she is a member of 'Amazon Vine', an invitation-only scheme subsidised by the publishing industry which offers free books to high ranking reviewers, reflecting the increasing recognition that online reviews have considerable commercial influence. McCormack and Mendlesohn also communicate their research into science fiction and fantasy via personal blogs.

Our research has also had an impact in enhancing public understanding of science. Rowland Wymer's co-authored article on Dee was an acknowledged influence on a BBC Radio 4 programme on Dee presented by Professor Jonathan Sawday in January 2013. Sawday drew on details of the article in this broadcast and consulted Wymer for further information and advice (email dated 8/11/12).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. A link to Rowland Wymer's lecture to the Chelmsford Theological Society.

<http://www.chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk/theological-society-1.html>

2. Information about Professor György Szönyi's Leverhulme lectures.

[http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/microsites/reinventing\\_the\\_renaissance/news\\_and\\_events.Maincontent.0002.file.tmp/Leverhulme%20lectures.pdf](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/microsites/reinventing_the_renaissance/news_and_events.Maincontent.0002.file.tmp/Leverhulme%20lectures.pdf)

3. A record of the 2008 panel discussion of science fiction at the Cambridge Festival of Ideas.

<http://www.adjb.net/sab/index.php?m=11&y=08&entry=entry081102-120131>

4. A record of the 2012 panel discussion of science fiction at the Cambridge Festival of Ideas.

[http://www.wereallneighbours.co.uk/cambridge\\_events/event.php?id=107241](http://www.wereallneighbours.co.uk/cambridge_events/event.php?id=107241)

5. A link to the broadcast on Today featuring Una McCormack.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-21158174>

6. A link to news of Una McCormack's audio play.

<http://www.bigfinish.com/news/v/gallifrey-5-big-finish-companion-2>

7. A link to Una McCormack's involvement in the Alt. fiction festival.

<http://www.doctorwhonews.net/2011/06/dwn160611113008-altfiction-literature.html>

8. A link to the British Science Festival event in Bradford.

<http://bahistoryofscience.wordpress.com/2011/05/31/sfreligion/>

9. A link to Una McCormack's review of Sylvia Engdahl's *The Far Side of Evil* on normblog.

<http://normblog.typepad.com/normblog/2012/06/writers-choice-353-una-mccormack.html>

10. A link to the 2012 collection in which Jeannette Baxter's interview with Ballard was republished.

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Extreme-Metaphors-J-G-Ballard/dp/0007454856>