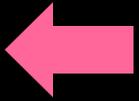
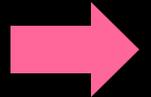


# LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

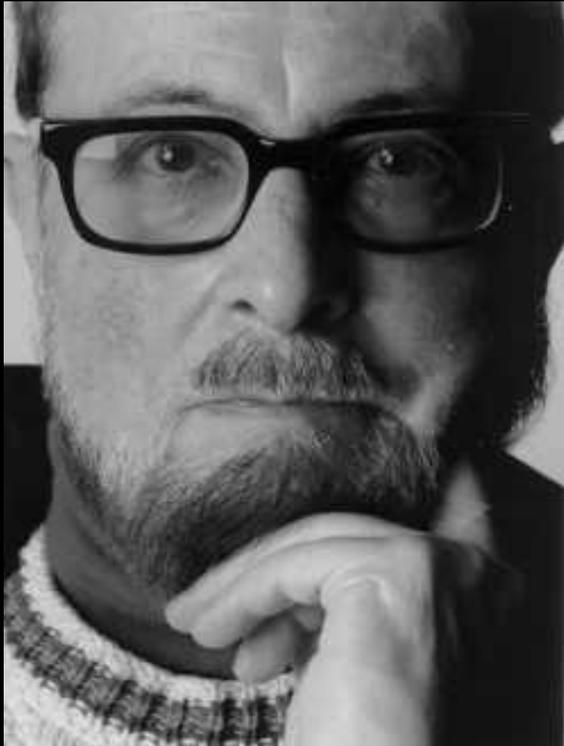


Lanier: Technical Culture and Digital Humanism  
LeGuin, Suvin: SF and the Discipline of Imagination



Informal Project Sharing  
Final Thoughts and Evaluations

# URSULA K. LE GUIN & DARKO SUVIN



1930 -  
cognitive estrangement

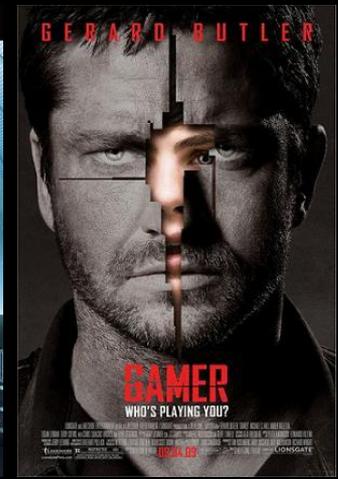


1929-  
imaginative understanding

# SUVIN: SF AND THE CRITICAL IMAGINATION

## SF & “COGNITIVE ESTRANGEMENT”

1. “realist” literature
2. literature of estrangement: myth, folktale, fairytale, fantasy, horror, pastoral, etc.
3. literature of cognitive estrangement: science fiction



# LE GUIN: FANTASY & UNDERSTANDING

## FANTASY, A DISCIPLINE OF IMAGINATION

1. Power of Imagination is innate in human nature
2. Fantasy is one expression, and it has been *repressed*
3. Fantasy is vital and “true” (not factual)
4. Its primary use = to give pleasure and delight
5. Its secondary use = “deepen” understanding of world, humanity, feelings, and individual destiny

“True, but not factual”



# IMAGINATION AS A METHOD

## METHODOS, METHOD

1. Greek: “meta” (after) “hodos” (way or path)  
“pursuit, a following after”; path of inquiry
2. Latin: “methodus”  
a way of teaching or proceeding

## THE “DISCIPLINE” OF IMAGINATION

Schiller, Shelley, Whitman, Hughes, Stevens, LeGuin, Suvin  
ALL argue, in their own way, from their own contexts, that the imagination is not only a central human power, but an essential *METHOD* or technique, a “path” or means of apprehending or understanding the universe through experience, as well as transforming ourselves and our world.

