In the Valley of the Time Tombs: Monumentality, Temporality, and History in Science Fiction

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> "I remember," Herron thought, "but not distinctly. I must read the incised legends on certain monuments. But I have been sent back too far in time; the monuments have not yet been built. I must come again."—John Taine, *The Time Stream* (13)

"The Monuments Will Reveal What Truth There Is." In John Taine's *The Time Stream* (1936), a group of men travel backward through time to understand the origin of a calamitous event that, in the depths of a forgotten past, decimated the civilization out of which humanity emerged—an event prophesized to repeat itself and destroy contemporary society as well. In order to learn how to avoid this catastrophic event, they hurl themselves into the eponymous time stream and seek answers in the vast and bleak "desert of the monuments" (11). Disoriented by their journey into the past, they first arrive in a time in which the monuments that hold the key to understanding the calamity do not yet exist, and only one of their party—a journalist and code-breaker named Herron—can remember why they have journeyed to the lonely desert in the first place. Gradually, the adventurers orient themselves in the flow of time and begin to untangle the jumble of memories and premonitions brought about by their travel. After repeated efforts Herron returns to the desert, to an age after the monuments have been erected. When he rejoins his companions, he recounts his struggle to read the structures created in the desert.

This struggle is not simply one of understanding; Herron's entire perception of time and history is transformed by his encounter with the desert of the monuments. The desert itself produces "a sense of awe at the vastness of time," and within its immensity temporality stretches out beyond the scale of human experience (88). "For ages I wandered thus over the desert," Herron recounts, "groping for the cold metal of the monuments. My sense of time, ever acuter and quicker, summed up and revealed the changes of æons" (88). The suns that shine over the desert are waning and soon the acceleration of time plunges the expanse into total darkness. In this darkness, Herron stumbles about and finally comes upon a column, inscribed with lines of indecipherable text that he begins to read by tracing his fingers over the surface. Gradually, the "quickening" of Herron's "time-sense" allows him to "see" the monuments in a new way: although the planet's suns have died, he senses matter in the desert in the process of its "dissolution [in]to an everlasting nothingness" (89-90). He perceives "the infinitely slow natural breaking down of matter into energy as one continuous stream of flickering light," and—armed with this newfound mode of perception—he sets out among the thousands of monuments that stretch across the desert (90). As he encounters more of the forms, he learns to understand the language of their inscriptions and the logic of their creation: "the prodigious labors of an age were compassed in one throb of my pulse[, and in] the twinkling

of an eye my mind performed the task of æons," he explains (90). As the matter that composes the monuments decays, Herron rushes through the desert, desperate to read them all.

Taine's account of Herron's encounter with the monuments is in many ways typical of the way in which sf literature has characterized monumental sculpture. The monument is frequently presented as belonging to another place and another time, reflecting an image of reality that is at once reminiscent of our own and perpetually inscrutable. The monument's displacement in time is importantly related to the aesthetic of the ruin: either the monument appears eroded by time and swallowed by obscurity, or else it paradoxically presents itself as eternally preserved, reflecting no sign of age despite its implied antiquity. Monuments frequently suggest a semiotically complete but inscrutable pantheon or typology: the core elements characterizing a religious belief system or sociopolitical structure. Despite their clear association with the past, monuments are often anticipatory—they gesture toward the future. Monuments do not always represent clear and simple chains of chronological causation, however; they can also be loci for breaks in the flow of events, reversals, and the emergence of both alternate histories and alternate futures. They condense the fecundity of memory and the eroding action of oblivion. In short, monuments are related to specific paradoxes regarding the representation and perception of time and history.

Monuments (both monumental sculpture and commemorative architecture, which I subsume here together under the notion of "monument") have become an increasingly important topic for art historical investigations of modern and contemporary culture, and some recent art historical debates on monumentality have begun to take into account sf's tropes and narrative strategies. This has occurred primarily in analyses of Cold-War-era state socialist monuments, created in modernist idioms that appear decidedly futuristic. In the same historical period, Land Art also looked to sf for both aesthetic and philosophical inspiration. More recent efforts by contemporary artists whose practices interrogate monumentality have likewise adopted the science-fictional as a mode of understanding and creation. There has so far, however, been little examination of the ways in which monuments and monumentality feature as motifs in sf literature. Understanding how sf authors have treated the subject of monuments helps bring together a cluster of debates in art history, art criticism, and the study of sf. It also shows the ways in which monuments foreground a set of questions that are central to sf about the perception of causality, the shape of time, and the mutability of history.

In what follows, I first sketch the stakes of monumentality as a cultural and artistic form, and its possible relationship to sf. I then summarize some of the ways in which art historical and popular discourses have linked monumental art forms to an sf imaginary. Finally, I explore how monuments are represented and the diverse roles they play in several works of sf literature, including H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), Jack McDevitt's *The Engines of God* (1994), Robert Charles Wilson's *The Chronoliths* (2001), and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Icehenge* (1984). All of these stories feature events and character arcs that are importantly driven by conceptual investigations of monuments and their purposes. The specific role played by

monuments differs in each of these works, but they all evidence the treatment of monuments as paradigmatic sf forms that relate to the genre's broader concern with temporal multi-directionality, futurity, and questions of historical inevitability. Furthermore, each story links its treatment of monuments to issues of representation: monuments challenge the limits of perception and cognition and therefore also the possibilities of representation. In this sense, monuments are importantly related to certain characteristics of sf's mimetic mode more broadly construed.

There are, of course, many kinds of monuments, and they do not all evidence the same kinds of mimetic strategies or ideologies. It is worth considering, however, what might distinguish monumentality—generally speaking—as a mimetic project. Art historian Suzana Milevska describes the process of monumentalization thusly:

> To build a monument is by definition to attempt to represent the sublime—that which is incomprehensible, bigger than us. Any monument offers a remembrance of a certain unperceivable and unrepresentable sublime. It commemorates incommensurability and incomprehensibility.... By definition, a monument is something negative—marking absence, the past, death, and above all a certain loss.

This passage succinctly lays out the way that monuments function to represent experiences and events that exceed direct apperception. It is useful to consider this definition of monumentality in relation to Seo-Young Chu's recent effort to elaborate a new "science-fictional theory of mimesis," since both Milevska and Chu aim to describe the processes by which "unrepresentable" but real objects can be brought within the bounds of representation (Chu 2). Chu builds upon Darko Suvin's classic description of science fiction as "a literature of cognitive estrangement" (4). She adapts the notion of cognitive estrangement specifically in relation to sf's *objects* of representation, shifting the emphasis to various kinds of "cognitively estranging referents" (5). Such objects of representation are "Neither totally knowable nor totally unknowable," and they admit of lyrical modes of representation that nonetheless stretch the bounds of mimesis and human thought (7); some of Chu's examples are the referents associated with the sublime, the virtual, and the traumatic.

