

The Future is Scar-y: The Connective Tissue of Emotion, Body, & Identity

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Abstract: This paper brings conversations around coalition work between communities of trans people and disabled people into the greater scope of popular culture. Drawing on theories of reboot culture—the practice of updating and remaking past storylines—alongside disability theory, this paper brings together the material and metaphorical elements of cultural conversation. Staying with the historical violence of science fiction, this paper does not move towards restoration or “cure.” Instead, attentiveness to the white-, cis-focused practices of the past speculations on the future offers a route to re-code our present moment. I argue that scars offer a place for this conversation. By defying a fixed temporality of injury followed by healing, scars provide a connection where the conversations of non-normative community can take place. An acceptance of the pain and loss from the original runs of sf narratives opens the potentials of new futures that allow these narratives to be reshaped.

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At the midpoint of the film *Predestination* (2014), the main character stands in front of a hospital mirror. The character’s abdomen and chest show scars of a mastectomy and hysterectomy while the voice-over states, “the person I knew was truly gone” (Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 42:14). This narration is Jane’s, as well as that of every main character of the film. However, as do the short story and the film addressed in this essay, I will refrain from explaining every detail at the start. The hinge on which the story turns is Jane’s transition, first into John and later into others. Without consent, surgeons forcibly operated on Jane’s body to modify it into one that has a penis after noticing the character’s intersex anatomy (genitals which do not adhere to a binary male/female social construct) during a difficult childbirth. In the next scene, the character (years later) describes this experience to the Barkeep, a far future version of the main character who has come to recruit John as a time traveler. The Barkeep remarks: “you seem like a normal man” (43:37). John’s reaction to this statement registers somewhere between disbelief and pain: with eyes wide and mouth hanging open, John exhales a small sound of corroboration. The character then retorts scornfully: “more normal than ever now... I found out I’m not shooting blanks anymore” (43:48), referring to a return to gamete production.

This “normality” functions as an open wound, rather than the healing scars of the mirror scene, more closely resembling the character’s gaping mouth as they corroborate the Barkeep’s expectations. From this opening synopsis, this article asks: how does normality function as wounding? What is normality’s relationship to bodily scars and identity? How are ideas of normality (dis)figured in cultural reimaginings of futures? And what would a future with disability and trans studies working in coalition look like?

Predestination, directed by Michael and Peter Spierig, is a conflux of ideas in literature, culture, and identity. The film itself is entangled with questions of disabled and trans identity, assemblages of self that make contact with and enter frictive discourse through scarring. Temporally, the 2014 film is engaged with multiple existences: its source text—the 1959 short story “All You Zombies—,” its contemporary audience, and the potential futures it may produce. The story itself is temporally unstable: it is a tale of time travel following a single character’s birth, transition, self-impregnation, recruitment as a temporal agent, and ultimately, the murder of the character’s future self. By questioning the overlaps and divergences of multiple positions in time and culture, this essay returns to an embodied exper-

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-ience of scarring to think through its multiple potentialities as both wounding and reparative force. I am particularly invested in scarring's potential as a coalitional tool to engage disabled people and trans people who were cut from many sf texts written around the time that "All You Zombies—" was first released.

This essay centers on the transition of the character/s central to Robert Heinlein's "—All You Zombies—" and its later film adaptation *Predestination* (2014) to address scarring and wounding as possible sites for community formation. Relying upon scholarship drawn from literary studies, disability the intricacies of identity and wounds in an assembled framework which notes the linkages of identity, disability, and science fiction (sf). The essay follows the physical and emotional transitions of the main character/s of the story: marked by injury, scarring, and narrative. The main character's transforming body offers a potential space to discuss the coalitional engagement of disabled people and trans people. As groups that face mutual stigmatization for not fitting the narrow definition of bodily normality, these groups must navigate systems of oppression that act on them in similar fashions.

