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MYTHLORE

A Journal of J. R. R. Tolkien,
C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams,
and Mythopoeic Literature

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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 prefatory: 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!

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Esko Suoranta, Laura E. Goodin, and Essi Varis,
Editors-in-chief
Dennis Wise, Reviews Editor
Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research



Fandom, Academia, and the Literati: Some Historical Speculations

Gary K. Wolfe

If we set out to construct a history of the various discourses and voices that have come to characterise the criticism and scholarship of science fiction and fantasy (SFF), we could do worse than to start in 1939. The year is famous in fan lore for two reasons: it saw both the first World Science Fiction Convention, held in New York from July 2-4, and the July 1939 issue of *Astounding*, which appeared during the convention and is widely viewed as the first issue to fully reflect the editorship of John W. Campbell, Jr., ushering in what some fans would come to label the “Golden Age of Science Fiction”. That term, whether viewed as a critical assessment or merely an expression of nostalgia, would generate debate for decades to come, as evidenced most recently by Jeannette Ng’s Campbell Award acceptance speech at the 2019 Hugo Awards ceremony in Dublin (which contributed strongly to the removal of Campbell’s name from that award). It wasn’t the beginning of the debates about the nature and purposes of SF; those had been going on for more than a decade in the letter columns of pulp magazines and later in amateur fanzines, reaching a kind of crisis point in that first Worldcon, with the ideological debate between the “New Fandom” of Sam Moskowitz and his allies on the one hand, and the more politically activist Futurians, including Donald Wollheim and Frederik Pohl, on the other. Wollheim and Pohl would later become two of the most influential editors in the field (and Pohl one of the most influential writers), and Moskowitz would produce a series of critical/biographical sketches that, collected in book form, became popular sources of genre history: *Explorers of the Infinite* (1963) and *Seekers of Tomorrow* (1965). He also compiled significant historical anthologies of early SF, as well as a rather portentous account of those early fan battles in *The Immortal Storm* (1954).

In brief, 1939 can be seen as a watershed year in the history of fan criticism and, eventually, of fan scholarship. But the year also saw two far less widely celebrated events. James O. Bailey, a 35-year-old English professor at

the University of North Carolina, met with a New York bookseller named Ben Abramson about publishing a version of his 1934 doctoral dissertation, “Scientific Fiction in English, 1817–1914: A Study of Trends and Forms”, which he had been unsuccessfully trying to get published through the academic presses of the time. Bailey was concerned that his bibliography was inadequate, and Abramson – a collector as well as a bookseller – provided an extensive list of titles that he had compiled over several years. Abramson agreed to publish the study, but he suggested that Bailey add a chapter to at least make some mention of post-1914 SF. Bailey’s revisions, together with the World War II paper shortages, delayed the publication until 1947, when Abramson published it under his Argus Books imprint with the title *Pilgrims through Space and Time: Trends and Patterns in Scientific and Utopian Fiction*. It would become the first full-length academic treatise on SF, although two years earlier Abramson (something of an unsung pioneer) had published one of the first important treatises on horror literature, H. P. Lovecraft’s *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Bailey’s study, however, came from within an academic culture that would not seriously begin to grapple with SFF for more than another decade.

The third event was the appearance, in the September 1939 issue of *Harper’s Magazine*, an essay by Bernard De Voto titled “Doom Beyond Jupiter”. De Voto was a widely respected novelist, editor, and historian already famous for his scathing criticism of Thomas Wolfe and his curatorship of Mark Twain’s papers, and his dismissive view of the SF pulp magazines probably wasn’t the first time a mainstream literary figure had looked askance at the genre. But coming at such a crucial juncture in the development of science fiction, it quickly became the most widely read of such dismissals. Describing the fiction as “besotted nonsense” in which the “science thus discussed is idiotic beyond any possibility of exaggeration”, he viewed science fiction largely as a setting for transplanted Westerns (another widely popular pulp genre) and concluded:

As the sermons of back-country evangelists dilute and translate into the vernacular the ideas painfully worked out by thinkers on the age’s highest plane, so what we call popular literature has, in every age, accommodated to simpler intelligences the sentiments and beliefs enregistered by artists in what we call good literature.

The notion that SF and fantasy might address the needs of “simpler intelligences” might in part be attributed to the fact that De Voto had simply looked at a handful of pulp magazines rather than trying to engage the genre as a whole, but it’s a criticism that would resurface in similar articles in mainstream literary magazines for decades to come.

These three artifacts from 1939 – the passionate if geeky infighting over the nature of SF at the first Worldcon, the effort of a young academic scholar to get his work on SF in print, and De Voto’s pointedly supercilious *Harper’s* essay – can now be seen as harbingers of what even today constitute three distinct ways of talking about SF and fantasy: the fans, the academics, and the mainstream literary community. To these we might add a fourth – the commentary of SF and fantasy writers themselves– but so much of such commentary originated in fan publications that it becomes problematical to

separate it out. Early writer-critics such as Damon Knight and James Blish originally published much of their work in fan venues, and were active fans themselves in their younger days. Frederik Pohl even won a “best fan writer” Hugo Award in 2010, at the age of 90, for his blog. A smaller subset of writer-critics, such as Joanna Russ with her essays in *Science Fiction Studies* and *Extrapolation*, or Adam Roberts with his dual career as novelist, university-based scholar, and biographer, might also overlap with the academic leg of this triad, but such examples are exceptions rather than the rule.

It seems unlikely that, in 1939, any of these three communities of SF commentary were even aware of the others. It’s improbable that many fans of *Astounding* or *Amazing* were also readers of *Harper’s* or vice versa, and Bailey’s work only glancingly acknowledged the assistance of genre figures (including Lovecraft and Forrest Ackerman) for providing him with additional titles for his bibliography. Over the next decades, we can easily trace the growing mistrust of these three camps toward each other: fans came to regard academia (once it finally turned its attention to SFF) as opportunistic and inadequately informed; academia sometimes regarded fan scholarship as uncritical and lacking in methodological rigor; both fans and academics bristled at the indifference, bordering on contempt, of the literary “establishment”, including university literature departments.

It should be noted at this point that the situation I’ve been describing so far is essentially that of the United States, and usually focused on SF rather than on fantasy. Similar fan groups and fanzines developed in the UK, and the Leeds Science Fiction Conference of January 3, 1937 – which included such later influential figures as Arthur C. Clarke and Edward Carnell – predated the New York Worldcon by more than two years. But the distrust of the fantastic in literary and academic circles seemed much less pronounced. One of the most prominent figures in the British literary community was H. G. Wells, Olaf Stapledon’s philosophical novels were widely praised, and even E. M. Forster had written a classic futuristic tale in “The Machine Stops” (1909) and a touching fantasy in “The Celestial Omnibus” (1911). Nor was the British academic world quite so dismissive of fantasy. In 1935 – while working on the prose “romance” that would probably do more than any other single work to establish the legitimacy of fantasy in the university curriculum – J.R.R. Tolkien delivered his lecture “On Fairy-stories” at the University of St. Andrews. In 1947, the essay was expanded for inclusion in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, edited by C. S. Lewis in honor of their late friend and fellow fantasist Charles Williams. Lewis’s own essay in that volume, “On Stories”, discussed works by Wells, E. R. Eddison, Tolkien, and David Lindsay; of course Lewis’s own fantasy and SF would remain widely popular for decades. While pulp magazines and pulp fiction gained little more respect than they did in the United States, fantastic fiction as a whole seemed to fare much better.

When university-based scholars of SF and fantasy began to proliferate in the 1960s and 1970s, they quickly discovered that many of the source materials needed for research were not to be found in the traditional venues of scholarly journals and academic reference works. Instead, the most useful criticism, scholarship, and bibliographies were largely confined to fan publications and magazines not often collected by academic libraries. Even James Gunn’s seminal 1951 master’s thesis on SF, *Modern Science Fiction: A Critical Analysis*, could not find a book publisher despite the efforts of his agent,

Frederik Pohl, and it ended up as a series of articles in a pulp magazine, *Dynamic Science Fiction*, which folded before it could publish the whole thesis (although it eventually appeared from McFarland in 2018, edited by Michael R. Page). An important early essay collection edited by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, *Of Worlds Beyond: The Science of Science Fiction Writing*, was published by Eshbach's own Fantasy Press in 1947, with essays by John W. Campbell, Jr., Jack Williamson, A. E. Van Vogt, Edward E. Smith, and especially Robert A. Heinlein, whose "On the Writing of Speculative Fiction" elaborated on an influential argument he had earlier made at a fan convention: that "speculative fiction" was a more appropriate term for the genre. The following year saw Everett F. Bleiler's *Checklist of Fantastic Literature*, the first significant effort at a comprehensive bibliography of the field, and a crucial source for subsequent bibliographies. It, too, came from a small SF specialty press, Shasta.

By the mid-1950s, a handful of other books began to appear, ranging from "how-to" manuals like L. Sprague de Camp's *Science-Fiction Handbook* (1953) to general introductions like Basil Davenport's *Inquiry into Science Fiction* (1955), and essay collections like Reginald Bretnor's *Modern Science Fiction: Its Meaning and Its Future* (1953) and Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder* (1956, in its first edition). The Knight volume, drawn mostly from columns he had written for magazines in the early 1950s, was the first publication of Advent: Publishers, founded by members of the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club and the first publisher dedicated to critical and historical works about SF and fantasy; later volumes included two collections of reviews by James Blish, written under the pseudonym "William Atheling, Jr."

If another year were to be chosen as significant for the conjunction of academia, fandom, and the literary community, it might well be 1959, exactly twenty years after that first Worldcon. That year saw the publication by Advent of *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism*, four essays by Robert A. Heinlein, C. M. Kornbluth, Alfred Bester, and Robert Bloch, which had originally been delivered as a series of lectures at the University of Chicago in 1957, and which grappled with the role of SF in the larger literary community. In Ohio, the fan-turned-academic Thomas D. Clareson published the inaugural issue of *Extrapolation*, the first academic journal devoted to SF and fantasy, with essays drawn largely from earlier Modern Language Association conventions. In the spring, the British novelist Kingsley Amis delivered a series of talks at Princeton, focusing largely on contemporary SF authors, including Frederik Pohl, whom Amis described as the "most consistently able writer science fiction, in the modern sense, has yet produced" (102). Amis clearly wanted to make a case for SF before an academic audience, and his own stature as a novelist – which had emerged only five years earlier with *Lucky Jim* – likely helped draw the attention of other literary figures to modern SF. Collected and somewhat revised under the title *New Maps of Hell*, the lectures were published in 1960 not by fan presses, but by Harcourt, Brace in the US and Gollancz in Britain. In all likelihood, Amis's volume reached a wider base of fans and readers than any prior book on SF, since Ballantine Books decided to reprint it in paperback, complete with a cover painting by Richard Powers, whose distinctive style had become a trademark of Ballantine's extensive line of SF and fantasy paperbacks. The publishers, Ian and Betty Ballantine, hoped the volume would both appeal to fans and draw the attention of a broader readership to SF

– though they were also shrewdly aware that nearly two dozen of the works recommended by Amis, including those by Pohl, were from Ballantine’s own list. More important is that a book that began its life in the heart of academia as part of the Christian Gauss lectures at Princeton, written by a significant figure from the mainstream literary community, found its way into fandom through a rare mass-market paperback of literary criticism.

Literary criticism and literary enthusiasm are often two sides of the same coin. Fans began writing a kind of folk-criticism in the letter columns of the early pulp magazines as a way not simply of voting for favorite stories, but of hoping to influence the magazine’s direction and, not infrequently, mounting spirited defenses of the genre as a whole (even if many of these defenses were extra-literary in nature, such as touting science education as a benefit of SF). Academic critics, less likely to be engaged in the month-to-month or year-to-year shaping of the field (though some may have begun as fans), also often found themselves in a defensive posture, simply by arguing that SF and fantasy might yield to the same tools of critical analysis and cultural contextualisation as any other literature. Relatively early academic books, like *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, edited by Thomas D. Clareson in 1971, would often begin by complaining about the “failure of the critics, both of the popular press and of academe, to afford sf even the small recognition given to the western story and the detective novel as forms of popular literature” (x); note that even the title of Clareson’s book implies SF’s value by aligning it with realism.

This sense of being beleaguered by the broader literary community was likely one factor – along with academics’ discovery that much of the crucial historical and bibliographical work they needed was the work of fandom – that eventually drew fans and academics into an uneasy alliance. Certainly there was still distrust on both sides; as late as 1983, writing in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, the author and critic Algis Budrys could complain that the “formal scholarship of speculative fiction is, taken in the whole, worthless”, adding to earlier similar diatribes from Ben Bova, Lester del Rey, William Tenn, and others, culminating in a quotation often attributed to Dena Brown: “Let’s get science fiction out of the classroom and back in the gutter where it belongs” (Gunn, “Protocols”). Other writers, including Damon Knight, Brian Aldiss, Joanna Russ, and Ursula K. Le Guin, were more welcoming of academic attention, and it’s worth noting that each of these writers – as well as Budrys himself – would eventually be awarded the Science Fiction Research Association’s Pilgrim Award (recently changed to The SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship).

But assessments like those of *De Voto* back in 1939 would persist with alarming regularity, dismissing both the readers of SF and its scholars. For example, in another *Harper’s* essay, 46 years after *De Voto’s*, the critic Luc Sante wrote:

Science fiction, by relying on a tradition of mediocrity, has effectively sealed itself off from literature, and, incidentally, from real concerns. From within, science fiction exudes the humid vapor of male prepubescence. The cultlike ferocity of science fiction fandom serves only to cultivate what is most sickly and stunted about the genre. (Sante)

And in reviewing Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* in the *New York Times* in 2003, Sven Birkerts asserted:

I am going to stick my neck out and just say it: science fiction will never be Literature with a capital "L," and this is because it inevitably proceeds from premise rather than character. It sacrifices moral and psychological nuance in favor of more conceptual matters, and elevates scenario over sensibility.
(Birkerts)

There are, of course, many literary figures who take exception to such blanket assessments, and Sante's gratuitous comment on fandom reflects a stereotype of male adolescence which was stale even in the 1980s. But such an attack on a genre's readers is implicitly an attack on its scholars as well, resulting in a common cause that has mitigated the once-common distrust between fans and scholars. The pre-eminent fan-voted award in the field, the annual Hugo for best related work, has gone to academic or scholarly works at least ten times since it was instituted in 1980 (depending on how we count such reference works as the Clute/Nicholls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*), while, as I noted above, the SFRA Pilgrim Award has often recognised authors whose critical work began in fandom rather than academia (Pamela Sargent, Hal Hall, Mike Ashley, and Samuel R. Delany are further examples). Beginning in 1982, Worldcons have usually featured an academic track of programming, which have likely encouraged some scholars to attend their first fan convention while offering fans an opportunity to hear papers and panels that revealed what the academics have actually been up to.

There is, in short, a good deal more to unite fandom and academia than to divide it, at least in terms of literature – but literature is only a part of what each encompasses today. Both SFF academia and SFF fandom have expanded far beyond the relatively narrow focus that I've been discussing throughout this essay, and in the process have fragmented into increasingly refined subspecialties. Literary fandom gives rise not only to distinct groups devoted to hard SF or heroic fantasy or paranormal romances, but to media fandom, which in turn gives rise to film, TV, and gaming fandom, and eventually to even more narrowly focused fandoms ranging from bronies to *Game of Thrones* or the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Academia develops similar subspecialties, including, with some irony, fandom itself. Earlier fan studies, like Joe Sanders's 1994 essay anthology *Science Fiction Fandom*, focused almost entirely on the history of SF fandom, with most contributions by fans themselves; today, essays in *The Journal of Fandom Studies* seldom focus on SFF or literary fandom. Both fan and academic groups have also benefited from intersectionality, finding new perspectives from feminist, LGBTQIA, disabled, BIPOC, and international communities once scarcely visible. These broadening perspectives inevitably lead to new conflicts and new alliances, sometimes reflected in Hugo Awards ballots and convention programming. But those ancient debates about whether SFF is worth reading or studying at all begin to seem almost quaint, and certainly naïve. That group of largely white, male, adolescent fans in 1939 who ambitiously called their New York meeting a Worldcon may be mostly gone now, but – with recent meetings hosted by Finland, Ireland, and New Zealand, with once-marginalized fans (and even scholars!) welcomed – Worldcon may finally have earned its name.

Biography: Gary K. Wolfe is Emeritus Professor of Humanities and a former dean at Roosevelt University and a reviewer for *Locus* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune*. His reviews have been collected in *Soundings* (BSFA Award 2006; Hugo nominee), *Bearings* (Hugo nominee), and *Sightings*, and his *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature* (Wesleyan) received the Locus Award in 2012. Earlier books include *The Known and the Unknown: The Iconography of Science Fiction* (Eaton Award, 1981), *Harlan Ellison: The Edge of Forever* (with Ellen Weil), and *David Lindsay*. For the Library of America, he edited *American Science Fiction: Nine Classic Novels of the 1950s* (2012), and *American Science Fiction: Eight Classic Novels of the 1960s* (2019). He received the Pilgrim Award from the Science Fiction Research Association, the Distinguished Scholarship Award from the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, and a Special World Fantasy Award for criticism. His 24-lecture series *How Great Science Fiction Works* appeared from The Great Courses in 2016. He has received ten Hugo nominations, two for his reviews collections and eight for *The Coode Street Podcast*, which he has co-hosted with Jonathan Strahan for more than 550 episodes.

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Science Fiction Collections at the University of Liverpool: Interview with Phoenix Alexander

Esko Suoranta

Phoenix Alexander is the Science Fiction Collections Librarian at the University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives.

Could you briefly introduce the Science Fiction collections at the University of Liverpool and its history?

The Science Fiction collections at the University of Liverpool constitute the largest catalogued library of science fiction in Europe. It includes the collection of the Science Fiction Foundation: one of the most prominent SFF research and educational organisations in the UK. The collections overall comprise over 35,000 books, over 5,000 periodicals and critical works, and archival holdings of major figures in British SF.

Some of the materials, such as the Olaf Stapledon archive, are owned by the University of Liverpool (Stapledon was a philosophy lecturer and took his Ph.D. at Liverpool), but the SF Foundation's materials were brought over from their original home in the North East London Polytechnic (now University of East London). The materials came to Liverpool in 1993 and my predecessor, Andy Sawyer, was the librarian until his retirement in 2018.

Could you give us an insight into archival material or unique research collections that may be of particular interest to researchers in science fiction and fantasy?

Probably not with any kind of brevity! Highlights of our holdings including the Olaf Stapledon, John Wyndham, John Brunner, and Ramsey Campbell archives, the papers of Ellen Datlow (one of the foremost editors of horror in contemporary publishing), and the libraries of Brian W. Aldiss and Arthur C. Clarke. We hold comprehensive runs of every major SF periodical, as well as an amazing collection of zines (fan-made pamphlets) that give fascinating and easily overlooked insights into the history of the genre.

Could you tell us about some of your research activities? What kind of facilities and support does it provide?

One of the main services we offer is the use of the reading room for viewing materials from our collections. Special Collections and Archives (SCA) isn't like a regular library: you can't check books out and take them out of the building, for one! As well as being able to physically view our materials in-house, we have created several online exhibits and recorded virtual lectures on various items in SCA. These are all viewable via our blog: manuscriptsandmore.liverpool.ac.uk. I also use the materials for teaching as part of the MA in Science Fiction Studies offered by the Department of English.

What kind of research events, public events, and dissemination events have been held in the past or are planned? Are there any particular conventions and events that you're associated with? Alternately, is it possible to organize events in association with you?

Well, as you might imagine, in-person events have not taken place during the past year due to the ongoing pandemic. However, SCA staff were hard at work creating digital content to continue the conversations about our holdings and literature more broadly. I recorded a short video series titled "Resisting Dystopia", in which I introduced ten books that I felt spoke to our current moment. I also created an online exhibit on Arthur C. Clarke – showcasing some of our newly acquired items – and my colleagues Niamh Delaney and Robyn Orr created exhibitions on early printed books and student life at Liverpool, respectively. Links to all of our online exhibitions may be found at libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/library/sca/exhibitions. For videos on SF texts (and more!), check out our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdPRzLKjZQGxggnsne7nfhg>.

Pre-pandemic, I organised pop-up exhibits at the International Slavery Museum and for the University of Liverpool's commemorative event celebrating the anniversary of the moon landings, and participated in an ongoing collaborative project on Terry Pratchett with Senate House Library and Trinity College, Dublin. Our next collaborative project is the World Museum's "AI: More Than Human" exhibit, which includes items from our SF periodical collections and a short video lecture on the history of AI in SF literature.

As the Head Librarian of the collections, could you tell us about yourself and your interests in science fiction and fantasy? Looking ahead, what is your particular vision for the future of the collection, especially as a research space?

Absolutely! I actually started out reading a lot of fantasy as a kid, including lots of naughty books by David Gemmell that in hindsight I was far too young to read. I've always been a huge gamer, too (board, video, role-playing), drawn to the immersive poetics of invented worlds.

Initially training as a fashion designer after leaving high school, I then moved back into literary studies and worked as a curatorial assistant at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library while I was completing my doctorate at Yale University.

