reactionary. His analyses of Moorcock's *The Warlord of the Air,* K. W. Jeter's *Morlock Night* (1979), James Blaylock's *The Adventures of Langdon St. Ives* (2008), and Tim Powers's *The Anubis Gates* (1983) argue that claims for an essential political radicalism in steampunk are overstated. Indeed, steampunk should reject such essentialism, Perschon writes.

In "Punking the Other: On the Performance of Racial and National Identities in Steampunk," Diana M. Pho employs Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* to critique steampunk as an appropriative phenomenon, one of surface-level bricolage, and demands a postcolonial reappraisal of the racism in its spin-offs, notably cosplay and "chap-hop" (pseudo-Victorian hip hop). Pho examines the frictions arising from camp mockery of colonial Britishness that, she asserts, is not free of "genuinely mourning its former splendor" (130) or gentlemanly twits who appropriate African-American experience and strip it of its historical and cultural context to render a cozy British village green parody.

All of this makes asking "why steampunk" problematic. It is also a question that all pop-cultural subcultures struggle to answer sufficiently or distinctly after their first wave. They become decadent. While *Like Clockwork* provides essential information for steampunk practitioners, it also demonstrates that a subculture so inherently nostalgic struggles more than others to assert its vital identity. Bruce Sterling's tweet returns to us: if steampunk is to endure as more than a grab bag of Victoriana for certain sf fans, more than the conforming codes of cosplay, it must remember what it is nostalgic for.

Taking Sf B-Movies Seriously. Steffen Hantke. *Monsters in the Machine: Science Fiction Film and the Militarization of America after World War II*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016. 234 pp. ISBN 978-1-49-680565-2. $60 hc.

Reviewed by Sean Guynes

Giant mutated ants, fifty-foot women, and laughable special effects hardly seem the refuge of sustained, serious cultural criticism. But, as Steffen Hantke demonstrates in his new book, *Monsters in the Machine*, the sf B-movies produced in the United States during the 1950s provide a complex and extensive archive of the intersections between popular culture and an array of formal, generic, historical, cultural, and political discourses in the postwar period. To organize his analysis, Hantke divides the book into four thematic chapters—on military stock footage, veterans, the Southwest, and decolonization—that

unfold chronologically and focus on one or two films. As the subtitle suggests, Hantke explores sf cinema's investment in American military power in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Korean War, foregrounding the ways they signaled and contested the military-industrial complex throughout the Eisenhower years. It is the emphasis on the military, and especially on military applications of science, Hantke argues, that differentiates sf films from the period's horror and monster flicks.

At the core of *Monsters in the Machine* is the argument "that science fiction films from the 1950s are a belated response to the national trauma of World War II and the Korean War projected onto the unsettling experience of the Cold War" (44). While sf B-movies appeared in the first decade of the Cold War and dealt with prevailing anxieties about nuclear annihilation and communist subversion, like much of the decade's cultural production, they were unable to imagine the realities of nuclear war and thus relied on heroic narratives featuring conventional weapons and tactics. The Cold War anxieties of these films cannot be denied, of course, but through historical readings of a handful of films, Hantke shows how postwar sf B-movies revealed the contradictions of Cold War ideologies even as they sought to solicit audience support for the military-industrial complex.

Chapter 1 addresses a major aesthetic "problem" with the B-movie: its reliance on military stock footage when production budgets prohibited renting military equipment or the Pentagon was unco-operative. Chapter 2 examines fears about the place of returning veterans in a demobilized postwar society. While the former performs a compelling ideological critique and rethinking of the aesthetic, generic and political stakes of stock footage in *Invasion U.S.A.* (1952), the latter makes significant claims on the social and gender dynamics of the veteran and his discursive life in postwar society, encompassing films like *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958) and television series such as *The Twilight Zone* (1959–1964) in which veterans (and their families or communities) are replaced or controlled by aliens seeking to infiltrate the US. These films deal primarily with the "precariousness of [veterans'] social embeddedness" in daily American life (115). Moreover, Hantke convincingly avers that, in contrast to realist or "social problem" films, "science fiction comes with the hyperbole, the barely contained emotional excess, to express with a greater degree of urgency public anxiety over the veterans' destabilizing presence" and thus "challenge[d] the reassurances of the uniformity and solidity of the 1950s social consensus" (116).