In recognition of the main character's complex embodiment, I do not use pronouns (except in the case of the plural possessive) when referring to the character in this paper. The character is named, at alternate times, Jane, John, The Unmarried Mother, the Barkeep, and the Fizzle Bomber. The character is born intersex, but the doctor assigns Jane as a "healthy little girl" (Heinlein, 1975 p.227). After this assignment, the character demonstrates dysphoric tendencies (Heinlein, 1975 p.225; Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 18:46) and does not identify with boys or girls. In both the film and the story, each time the character becomes another iteration of these multiple selves, the event is marked by scarring. This scarring is what sutures the character's understanding of previous incarnations to a new one. Jane's becoming John is marked by surgical scars. John's becoming the Unmarried Mother is marked by phys-

ical and psychic scarring that comes from not being able to perform normative masculinity through expected forms of work; he can't "do manual labor—too much scar tissue" (Heinlein, 1975 p.229). The Unmarried Mother becomes the Barkeep as the result of having a new face sutured on over burnt tissue (Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 02:44). The Barkeep's (potential) becoming the Fizzle Bomber is marked by unseen scars in the brain, which is wounded with each temporal jump (Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 01:10:12). Through these changes, the story demonstrates for the audience/reader that the connective tissue between these identities is scar tissue. Scar tissue functions at both the physical and metaphorical levels to hold things together as well as to mark the understanding of how they came apart.

What suturing happens when a short story from 1959 becomes a film in 2014? What links the text and the film together? What gets scarred over in the process of adaptation? The answers to these questions approach an understanding of the affective power of SF as a genre to influence and be influenced by changing opinions regarding non-normative bodies and identities. I discuss each of the character's traumatic changes to broaden our understanding of the connection between emotion, body, and identity.

While the film does make some progress by incorporating representations of disabled and trans people, the film *Predestination* continues to elide trans identities through the process of universalization. Rather than addressing the lived experience of disability or transness, the film moves past these specific experiences to use them metaphorically. The main character's transitions are the crux of the story, but it is the changes in the emotional development of the character that offers an affective connection to the audience. This is something that Ethan Hawke, who plays the Barkeep iteration of the main character, praises in an interview following the release of the film: it spoke to his own identity and conflicts of self-creation even though he doesn't identify as trans (Godfrey, 2014). Despite, or perhaps because of this emotional connection,

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however, the societal impact of the character's transition is absent from the narrative; the interview with Hawke notes that "although the lead character is transgender, the film is not explicitly about transgender issues, it's about all of us" (Hawke qtd. Godfrey, 2014). While the film focuses broadly on the character's physical scars to convey its ideas about transition, the significance of the character's larger social contextualization is limited to the arc of the story: the scars offer a representation of trans existence, but don't address lived trans experience in contemporary society. The narrative instead positions the character's transitions in line with a fictional and flattened depiction true to Heinlein's original elisions of identity. The makers of *Predestination* express their desire to uphold the 'original' story, as such, in an interview given after the release of the film. Peter Spierig explained that the society in the film "was a version of [Heinlein's] sixties, and we loved the idea of maintaining that" (McWeeny, 2017). Consequently, the social factors relevant to its creation (anti-blackness, ableism, trans-erasure) are retained in the interest of maintaining the story's history.

In the introduction to Robert A. Heinlein's "All You Zombies—" published in the anthology *The Mirror of Infinity*, Alexei Panshin (1970) discusses the central themes of the story: self and the paradox of time travel (p. 219). He argues that the idea of time travel is not necessarily a scientific fiction, but is instead a philosophical one (p. 220). When viewed this way, the idea of traveling through time offers a potential future and perhaps past for examination and speculation. Time travel comes with sets of paradoxes that are intended as thought exercises: if something has already subjectively happened as the result of a future actor in the past, can that act be changed? Are the events that shape a person's identity... predestined? As such, the story offers both a malleable past and future for analyzing the character of the story as well as the film. Because of the malleability of the subject matter, it lends itself to being twisted and reconfigured in the adaptation between text and film. To that end, it is beneficial to see what

room for re-thinking and re-evaluating arises when considering the story in terms of multiple temporal social frameworks.

It is in these frameworks that the potential of sf as a genre of interpretation and speculation on potential futures becomes apparent. SF allows for flexibility in thinking through changes of self by holding together a tight association of identity, embodiment, and narrative. In this case, scars are central to the internal and external conflicts the character experiences between self and other. The character is repeatedly scarred: by events that change the character's body, outward assemblages of sex, and emotional scars that drive the character to engage with other selves in other times. This paper will address those scars as a means of bringing potential coalitional futures between disabled people and trans people into being. The scar is an embodied site that offers multiple points of connection.

