

AMAZING FUTURE TALES

CONVERGENCE
SERIES:
SCIENCE
FICTION/FUTURES

Mick Ryan
Ksenia Ivanova
Will Slocombe
Nick Agar

More food for thought inside!





CONVERGENCE SERIES

SCIENCE FICTION/FUTURES: HOW SCIENCE FICTION CAN INFLUENCE STRATEGIC THINKING AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Join a diverse group of thinkers including Defence personnel and strategists, scientists, engineers, educators, futurists, creative writers, and filmmakers to discuss the role of science fiction in imagining possible futures and responses.

REGISTER TO ATTEND

DATE: Monday 20 September 2021

TIME: 5:30pm for 6:00pm start

WHERE: The Rob Roy Hotel
106 Halifax Street

Greetings everyone and thank you for attending our Science Fiction/Futures Convergence Series event!

Thank you to our amazing panellists and participants for what was a thought-provoking evening. We hope you all met some new people and sparked some new conversations, and that this reading list proves to be a useful resource to continue your thinking on this topic.

My team and I are already thinking about how to incorporate narrative and futures thinking into our own work, and I look forward to sharing our experiences with you at future sessions (and there will be future sessions!).



I mentioned in my introduction to the event that MAJGEN Mick Ryan was involved with a very exciting book entitled [To Boldly Go: Leadership, Strategy, and Conflict in the 21st Century and Beyond](#) which “draws out the lessons that we can learn from science fiction, drawing on classic examples of the genre in ways that are equally relatable and entertaining.” This book is now available, and I can’t wait to read it.

The enthusiasm and creativity I’ve already seen from the Science Fiction/Futures Convergence Series community has been so inspiring, and I’m very much looking forward to deeper discussions around some of the more specific issues and questions you’ve raised. Please reach out if you have any feedback or ideas (or books, or movies, or TV shows) you’d like to discuss.

Finally, I feel it’s only fair that I add something to this reading list since our panellists have been so generous with their time and thoughts. For their powerful and prescient commentary on impacts of climate change and social justice issues, I cannot recommend highly enough the [Parable of the Sower](#) and its sequel [Parable of the Talents](#) by the incomparable Octavia Butler.

Until we meet again... happy reading!

Sumen Rai
Director, Defence Innovation Partnership

October 2021

MAJGEN MICK RYAN

Commander, Australian Defence College

taken from

[Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep](#) Philip K. Dick

[Defence of Duffer's Drift](#) Ernest Swinton

[The Lathe of Heaven](#) Ursula K. Le Guin

[The Martian Chronicles](#) Ray Bradbury

[The War of the Worlds](#) H.G. Wells

[Forever War](#) Joe Haldeman

[Tactics of Mistake](#) Gordon R. Dickson

[The Last Good Man](#) Linda Nagata

[Old Man's War](#) John Scalzi

[Ghost Fleet](#) P.W. Singer and August Cole

MILITARY-FOCUSED

[Hammer's Slammers](#), [Redliners](#) David Drake

[The Red Trilogy](#) Linda Nagata

[The Ghost Brigades](#), [The End of All Things](#), and [Fuzzy Nation](#) John Scalzi

[Use of Weapons](#) Iain M Banks

[All You Need is Kill](#) Hiroshi Sakurazaka

[War of Honor](#) David Weber

[Starship Troopers](#) Robert Heinlein

SOCIAL-FOCUSED

[The Shore of Women](#) Pamela Sargent

[Foundation \(series\)](#) & [I, Robot](#) Isaac Asimov

[God's War](#) Kameron Hurley

[The Peripheral](#) William Gibson

[And Chaos Died](#) Joanna Russ

[Dune](#) Frank Herbert

[The Stand](#) Stephen King

[I Am Legend](#) Richard Matheson

[Murderbot \(series\)](#) Martha Wells

[Fahrenheit 451](#) Ray Bradbury

[Mars](#) trilogy, [Wild Shore Triptych](#) Kim Stanley Robinson



[Red Rising](#) trilogy Pierce Brown

[Moonwar](#) Ben Bova

[Stranger in a Strange Land](#) Robert Heinlein

MIND-EXPANDING

[Remembrance of Earth's Past \(地球往事\)](#) trilogy Liu Cixin

[A Canticle for Leibowitz](#) Walter M. Miller, Jr.

[The Killing Moon](#), [The Inheritance](#) trilogy, [Broken Earth](#) trilogy N.K. Jemisin

[The Martian](#), [Artemis](#) Andy Weir

[Solaris](#) Stanisław Lem

[Sevneves](#) Neil Stephenson

[Voyage](#), [Long Earth](#) series Stephen Baxter

[Leviathan Wakes](#) James S.A. Corey

[Provenance](#) Ann Leckie

MS KSENIA IVANOVA

Operations Research Analyst, Defence Science and Technology Group

[Beggars in Spain](#) (1993) by Nancy Kress is a classic 'what-if' novel, looking at social consequences of a relatively minor genetic modification to enhance human performance.