Chu's transformation of Suvin's formal definition of sf has been astutely critiqued, especially for the way that it fails to compellingly distinguish sf from other literary genres (cf. Rieder 534-38).[1] Her approach is useful for the current investigation for two specific reasons, however. First, in shifting the locus of cognitive estrangement from formal strategies to referents, Chu presents a kind of "object-oriented" approach that reminds us of the importance of the content of representations. Second, in treating sf as a fundamentally mimetic mode, Chu prompts a deeper investigation of the relationship between represented objects (such as monuments) and their own referents (historical events, communities of memory, the passage of time, and so on). Monuments are a particularly telling object of sf mimesis because—in modernity, at least—they are crucially intertwined with the limits of legibility and representation. That is, as objects, monuments themselves elude easy interpretation and representation (in the context

of particular narratives and in the phenomenological experiences of protagonists), and they do so in a way that reflects how the objects of monumental commemoration also elude representation in monuments. Through this dual gesture, monuments draw attention to the elusiveness of representation that is often endemic to sf in a more general sense, and specifically to the ways in which certain experiences of time and history elude straightforward mimesis.

My focus on the temporal associations of monuments in sf raises an important issue. There are two complimentary but distinct aspects to most accepted definitions of monumentality and both aspects consistently circulate in the fields of art history, architectural history, and archaeology. One characterization treats the monument primarily in terms of scale: the monumental is that which is large and imposing in size, which produces an impression of grandeur and conveys a universal sense of enduring significance. The second characterization focuses specifically on the relationship between the monument and memory: in many languages, including English, the word "monument" possesses an etymology that links it to the act of remembering or calling something to mind (Osborne 3-4). Based upon this aspect of the definition, the monument may extend beyond constructs of massive size to include a plethora of objects, texts, and sites more modest in scale whose purpose or function is tied to memory. This memorial aspect of the monument indelibly links it to time, as opposed to the primarily spatial associations of scale. In this discussion, I chiefly consider instances of sf literature that explore monuments in their commemorative aspect, although it will become apparent that the two aspects are never fully separable, since massive size frequently connotes differences in scale that have profoundly temporal associations. An examination of monumentality primarily as an issue of scale in sf would no doubt be productive, since representations of extreme size and distance are crucial tropes in the genre. The relationship of time, memory, and history to the monumental object, however, seems most crucial to sf stories that explicitly deal with monuments. In most of the works I examine here, this focus relates to the narrative importance of deciphering the monument's message or significance: monuments are understood as mysterious objects that nonetheless are created in order to ensure that a certain message is carried across time and remains available to those in the distant future (or in the past, as is sometimes the case).[2]

Understanding how the monument functions in sf literature requires understanding how it relates to the unfolding of historical time. Does it stand within history, prey to its vicissitudes, or outside history, a marker that transcends the ebb and flow of civilizations? Does it seek to represent history or to act upon it? And what kind of history? A cyclical one? A linear one? A multiplicity of histories? The example of John Taine's *The Time Stream* already stretches across several of these paradigms. The monuments populating the desert that Herron visits are at once a reflection of historical knowledge and an effort to transform the future by means of that knowledge; they allow Herron not only to learn of specific scientific discoveries, but also to transform how he perceives time itself. Likewise, the story of the monuments presumes the return of a perennial threat to civilization's survival, even as they promise an escape from this cycle. In many

cases, monuments serve as this kind of temporal bridge, allowing the paradoxes of representing different times and different modes of causality to come to the fore.

"Alien Art": The Monument and SF. It is not possible here fully to survey the ways and historical moments in which monumental sculpture and sf have become intertwined, but it is necessary to give some idea of the way that sf themes, paradigms, and texts have been inspirational for the creation and subsequent reception of certain monumental works. Probably the best-known episode in this encounter, at least in the context of Euro-American art history, is the influence of sf on Land Art in the United States, and specifically on Robert Smithson's art and writings. Smithson famously drew from a number of sf authors, including John Taine and J.G. Ballard, for concepts related to his theory of art as "a system of communication" and his investigations of entropy (Tsai 71-73). In particular, sf's descriptions of landscape resonated with Smithson; he explicitly references Brian W. Aldiss's *Earthworks* (1965) in his writings and even in his descriptions of his practice, and passages by Ballard describing monumental architecture in post-apocalyptic landscapes are cited in several of Smithson's influential critical writings (Sobieszek 143-45).[3] Unsurprisingly, one of the key points uniting the American Land Art movement and sf is their shared interest in archaeology as both process and subject matter.[4] In the 1960s and 1970s in particular, Land Art was preoccupied with theories and discoveries in the field of archaeology as part of its broader concern with time and temporality (Kett 121-22). Smithson was fascinated by the layers of history and prehistory that could manifest themselves in particular sites, such as the Great Salt Lake where Smithson created his best-known work, *Spiral Jetty* (1970). Other artists associated with the movement, such as Michael Heizer, created massive constructions that paralleled the scale and aesthetics of ancient civilizations. Works such as Heizer's *City* (begun in 1972), a collection of colossal earthen and cement structures located in the Nevada desert, evidence Land Art's preoccupation with fusing ancient building practices with the "high-tech" industrial innovations of the Cold War-era (Kett 140-41).

Artists such as Smithson did not associate the sf aspects of their work solely with deep time and ancient history; they also linked it to the conditions of the capitalist present. One of Smithson's most famous essays, "Entropy and the New Monuments" (published in *Artforum* in 1966), begins—after an epigraph from Taine's *The Time Stream*—with the declaration, "Many architectural concepts found in science-fiction have nothing to do with science or fiction, instead they suggest a new kind of monumentality which has much in common with the aims of some of today's artists" (10). Citing artists associated with Minimalism, such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Dan Flavin, Smithson writes that "the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future" (11). They are "monuments [constructed] to or against entropy" (12) and they "restor[e] the idea of immortality by accepting it as a fact of emptiness" (14). That is, in the face of an increasingly regularized existence enabled by late capitalism, the artists Smithson discusses imbued the monumental with a kind of semiotic vacuity akin to the

encounter with the monument in certain sf narratives, an encounter characterized by the inscrutability of the artifact and the sense that it no longer *means* anything in relation to its context. Inextricable contextuality is traditionally what defines what art historian Rosalind Krauss called "the logic of the monument"; monuments are created "in a particular place and speak in a symbolical tongue about the meaning or use of that place" (33). For Smithson, what occurred in both the new sculptural practices of the 1960s and in sf was the simultaneous spatial and temporal rupturing of this situatedness, a rupture that was linked to a reconfiguration of the structures of anticipation as they were being emptied out by capitalist repetition. The entanglement of sf and monumentality for Smithson, then, adhered in a specific amalgamation of the future's apparent oblivion and the corollary void behind the monumental form (once presumed to extend its significance across great stretches of time). The monumental form, in the sf context, becomes associated with the eternity of *meaninglessness*, rather than the endurance of meaning.