The language of "suturing" goes hand in hand with scarring and is often used in academic essays to discuss bringing ideas together. This metaphor, as it is currently implemented, falls somewhere between Wilderson's "violence of metaphor" and Mitchell and Snyder's "narrative prosthesis." In Wilderson's (2003) "Gramsci's Black Marx," he discusses the use of metaphor as a violent tendency towards black people. In his critique of metaphor, Wilderson articulates the ways in which Marxist theory disembodies understandings of collection and death through metaphor. His argument is that addressing only the metaphor, and not the reality, of killing Black people to sustain America re-enacts such violence (p. 231). In their work on "narrative prosthesis," Mitchell and Snyder argue that disability is used as a prop to elevate able-bodied protagonists through the narrative process and ignore the potentiality of a lived disabled existence (Mitchell & Snyder, 2001 p.205). Their foundational work in disability tracks the ways in which the use of disability is overwhelmingly present in narratives only as a way to "prop up" able-bodied protagonists and ideas. Such works excise meaning from living with a disability. Rather

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than abandon suturing altogether, I would like to think through this process as a way to return to the flesh of the argument, as it were, and to consider how *Predestination* and its source text “All You Zombies—” allow for rethinking the act of suturing: thereby transforming it from an abstract attribution that sounds good in a paper to a practice that is attentive to the violence of its subject matter, its social framework, and its potential to knit communities as well as concepts.

The act of suturing is to use a thread (sometimes organic, sometimes synthetic) to bring together two pieces of flesh that have been parted by some act of violence (“Suture” 2017). The act of suturing is done with the intent to ‘heal’ some form of bodily damage. The act of suturing, however, does not return the flesh to its previous state of connection. Rather, suturing creates scar tissue. A scar is a mass of collagen that creates a site on the body which allows it to connect to multiple times and spaces: it marks the timespace of the wound and continues to exist into the future. Scar tissue forms together in an alignment—it mobilizes in a particular direction: While “the protein fibres in normal tissue have a random (basketweave) appearance... those in scar tissue have pronounced alignment in a single direction” (Sherratt, 2001). This ‘alignment’ between groups sites a space of interaction in the same direction: a coalitional alignment. Several scholars have argued for the potentialities of scars in disability poetry (Kuppers, 2008 p.148) and in performance studies (Stokes, 2018), but the matter has not yet been broached in science fiction. It is both prudent and necessary to discuss the potentialities that can be realized through scar studies, particularly as an informative exchange suturing discourses between intersex, trans- and disability studies.

These points of connective tissue align with what Robert McRuer calls “compulsory able-bodiedness,” and my argument expands upon this concept to develop the phenomenon of compulsory embodied normativity more broadly. McRuer makes the case for an overlapping of Queer and Crip theory in the paper “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/

Disabled Existence.” McRuer (2016) argues that contemporary culture “assumes in advance that we all agree: able-bodied identities, able-bodied perspectives are preferable and what we all, collectively, are aiming for” (p.303). This cultural construct advances so that “compulsory heterosexuality is intertwined with compulsory able-bodiedness; both systems work to (re)produce the able body and heterosexuality” (p.306). In resistance to this practice, McRuer draws on Judith Butler’s conception of the critically queer, a framework which assumes that approximating a “norm” will ultimately result in failure, and therefore it is possible to force this failure through intentional acts of queerness (Butler, p. 26). In developing this queer/crip idea of compulsory able-bodiedness and heterosexuality, McRuer (2016) “[does] not mean to deny the materiality of queer/disabled bodies... [but] rather, to argue that critical queerness and severe disability are about collectively transforming” (p. 306). In this context, critical queerness and severe disability seem to entail the act of intentionally pushing for the failure of approximating normativity, actively refusing to enact ability/sexuality that is in line with societal pressure (McRuer, 2006 p. 30-1). This social framework (one that determines which bodies that can exist free of stigma) can be stretched to include trans and intersex people as well. The inclusion of trans people in this framework offers an embodiment of the ‘collective transformation’ that McRuer advocates. Trans people live in a space where the self, the social pressure of identity, and the body are inherently precarious. By extending compulsory expectations placed on bodies to include normative expectations of sex, one can see where similar goals for the groups involved open space for coalitional work.