I am a scholar and writer of science fiction, as well as a librarian, and my work has appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, *Black Static*, *Safundi: the Journal of South African and American Studies*, and *Science Fiction Studies*, among others.

My research interests cover the intersections of librarianship and curatorial practice, speculative fiction, and social justice. My work is informed by the question of how archives can serve as literary "home places" (after Carla Peterson's definition) for marginalised creators who have been historically undervalued – and whose work has had to take on new and innovative forms for recognition. In the future, I would love to acquire more archives of underrepresented voices in the SF collections: women, authors of colour, and queer authors in particular.



“Gold Would Cure That”: Economic Feminism in Olive Harper’s *A Fair Californian*

David Balfour

Abstract: In 1889, Minerva Press published a lost-race fantasy entitled *A Fair Californian*, by the controversial journalist, author, lecturer, and poet Olive Harper (Ellen Burrell D’Apery, 1842–1915). The novel incorporated its author’s beliefs about “economic feminism”, which advocated expanding economic opportunities for women, rather than on achieving women’s suffrage. There are obvious similarities between the novel and contemporary feminist utopian fiction, but Harper’s emphasis on economic opportunity for women (in particular, the novel’s protagonist, Dolores) clearly distinguishes *A Fair Californian* from the far more politics-focused work of more widely known feminist utopian writers.

Keywords: lost-race, utopian literature, feminist literature

1. Introduction

In 1889 the small New York-based Minerva Press released a highly imaginative fantasy entitled *A Fair Californian* by the controversial journalist, lecturer, author, and poet Olive Harper (1842–1915). The book, which deals with a young woman who discovers a fantastic civilisation at the centre of the earth, was well received and went through at least sixteen printings (*American Bookseller* 95; “World of Letters” 1). It appears that *A Fair Californian* was one of only three novels Harper wrote that contain elements of fantasy and her only foray into

"lost-race" or "lost-world" literature, the template for which had been established only three years earlier by H. Rider Haggard in *King Solomon's Mines*.¹

The *SF Encyclopedia* describes the populace of the subterranean civilisation depicted in the novel as a "race of feminists" (Clute). Although the novel has some points in common with contemporary feminist utopian fiction, there are also very significant differences. These differences stem from the fact that Harper's motives in writing the novel and her feminist beliefs varied substantially from those of the feminist utopian writers of her time. A close examination reveals that the ideas relating to the status, roles, and rights of women that are embedded in the novel reflect a particular strain of largely forgotten but still very relevant 19th-century feminist thought that has since been labelled "economic feminism" (Stanley 38). Elements of economic feminism and related ideas concerning marriage and childrearing are woven into the novel in various ways, and, in particular, are embodied in the character of Dolores, the protagonist of the novel.

2. Olive Harper

Dolores is clearly an idealisation of Harper herself, who, like her main character, managed to overcome severe obstacles to achieve success. Although little-remembered today, Harper enjoyed a considerable degree of fame in her own time. "Olive Harper" was the pen name of Ellen Burrell, who was born in Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania on 28 September 1842.² In 1849, Harper's father, Albert, immigrated to San Francisco, and shortly thereafter became one of the founders of a settlement that would grow into the city of Oakland ("Oakland News" 16).³ His family joined him there two years later.

Oakland retained a rough and rowdy frontier character throughout Harper's youth. Occasional gunplay, periodic disease, and dangerous wildlife such as grizzlies and rattlesnakes made life precarious. When Harper was twelve, she and her younger sister contracted diphtheria during an epidemic; her sister did not survive. Harper described herself as the "wildest of a wild lot of children" in the town (*Stormy* 47). She was a precocious learner and voracious reader who excelled academically, but a fierce intolerance of anything she perceived as hypocritical or snobbish resulted in frequent clashes with fellow students, as well as teachers and other adults in the community.

At age fifteen, against her parent's wishes, Harper married 42-year-old George Gibson, a business acquaintance of her father's. As his business enterprises faltered, Gibson sank deeper into alcoholism and became increasingly abusive. Harper sustained herself and her three children through shrewd real-estate dealings and, for a time, through operating a millinery and dressmaking shop. After about fourteen years of marriage, Harper divorced Gibson for "cruel and inhuman treatment" (583). In the midst of divorce

¹ The other novels with elements of fantasy are *The Show Girl* (1902), adapted from a comic musical by R. A. Barnett that involves a magical fez, and *A Sociable Ghost* (1903), an effective satire that shares some themes with *A Fair Californian*. For a more detailed discussion of these thematic similarities, see Balfour, "Afterword" (168–69).

² Unless otherwise noted, details from Harper's early life are drawn from her unpublished memoir, *The Stormy Petrel*.

³ In Beth Bagwell's book *Oakland*, Harper's father is misidentified as Alfred (27).

proceedings, Harper contracted what she described as “typhoid pneumonia” followed by “severe rheumatism”; complications from these ailments forced her to walk on crutches for the remainder of her life (577). In a memoir written near the end of her life, Harper describes her initial despair:

Can you realize what that all meant? It meant that I, the strongest, most active woman alive, almost, was cut down like this, never to run, walk, dance, climb, work, never to have free use of the splendid strength God gave me, and all this had fallen upon me out of a clear sky I went in to the sick bed a strong, young, proud woman, proud of the great strength and powers of endurance beyond that given to the strongest of her sex, at about 27 years old, and came out of it a hopeless cripple at 29. (*Stormy* 589–91).

Following her divorce, Harper – a single mother with three children to support – decided to pursue a career as a professional writer (Harper, “Will I Ever” 1). Against heavy odds, she met with rapid success and was soon regularly contributing articles and poetry to the *Daily Alta California* and a variety of other newspapers across the United States (“Lady Journalist” 1). She also became a popular lecturer, known for her outspokenness, her biting humor, and her occasional treatment of erotic themes in her poetry (Cummins 120). Despite, or perhaps because of, her success, Harper was the frequent target of criticism from her male colleagues. For instance, one characterised her prose as “slush and drivel” (“Good Letters” 2), another lamented the “fathomless obscenity” of her verse (*The Wasp*), and a third offered the gratuitously cruel judgement that her “narrative hobbled horribly, as though it went on crutches” (“Letter from London” 28).

In 1873, the *Daily Alta California* and the *St. Louis Globe* dispatched Harper to Europe to report on the Vienna Exhibition as well as the other cities she visited *en route* (“Woman’s Writes” 3). While in London, she generated considerable controversy through two sharply critical articles about Ambrose Bierce, at the time a rising literary star residing in the English capital, as well as the English poet, novelist, and critic Algernon Charles Swinburne (Grenander 406–22; Sypher 5–14). While in Vienna, Harper met, and shortly thereafter married, Telemaque D’Apery. The Franco–Turkish son of a Napoleonic officer, D’Apery had risen from the ranks of the Ottoman army to become imperial treasurer. They moved to Constantinople, where they were implicated in an alleged plot against the Sultan. Although D’Apery managed to flee to Athens, Ottoman authorities arrested and imprisoned Harper until the American consul intervened to gain her release, whereupon she rejoined her husband (“Her Romantic” 6; Harper, “Letters: Number 28” 6). The couple eventually settled in New York City, and in 1877, Harper gave birth to a son, Tello (“Boy’s” 10). Harper’s writing career flourished for several years following her return to America. She continued to publish articles on a range of topics for a wide variety of newspapers and produced several novels and numerous short stories. When other work began to dry up, beginning about 1902 and over the course of roughly a decade thereafter, she turned out at least thirty novelisations of sensational plays for Ogilvie Publishing (“*Famille*”; “*Compleat*”). She died on 2 May 1915 at the age of 72 following injuries suffered in a fall on a train (“Olive Harper Dies” 15).

3. Olive Harper and “Economic Feminism”

As a professional journalist, Harper promoted the cause of working women. An article that appeared in several newspapers, including the *Ithaca Daily Journal* for 19 August 1887, reveals that for a time Harper served as secretary for the Women’s National Industrial League, or WNIL (G.G. 1), an organisation founded in 1882 by Charlotte Smith (1840–1917), the leading advocate for women’s economic rights during that period. Smith’s prescription for advancing the cause of women’s rights was at variance with that of the more well-known suffragists of the time, who, as their name suggests, concentrated almost exclusively upon winning the vote for women. Smith instead “considered money more vital than the vote, and equal access to training and fairly paid work the likeliest route to social equality for women” (Stanley 10). In particular, she championed a woman’s right to pursue any profession she chose and to be paid equitable wages for her labor, being among first to demand “equal pay for equal work” (Stanley 12). Harper’s work for the WNIL included gathering statistical data, which was shared with a senatorial committee investigating conditions of female labor, and contributing letters to the *New York World* and the *New York Mail and Express* “embodying information gathered at the time” (G.G. 1).

Harper and Smith may have initially met in 1876 at the US Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia, which Harper attended in her capacity as a correspondent for the *Daily Alta California* and other newspapers (Stanley 91–92; Harper, “Centennial Letter” 4; N. 4). However, long before that date, Harper had espoused ideas similar to those of Smith. As early as 1872 she dismissed what she called the “folly of female suffrage” (“Lectures” 2) and argued that women could more effectively exercise power through private influence over the men in their lives, particularly their husbands and sons (“‘Olive Harper’ as Lectress” 2). Nonetheless, Harper’s work with the WNIL may have served to sharpen and focus her thinking on women’s rights, especially those of working women. In a brief item in *The Cincinnati Daily Star* on February 6, 1877, the anonymous author notes that Harper “holds strongly to woman’s right to labor and to be paid for her labor” (“Personals” 2), and in 1893, Harper herself wrote that women’s “intellect and courage” made them fit to fulfill any occupation successfully, save those that required a man’s “strength and power” (Harper, “Our Lucky” 11).

Harper then, was in agreement with Smith on what can be seen as the core tenets of “economic feminism”: that women should enjoy equal opportunity to men in the workplace and that their sex should not bar them from gainful employment of their choice; that they should be paid equitably for their work; and that the wealth that women attained through such economic freedom, rather than the vote, was the real key to women achieving social equality with men.

In addition, Harper, like Smith, held generally traditional views on marriage and childrearing, despite the fact that both had endured difficult marital unions (Stanley 70, 79, 83). She sometimes humorously lamented the travails related to bearing and raising children (“The Centennial” 6). However, a fellow reporter who interviewed her in 1877 remarked, “I have rarely met a woman who seemed to feel so deeply the exalted privilege of being a mother” (N. 4), and such reverence is frequently expressed in Harper’s own writings. For

instance, in dismissing the need for women to vote, Harper remarks caustically, “I have got all the rights I want. I have the undeniable right to be a mother, and that the tyrant man can never usurp” (“Lectress” 2). And, in 1873, she asserted:

I love babies. I hated them until I had one of my own, and ever since I have loved every baby I have seen The woman whose heart does not respond to infantile tears or smiles, pains or pleasures – whose heart does not grow tender toward the clinging grasp of helpless baby fingers, is not worthy the name of woman. (“Loveableness” 330)

Likewise, Harper supported traditional marriage, and in an 1893 article entitled “Our Lucky Fair Sex,” argued that American wives were treated much better by their husbands than wives in Europe and Asia (11). Nevertheless, as the survivor of an abusive first marriage, Harper remained acutely sensitive to the mistreatment that wives sometimes faced at the hands of violent or irresponsible husbands (Harper, *Letters* 7), and her writings are spiced with occasional but highly caustic comments about men, especially husbands. For example, in a story concerning the Women’s Pavilion at the Centennial in Philadelphia in 1876, she writes:

Men are useless in all things, and they are an encumbrance on the face of the earth. We can get along far better without them. With their disappearance from the face of the globe would also disappear many more of the things we complain of, also, babies. Soul exalting thought! No husbands to abuse us and keep us down; no babies to bother us; no orders to obey but those of our own will. What a happy divine and glorious world it would be! What a millennium this mundane sphere would be and how everlastingly would it last; this state of peace! (“The Centennial” 6)

4. Economic Feminism in *A Fair Californian*

Olive Harper was very much a working professional who wrote primarily to support herself and her family. Nevertheless, Harper regularly infused her own views into her original fiction, and, along with other of her ideas and interests, her economic feminist beliefs are very evident in *A Fair Californian*. The novel is narrated by Dolores, a young woman from San Francisco who is in love with Roy Lewis, handsome of face but infirm in health. When Dolores is informed by Roy that he cannot marry her because she would be unable to support him and his aged parents, she sets out to seek a fortune prospecting in Mexico. She succeeds in locating a cave filled with enormous quantities of gold, but exploring further passes through an increasingly fantastic series of subterranean landscapes until she stumbles upon a civilisation located at the centre of the earth.

The population of this Sacred City of the Seven is divided into seven houses. One of these – the House of the All – rules over the remaining six, each of which represents some aspect of their society. The denizens of this city have achieved immortality through their mastery of advanced science. In doing so, however, they have become estranged from their souls, which have been condemned to suffer a perpetual cycle of tortured incarnations in the bodies of

various life forms on worlds scattered across the universe. Meanwhile, after thousands of years, immortality has become a burden to the city's occupants. They seek only to reunite with their souls and achieve salvation in the afterlife. They recruit Dolores to help them achieve this end, and upon being administered drugs that allow her astral form to range across the cosmos, she embarks upon a series of journeys to other worlds to retrieve their souls. As each soul is reunited with its original body, that body quickly ages and dies, and the soul ascends, presumably, to heaven.

Once her task is completed, however, Dolores learns from Clarice, another surface-dweller who had earlier been abducted and brought to the city, that she has been cruelly deceived. The seemingly benevolent residents of the city had in actuality been evil and debauched worshippers of the demon-god Shaquina, to whom they regularly offered human sacrifices. No sooner does Dolores learn this than Shaquina destroys the city by a massive earthquake, and she and Clarice barely succeed in escaping with a fortune in jewels. Shortly after they reach the surface, Clarice loses her reason and dies from hunger and thirst. Dolores, however, through remarkable resourcefulness and determination, survives an arduous journey across a barren landscape and, with her newfound riches, manages to return to civilisation and marry her beloved Roy.

In the novel, Harper expresses both sides of her feelings about marriage, men, and children. Her more positive views on these topics are represented by Dolores, whose main goal is to marry Roy and, it can be surmised, bear and raise children. Conversely, when Dolores questions a female denizen about the absence of marriage and reproduction in the City of the Seven, the response she receives closely mirrors Harper's scathing remarks at the Philadelphia Centennial:

What is maternity but agony? What is carnal love but a lowering of the spiritual nature? What is wifely affection but degradation of will, and delivery of all one's finest sensibilities into the hands of another, a complete surrendering of all the holiest thoughts and divinest aspirations into the hands of another to defile if he so wills to do?

What is it to be subject to the will and caprice of mortal man? If men were angels, it would still be choosing the better part to live as do we. (*Fair* 77)

Harper's more specific concerns about the abuse of women at the hands of men are evident when Dolores, in her astral travels, visits a planet populated by ape-like beings and witnesses the following:

I floated along aimlessly, and found myself inside one of the houses, and there saw a strange-looking little creature, whether human or animal I could not at first determine. He looked so like a monkey, that I thought he must be one; and then, again, he looked so like a man, that I thought he was one.

I watched in expectation of seeing him do something which would determine what he was, when there entered another one of the same species; and in her hands she bore a tray of fruits, which she set down in front of him, at the same time standing at a respectful distance, as if fearing that he was about to throw something at her.

This gave me the opinion that they were human; and I reflected on the strange fact, that, in no matter what country, the male always asserts himself as the stronger of the two. After the man – if man it was – had eaten all he wanted, he deliberately emptied all that remained on the ground; for these places had no floors, being little more than thatched huts. The woman gathered the scattered fruit, and made off with it to a corner of the garden, where she devoured the remains....

I ... flew away towards the other habitations There was a man and a woman in each place; and everywhere the man seemed to find his only pleasure in doing something to annoy the woman, and to show the utter contempt in which he held her. (109–10)

Further exploration reveals a more violent tableau:

At last I came to a place where there were some twenty or thirty of the most abominable and ferocious looking monkey-men I had seen yet; and they were making a hideous howling noise, and striking with clubs and sticks at something which lay moaning piteously on the ground. Instantly I flew there, and saw a female of their species, lying bleeding and quivering under their cruel blows; and, as I drew near, they rained their blows upon her, still more fiercely; each one breaking a bone, or cutting or tearing a deep gash, from which the blood gushed in torrents. (111)

Harper's opinions on women's political and economic rights also find expression in the novel. In the City of the Seven, women enjoy a higher status than those in the surface world. The exclusively-female "House of the Under-World" – associated with art, beauty, and all the "grains and fruits which rise out of the earth" (86) – shares equal standing with the male houses, excepting only the House of the All, and occupies an equally prominent place in a magnificent procession of the houses that Dolores witnesses:

Then came the Priestess of the House of the Under-World, – out of which comes all that graces life, – and her maidens; and their gleaming white garments had sewn upon them in shining threads the growing, ripening grains; the different fruits; the symbols of plenty, of art and beauty, and the production of the wonderful pottery which they wrought from the clay and calcined bones, endowing each with a soul which emanated from their own like bubbles from a pipe.

The robe of the priestess was so scintillant with light from its jewels, that the eyes ached and burned from one glance.

Each one of her maidens carried in one hand a garland of flowers, and in the other a golden torch, which, instead of holding flame, emitted the most exquisite fragrance. (81)

In addition, the chief priestess of the "sisterhood" (79) of the Under-World occupies a position on the "Supreme Council," along with the chief priests of the male houses. Nevertheless, just as Harper was willing to cede political primacy to men in her own world, ultimate authority in the City of the Seven rests in the hands of an all-powerful patriarch. As Dolores explains, "all [are] under the control of, and owing obedience to, the Master of the Great House, The All, who is the recognised head of the whole cult of the Sacred Seven in one. He occupies a position in their religion, almost as supreme as the Pope of Rome

in his" (104). The awe and reverence with which this patriarchal figure is regarded is evident from his first appearance:

His stature was unusually tall, and his face and form god-like. Instead of wearing a crown of flowers on his head, he wore a crown with seven points, all separate, and yet all part of the superior seventh, which was a mass of blazing jewels.

His robe was of a royal scarlet; that color which in ancient days was called Tyrian purple. On the upper part, over the chest, it was covered with one splendid mass of jewels, in form of a sun, surrounded by crescent moons; and these in turn were bordered by gleaming stars. The centre of the sun was of one enormous yellow topaz, and the rays were alternate diamonds and topaz. The moons were formed of pale bluish-white diamonds, and the stars of the same. On the border of his robe and tunic were embroidered in jet black, mystic letters, and what looked like flames also in black. On his bare arms he wore intertwined serpents of jewels, which threw off rays of every color. On his feet he wore sandals, with jeweled straps. (81)

The economic standing of women in the city is, similarly, largely reflective of Harper's economic feminist beliefs. The social system in the city is essentially socialistic. Though there is a rigid division of labor in the City of the Seven, which Harper would have found unacceptable in her own world, both women and men are expected to be productive members of society, and their labor is afforded equal value. Interestingly, it is the men who prepare and serve meals, although, Dolores notes, those who serve are as "worthy to take their places at the tables as those who were seated there" (*Fair* 74). On the other hand, women are bound to responsibilities such as pottery making, needlework, and embroidery. Neither set of occupations signifies any degree of subjugation to the other; in fact, as related by Dolores, the making of pottery carries a religious significance vital to the salvation of the inhabitants of the city:

The priestesses made the sacred pottery, weaving and kneading a portion of the owner's soul in with the clay, so that, when that person died, the water-jar and plate must be broken, to set their souls free to go to their future abiding-place in heaven, where they were to have such joys as words would fail to paint. (104)

The clearest manifestation of Harper's economic feminist ideas, however, can be found in the character of Dolores, who, like her creator, combines a mawkish Victorian sentimentality with a steely resolve and extraordinary resourcefulness. Although Dolores's chief aim – winning the man she loves – is the same as that faced by the heroines of countless Victorian melodramas, her means of achieving that end are decidedly unconventional and dovetail neatly with the economic feminist contention that women can best achieve their goals by gaining financial independence. In considering that lack of wealth is the source of her dilemma, Dolores straightforwardly concludes: "gold would cure that" (33). Or, as she vows to Roy:

I will be rich, Roy, I swear it. I will make money somehow; and then there will be no obstacle I will go out alone into the world, and single-handed, with no aid save determination and integrity, and I will conquer fortune. (39)

In recounting Dolores' effort to gain riches so she may marry Roy, Harper, consciously or not, reverses the well-established trope, common at least since medieval chivalric literature, of the young, unproven male who embarks on a quest for fortune and glory to prove his worthiness to the fair maiden. This same trope has been employed in a number of lost-race novels, including H. Rider Haggard's *People of the Mist* (1894) and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912).

Most significantly, in her search for wealth, Dolores proves herself to be the intelligent and highly competent woman who, as Harper and Smith contended, ought to possess the right to pursue any occupation she wished. In the novel, Dolores asserts that when facing difficult circumstances, she is "cool and calculating" (*Fair* 47), with a "heart of rock" (100), and guided by the "practical side of [her] nature" (148), characteristics more often attributed to the masculine heroes of fantasy literature. Harper allows Dolores to display these qualities at several points, carefully detailing, for instance, her meticulous and prudent efforts to prepare herself for her quest, her arduous, solitary journey through the harsh Mexican wilderness in search of riches, and her daring astral travels.