This semiotic void can also be construed in an ideological way: the monument presents an ideology so foreign to us that it can only appear to come to us from the future, and indeed this is one way that another body of monumental sculpture has been popularized to English-speaking audiences in very recent years. This body of sculpture is the socialist-modernist monuments of the former Yugoslavia, a diverse array of sculptures dedicated to a variety of historical events (though predominantly to the antifascist Partisan resistance of the Second World War). These monuments were created between the 1950s and the 1980s.[5] Beginning in 2013, a meme circulated on the internet with the title "25 abandoned Yugoslavia monuments that look like they're from the future," accompanying a gallery of images of the eponymous sculptures. The collection of photographs was first incorrectly identified as depicting "Soviet" monuments, but this was later redacted (Džuverović 9, n.1). The photographs were by Belgian photographer Jan Kempenaers, whose photobook *Spomenik: The Monuments of Former Yugoslavia* (2010) featured dramatic images of these concrete and steel monumental sculptures located throughout the nations of the former Yugoslavia. Often set against empty, foggy landscapes, the monuments appeared—in Kempenaers's photographs—as if they might have belonged to a very different age and civilization. The headline of a June 2013 article in *The Guardian*, for example, declares that the monuments "look like alien art," and went on to describe the sculptures as resembling "alien landings, crop circles or Pink Floyd album covers" (Surtrees).[6] While critical analyses of the meme-ification of Yugoslavian monuments have tended to dismiss the association between the monuments and sf narratives of future oblivion (cf. Hatherley, and Džuverović), they have failed to consider the ways in which the monument might *already* be associated with a science-fictional imaginary, irrespective of its origin.

Regardless of the misinformed or sensationalist character of the popular discourse around Yugoslavian memorial sculpture, the suggestion that it appears to us from the future bears serious consideration, not least because it inverts the traditional association of monumental forms with the ancient past. I return to this suggestion of the monument's futurity below, since it is a crucial theme of

Wilson's *The Chronoliths*, but here it is enough to note that this arrival of the future in the present has become a crucial element of recent sf literature (Hollinger, "Stories" and Hollinger, "History"). In much recent sf, as Jonathan Benison has observed, the present "make[s] sense less as a continuation of the past than as an anticipation of the future" (qtd. in Hollinger, "Stories," 453). This anticipation, however, is often theorized primarily in relation to the acceleration of technological advances or the proliferation of technology (Tomberg 268-69), such that we appear already to live "in the future" (Hollinger, "Stories" 452-53). The idea of technological advancement also relates to the monument's futurity, since the creation of some monuments in sf is posited as possible only with levels of technology that far exceed the present of the narrative. Consider, for example, the characterization of the crystal pyramid in Arthur C. Clarke's "Sentinel of Eternity" (1951): "The mechanisms—if indeed they are mechanisms—of the pyramid belong to a technology that lies far beyond our horizon, perhaps to the technology of para-physical forces" (46-47). This latter characterization is similar to what is termed, in the study of monumentality, the "thermodynamic approach" to the meaning of monuments (Osborne 5). This method defines monumentality primarily according to the tremendous expenditure of resources needed to create the monument, an expenditure that seems to exceed the structure's practical functions. In sf, this excess is explained in terms of the monument's belonging to the future: it is not so much that the monument's "scale and elaboration" (Bruce Trigger qtd.in Osborne 5) exceed its function to a noticeable degree, but that the monument's scale, technological demands, or materials exceed the capacity of the present.[7]

So the monument as an artistic form is sometimes associated in different ways—and for different reasons—with science fiction. How, then, does the monument appear in sf literature? What roles does it play and what interpretations does it engender? Although monuments are by no means ubiquitous in sf, there are many examples of their appearances; the desert of the monuments in Taine's *The Time Stream* and the crystal pyramid in Clarke's "Sentinel of Eternity" are but two examples. The White Sphinx is the first form encountered by the Time Traveller when he arrives in the future in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine,* and monumental sculptures play a curious role in Samuel Butler's utopian satire *Erewhon* (1872). The megaliths of J.G. Ballard's "The Waiting Grounds" (1959) seem to function as monuments, as do the monoliths (later incarnations of the crystal pyramid) in Arthur C. Clarke's novelization of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Gene Wolfe's novella "Memorare" (2007) explores a future in which memorials constructed on asteroids in space are engineered to ensnare visitors in order to serve the spirits of those buried within. Jack McDevitt's *The Engines of God* tells the story of the quest to discover the secrets of the massive statues of the alien Monument-Makers. Kim Stanley Robinson's *Icehenge* centers on the ways in which history is continually rewritten, spurred by the discovery of a Stonehenge constructed in ice on Pluto. Robert Charles Wilson's *The Chronoliths* centers on a series of monuments sent back in time to commemorate military victories in the future, and the events in Dan Simmons's HYPERION CANTOS series (1989-1997) likewise catalyze around a collection of monumental structures

traveling backward through time. In nearly all these cases, as noted above, the monument appears as a sort of quandary or mystery—because of its origin, or its inscrutable meaning, or even simply because of its incongruous presence in the present.

The Monument as Riddle. Probably the most iconic appearance of monumental sculpture in sf literature is the enigmatic White Sphinx that anchors the future landscape of Wells's *The Time Machine*. The Sphinx, looming with outspread wings, gradually becomes visible through sheets of hail when the Time Traveller first arrives in the year 802,701. Almost immediately, the encounter with the monument becomes weighted with a sinister significance. "It chanced that the face was towards me," Wells's narrator recounts, "the sightless eyes seemed to watch me; there was the faint shadow of a smile on the lips. It was greatly weatherworn, and that imparted an unpleasant suggestion of disease" (20). Later, this menacing aspect is confirmed when the time machine vanishes into the hollow bronze pedestal of the monument, taken by the nocturnal and subterranean Morlocks (36). Thus, near the end of the book, the Time Traveller enters the hollow blackness of the Sphinx's base to recover the machine.