The main character(s) from the original, textual version does not integrate with a community however, neither within the time-loop that allows interaction with various iterations of self nor without. Significantly, this community of the self plays out differently between the textual and cinematic versions of the story. In the text of “All You Zombies—” the character exists within very narrowly construed pre-

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-scriptions of gender. In infancy, Jane is assigned as a girl by virtue of the doctor's proclamation. Later, with John's hysterectomy, the doctor has "rearranged things so [John] can develop properly as a man" (Heinlein, 1975 p.228). The reader's doubt about gender is only reconciled when John later sexually objectifies nurses by "staring down [their] necklines" (p. 229). It does not necessarily follow that changing a person's physical body parts will change their sexuality; however, in Heinlein's narrative this type of attraction confirms/affirms manhood. At the end of the written story, the Barkeep retires from recruiting others, lamenting then the character's previous and current self: "There isn't anybody but me—Jane —here alone in the dark. I miss you dreadfully" (p. 235). The Barkeep, identifying as Jane, laments being without the other time-selves of the story, though there is little development of an intra-personal community.

The interaction between selves in the film *Predestination* alters the story's narrative by entangling it with contemporary understandings of self, sexuality, and violence. In the film, the character expresses dysphoria with each new arrangement of identity. When recounting life as Jane in the orphanage, the Unmarried Mother narrates that Jane was different from both girls and boys in the childhood institution, never spending time playing with either group (Heinlein, 1975 p.225; Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 18:46). The character's iterations as Jane, John, and the Unmarried Mother do not recognize or connect with their present selves, instead connecting with selves from other temporal locations. Each interaction with their past or future self is a learning experience across scars, where one form of the character comes to appreciate the embodiment they have had or will have. For example, Jane does not appreciate the traits visible in the mirror but is "beautiful" (1:00:16) to the Unmarried Mother. After the series of surgeries that results in the character taking the name John, John has no issue looking in the mirror because the "person [John] knew was truly gone" (42:14). John does not connect with this new embodiment of self except across time and

through scars that embody what was taken in the interest of "normal" progression. The scarring caused by surgery creates discreet moments of self for the character to appreciate, through self-reflection, that which was never affirmed by the socially constructed expectations of normativity, as witnessed in John's sexual desire for Jane and Jane's reciprocation of being desired. These moments of mutual appreciation across time and scars create an internal community which pushes back against structures of social authority, such as the doctor's "normalizing" of the character's genitals with surgery, that enforce compulsory body-normativity.

Unlike the textual version of the story, which ends with the Barkeep's yearning for community, the open ending offered by the film provides an opportunity to think through the potential futures SF offers in answer to the paradox of predestination. Where the source text concludes after the Barkeep's retirement, the film's narrative continues the story beyond it, introducing a new aspect of the character in the form of the Fizzle Bomber. The Fizzle Bomber is the primary antagonist, creating explosions, killing many, and ultimately scarring the Unmarried Mother. The Barkeep retains a functioning time travel device and travels to the supposed whereabouts of the Fizzle Bomber for a final confrontation. The confrontation with the Fizzle Bomber iteration of the character replicates a scene from earlier in the film where the Barkeep comes to take the Unmarried Mother (a post-operative iteration of the character writing under a woman's pen name before being burned as a temporal agent) away from Jane. The Unmarried Mother, armed with a gun pointed at the Barkeep, has no desire to leave Jane, knowing the pain that the character experienced/will experience this loss. The Barkeep explains "you know who she is, and you understand who you are. And now maybe you're ready to understand who I am" (1:16:50). The Barkeep is not making an ultimatum or trying to force the predestined continuity of time but is trying to connect with a previous self. When the Barkeep delivers the line, "maybe you're ready understand," the to character's head angles to the side and seeks

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an emotional response from the Unmarried Mother with wide open eyes and a slightly open mouth. To have three physical forms of the character visible in this temporal moment embodies the complex emotional struggle of being. Each iteration of the character longs for a connection: Jane for John as an understanding friend, John for Jane as kindred spirit, and the Barkeep for their multiplicity, their being (physically and emotionally) together. The yearning in this shot is a palpable longing for connection in a way that is not sex: it is a yearning for love, community, and connection. The yearning across iterations is in defiance of socially constructed norms, each appreciating aspects of the others in the forms of scars, trauma, and difference.

