
ANG1750

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

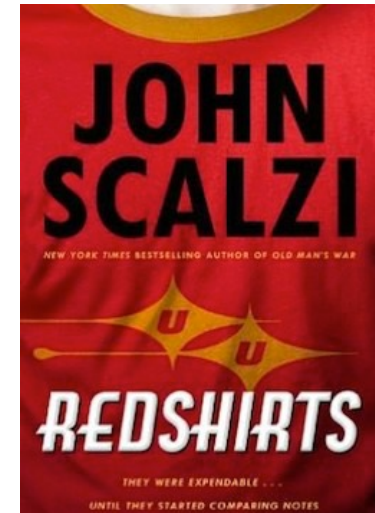
WEEK 10

▶ Redshirts

Winter 2021

Dr Michael E. Sinatra

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- ▶ Published in 2012
 - ▶ Winner of the 2013 Hugo Award for Best novel, and the Locus Award for Best Science Fiction Award



... THE MEDIUM'S EMPHASIS ON VISIBLE ACTION, ITS TIME CONSTRAINTS, AND ITS ALLEGIANCE TO HIGHLY DRAMATIC EFFECTS REQUIRE A TIGHTLY PLOTTED STORYLINE. THE MORE ACTION ONE SQUEEZES INTO A LIMITED TEMPORAL FRAME, THE GREATER THE NEED FOR LOGICAL (I.E. CAUSAL OR MOTIVATIONAL) CONNECTIONS, BUT ALSO THE GREATER THE PROBABILITY THAT SOME OF THESE CONNECTIONS WILL BE OVERLOOKED BY THE SCRIPTWRITER.

Marie-Laure Ryan, "Cheap Plot Tricks, Plot Holes and Narrative Design" 66

WE WANT OUR STORIES TO BE TRUE TO LIFE, IN THE SENSE THAT THEY SHOULD RECORD THE EFFORTS OF HUMANS TO ADJUST TO THE GENUINE RANDOMNESS OF DESTINY, BUT WE ALSO WANT THEM TO DISPLAY THE PURPOSEFULNESS OF NARRATIVE FORM, WHICH DENIES RANDOMNESS. THE OBVIOUSLY CALCULATED PSEUDO-RANDOMNESS OF [CHEAP PLOT TWISTS] AND THE INADVERTENT INCONSISTENCIES OF [PLOT HOLES] GUARANTEE NARRATIVE FORM AND TELLABILITY AT THE EXPENSE OF CREDIBILITY [...] THE PURSUIT OF NARRATIVE EXCITEMENT AT ALL COSTS LEADS TO A DEPENDENCY ON [CHEAP PLOT TWISTS].

Marie-Laure Ryan, "Cheap Plot Tricks, Plot Holes and Narrative Design" 72

**A BELIEF THAT HUMANITY WILL HAVE OVERCOME
RACIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PREJUDICES”**

**Patricia Vettel-Becker, “Space and the Single Girl:
Star Trek, Aesthetics, and 1960s Femininity” 144**

**RODDENBERRY’S FIRST PILOT FOR THE SERIES,
INCLUDED A FEMALE FIRST OFFICER AND NUMEROUS
FEMALE GUEST STARS PLAY[ED] ROLES FROM
AMBASSADORS, QUEENS, AND PRIESTESSES TO
SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS AND COMMANDERS.**

**Patricia Vettel-Becker, “Space and the Single Girl:
Star Trek, Aesthetics, and 1960s Femininity” 144**

**YOU DO WRITE BAD SCIENCE INTO THE SHOW. ALL THE
TIME. (167)**

**LOOKS LIKE A MICROWAVE, DINGS WHEN IT’S DONE
AND OUTPUTS COMPLETE NONSENSE. (63)**

**COMEDY AND SCI-FI HAVE A SHAKY
RELATIONSHIP. SCIENCE FICTION WAS ALLOWED
SOME COMEDY RELIEF, OFTEN IN THE FORM OF A
ROBOT, BUT FOR THE MOST PART, IT TOOK ITSELF
SERIOUSLY.**

John Scalzi, Rough Guide to Science Fiction, 185

**“THE FACT THAT PEOPLE DIE AROUND THESE OFFICERS
IS SO CLEAR AND OBVIOUS,” LIEUTENANT COLLINS
EXPLAINS, “THAT EVERYONE NATURALLY AVOIDS
THEM.” (61)**

**“FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW, YOU’RE WRITING
FICTION. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THOUGH, IT’S
REAL” (196)**

**“IT’S KIND OF A COINCIDENCE, THE TWO OF US BEING
HERE LIKE THIS” (314)**

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- What is this novel really about?
 - An alternative universe story (the “What if” scenario)?
 - A realistic portrayal of the future? (cf. “Energy cost money”)
 - A parody of a SF television show? (cf. name of the ship: UUCS Intrepid and the original Star Trek series’ USS Intrepid - NCC-1631)
 - Humour as key element of the story (cf. Prologue)

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- A good television show?
 - “It doesn’t bother you that a science lab has a magic box in it?” (chap. 5, 54) – cf. Arthur C. Clarke’s comment that “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”

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- Structure of the novel
 - Metafiction and postmodern characteristics (cf. direct references to Star Trek by Jenkins and Abnett’s explanation of the Redshirts chap. 16, 153])
 - What about the characters’ running commentary? (cf. chap. 7, 78)
 - Positive vision of a racially-acceptable future shaped by Star Trek’s creator Gene Roddenberry

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- On the question of agency and free will (cf. Dahl’s comment “I don’t care whether I really exist or don’t, whether I’m real or fictional. What I want right now is to be the person who decides my own fate” [167])
 - What about Dahl’s comment to Hanson at the end of the novel? (cf. “I’m an extra on the show ... I’m the protagonist somewhere else” [227])
 - What about the final two chapters?

BECAUSE WHETHER FICTIONAL OR NOT, ON A SPACESHIP, A TELEVISION SHOW OR IN SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY, HE STILL HAD WORK TO DO, SURROUNDED BY HIS FRIENDS AND THE CREW OF THE INTREPID. AND THAT'S JUST WHAT HE DID, UNTIL THE DAY SIX MONTHS LATER WHEN A SYSTEMS FAILURE CAUSED THE INTREPID TO PLOW INTO A SMALL ASTEROID, VAPORIZING THE SHIP AND KILLING EVERYONE ON BOARD INSTANTLY. (222)

NO, NO, I'M JUST FUCKING WITH YOU. THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER. SERIOUSLY. (224)

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- What does this say about authorial perspective and omniscient narrator?
 - What about the Codas?
 - What about the parodic elements in Black Mirror "USS Callister"?