# QUIZ 0: PEDERCINI & MURRAY

# THE TECHNOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

1964



Marshall McLuhan

*Understanding Media*  
media poetics

import. of media

Critical  
Media Literacy



*tech+media matter!*



2014



Jaron Lanier

*Who Owns the Future?*  
political econ. of digital

digital ideals

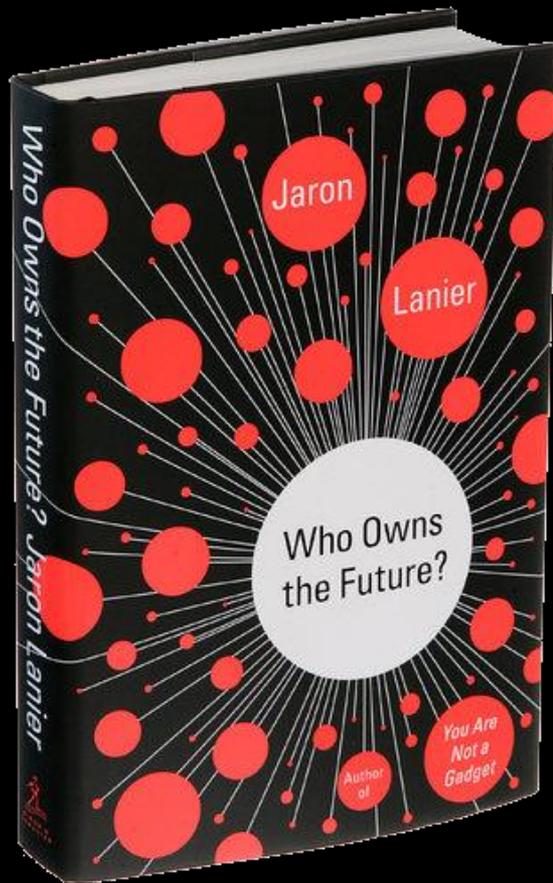
Digital  
Humanism



RETHINK

Meme: LANIER

# LANIER: CHANGE TECHNICAL CULTURE



JARON LANIER, BAN6 CONFERENCE

*"It's really about the hearts and minds of young engineers, of the most talented ones. It's really about the quality of "nerdiness" in our world, and what it means. That becomes this huge driver for what the future looks like."*

Art & aesth. ed. vs. the non-consensual power of Technology (esp. digital systems)

# A WORKING PREMISE

Digital games and game culture generally constitute  
a vital organ of cognitive and cultural evolution  
in networked societies

BUT...



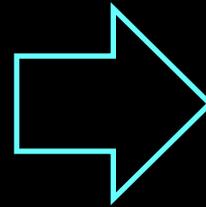
# FROM LITERACY TO CRITICAL DESIGN

MCLUHAN



ALL MEDIA

Human to Media Ecology  
Media literacy / agency



PEDERCINI



VIDEOGAMES

Media to Political Econ.  
Critical design / subversion

# PEDERCINI: COMPUTERS & CAPITALISM

COMPUTER GAMES ARE  
THE AESTHETIC FORM OF  
RATIONALIZATION

Dominant Technology

computer (rationalization of information)

Dominant Social Structure

corporate capitalism (“rationalization” of labor)

# THE PROBLEM(S) OF VIDEOGAMES

## FORCES INFLUENCING ART OF VIDEOGAMES

1. “Actionism” / dominant game design practices
2. Tendencies of the computer medium  
(calculation, quantification, economization, etc.)
3. Social context: consumerism / corporate capitalism

## PEDERCINI: AN ART OF GAMES AS RESISTANCE

The *forces above conspire to LIMIT videogames* to being merely the “aesthetic form of rationalization.” “Good game design” becomes merely an extension or aestheticized form of the given political economy (cf. McLuhan, Lanier)

# GAMES & AESTHETIC EDUCATION

“Games are to be call’ d for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of playing is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast’ s struggle; that the player is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the experience—the game furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work. Not the game needs so much to be the complete thing, but the player of the game does. That were to make a nation of supple and athletic minds, well-train’ d, intuitive, used to depend on themselves, and not on popular conventions.”

-adapted from Walt Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas* (1871)

# VIDEOGAMES AS EXPERIENCE ENGINES

The metaphor of *experience engine* is true for all play devices, but videogames put play in a *cybernetic* context in which the aesthetic experience of responsive computer-simulation approaches the meaning of a literal engine which not only enables but propels and generates new “virtual” experiences

Cf. Murray on “Joint Attentional Scenes”

Games as *evolution accelerators* (particularly of MIND)  
for self-organizing / regulating animals such as human beings

# MURRAY: GAMES AS PRODUCTIVE LIMITATIONS

“What do games offer in return for limiting the exploratory delights of play?”

1. An understanding of the self both as an agent and an object within a community of other intentional agents/objects (reflection technology)
2. The ability to shift perspective from one's own point of view to the point of view of others, to imagine what someone else is thinking, and to see oneself from the point of view of the other (empathy technology)
3. The ability to intentionally teach and learn, which is the foundation of all human cultural development. (education technology)

# MURRAY: CO-EVOLUTION, MERLIN DONALD

1. Episodic culture – sociality & tool use
2. Mimetic culture – symbolic comm. & tool-making
3. Mythic culture – language, ritual, art, narrative
4. Theoretical culture – science, info & memory techs

joint attention  
mimesis  
ritual

language  
narrative  
myth

writing  
argumentation  
theory

# MURRAY: GAMES AS PRODUCTIVE LIMITATIONS

“What do games offer in return for limiting the exploratory delights of play?”

1. An understanding of the self both as an agent and an object within a community of other intentional agents/objects (*reflection technology*)
2. The occasion to *TRY* to shift perspective from one's own point of view to the point of view of others, to imagine what someone else is thinking, and to attempt to see oneself from the point of view of the other (*empathy technology*)
3. A process of intentional, affective teaching and learning, which is the foundation of all human cultural development. (*education technology*)