In fact, the Barkeep's longing for connection arises several times in the narrative of the film. At the midpoint of the film, the Unmarried Mother asks, "[w]hat does anybody want?" and the Barkeep replies immediately with "Love" (46:13). Once the Unmarried Mother has agreed to try the Barkeep's job as a temporal agent, there is a moment of trepidation as they go over the job's lack of family or other ties: the Unmarried Mother shows fear at the idea of a life without love (58:42) and asks if there is any choice, to which the Barkeep replies that there is always a choice. After the Unmarried Mother meets Jane, the Unmarried Mother says "you pretend like love doesn't matter to you, when the truth is it's all you ever think about" (1:08:30). Working backwards through the web of scars, The Barkeep, Jane, and the Unmarried Mother actively affirm one another; these acts of understanding and compassion knit together the community of selves.

As if to complete this emotional spectrum, the final iteration of the character in the film is connected to this tissue with violence rather than compassion. The Fizzle Bomber (FB) is visibly disabled: FB uses one arm, displays browned teeth, and speaks in a manner that is theatrically codified to embody the diagnosis of "psychosis" that is part of the character's medical file at the beginning of the film (Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 05:25). The Fizzle Bomber attempts to seek the same compassion that the Barkeep elic-

its from the Unmarried Mother, arguing... that "if you shoot me, you become me. That's how it happens. If you want to break the chain, you have to not kill me, but try to love me again" (1:28:42). At this time, the Fizzle Bomber has explained that the future can be changed; FB's actions saved thousands of lives in "futures that never happened because I prevented them" (1:26:01). This self is not reconcilable to the Barkeep as the other iterations had been. Instead of contributing to the reconciling scar tissue, the Fizzle Bomber is entangled with the wounding force that creates the scar itself.

To appreciate the scar as a means of understanding in science fiction, it is necessary to focus not only on its ability to come together, but to appreciate the inherent violence that brings it into being. The history of SF is a violent one which excised the voices of women, people of color, queer people, and disabled people, turning them into tropes and metaphors for difference. The Fizzle Bomber's (FB) engagement is not reparative, but violent: FB tracks the number of lives saved in alternate timelines by causing explosions, but not the lives taken in the dominant reality (Spierig, M. and Spierig, P. 1:25:54). FB performs violence that results in the scarring of the Unmarried Mother and subsequent creation of the Barkeep. The Fizzle Bomber embodies the set of violent acts that the Barkeep spent a career trying to prevent. Like science fiction, FB is engaged in wounding that is violent, but productive. The Barkeep kills the Fizzle Bomber and enters the terminal monologue of the source text, with one addendum: "can we change our futures? I don't know" (1:30:50). Until this point in the movie, the character has been faithfully reproducing the timeline that encompasses the many temporal selves, but the end of the film manifests as uncertainty. If one believes the last words of the Fizzle Bomber, the future is simultaneously changeable and determined. For the Barkeep, this marks the first moment of uncertainty, where the story deviates from the expected course and is thus laden with potential. This potential to both harm and suture is enmeshed in SF's role in shaping the future through its impact on the present

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It is in the space of uncertainty that readers and writers of SF act, attempting to form futures with acts that potentially cause damage to bodies and communities. It is these acts that form scars. The scar is always in the process of being formed by violence and (re)connection. Thinking through scarring beyond the narrative of the film offers a potential for joint efforts to manipulate future remakes of this or other sf storylines. A coalitional trans and disability reading of the scar orients attention to past violence in order to bring communities together around their varied but sometimes overlapping experience.

