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Sarah Dillon 

Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

ABSTRACT

This essay presents public criticism as one answer to the question of why literary criticism has value in the twenty-first century. Reframing criticism in terms of its multiple functions, the essay moves beyond the critique-postcritique binary. It advocates for functional and methodological pluralism as crucial to the discipline's vitality. It addresses the public functions of story, criticism, and critic. Public criticism draws out and conveys the cognitive and collective value of stories, deploying the most appropriate disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods to show how stories can provide multiple points of view, enable understanding of collective identities, function as narrative models enabling surrogate reasoning about target systems, and play a key public role in anticipations of the future, as narrative futures methods. Public criticism expands the available public roles for the critic, adapting Roger A. Pielke Jr's framework to demonstrate how literary critics can function as humanities arbiters and honest brokers, as well as issue advocates, in the structures and institutions of public reasoning. Public criticism requires transparency about the methodological rigour of the discipline, and more prevalent practices of collaboration and knowledge synthesis. Overall, the essay provides an implementable framework for how stories, criticism and critic can inform public reasoning.

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Why is literary criticism of value? This is a question that has been asked and (un)answered many times. It is both hackneyed and haunting. It calls forth whole internal histories of the field, from resistance to the very idea that literature and its study ought to have value at all,¹ to an ideological commitment to criticism's value lying in critique and opposition,² to more recent postcritique attempts to move away from that perceived negativity and create the space for new ways of reading that, it is claimed, offer the opportunity to rethink the relationship of literary criticism to the public sphere.³

CONTACT Sarah Dillon  sjd27@cam.ac.uk  Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, 9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP, UK  [@drsarahdillon](https://twitter.com/drsarahdillon)

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Here I take up that opportunity, offering a new idea of *public criticism*, contextualised within the frame of understanding all criticism as serving some kind of *function*. The idea of public criticism is one attempt to move beyond the binary stalemate between critique and postcritique. Proposed as one function of criticism amongst others, it is part of a broader commitment to functional pluralism, and therefore methodological pluralism, as crucial to the vitality of the discipline. Public criticism meets the need for developing new ways of representing the value of criticism, and the humanities in general, although it offers *explanation* and *performance* of this value, not embattled rhetoric of *justification* or *defence*.⁴ In doing so, it offers one way – in theory and practice – for demonstrating the continued relevance of literary criticism in the twenty-first century.

Function

I here present a framework within which to understand, communicate, and practice a new form of valuable public literary criticism. It is an idea of public criticism that diverges significantly from traditional Marxist understandings, historical and contemporary, of criticism as born of and inherently of value only as, in Terry Eagleton's words, 'a struggle against the absolutist state'.⁵ That conception of criticism's public value is guided by Jürgen Habermas' idea of the 'public sphere', with public reasoning the activity of a public – here meaning a group of private people – reasoning collectively in opposition to public authorities.⁶ But criticism can also function in the context of public reasoning as defined radically differently, for instance by Sheila Jasanoff, as 'the institutional practices, discourses, techniques and instruments through which modern governments claim legitimacy in an era of limitless risks – physical, political and moral'.⁷ Public reasoning according to Jasanoff's definition is located within institutions of power, such as the state, and constitutes the practical activity of such institutions when making decisions in the public interest.

It gives weight to the arguments of postcritique to acknowledge that the idea that criticism might function within sites of governmental power seems a radical, rather than a normative, suggestion, one which might be received by many as symptomatic of the demise rather than the rejuvenation of the value of literary studies. It is at odds, for instance, with Michel Foucault's argument that the critical attitude is, in Felski's account, 'an expression of the desire not to be governed, or at least not to be governed quite so much'.⁸ But criticism does not only have to be positioned 'outside' to be of value, nor does its being positioned 'inside' mean accepting things as they are without attempting to change them. To *engage* is not to relinquish the possibility of critique, although it may provide new insights and understandings that prompt a reconsideration of the beliefs and assumptions underlying the critique.

There is neither a necessary nor essential relationship between literary criticism and opposition (political or ideological), but that does not mean that any criticism that is not ideologically informed is a form of quietism. The understanding of public criticism proposed here considers how literary criticism can function within structures of power (without any necessity for ideological complicity) to effect change, rather than always and only situate itself external to, and in critique of, power. It therefore runs contrary to understanding the public value of literary criticism, and (whilst being wary of Steven Connor's caution not to overly metonymise literary studies) the humanities more generally, to be that of challenging rather than supporting power structures and state operations.⁹ There is no doubt that independence, and sometimes explicit opposition (for instance to the state, or to neoliberal university systems) is necessary. They provide a key demonstration of the public value not just of the humanities in fact, but of academia in general. But they do not have to exclusively define the position of the humanities and the public value of literary criticism. Both independence and engagement (with the potential for critique happening at both sites) are needed.

Public criticism is one *function* of literary criticism amongst others. Thinking of criticism in terms of its multiple (and sometimes contradictory) functions enables us to move beyond the impasse of the melodramatic binarism of the so-called 'method wars'¹⁰ – as well as their lack of impact on changes in the discipline's actual methods – and expands the available characterological repertoire for the critic. In the first instance, current arguments about method need to be reframed as in fact arguments about function, and therefore also about value. There is no good reason why the functions of criticism cannot be plural. Indeed, an ecology of different functions of criticism – some in fierce competition, some in symbiosis – is crucial to the vitality of the discipline, to enable it to adapt and evolve, and to facilitate multiple articulations of its value.

