Session 8: Science Fiction, Literature and Gender

by

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Abstract: This session introduces course participants to the literary genre of science fiction and contemporary critical debates concerning the role of gender in this genre. The first half of the session outlines the debates concerning definitions of science fiction (and of literature). In addition to the terms “science” and “fiction,” we will examine “estrangement and cognition” (Suvin), and the relevance of these terms and debates to questions of disciplinarity and knowledge production. Leading critics such as Darko Suvin and Damien Broderick have argued influentially that sf is a literature written according to the objectifying principles of scientific method, rather than the subjectifying mode of the literary canon. We will cover science fiction’s “radical potential” for social critique which exists, for example, in the unusual temporality of the genre whether or not it is actualized in individual texts (Freedman). The first half of the session will conclude by building on the above discussion with an outline of science fiction’s capacity for feminist critique, especially in its foregrounding of time, the future, and processes of becoming (Wolmark). The second half of the session turns to Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818), often considered the first science fiction novel, as a case study for some of the issues introduced in the first half.

Suggested Readings (available with the CCS library):


Day, Date & Time: Saturday, 2nd October, 2010, 2:00 p.m.
Venue: CCS Seminar Hall, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012

All are cordially invited
Coffee/Tea and Snacks will be served at 3:30 p.m.
for details on the course: onknowinghow.blogspot.com,
url: http://ces.iisc.ernet.in/hpg/ragh/ccs/Welcome.htm