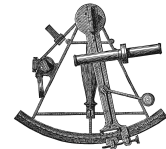


### **(Re)imagining the Sci-fi Hero in *Leviathan Wakes* and *This is How You Lose the Time War*: Queer narrative as the path to new, revolutionary futures**

SEXTANT—Sexualities, Masculinities  
& Decolonialities  
Vol. 1(2) 63-77  
© The Author(s) 2023



**Keev Boyle-Darby<sup>1</sup>**  
*University College Dublin*

#### **Abstract**

Alexis Lothian (2018) notes that speculative and science-fiction is a genre that can offer its “cultural producers” the opportunity to speculatively imagine alternative realities and futures by narratively “reconfigur[ing]” the socio-political conditions of their present moment (p. 18). This article employs a queer futurities and temporalities framework to examine two speculative, science-fiction novels—namely *Leviathan Wakes* by James S.A. Corey and *This is How You Lose the Time War* by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone—and both novels’ capacities to imagine alternative, speculative futures to our present late-capitalist, neoliberal socio-political moment. In making such an analysis, this article considers both novels’ representations of gender and sexuality as well as each novel’s war narratives to consider how queerness in its affectual and temporal relationality might offer novel opportunities for the genre of speculative and science-fiction in imagining possible futures beyond the confines of our current late-capitalist, neo-liberal and heteronormative socio-political parameters.

#### **Keywords**

Futurity; queer temporality; speculative fiction; heteronormativity; neoliberalism

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author: Boyle-Darby, Keev  
Email: [keevobaoill@gmail.com](mailto:keevobaoill@gmail.com)  
SEXTANT: [www.sextantnotes.com](http://www.sextantnotes.com). ISSN: 2990-8124  
University College Dublin, Ireland

## Introduction

You gave me so much—a history, a future, a calm that lets me write these words though I’m breaking. I hope I’ve given you something in return—I think you would want me to know I have. And what we’ve done will stand, no matter how they weave the world against us. It’s done now, and forever. What will I do, sky? Lake, what? Bluebird, iris, ultramarine, how can there be more when this is done? But it will never end—that’s the answer. There is always us. Dearest, deepest Blue— At the end as at the start, and through all the in-betweens, I love you. Red (El-Mohtar and Gladstone, 2019, p. 165).

*This Is How You Lose the Time War* (2019), co-written by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone, and *Leviathan Wakes* (2011), written under the pen-name James S.A. Corey, are two dystopian, speculative fiction novels published in the Global North (namely the United States) during similar, contemporary neo-liberal and late-capitalist geo-socio-political moments in the 2010s. *Time War* follows two cyborg agents, Red and Blue, from opposing sides of a war on time—Commandant and Garden, respectively. Both protagonists weave through the fabric of time on behalf of their respective regimes, attempting to rewrite history and win the war against time itself. As their relationship evolves from enemies to lovers, however, both Red and Blue begin to question the purpose of the war and their roles in the war as agents for their respective regimes. *Leviathan* (the first in a several-book long series) follows two cisgender, heterosexual men, a detective called Holden and a space captain named Miller, as they embark on a detective-noir-style mission in outer space.

In the epigraph above from *Time War*, Red narrates in an ode to Blue the significance of their romantic love for one another and how it relates to the theories of queer temporality and futurity that are central to my argument in this article: “You gave me so much—a history, a future, a calm that lets me write these words though I’m breaking” (p. 165). The queerness of their love, temporally and affectually, is a site of rebellion within the novella. Their relationship maps across countless time strands and historical-future temporal locations, as Red asserts: “... what we’ve done will stand, no matter how they weave the world against us. It’s done now, and forever. What will I do, sky?” (p. 165). Their love for one another is a form of resistance that cannot be undone by virtue of the very temporally rebellious nature in which it came to exist. This mutual

love and care allows them to build resilience in their desires to resist Commandant and Garden and persevere in the face of the oppressive reality of their present moment(s). In contrast to *Leviathan Wakes*, for example, by centring a queer romance El-Mohtar and Gladstone allow the reader to imagine and speculate on hopeful, alternate futures beyond our contemporary neoliberal and late-capitalist socio-political present.