The character of Clarice stands in strong counterpoint to that of Dolores. Harper's portrayal of Clarice as vulnerable and dependent – a female stereotype that would have been quite familiar to readers of popular Victorian literature – serves to bring Dolores's fortitude and competence into sharper relief. Clarice had originally been designated for the cosmic rescue mission that Dolores eventually accomplished, but failed, according to the Master of the Great House, because "she lacked the essential of courage" (*Fair* 127), and she is regularly depicted as trembling (131), shivering (134), crying (141), fretting (141), and clinging to Dolores "with fear" (132). In their hasty preparations for escape from the City of the Seven and in their tribulations once they reach the surface, Dolores assumes the typically masculine roles of provider and protector of her "poor little frail" companion (*Fair* 141). Despite these careful ministrations, Clarice rapidly degenerates into a delusional, childlike state, and finally perishes, leaving Dolores to carry on alone.

Dolores's skill, intelligence, bravery, and perseverance are most evident in the novel's late chapters that recount her grim, solitary struggle for survival following the death of Clarice. Here, the tone shifts from dream-like fantasy to gritty realism, as Dolores contends against hunger and thirst amid a desolate and arid surface landscape. To illustrate her hero's remarkable qualities, Harper relates at some length Dolores's tireless efforts to obtain food and to escape the remote valley in which she has found herself. After finally locating a river in which she can at least quench her thirst, Dolores remarks, "I was always, even as a little child, famous for finding means to get out of difficulties," and then goes on to relate in exacting detail how she unravels the threads of a mantle that Clarice had worn as a head covering, braids the threads into a sturdy line, uses her teeth to fashion a hook from a pin that had fastened her skirt, chipping a front tooth in the process, and adding parenthetically, "This did not worry me at the time, though afterwards I found I was still woman enough to regret it." Dolores then digs up worms with a sharp stick, baits her crude hook, weights the line with a small stone, and (after repeated failed attempts over several hours) finally lands "three fair-sized fish" (147–48).

Dolores's ingenuity and doggedness are even more evident as she devises her means of escape from the valley via the river. She fashions a dugout from a fallen tree-trunk by an arduous, two-month-long process of gradually burning and scraping out the interior. Having completed her vessel, Dolores shows equal proficiency and tenacity in provisioning and launching it. An example of how Harper describes this process demonstrates her attention to illustrating the varied strengths of her protagonist:

Now, my next undertaking was to get my boat into the river, and to keep it from floating away while I would be stocking it with my scanty store of provisions, and building a sort of stove there; for I could not bear to go off and leave my fire, which I looked upon as my only friend. I remembered having seen a vine of fibrous-looking stems some distance away; and I went there, and found that it would answer my purpose, as it was tough and flexible, and certainly long enough; but I could neither break it, nor tear it up by the roots, and I had to sit down deliberately with a stone, and rub and scratch my way through it. Before I had it cut through, and had its lateral branches trimmed off, it was almost dark, and I had a heavy weight of its coils to reach the boat with. I fastened it to one of the roots, which, having grown upward, I had left as a sort of stern-post, and found that it would easily reach a tree which grew upon the bank. Therefore I could secure my boat while getting ready to trust myself to the current

I laid a thick bed of grass in the bottom [of the dugout], and fixed a place for my fish, which, however, it was not my intention to put in until the last thing: then I set about hunting for a pole of some kind, that would assist me in the management of my not unhandsome boat. I was fortunate enough to find a sapling that was just what I wanted, but it took me three whole days to trim off the branches and get it cut down. There was one branch that had somehow grown downward; and this made a sort of natural boat-hook out of it, which I felt would be of great service.

At last the day came that my boat was to float or sink; and I dug and scraped away the soil, and the current of the river helped me, so that the last foot of earth gave way, and I had the satisfaction of seeing it rock gently on the water. (*Fair* 150–51)

Prior to the 20th century, lost-race fantasies written by women were not all that uncommon, but those featuring a strong, central female character were, at least up to the late 20th century, much more scarce. One is hard-pressed to find a single example in 19th-century fantasy literature of a woman who exhibits the same strength of character as does Dolores in *A Fair Californian*. The female protagonist of a roughly contemporary lost-race novel, *The Day of Resis* (1897) by Lillian Frances Mentor, displays some initiative and courage early on, but as the novel progresses, gradually assumes the more deferential and dependent characteristics of a typical Victorian heroine. Similarly, in the early chapters of the feminist utopian novel *Mizora: A Prophecy* (1880–1881) by Mary E. Bradley Lane, the female narrator exhibits considerable toughness and perseverance in escaping a Russian prison and making her way across the Siberian tundra, but thereafter serves as little more than a passive observer of the marvels of an underground civilisation that she discovers on her journey.

5. *A Fair Californian* and Feminist Utopian Literature

In addition to resilient female narrators, *A Fair Californian* shares other points in common with *Mizora* and other works of feminist utopian fiction that proliferated during the period. These early feminist utopian fantasies accompanied the so-called first-wave of feminism that emerged in the second half of the 19th century and continued until 1920, when women achieved voting rights in the US. They reflected many of the same feminist ideals and progressive policies advocated by those in the women's movement (Lewes 1, 42–48; Lough 1199–200; Kessler, *Daring* ix–x, xx; Lake 1277).

In several of its aspects, the all-female utopia described in Lane's *Mizora* bears a marked resemblance to Harper's City of the Seven. It is a scientifically advanced, socialistic community that has eliminated the social ills that beset the surface world. Utopias featuring one or more of these characteristics had also appeared in a number of other feminist utopian works prior to the publication of Harper's novel (Kessler, *Daring* xvii, xix, xxiv, Lake 1278; Lough 1200). Such commonalities suggest that Harper borrowed liberally from earlier utopian writers, just as she did from previous speculative literature in general. For example, Dolores's method of travelling across the cosmos with the aid of a consciousness-expanding elixir is quite similar to that employed by the female hero of Marie Corelli's best-selling fantasy, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, published just three years prior to Harper's novel.

In spite of these similarities, there are fundamental differences between *A Fair Californian* and feminist utopian literature. Some of these differences reflect the disparities between Harper's economic feminist beliefs and the broader goals of the more mainstream feminist movement of the period. Feminist utopian writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries routinely posited the moral superiority of women over men and were virtually unanimous in viewing patriarchy as the primary source of the various problems – poverty, class conflict, war, and the like – that plagued their own societies (Pearson and Pope 266, 268; Kessler, *Daring* xviii; Lewes 91). In their works, women have liberated themselves from male domination and established communities “within which the female protagonists are able to reach their full potential” (Lough 1195). These utopian visions range from egalitarian societies wherein the sexes are fully integrated, such as Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant's *Unveiling a Parallel* (1893) and Elizabeth Corbett's “My Visit to Utopia” (1869); mixed-sex societies in which women have established some measure of dominance over men, as in Corbett's *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future* (1889), where men are barred from holding political office; and, finally, exclusively female societies such as those depicted in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) and *Mizora*, in both of which women reproduce through a process of parthenogenesis. In all cases, it is through female agency that the problems resulting from male dominance have been eradicated, and it is women who are responsible for all of the positive attributes of the communities depicted. Briefly stated, these utopias are utopian due to female influence.

Harper, on the other hand, did not fully share the utopianists' unqualifiedly negative view of patriarchy, and although women share equal status with most of the male citizens, all in the City of the Seven are ruled by a patriarch. Further, though the City of the Seven displays many of the usual characteristics of fictional utopias – advanced science, absence of disease, social harmony, and the like –

Harper offers nothing to suggest that the women of the city are primarily responsible for this state of affairs. It can be seen, then, that – leaving aside the fact that it ultimately proves to be a dystopia – the City of the Seven does not match the criteria for a feminist utopia implicitly established within the genre.

Other differences between *A Fair Californian* and contemporary feminist utopian works stem from the fact that Harper's intentions in writing the novel were markedly at variance with those of the utopian writers. Brian W. Aldiss has referred to utopian writers as "moralists who use the fantastic to make their point" (68), and since Plato composed *The Republic* in the 5th century B.C.E., utopian writers have employed their visions of a perfect society to illuminate the imperfections of their own, as well as to serve as a model for which to strive. The feminist utopian writers of Harper's time shared these aims. Rachel DuPlessis, among others, has noted the "didactic and hortatory" nature of feminist utopian fantasies (197; see also Kessler, *Daring* xv–xvi; Lewes 1). Collectively, she categorises such works as "apologues" (DuPlessis 262), which Carol Farley Kessler has succinctly defined as "teaching stories that show us, as readers, how we might change our world" ("Fables" 189). Kessler adds elsewhere that the feminist utopian authors who wrote during the first wave of feminism "fully expected their fiction to effect social evolution, if not revolution" (Kessler, *Daring* xv–xviii; see also DuPlessis 179, 197; Lewes 19).

Lanes's *Mizora* serves as a good illustration of the heavily didactic nature of much feminist utopian fiction. The story concerns an aristocratic Russian noblewoman who, as discussed earlier, escapes from Siberian exile and subsequently discovers an all-female utopia deep beneath the surface of the arctic. The novel is largely expository, and consists mainly of a dialogue between the residents of the city and the visitor, a form common in such works (Lewes 12; Lake 1299). This dialogue is intended to convey the intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural superiority of the exclusively female Mizoran civilisation over the male-dominated world from which the narrator has fled. The following passage, in which the narrator envisions reshaping her own masculine-dominated society in the model of the feminist, enlightened *Mizora*, is typical of the tone and thrust of the novel:

The poor should be given work, and justly paid for it, instead of being supported by charity. The charity that had fostered indolence in its mistaken efforts to do good, should be employed to train poverty to skillful labor and economy in living. And what a world of good that one measure would produce! The poor should possess exactly the same educational advantages that were supplied to the rich. In this *one* measure, if I could only make it popular, I would see the golden promise of the future of my country. "Educate your poor and they will work out their own salvation. Educated Labor can dictate its rights to Capital. (ch. 10)

Like the feminist utopian writers, Harper was genuinely interested in social reform and, as noted earlier, regularly infused her own social and political views into her original fiction, including *A Fair Californian*. Nevertheless, unlike them, she did not have as her exclusive, or even foremost, aims to promote feminist ideals and foster social change. Writing was Harper's livelihood, and, almost certainly, her primary motive in writing *A Fair Californian* was to produce an engaging narrative that would generate substantial sales and income. Consequently, the novel is less forcefully didactic and not so narrowly

focused as most contemporary feminist utopian literature. The central point of feminist utopian fiction is to convey its authors' feminist ideas. By contrast, Harper's economic feminist views are just one of several personal concerns and interests that are evident in the novel. Indeed, while her economic feminist ideas are conspicuous, the author's liberal religious views and her deep distrust of "priestcraft" figure even more prominently in the narrative.⁴ It is the profound deceitfulness and corruption of the priesthood, for instance, and nothing related to the status or treatment of women, that is presented as the City of the Seven's chief evil when its dystopic nature is finally revealed.

It is likely that Harper hoped that at least some discerning readers would understand and appreciate the points about a woman's capabilities that she was making in the novel. Nonetheless, in this regard, her ambitions seem to have been more modest than those of the feminist utopian writers, and she likely did not envision that her fiction would serve to bring about the sweeping social change, much less the "revolution", for which the feminist utopian writers strove (Kessler, *Daring* xv–xviii). Accordingly, despite some oblique criticisms scattered throughout *A Fair Californian*, Harper offers no systematic, thoroughgoing critique of her own society or a blueprint for a more perfect world. Rather, after witnessing suffering and injustice on all the worlds she has visited in the course of her astral travels, Dolores adopts a tone of resignation:

...is there not, in all this great universe, some celestial spot where there live mortals who are yet superior to mankind? Is our people the acme of all human beings? These men and women who prey upon each other, who work evil to themselves and each other, who quarrel and kill and steal, and abuse poor dumb and helpless creatures, are they the best of God's human creations? If not, and you know of another world wherein peace, love, charity, and purity exist, divide my soul from its body now before you go, and let me stay there, and not go back to our world again. (132)

Finally, consistent with her intention to attract and entertain a wide reading audience, Harper places much more emphasis upon plot and character than did the feminist utopian writers, for whom "character and plot function mainly as the bearers of propositions or moral arguments, whose function is to persuade" (DuPlessis 179). And although Harper employs the character of Dolores to convey her convictions regarding the capabilities of women, she does so in a more artful way than most utopian writers. Duplessis remarks that in feminist utopian fiction, "characters may be flat because they function as manifestos, bringing undiscussable messages", and "ideas, not the character, are well-rounded" (179; see also Lewes 1). By contrast, the carefully drawn character of Dolores is much more than a simple manifesto, and emerges from the pages of the novel as a full-blooded and well-rounded human being.

6. Conclusion

Reflecting, as it does, Harper's economic feminist beliefs, *A Fair Californian* helps to shed light on a branch of 19th-century feminism that, while less known

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Harper's religious views and how they are reflected in the novel, see Balfour, "Afterword" (167–169).

today than the suffragist movement, was nonetheless significant in its time and still extremely relevant today. The novel also features one of the strongest and most compelling female characters in all of 19th-century speculative fiction. That Harper intended Dolores to serve as a vehicle through which she could express her deep convictions regarding the capabilities of women is demonstrated by the great care, attention, and detail that Harper devotes to portraying Dolores’s numerous strengths. Dolores epitomises the intelligent and skillful woman that economic feminists argued could compete on equal terms with males in the workplace. Moreover, in exhibiting great courage and unshakeable resolve in surmounting several daunting obstacles, Dolores proves herself a character worthy of her creator, who overcame an abusive marriage, disabling illness, and scorn from male colleagues to carve out a successful career as a pioneering female journalist, poet, and novelist.

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BOOK REVIEW:

*“Something Has Gone Crack”: New
Perspectives on J.R.R. Tolkien in the Great
War*

James Hamby

Croft, Janet Brennan, and Annika Röttinger, editors. *“Something Has Gone Crack”: New Perspectives on J.R.R. Tolkien in the Great War*. Walking Tree, 2019. ISBN 978-3905703412.

So much scholarship has already been dedicated to the topic of how World War I influenced Tolkien’s *Legendarium* that new avenues of exploration are hard to find. However, *New Perspectives on J.R.R. Tolkien in the Great War* accomplishes just that with sixteen wide-ranging essays on a variety of ways that Tolkien’s experiences in WWI shaped the characters, landscapes, and actions of his secondary world. Each of the essays acknowledges and responds to the scholarship that has been written previously on this subject, particularly John Garth’s seminal *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (2003). Yet each chapter makes its own contribution to the corpus of Tolkien Studies, exploring new influences and scrutinising older points of view. As the title suggests, this volume focuses on the sense of trauma that Tolkien experienced during the Great War and its aftermath, including how he transmuted those feelings into his creation of Middle-earth and its long story cycles of destruction and regeneration. Tolkien’s ideas about loss, comradeship, healing, and eucatastrophe, all important parts of the Middle-earth mythos, are rooted firmly in his WWI experiences.

Brennan and Röttinger divide this collection into four sections:

1. "The Conduct of War: Reading the Great War in Middle-earth's Wars";
2. "Biography: The Personal Becomes Art";
3. "Roots of Major Themes of the *Legendarium* in the Great War"; and
4. "Alterity: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality in War".

The first section is broad in scope and explores how WWI, with its new concepts of mechanised and total warfare, shaped the wars of Tolkien's *Legendarium*. The next section narrows its focus to look at how Tolkien's personal relationships, his convalescence away from the front, and his skepticism of finding glory in war all find expression in his writings about Middle-earth. The third section focuses on the themes in the *Legendarium* that Tolkien, or any soldier of WWI, would have experienced during combat. The volume unfortunately concludes with a section on alterity that feels tacked on, as though the essays could not fit into the other divisions of the book. Although these last essays themselves are quality scholarship, they would be more effective if integrated into the rest of the book, thus making "alterity" a central issue rather than an afterthought. While class and gender are discussed competently, the discussions of sexuality and especially race feel forced. If WWI did not particularly influence Tolkien's thinking on race in ways to be found in his fiction, then it seems unnecessary to include it in this volume. Nevertheless, when taken as a whole, all four sections reflect the multifaceted way WWI influenced all aspects of Tolkien's creation of a secondary world.

The first chapter by Tom Shippey and John Bourne, "A Steep Learning Curve: Tolkien and the British Army on the Somme", does an excellent job of contextualising the Battle of the Somme for all the discussions in the following essays. The "steep learning curve" refers to the British Army's eventual understanding, after the Somme's massive casualties, of the realities of modernised, total warfare. The result of this for Tolkien, argue Shippey and Bourne, is the creation of hobbits and their "new-style image of heroism for an uncertain and dispirited age" (23). In the following chapter, Glenn E. Peterson explores the ways that various battles from WWI influenced specific battles in Tolkien's *Legendarium*. Though Peterson's chapter does contain valuable insight into Tolkien's thought processes while writing about battles in Middle-earth, it is difficult to accept that there was such a one-on-one correspondence as he suggests. Indeed, readers familiar with Tolkien's disdain for allegory may scoff at such an idea, and the same charge may be levelled against virtually every other chapter in this book. However, as Röttinger astutely points out in her chapter immediately after this, examining Tolkien's biography in conjunction with his ideas of "applicability" does not detract from *The Lord of the Rings* but rather "directs a more sensitive focus to it and enables a multilayered exploration" (46). Despite Tolkien's dislike for allegory and his annoyance over readers searching for simplistic symbolism in his works, these chapters do establish ways in which Tolkien's lived experiences during the Great War found expression, whether consciously or unconsciously, in his writing.

The second section presents the strongest example of this expression. John Rosegrant and William Kuehs each offer excellent essays, respectively, on a psychoanalytic reading of Tolkien and a semiotic comparison with Ernst Jünger, but the most outstanding chapter of this section is Michael Flowers's

“Tolkien in East Yorkshire, 1917–18: A Hemlock Glade, Two Towers, The Houses of Healing and a Beacon”. Flowers engages in excellent academic research to build upon John Garth’s and Humphrey Carpenter’s previous works about Tolkien’s convalescence in Holderness, a peninsula in East Yorkshire. Flowers retraces Tolkien’s many moves throughout the peninsula during the months of his recovery, uncovers the places where he and Edith took up their separate residences, and analyses how local geography and landmarks found their way into Middle-earth. Flowers’s speculations on the location and time of year with what flowers must have been in bloom at the time of Edith’s memorable dance for Tolkien highlight what an emotionally charged time this must have been for the young writer as he was healing physically, mentally, and emotionally after leaving the front. Flowers concludes that though Tolkien was only in East Yorkshire for a year and a half, this time proved “crucial in the development of his emerging mythology” (144). Undoubtedly, this time of peaceful healing (though punctuated with sickness and anxiety as it was) served as a counterweight to the violence and upheaval of combat. Both of these experiences would provide important frameworks for Tolkien’s stories of Middle-earth.

The third section of the volume is similarly enlightening on how Tolkien’s war experiences influenced his work. Łukasz Neubauer’s chapter on the uncanniness of silence during trench warfare and Victoria Holtz Wodzak’s essay on dugouts and tunnels in WWI look at very specific phenomena not always covered in studies about Tolkien in WWI, while Molly Volanth Hall writes about Tolkien’s sense of the loss of ecology in *The Lord of the Rings* – which is certainly not a new topic but one that she ably explores nonetheless. Anna Smol contributes a chapter connecting Tolkien’s experiences with the unburied bodies he encountered during the Somme to *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhtelm’s Son* and competing ideas of heroism. Yet of all the works in this section, John Garth’s “Revenants and Angels: Tolkien, Machen, and Mons” stands out for its revealing look into the collective psychological need for mysticism and supernatural protection during such an uncertain time. Garth recounts how Arthur Machen wrote a fictionalised short story for a London newspaper. In this tale, the British Army retreats from Mons, Belgium and is miraculously saved by St. George and the ghosts of English longbowmen from the Battle of Agincourt. The story gained popularity and was repeated through word of mouth by people who had taken it to be real, and a large number of the British public came to believe that there were many eyewitnesses in the British Army who claim that they had been saved by angels. It is not known whether or not Tolkien read the original story, but, Garth argues, the value in examining this story in conjunction with Tolkien’s created mythology is that both share common archetypes, namely “revenants and angels who appear in time of war and intervene to aid the weak against the strong, the defender against the invader, good against evil, and the medieval against the quasi-modern”, and they are thus “vivified by similar contemporary imaginative needs” (178). It is likely, Garth argues, that in creating a new mythology for the English people, Tolkien and his audience would have found solace in eucatastrophe engendered by an unseen, benevolent force (199–200).

