French 392, Seminar in Literary and Cultural Studies

Professor Natania Meeker

Monday, Wednesday: 10-11:50 AM

Taper Hall 214

Image from Momoko Seto’s *Planet Z* (Sacrebleu Productions, 2011)

How might we imagine ourselves elsewhere—in other worlds, on a different planet, lost (or found) in outer- or inner-space? And what do these kind of fantasies have to tell us about our *own* world? In this class we will explore the rich and vibrant history of speculative fiction in French, beginning with its origins in the seventeenth century and continuing through to our current moment. We will read stories of the first (imaginary) voyages in the first (imaginary) rockets; narratives of societies, peoples, creatures, and cultures different from (but also strangely accessible to) our own; tales of fantastic and amazing technologies, experiences, and practices—all bound together by their commitment to speculation: the will to imagine alternative realities. We will ask why speculative literature, with its close ties to science fiction and the supernatural, arose when it did, how it has developed, and where it is going. Our own fantastic voyage will take us through works of fiction, films, and short stories into the great proliferation of speculative narrative that marks our present day. Authors we will read will include: Madame d’Aulnoy, René Barjavel, Cyrano de Bergerac, Michel Bernanos, Pierre Boulle, Sylvie Denis, Camille Flammarion, Anne Richter, Julia Verlanger, Jules Verne, Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, and Voltaire. Course will be taught in French.