

## WIF SCIENCE FICTION BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### INTRODUCTION

In a recent interview for the French newspaper *Libération*, Roland Lehoucq, president of *Les Utopiales* (a yearly international SF festival in Nantes) stated that “La SF ne cherche pas à prédire le futur, c’est la question qui importe” (interview with Frédéric Roussel, 19 octobre 2015). Indeed, with plots revolving around space travel, aliens or cyborgs, science fiction (or SF) explores and interrogates issues of borders and colonization, the Other, and the human body. By imagining what will become of us in hundreds or thousands of years, science fiction also debunks present trends in globalization, ethical applications of technology, and social justice. For this reason, science fiction narratives offer a large array of teaching material, although one must be aware of its linguistic challenges for learners of French (see below for more on this subject).

In this introduction, we give a very brief history of the genre, focusing on the main subgenres of science fiction and women’s contribution to them. We also offer several suggestions regarding how to teach SF in the classroom – there are additional suggestions for each fictional text referenced in the annotated bibliography. Readers interested in exploring SF further can consult the annotated bibliography, which provides detailed suggestions for further reading.

### **A Brief History of French SF**

It is difficult to trace the exact contours and origins of science fiction as a genre. If utopia is a subgenre of science fiction, then we can

say that the Renaissance marks the birth of science fiction with the publication of Thomas More’s canonical British text *Utopia* (1516), as well as Cyrano de Bergerac’s *Histoire comique des États et Empires de la Lune* (circa 1650). Many scholars posit that science fiction began in the nineteenth century in 1818 with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. However, to which subgenre of science fiction this text belongs is up for debate. Horror? A Prometheus-type tale?

As to French science fiction, although there are many texts published before the Second World War by writers such as Jules Verne, Camille Flammarion, J.-H. Rosny aîné, Gustave Le Rouge, and Maurice Renard, examples of French science fiction multiply and flourish in the 1970s, notably due to the creation of special collections by publishers such as Denoël (*Présence du futur*; *Lunes d’encre*) and Gallimard (*Folio SF*). The historical predominance of male science fiction authors points to a gender imbalance within the genre, an imbalance that has not yet entirely corrected itself. Women do publish, but very few in comparison to men. Nonetheless, as demonstrated by the list of works of contemporary SF fiction below, women are producing many SF publications of high quality today.

## What Is Science Fiction?

SF is first and foremost a literature that asks questions – many of which are philosophical: who are we ontologically, metaphysically, and physically? What will we become or how will we evolve? We have searched for what we were fifty thousand years ago; we must ask what we will be fifty thousand years from now. Other potential questions are: How do we relate to others? What is a community and who counts as human (a question often asked in the past through alien encounters but more often explored today through eschatological narratives and dystopias)?

Raphaël Colson and François-André Ruaud explain that contemporary authors experiment with different subgenres and narrative conventions within science fiction—mysteries, humorous tales and political thrillers are published alongside space operas and political dystopias (*Science-fiction: une littérature du réel*, 58). In a work of science fiction, the reader is not confronted with new technologies, customs and territories, but with new ways to look at the world. Science fiction addresses “les transformations techno- sociétales qui sculptent le futur de nos sociétés développées” (*Science-fiction: les frontières de la modernité*, Ed. Mnémos, 2008 [8]). It maps the collective psyche of our times by exploring our dreams, our beliefs, fears and nightmares (14). In short, science fiction dares us as readers to exit our comfort zone and, through a process of defamiliarization, reexamine the world we create and with which we engage every day.

Below are a few terms that are useful to the study of science fiction, as well as suggestions of corresponding works of fiction from the bibliography that exemplify them.

Utopia/Utopie – The word utopia derives from the eponymous book by Thomas More (1615). Although we use the term casually today, in literary studies it points to imagined communities in which a certain order is maintained for the good of all. This order (always isolated from the rest of the world) usually expresses itself through political and labor structures. It is a symptom of discontent with regard to contemporary politics, and, in the classroom, encourages imagination. Read Élisabeth Vonarburg’s novel *Chroniques du Pays des Mères* as an example of utopia.

Dystopia/Dystopie – Dystopia is not the opposite of utopia. While a utopia claims to be for the good of all, a dystopic society clearly benefits only a few. However, as is the case in

Orwell’s *1984*, the propagandist official discourse of a dystopic regime often resembles that of utopia. Like a utopia, a dystopic society is highly organized but it displays an excess of surveillance and control of every aspect of daily life. In SF literature, dystopias often unfold in urban settings in which a hero resists the oppressive regime. For an example of a dystopian take, read “Dedans, dehors” by Sylvie Denis in her short story collection *Jardins virtuels*.

Eschatological tales/Récits de fin du monde – A popular genre in French SF, eschatological narratives point to the fears and transformations of the society in which they are imagined. After the end of the Cold War, epidemics and ecological catastrophes became predominant in end-of-the-world narratives. Aside from the failure of human society to deal with problems before they happen, the most important aspect of these narratives is the aftermath of an event so big that everything must be reevaluated. Again, community (re)building, conflict resolution, life after

technology, and the spread of biological dangers are classic elements here. For an original take on this subgenre, read the short story “Les Bulles” by Julia Verlanger.

Space opera – The space opera became very popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Based on the expression ‘soap opera’, space operas are sagas that take place in the universe at large with grand battles and Ulyssean heroes. They involve politics and war games, and weave everyday life with conflicts of epic proportions. For these reasons, they were often published as series. Space operas are still popular today among SF authors. For an example of this subgenre, dive into Laurence Suhner’s *Quantika* trilogy.