As mentioned above, the final section contains both some good scholarship and some structural flaws. Alicia Fox-Lenz’s “Contemporary Reflections of War: Soldier-Servant Relationships in *The Lord of The Rings* and

Downton Abbey” is the chapter that most successfully explores issues of alterity through her discussion of class differences between officers and their batmen in WWI. A “batman” was an officer’s servant and they often formed close bonds of friendship despite their class differences. Fox-Lenz argues that the relationship between Sam and Frodo is based on these relationships, and that in Sam’s character Tolkien represents the “loosening of the class structure of post-war Britain” (355). Equally intriguing in her discussion of both class and gender is Lynn Schlesinger’s chapter on nurses in WWI and how they informed Tolkien’s conception of gender roles. Not only is her research into the lives of WWI nurses fascinating, but she takes a more nuanced view in how Tolkien represents women, specifically Éowyn. Tolkien is often criticized for making his female characters too passive, as Felicity Gilbert suggests in the very next chapter (332), but Schlesinger argues that Éowyn’s decision to become a healer makes her “more, not less powerful and effective” (307), as healing was seen as such a powerful force for good, as demonstrated in both Aragorn’s and Faramir’s skills at healing. As mentioned above, the issues of sexuality and race in this section seem forced and are not argued convincingly, and all issues of alterity would have been better dealt with throughout the courses of the other sections of the book.

This volume, however, is another wonderful addition to both the Cormarë series and to the corpus of scholarship focusing on Tolkien and WWI. These essays would be useful in both graduate and undergraduate courses on Tolkien, and they should be enjoyed both by Tolkien experts and any reader with an interest in learning about how WWI influenced Middle-earth. The disillusionment with modernity espoused by Tolkien’s writing is more than just that of a nostalgic writer; rather, it is a quality that places Tolkien amongst the greatest of the writers of the Lost Generation. Like so many other WWI writers, Tolkien yearned to recover the certainties that the war stripped away. But, just as Frodo realised he could not remain in the Shire, Tolkien realised that the world he and his generation had known would never return. These essays, taken together, reveal more than just Tolkien’s experiences with warfare: they represent the horrors and uncertainty of the modern world – that something has “gone crack”.

Biography: James Hamby is the Associate Director of the Writing Center at Middle Tennessee State University where he also teaches courses in composition and literature, including *Victorian Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Fairy Tale*. His dissertation, *David Copperfield: Victorian Hero* examines archetypal structures in Dickens’s most autobiographical novel. He is also the Book Reviews Associate Editor for *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.



BOOK REVIEW:
*Utopian and Dystopian Themes in Tolkien's
Legendarium*

Adam McLain

Doyle, Mark. *Utopian and Dystopian Themes in Tolkien's Legendarium*.
Lexington Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-1498598675.

In *Utopian and Dystopian Themes in Tolkien's Legendarium*, Mark Doyle argues that the reason Tolkien's legendarium is enjoyed, even revered, across many different cultures around the world is because of its delivery of "utopian ideals and dystopian warnings" (15). Indeed, Doyle's fundamental argument is that the utopian and dystopian themes that he has uncovered in Tolkien's legendarium will provide new and generative insight to the legendarium, especially concerning intersections with history, environmental studies, politics, and myth. This approach to Tolkien's work allows Doyle to present thorough and innovative arguments about Tolkien. For instance, in Chapter Three, Doyle uses his focus on the cities within the legendarium to argue that Tolkien's environmentalism differs from contemporary environmental views because it favors a world that respects the environment equally with society, even a society that is built out of and in respect of the environment. However, the text lacks much critical engagement with utopian and dystopian studies, strangely treating them as afterthoughts to work on Tolkien's legendarium rather than as conversations that could have benefited both Tolkien and those fields. This glaring oversight ultimately harms the entire project, leaving it a work diminished in its usefulness.

In his introduction and first chapter, Doyle begins his argument by attempting to show how utopian and dystopian literature and themes intersect with Tolkien's world. Doyle defines utopia as an "ideal state and culture (in the broadest senses of those words)", placing emphasis on the "politics, laws,

mores, and social structures of the imagined society” (10). This definition, he explains, differs from more-standard definitions by Lyman Tower Sargent and Darko Suvin, which emphasise a “non-existent society ... that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as” better or worse (Sargent) and that is constructed from estrangement (Suvin) (11). For Doyle, Sargent’s definition provides a too-broad argument that could possibly encompass the entirety of Tolkien’s work along with almost any SF or fantasy narrative because Sargent sees any society that is “better or worse” as utopian or dystopian. Suvin offers a better definition of utopia in Doyle’s view, except that Suvin relies too heavily on estrangement, whereas Doyle believes Tolkien uses enchantment in “making the ordinary sacred” instead of using estrangement to create the reader’s connection to his fantastical worlds (10–12). In arguing for utopian and dystopian *themes* in Tolkien’s literature rather than characterizing Tolkien’s work as specifically utopian or dystopian itself, Doyle skirts having to engage thoroughly with utopian and dystopian scholars like Tom Moylan, Ruth Levitas, and Peter Fitting. For example, Moylan is only mentioned in a footnote, and Levitas and Fitting receive no acknowledgement at all. This lack of engagement weakens Doyle’s entire project as, later in the book, the reader becomes entangled in Doyle’s use of the terms “utopia” and “dystopia”, and it is ambiguous whether he means, like Sargent, that utopia and dystopia have three faces (as literature, practice, and social theory) or that utopia and dystopia simply reflect culturally conceived notions of good and bad. Indeed, as I state later in this review when bringing Doyle into conversation with Ursula K. Le Guin, the way Doyle equates utopia with *good* and dystopia with *bad* is problematic because, as dystopian studies and literature have revealed, the point of utopias and dystopias is not to reflect good or evil but rather to assess contemporary problems as well as their possible solutions.

Instead of relying on the previous work of utopian and dystopian scholars, Doyle engages in a lengthy explanation of how Tolkien’s work resembles and differs from “traditional” utopian and dystopian novels, particularly Plato’s *Republic*, More’s *Utopia*, Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In Chapter One, rather than engaging with how Tolkien’s efforts could be compared to and illuminate these works, Doyle meticulously outlines how Tolkien’s work differs from them. His analysis of the traditional books leaves much to desire, though, as he pursues a many-paged attempt to highlight a feature about one traditional text and show how Tolkien’s work departs from that feature or performs it better, since, as Doyle sees it, Tolkien’s work is “unusually powerful, and in a strange way, more plausible to his readers than the ‘standard’ utopia and dystopia” (4). Thus, it is as if Doyle sets Tolkien’s work on a pedestal for the standard utopian and dystopian works to worship, rather than letting them converse as equals.

This lack of conversation between utopian and dystopian studies is seen most prominently when Doyle, throughout the book, seems to see *utopian* and *dystopian* as synonymous with *good* and *evil*. He spends little to no time analysing how Gondor or the Shire, both dubbed “utopian”, might be considered dystopian or hold dystopian themes, while Mordor and Thangorodrim, being evil, are related only to dystopia. These simplistic equations, along with much of Doyle’s arguments regarding utopia and dystopia, lack critical and theoretical depth. For example, seeing utopia as favoring “good” forgets that Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973) upends

the central meaning of utopia – a “no place” that exonerates and exhibits the good or what is better in society – and argues that all utopias are built on the back of tragedy. Instead of critically engaging with his own claims that the Shire or Gondor relate to utopian ideals or themes, Doyle uses his work to consider utopian and dystopian themes as preconceived cultural conceptions of good and bad, respectively.

This is not to say that all Doyle's scholarship is for naught; indeed, Doyle adds some exceptional insight on Tolkien's legendarium through his lens of utopian and dystopian themes. For example, in Chapter Two, Doyle makes compelling connections that broaden Tolkien's place within literary history. Doyle first argues that Tolkien's medievalist view is refracted through a prism of the “Victorian medieval”, giving his work the ability to be both alien and familiar to the reader and creating what Doyle calls a nostalgic feeling that strengthens the reader-text connection. At the same time that Tolkien is creating this nostalgia, Doyle nuances Tolkien's place in literary history by arguing that he is not only looking back to the medieval through the Victorian but also, because of how Tolkien handles his characters and societies, reacting to and interacting with his current literary moment. For example, Doyle argues that Frodo's character arc, which ends in a failure of will, epitomises mid-20th-century views of selfhood (62), and that Tolkien reacts against those same period views by showing Mordor's and Thangorodrim's evil as a result of modernisation, especially through technology (61). Doyle therefore shows Tolkien as both a reactionary and traditionalist thinker during his 20th-century moment. Thus, Tolkien resists canonisation within a particular literary movement because of his complicated and nuanced views. This deft contextualisation of Tolkien's works and arguments is a great strength of Doyle's text.

Chapter Three provides Doyle's most useful contribution to Tolkien studies. Instead of arguing that Tolkien fits into a specific camp of environmentalist thought, Doyle sees Tolkien's environmentalism as “orthogonal to the philosophy that gave rise to modern environmentalism” (78). This neat side-stepping is on par with Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans's in-depth study *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2006), in which they place Tolkien as precursor and herald of modern environmental tenets. Although Doyle doesn't cite Dickerson and Evans specifically despite repeating many of their environmentalist arguments, Doyle maintains Tolkien's usefulness for contemporary environmental justice while nonetheless displacing him from common discourses on the subject. Indeed, Doyle's approach to Tolkien through utopia and dystopia allows him to show that Tolkien's environmentalism does not argue for a return to an Edenic paradise; rather, Tolkien, for Doyle, displays a middle ground that grants as much respect to nature as to humanity and civilisation. In Doyle's estimation, Tolkien wishes civilisation to be a boon to the environment as well as the other way around. This approach can and should lead to many further engagements as Tolkien studies specifically, and fantasy studies more broadly, turn toward the Anthropocene, including what the world can and should look like post-Anthropocene.

Afterwards, Doyle argues in Chapter Four that “Tolkien's works are a modern-day myth with a specifically utopian purpose” (123). To make his argument, Doyle relies heavily on Tolkien's “On Fairy-Stories”, the conceptions of myth by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, and two obsolete books of Tolkien

scholarship: Randel Helms's *Tolkien's World* (1974) and Timothy R. O'Neill's *The Individuated Hobbit: Jung, Tolkien, and the Archetypes of Middle-Earth* (1979); however, his argument that Tolkien's overarching mythos makes Tolkien's utopian and dystopian themes more believable or relatable fails to recognise the worldbuilding and myth-making that occurs in many utopian and dystopian novels. For example, he never touches on the myth-making performed by Orwell in his appendices to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or in Le Guin's utopian and dystopian works, many of which are in her universe-stretching Hainish cycle. While he does close the chapter by stating that myth-making is "utopian in demanding not just a new way of living, but a new way of imagining the world", he does not elaborate further on what this new imagined world may be, or on any engagement with utopia as myth in and of itself (133).

This lack of utopian contextualisation continues in the fifth chapter, which focuses on Tolkien's politics. Doyle staunchly argues that Tolkien was a Tory anarchist, as outlined in Peter Wilkin's *The Strange Case of Tory Anarchism* (2010). This Tory anarchism was centred in Tolkien's political desire to "rehabilitate old values" (145), like charity and conservation, while shunning new modernisation techniques like fascist control of a population and the mechanisation of labor and work. Indeed, Doyle shows that the evil, dystopian leaders in Tolkien's legendarium exhibit "controlling, narrow, paranoid" command, while his good, utopian leaders are "more laissez-faire, multi-talented ... yet more flexible" (168). Although Doyle shows that Tolkien favored a more libertarian view of government and argues (in a rather lackluster way) that political desire makes Tolkien's politics utopian, he never addresses or outlines whether Tolkien is, in fact, engaging *in* utopian politics. Instead, the reader is told that Tolkien engages in projects that *seem* utopian but cannot be considered utopian politics according to 20th-century utopian political theories.

Throughout the book, Doyle attempts to argue that "Tolkien reinvigorates the formulas for utopian and dystopian literature, so that they speak more clearly to his readers' hopes and misgivings about their current culture" (3); however, in my reading, it seems more plausible to say that Doyle is more interested in how Tolkien reinvigorates *good* and *bad* rather than *utopian* and *dystopian*. The conversations, politics, and themes surrounding utopia studies in academia are largely lacking. That said, I can still recommend Doyle's work as a piece of Tolkien scholarship that can offer new avenues of thought for Tolkien's legendarium and diverging pathways with which Tolkien scholarship can further engage.

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BOOK REVIEW:
Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond

Henri Pitkänen

Eilmann, Julian, and Friedhelm Schneidewind, editors. *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond*. Walking Tree, 2019. ISBN 978-3905703399.

From the beginning of the creation-myth *Ainulindalë* to the last pages of *The Lord of Rings*, music is frequently depicted in Tolkien's legendarium and other works. Fortunately, there have already been some studies delving into this side of Tolkien's oeuvre. For example, the collections *Middle-earth Minstrel* edited by Bradford Lee Eden (2010) and *Music in Middle-earth* edited by Heidi Steimel and Friedhelm Schneidewind (2010) both offer analyses on various topics, such as the functions of music in the narrative; styles of lyrics and poems and of their counterparts in other stories and the real world; biographical remarks regarding what may have influenced Tolkien; how Tolkien's work has inspired musicians and composers; and so forth. As the successor of Steimel and Schneidewind's collection, *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* continues to investigate music and musical elements in Tolkien's texts in a similarly wide-ranging fashion. A hefty volume with almost 500 pages, *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* comprises 21 articles by a diverse group of writers. Fields of study include, among others, musicology, theology, philosophy, philology, literature, and history. It also includes from professionals in other areas, such as musicians and teachers. This multitude of viewpoints opens Tolkien's work in a way that would be impossible for a single author. However, this is not without problems (as often is the case in this kind of collection): research methods, thoroughness, and writing styles vary widely from easily accessible fan texts to more demanding scholarly essays.

The articles are organised into five sections, which, however, are quite broad and not as thematically or methodologically consistent as one might expect. That being said, some common aspects emerge. The articles in the

opening “Tolkien and Music” section, for example, use biography-based interpretations to uncover how Tolkien’s Christianity, his work as a philologist, his participation in the Great War, his English nationality, and his time period have – or may have – affected his literature. The second section, “The Power of Music”, collects papers that may be understood as different aspects of power. This section explores music’s power not only in a concrete sense, such as how music may be used in creation and enchantments, but also how it works for worldbuilding and informing the history of the secondary world. Furthermore, two articles in this section examine the musicality of Tolkien’s prose in terms of the kind of power that music-like elements of language may have over readers. The third section is titled “Music of Different Texts and Characters”, which is suitably descriptive, but somewhat too broad since other sections concern texts and characters as well. This section deals with Beren and Lúthien, Arwen and Fíriel (from *The Notion Club Papers* and *The Lost Road*), Aragorn, and various evil characters. The title for the fourth section, “Instruments in Middle-earth”, is somewhat misleading as, rather than instruments, the opening article introduces real-world classical music inspired by Tolkien’s secondary world. Likewise, Allan Turner’s article explores the liminality that music may indicate rather than instruments in Middle-earth. Fortunately, two other articles better fit the title as they examine the harp in Tolkien’s works and speculate what portative organs may look like in Middle-earth. “Music Beyond Tolkien” finishes the collection with two articles juxtaposing Tolkien’s texts with the works of others, namely Richard Wagner and Patrick Rothfuss, and an introduction to composing game music for Tolkien’s world.

Although organising the articles into the sections is arguably superfluous, quite a few articles by themselves stand out in a positive light. John Holmes’s “*Nis me ti hearpun hygi*: Harping on One String in Middle-earth” examines Tolkien’s various references to the harp and makes excellent observations of its functions. Holmes argues that the harp is used to indicate sorrow and an “elegiac mood” (361). Another interesting article, Chiara Bertoglio’s “Polyphony, Collective Improvisation, and the Gift of Creation”, suggests an illuminating reading of *Ainulindalë*. Bertoglio likens Ilúvatar’s themes to *cantus firmus* and the music of the Ainur to improvised polyphony. Also noteworthy are Bradford Lee Eden’s “‘The Scholar as Minstrel’: Word-music and Sound-words in Tolkien’s ‘New Works’” and Maureen Mann’s “Musicality in Tolkien’s Prose”, which highlight Tolkien’s ideas regarding the sound of language as aesthetically pleasing and analyse musical elements of various texts.

Furthermore, this collection succeeds in balancing studies that delve deep into a single case and more wide-ranging analyses that deal with various depictions of music. For example, in the essays by Łukasz Neubauer and Jörg Fündling, over fifty pages in total are reserved for Aragorn and Legolas’s “song which accompanies Boromir’s departure for his ultimate journey” (Neubauer 80), which indicates the richness of meaning and the influence a single song may have in Tolkien’s work. A good example of a contrasting approach to Tolkien’s works is Elizabeth Whittingham’s “‘A Matter of Song’: The Power of Music and Song in Tolkien’s Legendarium”, which explores numerous occurrences of music in *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Hobbit*. The sheer number of instances illustrates how important a role music has in the legendarium. As a result of these different approaches to the material, this

collection as a whole offers a comprehensive picture of the use of music in Tolkien's works.

Nevertheless, a couple of articles stand out as relatively unrefined, which is especially unfortunate given that they present intriguing viewpoints. Sabine Frambach's "Where You Hear Song, You May Rest at Ease': The Music of the Evil Ones in Middle-earth" raises an interesting question of the musicality of evil characters, but she takes beautiful music to be a sign of heroes and disharmonic sounds, croaking, and noise as signs of evil in an unduly rigid and absolute sense. For example, Frambach concludes that the villains "do not sing beautifully" (339), but the argument is largely based on the music of the Orcs, which is described only from a Hobbit point of view, hence making the whole argument rather Shire-centric. Also, Frambach argues that evil characters only use music in a functional sense; i.e., not for its own sake, but for some other end. This might very well be true, but Frambach calls the opposite of functional music "dysfunctional music" (335). Perhaps something is lost in translation, but it sounds somewhat harsh to call music valued for its intrinsic worth as "dysfunctional".¹ Another interesting yet incomplete article is Allan Turner's "The Horns of Elfland". The text starts off by referring to Tennyson's *The Princess* and Lord Dunsany's *The King of Elfland's Daughter* and notes how music is used to create "a liminal area between the real and the unreal" (290), but he only briefly applies this notion to Tolkien's works. This is one of the shortest articles in the collection, so this idea could easily have been expanded.

A few articles are less scholarly but nevertheless enjoyable. Heidi Steimel's "An Orchestra in Middle-earth" introduces Tolkien-inspired "classical orchestral works" by Carey Blyton, Johan de Meij, Aulis Sallinen, Craig H. Russell, and Martin Romberg (356), although Steimel scarcely analyses them. Nevertheless, as a playlist to listen to while reading Tolkien, these might work. Rainer Groß's "Portatives in Middle-earth: A Speculative Approach to Organ Instruments in Tolkien's Work" is a delightful text introducing the history of portative organs and imagines how they might look – images included! – if made by Elves, Dwarves, and Hobbits. These speculations, however, are quite shallow and brief, conjured from very basic impressions regarding different peoples. Tobias Escher's "Of Home Keys and Music Style Guides: Orchestral Scores for Tolkien-based Video Games" is a straightforward introduction to game music, with examples from games dealing with Tolkien's world. A more analytical approach would have been welcome, but since this article is already 26 pages long, perhaps this topic would need a book of its own.

Also, several minor problems caught my attention. In Anja Müller's "The Lords of the Rings: Wagner's *Ring* and Tolkien's 'Faërie'", quite a few citations are only in German. Although I respect that citations are presented in their original languages, it might have been a good idea to have English translations as well. I would also have wanted to see an index. Given that these articles cover a wide range of topics, an index would have made it easier to find relevant texts for those who are not necessarily keen to read this bulky collection from cover to cover.

¹ In the section "Acknowledgements", Doreen Triebel, the series editor at Walking Tree Publishers, mentions that this collection is also published in German "under the title *Musik in Tolkiens Werk und darüber hinaus* by Edition Stein und Baum", and some of the papers were originally written in German.

Overall, the structure of the collection and the varying quality of the articles lessens the impact of this book as a whole. Individual articles, however, offer interesting reading for various audiences, although this variability complicates identifying the proper audience. On the one hand, nonacademic fans of Tolkien might find this collection too difficult at times. On the other hand, academic readers familiar with the subject and its research may find several aspects of this collection trivial. But, for students and scholars who want to have a general idea of how Tolkien used music in his works, *Music in Tolkien's Work and Beyond* – together with its predecessor *Music in Middle-earth* – offers a nice overview on the subject.

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BOOK REVIEW:
The Zombie Reader

Jonathan William Thurston-Torres

Murphy, Kieran, editor. *The Zombie Reader*. Rev. ed., Cognella Academic, 2020. ISBN 978-1516531981.

In January of this year, I watched the 1966 Hammer horror film, *Plague of the Zombies*. Noted for inspiring much of *Night of the Walking Dead*, this film seemed itself a call-back to the much older film *White Zombie* (1932) but also pushed back against it, seeming to refuse to call people of color “barbaric” and also pointing the finger at white people for cultural appropriation. In seeing *Plague of the Zombies* for the first time, I was reminded of just how inextricably tied the zombie-figure is to our current racial moment, at least here in the United States. In another recent zombie book I reviewed (*Books of the Dead*), I harped on the book’s general ignoring of racial issues in the analysis of the zombie, and it was in that moment of writing that review that I really wished there was a book of foundational essays on the zombie – something that included such texts as Zora Neale Hurston’s “Zombies” or Laura Kremmel’s “Rest in Pieces”. And then I discovered Kieran Murphy’s *The Zombie Reader*.