In *Current Objectives of American Studies*, Jessica Stokes makes the case for scars as a multi-temporal, multispatial site of interaction. In “Scars for life(s),” Stokes notes that scars “exist as sites of trauma and healing simultaneously. While performance studies may attempt to limit performance to the act, the scar has no such limits” (Stokes, 2018 p.3). Drawing on the narratives of performers in *American Horror Story’s* “Freak Show” season, she notes that the “acts of trauma and separation that the freak show performers have experienced mark them with these scars: ephemera of trauma that also forms a part of a healing community” (p. 10-11). The characters in the narrative bond over both the stigma they experience from so-called “normal” people and the marks that have been put on and in their bodies. The performance of the scar in such texts works across time and space; the scar is “a queer landscape, as it is a tangible, physical location that conjures other spaces. While the scar is located on the body as a mark that hearkens to past and future temporalities, it also acts as a means to connect the body to other locales and to locate the place and method of trauma” (p. 13). The scar works as a place of connection rather than as a signifier of one moment. The scar connects the moment of being wounded to a point of recovery. In so doing, the scar defies traditional narratives of victimhood or “curing” –both common tropes associated with disability—by serving as a reminder of the complex processes and embodiment of living with impairment. It is an embodied reminder of the transfor-

mative and varied nature of flesh. The scar brings vital physicality to the stories of bodies that change through surgery. Stokes uses this vitality to discuss the potential of the scar for community formation: “Thinking through scar reminds us not to look away from violence as we consider communities formed in the assemblage of identities of disability and race. The scar is a place where these aspects of identity can communicate and form community without being flattened into a single perspective” (p. 18). As a material metaphor, the scar works as a reminder of both what has harmed a community and the ways in which coming together in view of this harm is restorative. Instead of pushing thought and consideration away, the scar invites contemplation and compassion. Because the scar connects the interior of the body to the outside world, it also works to connect the embodied self to others as community.

The multiplicity of the scar entangles it not only with physical experience, but links the embodied self to society as a result of historic practices of branding. In his work, *Transpeople*, author Christopher Shelley discusses the intersection of identity and body in trans theory. In the introduction, Shelley (2008) contends that the body of a trans person is codified in social interaction, and through this serves as a connector for the interiority of selfhood and the exteriority of gender: “How the body is socially read and how one feels about one’s body meet at the primary intersection between interiority and exteriority, where gender is concerned” (p. 25). For those who go through surgical transitions, scars mark the interaction between a social reading of the body, and the trans person’s attempts to change how the body is read. However, many trans people do not seek surgical intervention; some do not pursue it as they feel hormones are sufficient, others face social or economic barriers to accessing surgery, and still more face social, religious, and legal denials of their changing bodies. Trans people are often marked by societal wounds that attempt to force a reading of normativity onto them. Shelly discusses this social wounding in terms of a physical brand: “The trans subject, like those maimed Greek outcasts [slaves

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and prisoners], often carries a visible social stigma” (p. 27). This observation strongly links disabled people and trans people through the origin of the term stigma: bodies that have been marked to carry a (negative) societal message. Scarring is present in the origins of stigma, and it makes sense that in returning to the matter of bodies we recognize the connective tissue between embodied and cultural markings. Throughout “—All You Zombies—” and *Predestination*, the scars of each iteration of the character mark dis/connection to and from society as a whole and the community of the character’s multiple iterations.

I am indebted to critical race theory for the idea of the compulsory normative body that offers social connection through scarring. Wilderson’s perspectives on the violence of metaphor work hand in hand with Mitchell and Snyder’s “narrative prosthesis” to push back against solely metaphorical understandings of the body. These theorists understand the ways in which language and literature have a material impact on Black people and disabled people. The use of metaphor is tied to real world practices of violence, exclusion, and death. To separate the meaning of race, disability, or trans existence from its material body destroys its meaning. It is necessary to connect and engage with these wounds to find ways these conversations can be held simultaneously and across the scar tissue that marks bodies in defiance of compulsory normativity. In “Troubling the Waters” from *No Tea No Shade*, Kai Green (2016) discusses the potentiality of trans “as a value or an optic, one that, similar to queer, refuses temporal or spatial fixity” (p. 66). The author mines transness for its connective elements rather than the social divisiveness that originally marks trans people with stigma. In this formation of trans as connective, Green notes that “it is necessary to feel pain and loss, for it opens up space for something new” (p. 76) and that “we should instead be invested and committed to making space where the ability to change one’s name, the power to constantly transform, and shift is an option” (p. 79). I argue that scars and offer a place for this conversation.

