

## **Josefine Wälivaara: Deviants in Space: The Cancellation of *Firefly* as Testament to Shifting Tonalities in Science Fiction**

Science fiction film and television from the 2000s-2010s differ in many ways from their predecessors in terms of character depictions, themes and possible motifs, not least in depictions of, and narrative dealings with, adult themes and content such as sexuality. Throughout its history, science fiction has often been characterized as juvenile by different discourses, including academic definitions, fan positions, and classifications/rating systems. However, though this tendency can be considered as part of a dominant discourse of science fiction as a film and television genre, it by no means includes all science fiction. I instead argue that it is derived from a particular type of science fiction that became highly influential in the 1980s-1990s, and is represented by *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. They often become synonymous with the idea of science fiction as a Hollywood, or popular television, genre. Furthermore, I argue that this salient tendency of juvenility has been part in disassociating science fiction film and television from adult themes and concerns.

By the turn of the millennia, however, I suggest that a turn towards more adult science fiction took place. In this paper I argue that *Firefly* was a forerunner to the more adult science fiction that we see today, and its cancellation and later success, a testament to the discursive shift occurring in the genre at that time. Though the reasons behind the cancellation of the series are attributed to different things by different scholars (see, e.g. Jes Battis; Ginjer Buchanan; Keith R.A. DeCandido; Matthew Pateman) both Battis and Buchanan discuss it primarily in relation to science fiction as a genre. I join these in the idea that the generic lineage of science fiction into which *Firefly* was produced also contributed to the early demise of the series. I see this as an unpreparedness for an adult science fiction narrative and world. While I do not contend against the idea that there are multiple reasons for the cancellation of the series, I focus my consideration on the generic lineage into which it is positioned as science fiction, in relation to that earlier history and its continued development. While I consider the cancellation of *Firefly* as an example of the changes that occurred in the genre at the time, I do not suggest that it was responsible for the turn itself, but rather that *Firefly* was cancelled partly because of this ongoing change. It can thus serve as an example of this shift in tonalities in the genre.