Attending to the multiple functions of criticism enables us to understand and receive old and new critical approaches¹¹ as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' has not been understood or received – as 'a possibility among other possibilities', not 'as a mandatory injunction'.¹² Thinking about criticism as serving many and varied functions shares in Sedgwick's drive to see 'differentials of practice'.¹³ The same drive to de-essentialise critique is found in Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* (2015), which very closely follows Sedgwick's arguments. Where Sedgwick is perhaps less polemic than Felski is in her acknowledgement that what she calls 'the present paranoid consensus' has been achieved not by displacing other ways of knowing, but rather 'simply may have required a certain disarticulation, disavowal, and misrecognition' of such approaches.¹⁴ These are, she insists 'actually being practiced, often by the same theorists and as part of the same projects'.¹⁵ For Sedgwick, the history of criticism has always

witnessed the interlocking of, or oscillation between, different critical approaches, even if at moments that diversity has been (accidentally or purposively) forgotten.¹⁶

Reflections on the psychology or character of the critic also need to be reframed in terms of function. David Kurnick observes that the essays so often referred to within the ‘miniature tradition’ of the ‘method wars’ are less about the way we go about things when we are engaged in criticism and more about how we ‘feel about ourselves when we do’: ‘they give us powerful images of what kind of people we are when we interpret: more than a new hermeneutics, this work has popularized a series of character sketches of the academic critic’.¹⁷ Kurnick is strongly critical of what he calls this pop-psychology, but attending to characterology invites consideration of other possible functions of the critic. The function of a person is defined as their role in life, society or within an organisation. So we might ask ourselves what roles a critic can play in life, society or within an institution. In the final section of this essay, I suggest that Roger A. Pielke Jr’s framework of the types of role that scientists can play in public life can be usefully adapted to describe existing, and provide a range of new, roles that the literary critic might also play.

Finally, understanding criticism as functional involves asking what role the objects we study, and criticism of them, are playing in life, society or within an organisation. This is the subject of the next section of this essay. And here we do arrive at method. For the questions *why?* and *where?* (necessarily asked of story, criticism and critic) determine the most appropriate *how*, both the methods used for engaging with the object of investigation, and the modes in which the results of that investigation are communicated. From a practical point of view, the best or most appropriate method is determined, in each instance, by the answers to those two questions – ‘why?’ and ‘where?’. The methods available to the literary critic are highlighted most obviously in what we consider important to teach to our students, what in our pedagogy we implicitly or explicitly value as the core methods of our discipline: the ability to read, that is to understand and analyse the mechanisms of a text, how it produces the cognitive effects and emotional affects that it does.¹⁸ These are skills not just in the formal analysis of individual words, phrases, or lines, of imagery and rhetoric, but also in the analysis of narrative – students need to understand about order and discourse, about narrative voice, about double-ended frame narratives, about narrative temporality, and so on, in order to understand how a story works. To continue to state the obvious, other methods we teach are¹⁹: research skills (digital and archival); deploying historical and biographical context; tracing the material history of a text; attending to patterns of dissemination, proliferation, and reception; theoretical literacy; skills in writing well and constructing arguments effectively; as well as methods more commonly aligned with other

disciplines where useful, be it, for example, from computer science, sociology or philosophy. Thinking of all criticism as functional is an approach that demands of the critic a willingness, flexibility, and skilfulness to deploy the method(s) most suited to the specific combination of story, criticism, and critic function, at that moment encountered. In what follows, I offer a theory of the public functions of story, criticism, and critic, in order to delineate one critical approach – public criticism, the variety of methods it might deploy, and the reasons for its value.

The public functions of stories and criticism

In the rest of this essay, I will use ‘story’ to refer to the proper (meant descriptively not normatively) object of study of criticism, not the perhaps more commonly used ‘text’. By ‘story’ I mean a causal account of something happening that includes entities with agency, that can be distributed or shared, and in which both form and content generate affect and cognition. Stories can be textual (embedded, embodied, and curated) or non-textual (transient and malleable). Public criticism works with this capacious understanding of story, and is most useful when not restricted in its attentions only to ‘literature’ – the tools of literary studies have much to offer to the study of all types and forms of stories. In focusing my attention in this essay on the narrative form, I recognise that these reflections might therefore be more or less useful in relation to other proper objects of literary studies, or of other humanities disciplines in fact. But I think more is gained than lost in doing so. For such a focus responds to the ubiquity of stories in culture and society. Narrative is found across genres, media, sectors, and disciplines. Focusing on narrative form therefore offers the greatest scope for expanding where, why, and how criticism might valuably operate. Interestingly, this expansion restores the more generous understanding of the proper objects of criticism which Eagleton mourns the loss of at the end of *The Function of Criticism* (1984) when he notes that the ‘topics of criticism’ were ‘narrowed and impoverished’ when reduced to ‘the so-called “literary canon”’.²⁰

In *Uses of Literature* (2008), Felski calls for a renewed attention to literature’s connectedness with, and embeddedness and action in, the social world. But she notes that in many areas of literary studies there remains a deep mistrust of the idea that literature can have a use: ‘What distinguishes literature, in this line of thought, is its obdurate resistance to all calculations of purpose and function’.²¹ This resistance is not universal however – in ‘The Storyteller’, for example, Walter Benjamin identifies ‘an indispensable element of every real story. It serves, overtly or covertly, a useful function’.²² There is perhaps less resistance within literary studies to the idea of the eudonic functions of stories – entertainment, escape, happiness, healing – and the affective value of criticism, than there is to stories’ and criticism’s cognitive

functions.²³ But the cognitive value of stories is in fact recognised and investigated across disciplines.²⁴ Stories function as part of the informational context in which people think and act, make decisions, and formulate beliefs and judgements.²⁵ Stories – textual and non-textual – influence social judgement, agenda-setting, and the perception of problem urgency and responsibility.²⁶

One reason for suspicion of claims for literature's cognitive value within literary studies might lie in the fear that attention to cognitive value neglects attending to the ways in which stories are told. Consider Marjorie Perloff's assertion, for instance, that 'if the main purpose of a literary text is to convey knowledge or formulate truth, questions of form and genre take a back seat'.²⁷ Such questions may indeed be less foregrounded in public criticism attending to public function and cognitive value than in other critical approaches, but they need not necessarily be absent. Indeed, the extent to which they are present, and why, needs to be determined in the context of the function of the critical act being undertaken – attending to them at the levels valued within disciplinary criticism, for instance, might in fact be detrimental in some instances to the function of public criticism.