The second half of the book explores discourses of Cold War domestic and foreign policy (occasionally seeming to forget the initial argument of

the introduction). The third chapter is the weakest, but also provocative for Americanists. Hantke contends that the landscape of the American Southwest, familiar from Westerns, took on new significance after the development of the interstate highway system and through the military's appropriation of the desert for nuclear tests. Predictably, mutated monsters and alien invaders soon inhabited the Southwest, as depicted in, among others, *Them!* (1954). Hantke argues that sf replaced the Western as the genre centered around conquering the frontier and forging heroic American masculinity through violence (even suggesting that by co-opting the Western's role in American culture, sf may have helped exacerbate the genre's decline). Since the 1950s marked the Western's golden age, this is an exaggeration. Still, Hantke's notion that sf's Southwest is the American West overwritten by the military-industrial complex recognizes something essential about the American frontier and its symbolism in the Cold War era. The subversion of the Western in films like *Them!* in fact gestures toward an embrace of the Cold War and trades the lone cowboy-hero narrative of the Western for one of military science's ultimate perseverance.

The final chapter on decolonization raises questions by reading George Pal's *The Time Machine* (1960) in the context not of Cold War containment culture, but of what Christina Klein dubs the global imaginary of integration in *Cold War Orientalism* (2003). However, Hantke spends so much time contextualizing material that he does not engage the ideological implications of an integrationist reading other than to suggest that it falsely closes the "gap" between American self and colonized other. He emphasizes how geopolitical strategies of the 1960s began to shift away from those of the immediate postwar years, but he misses the chance to bring the final chapter and the book's thesis together by tying it to the discussion of demobilization in sf B-movies—namely *The Cult of the Cobra* (1955)—that appears earlier in the book.

Monsters in the Machine is, on the whole, a needed look at the way popular culture interpellates and recruits individuals into ideological formations, particularly apparent here in the establishment of the discourses that will predominate in US cultural politics throughout the latter half of the century (although Hantke is careful to point out the viability of the counter readings these texts beckon). This book's focus on the most popular and seemingly least "political" form of sf is important to understanding the relationship between popular culture and American cultural politics as well as between sf in itself and political history. Hantke sees the two as deeply intertwined, one a key site for shaping the other on account of its significant popularity

and extensive circulation in the 1950s. In terms of readership, *Monsters in the Machine* offers something to the sf scholar, popular culture historian, film critic, and Americanist alike.

Inaugurating Nineteenth-Century Digital Humanities through the Clockwork. Roger Whitson. *Steampunk and Nineteenth Century Digital Humanities: Literary Retrofuturism, Media Archaeologies, Alternative Histories*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. 229 pp. ISBN 978-1-13-885950-0. $140 hc.

Reviewed by Jonathan P. Lewis

In this contribution to the growing pool of scholarship on steampunk, Roger Whitson examines how steampunk arts, media, fandoms, and makers can benefit from the study of nineteenth-century cultures through digital humanities. It is a worthy addition to ongoing dialogue by joining the two sets of practices.

Whitson sets two goals: first, to look at the nineteenth century as both a historical period and a digital system whose various cultural practices are currently being played with by a variety of artists, scholars, and other makers; second, to see steampunk not simply as an aesthetic, but as a vehicle for contemporary expressions through nineteenth-century technologies, storytelling devices, fashions, etc. He is largely successful in realizing these goals.

The book is divided into five chapters covering historicism and time, postcolonialism and intersectionality, eco-criticism and the Anthropocene, Marxism and labor, and queer theory and sexuality. The chapters on eco-criticism and labor are especially useful. Those on historicism, postcolonialism, and the conclusion, on the other hand, could offer a stronger sense of the ongoing criticisms of empire in digital humanities and steampunk studies. For literary critics, Whitson makes broad connections between the works of William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Ken Liu, Neal Stephenson, and China Miéville, particularly Liu's "silkpunk" novel *The Grace of Kings* (2016). Of female steampunk novelists, however, few names beyond Cherie Priest's make an appearance, and he offers no extended readings of Priest's *Boneshaker* (2009) or other texts by women. Issues of gender in steampunk and nineteenth-century studies are primarily relegated to an examination of fandoms in Chapter 5, where Whitson invokes such creators and critics as Jaymee Goh, Emma Goldman, Diana Pho, Ashley Rogers, Dino Felluga, and Lisa Hager.

Chapter 1 begins with a sharp analysis of Gibson and Sterling's *The Difference Engine* (1991) for the ways in which it "warps" the historicity of