By defying a fixed temporality of injury followed by healing (Stokes), scars provide a connection where the conversations pertinent to non-normative communities can take place. The genre of SF is invested in speculating on potential futures, but often glosses over the violence perpetrated by compulsory normativity in its early writing. An acceptance of the pain and loss of erasure that was widespread in the “Golden Age” of SF (when “—All You Zombies—” was written) expands the potentials of new futures that allow these narratives to be reshaped. A flexibility towards perceiving peoples’ bodies as variable, fluid, and changing benefits not only trans people, but disabled people as well. Scars broaden embodied conversation without flattening them to the universal: making space for their particularities, differences, and points of connection in their distinctions.

Because of the exclusionary practices of early science fiction as a genre, it may be difficult to reconcile the connection between critical race theory and the early SF that comprises the core of my research. It is true that a great deal of the work in which I engage focuses on the white, male authors of SF and the white-led casts of the adaptations and reboots of these cultural artifacts. However, I attempt to bring these patterns into scholarly debate as a means of exposing the loss of diverse perspectives resulting from these cultural practices. In Patricia Holland’s (2012) *Erotic Life of Racism*, she mentions “the goal here is to get comfortable with that loss... not replacing the representation, by not making the obvious critical move to recover black.female.queer with an appropriate sign of her belonging” (p. 12). Using time travel to encourage the representation of non-white, disabled, and queer people in early SF is obviously not always possible, and representation is, as Patricia Holland argues, not always desirable. However, it is possible to intentionally bring into conversation this lack of representation to focus on the emphasis placed on whiteness, ability, cis-ness, and other signifiers of compulsory normativity. It is essential to address this re-presentation of normativity as early SF is sutured into contemp-

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-orary SF (re)productions.

Paying attention to the normative practices of past science fiction and disrupting its methods for codifying normativity in the future offer a means for restructuring our present moment. Holland notes the significance of cultural divisiveness: “where racism imposes racial purity, however, law and practice will code identification across differences as impossible—even if it happens, even if it is real... we are still made to choose a category, to state who our people are, and to relate to one cultural mode of being” (author’s emphasis p. 5). As a genre, SF proliferates these codes of identification, but using the wounds created by past writing and present procedure offers a way forward. Connecting groups that have been excised from the body of work and questioning this loss through physical and emotional scars opens up “the touch, crossing boundaries, [which] affirms the inadequacy of this boundary between selves” (p. 101). The wounding has already occurred and will occur again as culture continues to (re)write, (re)film, and (re)generate sf cultural artifacts as contemporary entertainment. During the 2017 Disability and Disciplines conference at the Centre for Cultural and Disability studies, scholar Andrea Connell was asked why we should be spending time on films and books that reinforce ableist norms. Disability film scholar Petra Anders responded with an emphatic summation of the situation: “an able-bodied audience will still watch it, and we need to have a voice in the conversation” (Anders, 2017). The conversations around the genre of SF continue, and it is crucial that literature and film students, as well as interdisciplinary scholars, remain critical of how these narratives repeat.

There are already some scholars working towards linking conversations between disability and trans studies. While their approaches to the connection between these fields has been a step forward, their work would benefit from thinking through the embodied connection of the scar. Thinking through his own transition, scholar and activist Dean Spade (2003) discusses the harmful impacts of compulsive body normativity: “medicine produces it not

through a description of the norm, but through a generalized account of the norm’s transgression by gender deviants” (p. 25). Discussing the physical and psychological risks of surgery undergone in teaching hospitals, Spade recounts the scarring of a trans person by a resident surgeon: “the patient’s massive scars were probably the result of the surgeon’s unconscious sadism and wish to scar the patient for ‘going against nature’” (p. 22). This trans person’s scars resonate through time with others who have consciously or unconsciously been marked by the social pressure to conform to body normativity. While surgery may function to bring one’s body closer to an alleged ideal in appearance or function, the resultant scars embody the physical marks of surgery as well as the previous social pressures which brought them into being. Spade closes with an optimistic commentary on the shared struggle of disabled and trans people: “like others in the disability rights movement, trans people are fighting against entrenched notions about what “normal” and “healthy” minds and bodies are, and fighting to become equal participants with equal access and equal protection” (p. 34). Trans people who are involved in communities with other trans individuals benefit from having foreknowledge of legal and medical requirements to physically affirm their identities. Disabled people form communities around resources to accommodate impairments and navigate the challenges of labyrinthine medical bureaucracies.