The value of public criticism lies in its ability to identify, analyse and communicate the cognitive value of stories, in particular in relation to important issues of debate or decision. To do so, public criticism needs to be able to identify what role a story or stories is/are playing in life, society or within an organisation, and deploy methods most suited to understanding and communicating that function. I here suggest four functions of stories that render them, and critical engagement with them, of cognitive value to public reasoning. Each function is (necessarily briefly) illustrated with examples pertaining to some of the key issues of contemporary public reasoning: the environment and climate crisis; exponential general purpose technologies such as AI; nuclear weapons and power; and the economy. The four cognitive functions of stories I propose focus on systems and collectives rather than individuals. Stories enable multiple points of view, increasing knowledge and understanding of a system of relevance to public reasoning. Stories create and consolidate collective identities, helping identify social groups, understand motivations and actions, and recognise social norms and how they are or might be changing. Stories are narrative models, functional tools that enable explanation and understanding. Stories can also function as anticipatory narrative models, part of their wider role in anticipatory systems, imagining and testing a range of futures in order to enable better public reasoning in the present. Any one story might function in one or all of these ways at the same or different times, and therefore might need to be approached methodologically differently depending on which function is currently being attended to. In the interdisciplinary spirit of public criticism, these function categories are

not primarily drawn out of the history of literary criticism or theory, but out of the most cutting-edge recent thinking about stories and their roles across disciplines. They may therefore be more or less recognisable to literary critics.

The function perhaps most notably absent for literary critics is empathy, which has historically been the most important, in some cases in fact the *only*, function of stories mobilised to maintain their relevance to public reasoning.²⁸ The narrative empathy-altruism hypothesis (NEAH) holds that stories function to produce empathy which leads to prosocial behaviour. Its validity, or lack thereof, is, as Andreea Deciu Ritivoi identifies, a question of importance 'not just for narrative theory but also for political thought'.²⁹ Convinced by neither the rhetorical nor empirical case for the NEAH, I propose that stories are of value to public reasoning not for the insight they may give into the emotional state of others, nor (posited) emotional or even intellectual changes in the reader. Rather, the public value of stories lies in the multiple perspectives one, or a collection of, stories can provide on a system of relevance to public reasoning. Public criticism that draws out and conveys that knowledge can contribute to greater understanding of the system. It can help change the boundaries of the system (what is included or excluded in it) and/or help change what is brought most sharply into focus or foregrounded within it. Functioning in this way, the useful information contained in stories and conveyed in public criticism is not about the holder of a specific point of view, but about expanding understanding of the systems that holder is observing, the object of their perspective.

Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (1990) (a revised version of his first novel, *Darkness in St Louis: Bearheart* [1978]) provides an Indigenous point of view on the environment, government and growth that can expand understanding of those systems. Ursula Le Guin's short story 'Direction of the Road' (1974) is less of value to public reasoning for the access it gives to the 'mind' of a tree and more for how the tree's point of view (imagined through story) offers a different perspective on the question of road development. Where an initial public framing might be to consider how to maximise movement and speed and reduce accidents (and would take for granted the perspective of the car driver), taking the story of the tree seriously means expanding the system it is necessary to consider to include stationary and slow-moving animate and inanimate entities adjacent to the road, which might include pedestrians as well as, for example, hedgerows. Functioning in this way, the story helps to foreground the consequences of increasing speed for static or slow-moving parts of the landscape.

Public criticism attending to stories as offering points of view on systems can draw on established core methods of disciplinary criticism, but must do

so with an awareness of, and in dialogue with, the cognitive value of the story in relation to issues of importance to public reasoning. As noted above, public criticism does not mean forsaking attention to the formal qualities of the story – indeed, as Felski notes, the ‘repertoire of sense-making devices is firmly anchored in the formal and generic properties of literary texts’³⁰ – but such attention is enacted in the interests of better understanding a story’s contextual cognitive value. Public criticism in this mode needs to ensure it expands the scope of its own enquiries in order to search out and include analysis of stories in which the points of view presented do not align with the critic’s own, in order to gather a wider range of viewpoints, and/or ensure that the multiple points of view contained within a single story are equally attended to.

Any increased understanding of individuals that might be achieved through stories functioning to offer different points of view is of value to the extent that individuals are part of collectives, and understanding collective identities is crucial to effective public reasoning. Stories can therefore also function to enable greater insight into collective identities. With regard to this function, public criticism attends *both* to how stories shared within groups convey social norms and other information relevant to group coherence, constituting identities and influencing behaviour, *and* how stories provide insight into the nature of collective identities, how they are formed and maintained, through their modelling of such identities in the contents of the story. (I will say more about modelling in a moment.)

Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888) created and sustained the Nationalist movement; Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) have and continue to shape and sustain American conservatism and libertarianism. Popular non-textual economic stories spread orally, through the news and through social media, influence individual and collective economic belief and action, such as the Bitcoin narrative, which has successfully cohered an anarchic and cosmopolitan collective identity that transcends nation state divisions.³¹ The story contents of Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* (2012) provides social knowledge about the impact of climate change on different but intersecting collective identities, those of scientists, low income families, and a population of butterflies, in a specific locale, at a specific time, in relation to the use or value of a particular piece of land.

The TV series *Chernobyl* represents the identity systems – including the relationship between the science and policy communities, and the dangers of misinformation, propaganda and disregard for truth – that characterised the US and the UK at the time the series was made. Public criticism informed by historical knowledge of Soviet life and research into the intentions and role of the series writer can explain why *Chernobyl* ought not to be taken as a reliable or realistic model of such structures in the final years of the

Soviet Union. But public criticism that draws on methodologies from sociology is needed in order to test Belarusian Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich's observation that the series has cohered the younger generation in Belarus who have learnt more about the extent of the disaster through watching it, and who have received the series through a lens of stronger generational environmental consciousness.³² Shared stories contributing to shared identities are also associated with research groups, for instance, evidence that science fiction (SF) plays a role in the formation of AI researcher communities, their constituents, and the type of research undertaken, is anecdotal, historical, (auto)biographical and, emergently, empirical.³³

Public criticism attending to the collective identity function of stories can help identify social groups in terms of narrative networks, leading to new understandings of motivations and actions and of the norms that inform them. To do so, public criticism needs to draw on and deploy different methods in order to study both story sharing and story content, and explore the cognitive value of both with regard to developing understanding of collective identities in public reasoning. To study the effects of story sharing, public criticism needs sociological, empirical, and experimental research methods. It can also continue to cautiously deploy new digital methods made available by developments in research technologies – in particular in relation to accessing and processing large datasets of stories – whilst being cognisant of the access and ethical challenges of such research.