This book, as Murphy states in the preface, is meant to be a book of contexts. He envisions *The Zombie Reader* being taught alongside works such as *The Walking Dead* (2010–present) and Colson Whitehead’s *Zone One* (2011) (ix). As such, his book contains an introduction, short introductory essays of his own at the start of each labeled section, then the various essays considered foundational to the place of the zombie in culture, history, and literature, and finally some discussion questions. Murphy sees his reader as working on defamiliarising the zombie for students, helping them see the zombie through a non-Eurocentric lens. Murphy himself admits to teaching his own zombie courses since 2009. He also admits that his frustration, like mine, has been that many zombie scholars (as in, scholars of zombies in literature, not the undead

scholar imagined by Robin Becker in *Brains*) tend to relegate the zombie to a position of popular and sensationalised Eurocentrism void of historical or Afro-Caribbean context or significance. As he says in the introduction, this willful ignorance “eclipses the pioneering Haitian experience of modernity that produced the zombie in the first place and that facilitated its passage into the American imagination during the Great Depression” (xi–xii). *The Zombie Reader* ultimately challenges these dismissals, and it functions as an essential companion book for any class on the literary figure of the zombie.

After a preface and introduction, Murphy separates the essays into four parts based on distinct themes or literary tropes: voodoo, spectrality, death, and sympathy. Each section begins with its own short (usually three- to four-page) introduction, defining some key terms and introducing the discourses mentioned in the following two or three essays. Because of how these ideas intersect, though, the organisation does seem arbitrary, and even the introductory notes feel less like section introductions and more like introductions to each specific essay. For example, in Part 1, before the readings, Murphy has written three mini-essays, one of which is called “Zora Neale Hurston Takes the First Photograph of a Zombie”. What follows is not Hurston’s essay “Zombies”, however, but two other essays and *then* “Zombies”. So, I think readers would have been better served if those part introductions had functioned instead as textual notes at the start of each essay.

The first section, “Vodou, Voodoo, and the Globalization of a Haitian Curiosity”, starts the reader off strongly with an introduction to the Haitian origins of the zombie mythos. Essays from Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Sydney W. Mintz, W. B. Seabrook, and Zora Neale Hurston depict early encounters with and constructions of the zombie, especially in Afro-Caribbean contexts. For me, this was the most significant part of the book. Reading any 21st-century zombie novel (or even watching any TV show or film) alongside just these three readings would greatly benefit any class on zombies. This part alone makes the book worth its purchase price and worthy of inclusion in a course syllabus. It tackles fundamental Afro-Caribbean elements of the zombie narrative: the origins of the zombie, the importance of vodou and voodoo in that mythos, and the historical-political elements of the zombie’s geographic past. This section pushes the book above and beyond many other zombie academic texts today. The section introduction, too, carries some useful historical context for the pieces.

The second section, “Haunted History: Dispossession and Spectral Works,” feels more “forced” than the others, however. Its introduction deals with several different themes but none that carries through in the section’s first two essays, though the idea of labour is a major theme that emerges in the latter two essays by Joan Dayan and Sascha Morrell, which focus on vodou and labour issues in historical zombie narratives. Moreso than other sections in the reader, this section encourages students to think about the ways in which the zombie can be a revolutionary force. Moving Dayan’s piece on dismemberment to the first section would have left room to reshape this second section as a segment on modern race issues. Even with Murphy’s attention to historical race, the book leaves much to be desired in terms for zombies in the context of modern critical race issues – I immediately think of Christopher M. Moreman and Cory James Rushton’s edited collection *Race, Oppression, and the Zombie* (2011) or Camilla Fojas’ *Zombies, Migrants, and Queers* (2017). The most contemporary

that Murphy's second section gets is a 1990s discussion of race in South Africa. However, one could easily argue that this fits in with the overall theme of the book: defamiliarisation. Murphy does not express any interest in having students read the zombie as relevant to their own lives – only as relevant to cultural history. This in itself seems like weak pedagogy, too, when half the point of cultural history is that it is relevant to students' own lives.

The third section, "Projections of Death: Mourning, Melancholia, and the Undead", tackles some other important zombie tropes in literature. The theme of melancholia in relation to zombies, after all, is a crucial aspect that comes up often in zombie discourse, so it certainly deserves its own section in this reader (even if it is the shortest of the four). Both Roger Luckhurst's and Laura Kremmel's essays are valuable for beginning scholars in thinking through what happens with perceptions of death, grieving, and melancholia. The introduction for this section gestures toward reading capitalism into the modern zombie mythos, but Murphy shies away from including essays with any substantial critique here – again, I'm thinking of Fojas again as well as Sarah Juliet Lauro's *Zombie Theory: A Reader* (2017). Even had Murphy wanted to keep strictly to a more international context, Chase Pielak and Alexander H. Cohen also discuss globalisation in the zombie narrative in *Living with Zombies* (2017), although it is possible that, given how long academic publishing can take, their monograph appeared too late for Murphy to include an excerpt. Although he situates cannibalism within a history of colonialism, Murphy leaves the subject there, making room for cannibalism to seemingly evolve into melancholia without much reasoning involved in tracing that transition or considering whether colonialism is still implicit in the zombie mythos for the 21st century.

The final section focuses on "Sympathy for the Zombie". This is arguably the most modern of the sections, focusing in on the ever-emerging trope of the "good" zombie. Especially with the wealth of young-adult fiction going this direction, for instance *Warm Bodies* (2010) and *Rot & Ruin* (2010), it is productive to have both theory and history behind those kinds of texts, making this section potentially an easily teachable one depending on the primary texts involved. Both Kyle William Bishop's and Kaiama L. Glover's essays work well in that context, theorizing why consumers of zombie protagonists could include sympathy as a reader response and addressing the humanity inherent in the human zombie. This is probably the most digestible and lightest material in the book, but that is far from a critique. It situates a literary zombie trope in a larger tradition, which will be valuable to students who find these sympathetic zombies in their texts.

Overall, *The Zombie Reader* shines most in its focus on history. Too many zombie scholars ignore – whether in their research or in their pedagogy – many of the historical contexts evoked in this reader. Likewise, I have seen zombie courses that speak to the "sensationalist evocations in travel literature and horror films" that Murphy critiques (xi). As such, this reader succeeds best as a historicising challenge. The essays Murphy has chosen are foundational to the cultural history of zombies, and they ground (pun intended) the zombie in long-established discourses beneficial for students in zombie lit classes. All are therefore necessary inclusions. The book also succeeds in defamiliarising the zombie for students, getting them away from pop-culture sensationalism and into an awareness of the figure's rich traditions in culture, history, and

literature. Plus, I truly appreciate the Afro-Caribbean focus the editor carries throughout the volume. Even though the essays become more Eurocentric as the book progresses, the section introductions keep reminding the reader that the zombie comes from Haiti.

However, this book unfortunately remains more of a zombie *history* reader than a zombie *critical* reader. There has been so much work over the past five, ten, even twenty years to show how the figure of the zombie is used to speak out against capitalism, against racial issues, and even against environmental waste. Rather than leaving room for and encouraging those kinds of discussions, Murphy focuses too much on defamiliarisation, relegating zombies to a far-off past, even while the texts being read for a zombie class might virtually beg students to analyse the very modern issues the zombies were meant to address. There is even room for these two ideas to be blended. As Murphy indicates throughout the entirety of his reader, the zombie has always been a political figure (again, I think of the wealth of essays in Lauro's volume). An easy takeaway from this reader, though, would be that the zombie *stopped* being political at some point.

All the same, despite these limitations, I definitely would recommend this book for any zombie-lit class, especially those needing Afro-Caribbean and historical context. I cannot say that I would recommend this *above* Lauro's reader, but what Murphy's book does that Lauro's does not is include a great deal of needed historical information. The defamiliarisation Murphy aims for is important – just not in isolation. In my own zombie-lit classes, assuming I had a chronological order to my primary texts, I'd teach the oldest zombie texts alongside Murphy and then move on to Lauro as the primary texts became more modern. And who knows? Maybe in a few years, Murphy will release a sequel to this reader with more modern essays and critical analyses. It should nonetheless remind us as scholars that context does matter, and hopefully it will inform our students that the zombie has been shambling a long time, well before *The Walking Dead* and *Ash vs. the Evil Dead*.

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BOOK REVIEW:

*Imagining the Unimaginable: Speculative
Fiction and the Holocaust*

Graham Minenor-Matheson

Morgan, Glyn. *Imagining the Unimaginable: Speculative Fiction and the Holocaust*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. ISBN 978-1501350542.

It's said that ignorance is bliss, but an ignorance of history has the potential to reap untold misery as the wheel of history turns to repeat cycles of violence. A recent study of Holocaust knowledge among Millennials and Gen Z in the United States found that 63% of respondents "did not know that six millions Jews were murdered", while 36% thought the number was lower; 48% couldn't name a single concentration camp (Taylor) despite images of the Holocaust being abundant across Western cultural output. This is why Glyn Morgan's book *Imagining the Unimaginable* is both timely and important as it investigates "key works" of SF that "try to represent the Holocaust and attempt to say something meaningful about the pre-eminent genocide in human history" (3). As the collective memory of this tragedy fades, either through the distance of time or the deaths of witnesses and victims, Morgan's book serves as a reminder that fiction can shock us into remembrance.

Imagining the Unimaginable has been written in what Morgan argues is a "new phase in our relationship with the Holocaust", a post-survivor age where we must relearn the "horrors of war and genocide" (3). SF is a useful tool with which the field of Holocaust studies can examine its central event because, as Morgan argues, without "survivors to offer fresh insights and reinvigorate debates with personal insight" (9), other ways of transmitting such experience need to be sought. *Imagining the Unimaginable* is the first academic book to focus on representations of the Holocaust within SF and, as such, is important for SF studies. Morgan's analytical focus is on novels from the "alternate history

and the dystopia” fields, with a special focus on Anglo-American works because US and UK experiences of the Second World War were different from those of the nations in Europe, as they “experienced neither occupation or collaboration” (3). He separates the book into four themed chapters bookended by an introduction and epilogue. The first chapter describes the plot of Katherine Burdekin’s (writing as Murray Constantine) *Swastika Night* before discussing other works of speculative fiction that imagine Nazi Germany as victorious in WWII. Chapter Two analyses texts that problematise history by forcing the reader to ask questions of historical narratives: not their truth claims but rather their methods of being told. Following this, Chapter Three analyses texts that focus on retributive justice and the possibility of saving some victims of the Holocaust; the final chapter of the book presents novels that have a more contemporary feel, as they relate stories of fascism slowly rising in America.

A reading of Morgan’s book reveals two overarching themes. The first is silence; the second, darkness. Despite the seeming ubiquity of texts (novels, films, etc.) about the Holocaust that pervade popular culture, speaking about it has approached the level of myth. This myth suggests that the Holocaust is an event so unimaginable that silence is the only appropriate response. However, as Morgan shows, despite the “requirement of silence” being championed by survivors (4), a considerable number of stories were written in the immediate aftermath of the war. The second theme in *Imagining the Unimaginable*, darkness, makes for uncomfortable reading because of *how* dark that subject matter can be, but coming to terms with atrocity requires staring into its disturbing depths. The inevitable experience of reading darkness is a necessary product of doing the work of remembering.

In the introduction, Morgan introduces us to silence as a key theoretical tool, which he argues is a common method to discuss the Holocaust (4-5). Intriguingly, Morgan calls upon two intellectual scholars, Elie Wiesel and the historian Saul Friedländer, to show how silence has been invoked in different ways to – paradoxically – *explain* the Holocaust. For Wiesel, silence is how he came to start writing, while Friedländer targets the silence of the international community to Hitler’s starkly antisemitic speeches and the prevailing antisemitism “across Europe” (5). Silence also reduces the powers of language to explain the horrors of the Holocaust, but it is through language that silence has its greatest power, because this is where we create meaning. Quoting the poet Paul Celan, Morgan informs us that language is incapable of providing – or rather *overlaying* – meaning to the Holocaust (6). This silence helps to explain why survivors such as Wiesel are able to process their experience for us, yet at the same time such explanations are insufficient because it would take an “infinite number of works of literature to represent the vast multiplicity of voices and experiences that constitute the Holocaust” (5).

Chapter One expands on silence through a lengthy discussion of Burdekin’s novel, *Swastika Night*, a text that Morgan argues is startling because it was actually written before the start of the WWII yet “closely foreshadows the historical treatment of Holocaust victims” (22); the novel is important for Morgan given how “closely it mirrors many of the dehumanizing tactics employed in the Holocaust” (23). This chapter is further enriched through Morgan’s discussion of obscure and unpublished novels in the decade after the end of the Second World War. These stories, on the whole, dispel the idea that discussing the Holocaust and Nazism was a taboo subject during the

war's immediate aftermath. At the same time, Morgan argues that the public was also unwilling to be reminded of the trauma, as can be attested by Noel Coward's unsuccessful play *Peace In Our Time*, which speaks of "liquidation" and was described by friends of the playwright as being "too horrible to put England in such a position" (28). What would have been useful here, though, is a discussion of Stanislaw Lem, who had a complex relationship with the Holocaust, and his work is arguably reflected in Morgan's argument of the myth of silence. A Lemian perspective of the Holocaust can show that distance (whether of time or of physical, ethnic, or political distance) permits a greater freedom with which to be critical of and reflect on one of the most difficult and barbaric events in history. Lem's experience of the Holocaust and the political environment of censorship in which he lived and wrote had dramatic effects on what he could, and wanted, to say about the Holocaust. Although Lem refused to discuss his Holocaust experience, his writing reveals a great deal, scattered through metaphor, across his output. This is a good example of the kind of silence that Morgan talks about in Chapter One because, in Lem's fiction, the brutal conditions and experience are reflected through vivid descriptions that never directly name the Holocaust nor identify its victims as Jews (Middleton-Kaplan 2020). Yet, ultimately, this neglect of Lem is only a mild critique of Morgan's chapter.

Chapter Two, "Problematizing History", analyses three alternative history novels from three very different writers: *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick, *Fatherland* by Robert Harris, and *Making History* by Stephen Fry. Although these alternative histories all imagine the Nazis as victorious, they do not immediately stand out as being related, but Morgan informs us that each asks questions about history and the nature of evil. While not providing any answers, they see history as something that should be used to ask bigger questions about morality. These three novels question the Holocaust-as-Evil-Absolute idea by imagining something worse, and, as such, they challenge the "Holocaust's status as the incomparable and exceptional ultimate evil" (68). One way this is done, for example in *The Man in the High Castle*, is through imagining an African genocide but one that is obliquely referred to, hinting yet again at a new dimension of silence. What is particularly good about this chapter is Morgan's interweaving of other similar texts, such as Guy Saville's *The Afrika Reich*, which Morgan uses as a comparative to highlight the horror in Dick's imagery.

The third chapter, "The Damned and the Saved", takes a more "positive" (72) theme by dealing with texts that envision escaped Nazis being hunted down and brought to justice (Hitler-on-trial novels) or victims being saved from the Holocaust. The positive tone of this chapter is laced with a darkness differently barbaric and traumatic to the previous chapters, as many of the novels present a "different dystopia" (99) or "the denial of the happy ending" (100). Discussing *The Boys from Brazil* by Ira Levin, Morgan opens by reporting on evidence that Simon Wiesenthal found of minor SS officials receiving enormous deposits of Reichsmarks into hidden accounts for the "building of a Fourth Reich" (73), describing a sophisticated infrastructure to enable their escape. After the war, collaborators with the Nazis also escaped justice. Recent academic studies by Per Anders Rudling have found that veterans of the Ukrainian chapter of the Nazi Waffen-SS were granted asylum in Canada, and these studies argue that this unit was responsible for war crimes in Poland, massacring a village called

Huta Pieniacka, despite having numerous monuments dedicated to its “heroism” in the West (Rudling). While the focus, both in real life and in fiction, has been on capturing Nazis in hiding around the world, collaborators like those attached to the Waffen-SS not only evade justice but live free from the stain of collaboration. If one reason alone were needed for the timeliness of Morgan’s book, then the knowledge that such groups exist in Western society should be enough to remind us that, yes, it could happen here.

The final chapter, “Reimagining Horror”, continues the underlying theme of darkness by examining four novels: *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth, *Farthing* by Jo Walton, *A Man Lies Dreaming* by Lavie Tidhar, and *J* by Howard Jacobson. All four focus on political currents recognizable in our contemporary moment rather than on alternative histories involving Hitler and a victorious Nazi Germany. This chapter takes the “it couldn’t happen here” principle and showcases writers who portray Fascism slowly creeping to become the dominant political ideology in America and Britain. This is particularly evident in Roth’s *The Plot Against America*, which depicts the rise of homegrown fascism through famous historical figures like Charles Lindberg taking power through democratic processes – a scenario that brings to mind Michael Rosen’s dictum that “Fascism arrives as your friend/It will restore your honour/make you feel proud” (2014). Scholars of fascism and the radical right in America have traced how such extremist movements have gained political legitimacy through the mainstreaming of extremist discourses via organisations like the John Birch Society, Willis Carto, and operations like *Reason* magazine that co-opt leftist rhetoric (Kettler 198-99). Written in 2004, Roth’s novel is of contemporary relevance through its emphasis on the “feelings of existential dread that authoritarianism provokes” (107), and it is precisely the societal upheavals and the “growing climate of fear” that Morgan argues is an important factor in shaping the “dangers of such trends” continuing (144).

Whilst Morgan limits his object of study to novels, many of his texts have nonetheless been adapted into either movies or television series, expanding both audience and medium. It would have been interesting to see what comparisons or differences between adaptations Morgan might have identified. For instance, the recent adaptation of Roth’s *The Plot Against America* could have been used to show how television and novels operationalise feelings of dread. However, this is a minor criticism of what is a thorough and well-written work of scholarship that turns the myth of silence into a resounding yell and should be a core text for courses that teach SF. By examining texts that imagine the unimaginable, Morgan reveals the necessity of being reminded of atrocities through the medium of fiction: the “incomprehensibility of atrocity” (56) will become comprehensible unless we are presented with the shocking truth. Alternative fiction is an ideal means to explore the horrific and the unimaginable precisely because the power of narrative to shape reality has real-world consequences, as shown all too clearly by conservative media ecology, conspiracy theories, and Trump rallies. If the Holocaust is impossible to understand except through direct experience, Morgan’s book is a timely intervention to remind us that, not only *should* it be understood in this post-survivor age, but we have a readily available library of texts to set us on the proper path.

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Stockholm University. He is currently pursuing a Master's in Media, Communication and Cultural Analysis from Södertörn University. His Master's thesis examined the growing influence of think tanks in broadcast television news. He cites his main research interests as being the work of Ursula K. Le Guin and Philip K. Dick.

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BOOK REVIEW:

*Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From
Giant Turtles to Small Gods*

Andrew M. Butler

Rana, Marion, editor. *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. ISBN 978-3319672977.

This baker's dozen of essays on Terry Pratchett, edited by Marion Rana of the University of Bremen, is an entry in the Palgrave Macmillan series *Critical Approaches to Children's Literature*. This offers us a puzzle, as only a small proportion of Pratchett's oeuvre was aimed at younger readers – his (later heavily revised) debut, *The Carpet People* (1971/1992), the Truckers trilogy (1989–1990), the Johnny Maxwell trilogy (1992–1996), *Maurice and his Amazing Educated Rodents* (2001), *Where's My Cow?* (2005), *Nation* (2008), *Dodger* (2012), and the Tiffany Aching Discworld novels (2003–2015); in addition, posthumous short-story collections were issued between 2014 and 2020. The various target age groups of these books – from a picture book mentioned in and released at the same time as *Thud!* (2005) to young-adult titles – bring with them differing meanings of identity, coming of age, sexuality, freedom, and gender, but *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds* mentions very few of these titles in passing, if at all.

Even the chapters that do pay attention to the child protagonists do not stick to the children's books. Maxi Steinbrück discusses education with varying degrees of formality: Mort's on-the-job training; Tiffany's mix of instinct, apprenticeship, and becoming a learner; Susan's boarding school; and the Unseen University. In covering these areas, it might have been worth mapping them onto Pratchett's ambivalent attitudes to formal education and his evident self-education over the decades – his informal, interest-driven reading that taught him more than he would admit to learning in school. Virginie Douglas's

chapter on the Truckers trilogy also considers formal and informal education and the nature of the Bildungsroman – although the book's index would not help you find those pages (and more on this later). She argues that Pratchett himself is teaching through the course of these novels. This chapter perhaps engages the most with children's fiction or books recommended for children, even if, as Douglas notes, Pratchett denies having read the trilogy's obvious precursor, *The Borrowers* (1952). The role of children's fiction as parodic sources for Pratchett, however, remains underexplored in this volume.

