



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

Elizabeth Oakes & Essi Varis

The past 12 months have been a year of upheaval in the halls of *Fafnir*. With the departure of one of our longest-serving editors-in-chief, Laura E. Goodin, Essi Varis suddenly bobbed from the new arrival to the most senior member of the editorial team as all the other posts were vacated and then filled again with new international talents. We were aided past these rocky waters by two visiting editors in issue 2/2022. But now, with the arrival of our newest editor-in-chief, Merve Tabur, the ship of *Fafnir* is finally sailing on an even keel again. As has become our tradition, we wanted to reach across the cyber-seas and give both the departing and the arriving editors a chance to share some thoughts with the readership. Essi, who is currently in Norway, contacted Laura in Australia, and Elizabeth Oakes messaged from Finland to the Netherlands in order to interview Merve.

Essi Varis: So, Laura, in addition to being a researcher and an editor, you are also a fantasy author. If you wrote a speculative fiction story of your time with *Fafnir*, what kind of a story would it be?

Laura E. Goodin: It would be full of wonder, newly discovered treasures, and quests for secret knowledge. It would have heroes solving mysteries and returning in triumph to share what they've learned with the rest of the kingdom (and occasionally win international renown). It would have practitioners of the magic art of scholarship, both new and experienced, working together to continually push the boundaries of what we all know and understand. And it would have at least one editor-in-chief who has been profoundly changed by her own *Fafnir* quest.

EV: You also stayed on board as *Fafnir*'s editor-in-chief for a fairly long time, from 2018 to 2022. What were the highlights of those years? Were some issues or texts particularly memorable, or was there some part of the editing process you enjoyed the most?

LEG: I don't think I could single out a particular issue or text as each issue was a veritable tsunami of fabulous ideas and perspectives, and each paper, prefatory, review, and reflection was an exciting discovery. I think that, actually, was what I enjoyed the most: the thrill of seeing what new concepts and insights the scholars who submitted to us would come up with. Of course, I loved collaborating with the other editors-in-chief and the reviews editor in the heady rush to produce each issue; that was just plain fun, as well as a terrific learning experience for me. And I'm not sure you could top the excitement of finding out we'd been nominated for a 2020 World Fantasy Award and then Zooming in to the ceremony, all of us on the edge of our seats, to find that we'd become the first academic journal in history to actually win one.

EV: *Fafnir* is a Nordic journal, but you live all the way in Australia – farther away than any other editor we've ever had in the team. I remember that negotiating the timezones was a little challenging sometimes. But other than that, how did you find working with people on the other side of the planet? Did you know a lot about Nordics beforehand or did you learn anything interesting about us?

LEG: Yes, the time zones could sometimes be a bit tough to juggle. But I'm a bit of a geography geek, and the intersections of people and place, and the wild energy that those intersections can throw around, are some of my greatest fascinations and joys. I'm endlessly curious about the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of people who live Somewhere Else. As an expat myself (I'm an American who's been living in Australia for the past 27 years), I find ideas of place, home, and belonging to be crucially important to my own speculative writing and to the insights I can gain from others. Again, as an armchair geographer, I'd known a bit about the Nordic countries, and I'd traveled (albeit briefly) in Finland (in fact, the academic stream at the Helsinki Worldcon was where I'd found out about *Fafnir*). But getting to know my *Fafnir* colleagues gave me a great opportunity to learn more about the various cultures in the region. Probably the biggest cultural difference between me as an American and my Nordic colleagues was that y'all have a much, much better grasp of the idea of a healthy work-life balance. I took inspiration from that!

EV: Do you think that speculative fiction and the research of speculative fiction have changed in some way during the time you've worked on the field? Is there some change you still expect or hope to see in the future?

LEG: I don't think a few short years is long enough for trends in academia to change drastically. (Inertia is a thing!) However, what I am seeing is changes in academia itself: it's harder in many countries for researchers to get the support that makes large-scale research possible, whether that's grants or jobs at universities. This is having a dire effect on the vibrancy of the research scene in just about every discipline, including (and perhaps especially) speculative fiction. I would love to see the pendulum swing back so that research into the humanities and creative arts is seen as enormously valuable, rather than as a quaint but irrelevant holdover from the previous century. I'd love to see the creative work of the human spirit be acknowledged as essential to our lives together and to our very survival as a species. I'd love to see the world's economists, politicians, and businesspeople turn to its writers, artists, and scholars for new ways of thinking about – and perhaps even solving – the world's many problems and dilemmas.