Public criticism attending to the cognitive value of story content with regard to collective identities needs a robust theory of narrative representation in order to explain how stories provide knowledge about the world. Such a theory is found in the third function of stories proposed here – modelling. Stories can be understood as narrative models. A narrative model is an idealised description or conception of a target system, through narrative means, which can help perform some cognitive function with respect to that system, yielding knowledge through *surrogative reasoning*.³⁴ The nature of the narrative representation underpinning stories' modelling function can be understood according to Roman Frigg and James Nguyen's DEKI account of representation.³⁵ It is so called because of its key elements: denotation, exemplification, keying up, and imputation. A model *denotes* a target system. The model *exemplifies* certain properties of that system – this is a selective act determined by context. These properties are *imputed* to the target system by the model designer or the model user – that is, they stipulate that the properties exemplified in the model hold in the target system. But an exact correspondence is rarely proposed. A precise articulation of the relationship between the properties of the model and their imputed correlates in the target system is needed. This precise articulation is a *key*,

which explains exactly how the properties of the model relate to the target system.

DEKI provides a more rigorous understanding of narrative representation – of how stories relate to the world – than that found in the history of literary critical thinking about mimesis, which too often flounders on the rocks of defining representation. In his otherwise impressive history of mimesis, Stephen Halliwell merely proposes that the relationship between the story-world and the real-world is one of ‘correspondence or equivalence’ or of ‘coherence or congruity’.³⁶ DEKI offers a tighter formulation of the nature of the relationship between story and world or, as it can now be termed, between narrative model and target system. Frigg and Nguyen suggest as much in the final chapter of *Modelling Nature* (2020), where they propose that DEKI could be extended to explain the workings of symbolic art, film, and literature. They give example readings of Frans Pourbus the Younger’s painting of Anne of Austria, the 1987 film *The Way Things Go* (dir. Fischli and Weiss), George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, and Voltaire’s *Candide: or, Optimism*. They suggest that extending DEKI to art, film, and literature could provide a new account of ‘the epistemic value of art’.³⁷

To provide a worked example, the target system *denoted* in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Aurora* (2015) is planet Earth and its human inhabitants – a large target system, but an important one given that climate change is a global issue, even as it has radically different local effects. *Aurora exemplifies* certain properties of that system. That is, the novel represents many properties of our present-day situation. These include: unstable environmental effects with consequences for the planet’s ability to sustain human (and other) life; the possibility that one mode of adaptation is the colonisation of other human habitable planets; and, the challenges of governing resources and people in a closed system. The novel is affective and effective because the reader *imputes* that these properties exemplified in the model hold in the target system; that is, the novel has relevance to its readers – it enables them to engage in surrogative reasoning about contemporary circumstances – because the reader is convinced that its themes and concerns correlate with their reality. For the story to enable such reasoning, an articulation of the precise nature of that correlation is needed. This precise articulation, the *key*, is provided through public criticism that shows how, for instance, the novel prompts its readers to consider possible policy responses to climate change such as the relocation option on the one hand, and the resource management and collective governance option on the other. With regard to the latter, in recreating the closed system of Earth on an imagined interplanetary relocation ship, *Aurora* models the resource and governance challenges and options that Earth currently faces, but which some individuals and collectives have been slow or resistant to confront, countenance, and address.

Public criticism recognises that certain narrative models are only useful in certain contexts, that the same model is not (necessarily) useful in different contexts, and that the knowledge produced needs to be used carefully. But it also asserts that, deployed judiciously and in appropriate contexts, surrogate reasoning about narrative models can help inform public reasoning. Public criticism must ascertain which stories are relevant to the public issue at hand, what target system the story or stories enable surrogate reasoning about, whether the narrative model is functioning in mimetic or anticipatory mode (depending on whether the target system is actual or hypothetical), and, if the former, whether the story is mimetically legitimate. Public criticism that asks and answers such questions can enable narrative models to be effectively and explicitly incorporated into a pluralistic evidence base to inform public reasoning. The DEKI account of narrative representation, and approaching stories as narrative models, represent new methods in publicly valuable literary criticism, but they are methods that also still draw on established core methods of the discipline for the operation of the literary critical key.

Whereas mimetic narrative models can aid surrogate reasoning about nearer term or narrower areas of public reasoning in which more elements of the target system are fixed, anticipatory narrative models can function in longer-term areas where more elements of the target system vary, and over greater ranges. Anticipation is crucial to effective public reasoning since, as Kenneth Boulding notes in the foreword to one of the foundational works of Futures Studies (FS) – Fred Polak’s *The Image of the Future* (1973) – ‘The human condition can almost be summed up in the observation that, whereas all experiences are of the past, all decisions are about the future. The image of the future, therefore, is the key to all choice-oriented behavior’.³⁸ *Aurora*, for example, has cognitive value as an anticipatory narrative model, rather than a mimetic one, if its hypothetical target system is understood to be the consequences and effects of the development and deployment in human systems (in particular, those of governance) of artificial general intelligence. Anticipatory narrative models are one way in which stories function as narrative futures methods. Such methods can be used to anticipate under conditions of uncertainty and contingency, can help avoid (or raise critical self-consciousness about) colonial attitudes towards the future, and can extend futures practice beyond experts, leading to enhanced civic engagement and deliberative democracy.

Stories already play a role in the processes of established futures methods. For example, in incasting, the story functions as a prompt for speculation on impacts of alternative futures: ‘incasting is a simple matter of having participants divide into small groups and read a paragraph that describes a rather extreme version of an alternative future. [...] They are then asked to describe the impacts on a series of domains, such as law, politics, family life,

entertainment, education, work, etc'.³⁹ Comparably, in backcasting, a future state is envisioned and then a story is created about the events that would lead from the present to that future state. Future mapping also uses pre-defined narrative end-state scenarios, but also includes ideas for events leading up to those states. Participant teams then select and arrange the events, in essence creating a 'full story' but with the assistance of having the story pathway parts provided, although with their ordering and connection to be determined. Science fiction prototyping (SFP) is an 'emerging foresight technique' inspired by 'hard' SF.⁴⁰ SFPs are defined by Brian David Johnson as 'short stories, movies and comics that are created based on real science and technology'.⁴¹ They have a twofold function: one, commercial and instrumentalist, to help develop new products and technologies; the other, social and ethical, using science fiction to explore the use and implications of those future technologies. SFP develops out of a keen respect for SF as a genre, but also distances itself from it on the grounds of intention, context, and purposiveness.⁴² Public critics can take part in, or lead, SFP exercises, thereby playing a part in widening the sources of evidence included in public reasoning (both the form of evidence and the source of people generating it), and contributing to a more deliberative democracy. Collaborative storytelling games can function similarly, with the same benefits, in particular offering an important avenue to further include non-experts in futures work.⁴³