Nurul Fateha considers *Johnny and the Dead* (1993) and *Nation* (2008) as metamodern texts, which is to say characteristic of the aftermath of the high-water point of the postmodern where that aesthetic's sense of irony and collapsed metanarratives no longer seem attractive. Johnny navigates his identity through assisting the Dead and, in *Nation*, Mau, reconfiguring his rejected cultural traditions to rebuild his destroyed society. In both cases, storytelling provides agency for the protagonists and their communities while frustrating the threats of neoliberal forces. Oddly, Fateha does not seem to mention the other two Johnny books, but equivalent processes are nonetheless at work in dealing with aliens and home-front participants in World War Two; the similarities and differences between ghosts, extra-terrestrials, and their grandparents' generation in their youths would have been instructive.

The 2009 London National Theatre adaptation of *Nation* by Mark Ravenhill allows Justyne Deszcz-Tryhubczak, in her chapter, to consider the political agency of young people through theatre. The collective experience of going to see a play, she argues, potentially produces a utopian experience in which taking action is performed and witnessed, which may radicalise the adaptation's (mainly) young audiences. The radicalisation of the reader is also raised in Minwen Huang's chapter, which looks at the performative nature of storytelling by focusing on *Hogfather* (1996). Central to this is Text World Theory, developed by Paul Werth but here explained via an introduction by Joanna Gavins. At first sight, this looks like yet another secondary-world model that considers a metadiegesis within a fictional world – the novel within the novel, the dream within the novel, and so forth. Pratchett and the readers exist in the discourse-world, Huang writes, and they read the text-world in light of the characters having epistemic modal-worlds. Although this structure is hardly unique to fantasy, what seems different in Pratchett's novels is the tendencies of those stories-within-the-stories to come true. The characters' belief systems become true – gods exist when they are believed in.

My problem comes with Huang's suggestion that we can take the next step and make such things real in the real world. According to Huang, the "processing of the text at the text-world level, propels the potential formation of an action-world at the material-world level This action-world turns readers into actors in the actual world" (191). For a start, this ignores the place of the author: the beliefs become true because Pratchett writes on both "levels". He can load the dice. Since each level is constructed of words, they are not really nested within one another; they share the same ontological status. I'm not convinced that Pratchett's book would have any more impact than a book that does not dramatise the reifications of beliefs. Huang concludes that "fantasy as a literary genre that tells 'lies' in the minds of readers can bring about change in our actual world" (191). It can, but has it? Are these "lies" any different, say, from those Charles Dickens tells in his books? And as the other chapters that

consider identity and other politics explore, although we might want some of the lies to bring about change, it might not be the change we actually wanted.

The Discworld novels sometimes get described as being for adults of all ages, but by not unpicking that marketing slogan, *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds* is missing a trick, and the slogan's assumptions about children and adults need development beyond seeing the all-too-frequent refrain "it's just for kids" as an excuse for any problems in politics or representation. Yet, although this volume is a laudable attempt to take Pratchett's fiction seriously, whatever his target market, the collection edges into this project nervously. As Rana's introduction notes, "Popularity and commercial success alone, however, do not necessarily warrant scholarly attention, at least not of the kind that this book is offering" (3), but it is precisely popular and commercial fiction that needs scholarly attention, even if it is of the snide variety offered by Q. D. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932). An awful lot of SF and fantasy nonfiction would fall at this hurdle, and it is vital we understand the ideologies sustained and challenged by popular fiction. I had a sense of déjà vu at this point as I've myself fallen into defensiveness about literary worth and taking Pratchett's work seriously.

Twenty years ago, when Edward James, Farah Mendlesohn, and I edited *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* (2000), the first collection of essays on Pratchett, we rather defensively suggested that he was neglected because he was a popular writer of comic fantasy and thus had three strikes against him. Whilst several chapters covered the children's books, we did not especially emphasise that further bar to taking him seriously. In the intervening years, fantasy seems to have gone mainstream, across media – with Martin, Pullman, Rowling, and Tolkien being the most visible crossovers to bestseller charts, small and large screens, and big budgets. Do we really still need to defend taking Pratchett's books seriously? The main Discworld sub-sequences were already in place by then, and we commissioned chapters on topics such as the Witches, the City Watch, the Librarian, and Death, as well as a handful of more thematic chapters. Since the second edition of *Guilty* in 2004, Discworld has had the Tiffany Aching subseries and the Moist von Lipwig novels, plus standalones. As far as I can see, von Lipwig is absent from this volume, although Aching appears in a number of the chapters. Indeed, to judge by the index, only a relatively narrow selection of the novels gets in-depth coverage.

The chapters, as I have already begun to show, do pay Pratchett scholarly attention, but the chapter by Alice Nuttall on the Witches shows some of the problems with the attempt to say something new – the first half, on Tiffany and emotional labor, feels fresh, and not only because it is discussing Pratchett's late works. Nuttall shows Pratchett subverting gender stereotypes for comic and narrative purposes, as he so often does, but her chapter's second half, which relates the various triads of witches back to the Maiden, the Mother and ... the other one ... takes us back to what Karen Sayer had already written in her chapter for *Guilty of Literature*, which is cited in Nuttall's notes but not the bibliography, and I think there is a greater scholarly debt than is quite acknowledged. Editor Marion Rana's own chapter on the City Watch's werewolf Angua takes us both into issues around ethnicity and intersectionality by focusing on monstrosity and gender. The City Watch recurs in Mel Gibson's following chapter through a discussion of multiculturalism that draws upon the other potentially tokenist identities within a diverse police force. In a

fascinating consideration of how Pratchett uses and undercuts his characters' racism, Gibson notes how the disparate members of the Watch are united by a work ethic and a performed masculinity, the latter of which rather undercuts the institution's true equality. Although there are many such interesting ideas explored through this volume, all too often I was left with a sense that most chapters got going only just as the word counts were reached.

Earlier, I mentioned the index and hinted at some problems. This index lists character names in a single place (with cross-references) (248–49), but some individual books get separate entries in addition to a list of all titles by Pratchett, under N for “Novels, series and plays by name” (252). Yet not all mentions of names or books get indexed, and some page references appear to be wrong. For example, the entry for *Jingo* (1997) points us to p. 147, but the longer list suggests pp. 60, 63, 66, and 147. There's a James Butler in the index (225), which seems to be a mangling of the names for my coeditor Edward James and myself in that chapter's notes which contradicts its bibliography (225). I know we did not help matters by leaving the publication date off *Guilty of Literature* (2000), but a couple of the bibliographies have a ghost 2008 edition (34, 54, and 71). Meanwhile, all the page numbers in cross-references to other chapters in this volume appear as (xy). The copy editing and proofreading seems to have been rushed.

This volume ought to inspire more people to take seriously a popular writer who just happens to have mainly written comic fantasy – some of which, yes, is aimed at children, and much of which could be enjoyed by children. Many of the ideas here deserve further development. However, the editing and especially the index do limit its usefulness.

Biography: Andrew M. Butler wrote *Terry Pratchett* (2001), edited *An Unofficial Companion to the Novels of Terry Pratchett* (2007), and co-edited *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* (2000, 2004). He is now managing editor of *Extrapolation*. He is currently researching 1980s SF and SF romcoms. In his spare time, he collects shiny trousers.



BOOK REVIEW:

Stanislaw Lem: Philosopher of the Future
*Lemography: Stanislaw Lem in the Eyes of
the World*

Michael Godhe

Swirski, Peter. *Stanislaw Lem: Philosopher of the Future*. Liverpool UP, 2015.
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Swirski, Peter, and Waclaw M. Osadnik, editors. *Lemography: Stanislaw Lem
in the Eyes of the World*. Liverpool UP, 2014. ISBN 978-1789620535.

Most people probably know Stanislaw Lem (1921–2006) as the author of *Solaris* (1961) thanks to the 1972 film adaption by Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, or perhaps even from the 2002 remake by American director Steven Soderbergh. For a long time, the English translation of *Solaris* was based on a 1966 French translation from the original Polish, but today, fortunately, *Solaris* and many of Lem's other novels, essays, criticism, and short-story collections have been translated directly into English, as well as approximately 40 other languages. Overall, his books have sold more than 40 million copies. No doubt, Stanislaw Lem must be considered one of the iconic names in the history of SF, but as with many writers from the Golden Age of SF – Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, for example – his oeuvre ranged widely between many different genres, fiction as well as non-fiction. In this review, I first discuss Peter Swirski's monograph *Stanislaw Lem: Philosopher of the Future*, an overall excellent introduction to Lem's career that includes a comprehensive biographical overview and critical interpretations of his novels and essays, before subsequently discussing the collection that Swirski and Waclaw M. Osadnik co-edited.

Adam Roberts has characterised Lem as probably the “greatest European writer of postwar SF” (260–61). However, as Roberts points out, few literary scholars have engaged in Lem’s oeuvre as systematically as Swirski has, since Lem’s work is very complex and spans a wide range of genres. As Swirski points out in his latest major work on Lem, named simply after its author, Lem’s body of writing included not only SF but also

poetry, fiction, metafiction, autobiography, drama, literary theory and criticism, popular science and futurology, anthropological and analytical philosophy, sociocultural analyses, book reviews, newspaper columns and magazine feuilletons, radio and television screenplays, film scripts, volumes of polemical writings, and – last but not least – truckfuls of letters, some garnished with fanciful sketches and drawings. (20)

In his monograph, Swirski gives a deeper understanding of Lem’s writings by situating his oeuvre in biographical, social, (geo)political, economic, scientific, and technological contexts, without reducing it to an epiphenomenon of those contexts (for example, by pointing to genre conventions). In his own view, Swirski believes that since literature is “never created in a perfect vacuum ... it often helps to understand the novelist and the context in which his works were created” (3). Along similar lines, Swirski argues that “literary criticism can hardly hope to render justice” to a “writer who preferred to be called the philosopher of the future”. Accordingly, where Lem

models nuclear-age strategic madness, literary critics discuss postmodern absurdity rather than game-theoretic rationality. Where he describes top-down engineering of de-aggression in *la bête humaine*, they dissect his style rather than his arguments. Where he speculates on cyberevolution and devolution, they turn for help to Bakhtin, not Darwin. Where he runs thought experiment about a statistical disproof of the epistemic bedrock epitomized by Occam’s razor, they retreat into intertextual taxonomy. (3, italics original.)

It is an open question about how thoroughly texts should be related to their historical contexts – or related to different contexts – since biographical critics always run the risk of “intentional fallacies” or of understanding a work solely through interviews or an author’s correspondence. Still, despite Swirski’s biographical and contextualist leanings, he nonetheless offers several convincing readings of Lem’s work. Lem’s horrible experiences of World War II, including occupations by the Nazis and then the Soviets, and everyday life in Poland as a satellite state to the USSR had, obviously, a deep impact on Lem’s works and world view. As Swirski writes:

Even though, as a writer, he has always maintained that he was by and large a realist, gradually he turned his back on characterization, story-line, and other canons of verisimilitude. The shift from the microscale of human atoms to the macroscale of the civilization, not to mention *the obsessive return to the subjects of chance*, survival by the skin of our teeth, and the inhumanity in humanity, were but some of the after-effects of the years of Nazism which, like Stalinism, barely differentiated between the murder of one and the butchery of millions. (15, emphasis added)

Swirski emphasises that there is a thread of misanthropy in some of Lem's novels and other writings.

A common theme in SF is, of course, encounters with other civilisations. Lem, however, did not believe that contact or cooperation with other civilisations is possible; he expressed this, for example, in the novel *Solaris*. In one of Lem's last email exchanges with Swirski, he writes that the "almost limitless diversity and distribution of evolutionary paths taken by different forms of life and civilizations" is the basic reason for this (39). I consider this an example of what Thomas Kuhn conceptualised as *incommensurability*. Although *Star Trek* would have it otherwise, there are no "universal translators" in Lem's universe since different civilisations would have different ontological and epistemological concepts impossible to translate. And even if Lem was a "philosopher, futurologist, and not least a science-savvy polemicist" (181), as Swirski claims, he also had a life-long "love affair with cybernetics and its multiplex progeny, from robotics to artificial intelligence to artificial emotion" (20). According to Swirski, however, Lem didn't believe that social engineering of any type could lead to universally happy societies, and he was critical of blueprints for revolutionary utopias. Nonetheless, Swirski continues, many of Lem's recurring themes remain important today: the role of artificial intelligence in our (future) societies, for instance, or the question of human exceptionalism, what constitutes a human being, or what a human being is when juxtaposed with technology.

All in all, although the short space allotted to a review makes it difficult to give a fair account of the richness of Swirski's monograph, *Stanislaw Lem* is an excellent critical introduction to Lem's oeuvre, casting light on several of the recurring themes in Lem's authorship, and a must-read for everyone interested in Golden Age SF as well as the intellectual, socio-political, and scientific contexts of Lem's writings. It should also appeal to readers who have admired his work for a long time. In this sense, the monograph is both an introduction to and a thorough exploration of Lem's oeuvre and intellectual legacy: a wonderful place for any scholar new to Lem to start.

Accordingly, Swirski's monograph also serves as a handy springboard for the more widely ranging essays in *Lemography: Stanislaw Lem in the Eyes of the World*. This edited collection by Swirski and Waclaw M. Osadnik comprises seven articles, and its introduction by Osadnik and Swirski ("Lem Redux: From Poland to the World") continues to contextualise Lem's oeuvre by pointing to the political conditions with which Eastern Bloc writers had to contend (particularly censorship) and adding further biographical points. Still, the introduction has two general aims. First, as the editors mention, it seeks to "introduce aspects of Lem's work hitherto underrepresented or even entirely unknown in the English speaking world" (14), and in Swirski's contribution to the volume, "The Unknown Lem", he introduces and analyses three previously untranslated novels important for understanding the development of Lem's literary universe: *Man From Mars* (1946), *The Astronauts* (1951), and *The Magellan Nebula* (1955). Second, although this is never explicitly stated by the editors, the introduction aims simply to support better interpretations of Lem's work. As such, *Lemography* offers a number of valuable new critical readings.

For instance, as Osadnik and Swirski write in their introduction, until 1989 all "Polish literature was nominally subject to state control" (4). Initiated in 1949, this state control demanded social realism in art but, despite a

loosening of censorship restrictions in 1956, there always remained a “plethora of censorial quibbles” (2) that affected what and how Lem could write. In Swirski’s chapter, he points out that since cybernetics was characterised as a false capitalist science in the Soviet Union, Lem tried to avoid this hurdle by coining the neologism “mechaneuristics” in *The Magellan Nebula* (1955). Additionally, Lem claimed to have written a “good Communist utopia” in *The Astronauts* (1951), often considered the first Polish SF novel, although this did not prevent Stalinist critics from attacking the novel for lacking a “sufficiently robust ideological infrastructure” (32–33).

One can easily get the impression that many of Lem’s works prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall must be read allegorically – that is, as critiques of communism and historical materialism, like some of the Strugatsky brothers’ work; for example, *Hard to be a God* (1964). And, of course, as Bo Pettersson points out in his chapter “The Hilarious and Serious Teachings of Lem’s Robot Fables: *The Cyberiad*”, a short-story collection like *The Cyberiad* can easily be read allegorically (112). However, Pettersson argues that there is more to Lem than just cleverly disguised critiques of the political system. Many novels and short stories discuss humanity’s place in a highly technological civilisation and our dependence on science. In some sense, then, Lem was anticipating post-humanist thought “many decades before the term *post-human* was coined” (Pettersson 97, emphasis original). Science, robots, and androids – and artificial intelligence – are used for discussing the increasingly blurred interface between humans and machines, technology, and technological systems.

This blurring interface is also a theme that concerned Lem more greatly as time passed and he began to foresee an almost unavoidable future for humanity, which led to him losing interest in SF during the 1970s. In another article, “Problems and Dilemmas: Lem’s *Golem XIV*”, Victor Yaznevich explains why SF ceased to interest Lem: it had a

tendency to degenerate either into pseudo-scientific fairy tales or into simplistic visions of civilizational nightmares – all the while failing to pursue the most important goal of culture, which is to attempt to figure out where the world is going, and to figure out whether we should resist or actively contribute to its civilizational march into the future. (141)

Golem XIV (1981) was a “book of meditations and prognoses about mankind’s ultimate destiny” (142), the protagonist of which is a supercomputer genius called Golem (General Operator, Long-range, Ethically Stabilized, Multi-modelling). The book once again brought up the post- or transhuman question, and this of course presents an even more present-day question: should our future include artificial intelligence only, or the coexistence of biological human minds with ‘nonhuman’ machine intelligence? Kenneth Krabbenhoft follows this same topic in “Lem, Cervantes, and Metafiction: *Peace on Earth* and *Fiasco*”, which shows how Lem’s final two novels return to themes such as the limits of human knowledge and moral reasoning in a highly developed technological civilisation.

Humankind’s destiny to either emerge as AI or to coexist with machine intelligence was a more urgent topic, in Lem’s view, than encountering or communicating with alien species in outer space. In “Embodiment Problems: Adapting *Solaris* to Film”, Nicholas Ruddick explores this topic by discussing

the three film adaptations of Lem's seminal classic novel *Solaris*: the 1968 version, Andrei Tarkovski's classic 1972 version, and Steven Soderbergh's 2002 version, often considered flawed in several ways. Ruddick highlights the pros and cons of each adaptation, as well as some of the themes investigated in *Solaris* – for example, “epistemological arrogance” in encounters with other life forms (71). Surprisingly, Ruddick does not consider Tarkovsky's version a masterpiece (in fact, Lem himself hated it!) but also believes that some of the scenes in Soderbergh's version, despite some other difficulties in the film, do a better job than Tarkovsky's adaptation. As Ruddick considers Lem's *Solaris* to be a truly great novel, he asserts that the work can inspire even more adaptations, and, despite the limitations of understanding *Solaris* only through its adaptations, Ruddick hopes that new adaptations will bring greater attention to Lem's novel.

In “Literature, Futurology, or Philosophy? *The Futurological Congress*”, Iris Vidmar and Peter Swirski provide a close reading the tricks Lem is playing with reality in *The Futurological Congress* (1971; trans. 1984). This is not an end in itself – or a postmodern playing with reality – but the means for Lem to criticise futurology and discuss contemporary issues of overpopulation and resource depletion. At stake here are issues of state or supra-state control, technocracy, and the development of surveillance technologies – issues that still linger today with the discussion of how to solve the climate crisis or the current global pandemic of COVID-19.

As with Swirski's monograph, it is impossible to give a fair account of the intellectual richness in these collected articles. All in all, this is an excellent edited collection that deepens our understanding of Lem's work and legacy, and it will hopefully spur further research into Lem's oeuvre. And even if there are *now* plenty of translations of Lem's works, one also hopes that more of his voluminous writings will find translation into English in the future.

Biography: Michael Godhe is Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Culture and Society, Campus Norrköping, Linköping University, Sweden. His research concerns Critical Future Studies with an emphasis on science fiction: see “Beyond Capitalist Realism – Why We Need Critical Future Studies” (co-written with Luke Goode) in the journal *Culture Unbound*, and the themed issue of *Culture Unbound*, on Critical Future Studies (co-edited with Luke Goode). ORCID ID 0000-0002-3259-9754.

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BOOK REVIEW:

*The Canons of Fantasy: Lands of High
Adventure*

Mark Scroggins

Moran, Patrick. *The Canons of Fantasy: Lands of High Adventure*. Cambridge UP, 2019. ISBN 978-1108708678.

Patrick Moran's *The Canons of Fantasy: Lands of High Adventure* appears as one of Cambridge University Press's "Elements", very short digital-native books presenting overviews of particular subjects. *The Canons of Fantasy* is part of the series "Publishing and Book Culture", and more specifically of the gathering "Publishing the Canon", which also includes volumes on African literature and science fiction publishing. These contexts shape several aspects of Moran's book: it is very short, though it covers a great deal of conceptual territory; it is largely descriptive and analytical, rather than argumentative; and it is addressed to a broader audience than just scholars of fantasy – it is also aimed at students of literature in general, scholars of popular culture and media studies, even library collection specialists. This doesn't mean that fantasy scholars have nothing to learn from Moran's book, though they will certainly find much that is common knowledge in the sub-discipline. Nor does it mean that Moran has shied away from potentially arguable points. He tries to cover the entire history of the formation of the "canon" of popular fantasy in a very brief compass – some 75 small pages – not merely discussing fantasy fiction but touching on graphic novels, role-playing and video games, movies and television, and such transmedia franchises as "Pottermore", *A Game of Thrones*, and the *Witcher* series. Along the way, Moran manages to shoehorn in a number of thought-provoking questions and objections to critical orthodoxy.

Moran begins by drawing a parallel between canon-making and cartography, the mapping of a particular subject – both identifying the landmarks firmly within that subject’s purview and tracing its sometimes debatable boundaries. His emphasis, refreshingly, is as much on process as product: that is, he is at least as interested in the processes by which a canon of fantasy has emerged as he is in defining what falls within that canon (and what is excluded). Moran’s first chapter, “The Lay of the Land”, surveys with admirable concision various attempts at defining fantasy; he lays out with clarity what’s at stake in essentialist definitions of the genre.

