

be of particular significance to sf and fantasy, but which we have not before seen explored in such a provocative and insightful manner.—**Gary K. Wolfe, Roosevelt University**

**New Ways to Think about Zombies.** Lorenzo Servitje and Sherryl Vint, eds. *The Walking Med: Zombies and the Medical Image*. University Park, PA: Penn State UP, 2016. xxiii + 264 pp. \$74.95 hc, \$29.95 pbk.

As a scholar of zombie fiction, one tends to get hung up on one's specific method of dealing with the shambling dead—does one prefer a gun, a baseball bat, or a sword? Academically speaking, that means that once you look at the hordes of undead roaming through popular culture with an eye for consumerism, you find anti-capitalist notions everywhere. Do you have a thing for the dehumanization of refugees, the colonized, and the poor? Here you go, lots of zombie fictions to cater to your tastes. It is easy to get mono-theoretical about these ever-present cyphers for our twenty-first-century lives and to forget that zombies are indeed valuable for processing a wide variety of cultural anxieties: they are “good to think with” (77), as one essay in *The Walking Med: Zombies and the Medical Image* states (echoing Lévi-Strauss's comment about animals in totemism).

So it is quite possible that you have not thought about the connections that the essays in Lorenzo Servitje and Sherryl Vint's collection draw among medical discourses, graphic literature, and the zombie. That zombie fictions establish a link with medical discourses seems a simple enough starting point, as viral outbreaks inform not only films such as *28 Days Later* (2002) and *Resident Evil* (2002), but also one of the most popular graphic novel series: *The Walking Dead's* (2003-) central tenet, “we are all infected,” infuses the narrative with questions about modern medicine and manageable diseases. But far more than discussing simple cause-effect relations or metaphors of virology, the collection wants to open up an interconnected field of medical discourses that the zombie speaks to, especially in its graphic representational form: the editors tell us in their introduction that “[t]he project of this book, then, is ... to consider what new things it [the zombie] might signify in the context of contemporary for-profit healthcare, dehumanized working conditions ... and biomedical protocols” (xiv). And indeed the essays here are breaking new ground in their deployment of the zombie as a figure to think through representations of specific medical diagnoses, conditions within the medical profession, and the social stigmas related to illness.

In addition to the innovative connections between medical and zombie discourses, *The Walking Med* introduces readers to the idea of graphic medicine, a field that deploys graphic literature as a way mainly to illustrate medical practice and the autobiographical experiences of patients. The cross-section of these three discourses is a valuable addition to the research going on in each field. As such, the volume is an immensely important venture in the kind of interdisciplinary research that we as scholars so value in science fiction itself—it serves to estrange us from our reality and helps us to appreciate a known object from unknown viewpoints. Servitje and Vint have brought

together researchers from cultural studies (looking at the zombie as a metaphor) and those working in graphic medicine (using visual texts for medical purposes) and have challenged each of them to imagine new perspectives. Composed of nine essays divided into three sections, the collection expressly moves beyond the boundaries of conventional approaches.

The first section, "Diagnosing Zombie Culture," examines and reimagines works of popular graphic literature with an eye toward the discourses of graphic medicine. This is especially fruitful in Gerry Canavan's chapter on "Geriatric Zombies": the medical lens allows Canavan to analyze mass-distributed comic series from DC and Marvel as allegories for treatments of aging, disability, and infirmity. Series such as *Blackgas* (2007), *Blackest Night* (2009-2010), and *Marvel Zombies* (2005-2006) portray characters that shift uncomfortably from normalcy and ability towards a loss of cognitive and bodily control, echoing discourses on "progressive and degenerative conditions that strike the elderly" (18). These new narratives, Canavan shows convincingly, reveal a drastic need for renegotiation of how we treat senescence and disability; they portray zombies with subjectivity struggling with an involuntary loss of humanity. Rounding out the section are two less disease-specific rereadings of the zombie as metaphor: Kari Nixon's "Viral Virulence, Postmodern Zombies, and the American Healthcare Enterprise in the Antibiotic Age" and Tully Barnett and Ben Kooyman's "Dramatizing Medical Ethics through Zombie and Period Fiction Tropes in the New Deadwardians." They discuss zombie fiction as representations of conditions in the healthcare system, in the first instance in regard to access to health care and the virtual indistinction between those infected and those not infected, and in the second instance in regard to critiquing how medical knowledge and access to medicine is based in class divisions.