The development of narrative futures methods has largely been undertaken by academics outside of literary studies. Developers of narrative futures methods therefore often lack the rigorous training and professional skill that literary critics possess. This can weaken the quality of critical engagement with narrative scenarios in FS and futures practice, both those produced by standard futures methods and those produced by novel narrative methods. In particular, the lack of intersection and interaction between FS and SF studies might explain the most underdeveloped narrative futures method – the use of existing SF stories as anticipatory narrative models. Many works of SF are written with similar intent and purpose to SFPs and collaborative storytelling games, and have a wide effect on public views, actions, and decision-making. Given they are produced by creative professionals, they are also usually significantly more sophisticated and rewarding in their rigorous imagining than lay products. Whilst not (necessarily) collaborative in creation, critical engagement with such stories can indeed be collaborative, and can take place within a futures context. Moreover, literary theory has long dispensed with authorial intention as an arbiter of the meaning and effects of a story, so critical engagement with SF stories irrespective of author intention can yield rich insights into possible and preferable futures. In particular, SF stories functioning as anticipatory narrative models enable surrogative reasoning about future states, and the pathways

to those states, of cognitive value to public reasoning.⁴⁴ Public criticism of narrative models undertakes surrogate reasoning drawing on the core methods of literary criticism. But it also incorporates new methods in order to fully engage with the valuable public potential of narrative futures methods. Such methods include civic engagement, hosting or participating in cross-sector and interdisciplinary collaborative workshops, establishing and maintaining interdisciplinary and cross-sector relationships, storytelling game design, and story creation.⁴⁵ Such practical and creative activities, often taking place outside of the physical or conceptual space of university literary criticism, are valuable methods of public criticism.

The public functions of the critic

In the previous section, I have delineated the cognitive and collective value of stories and public criticism of them. Narrative experts who are highly skilled in analysing and interpreting the functioning of stories are needed to draw out and convey this collective cognitive value to non-experts. But for narrative expertise to contribute to public reasoning by creating narrative evidence on a cognitive and collective scale, it is necessary to expand our conception of the public functions of the critic. The literary critic can play different roles at different times, in relation to life, society and institutions, and our discipline as a whole can be collectively strengthened by different groups and individuals functioning in these different ways at different times. When it comes to seeking out a plural understanding of the function of the literary critic, and perhaps of the humanities scholar more generally, we can usefully learn from the sciences not in terms of their methods, but in terms of the learning that has amassed over some time in the sciences regarding the different public roles a scientist can play. Indeed, Roger A. Pielke Jr's *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science and Politics* (2007) provides a model that might be productively adapted to the humanities.⁴⁶

Pielke outlines four idealised types of engagement that scientists can adopt (depending on their view of science and of democracy) when considering the range of roles they may choose to play if they wish (or do not wish) their research to inform public reasoning in some way. Pielke's book might be described as sharing a functional disposition, but in relation to scientific rather than humanistic knowledge. Pielke's categories are: the pure scientist – focusing on research with ostensibly no regard for its utility; the science arbiter – a responsive role, providing expert advice when approached by a policymaker with a specific request; the issue advocate – who has a desired policy outcome in mind; and, the honest broker of policy alternatives – one who 'engages in decision-making by clarifying and, at times, seeking to expand, the range of choices available to decision-makers'.⁴⁷ Pielke also identifies a fifth type, called the stealth advocate, representing experts who

attempt to ignore or disguise their intentions by over-emphasising the apolitical or independent nature of their advice, with related risks to the overall quality of the public reasoning.

Public criticism's consideration of the public role of the literary critic can be informed by considering how Pielke's typology might map on to literary scholarship, and humanities scholarship in general. Literary critics have traditionally inhabited the role of pure academic, or of issue advocate. Where literary critics are explicit about their personal values and beliefs, they can operate openly as issue advocates intending to influence public reasoning in a particular direction. This role may include taking part in political activism. Pielke notes that 'the defining characteristic of this role is a desire to reduce the scope of available choice, often to a single preferred outcome among many possible outcomes', and that 'issue advocacy is fundamental to a healthy democracy and is a noble calling'.⁴⁸ But issue advocacy is not the only possible role a literary critic can play in public reasoning – literary critics can also function as humanities arbiters and honest brokers. These positions may offer a much needed way out of the current impasse I see many humanities issue advocates currently facing, in which realisation that the work of their discipline is not sufficient (or even perhaps necessary) to change the world can lead to a questioning of faith in its value at all. Many humanities academics have lost the 'faith in exposure'⁴⁹ that Sedgwick associates with paranoid reading while still continuing to practice it, unable to consider alternatives due to the persistence of a concomitant belief that paranoid reading is 'the only and inevitable mode, motive, content, and proof of true knowledge',⁵⁰ and of the public value of their work.⁵¹ They are also plagued by what Felski identifies as the challenge of reconciling their intellectual commitments and, I would add, institutional positions, with their 'political claims to speak "from below"'.⁵² Considering the roles of humanities arbiter or humanities honest broker as viable additions to the possible public functions of the literary critic, and other humanities scholars, offers new sites at which to locate both the public and self-reflective value of the humanities.⁵³

The science arbiter 'supports a decision maker by providing answers to questions that can be addressed empirically, that is to say, using the tools of science',⁵⁴ often playing this role as a member of expert advisory committees. The literary critic as humanities arbiter can support a decision-maker by providing answers to questions that can be addressed through the tools of our discipline, also as a member of expert advisory committees if such structures were to adapt to accommodate us. To function in this way requires explicit explanation of, and public understanding of, what constitutes methodological rigour in literary studies: robust methods (as recognised by sub-field), appropriate to their object of study; depth and breadth of knowledge of the existing critical literature and the situation of one's

research in relation to it; sensitive, detailed, and acute close reading; archival research, or identification by other means of new relevant material; the construction of coherent and compelling arguments substantiated by evidence gathered; peer review; and, ongoing engagement, rejection, refinement, and deployment of arguments and ideas across a field, over time, leading to cumulative knowledge as well as evolution and novelty. Routine effective, explicit, academic and public description and communication of the methods and structures guaranteeing rigour in literary studies, and the humanities more widely, would enable the role of humanities arbiter to be filled more regularly, enable humanities academics to be more easily incorporated into the structures of public reasoning, and give decision-makers more confidence to ask humanities experts questions, and more confidence in the robustness of our answers.