In this article, I will argue that by invoking queerness—both as a paradigm of temporality and futurity and through the narrative exploration of queer affects and relationships—*Time War* subverts expectations regarding the enclosure, or containment, of potential dystopian, speculative futures, in a way that *Leviathan* attempts but fails to do, as a result of the novel's maintenance and promotion of contemporary hegemonic and heteronormative ideals in imagining a speculative near-future. Compared to *Leviathan*, *Time War* creates a meaningful and convincing counter-narrative to the novel's dominant structures of oppression by ensuring that its protagonists oppose the values of those systems of oppression. Significantly, *Time War* explores time travel as well as space travel in a way that I will argue literally symbolises a queer temporality within the context of the speculative, sci-fi genre. While it is not central to my analysis in this article, it is important to note that *Leviathan* operates within a narrative taking place solely within space travel; space and its many ships and planetary stations become a means of symbolic and literal enclosure within the novel.

In defining queer temporality and futurity, I will engage with Halberstam's (2005) definition of queer time:

Queer temporality disrupts the normative narratives of time that form the base of nearly every definition of the human in almost all of our modes of understanding, from the professions of psychoanalysis and medicine, to socioeconomic and demographic studies on which every sort of state policy is based, to our understandings of the affective and the aesthetic (p. 192).

I will also draw from Muñoz's (2009) definition of hopeful, queer futurity: "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (p. 26). Queerness, according to Muñoz, is a "horizon", "a modality of ecstatic time in which the temporal stranglehold [of] straight time is

interrupted or stepped out of” (p. 63). Additionally, I will consider how queer temporality and futurity relate specifically to the genre of speculative fiction. In analysing how both novels engage, or in the case of *Leviathan* fail to engage, with the possibility of imagining convincing and meaningful counter-narratives to future dystopian trajectories, I will focus on each novel’s portrayal of gender and queerness (or lack thereof), as well as the role that each text’s war narrative plays in imagining speculative, dystopian futures.

### **Sci-fi ‘Wars’: The ideological function(s) of conflict in space**

*Leviathan* follows a typical dystopian-sci-fi war narrative whereby two heterosexual, cis-gender men come to an abrupt and violent realisation that the socio-political moment in which they exist is corrupted and that the hegemonic, neoliberal systems in power do not represent the freedoms they wish to behold. For *Leviathan*’s two protagonists, Holden, and subsequently Miller, this is precisely the case. Goode and Godhe (2017) argue that the importance of critical future studies—which they define as: “interrogat[ing] imagined futures founded - often surreptitiously - upon values and assumptions from the past and present, as well as those representing a departure from current social trajectories” (p. 109)—is inherently connected to the neoliberal, Thatcherite slogan that: “there is no alternative” (p. 115). In failing to imagine alternative futures outside of the parameters of our current neoliberal moment, by upholding hegemonic heteronormative and masculinist ideals, *Leviathan* reproduces that Thatcherite model. The United Nations plays a significant role in the novel’s war narrative, maintaining hegemonic colonial and late-capitalist systems of oppression. In this section, I will first focus on the role of the ‘trial’ and the UN within the narrative. I will discuss the significance of space as being literally representative of a culture of containment whereby these hegemonic ideals are reproduced. I will subsequently, briefly, discuss the role of police within the novel and, in particular, the significance of Miller being fired from his post as a police officer.

For Holden, the significance of Fred Johnson and the discussion surrounding the UN ‘trial’ is particularly significant in understanding how the novel feigns a kind of revolutionary capacity. The novel maintains this superficial revolutionary capacity by promoting Holden and Miller as rebellious heroes who are only now realising the corruption within the system they operate in, whilst simultaneously ensuring that said revolution operates within a framework of criminality and policing. Fred