As many readers have pointed out, the appearance of the White Sphinx at the beginning of the Time Traveller's adventure lends the entire narrative an Oedipal framework: the Time Traveller is confronted with a puzzle about the character and fate of humankind over the course of hundreds of thousands of years.[8] The White Sphinx is significant precisely as a monumental form that—in its immediately evident literary associations—*poses a riddle*. That is, even more explicitly than many later treatments of the form in sf, Wells's Sphinx establishes the monument as something that must be solved, and this element transforms the story from a simple fiction into a kind of broader allegory for the social and technological changes taking place in modernity (Scafella 261).

One of the most curious aspects of the White Sphinx in *The Time Machine*, however, is the way that it functions in the story as a rather different kind of mysterious artifact than other monumental sculptures in sf. The White Sphinx, as opposed to most other monuments in sf literature (and different from all the works discussed in depth in this article), is not really treated as an index of a particular civilization. This sets it apart, for example, from the Palace of Green Porcelain in *The Time Machine*, the massive structure that the Time Traveller discovers to be a museum, and that therefore functions explicitly as a way to indicate the passage of time and to mark the understanding of that passage as history. Indeed, throughout his eight days in the future, Wells's protagonist is consistently engaged in reading the ruins of civilization and their gradual naturalization (overrun by vegetation, becoming mere remnants in an immense garden). He never applies this same hermeneutic to the Sphinx, however—he never wonders about the purpose of its construction or the stage of civilization that it represents. The figure of the Sphinx, already connected in many ways to antiquity, thus becomes a timeless symbol. It does not stand completely outside history, but the quandary it poses persists across enormous stretches of time without apparent alteration.

As Matthew Beaumont points out, Wells frames the dissolution of civilization as a linear and unavoidable process (245), and *The Time Machine* presents the monument as a witness to this long arc of history. The decaying White Sphinx presides over the waning of humankind, and the Sphinx itself is not eternal. In fact, it disappears entirely from the story at the close of the novel, as the Time Traveller desperately hurls himself even further forward in time to escape the Morlocks. The disappearance of the Sphinx no doubt correlates symbolically to the disappearance of the object of its riddle: humanity. In the even more remote future of terrible, colossal crustacean beings that the Time Traveller encounters before he returns to his own time, the White Sphinx has vanished entirely. He begins his journey within its bowels and ends it in the open air, on a desolate beach. Just as his own laboratory had faded away, so too the Sphinx is gone, presumably because there is no longer anything like a civilization to which it might bear witness.

The decay and disappearance of the White Sphinx alongside the vestiges of humankind thus also raise the issue of the obsolescence of the traditional monument as a symbol of Western culture. In the early twentieth century, critics began to question the credibility of monuments. Most famously, in *The Culture of Cities* (1938), sociologist and historian Lewis Mumford declared that "the monument no longer represents the impulses of our civilization.… If it is a monument it is not modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument" (438). For Mumford, the monumental was indelibly tied to "a metaphysical belief in fixity and immortality" (439), ideologies that were fundamentally in contradiction with the demands of a society in flux. Mumford was not alone in this condemnation of monuments; as the century progressed, architects and artists continued to debate the potential obsolescence of monumental forms, materials, and ideologies, and sought new ways to adapt monumentality to shifting patterns of historical experience. Wells's White Sphinx prefigures these debates: it situates the monument in a narrative concerned with the outcome of both social continuity and gradual evolutionary transformation.

The Monument and Cyclical Temporality. The association of the traditional monument with the scale of eternity makes it both an appropriate and a counterintuitive object for a genre such as sf, which, as Robert Charles Wilson notes, is so often focused on "time and change" (Murphy 214). *The Time Machine* presents the White Sphinx as the marker of a long rise and fall of the human race: a symbol out of antiquity, its "leprous" visage marks the alteration of humans into something still recognizable but also fundamentally different (Wells 31-33). Ultimately, the Sphinx shares the same fate as humankind. In other sf narratives, however, the monument serves as a witness to cyclical (as opposed to linear) history. Monuments may warn of future calamity, upheaval, or decay, but they also testify to the recurrence of these phenomena throughout time, across worlds, and among different species. Emerging from the depths of the past, the monument stands (or, as is more often the case, is uncovered) as a hermeneutic challenge: the meaning of the monument is essential to integrating the present into

a cycle, or else indispensible to understanding how to break free from this repetition.

Perhaps the most iconic—and the most ominous—appearance of the monument as an index of historical cycles is in H.P. Lovecraft's famous *At the Mountains of Madness*. In terms of its genre, the novella stands much more squarely within the realm of weird fiction. Some of its most science-fictional elements, however—its concern with extraterrestrial civilizations and its corollary interest in radically expanding perceptions of time and space—are in fact closely related to monumentality in its narrative. In the story, a team of researchers from Miskatonic University discovers an unimaginably vast and ancient city in Antarctica, a remnant of the civilization of the Old Ones. The city of the Old Ones is monumental in its scale, an "endless labyrinth of colossal, regular, and geometrically eurhythmic stone masses"—the very definition of Cyclopean architecture (42). As much as the lost city's scale, however, it is the use of sculptural relief to narrate history that forms the center of the protagonists' encounter with the Old Ones' built environment. In the course of exploring the labyrinthine spaces of the city, Lovecraft's narrator and his companion discover an "almost universal system of mural sculpture" running along the walls of the city's hallways and tunnels (54). This system of reliefs—combining figurative representation, arabesque ornament, and a system of writing—evidences the "abnormal historic-mindedness" (55) of the Old Ones, establishing one of the most significant cultural links between humanity and these ancient beings and allowing the researchers to understand the arc of their society's growth and decline.