To function as an honest broker rather than an issue advocate, the literary critic must deploy their expertise to serve the public good regardless of whether they, as citizens, are aligned in terms of politics or values with those currently in power. Those the literary critic might most seek to inform may be precisely those with whom both sides feel they have least in common. This is a challenge at which many literary critics may well balk, so far removed is it from the issue advocacy alignment of research with activism. But in public criticism this needs to be one role that the literary critic can play among many. To do so would require literary critics committed to influencing public reasoning in this way to operate both in their research practices, and in public, in more politically neutral ways, enabling more public trust in the non-partisan nature of their knowledge and expertise.

Public trust in humanities scholarship, including literary criticism, is therefore dependent on greater communication and understanding of the robustness of our methods, and on *either* the clear statement of personal political values influencing the research (in the full knowledge that this can actually make it less effective, in the sense that the research becomes conflated with, and therefore easily dismissed as, only an academic version of an already well-understood political position), *or* with developing and practising research methods that mitigate against personal beliefs and politics. One way of achieving the latter is through a greater emphasis on collaboration and synthesis in our research practices, since a decision-maker within the structures of public reasoning may be more confident of the value of insights that come from a given field of research if it is clear that the knowledge is produced by researchers with different political leanings or sets of values. Whilst synthesis practices exist in the sciences (consider for instance the IPCC, or in medicine [Cochrane] and international development [Campbell]), they are very rare within the humanities.⁵⁵ Researchers are inevitably drawn to, and rewarded for, creating new knowledge, and

the generative effects of synthesis tend not to be included within that categorisation. Public criticism includes synthesis as a valuable and important method, both the task of bringing together existing knowledge within a discipline, and knowledge across disciplines, of relevance to a question of importance to public reasoning. In public criticism the value lies not just in the function of the individual critic generating original work alone, but in collaborative working to generate collectively produced knowledge, and in the synthesis of work across fields (a practice which requires its own forms of rigour, creativity, and judgement).

Public criticism is inherently interdisciplinary and intersectoral.⁵⁶ In his focus on the epistemic value of criticism, Jonathan Kramnick calls for an understanding of ‘how a “reading” of a poem on for example the topic of harvesting apples might be of interest for a scholar working on sustainable agriculture’.⁵⁷ Such an understanding would, he says, ‘provide the ground for ongoing conversations and collaborations among disciplines’.⁵⁸ Public criticism as presented here provides that understanding. It offers the ground not just for collaboration among disciplines, but across sectors, providing an implementable framework for how a story about harvesting apples might be of interest not just to a scholar working on sustainable agriculture, but to the policymakers tasked with designing agricultural policy.

Conclusion

Twenty-first-century literary studies might well benefit from engaging in a collective futures exercise to imagine its own possible, probable, and preferable futures, the multiple pathways it might follow, and how to not just survive, but thrive, in environments of recurrent risk. But to be productive, such an exercise would need to be conducted out of a spirit of disciplinary self-confidence and respect, rather than anxiety and contempt. It may prove a far more fertile exercise in futural development than internecine conflict; at the very least, it would give us another way of going about things.

Notes

1. This first history might encompass, in reverse chronological order, New Formalism, New Criticism, and *fin de siècle* ‘art for art’s sake’. See also Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), for a historical account of ‘the *function* of the discipline’ (p. 1) and of how nineteenth-century writers claimed for literature ‘a special kind of value – one not defined by the market’ (p. 2).
2. This second history would encompass (and this is not an exhaustive list) Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1981) and Terry Eagleton’s *The Function of Criticism*

(London: Verso, 2005; orig. pub. 1984); the work of the Frankfurt School; the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud; and the branches of literary criticism they have influenced, including New Historicism, Deconstruction, feminist, queer, postcolonial and psychoanalytic criticism. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You', in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (ed.), *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 1–39. See also Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2015) for a critical mapping of this history.

3. For versions of this school of thought, see Elizabeth S. Anker, 'Postcritique and Social Justice', *American Book Review*, 38.5 (2017), pp. 9–10; Elizabeth S. Anker and Rita Felski (eds), *Critique and Postcritique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, 'Surface Reading: An Introduction', *Representations*, 108.1 (2009), pp. 1–21; Christopher Castiglia, 'Critiquiness', *English Language Notes*, 51.2 (2013), pp. 79–85; Christopher Castiglia, 'Hope for Critique?', in Elizabeth S. Anker and Rita Felski (eds), *Critique and Postcritique*, pp. 211–29; Russ Castronovo and David Glimp, 'Introduction: After Critique?', *English Language Notes*, 51.2 (2013), pp. 1–5; Felski, *The Limits of Critique*; Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Heather Love, 'Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn', *New Literary History*, 41.2 (2010), pp. 371–91; Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies After Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2017). Its origins can be traced back through Bruno Latour's 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30.2 (2004), pp. 225–48, to Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading'.
4. See Sarah Dillon, 'English and the Public Good', in Robert Eaglestone and Gail Marshall (eds), *English: Shared Futures* (Martlesham: Boydell and Brewer, 2018), pp. 194–201.
5. Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 9. See also Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *The Institution of Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982).
6. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
7. Sheila Jasanoff, *Science and Public Reason* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 5. This definition of public reasoning moves away from other conceptual traditions regarding public reasoning perhaps more familiar to academics in the humanities, as summarised in Jonathan Quong, 'Public Reason', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/public-reason/> [Date: accessed: 9 August 2022].
8. Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, p. 140. See Michel Foucault, 'What is Critique?', in James Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 382–98. Note also Felski's discussion of 'an anti-normative normativity' (*The Limits of Critique*, p. 9).
9. See Steven Connor, 'Decomposing the Humanities', *New Literary History*, 47.2&3 (2016), pp. 275–88. See Frans W. A. Brom, 'Institutionalizing Applied Humanities: Enabling a Stronger Role for the Humanities in