Johnson, another cis-heterosexual, male protagonist who realises that the system and organisation he works for (the UN) is corrupt after committing several atrocities that won him accolades within the UN, is a character who for Holden offers the key to finding justice for him and his crew. While Holden is unsure about participating in the UN trial as Fred recommends, he agrees (although somewhat reluctantly) expressing that: “he told himself that Fred was right; a trial was the right thing to hope for” (p. 202). In focusing on the destruction of the *Canterbury* ship, the catalyst for the supposed call for war, as a criminal act rather than an act of war, Fred argues that: “civilized society has another way of dealing with things... a criminal trial” (p. 198). The focus on criminality within the novel is a central theme in terms of the novel’s failure to imagine alternative futures with any conviction. While Holden may strive for rebellion against the forces that destroyed the *Canterbury*, he cannot imagine possible alternative systems outside of those controlled by his opponents. Even in attempting to revolt, Holden’s motivations for doing so are selfish. He is mainly concerned with the destruction of his ship, and I would argue that the destruction of his private property acts as his catalyst in becoming a revolutionary hero, rather than the corrupt, oppressive and violent behaviour at the core of the narrative. Due in part to his being part of that same system as a former UN navy officer himself, Holden is, therefore, unable to imagine tangible revolutionary futures beyond his present circumstances.

Bellamy and O’Brien (2018) argue, discussing the television adaptation of the novel, that: “The series offers a version of interplanetary science fiction bound to the solar system, where inter-colony communication remains a challenge and resources scarce” (p. 517). In understanding the “realism” (p. 524) that *Leviathan* evokes in terms of scientific technology and a lack of time travel, I argue that in its “aim to represent the actualities of space travel with an admirable degree of technical accuracy” (p. 517) the novel, in reality, fails to imagine futures beyond that technical and spacial enclosure. In contrast, *Time War* effectively utilises time travel and various other speculative narrative tools to meaningfully symbolise our contemporary socio-political struggles. Evidently, space acts as a means of enclosure in *Leviathan*: “Ships were small. Space was always at a premium, and even on a monster like the *Donnager*, the corridors and compartments were cramped and uncomfortable” (p. 213). Such physical restraints within the narrative with “anyone who doesn’t live on a ship” (p. 197) being “structurally vulnerable”, despite feigning a certain realist representational accuracy,

expose the authors' reluctance or inability to imagine a future beyond our contemporary neoliberal moment. As Goode and Ghode (2017) highlight, these narratives work only to reassert the "no alternative" (p. 115) political agenda. The "realism" (Bellamy and O'Brien, 2018, p. 524) the novel claims to represent is undercut by the misogyny, heteronormativity and police brutality that is presented uncritically throughout the novel. A prime example of the novel's depiction of police brutality, and its connection to misogyny, is Miller's violent attack on a Belter during a riot towards the beginning of the novel. Miller orders to "kneecap him [the Belter]" (Corey, 2012, p. 68) after thinking to himself "Okay, second time I've been called a bitch" (p. 68). Not only is Miller's exertion of violent power over the Belter a result of his position as a police officer, but it is also in reaction to his masculinity being undermined by being called a "bitch" (p. 68).

In line with the symbolic function of enclosure throughout the novel—in maintaining hegemonic ideals and systems—Miller's character development as a detective-noir-style police officer is crucial to *Leviathan's* ideological narrative progression. Having bolstered his career working on kidnap and rape cases, Miller begins questioning the system's authority when he is fired from his position in the force. Like Fred, Miller's redemption arc is framed by his retrospective realisation that his career as a police officer was corrupt. He expresses how: "everything he'd ever had was gone. His job, his community. He wasn't even a cop anymore, his checked-in-luggage handgun notwithstanding" (p. 226). While his career as a police officer operated within an oppressive and corrupted system, his recognition of this comes only when his safety and comfort within that system are challenged.

An examination of the "war on time" (p. 2) itself in *Time War* is essential to understand how both Red and Blue—and their experiences of love and queerness—subvert and imagine possible new futures. While the aim or purpose of the war in the novella is ambiguous, Red highlights that: "They would this make, she thinks, if there were not a war already made for them to make" (p. 98). Halberstam (2005) discusses the centrality of catastrophic or world-altering events to how queer individuals and communities navigate temporality and futurity when excluded from the heteronormative milestones that are generally associated with success and achievement in our present socio-political moment (marriage and traditional family-making, for example). In his words:

The constantly diminishing future creates a new emphasis on the here, the present, the now, the urgency of being also expands the potential of the moment and... squeezes new possibilities out of the time at hand (p. 13).