In fact, this deterioration (rather than the sublime grandiosity of the city itself) produces the greatest terror in Lovecraft's tale. The researchers observe representations of the struggle between the extraterrestrial conquerors, the Old Ones, and their slaves, the shoggoths, and at the same time note the stylistic degradation over time of the sculptural reliefs until finally the narrator declares them to be "degenerate work … seeming more like a parody than a continuation of [the Old Ones' earlier] tradition" (88). The waning of the artistic quality of the sculptural narration of history is correlated, in Lovecraft's novella, with the implied rise of the shoggoths, who are horrific precisely in their inferior and distorted mimicry of their masters. As China Miéville notes, Lovecraft was deeply influenced by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1918), and in *At the Mountains of Madness* he establishes a clear parallel between the arc of the Old Ones' classical era and subsequent decay and human civilization (xx-xxi). Thus, the massive and horrific shoggoth that appears in the novella's conclusion is portended by the decline of monumental representation, and at the same time that creature's grotesque qualities prophesy a terrible fate for the future of humankind as well.

At the Mountains of Madness uses monumentality to navigate among phenomena that exist at radically different scales in relation to the protagonists and—by extension—to the reader. The monument straddles cosmic time and the scale of eternity, while it still persistently reflects historical time and change at a scale eminently comparable to the human. A more recent and elaborate

examination of the alien monument as an index of cyclical history—and the corollary doom of civilizations comparable to humanity—is Jack McDevitt's *The Engines of God*. McDevitt's novel clearly owes a certain debt to Lovecraft's *Mountains*, although its tone skews much closer to high adventure than cosmic horror. *The Engines of God* merits discussion as one of the most direct sf engagements with the motif of monumentality and presents a number of the most widespread assumptions about the monumental form that appear in sf: that the monument is a universal form; that the monument both reflects history and has an active effect on history itself; that the monument's meaning is essentially established at the moment of its creation and persists across great gulfs in time; and finally that the monument's full significance emerges in relation to a moment in the future. The novel tells the story of a group of archaeologists who are attempting to unravel the meanings of a collection of structures spread across several worlds, created by a presumably extinct alien race known as the Monument-Makers (1-9). The urgency of uncovering the purpose for these monuments is accomplished both through the impending destruction of the monuments in the process of terraforming and through the growing certainty—on the part of the archaeologists—that the structures serve as a warning and are connected to the apparent eradication of the civilization that created them.

Like Lovecraft, McDevitt clearly establishes parallels between the Monument-Makers and humanity. The standards of beauty according to which the aliens constructed their monuments are readily legible to human observers (27), and the archaeologists are certain that the aliens were motivated by a desire to immortalize their own achievements, a drive they consider to be mutually comprehensible across advanced species (235). At the same time, McDevitt's protagonists are certain that the monuments are also significant at a deeper level. They are not simply the relics of a society that felt drawn to extravagant displays of engineering or aesthetic prowess; they possess "hidden meanings" (370). These meanings are fixed at the point of the monuments' creation, and remain essentially frozen in time until they are rediscovered. There is no question of changes in the monuments' meaning over time in McDevitt's narrative.

This is not to say, however, that the monuments possess no agency and merely serve as a record. As the protagonists of *The Engines of God* uncover more about the Monument-Makers, they learn that their structures are linked to a cycle of destruction occurring every 8,000 years (363-65). Specifically, they discover that a series of apparently inscrutable, uninhabitable, and purely geometric constructions (including a set of moons carved into cubes) were in fact created by the Monument-Makers to draw the attention of these periodical destructive forces, which are compelled to lay waste to right-angle forms (375). That is, in *Engines*, certain monumental structures serve as a synecdoche for civilization, conceived morphologically as the ability to construct large forms with sharply defined angles and straight lines (407-408). Thus, as in Lovecraft's *Mountains*, exactness of geometry is a crucial characteristic of monumentality, but rather than reflecting the psychology of a particular society, this geometry is related to the behavior of superhuman forces (which are induced, for reasons never discovered in the novel, to destroy such structures).

Both Lovecraft's and McDevitt's representations of the monument's relation to cyclical change and momentous events allow communication between spans of time that exceed the collective experience of human civilization: they allow for an expansion of historical time to encompass the cosmic. They also allow for alien civilizations to be brought into a comparative framework with humanity; both authors suggest that cosmic temporality can be grasped through understanding the material creations of particular societies (in this case, monuments), and for both authors this temporality involves the recurrence of certain patterns, of which monuments serve as a record.

The Monument from the Future. If the monument signals a certain set of problematics related to the inevitability of future events and the possibility of transcending history, then one of its most richly paradoxical versions in sf is surely the trope of the monument that is transported back in time from the future. Two works that most significantly explore this trope are Dan Simmons's *HYPERION CANTOS* series and Robert Charles Wilson's *The Chronoliths*, both of which transform the straightforward connection of the monument with the past in order to posit alternate experiences of time and patterns of causality.

Differential temporalities play an important role in the universe of Simmons's *HYPERION CANTOS*. One of the key narrative devices of the series involves the notion of "time debt," Simmons's term for the time dilation that causes the passage of time for those travelling through space at very high speeds to be different from its passage for those at rest. Perhaps as significant as time debt is the peculiar temporality of the Valley of the Time Tombs, a site on the planet Hyperion that houses a collection of six architectural structures that travel backward through time. These six structures are crucial elements of the story that unfolds across the first two novels of the series, *Hyperion* (1989) and *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990). The Time Tombs are comprised of the Sphinx, the Obelisk, the Jade Tomb, the Cave Tombs, the Crystal Monolith, and the Shrike Palace. The last structure is associated with the books' mysterious and powerful antagonist, the monstrous Shrike, a being that—as the series begins—has begun to wander beyond the reaches of the Valley of the Time Tombs, mercilessly killing those it encounters. The Time Tombs are propelled backward through time by the "time tides," ensconced in "anti-entropic fields" that prevent them from decaying (*Hyperion* 164). The time tides produce an effect of *déjà vu* on those who come into their proximity, and in one instance in the novels, a visitor to the Tombs is infected by the temporality of the anti-entropic field, beginning to age in reverse (*Hyperion* 164, 262). As the *HYPERION CANTOS* begin, the Tombs are open and as the narrative progresses, the moment of their opening approaches, a climactic event that occurs in the second half of *The Fall of Hyperion*. Even after the struggle that coincides with their opening, the precise purpose of the Tombs remains a mystery: the Obelisk seals itself entirely, while others become portals that admit only certain travelers (*Fall* 511-12). The Crystal Monolith is the only one of the six to actually take on a function as a tomb.