- Interdisciplinary Research for Public Policy', *Palgrave Communications*, 5.72 (2019), pp. 1-8, for a functionalist case for what he calls 'the applied humanities', quite opposite to Connor's in disposition and approach.
10. 'Melodramatic binarism' is adapted from David Kurnick's description of the character sketches of the critic available in 'method wars' texts as 'vehemently, even melodramatically, binarized' ('A Few Lies: Queer Theory and Our Method Melodramas', *ELH*, 87.2 (2020), pp. 349-74 (p. 351)). The term 'method wars' comes from Felski's 'Introduction' (*New Literary History* 45.2 (Spring 2014), pp. v-xi (p. v)) to a special issue on 'Interpretation and its Rivals'.
 11. Sedgwick deploys Kleinian *positions* to think about 'paranoid and reparative critical *practices* [...] as changing and heterogenous relational stances' ('Paranoid Reading', p. 8). Felski attends to 'mood' to 'expand our repertoire of critical moods while embracing a richer array of critical methods' (*The Limits of Critique*, p. 13). Jonathan Kramnick notes an imprecision in distinguishing between mood and method in Felski, the former characterised by affective dispositions such as suspicion or pleasure, the latter more properly referring to 'the procedures and norms of analysis and argument' ('Criticism and Truth', *Critical Inquiry* 47 (Winter 2021), pp. 218-40 (p. 219, n. 3)). I here retain a distinction between critical *approaches* – a more kinetic and interactive term than 'position', and less purely affective than 'mood' – and *method*, as defined by Kramnick.
 12. Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading', p. 5.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. Kurnick ('A Few Lies', pp. 362-3) notes – and points to others who have also done so – the way in which the rhetoric of Sedgwick's essay forgets some of its own more nuanced claims. Critical engagement with the essay need not be subject to the same amnesia.
 17. Kurnick, 'A Few Lies', p. 351.
 18. It has recently been observed that contemporary debates about the value and methods of literary studies lack sustained and detailed theoretical accounts of what happens in the classroom, including in the writings of postcritique. See Maral Attar-Zadeh, 'Addressing our Authors: Reading Relations in the Literary Classroom' (unpublished Master of Philosophy dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2021). Attar-Zadeh addresses and explains this absence, and moves towards rectifying the elision with a theoretical account of reading relations in the literary classroom, focusing primarily on the relationship between student and teacher and individual subject-formation. See also Rachel Sagner Buurma and Laura Heffernan's *The Teaching Archive: A New History for Literary Study* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2020).
 19. Most discussions around the 'method wars' do not state the obvious about method. Kurnick points to 'a willingness among literary critics to generalize imprecisely [...] about what the practice of literary criticism looks like' ('A Few Lies', p. 360).
 20. Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 124.
 21. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 7.
 22. Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller Essays*, trans. Tess Lewis (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2019), p. 51.

23. This perhaps in part explains the affective turn in literary studies – including in postcritique – and in the humanities and social sciences more broadly.
24. See, for example, Louis Mink, ‘Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument’, in Robert H. Canary and Henry Koziciki (eds), *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 129–49; John A. Robinson and L. Hawpe, ‘Narrative Thinking as a Heuristic Process’, in T. R. Sarbin (ed.), *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), pp. 111–25; Margaret R. Somers, ‘The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach’, *Theory and Society*, 23.5 (1994), pp. 605–49; Peter Swirski, *Of Literature and Knowledge: Explorations in Narrative Thought Experiments, Evolution and Game Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006); Peter Brooks with Hilary Jewett (eds), *The Humanities and Public Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Mary S. Morgan and M. Norton Wise, ‘Narrative Science and Narrative Knowing: Introduction to Special Issue on Narrative Science’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 62 (2017), pp. 1–5; and Julia Christensen, Christopher Cox, and Liza Szabo-Jones (eds), *Activating the Heart: Storytelling, Knowledge Sharing, and Relationship* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018). This focus on cognitive value concurs with Felski’s insistence in *Uses of Literature* that stories are ‘purveyors of epistemic insights’ (p. 21). Her useful focus on knowledge in *Uses of Literature* is less visible in later work, such as *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020).
25. See, for example, Larry W. Gregory, Robert B. Cialdini, and Kathleen M. Carpenter, ‘Self-Relevant Scenarios as Mediators of Likelihood Estimates and Compliance: Does Imagining Make It So?’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43.1 (1982), pp. 89–99; Nancy Pennington and Reid Hastie, ‘Explanation-Based Decision Making: Effects of Memory Structure on Judgment’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 14.3 (1988), pp. 521–33; Deborah A. Prentice, Richard J. Gerrig, and Daniel S. Ballis, ‘What Readers Bring to the Processing of Fictional Texts’, *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 4 (1997), pp. 416–20; Jeffrey J. Strange and Cynthia C. Leung, ‘How Anecdotal Accounts in News and in Fiction Can Influence Judgments of a Social Problem’s Urgency, Causes, and Cures’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25.4 (1999), pp. 436–49; and Christian Wheeler, Melanie C. Green, and Timothy C. Brock, ‘Fictional Narratives Change Beliefs: Replications of Prentice, Gerrig, and Bailis (1997) with Mixed Corroboration’, *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 6 (1999), pp. 136–41.
26. See, for example, Herbert A. Simon, ‘Making Management Decisions: The Role of Intuition and Emotion’, *The Academy of Management Executive*, 1.1 (1987), pp. 57–64; Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Shanto Iyengar, ‘Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty’, *Political Behavior*, 12 (1990), pp. 19–40; Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Rhonda Gibson and Dolf Zillmann, ‘Exaggerated Versus Representative Exemplification in News Reports: Perception of Issues and Personal Consequences’, *Communication Research*, 21.5 (1994), pp. 603–24.