Uchronia/Uchronie – Utopia is the place that doesn’t exist; uchronia is the *time* that doesn’t exist and features events that did not transpire. Uchronia refers to fiction that has as its premise the modification of a major historical event. The most popular inspirations for uchronia are WWII and the rise to power of Adolf Hitler. The next most popular is Napoleon’s demise. There aren’t many uchronias in women’s writing but for a good example of this subgenre, read *Par tous les temps* by Colette Fayard (not included in this bibliography), which reimagines the life of Arthur Rimbaud (Denoël, 1990).

### **Women Writers of French Science Fiction**

Male authors dominated science fiction long before the term science fiction was even coined. Few women were published in this genre before WWII and only a few made it to the printer until the 1970s and 1980s. According to her husband Claude Cheinisse, Christine Renard, although she was deemed “l’une des quatre de nos meilleurs écrivains français de science-fiction” in 1975, had a hard time getting published (*à la croisée des parallèles*, Denoël, Présence du futur, 1981, p18). In cases where women were only published in SF magazines such as *Fiction* (in which Cheinisse’s work frequently appeared), their stories have all but disappeared today. One may unearth old copies of these magazines after some research or, if lucky, find some of the stories in a used copy of a collection. Novels may also be bought used. Interlibrary loan services in the U.S. will fail to turn up many titles available in the US and fans of French SF have to purchase books from France.

Increasingly, SF women writers have taken up the pen and have created a place for themselves within publishers’ lists and on readers’ bookshelves. Following the footsteps of Christine Renard and Julia Verlanger, who died in 1979 and 1985 respectively, Colette Fayard, Sylvie Denis, Catherine Dufour and Sylvie Lainé have become major SF figures in French today. Younger authors such as

Mélanie Fazi, Québécoise writer Élodie Boivin and Swiss writer Laurence Suhner, are following in their footsteps. Elisabeth Vonarburg and Joëlle Wintrebert, who both live in Québec, have been publishing successfully since the 1980s. Last but not least, Marie Darrieussecq, who has never been associated with SF, has nonetheless written many novels and short stories that flirt with the genre: *White* and *Le Pays* explore hologram technology, and *Zoo* examines cloning.

## Teaching

Science fiction is difficult to read for the French learner. Texts surprise and unsettle the reader through the process of defamiliarization, introducing vocabulary that is not in the dictionary and landscapes that do not fit into the student's current frame of reference. For these reasons, pre-reading activities are paramount; the instructor should provide lists of vocabulary and perhaps a short summary of the story to give students a leg up. However, the difficulty of these texts is precisely what makes them useful for language learning, especially when it comes to reinforcing reading strategies. Because of the defamiliarization process that operates when students read science fiction, students must rely on language only. They cannot rely on what they already know about French culture, for example, when a story takes place in space. Thus, students have to learn how to detect paraphrases that explain a piece of futuristic technology, or neologisms that make sense because of the familiar verbs they are associated with. They have to recreate the universe of the story alongside the text – for this, visual exercises will help (sketching, collages), especially in groups. To assess learning, we suggest asking students to write their own science fiction short story in which they create a universe with a consistent list of invented vocabulary and, of course, excellent grammar!

In terms of class discussion, science fiction is extremely rich. With utopias and dystopias, you can discuss political regimes, surveillance technology, labor organization, and class divisions. With uchronias, you can discuss history. Fantasy – another subgenre of science fiction – might seem remotely connected to everyday life at first, but it often stages the battle between good and evil, the role of nature, and relationship with the Other. Space operas are fertile ground for a conversation on imperialism and colonization. Regardless of the subgenre of SF that the instructor chooses to explore with students, SF has the potential to inspire complex discussions on urgent and engaging topics.

### GENERAL WORKS ON SCIENCE FICTION

**Bréan, Simon. *La Science-Fiction en France: théorie et histoire d'une littérature*. Paris: PU Paris-Sorbonne, 2012. Print.**

This book is an essential contribution to the field of French science fiction studies. Bréan first gives a rich historical background on French science fiction since the 1950s. He acknowledges American influence but does not dwell on it, focusing instead on the various texts that constitute what he calls the “macro- texte français” or the literary consciousness that these texts form (105). The most interesting chapters (V, VI and VII) are those that explore major themes and narrative techniques. In chapter V, for example, he coins several terms such as “le régime ontologique matérialiste spéculatif” (261) and redefines the concept of *objet* (287-297) and *vademecum* (280) within the science fiction genre.

**Colson, Raphaël and André-François Colson. *Science-fiction. Une littérature du réel*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2006.**

This brief volume is organized around 50 questions, starting with “Quelles sont les origines de la science-fiction?” and ending with “Quelle synthèse pour la fiction prospective ?” The neophyte will learn about science fiction a few pages at a time, from the impact of WWI and WWII on SF, the influence of the “livre de poche,” cyberpunk esthetics, and the role of publishers. The

evolution from the term “science fiction” to “fiction spéculative” is intentional. As noted in the introduction to this bibliography, the authors view the genre as “un outil indispensable et adéquat pour étudier et anticiper les mécanismes qui conditionnent notre monde en devenir” (179). This doesn’t mean that science fiction is forecasting the future like the weatherman, but instead, that science fiction understands the world as constantly evolving. Hypothesizing trajectories for our world and its societies based on current events is a way to make sense of the present as well as, at times, a means to expose excesses and weaknesses while embracing technological change.