At the heart of the conflict that plays out in the first two *HYPERION CANTOS* novels is the question of prediction. The planet of Hyperion itself emerges as the

epicenter of the story's action, because its existence represents an unknown quantity that disrupts the predictive models of the Core, a collective of Artificial Intelligences obsessively seeking to map future events with absolute certainty. The Time Tombs, sent back in time "from a point at least ten thousand years in the galaxy's future," and the presence of the Shrike that is associated with the Tombs, confound all the Core's efforts at predictive modeling (*Hyperion* 400). The intertwining of monumentality and prediction points to the way the monument reveals both the extent and the limitations of historical understanding, which in turn plays an important role in Simmons's investigations of how religion, destiny, and choice factor into humanity's search for meaning and self-definition. Ultimately, however, the Time Tombs function primarily as vessels for historic events and protagonists; as monumental architecture they tend to fade into the background of Simmons's narrative, even as their reverse-temporal disturbance sets the story in motion. By contrast, Wilson's *The Chronoliths* explicitly frames the monument from the future as itself an agent of historical transformation.

The Chronoliths is one of the most nuanced engagements with the monument in sf, using the monument to figure the mimetic challenges posed by history and causality. The premise of Wilson's book is simple: in the near future (the year 2021), a massive obelisk suddenly appears in rural Thailand. The monument is constructed of an inscrutable blue material resembling glass, but impossible to damage (16). At its base is an inscription in multiple languages, commemorating the surrender of southern Thailand and Malaysia to a leader or group identified as "Kuin," and a date noting that this surrender occurred on 21 December 2041, twenty years in the future (23-24). The blue obelisk is only the first of a long chain of monumental appearances proclaiming Kuin's triumphs. They spread first across Asia, throwing the continent into turmoil, and eventually to America. As more and more of the monuments appear and the moment of Kuin's future victory approaches, the world descends into chaos. Various factions emerge across the globe. Some are active "Kuinists," violent insurrectionists seeking to establish themselves as the legitimate precursors of the leader who will soon arrive to lead them to victory. Others, from regions outside Asia, hope that servile capitulation to Kuin's eventual arrival will ensure their survival and achieve relative political stability. Still others enter into a race to prepare to fight and defeat Kuin's forces (both those of the present-day Kuinists and those of the future Kuin). Wilson's narrator, Scott, a perpetually down-on-his-luck code-writer, is present at the appearance of the first Chronolith (as the media dubs them), and is eventually swept up in the efforts to destroy the structures. The novel follows Scott's life as history around him begins to change to accommodate the predicted appearance of Kuin.

Wilson's book is, in important ways, an investigation of the relationship between individual choice and the inevitability of destiny; as the story unfolds, there are many suggestions that the connections between the characters and the monuments are indeed fated. At the same time, as the date approaches that the first monument commemorates, various Kuinist factions across the world seek actively to bring about a future that is still (theoretically) avoidable: Kuin's victory becomes the paradigmatic self-fulfilling prophecy (Hollinger, "History" 23). This

examination of questions surrounding determinism and the significance of human agency, however, is enabled by the subtle ways in which Wilson uses the Chronoliths to examine the difficulties posed by representing time, history, and the future.

Crucially, the Chronoliths are characterized by the vagueness of their representational mode (in contrast to the precision of the dates of the victories they commemorate). Wilson describes this vagueness specifically in relation to socialist-realist monumentality. The second Chronolith to appear, for example, is the first of several to depict the figure of (presumably, although it is never known for sure) Kuin. Wilson writes:

> It recalled more than anything else the monuments of Stalinist Russia.... Such structures are daunting not only because they are enormous but because they are so coldly stylized. This was not an image but a *schematic* of a human being, even the face contrived to suggest some generic Eurasian perfection unattainable in the real world.... Beyond its apparent masculinity, the figure could have been anyone. (38; emphasis in original)

Later, Wilson again describes the figural Chronoliths as being "as bleakly generic as works of Soviet Realism" (275).

This generic quality possesses a significance beyond the ideological and historical associations that Wilson gives it, however. The schematic character of the Chronoliths also indexes the indeterminacy of history (in this case, the future history) that they represent. It represents the inevitable *failure to sufficiently represent* historical persons and events, the mimetic gulf that always exists between the monument and what it commemorates or valorizes. The gulf is heightened by the fact that the characters never witness the arrival of Kuin himself, so it is never even clear whether Kuin is a real person or a fabrication of the forces behind the monuments' temporal transport. The insufficiency of the monuments' relation to their object is effectively redoubled. There is first of all the gap between any artistic representation and the object or objects it aims to represent. Then there is the projection of this object of representation into the future, effectively reversing the usual temporal directionality of the monument. Scott and his former professor Sue Chopra discuss this reversal in the novel:

> [Sue:] "Monuments are supposed to be messages for the future—the dead talking to their heirs."
> [Scott:] "'Look upon my works, ye mighty, and despair.'"
> [Sue:] "Exactly. But the Chronoliths have it exactly backwards. Not, 'I was here.' More like, 'I'm coming. I'm the future, whether you like it or not.'"
> [Scott:] "Look upon my works and be *afraid*." (74; emphasis in original)

What is perhaps most significant about this reversal of the monument's traditionally conceived trajectory is how little it changes the monument's function, at least narratively speaking. The monument becomes even more explicitly what it often is regardless of its other functions: anticipatory.

The not-yet-ness of the events that the monuments commemorate meshes perfectly with sf's frequently postmodern impulse to disrupt the assumption of time's stability. As literary critic Mikhail Epstein argues, postmodern culture

frequently inverts the modernist obsession with the future, "but in doing so it [gives the past] the attributes of the future: indeterminateness, incomprehensibility, polysemy, and the ironic play of possibilities" (330). Thus, the anticipatory quality of the monuments is simultaneously disrupted by their indeterminacy, a term Wilson himself has used. In explaining his fascination with the concept of the Chronoliths, Wilson writes: "an object that had travelled in time would be extraordinarily peculiar, because it would have a fixed future and an indeterminate past. At the end of the book, the history of the [C]hronoliths is essentially unknowable. These are actually indeterminate objects" ("Robert Charles Wilson" 85). The monuments effectively bring indeterminacy into the present that unfolds in *The Chronoliths*, ironically just as they appear to bring determinacy (the certainty of Kuin's victory).

This obscure historical confusion brought about by the Chronoliths must have something to do with modernity, precisely because the visual austerity ("cold and ruthlessly modern") of the monuments so clearly seems to reference certain stylistic elements of modernist architecture, sculpture, and design. (Socialist realism, in a particular way, is very much part of the history of modernism, despite the fact that its tendencies towards abstraction manifest in different fashion from the geometricism typically associated with modernist art.) Even more specifically, it must have something to do with the way in which—to quote art historian T.J. Clark—"Modernism is our antiquity" (2). In the wake of the postmodern inversion of temporal emphasis, modernity and its material forms (such as sculpture and architecture) become a kind of antiquity at the same moment that this antiquity becomes "essentially unknowable," as Wilson puts it. This epistemological failure is almost always present to some degree in sf's treatments of time travel, which complicates the relationships among history, historicism, and historicity (all three of which are crucially related to the monument as a form).