Where the dystopian future reality in which Red and Blue are agents acts as a catastrophic series of events in much the same way the AIDS epidemic did for those “whose horizons of possibility have been severely diminished” (p. 13), Red and Blue are able to imagine new futures not only through their expressions of queer love for another but also by virtue of the fact that while their linear ‘future’ has been “diminished” (p. 13), they have access to time travel to aid in the expansion of their possible future(s) and subsequently their revolutionary capacities as rogue agents. It is through this queered temporality and their love for one another that these revolutionary imaginings of possible alternative futures are possible, with Red describing how:

Lacking letters, lacking the tremors of your footsteps through time, I seek out your memories; I ask myself what you would say and do if you were here. I imagine you reaching over my shoulder to correct my hand on a victim’s throat, to guide the braiding of a strand (p. 112).

Edelman (2004) discusses queer futurity as it pertains to the concept of the child as the central manifestation of heteronormative, hegemonic politics. When considering that: “Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention” (p. 3), the manner in which Blue, as the biological protégé of Garden, is placed within both the narrative of the novella and the time war itself is vastly significant. Edelman argues that queerness, by virtue of its reproductive incompatibility, works in direct opposition to that “perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics” (p. 3). In other words, he argues that queerness is the antithesis of futurity insofar as futurity is, according to Edelman, inherently heteronormative. Following Muñoz’s (2009) definition of queerness as intimately connected to a futurity that offers alterity in the face of an oppressive heteronormative notion of futurity (p. 26), *Time War* offers a complication to Edelman’s argument in Red’s ‘seeded’ saviour of Blue’s life—although temporally disjointed and arguably queered—from childhood. The first discussion of this harkens back to Blue as a child, both the child of Garden and the child of Blue and Red’s revolutionary escape, with Blue’s

proposition, “Shall we do something we’ve never done?... bend the fork of our Shifts into a double helix around our base pair?” (p. 198), comes as Blue describes that:

When I was very small, still just barely a sprout of Garden rotted through a five-year-old girl, I got sick. This wasn’t unusual—we’re often deliberately made sick, inoculated against far-future diseases... But this was different. This wasn’t Garden infecting me to strengthen me; this was someone infecting me to get to Garden... and Garden cut me off (pp. 122-123).

Here, we, as the reader, come to understand two aspects of Garden’s relationship with childhood, parental care and the concept of futurity as it pertains to a political cause. On the one hand, we see a metaphorical representation of Edelman’s claims to the child as central to the political agenda. Garden uses Blue as a child, in that Blue’s initial reaction to falling ill is that Garden must have infected her intentionally in order not necessarily to protect her against “far-future diseases” (p. 122) for her own sake but rather to ensure that her place as an agent would not be compromised by her own immuno-vulnerability to disease. Furthermore, this metaphor is complicated in that the “someone” (p. 123) infecting Blue, from the future, is Red herself as the ‘seeker’. While Edelman (2004) understands queerness as the antithesis of the political agenda of the child—“that *queerness* names the side of those *not* ‘fighting for the children’” (p. 3)—Red and Blue surpass this problem. Blue, as her child self, is not only protected by Red as the seeker, but in doing so, Red also provides Blue with the seed or tool she needs to revolt and overcome Garden and forge a queer “defect[ive]” (p. 198) life with Red. In response to Red’s infection of Blue as a child (the very tool she needs to escape) Garden “cut[s] me [Blue] off” (p. 123), sensing the danger that such a queer attempt at appropriating the child brings about: the loss of total discipline over its agents of war.

## **Gender in Outer Space: Imagining Alternative, Queer(er) Futures**

### **Mapping non-human trans-queer identities: a narrative, epistolary function**

In understanding the centrality of queerness and its temporalities to *Time War*, Freeman’s (2010) theory of erotohistoriography as it pertains to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is particularly applicable. Freeman articulates