EV: What advice would you give to the current and future editors-in-chief of *Fafnir*?

LEG: Everything is always going to take more time than you think. The rewards and satisfactions will come from both expected and unexpected places, and they will be intense. The frustrations will pop up randomly, and they'll be intense, too, but you and your fellow editors-in-chief will always find a way to prevail. And, finally, hang on and enjoy the ride!

Elizabeth Oakes: How does your background and experience shape your work with *Fafnir*? And what has been most interesting and engaging in your editorial work with *Fafnir* so far?

Merve Tabur: As a scholar of comparative literature and environmental humanities, my approach to the study of speculative fiction is very much steeped in interdisciplinary, postcolonial, and feminist methodologies. My research examines how ecological and planetary futures are envisioned in Turkish, Arabic, and Anglophone speculative fiction. The comparative, multilingual, and interdisciplinary approach underlying my research necessarily informs the kinds of contributions I make and the feedback I offer as an editor. Many of the texts that I work with in my research also foreground the entanglement of social and environmental justice in their articulation of speculative scenarios. This strong emphasis on justice, which is a central aspect of my theoretical and pedagogical engagements with speculative fiction, is something I aim to foster also in my editorial work in *Fafnir*.

Being in the backstage of production and seeing the issue come to life through the rigorous and collaborative work of the authors and the editors has been the most fulfilling and inspiring aspect of my editorial work with *Fafnir* so far. As a new member of the team, I have also enjoyed (and greatly appreciated) learning from my hardworking colleagues!

EO: How do you see *Fafnir* contributing to the field of speculative fiction research, and what kind of contributions would you like to foster?

MT: *Fafnir*'s pioneering contributions to the expansion of speculative fiction research in Nordic countries and languages are invaluable. Yet, although *Fafnir* is situated in the Nordic context, it receives and publishes submissions from all around the world. I see *Fafnir*'s biggest contribution to the field as its openness to international, interdisciplinary, and innovative perspectives in speculative fiction research. A wide range of scholars working with diverse languages, genres, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks can find a vibrant and welcoming platform for conversation here. As an editor, I would like to foster further contributions to discussions on postcolonial and decolonial approaches to the study of speculative fiction. I would also love to see more submissions that engage with futurisms from a comparative perspective. I hope that authors working on speculative fiction traditions that are underrepresented in Anglophone research environments will feel encouraged to submit their papers to *Fafnir*!

EO: What would you say to someone thinking of submitting an article to *Fafnir*?

MT: Send it along – especially if you have perfectionist tendencies and struggle departing with finished articles! You may want to take a look at the previous issues to see if *Fafnir* is a good fit for your research. We accept submissions that engage with any aspect of speculative fiction and are open to interdisciplinary and intermedial studies. If you are unsure whether your article is a good fit, feel free to contact one of the editors. Rest assured that the editorial team attends to every submission diligently and works closely with authors to ensure the timely completion of the peer review and revision process.

EO: Why do you love speculative fiction?

MT: Speculative fiction is where I can feel at home as a stranger in a strange land. What I appreciate the most about speculative fiction is its capacity to foster ways of being, thinking, and relating to the world that seem paradoxical, contradictory, or impossible. I love the complexity and empathetic depth with which speculative fiction can endow its diverse worlds. Growing up, I was particularly drawn to horror books: I not only enjoyed the company of many ghosts and monsters but also found them to be good teachers. I developed a more focused interest in science fiction later in life and was lucky enough to turn it into one of my research areas. What fascinated me the most about science fiction in my early encounters with the genre was the sense of looking at the future in the face. Although my relationship to science fiction has become more nuanced since starting to study it more critically, time and again I have turned to science fiction simply to find an anchor in this sense of futurity,

particularly in times when even dreaming about the future feels like an impossibility. I love how speculative fiction enchants anticipation and harbors this feeling of an opening by simultaneously stimulating philosophical inquiry, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving.