



Editorial 1/2021

*Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Esko Suoranta, Laura E.
Goodin, Essi Varis, & Dennis Wilson Wise*

We are pleased to welcome you to this issue of *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*.

Finally, the time has come to turn on those automatic email responses, close the door on the dim university hallways, and set off to the green, green summer pastures with this light but inspiring package of reads in your picnic basket. We invite you to discover 19th-century feminist utopias; to enjoy reviews of the latest academic publications on SFF; and to witness the passing of the torch to a new editor-in-chief. Along the way, we will ponder speculative genres' struggle for prestige and the uneasy position SFF research has occupied in the intersection of fan writing, academia, and the literary establishment.

This important theme is brought up by the eminent Gary K. Wolfe, whose prefatory speculates on the SFF community's evolution since the first Worldcon of 1939. In the past few decades, the massive international success of such transmedia productions as Peter Jackson's Tolkien films, the *Harry Potter* universe, new *Star Wars* trilogies and *Game of Thrones* may have brought fantasy and science fiction closer to the mainstream than ever before. Yet, for most of the 20th century, the pioneers of SFF scholarship struggled to get their work published or acknowledged by academic and literary circles alike. Much has changed for the better: not only is speculative fiction at the core of contemporary popular culture, but fandom itself has grown, globalised, diversified, and even formed a closer, more trusting relationship with academia – which our journal hopes to exemplify. As Dr. Wolfe reminds us, however, we should not forget the roots of our field, which owe much to fanzines, fan writing, and other fruits of fandom.

Should any of our readers wish to investigate these roots, we are happy to direct you to the University of Liverpool's science-fiction collections, which constitute the largest gathering of science-fiction literature and scholarship in Europe, and include, among other things, an amazing archive of fanzines. You

can read more about the collection and the services it provides in our interview with its Head Librarian, Dr. Phoenix Alexander.

If you wish to travel even further back in time, we recommend Dr. David Balfour's article on Olive Harper's fantastical feminist utopias. Born on the Pennsylvanian frontier in the mid-1800s, Harper lived a life of many miseries and adventures, which also influenced her literary career. Balfour introduces this mostly forgotten author and demonstrates how her novel *A Fair Californian* (1889) reflects Harper's feminist views – but also goes beyond didactic aims, portraying an exceptionally stalwart and compelling heroine.

While Balfour's is the only full-length article in this issue, the eight book reviews reach across the entire speculative spectrum. Three of the reviewed books are searching for and finding new approaches to J.R.R. Tolkien's classic works. Others trace zombies' origins back to the Caribbean, imagine the unimaginable darkness and silence of the Holocaust, and map the oeuvres of Terry Pratchett and Stanislaw Lem. Mark Scroggins's review of Patrick Moran's *The Canons of Fantasy: Lands of High Adventure* (2019) circles back to the themes of Wolfe's preface: how has the landscape of the speculative canon changed over the years and what kind of a map would do it justice?

Just like the research field it dedicates itself to, *Fafnir*, too, must keep changing. This is the last issue co-edited by Dr. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, who has served the journal with passion and dedication since 2017. At the same time, this is the first issue formed in part by his successor, Dr. Essi Varis. In their entrance/exit interview, both declare their undying love for speculative fiction and open-access publishing alike – so some things, thankfully, won't have to change.

This issue concludes with Dr. Varis's *lectio praecursoria* (from 2019), which will offer our Finnish-speaking readers a light-hearted overview of her previous work on character theory and graphic novels. It also takes us back to a simpler time, when we still had the energy to focus not only on global catastrophes but also on figures and characters – be they real, fictional or anything in between.

We remain grateful to our readers and all their contributions, and hope to keep providing both fandom and SFF scholars with the kind of open academic forum they want and need. It's summer, after all. So, let us all dig in those roots and keep on growing!

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