that erotohistoriography, in its understanding of the importance of creating a history that is “distinct from the desire for a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times” (2010, p. 95), navigates history in such a manner that relates historical event and memory to bodily sensation (95-96). In other words, as Freeman explains: “historical consciousness [is] something intimately involved with corporeal sensations” (p. 96). Freeman’s examination of this theory in relation to *Frankenstein* is particularly relevant to my analysis of *Time War*, in terms of how the novella’s grappling with time, space, and non-human, trans-queer identity allows for an imagining of alternative futures that move beyond our current neo-liberal parameters. For Freeman, the letter-writing in *Frankenstein* is central to the creation of a narrative that is: “temporally out of joint in ways that parallel the monster’s composition out of bits and pieces of dead flesh” (p. 96). While she notes that letter-writing is a common feature of narrative writing whereby the letters “forge a sense of immediacy and intimacy” (p. 96), they are also frequently segmented by narrative forewords to the reader, creating plot elements that are “dead on arrival” (p. 97). Where Freeman continues to explain that this supposed death or undoing of plot and linear narrative relates directly to a gothic preoccupation with the dead and the undead (vampires, zombies, for example), I propose that in complicating the narrative element of letter-writing—in that *Time War* gives little in the way of “gaps between the moment of writing a letter and the moment of receiving and reading one” (p. 97)—*Time War* highlights the tension within speculative, science fiction and the non-human, queered identities of its protagonists in much the same way as the dead and undead provided symbolic and narrative tension for the gothic genre. Furthermore, where Freeman articulates that for the gothic writing, the undead and re-lived body “catalyze bodily sensations such as skipped heartbeats, screams, shudders, tears and swoons in gothic characters, and presumably in some readers” (2010, p. 98), so too does the cyborg, non-human and in the case of Blue’s character, the ‘plant’-borg represent our current preoccupation with and anxieties regarding the concept of “our present as future” (Lothian, 2018, np. 1) that Lothian considers.

In applying this theory of erotohistoriography to *Time War* with regard to the function of the epistolary narrative with the novella, it is important to understand the significance of the non-human experiences expressed in Red and Blue’s time-travelling letters to another and how they symbolise (both literally and metaphorically) a unique sci-fi transness. In writing to Blue about their experiential differences on

opposing sides of the war that is central to the novella's narrative, Red articulates that:

I dream. They've freed us from sleep as from hunger. But I like exhaustion, call it a kink or what you will, and in my work upthread it's often convenient to impersonate humanity. So I tire myself with work, and I sleep, and dreams come. I dream of you. I keep more of you inside of my mind, my physical, personal, squishy mind, than I keep of any other world or time (p. 113).

In describing her experiences with "impersonat[ing] humanity" (p. 113) as such, two aspects of the way queer temporality operates within the text become evident. Firstly, what is central to Red's identity, and consequently her capacity for rebellion and resistance against both her Commandant and Blue's Garden, is her capacity to choose that identity, both in terms of humanity and gender, in much the same manner as we would understand transness within a contemporary context. Secondly, is the significance of her love for Blue in acting as a site of rebellion in their love letters, in that: "I keep more of you inside of my mind, my physical, personal, squishy mind, than I keep of any other world or time" (p. 113). Furthermore, in much the same way that the undead and the dead represent for the gothic contemporary anxieties regarding their own contemporary socio-economic climate, Red's notably queer and non-human understanding of hunger, sleep, and love explore contemporary anxieties regarding the transgender experience in terms of society's ability to regard and disregard experiential social constructions regarding gender and sexuality.

In discussing the relationship between queer and narrative theory, Rohy articulates that: "It is narrative that turns queerness into LGBT identity, normalizing deviance into a difference that makes no difference and domesticating sexuality to fit the marriage plot" (pp. 177-178). If narrative is, by some definition, the assimilatory capacity of fiction, how do *Time War's* representations of queerness challenge that argument? The epistolary function within the narrative is central to the sense of queered temporality that enables both protagonists to break free from the structures of oppression and militarisation in which they are agents. The pair's love letters act as sites of resistance. There is no marriage at the end of the narrative per se, although there is a significant moment where Red describes a yearning as such for a domesticated life with Blue,

describing how: “I wish we could have left all those horror-shows behind and found one together, for ourselves. That’s all I want now. A small place, a dog, green grass. To touch your hand. To run my fingers through your hair” (p. 164). I would argue that in the very nature of the pair’s existence with one another, through each time strand and shift, in their non-human transness and their queerness, the narrative is inherently queered. Their relationship does not represent assimilation to their political reality within the novella. In the very queerness of the romance’s nature and the pair’s identities within the narrative arc of the novella, those “normalizing of deviance[s]” (Rohy, 2018, p. 178) and “LGBT identities” (p. 177) that Rohy discusses are complicated. The queer romance and gender at play within the novella ensure the narrative cannot be complicit in assimilation. In breaking free from their incarceration at the end of the novella, Blue begs the question:

Shall we build a bridge between our Shifts and hold it—a space in which to be neighbours, to keep dogs, share tea?... I don’t give a shit who wins the war, Garden or the Agency—towards whose Shift the arc of the universe bends. But maybe this is how we win, Red. You and me. This is how we win (p. 198).