Stanisław Lem's essays (and semi-fictional works) on technological development, especially [Weapon Systems of the Twenty First Century or The Upside-down Evolution](#) (1987) which makes projections for military and strategic use of miniaturisation and swarming technology.

[Rainbows End](#) (2006) by Vernor Vinge – describes a world with convergence of multiple technologies (AI, augmented and virtual reality, autonomous systems) in the context of ever-increasing pace of technological innovation. This novel is particularly interesting from the Defence perspective as it describes a new security paradigm aimed at dealing with protean threats with far-reaching consequences and spanning across physical, psychological, and cyber domains.

PROFESSOR NICK AGAR

Distinguished Visiting Professor, Carnegie Mellon University & Adjunct Professor, UniSA Creative

One is Liu Cixin's already classic [Three Body Problem](#) trilogy. It's a hard sci-fi romp through a bewildering host of future possibilities. There doesn't seem to be a limit to where Liu Cixin is prepared to follow his imagination. If we tried to treat sci-fi as a forecast I'd be quite confident that there's almost nothing in *Three Body Problem* that will come to pass.

Kim Stanley Robinson's [The Ministry for the Future](#) offers a plausible account of the near future of the climate crisis. It starts with an excruciating description of a heat wave that kills 20 million people in India and describes how policymakers are forced to take action on the climate rather than treating it as a "some scientists say yes but other scientists say no" event.

DR WILL SLOCOMBE

Senior Lecturer in English & Co-Director of the Olaf Stapledon Centre for Speculative Futures, University of Liverpool

Paolo Bacigalupi, [The Water Knife](#) (2015) and [The Windup Girl](#) (2009) – both texts are excellent at imagining new environmental and social contexts to enable us to think about how our attitudes and commonly held assumptions might not necessarily hold true in the near future. His *Ship Breaker* trilogy is also highly recommended for the same reason.

Iain M. Banks, [Consider Phlebas](#) (1987) – a far-future space opera containing outlandish technologies, but at its heart a study of how an outsider fits into a larger war effort, and which is in fact the 'right side' to be on. There's also a

clever historical reference to war and some representations of futures work contained within the book, but I won't reveal any more on that.

Brad Bird, dir. [Tomorrowland](#) (2015) – a Disney film might seem like an odd choice, but it contains one of the most succinct 'futures' lines I have ever heard: "The future looked different back then". It also considers how individuals and society need agency to build better futures, rather than being locked into systems and assumptions.

Ursula Le Guin, [The Dispossessed](#) (1974) – an interesting New Wave take on state control, and the politics of state-actors, written as a response to Le Guin's feelings about the Vietnam conflict.

Kim Stanley Robinson, [The Ministry for the Future](#) (2020) – a really interesting consideration of large-scale events and engineering challenges concerned with climate futures, and how political organisations might intervene in them.

Joanna Russ, [The Female Man](#) (1975) – using the notion of different realities colliding, Russ explores how social conditions change (and don't change) due to the impact of technologies. Perhaps most importantly for 'futures thinking' it asks how a given idea can translate over time, as if the book can still be 'understood' when it is read then not enough has changed, and it is only when it would make little sense that the world has changed enough for the better.

Selected works and contributions by Dr Will Slocombe

There will be a podcast on visualising the future of war, conflict, and threat, and using speculative fictions to think about it, on the Visualizing War website, available from early November ([Podcasts | Visualising War \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](#)), featuring Will Slocombe, Emily Spiers, and Lt Col Matthew Brown.

Slocombe, Will, and Louise Dennis. 'Enforcing Machine Ethics: Considering Governor Modules through Martha Wells's Murderbot Diaries'. In Dainton, Barry, Will Slocombe, and Attila Tanyi. Eds. *Minding the Future: Artificial Intelligence, Philosophical Visions and Science Fiction*. Springer, 'Science and Fiction' series, September 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64269-3_4

Slocombe, Will. 'Militaries plunder science fiction for technology ideas, but turn a blind eye to the genre's social commentary'. *The Conversation*. 26 July 2021. <https://theconversation.com/militaries-plunder-science-fiction-for->

[technology-ideas-but-turn-a-blind-eye-to-the-genres-social-commentary-164978](#)

Lively, Genevieve, Will Slocombe, and Emily Spiers. 'Futures Literacy through Narrative'. *Futures: The journal of policy, planning and futures studies*. 125 (2021): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2020.102663>

Slocombe, Will. 'Playing Games with Technology: Fictions of Science in the Civilization Series'. *Osiris: A Research Journal Devoted to the History of Science and Its Cultural Influences*. 34 (2019): 158-174.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/703828> [A few tech dev people have started thinking about some interesting modelling exercises in response to this piece...]

Slocombe, Will. 'Robots, aliens, corporate drones – who will be the citizens of the future?' *The Conversation*. 16 March 2017.

<https://theconversation.com/robots-aliens-corporate-drones-who-will-be-the-citizens-of-the-future-72137>.