**Guiot, Denis, Jean Pierre Andrevon, and George Barlow. *La Science-fiction*. Paris: MA Editions, coll. Le Monde De..., 1987.**

This pocket encyclopedia provides concise explanations and definitions for subgenres, authors, terms, tropes, and really anything that relates to French science fiction from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1980s. In the first few pages, Guiot stresses the impossibility and futility of searching for a set definition of SF, and discusses the problem of limiting and restricting literature by assigning labels and “genres” at all (8). Much of the Avant-propos consists of quotes and working definitions provided by several notable theorists, critics, and other personalities in science fiction and paints a general picture of what it is, what it can do, and why it is important and valuable literature (what we can learn from it).

**Jakubowski, Maxim. Introduction. *Travelling towards Epsilon: An Anthology of French Science Fiction*. Ed. Jakubowski. London: New English Library, 1976. 9-27.**

The author writes that “[t]his anthology aims to present the multitude of themes, styles and preoccupations of [late 20<sup>th</sup> century] French [SF] at a time when a whole new generation of writers which has a fierce understanding of the genre’s conventions and restrictions is emerging” (10). The introduction provides a brief history of the evolution of French SF by discussing its development in relation to certain social and political events such as the Second World War and the May 1968 protests. Jakubowski identifies a number of influential texts, highlights key authors, and points to the work of Cyrano de Bergerac as the genesis of the genre in France. Though “French science fiction has always been more concerned with psychology” (24), the author identifies several elements and tropes that French SF has in common with science fiction from America and the UK.

**Lofficier, Jean-Marc, and Randy Lofficier. *French Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror and Pulp Fiction: A Guide to Cinema, Television, Radio, Animation, Comic Books and Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000.** Book 2 in this text deals with the French *fantastique* and science fiction literature from the Middle Ages to contemporary times. The Preamble distinguishes between the two genres, and then the sections that follow treat their histories and developments separately. This text is essentially an elaborate and extremely comprehensive timeline which takes into account how France’s changing social, cultural, and political climates from the 1500s to the 2000s affected the writing, publishing, and attitudes towards/reception of the speculative, anticipation, and utopian stories which officially became “science fiction” in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Chapter IX: Modern Science Fiction (After 1950s) is particularly informative, but the topic of women in the genre and the influence of the feminist movement on its dominant themes is largely ignored. Overall, this volume presents a concise and straightforward summary of all the information pertaining to the history of French SF.

**Vas-Deyres, Natacha. *Ces Français qui ont écrit demain: utopie, anticipation et science-fiction au XXe siècle*. Paris: Éditions Champion, 2012.**

Often, critics, theorists, and historians are more concerned with the impact of American SF (which tends to be more political and military) on French SF than with French SF itself. This text focuses on the ways in which French SF is different, original, and unique in its construction of alternative, strange, or futuristic universes, and its examination of political and social issues. In Avant-propos I, Roger Bozzetto describes this source as the first to really examine French SF's roots in, and shared features of, "la littérature utopique" – a genre and an umbrella term under which most French SF was assembled prior to Hugo Gernsback's introduction of the term "science fiction" in 1926. In the Introduction, Vas-Deyres identifies four types of utopias that are echoed in French SF throughout the 18th-20th centuries, focusing on the anti-utopias of contemporary times. Chapters II and III of the third section look closely at the feminist and mechanized (turned digitalized) utopias of the 70s, 80s and 90s.

**Vint, Sherryl. *Science Fiction: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.**

The first chapter of this guide stresses the difficulty of defining SF in terms that are more specific than the "sense of wonder" it provokes in its readers and consumers. Through the analysis of specific examples from literature and film, the subsequent chapters outline the dominant and competing theories and interpretations of the genre (such as Darko Suvin's "cognitive estrangement" theory in his *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*), as well as its many different trends and sub-genres (Hard sf, Megatext, Cyberpunk, Speculative Fiction, Feminist SF, etc.) in order to illustrate why this is the case. Though it focuses on the Anglo- American SF tradition, it is very helpful as a brief but comprehensive introduction to the general and universal themes, ideas, and common tropes of the genre, as well as its history, development, and constantly evolving social, political, and cultural significance.

**Wollheim, David A. Introduction. *The Best from the Rest of the World: European Science Fiction*. Ed. Wollheim. Garden City, NY: Doubleday &, 1976. Xi-xix.**

Wollheim provides an overview of the history and conditions of European SF literature as compared to Anglo-Saxon SF and identifies French SF as "by far the healthiest and most vigorous science fiction literature" (xiii) when compared to the SF market and products of other European and French-speaking countries. He acknowledges the impact of French SF on the shaping of American SF prior to WWI, and discusses how translation of French SF texts into English and other languages played a key role in how the genre changed and developed differently within and between different parts of the world at the beginning of the 20th century. Finally, he touches on the "return" and growing presence of European SF to/in the North-American market, which began in the 1970s and continued through the final decades of the 20th century.

#### SF FICTION WRITTEN BY WOMEN

This bibliography privileges short stories and novels from the last twenty years, but it also offers references to earlier publications. We could not publish a bibliography on science fiction women writers without including authors such as Julia Verlanger and Christine Renard who have now passed away. Moreover, some contemporary authors have been writing since the 1970s.

For each writer, we focus on one or two texts (novel or short story) because we think it best not to overwhelm the reader with a long list of publications from which she might find it difficult to choose. Should a given author prove interesting, it is easy to find a complete list of her published works on the Internet. We give priority to short story collections over novels, with some exceptions, to encourage the exploration of science fiction without the daunting task of starting with a thousand-page space opera.

For more on the authors referenced below, and on science fiction and its subgenres, visit nooSFe at [noosphere.org](http://noosphere.org) and ReSFururae (carnets de recherche sur la science-fiction) at <http://resf.hypotheses.org>.