### **Gendered Plot Drivers: Misogyny and Sexual Assault in the Stars**

The exploration of gender in *Leviathan* is significantly more representative of the hegemonic ideals embedded in speculative, sci-fi writing in our contemporary moment. Attebery (2002) discusses the significant relationship that sci-fi writing has with Darwinism and the “story of evolution” (p. 62). He argues that in opting to utilise evolution as a plot narrative, the author is left with a choice between doing so “uncritically” (p. 62), or an alternative whereby the authors and characters within the text “imagine a different evolutionary scenario, one in which, for instance, women and men... might choose one another and scale the evolutionary ladder together” (p. 81). In arguing that the use of such an evolutionary narrative can be fruitful in terms of subverting hegemonic ideas regarding sexual differences, for example (p. 62), Attebery focuses on the superman hero narrative, which is particularly applicable to the characters of Holden and Miller in *Leviathan*. I will offer a further critique on this argument regarding evolutionary narrative and its function in the supposed revolutionary comradeship of the sexes. In failing to imagine alternative futures to our contemporary neoliberal, capitalist moment, the very

manner in which gender is demonstrated in *Leviathan* is central to that failure. While the hierarchical relationships between Holden and Naomi, Miller and Captain Shaddid seemingly act as a kind of pseudo-equality between the sexes, both the discussion around rape, sexual assault and sex work and the way in which the characters themselves are gendered in relation to one another, disproves that supposed equality.

The most significant examples of the centrality of gender to the failure to imagine new futures in *Leviathan* lie with the characters of Holden and Miller themselves. Both characters, in particular Holden, are portrayed as beacons of revolutionary hope, or as Miller describes Holden as “self-appointed martyr[s]” (p. 81). Unlike Miller, whose previously discussed redemption arc came following the loss of his job as a police officer, Holden is held in the image of radicalised rebellion from the beginning of the novel. If both characters are supposed beacons of hope in this regard, why then is the novel’s capacity for revolutionary, imagined futures so unconvincing? I argue that it is because of what Attebery (2002) articulates as the “superman scenario” (p. 67), whereby a protagonist or hero becomes almost god-like, that Holden and Miller are maintained in their hegemonic masculinity and thus fail to envision convincingly revolutionary futures to their current circumstances. While Attebery discusses the so-called “superman scenario” (2002, p. 67) in relation to literal human evolutionary processes in fiction whereby a man becomes superhuman, *Leviathan* demonstrates this same evolutionary narrative with regard to space colonisation; and, as such, Miller and Holden represent two hegemonic hero arches within that context. This is clearly demonstrated by the centrality of rape as a plot device for Miller’s character development. Throughout the first half of the novel, Miller is investigating several different rape cases. Firstly, Juliette Mao’s character, in her centrality in driving the plot, is rumoured to have been sexually assaulted and kidnapped when Miller begins investigating her disappearance. The nonchalant tone in which Miller and his colleagues discuss her potential kidnapping, and subsequently her rumoured assault, is indicative of the degree to which gender subjugation is a central function of the novel’s plot. Miller describes the case as “a bullshit case” (p. 44) where: “some shareholders misplaced their daughter and want me [Miller] to track her down, ship her home” (p. 44). When Miller’s detective partner Havelock describes the case as “dysfunctional families playing power games” (p. 44), Miller agrees. This seemingly innocuous exchange between Miller and Havelock proves the willingness that the two men have to dismiss the case of a woman’s “kidnap job” (p. 44) as unimportant or

beneath their rank in that “That’s not law enforcement... It’s not even station security” (p. 44). Furthermore, when the language used to describe the several other active rape cases throughout the first half of the novel, namely the responsibility of the so-called “rape squad” (p. 165), is equally nonchalant and dismissive, including several casual references to cases as “the rape up on eighteen” (p. 182) for example, the degree to which Miller’s hero narrative is bolstered by the use of misogyny and pseudo-equality of the sexes is evident.