Such definitions are made problematic, of course, by the genre’s idiosyncratic history, laid out at length in Jamie Williamson’s *The Evolution of Modern Fantasy: From Antiquarianism to the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series* (Palgrave, 2015) and summarised briefly by Moran. In short, while there were many books that could be classified as “fantasy” before the middle of the twentieth century, fantasy fiction only really emerged as a popular genre after *The Lord of the Rings* (in paperback reprint) became a massive cultural phenomenon in the late 1960s. Other writers responded to Tolkien’s work with their own fantasy series (often trilogies), many of them also bestsellers, and editors and critics hastened to reprint earlier proto-Tolkienian books, with an eye to constructing retroactive genealogies or canons for what was becoming a remarkably popular genre.

Moran’s second chapter, “The Tolkien Landmark”, focuses specifically on the place of Tolkien’s work within the fantasy canon. Playing off Brian Attebery’s proposal that fantasy fiction can be defined as a “fuzzy set” of texts that bear some degree of resemblance to *Lord of the Rings*, Moran counters (winking to Pascal) that “The canon of fantasy has a Tolkien-shaped problem” (25). He surveys the array of immediate post-*LotR* Tolkien-imitations, then observes to what degree projects such as the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series constructed their retrospective genealogies of fantasy fiction as teleologically culminating in Tolkien. But he spends at least as much time examining parallel non-Inkling traditions, such as the pulp adventure genre that lies behind Poul Anderson’s *The Broken Sword* (1954), published the same year as *Lord of the Rings*. From there, Moran confronts such issues as the evoking of “literary value” as a canonical yardstick, and the various subgenres of fantasy (“high fantasy”, “sword and sorcery”, “urban fantasy”). These ways of categorising fantasy, he argues, ultimately spring from the centrality accorded Tolkien within the genre as a whole; at the same time, a recognition of how varied fantasy fiction actually is has been occluded by too singular a focus on Tolkien as a normative model.

Moran’s third chapter, “Crossing Boundaries”, expands fantasy from an affair of books to one of books and other media; in some ways this is the most timely chapter of the book, as contemporary audiences are offered an extraordinarily broad and rich array of fantasy through television series, films, role-playing games, and graphic novels. Fantasy fiction, the literary canon explored and promoted by Lin Carter with the Ballantine series, is now only a single subset of what is perhaps our time’s most expansive cultural genre. Contemporary fantasy fans, I venture, are more likely to enter the genre through Peter Jackson’s films or HBO’s *Game of Thrones* than they are through J.R.R. Tolkien’s or George R. R. Martin’s fat novels.

In “Alternative Cartographies”, his final chapter, Moran explores some of the emergent regions of fantasy, and some corners and counties many readers and viewers might find unfamiliar. After discussing some of the ideologically unsavory origins of fantasy, its roots in a racialised, nostalgic nineteenth-century culture, which have led some critics to consider it “an inherently reactionary genre” (59), Moran surveys fantasy writing that gives voice to female, non-white, and LGBTQ+ subjectivities, and that questions the hierarchical neo-medievalism of so much Tolkien-derived work. Finally, he gestures toward non-Anglophone fantasy. Obviously, as Moran is well aware, the subject deserves a full-length monograph of its own; within his constrained compass, however, he provides a fascinating example in a brief survey of the history of French fantasy.

Moran’s most penetrating insight is that while all canon-making is a process of struggle – of the inclusion or exclusion of various works on the basis of criteria which are always ideologically weighted, even when they are characterised as purely aesthetic – the process by which fantasy has established and continues to establish its canon differs in fundamental ways from that of “mainstream” literature (what one finds in the Norton Anthologies of English or American literature, for instance). For one thing, fantasy is a relatively young genre, even compared to its cousin science fiction, and every decade sees new volumes that seem destined to be “classics”: just in the past quarter century, Philip Pullman, J. K. Rowling, China Miéville, and N. K. Jemisin have written books redefining the genre. More importantly, since fantasy as a field still remains rather marginal within the academy, the genre is not subject to “hegemonic” (74) pressures of academic canon-formation: in short, the canons of fantasy are constructed by readers, fans, and writers themselves.

The canons of fantasy, then, are in constant flux. So far as I can tell, Tolkien’s place, thanks to an army of enthusiasts, a strong cross-platform presence (Jackson’s six films, numerous role-playing games, and the forthcoming Amazon series), and a tradition of academic scholarship, seems assured – though the arguments for canonicity advanced by Tolkien scholars at least seem to smack of Arnoldian Culture: “sweetness and light” and so forth. Marion Zimmer Bradley, whose Avalon novels were immensely popular and influential over the 1980s, but who was posthumously accused of child sex crimes by her daughter in 2014, has been largely erased from contemporary discussions. “This”, Moran comments, “is a rare case of a conscious decision to de-canonize an author previously considered a notable representative of the genre” (58n81). H. P. Lovecraft, I think, is a more ambiguous example. While most recent readers have acknowledged the extent to which Lovecraft’s racism and anti-Semitism permeate his fiction – the World Fantasy Award decided after 2015 no longer to use a bust of Lovecraft as its prize – his works retain their compelling fascination and seem more popular than ever. Such recent fantasy works as Alan Moore’s graphic novel *Providence* and the series *Lovecraft Country* (after Matt Ruff’s novel) show creators interrogating Lovecraft with both a loving and critical eye. He is the Ezra Pound of fantasy.

Moran’s book, for all its brevity, is a strong one. It joins Williamson’s *Evolution of Modern Fantasy* and James Gifford’s *A Modernist Fantasy: Modernism, Anarchism, and the Radical Fantastic* (ELS Edition, 2018) as one of the three most intelligent historical surveys of the fantasy field. For newbies,

Moran's *Canons of Fantasy* is a first-rate, sophisticated introduction to the scholarly debates over popular fantasy; for those already engaged in the critical discussion, it offers a refreshingly clear overview of what's at stake, and along the way raises some issues that might have been forgotten or overlooked.

Biography: Mark Scroggins is the author of five collections of poetry; among his nonfiction books are *The Poem of a Life: A Biography of Louis Zukofsky* and a critical monograph, *Michael Moorcock: Fantasy, Fiction and the World's Pain*. He has edited a selection of the erotic poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne.



Hail and Farewell: An Interview with *Fafnir*'s Departing and Arriving Editors-In-Chief

Laura E. Goodin

The only constant is change, and thus we at *Fafnir* are both excited to welcome a new editor-in-chief – Dr. Essi Varis – and sorrowful at the departure of a much-valued and long-serving member of the editorial team – Dr. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay. We asked each of them about their thoughts on *Fafnir* and speculative fiction more generally.

LEG: Bodhi, What have you been most excited about contributing to *Fafnir*?

BC: Oh, so many things! Contributing to the first open-access research journal and platform for SFF as well as the only SFF journal from the Nordic countries, creating whole new sections for interviews and other kinds of focused content, pushing for a reviews editor, who has done wonders for the journal, and most significantly – editing itself. I'm happy about the things we have achieved as a team and really grateful to have been part of the journey with all my fellow editors, and I am excited about the next steps *Fafnir* will take!

LEG: What have you gained from your time as a *Fafnir* co-editor-in-chief?

BC: Those who haven't edited a journal may not realise how rewarding editing a journal can be. Editing *Fafnir* helped me develop an insider's understanding of the art of writing and publishing. If one has only read published academic content by others, they see an end-product that might have taken a long time to

get there, even after submission. As an editor, one has to see more than just the surface level of craft – a well-written piece with good language may not necessarily be the most innovative or ground-breaking. It might not even make a good argument, even if you know it's publishable. Sometimes, pieces that are just draft-like can have more potential, but you can see that it will be a long while before it's publishable quality, but will be a significant contribution to the field if published. The question is whether, as editor, you'll have time to pursue the latter. Too often in academia, we tend to prize the former over the latter since we need to get those issues out on time. As journal editors, one makes these calls every day. At *Fafnir*, I'm glad we take the second route, even though sometimes articles submitted for one issue get pushed to another until we feel they're ready. But what the process does help with is learning the most invaluable lesson from the insider perspective: patience. As a researcher, the insider perspective made me adjust better to the outside world of academic publishing, especially publishing schedules and delays.

The other thing I gained from my time is a better understanding of how powerful editing a journal can be. One gets to shape a field, a discussion, a discourse. I joined *Fafnir* as a postdoc in a decade of rapid transformations and expansion of the field of SFF in terms of what was being written, read, and recognised from all over the world. This expansion, in turn, was and is seeding new kinds of research. I'm leaving *Fafnir* as an associate professor, leading the first European Research Council project on contemporary SF from the Global South, and managing CoFUTURES, one of the world's largest SF research groups, period. There are current and incoming projects with CoFUTURES scattered across all the continents except Antarctica. In between, I'll be working on five other research grants on different things related to SF. One might think such things are unrelated, but they are not. Working at *Fafnir* gave me a better understanding of the field, and helped me learn how to run and manage a project, see first-hand the changes coming and feel the pulse of what was yet to come, and shape those changes too in my small way. I think I will carry these things with me as I move on to other things, including – ta-da – more editing. I'm currently co-editing (with the fabulous Taryne Taylor) a book series on global genre fiction with a major publisher and will be helming another one shortly. All of this has been possible because of my editorial experience with *Fafnir*.

LEG: What do you see are some important contributions that *Fafnir* can make to the field of speculative-fiction research?

BC: *Fafnir* is a small journal with an outsized impact. We get a ridiculous number of readers from all over the world. While a lot of older journals have moved to institutional repositories, our completely open-access model has helped us reach out to a lot of early-career scholars in addition to more established ones. A lot of these institutional repositories are simply inaccessible to scholars in poorer countries or institutions. Several big repositories are run by publishers with deeply unethical practices directly harmful to scholars from poorer countries. Independent scholars without institutional affiliations are also unable to access these journals. These access issues are not necessarily the fault of these journals. It is a problem with the

whole setup of academic publishing. So if you want to see the present and future of cutting-edge SFF research, then it's in *Fafnir* and other OA journals in the field. That's what people are reading. That's where they are sending their articles. If awards are a measure of impact, then I want to point out that we received the prestigious World Fantasy Award last year for our work at *Fafnir*, the first time in the history of the award that an academic journal has been so recognised. *Fafnir* is already making significant contributions. It just needs to keep doing so!

LEG: What would you say to people who are thinking of submitting an article to *Fafnir*?

BC: We welcome work by junior and early-career scholars, and we read them with the same care that we read work by more established names. We are also really interested in work on non-Anglophone materials and more experimental research than a traditional print-journal form allows. That said, we are highly selective about what we publish and have double (and sometimes triple) blind peer-reviews, so send us your best work!

Also, I know many scholars who are perpetually in a rush to publish in a publish-or-perish world. Still, my personal experience has been that quality rather than quantity is far more significant. One good article is worth a dozen regular ones. To quote a famous gruk by the Danish anti-fascist polymath Piet Hien - T.T.T. – “ting tar tid.” Things take time. Everything takes time, including ideas. I focus on writing just one good article a year, since I play with the idea for months or even years before getting to the writing part. The risk is that the article might still get rejected, which is also absolutely fine!

A golden tip: please follow the submission guidelines, and use the journal style sheet (<http://journal.finfar.org/for-authors/submission-guidelines/>). If you have any questions about any of those, please reach out to the editors and ask before sending your piece. It will save you – and the journal – from a lot of misery.

LG: Why do you love speculative fiction?

BC: The short answer is that it gives me hope for the future. If we can imagine better possible worlds, we can make it. It all begins in the imagination. The long answer will take a lifetime.

LEG: And Essi, what parts of your background and experience are you most excited about bringing to *Fafnir*?

EV: This is probably the most boring and straightforward answer imaginable, but just working with speculative fiction research and having this unique vantage point to what's currently going on in the field is a very exciting prospect for me. I've recently started working on a personal research project (funded by

the Finnish Cultural Foundation, 2020–2024) that investigates how texts and images are used as instruments of imagination, so speculation is very much on my mind at the moment. On top of that, I've always been a huge fantasy nerd; I even used to write my diary in tengwar (Tolkien's elvish script) in my teens. I wish 15-year-old Essi would've known that she'd be editing a World Fantasy Award-winning journal one day, because she would've freaked out!

I'm also used to being the one person in the team who knows about (Gothic) horror and visual narration, because I studied Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and graphic novels for my doctorate. I hope I get to dip into and expand those areas of expertise while working on *Fafnir* as well.

LEG: What do you see are some important contributions that *Fafnir* can make to the field of speculative fiction research?

EV: I've been active in Finfar for a long time, and the fact that our little society has been able to run an international peer-reviewed journal that's fully open access has always been a beautiful thing to behold. There're a lot of practices in academic publishing that feel exploitative and make zero sense, and just about all of them have to do with money and access. I believe information and scholarship should be made freely available for everyone, and I'm delighted to work for a publication that upholds and promotes those values.

Offering these free opportunities to publish and read quality research is especially important in marginal fields, I think, because it helps the entire scene to grow and mature. Hopefully, it also helps to alleviate some of the prejudices that pop-cultural topics like speculative fiction still face in the elitist end of academia. Some important professor somewhere might think that SF is not real literature, and hence, not worth studying – and if so, so be it. At least we have made the research readily available for them all along.

LEG: What would you say to people who are thinking of submitting an article to *Fafnir*?

EV: "If it's too strange for the mainstream literary journals, let us have a look"? Well, not really. But also, yes, really.

What I mean by that is I'd love to see articles showcasing original ideas, little-known works, unexpected viewpoints, maybe even some experimental or interdisciplinary methodology. Articles introducing speculative works from beyond the Anglophonic cultural sphere would be most welcome and refreshing. But at the same time, I expect the writing and the argumentation to be clear, sound, and properly referenced. I'm very theoretically oriented myself, so hiding weak argumentation behind mushy writing is never going to fly with me. If I could be notorious for something in academic circles, I'd like to be notorious for having an open mind and high standards. Why produce just another research paper, when you could write something only you could dream up and do it as well as you possibly can?

LEG: Why do you love speculative fiction?

EV: I feel my worldview has always been a bit speculative. That doesn't mean I couldn't discern what's real or possible or likely – just that I'm agnostic on principle; I enjoy keeping improbable options on the table more than most people. Making a living as researcher once seemed an almost fantastical idea to me, for instance. But I try to look at the world thinking that all kinds of things can and do happen.

That's an attitude you can cultivate with fiction in general and speculative fiction in particular. We already have to deal with a whole lot of reality in our daily lives, so I don't see why we should drag all those rules and limitations and banalities into fiction as well. Fiction, for me, is the one place where all the improbable options can be fully examined and all the rules broken, with no costs or consequences. In that sense, I believe fiction is closer to its full potential when it's speculative.

Also, dragons and vampires and steam-powered airships are just really cool and fun, don't you think?

LEG: Anything else you'd like to add?

EV: I'm just exceedingly curious to see what kind of texts and people this editorial post will bring to my attention and grateful for the opportunity to learn from my fellow editors. Let's give this mythical beast even more gems and treasures to guard in its archives!



Lectio praecursoria:
Hahmot keskuudessamme:
Ihmisen muotoisen informaation,
hirviöiden ja metaforien tärkeydestä

Essi Varis

*Fafnir*n uusi päätoimittaja, FT Essi Varis väitteli Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjallisuuden oppiaineesta keväällä 2019. Oheinen essee on päivitetty versio hänen väitöksen alussa pitämästään lokiosta. Se antaa suomenkielisille lukijoillemme katsauksen tohtori Variksen aiempaan tutkimukseen henkilöahmoteorian ja sarjakuvien parissa. Samalla se on aikakapseli pandemiaa edeltävältä ajalta, jolloin päivän polttavat puheenaiheet olivat vielä henkilöiden, hahmojen tai henkilöahmojen kokoisia ja näköisiä.

Nykyisin Varis keskittyy Suomen Kulttuurirahaston rahoittamaan poikkitieteelliseen tutkimushankkeeseensa *Metacognitive Magic Mirrors: How Imagined Instruments and Theoretical Tools Illustrate and Enable Speculative Thought* (2020–2024). Hänen artikkeliväitöskirjansa *Graphic Human Experiments: Frankensteinian Cognitive Logics of Characters in Vertigo Comics and Beyond* (JYU Dissertations 73; ISBN 978-951-39-7725-2) on vapaasti luettavissa JYX-arkistossa: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/63458>.

Asiasanat: sarjakuvahahmot, fiktiiviset henkilöt, sarjakuvat, kognitiivinen kirjallisuudentutkimus, kertomuksen teoria, lukukokemukset, transmedia, enaktivismi, Vertigo-sarjakuvat, Frankensteinin hirviö

I

Vuonna 2019, ennen kuin COVID-pandemia täytti globaalin tajunnan, kansainvälistä mediaa kiinnosti kaksi asiaa ylitse muiden: Yhdysvaltain presidentti Donald Trumpin viimeisimmät edesottamukset ja *Game of Thrones*-televisiosarjan (2011–2019, HBO) päätöskauden uusimmat käänteet. Trumpin saama huomio tuskin yllätti ketään; olihan hän hetken aikaa merkittävän suurvallan keulakuva ja syöksyi koko nelivuotiskautensa ajan skandaalista toiseen. Räjähdysherkistä tunteista elävä huomiotalous ja sen taustalla vaikuttavat sosiaalisen median algoritmit suorastaan mässäilivät henkiin heränneellä poliittisella karikatyyrillä (Lanier). Mutta miksi fiktiivisen Westerosin täysin keksityistä asukkaista kohistiin lähes yhtä kiihkeästi kuin todellista valtaa todellisessa maailmassa käyttävästä hahmosta?

Game of Thronesin viimeinen kausi lähetettiin noin 200 maassa yhtä aikaa (Feldman). Harva tosimailman uutinen kiinnostaa yhtä paljon ympäri maailman – ja jokaisen jakson jälkeen internetiin suorastaan tulvehti erilaisia analyysyjä, faniteorioita ja haastatteluja. Yhdessä näistä haastatteluista toinen sarjan pääkäsikirjoittajista, Bryan Cogman, kuvaili kauden toista jaksoa ”rakkauskirjeeksi sarjan hahmoille”. ”Minä rakastan kaikkia näitä hahmoja niin kovin paljon”, hän kertoi, ääni sortuen. (Hibberd.) Jostain syystä ruudulleni ei koskaan sattunut videota, jossa joku olisi puhunut samaan sävyyn Donald Trumpista – mutta Cogmanin liikutuksessa piilee ainakin yksi tärkeä johtolanka siihen, miksi puoli maailmaa seurasi henkeään pidätellen kuvitteellisten konnien ja sankareiden kohtaloita: vaikka kohtaamamme olennot olisivat epätodellisia, niiden herättämät tunteet ovat täysin todellisia (Keen, Smith).

Sinun vuorosi, hyvä lukija: ajattele jotakin kirjaa tai sarjakuvaa – sellaista kirjaa tai sarjakuvaa, jonka luit viisi, kymmenen vuotta sitten ja joka teki sinuun suuren vaikutuksen. Mitä ensimmäisenä palautuu mieleesi? Muistatko vielä, millä sanoilla teos alkoi? Muistatko, mitä toiseksi viimeisessä kohtauksessa tapahtui? Tai missä järjestyksessä juoni tarkalleen eteni? – Tuskin. Minä kehtaan kutsua itseäni sarjakuvatutkijaksi, enkä silti muista, miksi kummassa Muumit kaivoivat esi-isänsä ylös haudasta Tove Janssonin sanomalehtistripteissä, kuinka journalistisankari Tintin ystävä Kapteeni Haddock päätyi kartanon isännäksi, tai palasiko Roope Anikka koskaan Klondikeen.

Sen sijaan ainakin jokin näistä nimistä, jotka juuri mainitsin, varmasti herättää sinussa jonkin muiston, tunteen tai asenteen – aivan kuten minussakin. Tavattoman tutuntuntuinen, erityisen kauhistuttava tai elämää suurempi henkilöhahmo jää helposti mieleen, ja niiden kautta pystymme usein muistelemaan myös tarinan keskeisimpiä sosiaalisia tilanteita ja konflikteja, moraalisia valintoja ja näkökantoja; sitä, miltä tarina meistä tuntui ja mitä siitä opimme. Samasta syystä muistelllessamme vuotta 2019 monen mieleen nousee kasvoja: läheisiä, joiden kanssa tuli vietettyä eniten aikaa, Trump huutamassa taas jollain puhujakorokkeella, Daenerys Targaryen lohikäärmeensä selässä.

Kognitiotieteilijöiden mukaan syy tälle on hyvin yksinkertainen: koska me median kuluttajat olemme ihmisiä, olemme tavattoman kiinnostuneita toisista ihmisistä, ja henkilöhahmot tarjoavat meille ihmisen muotoista informaatiota. Sillä, että ne eivät ole olemassa, ei lopulta ole paljoakaan merkitystä; kun abstraktin asian tai ongelman dramatisoi henkilöhahmojen

kautta, se on joka tapauksessa konkreettisempi ja koskettavampi kuin se olisi ilman näitä ihmisenkaltaisia luomuksia. (Mar & Oatley, Vermeule, Zunshine.) Yön kuningas epäkuolleine armeijoineen kuulostaa paljon välittömämmältä uhalta kuin ilmastonmuutos, ja tiettyjen hahmojen tyyli pelata valtaistuinpeliä voi auttaa meitä arvioimaan vaikkapa utilitarismin, macchiavellismin tai pragmatismien uhkia ja mahdollisuuksia hyvin eri tavoin kuin filosofinen tai sosiaalipsykologinen teoriakirjallisuus.