**Boivin, Elodie. “Impress Genetic Inc.” Available online only from Éditions ActuSF at [editions-actusf.fr](http://editions-actusf.fr), janvier 2015.**

Élodie Boivin is an up-and-coming Québécoise author and colorist of bandes dessinées who resides in France. She has not published much prose yet, but you can download for free “Impress Genetic Inc,” an ingenious and delightfully sarcastic short story, on the site of ActuSF Éditions ([editions-actusf.fr](http://editions-actusf.fr)). The story won the Prix Barjavel at the Festival des Intergalactiques de Lyon in 2013.

In the future, a woman invents a 3D printer that can print body parts, using nanotechnology to reconnect the tissues. Bodies can no longer die; diseases and accidents are a thing of the past. On the other hand, children have become so desensitized to pain that they have fun playing with a dog’s legs as if they were swords. Ironically, the only sensitive character in the narrative is a robot. This short text raises many questions. What makes us human? Is it our humanoid body or our ability to empathize with others? This is a great story to introduce science fiction into the French classroom.

**Darrieussecq, Marie. *Zoo*. Paris: P.O.L., 2006.**

Marie Darrieussecq writes novels and short stories that constantly flirt with science fiction, the fantastic and magical realism. In her bestseller *Truisme* (1996), translated in English as *Pig Tales*, she debunks the excesses of a sick society—the story is set in the near future—through the transformation of a woman into a sow. In *White* (2003) and *Le Pays* (2005), technological innovations signal that the stories also take place in the near future. In *White*, holographic telecommunications allow scientists on a mission in Antarctica to project themselves into their family’s living room while in *Le Pays*, the main character ‘visits’ her dead grandmother (in fact, her hologram).

In her collection of short stories *Zoo*, Darrieussecq published SF narratives alongside fantastic tales. The plots of “Quand je suis fatiguée le soir” and “Mon mari le clone” revolve around cloning, which makes these stories great fuel for a discussion on reproduction and women’s health care. While the first story is dystopic (the narrator evokes excessive surveillance and the oppression of some of its citizens by a scientific elite), the second, whose narrator praises the current social order, hypothesizes a rationalized healthcare system that privileges cloning over classic reproductive techniques (cloned babies have priority in receiving day care). Both stories display Darrieussecq’s usual wit.

Holograms and cloning are not decorative devices that simply festoon these stories. Rather, they allow for a different perspective on the characters' trajectory. Cloning also poses the question of what it is to be human, and who we would become were we given a second chance at life – would we choose to be the same person or someone different from our original self?

**Denis, Sylvie. *Jardins virtuels*. Paris: Gallimard, Folio SF, 2003.**

Born in 1953, Sylvie Denis is a central figure of French science fiction today. Writer, editor, translator and anthologist of science fiction, she has published short stories and novels for adults and young adults, translated American and British SF texts by Greg Egan, Alastair Reynolds and Stephen Baxter; and she has won several prizes for her work. In 2006, she published a revised and augmented version of her short story collection *Jardins virtuels*. In these stories, the reader journeys to a future dominated by new but uncannily recognizable subjectivities, often defined through resistance to a dystopic, homogenizing order, and dominated by technoscience: rebellious intelligent robots, polymorphous and hyper-connected bodies, brainwashed adolescent girls, and “les Hommes Libres et Singuliers,” an omnipresent underground and rhizomatic group that helps individuals escape the lobotomized life of their contemporaries. “L’Anniversaire de Caroline” is a first-person narrative that combines technological innovation (imprisoning convicted felons in sarcophagi and hooking them to computer systems), social justice (the rebel heroine cheats the oppressive system) and women issues (the heroine adopts a daughter from her virtual prison).

If you are ready for a page-turner space opera, read also *La Saison des singes* and its sequel *L’Empire du sommeil* (L’Atalante, 2007, 2012).

**Dufour, Catherine. *L’Accroissement mathématique du plaisir*. Paris: Béliat, 2008.**

Catherine Dufour, born in 1966, has won national prizes for her novels (several of them for *Le Goût de L’immortalité* [2005]), but her short stories are as dense, complex and dark as her longer prose. “L’Accroissement” is her first collection. It regroups texts written over several years and previously published in periodic genre publications. These twenty stories are closer to fantasy than science fiction, although the eponymous story “L’Accroissement mathématique du plaisir” straddles both genres, challenging the reader with philosophical questions and intertextual references. Dufour’s writing style is uniquely sophisticated whether she writes about vampires, artists or monsters.

“L’immaculée conception,” in which the main female character finds herself pregnant, is chilling. Despite many attempts, the young woman cannot terminate her pregnancy. The story not only depicts the constant battle between a woman and the child to be born; it acerbically interrogates the social construct of pregnancy, from pressures in the workplace to condescending advice from the medical world and from friends. Witty dialogue and Dufour’s comic writing style offset the main character’s horrifying experiences and the lack of support that she receives from her entourage.

**Fayard, Colette. *Les Chasseurs au bord de la nuit*. Paris: Denoël, coll. Présence du futur, 1989.**



It is not easy to find Colette Fayard's texts but this collection (her first) is available on Editions Denoël's website in the SF collection. Fayard's stories unfold with strange encounters – for the characters as well as for the reader. At the end of some of these stories, one may feel a slight shiver. In “L'Alphabet des révélations,” people never leave their homes and rely entirely on computer networks. Even when having a party with friends, holograms – not real people – gather. A young woman defects and joins a pirate group in order to counter this tasteless virtual life and soon, little by little, “les maisons se sont mises à s'ouvrir.” More easily identifiable as an SF narrative because the action takes place on another planet, “Le Libérateur” tells the story of an Earth agent who tries to understand an alien society and undergoes a riveting transformation.

