Book Review: Sandy Torres, Travels in Time, in Fiction and in Science

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rhythmanalysis urges us towards a more cadenced understanding of the worlds, whichever worlds, we choose to investigate.

Lefebvre's is never a naïve analysis of rhythms, of course. The Marxist roots of his analysis are rarely far from the surface, he never loses sight of how everyday rhythms are produced elsewhere as well as here, by what is not obviously present (though embedded in architecture, in space), by the structuring rhythms of the state and capital. For Lefebvre, humans are produced both by 'natural' rhythms of respiration and the heart and the 'social' rhythms of contemporary cultural processes. These rhythms converge on the body, in 'the everyday'. 'The everyday is simultaneously the site of, the theatre for, and what is at stake in a conflict between great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat' (p. 73).

Overall, this is a welcome addition to Lefebvre's work available in English. As the most comprehensive translation of his studies of time and rhythm so far, it will be of very wide interest. Yes, Lefebvre's writing can be infuriatingly hard to follow, and repays substantial effort, concentration and revisiting. But this work on time is remarkably transdisciplinary and, correspondingly, there is something here for anyone interested in time, irrespective of disciplinary perspective. Whoever we are, *Rhythmanalysis* will enrich our theoretical and empirical investigations of time.

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Sandy Torres, Travels in Time, in Fiction and in Science. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004. ISBN 2–7637–8069–5.

According to a recent poll in The *Guardian* (htpp://film.guardian.co.uk) scientists' favourite science-fiction (SF) films are, in order, *Blade Runner*, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the trilogy of *Star Wars*. Magnetic Tarkovski's *Solaris* and other famous movies follow in the list. The reasons of this choice, according to physicists and biologists, must be found in the way these films use science as an integral part of their narrative, making difficult concepts understandable and helping new theories to penetrate common people's imagination and language. This is also the idea of sociologist Sandy Torres, who researched science-fiction films, focusing on time.

'Science-fiction films and the knowledge of time' form the central focus of this compelling book which examines and analyses more than 150 films, with the author undertaking more than a quarter of this work. The first part of the volume deals with the most relevant ideas of time in philosophy, in physics, in sociology, in narratology, discussing ancient sources, classical metaphors of time and the contemporary state-of-the-art. While there are some significant omissions, such as details of the work of J. T. Fraser and Paul Davis, the author provides a clear engagement with competing definitions in this huge and interdisciplinary field.

After facing the definitions of SF films genre (including social and speculative fiction), Torres enters the core of her study: how time manipulations are presented in SF movies and how they cooperate to build a diffused time culture. Later on in the survey it becomes evident that the key theme of the book is the time travel. In the central chapter of the book 'Jeux avec le temps', Torres catalogues a series of SF movies according to the different motivations and modalities of time travel, advancing the following classification: providential, initiatory, heroic, cathartic, and regenerative – a modality producing paradoxes and loops. Films categorized include *The Time Machine*, *Back to the Future*, *Highlander*, *Terminator* and *Planet of the Apes*, but the analysis extends beyond the SF genre including, for example, *Peggy Sue Got Married*, where the main character travels in the past.

While there are different ways to deal with narrative manipulations of time, many *mises-en-scène des temporalités*, a linear sequential approach mirroring spatial navigation dominates the book in order to avoid issues of temporal reversibility. The cultural humus of all these travels must be found in the assimilation of scientific thought. Einstein's theory of relativity ('a fourni le cadre scientifique le plus prolifique aux manipulations du temps') dominates, while quantum theory has a minor influence. Following 'frame by frame' the evolution of time travels (with their technical devices and narrative structures) in films from the beginning of 1960s up to the 1990s, the book suggests that one can deduce from them both the current time consciousness of a society and emergent changes. Capturing from scientific theories those aspects that can express people's imagination about time, SF films deeply entwine science and society through fiction. SF films transpose scientific knowledge into fictional experience that permeates consciousness, via the viewing process, with the gleam of new temporal arrangements. They not only popularize difficult theories (as scientists have admitted), but they change to some extent the meaning of theories themselves, moulding them according to the public's awareness and expectations about time. Altogether, SF films are a collective repository of time knowledge, time representations and time experience, from which one can draw plenty of clues and indications. Torres's book also contains the nucleus of a printed relational data base (films are classified by different keys), that could be set on-line to the benefit of many interested people, who could add examples and update it in *real time*, playing with the categories of time travel.

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