The second section of the anthology, "Reading the Zombie Metaphor," turns its attention to graphic medicine and approaches these texts through the cultural impact of the zombie figure. Especially interesting and most acutely unusual in regard to methodology is the chapter on "Zombies, Comics and Medical Education" by Michael Green, Daniel George, and Darryl Wilkinson. Because Green is an MD who teaches bioethics to medical students, this chapter lacks a distinct cultural studies approach, but offers a best-practice report about Green's teaching of "Comics and Medicine," a course in which students draw comics of their own challenges in medical education. Green and his colleagues distill several zombie tropes from the self-depictions and storylines drawn by his students and connect them to their experiences, and to the more "dehumanizing aspects of medical education" (100) such as isolation, mindless consumption, herd mentality, and the loss of empathy in the process of becoming an MD.

Also in this second section, Juliet McMullin's essay on "Zombie Toxin" traces the categorial multiplicities of chemicals connected to cancer, either as cure or cause, and their impacts on the conception and representation of life and death in graphic medicine. Sherryl Vint's essay, "Zombies and Public Health in the *28 Days Later* Comic Series," discusses the cultural conflation

of contagion and zombies that the CDC comic *Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic* (2011) has helped to entrench and suggests how indiscriminate violence against zombies can all too easily be applied to “dehumanize victims of virulent outbreaks” (140).

The third part of *The Walking Med* opens up the discourse of zombies and graphic medicine to include a “longer history of the study of visual culture in medicine” (xxi); it includes three essays that push beyond the cultural work of graphic novels and zombies. Sarah Juliet Lauro argues that corpses are “Zombie Objects” (151), linking them via the medical histories of anatomical models to the representation of fictional zombies in the artworks of George Pfau, and revealing their ontological work as non-living subjects. Lorenzo Servitje’s chapter on “Objectivity, Medical Visuality, and Brain Imaging” discusses a novel by Steven Schlozman—*Zombie Pandemic* (2011)—that revisits anatomical drawings and pre-digital knowledge technology via the zombie narrative in order to critique the discourse of neutrality and impartiality involved in digital neuro-imaging. And lastly, Dan Smith discusses the figure of the zombie as a boundary figure in an autobiographical comic, Katie Green’s *Ligher than My Shadow* (2013), about the pathology of and recovery from anorexia.

In all, this collection takes a most innovative and interdisciplinary approach to the very prevalent cultural phenomenon of the zombie. Instead of retracing conventional methodological pathways, the editors have done a remarkable job in guiding their contributors toward new and challenging perspectives on the subject. For anyone wanting a swerve from their own well-trodden paths researching or teaching the zombie, I wholeheartedly recommend a deep and thorough look into this book for inspiration.—**Lars Schmeink, Institut für Kultur-und Medienmanagement, Hamburg**

**Thinking with Science Fiction.** Steven Shaviro. *Discognition*. London: Repeater, 2016. 245 pp. \$14.95 pbk.

At some 60,000 words and 240 small pages, *Discognition* does not look daunting. Like Shaviro’s *Post Cinematic Affect* (2010) and *No Speed Limit* (2015), it is compact and seems almost like a one-afternoon read. The appearances are deceptive, though, since the little volume packs a serious intellectual punch and will leave attentive readers returning to its sections again and again. Erudite but not overbearing and accessible but never simplistic, Steven Shaviro’s latest work may also be one of the more important critical interventions in sf studies of the last few years. Its usefulness will continue to grow with time, and for several reasons.

Summarizing even one chapter, not to mention the whole book, in a short review would be folly, but before I explain the book’s relevance for the field, I want to sketch Shaviro’s main lines of flight. Conceptually, *Discognition* is, in some ways, a companion to the more substantial *Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (2014), in which he maps the complicated terrain of the titular philosophical grouping, in the process proving himself a philosopher in his own right. *The Universe of Things* re-examines the diverse (and frequently