Olemme tottuneet siihen, että ajattelevat, tuntevat ja puhuvat olennot ovat oman selviytymisemme kannalta olennaisia, mahdollisia ystäviä tai vihollisia. Me voimme vaikuttaa niihin ja ne meihin tärkeillä tavoilla. Kun fiktio saa esittämänsä keinotekoiset oliot näyttämään tällaisilta tietoisilta agenteilta, saamme mahdollisuuden merkitykselliseltä tuntuvaan vuorovaikutukseen. Voimme siis luoda näihin olentoihin suhteita, joista ehkä puuttuu normaali sosiaalinen vastavuoroisuus, mutta jotka voivat siitä huolimatta – tai juuri siitä syystä – muodostua palkitseviksi ja henkilökohtaisiksi (Klimmt et al.). Tässä mielessä fiktiiviset hahmot voivat todellakin olla lähempänä meitä ja vaikuttaa elämiimme paljon suuremmin kuin kaukaisten maiden oikeasti olemassa olevat despoottit. Tätä havaintoa tukevat myös monet empiiriset tutkimustulokset (esim. Shedlosky-Shoemaker, White).

Toisaalta on tärkeä huomata, että Donald Trumpista on myös sukeutunut eräänlainen henkilöahmo. Talk show -isännät parodioivat hänen jokaista lausuntoaan, aiemmin tuntemattomat näyttelijät niittävät mainetta Trump-imitaatioillaan, eivätkä pilapiirtäjätäkään ole säästelleet sivalluksiaan. Jos Trump olikin tosi-TV-hahmo jo ennen politiikkaan sekaantumistaan, viimeistään tässä vaiheessa meidän, jotka emme todennäköisesti koskaan tule tapaamaan häntä kasvokkain, on todella vaikea erottaa, mihin todellinen henkilö päättyy ja mistä fiktio alkaa.

Mikä vielä kiinnostavampaa, tässä medioituneessa maailmassamme tämä ei enää ole pelkästään julkisuuden henkilöihin liittyvä ongelma, vaan kuten tunnettua, internetissä kuka hyvänsä voi olla kuka hyvänsä. Itse asiassa emme edes voi toimia verkossa luomatta itsellemme jonkinlaista julkista persoonaa, jossa on väkisinkin jotain aitoa, jotain kaunisteltua, jotain lainattua, ja jotain keksittyä (Lanier). Toisilleen tuntemattomat ihmiset ympäri maailman solmivat nykyään luottamuksellisia, vuosienkin mittaisia parisuhteita erilaisten keskustelupalstojen ja verkkopelien välityksellä. Välillä paljastuu, että jompikumpi tai molemmat osapuolet ovatkin lähettäneet toisilleen kuvia joistain aivan toisista henkilöistä ja sepittäneet uusiksi koko elämäntarinansa. Tuhannet nettideittailijat ovat siis uskoneet rakastuneensa todellisiin ihmisiin, mutta ovatkin tietämättään jopa kihlautuneet useista eri aineksista ja totuuksista koottujen keinotekoisien hahmojen kanssa.

II

Kaiken tämän nojalla lieenee selvää, että nykykulttuurissa on hyvin vaikea navigoida ilman syvempää ymmärrystä siitä, kuinka luomme erilaisia kuvitteellisia olioita ja ihmisten malleja, kuinka elämme niiden rinnalla ja kuinka ajattelemme niiden kautta. Väitöstutkimukseni pyrkii edistämään juuri tätä ymmärrystä tarkastelemalla monimediaisia henkilöahmoja eri kanteilta ja vertaamalla niitä Frankensteinin hirviöön.

Kyllä vain, luit oikein: väitöskirjani keskeinen väite on, että kaikki henkilöhahmot ovat eräänlaisia Frankensteinin hirviöitä. Niinä loputtomina yksinäisinä yön tunteina, joina olen rakentanut tätä teoriaani, korvissani on jatkuvasti humissut humanistisia tieteenaloja väheksyvien konservatiivien paheksuva puhina: ”Epätieteellistä! Ennenkuulumatonta! Kaikenlaisella ylimalkaisella esseistiikalla sitä voikin nykyään napata itselleen tohtorinhatus!” Muistakaamme kuitenkin, että hyvin samanlaista epäilyä kohdistettiin myös Victor Frankensteinin alkemistisiin metodeihin – ja hänhän onnistui. Seuraukset olivat kieltämättä katastrofaaliset, mutta Frankensteinin tieteellisen prosessin takana täytyi silti olla jokin pätevä logiikka. Väitän, ettei myöskään oma hirviövertaukseni ole pelkkää goottilaista maalailua, vaan senkin takana on vankat metodiset perusteet.

Kuten olen pyrkinyt edellä antamillani esimerkeillä todistamaan, rajat toden ja fiktion, orgaanisen ja keinotekoisien sekä inhimillisen ja kuvitteellisen olion välillä eivät aina ole niin selvät ja pitävät kuin haluaisimme uskoa. Tällaisia vaarallisia rajavyöhykkeitä, jotka uhkaavat vakaata maailmankuvaamme, asuttavat perinteisesti juuri hirviöt: lohikäärmeet, ja jättiläiskalmarit, basiliskit ja kimeerat – mutta myös Frankensteinin hirviö, jonka todellinen tragedia on se, että se ei kuulu yhtään mihinkään. Siitä ei ole uudeksi Aatamiksi, paremman yli-inhimillisen rodun kantaisäksi, jollaiseksi Frankenstein sen suunnitteli, eikä sitä myöskään kelpuuteta tavallisten ihmisten joukkoon. Sen kohtalo on olla yksin oma, ambivalentti kategoriansa.

Kuten olen tähdentänyt jo useissa julkaisuissani, samanlainen kahtalaisuus leimaa henkilöhahmoja, sillä myös ne saavat merkityksensä tekijänsä ja yleisönsä välisessä ristivedossa. Yhtäältä tiedämme, että henkilöhahmot ovat olemassa siksi, että ne on luotu jotain tiettyä tarkoitusta, tavallisesti leikkiä, tarinankerrontaa tai muunlaista kommunikaatiota varten. Toisaalta meidän on hyvin vaikea vastustaa niitä merkkejä, jotka houkuttelevat meitä lukemaan niitä kuin ne olisivat ihmisiä. Tästä syystä en voi tyytyä sellaisiin henkilöhahmoteorioihin, jotka sovittelevat hahmoa vain jompaankumpaan näistä kategorioista.

1900-luvun puolivälissä uskottiin vielä vakaasti, että henkilöhahmot ovat läpeensä tekstiä; että niin niiden luut kuin unelmatkin ovat vain taitavasti järjesteltyjä merkkijonoja (Eder et al.). Kuitenkin näyttää siltä, että pelkkä kuva tai maininta henkilöhahmosta ei ole sama asia kuin kokonainen henkilöhahmo.

Kuten monet muutkin henkilöhahmojen omituisuudet, tämä on erityisen ilmeistä sarjakuvan ystäville. Lähes jokaista sarjakuvan sivua voidaan nimittäin lukea pysähtyneenä, kollaasimaisena sommitelmana, jossa hahmojen kuvalliset ruumiit toistuvat erilaisista kulmista ja erilaisina paloina, osana sivun antamaa esteettistä vaikutelmaa. Tavallisemmin kuitenkin ymmärrämme toisiaan seuraavat sarjakuvaruudut tarinallisiksi, dynaamisiksi jatkumoiksi, jotka punovat nämä toistuvat, pilkotut ruumiit kokonaisiksi, liikkuviksi, kenties jopa kehittyviksi hahmoiksi (Hatfield). Tämä tietenkin korostaa illuusiota siitä, että hahmoilla olisi oma toimijuus ja tietoisuus, mikä puolestaan voi houkutella lukijan liittämään niihin aikeita ja tunteita. Kenties näiden aikeiden ja tunteiden tuottaminen olikin juuri se tarkoitus, jota varten kyseinen hahmo oli luotu – tai sitten ei.

Valinnat näistä lukutavoista tekee nimittäin lukija, jota kognitiotieteistä ammentavat tutkijat ovat sysineet kertomusteorian valokeilaan vuosituhaten vaihteesta lähtien (Palmer, Schneider). Näiden teoreetikoiden keskittyminen

realistisen kirjallisuuden tavallisiin ihmishahmoihin ja niin sanottuun mielen teoriaan on kuitenkin saanut heidät korostamaan fiktiivisten ja todellisten ihmisten välistä sukulaisuutta kenties liiaksikin. Henkilöhahmothan voivat hyvin esiintyä jonain aivan muunakin kuin ihmisinä, vaikkapa uneksivina kukkina, tietoisina bakteerirykelminä tai elävinä taloina, kuten tutkimassani *The Sandman: Overture* -sarjakuvassa (2015, Gaiman & Williams).

Frankensteinin hirviön tapaan hahmot eivät siis täysin tunnu mahtuvan tekijöidensä määrittelemiin välineellisiin kategorioihin, mutta ihmisiä ne eivät myöskään ole – eivätkä ehkä haluakaan olla. Nekin muodostavat siis oman, ambivalentin kategoriansa. Siinä missä tämä ristiriitaisuus ja välitilaisuus on tragedia Frankensteinin hirviölle, henkilöhahmoille se on niiden suurin vahvuus, eräänlainen supervoima, joka tekee niistä erityisen hyviä ajattelun, kuvittelun ja viestinnän välineitä. Esimerkiksi vedon lyöminen siitä, kuka *Game of Thronesin* sankareista kuolee seuraavaksi, olisi tietysti epäeettistä, jos emme muistaisi niiden olevan keinotekoisia, fiktiivisiä, virtuaalisia olioita. Toisaalta, jos näkisimme ne vain litteinä tekstikyhäelminä, olisi mieletöntä liittää niihin sellaisia toimintoja kuin eläminen ja kuoleminen.

Hyvä lukija, mikäli olet seurannut päättelyäni tähän asti ja nyökkäilet vielä mukana, mielessäsi muodostuu varmasti jo seuraava kysymys, joka onkin hyvin tärkeä kysyä: kuinka tätä jännitteistä, hirviömaista keinotekoisuuden ja inhimillisyyden välitilaa, jossa henkilöhahmot elävät, voisi lähestyä tieteellisesti? Uskon, että moninkin eri tavoin, sillä kyseessä on hyvin monitahoinen ilmiö. Itse olen kuitenkin päättänyt tukeutua niin sanottujen uuden sukupolven kognitioteorioiden enaktivistiseen haaraan. Ratkaisuani perustelee edellä esittämäni näkemys, että niin tekstien antamat virikkeet kuin lukijoiden mieletkin ovat keskeisessä osassa henkilöhahmojen muodostumisessa. Enaktivismin keskeisin pyrkimys on nimittäin selittää näiden kahden tekijän välistä yhteyttä: sitä kuinka ajatus, merkitys ja toiminta keriytyvät auki tietoisien olennon ja materiaallisen maailman välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa (Kukkonen & Caracciolo, Thompson).

Pelkästä kuolleesta tekstimassasta on siis turha etsiä elon merkkejä. Kuten jo mainitsin, yksi henkilöhahmoa kuvaava sarjakuvaruutu tai -sivu ei ole sama asia kuin kokonaisempi kokemus henkilöhahmosta, ja sama kahtalaisuus pätee toki muihinkin kerrontamuotoihin. Sarjakuvien ruutuihin jaetut sivut, jotka pirstaloivat tarinan erillisiksi, rinnakkaisiksi elementeiksi muistuttavat kuitenkin kiinnostavalla tavalla Frankensteinin hirviön arpien halkomaa ruumista. Samalla ne alleviivaavat sitä, että mitään teksteissä piileviä merkityksiä ei siirretä aivoihimme kokonaisina, sileinä ja sopuisina, yksisuuntaista putkea pitkin. Todellisuudessa lukuprosessit ovat aina jossain määrin ennalta-arvaamattomia, sotkuisia ja avoimia monenlaisille lukijan mielessä ja ympäristössä piileville vaikutteille. Kuten Mary Shelleyn *Frankensteinin* (1818) meille opettaa, uuden elämän luominen vaatii aina erilaisten materiaalien yhteen kokoamista ja parsimista – ja kuten kaikki käsitöitä harrastaneet varmasti tietävät, lopputulos vaihtelee usein tekijän mukaan.



Kuva 1: Tutkijan oman
hahmonluontiharjoituksen tulos.
Kuva: Essi Varis

Se etu itse tekemisessä kuitenkin on, että mitään ohjeita ei tarvitse noudattaa, materiaalien suhteen voi aina vähän soveltaa, jotain voi lisätä ja jotain jättää pois. Enaktivistinen käsitys kognitiosta sallii tällaisen lähestymistavan myös henkilöhahmoihin, mikä onkin tärkeää tämän päivän globalisoituneissa, digitoituneissa, suurten mediayhtiöiden ympärillä pyörivissä tarinankerronnan tiloissa. Niin kirjoista kuin sarjakuvista tutut suosikkiahmot jatkavat nykyisin matkaansa yhä uusiin elokuva- ja videopelisovituksiin ja antavat aihetta niin kaupallisille fanituotteille kuin fanien itse tuottamalle taiteelle. Kaikki nämä erilaiset materiaaliset muodot, samoin kuin vaikkapa toisten tutkijoiden ja fanien kanssa keskusteleminen antavat minulle omanlaisensa mahdollisuuden

tunnistaa ja kuvitella sellainen olematon olio kuin Frankensteinin hirviö ja punoa se osaksi jatkuvasti muodostuvaa tietoisien toimintani vuota.

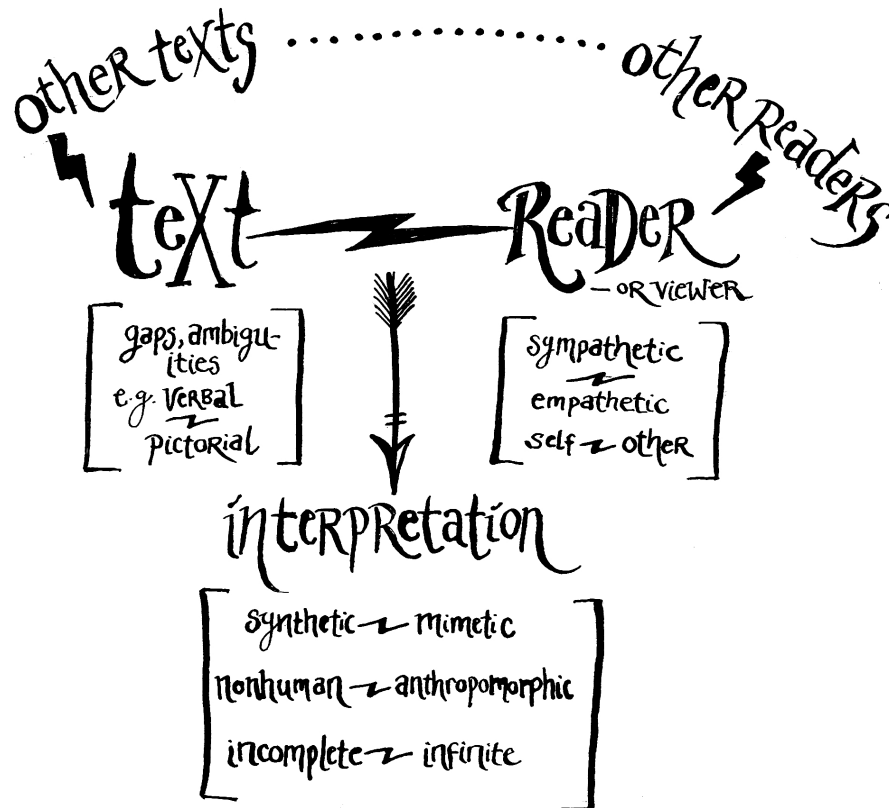
Uskon, että juuri tässä kokemusten ja merkitysten virrassa piilee henkilöhahmojen näennäisen elämän salaisuus. Niitä liikuttavat eri merkkien, tekstien, teosten, tekijöiden, yleisöjen, tulkintojen ja tulkintatilanteiden väliset jännitteet. Ne eivät koskaan tule kokonaisiksi ja selvärajaisiksi sen enempää kuin mikään muukaan spekulatiivinen, kuvitteellinen ja epätodellinen; ne eivät koskaan kiistattomasti kuulu minnekään.

III

Kaiken tämän nojalla voidaan todeta, että Frankensteinin hirviö on erinomaisen havainnollinen metafora, vertauskuva tai analogia henkilöhahmoille. Se edustaa hahmojen keinotekoisuutta ja puuttellista inhimillisyyttä, niiden pirstaleisuutta, keskeneräisyyttä, monimuotoisuutta ja levotonta kulttuurista vaellusta. ”Metafora ei kuitenkaan ole sama kuin tieteellinen teoria”, kuulen taas niiden puhisevien kriitikkojen sanovan.

Ei niin. Siksi teoria onkin minulla erikseen oheisessa kaaviossa, ja olen yrittänyt edellä selittää auki sen enaktivistisia pääperiaatteita. Mutta en olisi koskaan päätenyt tähän teoriaan, jos olisin ajatellut henkilöhahmoja piirrekimppuina tai fiktiivisinä ihmisinä, kuten aiemmat hahmoteoriat ovat tehneet. Päädyin siihen, koska päätin ottaa vakavasti erään tutkimukseni kohteena olevan sarjakuvan, *The Unwrittenin* (2009–2015, Carey & Gross) ehdotuksen siitä, että henkilöhahmoilla ja Frankensteinin hirviöllä on häkellyttävän paljon yhteistä. Kuten hyvän enaktivistin kuuluukin, en siis

lukinnut tutkimiani fiktiivisiä olioita valmiiksi määriteltyihin kertomusteoreettisiin lokeroihin, vaan pyrin tuomaan fiktion ja teorian avoimempaan, monisuuntaisempaan vuorovaikutukseen keskenään.



Kuva 2: Henkilöhahmo enaktiivisena rakennelmana. Kuva: Essi Varis

Kun sanon, että henkilöhahmot konkretisoivat ja ohjaavat ajatteluamme, on siis tärkeää huomata, että akateeminen ajattelu ei suinkaan jää tämän väitteen ylä- tai ulkopuolelle, eikä tieteellisissä keskusteluissa metafora koskaan ole pelkkä metafora. Mikäli uskomme enaktivismiin näkemyksen siitä, että kaikki toimintamme keriyyt auki tietoisuutemme ja sitä ympäröivän todellisuuden välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa, meidän on tunnistettava, että myös valitsemamme tutkimusmateriaalit ja -välineet ohjaavat oleellisesti ajatteluamme. Humanistisissa tieteissä – ja aivan erityisesti kirjallisuustieteessä – tähän välineistöön kuuluvat myös käyttämämme termit, sanavalinnat ja kielikuvat. Kun puhumme henkilöhahmoista ihmisen kaltaisina tai pelkkänä tekstinä, silmiemme eteen suinkaan avaudu koko suodattamaton todellisuus, vaan tietynlainen todellisuus – vallankin jos analyysimme kohdistuu aina vain länsimaiseen, realistiseen kirjallisuuteen, johon suuri osa kertomusteoriasta tällä hetkellä nojaa.

Tämän johdosta väitän, että keskeisen metaforani – Frankensteinin hirviön – nostaminen etualalle, jopa väitöskirjani kanteen, ei suinkaan tee tutkimuksestani vähemmän tieteellistä, vaan pikemminkin avoimempaa ja luotettavampaa. Se viestii, että olen itse jatkuvasti pyrkinyt pysymään

tietoisena ja valistamaan myös lukijoitani tutkimuksessa käyttämäni kielen ohjaavasta vaikutuksesta. Samalla myönnän, että olen *antanut* sen ohjata minua – olen päästänyt hirviön valloilleen – sillä olen uskonut sen tekevän näkyväksi sellaisia sokeita pisteitä, joita fiktiivisten henkilöiden anatomia on tähän asti ollut.

Sama pätee tutkimusmateriaaliini, eli sarjakuviin. Valitsemalla tämän perinteestä poikkeavan tutkimusaineiston olen pystynyt osoittamaan esimerkiksi sen, että hahmojen kuvalliset ruumiit tarjoavat lukijoille ja tekijöille erilaisia vuorovaikutuksen mahdollisuuksia kuin hahmojen nimet. Muun muassa tätä pelkkään proosatekstiin pohjautuvat kirjallisuuden teoriat eivät tietenkään ole pystyneet ottamaan huomioon.

Lopuksi haluan kannustaa kanssatutkijoitani suorittamaan entistä rohkeampia ajatuskokeita henkilöhahmojen ja muiden spekulatiivisten tutkimuskohteidemme ympärillä. Muistakaa nyt: eivät ne oikeasti ole olemassa, ei niihin satu. Pikemminkin pieni frankensteinlainen tieteellinen kapina on paras keino ymmärtää entistä paremmin, miksi jokainen meistä on kaikesta huolimatta jonain myrskyisenä yönä katsonut jotain sivua tai ruutua ja huudahtanut jossain mielensä perukoilla: ”Ne elävät!”

Ne elävät.

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