**Fazi, Mélanie. *Serpentine*. Paris: Gallimard, Folio SF, 2010.**

Melanie Fazi is a professional translator by trade and one of the rising voices in fantastic literature. She published many short stories and her first novel *Trois pépins du fruit des morts* (2003) received excellent reviews. To discover Fazi's fascinating stories, pick up the collection *Serpentine* which contains ten narratives about magical tattoos, haunted houses, and lost souls on the highway. Each story is carefully crafted to take you into realities that parallel everyday life: an accident on the highway, a singer in the subway car, vacations in the family home. Storytelling is a recurrent subtheme in the collection. Characters tell stories, ask for, or steal stories from others, as in “Serpentine” and “Ghost Town Blues” – a spooky take on the Western. Which stories do we choose to tell? Why do we need stories? How much of one's story is part of the self and what happens to the self once the story is told? You – and your students – will think about these stories long after you close the book.

**Lainé, Sylvie. *Espaces insécables*. Paris: ActuSF, coll. Les Trois Souhairs, 2008.** Sylvie Lainé was born in 1957. She has been publishing SF short stories since the 1980s while teaching information technologies at the college level. She won several prestigious prizes in France (Prix Rosny Aîné, Grand Prix de l'imaginaire). “Espaces insécables” is one of four collections published with ActuSF in the series “Les Trois souhaits.” The collection contains six stories in which futuristic technology subtly spreads and brings forth a new social order (“Carte blanche”) or gives rise to encounters with other forms of intelligence (“Le chemin de la rencontre”). In “Carte blanche,” 150 000 people on a giant spaceship live by the motto “Le changement, c'est la vie!” and change jobs and partners regularly based on little cards that pop out of a personal printer. Even the urban landscape gets reconfigured once in a while – a great story to spark discussion on the concepts of dystopia and utopia.

See also the collections *Marouflages* (Paris: ActuSF, coll. Les Trois Souhairs, 2009) and *L'Opéra de Shaya* (Paris: ActuSF, coll. Les Trois Souhairs, 2014).

**Pelletier, Francine. *Les Jours de l'ombre*. Québec: Alire, 2004.**

Francine Pelletier was born in Laval, Québec in 1959. She writes science fiction and mystery stories for both adults and young adults, and has published over 50 works in total. She has been nominated for, and won, a number of prizes for her long and short fiction. Pelletier is well known for her brave and admirable female protagonists, like those found in her popular trilogy *Le sable et l'acier*. In 1999, she won the Grand Prix de la Science-Fiction et du Fantastique Québécois for the second and third volumes, *Samiva de Frée* (1998) and *Issabel de Qohosaten* (1998). (For those interested, *Nelle de Vilvèq* (1997) is the first in the series.) That same year, she won the

Prix Boréal for *Samiva de Frée*, and took home the Prix Aurora Award for the “meilleur livre” in 2000. She is currently finishing her second SF trilogy, *Le cycle des Laganière*, begun in 2007.

*Les Jours de l'ombre* (2004) is Pelletier's only SF novel that does not belong to a series. It is about a young woman, Sha'Ema, who discovers a third eye developing beneath her left breast. To avoid mutilation of her mutation at the hands of the village priests, and to protect her family from persecution for impurity, she self-exiles in order to discover the truth about her biological heritage. Pelletier's SF works for adults consistently explore the themes of alienation and oppression with regards to racial and gendered others.

**Christine Renard (avec Claude-François Cheinisse). *À la croisée des parallèles*. Paris: Denoël, 1981.**

Christine Renard (1929-1979) started publishing short stories in the magazine *Fiction* in the early 1960s while studying psychology. In 1965, she married another SF writer, Claude-François Cheinisse, and continued writing short stories, novels and translations, as well as scholarly articles on science fiction. She died of cancer at age 50 but her husband continued to publish her texts after her death. Ten of her novels and about sixty short stories made their way into print either during her lifetime or posthumously. In the collection *À la croisée des parallèles*, Cheinisse creates an intertextual dialogue between his own short stories and Renard's. One such pair is “Juliette” by Cheinisse and “Mark” by Renard, two different approaches to the same love story between a man and his artificially-intelligent car. While Cheinisse develops the point of view of the car owner, Renard writes a first-person narrative with the voice of the jealous car replaced by a younger model. Also in this collection, “La Nuit des Albiens” won the Prix Rosny aimé in 1982 for best short story. The *albiens* are albino mutants that don't sleep, don't dream, and thus, cannot discharge their aggressiveness in their sleep, which makes them very dangerous. In this story, Renard's doctoral studies in psychology surface through the Freudian theory that unleashed neurosis leads to rape and murder. The beginning of the story also debunks the mechanisms by which we start to see others as a threat just because they are different.

**Rochon, Esther. *Coquillage*. Montréal: La Pleine Lune, 1985.**

Esther Rochon is considered one of the top three women authors in the field of Québécois science fiction, along with Francine Pelletier and Elisabeth Vonarburg. She was born in 1948 in Quebec City, and has been writing and winning awards for her stories since the age of sixteen. She was awarded the Grand Prix de la Science-Fiction et du Fantastique Québécois for the first time in 1986 for *L'Épuisement du soleil* (1985), the second novel in her first trilogy *Le Cycle de Vrénalik*, which also won her the Prix Boréal for the best science fiction novel that same year. In 1987, she won both prizes again for her novel *Coquillage* (1986). She has won the Grand Prix a total of four times for four of her novels, and four short stories. Many of her stories belong to the SF genre, but incorporate elements of fantasy and the *fantastique*.