The Monument as the Indeterminacy of History. Wilson's characterization of the Chronoliths as "indeterminate objects" raises a quandary that is fundamental to understanding how monuments figure history in sf narratives. Many of the examples discussed in this article (including Wells's *Time Machine*, Lovecraft's *Mountains*, McDevitt's *Engines,* and even Simmons's HYPERION CANTOS) suggest that the monument is primarily unchanging, and even more so because its community of reception (the beings that encounter it over time) does not importantly alter its meaning, which always lies waiting to be revealed. But how fully does this conception capture the monument's indeterminacy, and in turn the mutability of history itself?

Historians of art and architecture have tended to argue that "monuments are not stable and unchanging[,] but [are rather] dynamic spaces that can help us understand how political movements and social identities … have been forged through the imperatives of power, subjectivity, and the spatial practices they influence" (Kavuri-Bauer 2). It is illuminating to conclude by considering a work of sf that likewise presents the monument as both agent and object in the midst of shifting historical understandings. Like *The Chronoliths*, Kim Stanley

Robinson's *Icehenge* takes the relationship of the monument to history as one of its central themes, considering how the lives of its protagonists are affected by the presence and understanding of commemorative structures. *Icehenge* takes place in a future in which human life has been significantly prolonged, but this has not been accompanied by a corollary development in human mnemonic abilities. Thus people forget their own experiences and accomplishments within the span of their own lives (77). In this context, the chronicling of history has become a particularly urgent—and also particularly fraught—exercise, one that puts generations living contemporaneously with each other into conflict over the legacies of the past. Thus *Icehenge* is also, like *The Chronoliths,* a novel that is crucially interested in the way history changes between and for different generations.

The novel examines these conflicts through the lens of a massive collection of sixty-six monoliths discovered on the surface of Pluto. The forms crafted from ice bear an inscription in Sanscrit meaning roughly "to move, to push farther out; to cause to set out towards," together with a series of markings that presumably indicate the date 2248 (189). *Icehenge* (also the name given to the structures, for their resemblance to Stonehenge) is a novel in three parts, each narrated by a different protagonist. The first, Emma Weil, is an engineer who is present on a spacecraft that mutinies as part of a Martian revolution in 2248 CE. Her diary records the mutiny and her own role in assisting the revolutionary forces. Specifically, she helps the revolutionaries on board the ship to modify their life-support systems to allow them to travel beyond the solar system, in hopes of establishing a new society outside of the oppressive control of the centralized corporate Committee (although Weil herself is skeptical about the possibility of achieving this interstellar mission and returns to Mars to assist the revolution there). In the course of working with one of the leaders of this expedition, she discovers a set of drawings that appear to outline a monument to this projected interstellar journey, annotated with the text "something to leave a mark on the world, something to show we were here at all" (60).

The second protagonist is Hjalmar Nederland, an archaeologist writing in 2547 CE, at which time the Martian revolution that Weil witnessed has been effectively covered up, erasing the history of organized resistance to the Committee (92-93). Nederland takes part in a dig on Mars and uncovers Weil's diary, at the same time that the Icehenge structures are discovered on the surface of Pluto (122-23). In the wake of their discovery, theories about their origin proliferate, including ones that link them to "a prehistoric space technology" also responsible for structures such as the Easter Island statues and Mayan temples (139). Against these "ancient alien" arguments, Nederland seeks to prove that the monument is the one mentioned in Emma Weil's journal, that it dates from the years of the Martian revolution, and that in fact its existence proves that the revolution was not some minor uprising, but a movement with a powerful vision of freedom and the ability to record its ideals for history to remember. Nederland, who is over 300 years old, lived through the revolution, but cannot remember it clearly; he is dismissed by those who have learned of the uprising as a chaotic and purposeless riot organized by disgruntled locals (93). The connection between Weil's story

and the monument becomes an obsession for Nederland as he seeks to validate not only his remembrance of history but also his belief in revolutionary ideals.

Although Nederland seems to lose his sanity over the course of his narration, the second part of Robinson's book closes with the impression that Icehenge's meaning has been ascertained. The third narrative, however, told by Nederland's grandson, Edmond Doya, throws this interpretation into question. Doya (telling his story in 2610 CE) is convinced that his grandfather's reading of the monument was inaccurate, that Nederland has ignored or cannot account for important facts about the dating of the ice monoliths. Doya believes not that they are more ancient than Nederland believes, but that they are more recent, that they were intentionally created by someone who also planted Emma Weil's diary for Nederland to find. He encounters a man who claimed to have helped build the monument and sets out to prove that the entire story (of the monument at least, though not necessarily of the revolution) is a hoax perpetrated by a rich businesswoman named Caroline Holmes (206, 237).

Robinson never resolves the mystery of Icehenge's creation, but that of course is the point of the novel. The monument stands for the continual re-writing and reinterpretation of history, both in the sense of a codified narrative and in the sense of our own individual understanding of our memories of lived events. Instead of presenting the monument as a cipher that must be unlocked or a destiny that must be avoided (or embraced), *Icehenge* suggests that monuments can never be such straightforward reflections of events and furthermore that their meaning will never stop changing—like history itself. Whenever Nederland and Doya seem close to confirming their own theories, new gaps in knowledge emerge and new chronologies are suggested. Emma Weil's testimony from the novel's first part is thrown into question. The ordering of events is constantly questioned, in contrast to the novel's own chronology. In this sense, Robinson's novel is perhaps the subtlest and the most revealing treatment of monumentality among those discussed in this article because it embraces the mutability of the monument as a positive aspect of its narrative role. The possibility that the ice sculptures are fabricated, or that the story behind them has been and continues to be altered by time, does not make the monument less reflective of history. Rather, it makes Icehenge *more* of a critical tool for the mimetic representation of time and change, precisely because it fully embraces the monument as an "indeterminate object." Like Herron in *The Time Stream*, who never manages to complete his reading of the columns in the desert of the monuments, the protagonists (and reader) of *Icehenge* can never grasp the monument's message as a totality. Furthermore, like Robert Smithson's characterization of Minimalism's vacuous capitalist monuments of entropy, Icehenge itself seems to threaten the inevitability of meaninglessness, the absolute inscrutability of either the monument or its context. For Robinson, however, this meaninglessness is never nihilistic, and it always gives way to the possibility for the monument to open up different interpretations of history.

