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PABLO GÓMEZ-MUÑOZ

***SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY –
TRANSNATIONAL FUTURES, COSMOPOLITAN CONCERNS***

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Contemporary Science Fiction productions take centre stage in Pablo Gómez-Muñoz's *Science Fiction Cinema In the Twentieth Century – Transnational Futures, Cosmopolitan Concerns*, an exceptionally detailed study, winner of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) Book Award for 2024, in the Cultural and Area Studies in English category. It is the result of research partially carried out at the University of California, the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction and Fantasy, and encouraged, reviewed and supported by the research group Cinema Culture & Society at the University of Zaragoza in Spain, under the direction of Professor Celestino Deleyto.

In the 'Introduction', Pablo Gómez-Muñoz gives an overview of the main features of the films under scrutiny, namely post-2000 SF Hollywoodian and Western productions addressing cosmopolitan issues via imaginary universes, which function as metaphors of current concerns. The author emphasizes the ambivalent approach to borders that cosmopolitan discourses take in the context of globalization. The role of technology, an inherent element of SF films, is linked to a comprehensive typology of borders which become mirrors of cosmopolitanism. The aim of the study is to analyse the thematic components of a selection of SF films, focusing on their versatility in addressing cosmopolitan concerns.

In view of facilitating an in-depth understanding of the analysis, Pablo Gómez-Muñoz provides the context and definitions of key terms such as 'globalization', 'transnational', 'cosmopolitan', or 'international', giving examples of films whose production or success is highly influenced by transnational approaches. Contemporary theories on 'borders', 'aliens' or 'otherness' pave the author's critical endeavour to expose the ambivalent nature of filmic units in connection to transnational narratives:

"The relationship between cosmopolitanism, borders, and sf on which I focus in this book concerns the *transnational* physical, symbolic, spatial and temporal borders that sf uses to construct seemingly cosmopolitan discourses." (Gómez-Muñoz. 2023: 12)

Four groups of films are analyzed in the main body of the book, with each chapter introducing common elements of each subgroup and giving a detailed critical perspective on two illustrative examples.

The first chapter, 'Systemic Dystopias Through a Cosmopolitan Lens: Contesting Global Neoliberalism', focuses on systemic dystopias and their exploitation of humans caught in a socioeconomic race for profit, leading to shifting individual and public physical borders. Technological advancements in connection to global financial issues lead to societal division and the exploitation of diminishing resources. The author focuses on what he calls 'systemic dystopias', which heavily impact the lives of citizens, emphasizing contemporary thematic conventions, such as surveillance, geopolitical conflicts, and biometrics, with a magnifying glass on the dystopian SF films *Elysium* (2013), and *In Time* (2011).

The following chapter, 'Greening Apocalypse: Eco-Conscious Disaster and the Biopolitics of Climate Change', zooms in on transnational environmental concerns voiced through extreme weather manifestations, which generate displacement and post-apocalyptic alternatives to life on Earth. Climate change in old and recent SF productions grouped in the category of 'disaster films' becomes a catalyst for migration at a large scale, with the disastrous consequences of environmental degradation, as the author demonstrates in his thorough evaluation of *2012* (2009).

'Love for the Alien Same: Interplanetary Romance and Kinship as Harbingers of Ambivalent Cosmopolitanism', the third chapter, deals with transnational relationships by exploring human and alien figures engaged in profound connections that transcend the layers of reason and prejudices. These relationships are viewed as metaphors of transnational love, whereby couples become "harbingers of cosmopolitanism" (Gómez-Muñoz. 2023: 90). LGBTQ themes are seen as frameworks for investigating the borders of sexual cultures, as Pablo Gómez-Muñoz states in his study of the romantic SF film *The Host* (2013) and the comedy film *Codependent Lesbian* (2011).

The core of chapter four, 'The Cosmopolitan Potential of Connections across Time and Space', is human, yet more abstract, as the concept under discussion is humanity in its journey across space and time, configured via narrative loops, "the butterfly effect, the mutations of spaces through time, the interconnectedness of time, and even reincarnation" (Gómez-Muñoz. 2023: 16). Spatial networks in SF films are evaluated from the perspective of their global negative effects, and temporal shifts in the narratives are interpreted in the context of facilitating the survival of species, with particular focus on *Cloud Atlas* (2012).

Pablo Gómez-Muñoz's book is a meticulous and elaborated study of twenty-first-century science fiction film, which delves beyond conventional themes and spectacular effects, uncovering representations of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism at societal and individual levels, via characters engaged in negotiating shifting borders under the pressure of uncontrollable technology and heterotopian paradigms.