*Coquillage* is a non-chronological SF narrative that interweaves two separate but connected love stories: one between a man named Thrassl and a giant, telepathic, shellfish monster, which takes place in the past, and the other between the monster and Thrassl's son, François, which unfolds in the present. The novel follows the amorous relationships that the various primary and secondary characters have with the monster, and with each other. It is a sensual and grotesque tale of love, sex, and death, which delves into the depths of the human condition. Among other

things, it questions and subverts traditional sex and gender roles, and explores topics such as motherhood, reproduction, and consciousness.

**Suhner, Laurence. *QuanTika* (Trilogy: Tome 1: *Vestiges*,; Tome 2: *L'ouvreur des chemins*; Tome 3: *Origines*). Paris: L'Atalante, 2012, 2013, 2015.**

Laurence Suhner is a Swiss science fiction writer and graphic artist. Tome 1 of *QuanTika* was her first novel. The second part of the trilogy won the prix Bob Morane and the prix Futuriales in 2013. Although she published her first (short) work of prose in 2006 she has been publishing graphic novels since the early 1980s.

*QuanTika* is a sumptuous space opera –the genre is still popular – that takes the reader to the harsh planet Gemma where humans have settled a colony. The real adventures start when a group of archeologists uncover dark powers locked for thousands of years under the planet's surface. The main character, Ambre, is a female scientist whose past also resurfaces as she experiences desire, scientific curiosity and of course, fear. In *QuanTika*, Suhner combines the best of classic science fiction with contemporary explorations of self-identity, otherness, and ecological quandaries. Part technoscientific endeavor, part mystical journey, the trilogy (1584 pages combined) epitomizes science fiction postmodernism in the sense that it constantly challenges the truth, embraces the unknown and the uncanny as part of the construction of the self, and “thinks” in terms of shifting paradigms instead of absolute truth. While the story is entertaining, the reader will find many ways to relate to aspects of Ambre's journey into space and into herself.

For a (considerably) shorter look at Suhner's prose, read her steampunk short story “La Chose du lac” (available in pdf from ActuSF editions for 99 eurocents). In 1925 by the Lehman Lake in Switzerland, a diamond thief meets a monster in the deep...

**Verlanger, Julia. “Les Bulles.” In *D'Étranges visiteurs: histoires de science-fiction*. Paris: Médium, 1991.**

Julia Verlanger (1929-1985) was born Éliane Taïb and often published under the name Gilles Thomas. She published most of her novels in the 1970s. Between 2008 and 2010, the French SF publishing house Bragelonne released several tomes finally regrouping her novels, such as the post-apocalyptic trilogy starting with *L'Autoroute sauvage* (originally published in 1976).

However, these volumes are not readily available in the United States and, like many others for the moment, must be purchased from France.

On the other hand, the short story “Les bulles” is quite easy to find because it was published in several anthologies (find it also in a used copy of *Le Grandiose avenir*, an anthology of French SF of the 50s, published in 1975). Verlanger's first publication, it dates back to 1956 but we make an exception to the temporal boundaries of this bibliography to include Verlanger (a major figure in French science fiction who begs to be the subject of a monograph). In this short story, a 16 year-old girl is locked in her house after her father's death and narrates her lonely life with robots. Every day, giant bubbles kill or transform people outside, and humanity must remain indoors at all times. One day, the radio announces that things will finally change and that people will soon be able to safely emerge. But the ending, which we won't reveal here, will question the ethics of who gets to live and who gets to “stay” before life can return to normal.

This story would work well with French learners at the intermediate level because the narrative voice – a teenage girl – cleverly avoids complex sentences while retaining the estrangement inherent to most science fiction stories. The origin of the bubbles is never explained and thus would lead to interesting discussions about otherness, diseases and environmental issues, as well as decisions regarding the protection of the individual versus the community.

**Vonarburg, Elisabeth. *Le Silence de la cité*. Québec : Alire; science-fiction edition, 1998 (1981).**

Elisabeth Vonarburg is a prolific French writer who started writing science fiction in the 1960s. She moved to Quebec in 1973 and ever since has been on the editorial team of the science fiction magazine *Solaris*. She earned her doctoral degree in 1987 but opted out of a career in academia. She is without a doubt one of the greatest women writers of science fiction in French today, alongside Anglophone counterparts such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Margaret Atwood. Besides writing fiction (novels and short stories), she has also written songs, hosted radio shows, organized conferences and translated fantasy and science fiction novels. She has won countless prizes, and yet new editions of her texts were for a long time not published in France. Fortunately, many are now available again in print and electronically through the Québécois publisher Alire. She is also one of the rare SF writers whose novels have been translated into English.

It is very difficult to select only one book from Vonarburg's extensive bibliography. *Le Silence de la cité* (translated into English as *The Silent City*), her first novel, is a post-apocalyptic dystopian tale in which people live underground in a city run by robots. The few survivors have managed to more than double their life expectancy thanks to genetic manipulations. The heroine is a young girl, Élisabeth, raised by Paul, an evil genius who wants to create a new human. As a young adult, she escapes from the city and later works toward repopulating the damaged surface of the earth in the Village. These few details about the plot do not do justice to the complexity of Vonarburg's narrative and the questions it raises about gender roles, sexuality, and genetic manipulations. As in her later novel *Chroniques du Pays des Mères* (1992), women take charge of their destiny, the role of man is downplayed, and motherhood is redefined – it is no longer the linchpin of the normative family structure, but instead the passing on of responsibilities and respect for others. Via the presence of robots, simulacra and manipulated bodies, this novel also questions what it is to be human and the role of images in human relationships.

