

Disruptive Imaginations (Dresden, Aug 23)

TU Dresden

Deadline: Mar 1, 2023

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This conference will merge the annual meetings of the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) and the German Association for Research in the Fantastic (GfF). With some overlap in membership and a shared interest and mission, we believe that a joint conference offers great potential for dynamic exchange, constructive discussions, and new insights and perspectives. This expanded focus on SFF allows for a consideration of a wide range of genres and forms that include science fiction, fantasy, horror, and the weird. For more information on the respective associations, please see below. We are excited to welcome you all to Dresden in August 2023!

Science fiction and the fantastic (SFF) have the power to disrupt entrenched narratives and world-making practices. Whether in the form of hard science fiction, utopian speculation, high fantasy or supernatural horror, SFF is fundamentally anchored in imaginations of disruption—a tear in the fabric of reality, an estrangement of the senses, a break with the known world, or a transgression of boundaries. The conference theme “Disruptive Imaginations” invites participants to engage with disruption as a variegated paradigm of the SFF imagination. As a mode of disturbance or interruption, a disruption implies that habitual patterns of perceiving, inhabiting, and ordering the world are unsettled, giving way to uncertainty and the unknown. It can occur at scales that range from the micrological to the cosmic. At the precarious threshold between chaos and order, a disruption carries the potential for transformative system change and can produce a shift in hegemonic articulations of ‘the im/possible.’ Fredric Jameson famously invokes disruption as the fundamental discursive strategy of political utopia, which only “by forcing us to think the break itself” enables the imagination of worlds otherwise. What would it mean to think disruption “as restructuration and the unexpected blasting open of habits, as that lateral side-door which suddenly opens onto a new world of transformed human beings.” [\[1\]](#) Disruption has been championed as a strategy of intervention across the political spectrum and impels a careful examination of questions of agency and power (relations). Who or what has the power to disrupt and whose experiences of disruption are acknowledged while others remain suppressed or invisible? In the face of a lingering pandemic, looming threats of nuclear warfare, global heating, environmental racism, and extractive capitalism, how can imagination offer a counterforce to the disruption of lifeworlds?

“Disruptive Imaginations” seeks to confront SFF narratives of innovation, progress, and other-worlding with the faultlines of their own construction. Envisioned in part as a critical response to neoliberal models of disruptive innovation, “Disruptive Imaginations” invites scholarship and creative work that interrogates methods of both local and larger systemic change that does not fetishize newness, and that anchors in the critical world-making capacities of literature and the arts. As a literary and artistic mode, SFF ceaselessly rehearses alternatives and dishabituations of

the status quo while also creating spaces that expose and resist the disruptive forces of white supremacy, settler-colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and ableism. Beyond the promises of a technological fix or a naive return to equilibrium, how might SFF help foster an understanding of complex and messy worlds in crisis? What are the limits of disruption as a useful story to think worlds with, and what collateral damage does it entail? What kinds of different paradigms (speculative and otherwise) may be needed to disrupt disruption?

We invite papers on all forms and genres of science fiction and the fantastic in relation to the paradigm of disruption, including but not limited to literature, music, film, games, design, and art. Presentations may be held either in English or German. We strive for a diversity of voices and perspectives from any and all disciplines and career stages. While papers on any subject in SFF are welcome, we especially encourage topics that resonate with the overall conference theme and that engage disruptive imaginations along axes that include but are not limited to

SFF imagination under conditions of disruption e.g., energy crisis; toxicity; climate disruption; war; colonialism; dis/ability and ableism; trauma; white supremacy; ...

SFF imagination against disruption e.g., resilience; worldmaking; utopia; decolonization and restitution; cultural healing; kinship; critical and co-futurisms (African and Afro-futurisms, Indigenous Futurisms, Queer and Trans Futurisms, Crip Futurisms, LatinX Futurisms, ...); ...

SFF imagination in need of disruption e.g., SFF and systems of oppression; the energy unconscious of SFF; transhumanism and eugenics; SFF tropes/histories/conventions of white supremacy, colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and technological solutionism; ...

SFF imagination as a force of disruption e.g., SFF in/as activism; emancipatory forms of SFF publishing (e.g., Destroy! Series); the cultural/bodily/social/political/aesthetic/ecological impact of SFF;

SFF as medium of political subversion and agitation; alt-right utilization of SFF rhetoric; ...

SFF imagination of disruption e.g., ruptures of space and time; geoengineering; gene editing; hacking; revolution; border crossings, unsettling of hierarchies, chimeras and hybrids, creative technologies and alternative communication media; ...

It is possible to submit proposals for individual presentations and preformed panels in English or German. Non-traditional formats (roundtable, artistic research, participatory formats, etc.) are welcome. For individual presentation, we ask for an abstract of 300 words and a short bio (150 words). For preformed panels we require a proposal (single file) that includes a 300 word summary of the panel topic, abstracts of 200 words for each contribution, and bio notes (150 words) for all participants. Please send all submissions by March 1, 2023 to disruptive.imaginations@tu-dresden.de. Options for limited hybrid participation will be available. More information will be supplied soon on our conference website. Both organizations give out a limited number of travel grants to help students, PhD candidates and non-tenured participants with their expenses: SFRA members are eligible to apply for travel grants of up to 500\$; the GfF offers four travel grants of 250€ each, membership not required. Please indicate your interest upon submitting your abstract.

[1] Fredric Jameson. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*.

Verso, 2005. 232.

Reference:

CFP: Disruptive Imaginations (Dresden, Aug 23). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 12, 2022 (accessed Oct 23, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/38140>>.