27. Marjorie Perloff, *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004), p. 17, cited in Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 83.
28. See, for just one example, Martha Nussbaum's work, for instance in *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995) and *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997).
29. Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, 'Reading Stories, Reading (Others') Lives: Empathy, Intersubjectivity, and Narrative Understanding', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 8.1 (2016), pp. 51–75 (p. 52).
30. Felksi, *Uses of Literature*, p. 83. For Felski, the 'fictional and aesthetic dimensions' of texts, 'far from testifying to a failure of knowing, should be hailed as the source of their cognitive strength' (p. 104).
31. See Robert J. Shiller, *Narrative Economics: How Stories Go Viral and Drive Major Economic Events* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).
32. Anna Sous and Tony Wesolowsky, 'Belarusian Nobel Laureate Says HBO Series Has "Completely Changed Perception" of Chernobyl', *RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty*, 13 June 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/belarusian-nobellaureate-says-hbo-series-has-completely-changed-perception-ofchernobyl/29997496.html> [Date: accessed 8 August 2022]; unpaginated.
33. See Sarah Dillon and Jennifer Schaffer, 'What AI Researchers Read: The Role of Literature in Artificial Intelligence Research', *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 2022, ahead-of-print, 1–22.
34. See Chris Swoyer, 'Structural Representation and Surrogate Reasoning', *Synthese*, 87 (1991), pp. 449–508.
35. Roman Frigg and James Nguyen, *Modelling Nature: An Opinionated Introduction to Scientific Representation* (Cham: Springer, 2020).
36. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 15 and p. 23.
37. Frigg and Nguyen, *Modelling Nature*, p. 210.
38. Kenneth Boulding, 'Foreword', in Fred Polak, *The Image of the Future* (London: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1973), pp. v–vi (p. v).
39. Peter Bishop, Andy Hines, and Terry Collins, 'The Current State of Scenario Development: An Overview of Techniques', *Foresight*, 9.1 (2007), pp. 5–25 (p. 12).
40. Gary Graham, Anita Greenhill, and Victor Callaghan, 'Technological Forecasting and Social Change Special Section: Creative Prototyping', *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 84 (2014), pp. 1–4 (p. 2).
41. Brian David Johnson, *Science Fiction Prototyping: Designing the Future with Science Fiction* (San Rafael, CA: Morgan & Claypool, 2011), p. v.
42. Graham, Greenhill, and Callaghan, 'Technological Forecasting and Social Change', p. 2; Jan Oliver Schwarz, Rixa Kroehl, and Heiko A. von der Gracht, 'Novels and Novelty in Trend Research: Using Novels to Perceive Weak Signals and Transfer Frames of Reference', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 84 (2014), pp. 66–73 (p. 6).
43. See Shahar Avin, 'Exploring Artificial Intelligence Futures', *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Humanities*, 2 (2019), pp. 169–94; Stuart Candy, 'Gaming Futures Literacy: The Thing from the Future', in Riel Miller (ed.), *Transforming the Future: Anticipation in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 233–46; Olivia Belton and Sarah Dillon, 'Futures of Autonomous Fight:

- Using a Collaborative Storytelling Game to Assess Anticipatory Assumptions', *Futures*, 128 (2021), pp. 1–13.
44. Dennis Livingston enquires into 'the availability and utility of alternative models of the future international political system that may be found in science fiction', and identifies that 'the essential contribution of science fiction consists in its offerings of heuristic, speculative models of social systems that speak to the major issues raised in nonfiction works' ('Science Fiction Models of Future World Order Systems', *International Organization*, 25.2 (1971), pp. 254–70 (pp. 255, 268)). A.H. Louie notes that models are the vehicles through which humans anticipate, functioning to 'pull the future into the present' ('Robert Rosen's Anticipatory Systems', *Foresight*, 12.3 (2010), pp. 18–29 (p. 21)).
 45. For cross-sector engagement in relation to futures and literary studies see the activities of the University of Lancaster's Institute for Social Futures (UK). See also Genevieve Liveley, Will Slocombe, and Emily Spires's work on FLiNT (Futures Literacy through Narrative) ('Futures Literacy Through Narrative', *Futures*, 125 (2021), 102663). For just one example of story creation as literary critical method in issue advocacy criticism, see Ruha Benjamin's creative work, such as her experimentation with speculative methods in 'Designer and Discarded Genomes', paper presented at the Future Perfect, E37, Data & Society, 28 June 2017; audio recording available here: <https://listen.datasociety.net/episodes/future-perfect-designer-and-discarded-genomes-zVAbl1xP>.
 46. The framework is not, of course, without its critics. See, for instance, Sheila Jasanoff, 'Speaking Honestly to Power', *American Scientist*, 96.3 (2008), pp. 240–43.
 47. Roger A. Pielke Jr, *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 17. See Roger A. Pielke Jr, 'Five Modes of Science Engagement', *Roger Pielke Jr.'s Blog: Science, Innovation, Politics*, 19 January 2015, <https://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2015/01/five-modes-of-science-engagement.html> [Date: accessed 8 August 2022], for an accessible overview.
 48. Pielke Jr, 'Five Modes', unpaginated.
 49. Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading', p. 17.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 51. Caren Irr summarises the position of such work on the question of its public value: 'Ideology critique remains the primary social contribution made by intellectuals in the humanities to the project of emancipation and planetary survival' ('Ideology Critique 2.0', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 119.4 (2020), pp. 715–45 (p. 715)).
 52. Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, p. 144.
 53. Public criticism's consideration of the functions of the literary critic provides an answer to the key question that Best and Marcus identify, that of 'why literary criticism matters if it is not political activism by another name' ('Surface Reading', p. 2). Best and Marcus note their thinking arises 'in part, out of a sense of political realism about the revolutionary capacities of both texts and critics, and doubts about whether we could ever attain the heightened perspicacity that would allow us to see fully beyond ideology' (pp. 15–16).
 54. Pielke Jr, 'Five Modes', unpaginated.

55. Cochrane is an international network providing information and evidence for healthcare workers, funders, and researchers to enhance decision making (<https://www.cochrane.org/>). Campbell's International Development Coordinating Group (IDCG) 'is a multidisciplinary network of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners' that 'prepares, edits, updates and disseminates systematic reviews of high policy relevance with a dedicated focus on social and economic development interventions in low- and middle-income countries' (<https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/contact/coordinating-groups/international-development.html>). The British Academy is now beginning to conduct useful synthesis work in the UK across the research community in the Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts (SHAPE) - see, for example, their report *The Covid Decade: Understanding the Long-Term Societal Impacts of Covid-19* (The British Academy, 2021), pp. 1-72.
56. See Sarah Dillon 'The Deictic Humanities: Towards a Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity' (forthcoming) for a taxonomy that includes within it, as in fact one type of interdisciplinarity amongst others, intersectorality.
57. Kramnick, 'Criticism and Truth', p. 240.
58. Ibid.

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ORCID

Sarah Dillon  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6321-1273>