Vonarburg also published many short stories. See the collections *La Maison au bord de la mer* (Alire, 2000) and *Sang de Pierre* (Alire, 2009).

**Wintrebert, Joëlle. *La Créode et autres récits futurs*. Paris: Béliat, 2009.**

Joëlle Wintrebert's stories are poetic and political. All of her narratives involve a social critique of well-established rituals and official rules that impose on the community strict but questionable ways of living through reproduction, sexuality, body image, or gender roles. Her genealogical approach to tradition often debunks contemporary rules of law, publicly characterized as 'natural' by a leading elite and yet so obviously manmade. She likes to explore, as she states in the postface of "La Créode," the violence behind worlds of peace and the cost of such a peace (think colonization).

Born in France in 1949, Winterbert won the Prix Rosny aîné three times: first for the title story of the collection *La Créode* (1980), which is featured in this bibliography, and then for two of her novels (*Les Olympiades truquées* in 1988 and *Pollen* in 2003). She also won the Grand Prix de la Science-Fiction française for *Le Créateur chimérique* in 1989 (a continuation of the short story “La Créode”). The collection regroups 19 short stories that give a wide look at the overall work of this prolific writer and the above- mentioned themes.

“La Créode” is a good example of Wintrebert’s ability to create an unfamiliar world in which the hero is at odds with a tradition that has involved genetic manipulation. In this story, the Ouqdars reproduce through “scissiparité,” giving birth to a twin self, instead of another being. But the main character, Ranys, is an anomaly. He is carrying a female and refuses the separation. By defying the ritual of

separation, he questions the complex absence- presence of gender difference in his society. “Alien bise” is typically science fictional: a crew on a spaceship finds a planet with an abandoned alien craft shell. What follows is a body invasion but, contrary to the *Alien* movie series or a traditional body snatcher plot, these aliens bring pleasure to their hosts. Can they bear it?

#### **Other anthologies that bring together short stories by men and women:**

Klein, Gérard, Ed. *Les Passeurs de Millénaires: La grande anthologie de la science-fiction française*. Paris: Le Livre de poche, 2005.

Denis, Sylvie, Ed. *Escales sur l’horizon 2001*. Paris : Fleuve Noir, 2000.

Dunyach, Jean-Claude, Ed. *Escale 2000*. Paris: Fleuve Noir, 1999.

#### CRITICAL TEXTS

**Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan, Jr. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 2008.** “Science-fictionality” is a theory that aims to both describe and account for the ubiquity of science-fictional themes and elements in contemporary cultural products of all genres and mediums (novels, films, comics, video games, visual art, music, digital media, etc.). It is the ethos of science fiction, and denotes an attitude or a mode of thought. The “cognitive attractions” or “mental schemes” of science- fictionality are the “seven beauties” of the title: *fictive neology*, *fictive novums*, *future history*, *imaginary science*, *the science-fictional sublime*, *the science-fictional grotesque*, and the *Technologiade*. These easily recognizable, but not easily articulated, features, theories, themes, and story structures apply equally to esteemed and popular forms of science fiction, making this text useful for unifying one’s understanding of SF and sci-fi. Each beauty receives its own chapter, and is discussed in relation to example works.

**Evans, Arthur B. “Functions of Science in French Fiction.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22.1 (1989): 79-100.**

This essay investigates the amalgamation of scientific and literary discourse in French narrative

texts of the 19th to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Evans classifies these “hybrid” texts based on the pedagogical, satiric, or narratological purposes of their scientific or pseudo-scientific elements. He concludes that the ways in which these two separate domains interact and overlap in a single work can provide insight into the construction and development of narrative forms. For example, in the 20th century, scientific discourse in literature is increasingly used to “enhance verisimilitude, to create exotic effects, to expand the thematic possibilities of the plot, or to provide a fictional platform for social commentary” (94). This source provides an interesting technical and formal look at the development of the science fiction genre.

**Haraway, Donna Jeanne. “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s.” 1985. *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 7-45.**

1980s socialist feminism saw techno-culture as something that deepened and reinforced female oppression in the private and public spheres. Haraway’s critique of this perspective adopts the notion of cyborg identities (such as “constructions of women of color and monstrous selves in feminist science fiction” (32)) to argue *against* the substitution of the individual “woman” with the collective “women” and their “experience” (and this essentialist attitude more generally), and to argue *for* the positive reconstructive power of science and technology in terms of the social binaries that have historically structured one’s identity and his or her place in society. Haraway sees hope in the way that twentieth-century technology has blurred the boundaries between humans and animals, organisms and machines, and the physical and non-physical. As a product or symbol of these transgressions, her cyborg further disrupts the divisions between mind/body, idealism/materialism, nature/culture, whole/part, truth/illusion, maker/made, self/other, man/woman, God/man, etc. Her myth proposes that “cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (39), and lead us to a post-gender utopia in which production, reproduction and imagination are separate from identity.

**Hottois, Gilbert and Jean-Noël Missa, and Laurence Perbal (eds). *L’Humain et ses préfixes: une encyclopédie du trans/posthumanisme*. Paris: Editions Vrin, 2015.**

This encyclopedia presents the facts about and ethical questions raised by today’s technoscientific innovations – devices often used in science fiction. It is an ambitious project, and despite some organizational and stylistic issues, it is a successful one. It reads like a book of wonders, each chapter telling a story of human innovation and the power of imagination. It combines technical descriptions, philosophical probes, and artistic explorations to offer a large, but not diluted, picture of how technoscientific applications reconfigure, challenge, and enhance the human body. The concept of the human constantly changes as each innovation “pose la question éthique de la transgression des limites naturelles”(67). Thus, the reader will not find a fixed definition of the human or an exhaustive definition of transhumanism; rather, the book offers several definitions from different angles of interpretation.