As suggested in the passage from Suzana Milevska cited in the introduction, many of the objects of monumental representation are cognitively estranging: absence, the past, death, loss—a list to which we might add other traumatic ruptures. The monument can also be valorizing, an attempt to reflect and nurture

more localized community identities, to immortalize unrecognized folk heroes and specific collective struggles (as Nederland claims that Icehenge does). These too are cognitively estranging referents, notions and emotions that appear to transcend straightforward imaginative conception. Perhaps the aspect of monumentality that most persistently eludes both understanding and description, however, is the monument's simultaneous relationship to the representation of time and to time's passage. The monument can appear both rooted (or even lost) in time and beyond time itself. It can appear to reflect history at the same time that it sets out to shape history. These paradoxical configurations of temporality make the monument a particularly compelling sf object, since sf has continually preoccupied itself with new understandings of time's flow and our experience thereof.

Modern and contemporary artists working in monumental paradigms have sometimes positioned their works in relation to sf and at other times works of monumental sculpture have been labeled as aesthetically science-fictional by popular discourses, in that they seem to gesture toward alternate histories or imagined futures—toward "other times." A sustained consideration of the relationship between monumentality and sf, however, is still lacking. One necessary step in advancing this understanding is a consideration of how monuments themselves have been represented in sf literature, which the present article has attempted to outline. Looking closely at the monument in sf means attending to new constellations of relationships among human agency, memory, and attempts to represent them across vast stretches of time. It also means embracing the indeterminacy of history, as a site where the very definitions of the past, present, and future can be reimagined and reordered.

NOTES
1. My concern in this article is not to define (or redefine) literary genres and subgenres, and thus I do not delve deeply into Chu's typology of sf, a system that organizes and analyzes sf texts primarily based upon their cognitively estranging referents. Furthermore, I do not explore the distinctions between the concept of genre and "mode" or "representational technology," two terms Chu uses to characterize sf (73). While I believe that Chu's framework can draw our attention to important subjects of sf—and help us show why they matter to sf—I do not consider her analysis to be as helpful in establishing the boundaries of the genre. I agree with John Rieder's argument that a model that takes account of historical changes over time is indispensable to such a project of genre definition, and Chu's formal approach cannot easily take account of such diachronic shifts (Rieder 537).

2. There is another important terminological distinction to be made: when I use the term "monument," I am primarily speaking of what art historian Aloïs Riegl refers to as "intentional" monuments—that is, monuments created with an explicitly commemorative or celebratory purpose (23). I rarely use the term with the broader meaning that Riegl

analyzed and which is often used in archaeological and architectural discourse: the monument as an object that achieves lasting significance well after its creation by virtue of being integrated into a new system of values, such as the system that cherishes the "age value" of buildings as remnants of the past (24).

3. Both Aldiss's novel and Smithson's Land Art derive the nomenclature of "earthworks" from a practice that is decidedly monumental in its scale, namely the transformation of landscape contours, usually for the purposes of military defenses or civil engineering projects. It seems, however, that the post-apocalyptic aspects of Aldiss's treatment of landscape, rather than any specific engagement with monuments, was what most influenced Smithson (Sobieszek 144).

4. Sf's interest in archaeology is long-running and is importantly related to the genre's representation of monumental sculpture and architecture. The relationship between sf and archaeology, however, is a much broader discussion, one that charts the relationship among commemorative structures, ruins, lost languages, and other artifacts as they appear in sf. Such a discussion exceeds the scope of the present article, although many of the key issues are raised by the works examined here. For several approaches to the ways in which archaeology has featured in sf literature and film, see Miles Russell's edited collection, *Digging Holes in Popular Culture*.

5. It is interesting to consider that the Yugoslavian monuments to the antifascist resistance have been so closely linked to science fiction, because Darko Suvin himself described the experience of the Second World War and the Yugoslavian social revolution in the postwar period as "formative" for his own project:

> [I]t became very easy to think of alternative time-streams, of alternative histories, because we all lived them. When I was a little boy there was still monarchist Yugoslavia; then we had the Fascist occupation, we had the partisans, the revolution, post-war Titoism. These were all alternative time-streams.... [Y]ou had the possibility to think ... of 'possible worlds.'" (Pukallus 254)

6. The question of artistic representation construed as "alien" in both science fiction and popular discourse more broadly merits its own lengthy study. An interesting exploration of this subject is Gordon R. Dickson's novel *Alien Art* (1973), which tells the story of a quest by local residents on a planet threatened by corporate exploitation to pay off the mortgage on their world by selling a large sculpture crafted by one of the "alien" species indigenous to the planet (an alien effectively indistinguishable from a river otter, except perhaps for his ability to sculpt). The question of whether or not the alien (or the animal) can really produce "art" is central to the novel.

7. One of the most common versions of this argument in popular culture is the outlandish theory that aliens constructed key works of architecture in the supposedly primitive pre-Colombian societies of Central and South America. The argument is that these societies could not possibly have handled either the materials or the construction of monumental architecture on the scale that existed, and thus that they must have received assistance from extraterrestrial beings. See the History Channel's now-famous *Ancient Aliens* series, which began airing in 2010.

8. The literature on *The Time Machine* is expansive and several studies have focused on the significance of the Sphinx. See Lake, Scafella, Ketterer, Price, and Beaumont.

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ABSTRACT

Modern and contemporary artists working in relation to monumentality have sometimes positioned their works in relation to sf, and at other times works of monumental sculpture have been labeled as science-fictional by audiences to whom these monumental forms appear alien or displaced in time. While art history has sometimes examined the influence of sf ideas on modern and contemporary artists, a more sustained consideration of the relationship between monumentality and sf is lacking. One necessary step in advancing this understanding is a consideration of how monuments themselves have been represented in sf literature. This article examines the representations and roles of monuments in a number of sf works, including H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), Robert Charles Wilson's *The Chronoliths* (2001), and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Icehenge* (1984). The ways in which monuments appear in these and other sf texts foreground a set of questions about the perception of inevitability, the shape of time, and the mutability of history. These works explore how the relationship between past and future can be reconfigured through encounters with monumental forms that create new bridges and chronologies across cosmic and historical scales of time.