Furthermore, as Davis (2013) articulates: “texts which employ rape as a plot device for character development are dramatizing an event for their own purpose” (pp. 9-10). While Davis continues to consider that speculative fiction texts, in dealing with dystopian themes and contemporary anxieties regarding possible futures, might understandably grapple with themes of sexual assault (p. 10), the extent to which *Leviathan* uses instances of rape, sexual assault and harassment to benefit the maintenance of hegemonic values within the text disregards a possible understanding of these representations as being reflective solely of contemporary societal concerns. This is most clearly exemplified in a moment between Holden and Naomi where Holden, having acknowledged that his colleague, portrayed as a spunky ‘one of the boys’ type female character, is rather drunk, articulates that:

For a moment there, he’d had a vision of the two of them staggering back to the room together, then falling into bed. He’d have hated himself in the morning for taking advantage, but he’d still have done it. Naomi was looking at him from the stage, and he realized he’d been staring (p. 200).

This insight into Holden’s inner thoughts, presumably an attempt to humanise his character while simultaneously drawing readers into a plot with the promise of romantic endeavour, is surrounded in the text by the conversation of “[murder] by space hookers” (p. 200) whereby another male character Amos “... will be murdered by space hookers, but at least he’ll die doing what he loved” (p. 200) as well as remarks about Naomi’s experience drunkenly singing karaoke in a bar surrounded by those in her profession, mostly men, where she “... finished to scattered applause and a few catcalls” (p. 199). While Davis provides ample examples of sci-fi texts that manage to “break both self- and community-imposed silences” (2013, p. 20) regarding rape culture, *Leviathan* fails to do so in any

meaningful way by using the threat of sexual assault as a tool to humanise its Superman-like heroes Holden and Miller.

Fundamentally, where *Leviathan* has the opportunity to explore gender and queer identities in a way that would aid in its portrayal of a convincing imagining of possible revolutionary futures, the text's gender representation fails to imagine a possible future whereby marginalised gender and sexual identities are given any agency. Rather, women and sexual assault are utilised within the narrative as both a plot point and as character development for the novel's misogynistic heroes in their bid to gain revolutionary freedom on their own hegemonic terms.

## Conclusion

To conclude, *Time War*, while grappling with similarly dystopian themes and plot points to *Leviathan*, provides a convincing alternative to both our current late-capitalist, neoliberal reality and the dystopian reality within the novella itself. Where Holden and Miller's motivations for revolution are tainted both by their uncritical engagement as cis het actors within those systems and the wider narrative surrounding rape, misogyny, and gender within the novel, Blue and Red's queer romance acts as a convincing and thoughtful site of rebellion against their respective warring sides: Agency and Garden. By centring queerness—and its manifold representations, in terms of temporality, spatiality, futurity and interpersonal connection—*Time War* imagines a speculative future where there is a convincing capacity for revolution within a corrupted system without forgoing the reality of the novella's dystopian parameters. As Blue herself expresses at the end of the novella: "This [Blue and Red's romantic love for one another] is a strategy untested... This is how we win" (p. 198).

## Bibliography

- Attebery, B. (2002) *Decoding gender in science fiction*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Bellamy, R. B. and O'Brien, S. (2018) 'Solar accumulation: The worlds-systems theory of the expanse', *Science Fiction Studies*, 45(3), pp. 515-529.
- Corey, J. S. A. (2012) *Leviathan wakes*. London: Orbit.
- Davis, S. (2013) "Representations of rape in speculative fiction: From the survivor's perspective." *Femspec*, 13(2), pp. 9-23.

- Edelman, L. (2004) *No future: Queer theory and the death drive*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- El-Mohtar, A. and Gladstone, M. (2019) *This is how you lose the time war*. London: Jo Fletcher Books.
- Freeman, E. (2010) *Time binds: Queer temporalities, queer histories*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Goode L. and Godhe, M. (2017) 'Beyond Capitalist Realism – Why We Need Critical Future Studies', *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 9(1), pp. 109-129.
- Halberstam, J. (2005) *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Lothian, A. (2018) *Old futures: Speculative fiction and queer possibilities*. New York: New York University Press.
- Muñoz, J. E. (2009) *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Rohy, V. (2018) "Queer narrative theory", in Garrett, M. (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to narrative theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 169-182.