What will become of the human body is not only the business of scientists, philosophers and artists. *L’Humain et ses préfixes* makes clear that transhumanism is omnipresent. Although we cannot know what the human body will look like, what it will do, or what it will think thousands of years from now, the process of transformation has already begun and touches us all.

**Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. New York: Verso, 2005.**

In the Introduction: Utopia Now, Jameson makes an important distinction between utopia as genre and utopia as “impulse,” wish, theme, and/or ideology expressed in many types of fiction, and which extends beyond literature to the socio-political visions and programs of the real world, and of post-Cold War life in particular. He seeks to define and deconstruct contemporary representations of Utopianism in and apart from SF texts, and to determine its future as a political genre and political ideology, by treating utopian form as separate from utopian content. Chapters 1-6 of Part 1: The Desire Called Utopia, deal exclusively and extensively with the former, and Chapter 7: The Barrier of Time, is the point at which the discussion turns to the latter. Part 2: As Far as Thought Can Reach, consists of twelve critical essays that address ideas from Part 1 in relation to specific examples of past and present utopian works of fiction.

**Langlet, Irène. *La science-fiction: Lecture et poétique d'un genre littéraire*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2006.**

Langlet's close study of science fiction texts by English- and French-language authors is unique in its close-reading analysis approach. Other books offer an overarching study of the genre, quickly moving from trope to trope; others tell at length the history of science fiction since the nineteenth century or the Renaissance. As the title indicates, “Lecture et poétique d'un genre littéraire” brings the reader closer to the materiality of SF prose and focuses on the textual specificities of the genre: neologisms, analepsis, narrative point-of-view. For this reason, it is an excellent secondary resource for instructors teaching science fiction. Langlet breaks stereotypes and resists reducing science fiction to recurrent narrative objects (aliens, space ships, etc.). For example, she analyzes science as social practice (“le traitement romanesque des images de la science” [168]), and feminism as impetus for alternative societies (208). With this book, science fiction finally receives the same attention to details as “la littérature patentée” (quatrième de couverture).

**Lavigne, Carlen. *Cyberpunk Women, Feminism and Science Fiction: A Critical Study*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co, 2013.**

The author argues that “[cyberpunk is] a direct reflection of the human condition in the digital age” (17). Feminist cyberpunk fiction of the 1990s was the result of women authors altering and subverting key tropes and themes of the masculinist texts of the 80s (primarily identity, globalization, the male hacker/tech genius, and anything relating to Frances Bonner's “four Cs” of cyberpunk: Corporations, Crime, Computers, and Corporeality) in order to present dated notions from new progressive perspectives, and to introduce new themes relating to the experience of anyone who is not a white, heterosexual, middle-class man. Chapters 4 and 5 address how the topic of postmodern identity is framed, considered, and responded to differently in cyberpunk texts of the first and second waves by exploring the concept of gendered bodies and the escape from embodiment (or the mind/body dichotomy) in relation to virtual realities, cyborg characters, and artificial intelligence. Chapter 8 looks at how the role of woman and the concept of “motherhood” changes and /or is complicated when reproductive technologies usurp biological procreation.

**Sargent, Pamela. Introduction. *Women of Wonder: The Contemporary Years: Science Fiction by Women from the 1970s to the 1990s*. Ed. Sargent. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995. 1-20.**

This book underscores the centrality of women writers to the development of the science fiction genre. The author identifies one of the principal aims of all SF as the “freeing of the reader...from the social and sexual assumptions of [societies and] culture” (1), and explains that this trend is a product of the women’s movement and its ubiquitous effect on SF in the 70s. Due to considerable backlash in the 80s, many women authors and their sympathizers began avoiding the “feminist” label. The 90s can therefore be referred to as a “post-feminist” era for the genre, in which the feminist ideals of women authors manifested covertly and primarily in utopian visions of the future that posited societies with non- traditional sex and gender roles. Finally, Sargent makes the point that not all fiction written by women is automatically “feminist” fiction.

**Suvin, Darko. *Pour une poétique de la science-fiction: Études en théorie et en histoire d'un genre littéraire*. Montréal: PU Québec, 1977.**

**Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.**

Asserting that it is a genre worth engaging with critically, Suvin proposes a definition of science fiction and then outlines how best to approach and evaluate it. He first discusses SF in relation to a variety of “fictions métaphysiques” in order to show how it connects to the genres from which it developed (the fantastique, the merveilleux), and how it distinguished/s itself from them as something “new” and unique. SF is foremost a “literature of cognitive estrangement” (la connaissance distanciée) meaning that it is based in a natural, empirical, knowable world, but this world is made different from the author and reader’s reality by the presence of a “novum.” This estranging factor (be it a new and unknown object/invention, phenomenon, setting, character, or relationship (64)) is either “true” or “fake” based on its transformative influence on the world in the text, and its “ethico-political liberating qualities” (82). Overall, Suvin “[challenges] the defining of all SF as extrapolation” (76), escapism, and anticipation, arguing that good science fiction is not about positing, predicting, or escaping to a new/better/different world – it is analogical, and about gaining new perspective on the author and reader’s current reality and environment. The French and English versions of Suvin’s text are nearly identical, but the English text contains added chapters that elaborate on and clarify his arguments and theories (Chapter IV: SF and the Novum).