The connection between the individual body and the social body is one that is particularly salient to working coalitionally between disabled people and trans people, according to Alexandre Baril (2015). In his work, Baril discusses the many factors that impact his life: “I experience transness in much the same way I experience depression or anxiety... trans suffering can neither be separated from social oppression nor be reduced to it” (p. 69). This conflux of the medical and the social models of disability offers a potential coming together for disability and trans theory. In arguing for a disability politics of transness, Baril pushes for “the applica-

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tion of tools from disability studies to trans issues” which would serve to “uncover[] cisnormativity in disability” and “denounce[] ableism in trans movements” (p. 71). Such a coalitional politic could be mobilized following a scarred alignment with an embodied understanding of shared goals.

A successful example of such a coalition can be observed surrounding the advances in community developments over scarring in mastectomies between feminist and disability groups. In the Breast Cancer Awareness campaign of 2000 called “Obsessed with Breasts,” posters of women who had undergone mastectomies were created in pastiche of contemporary Calvin Klein and Victoria’s Secret advertisements. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (2002) notes that “The posters... produce a powerful visual violation by exchanging the spectacle of the eroticized breast, which has been desensationalized by its endless circulation, with the medicalized image of the scarred breast, which has been concealed from public view” (p. 12). Such a project challenges the isolation of the disabled body and questions the commodification of the female form. The scarring of the mastectomy becomes an embodied connection of disabled and women’s communities.

The benefits of a community inclusive of bodily variance would serve to improve the emotional health of disabled people and trans people, and particularly those who live at the intersection of these identities. In their work “Risk and Resilience During Transgender Identity Development,” Testa, Jiminez and Rankin (2014) found that trans people who had prior knowledge of other trans people when they realized they were trans were “significantly more likely to report feeling comfortable when first identifying as trans” (p. 38), less likely to report feeling suicidal (p. 38), and more likely to feel comfortable with other trans people (p. 39). These communities formed around scarring would offer an exchange of comfort and support between communities that are often already navigating various medical and social hurdles. That prior knowledge of transness can be linked to one’s emotional well-being is further rea-

son for SF to move away from reinforcing narratives of compulsory normativity.

In their work “Transgender Friendship Experiences,” Galupo et. al (2014) measure the benefits of friendship and community for trans people. They found that “in particular, transgender friends offer support, have similar experiences, and share knowledge with one another” (p. 194). As part of their findings between the community of trans people and their friends who identify as queer, the researchers found that “participants related benefits of transgender and sexual minority friendship to common understandings, shared experiences or knowledge in ways that made non-normative experience primary” (p. 205). Broadening this community of non-normative experience could incorporate disabled peoples’ experiences in ways that would serve to disrupt compulsive body normativity. Beneficially, discussing bodies that do not adhere to compulsory normativity provides companionship within such communities. Science fiction has the potential to bring these communities together, if it is willing to work to undo its past erasures and to recognize non-normative embodiments as valid. The work being done to integrate trans and disabled communities is happening in legal, activist, and scholarly communities, however it has not yet been integrated into popular culture. The coalitional reading/viewing of *Predestination* in this article offers the opportunity to suture these community efforts to widespread popular culture conversations. In *Predestination*, scars work across time and place to suture together the various incarnations of Jane, the Unmarried Mother, and the Barkeep. Through these lingering embodiments of wounding, the character lives out a lasting desire for love and connection. Instead of remaining mired in the biological determination that permeated the source text, *Predestination* broadens the possible connective tissue between body and identity— though only to a certain extent. As more people push against a compulsive normativity that puts social pressure on and forces readings of the various configurations of the body, it is inevitable that stigma and scarring will



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continue. However, one can hope that these (inevitable?) wounds can be the sites of future communities.

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