
Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

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At the foot of the mountain was a river, white and cold and still; and beyond it was a smooth and barren plain, lying silent and lonely in the pale moonlight. But in the distance was seen a circle of flickering flames, ever changing,—now growing brighter, now fading away, and now shining with a dull, cold light, like the glimmer of the glow-worm or the fox-fire. And as Siegfried gazed upon the scene, he saw the dim outline of some hideous monster moving hither and thither, and seeming all the more terrible in the uncertain light.

"It is he!" whispered Regin, and his lips were ashy pale, and his knees trembled beneath him. "It is Fafnir, and he wears the Helmet of Terror! Shall we not go back to the smithy by the great forest, and to the life of ease and safety that may be ours there? Or will you rather dare to go forwards, and meet the Terror in its abode?"

(Baldwin, *The Story of Siegfried*.)

Dear readers, do dare to go forwards, and meet *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*! *Fafnir* enters the scene roaring, not to yield terror, but to boldly take part in topical discussions and debates in the field of science fiction and fantasy research.

Fafnir was founded hand in hand with the FINFAR Society, the society of science fiction and fantasy researchers in Finland. Science fiction and fantasy research has been done in Finland actively for decades, but before the autumn of 2013, there was no official, organized framework for the network and cooperation of science fiction and fantasy researchers besides an annual working seminar. Thus *Fafnir* is the product of a long tradition of close but unofficial networking of Nordic science fiction and fantasy researchers. In this issue, Liisa Rantalaiho recounts the history of FINFAR, a gift from fandom to academia.

Fafnir aims at serving as an international forum for scholarly exchange on science fiction and fantasy and for discussion on current issues on the field. In order to achieve this, the journal introduces and develops research focusing on science fiction and fantasy literature, audiovisual art, games, and fan culture by providing an interdisciplinary perspective into the research within these genres.

In addition to this, one of the objectives of *Fafnir* is to rejuvenate and join up the Nordic field of science fiction and fantasy research. Although *Fafnir* is not limited to Nordic issues and themes, they are regularly addressed in special issues. This first issue of *Fafnir* is a good example of this, as it introduces the proceedings of last summer's FINFAR seminar, held for the 14th time in July 2013.

FINFAR seminars are working seminars, in which mostly master's degree students and doctoral students present papers that are either a part of a future doctoral dissertation, a master's thesis, or a conference paper. During a FINFAR meeting, participants get feedback from both their peers struggling with similar issues and experts on speculative fiction.

Therefore, FINFAR meetings have provided an indispensable networking opportunity to students on science fiction and fantasy in Finland, and hopefully also more and more internationally in the future, as FINFAR meetings are being opened up and advertised more widely. Thanks to FINFAR, Finnish science fiction and fantasy researchers are quite thoroughly networked - even the editors of *Fafnir* have first met each other during a FINFAR meeting. In this issue, Katja Kontturi gives a more thorough account on last summer's seminar in her report on the meeting.

This first issue of *Fafnir* presents four articles that are fruits of the 2013 FINFAR seminar themed "Opposing Forces". All of the articles have been subjected to double-blind peer review process. Articles in this journal have been organised so that their themes range from opposition or resistance towards the so-called mainstream, from Samuel Delany's groundbreaking sf-rhetorics and William Gibson's post-cyberpunk fiction, through scifi fanfiction to J. R. R. Tolkien's poetics, which defined the genre.

In the opening article of this journal, "Opposing Forces and Ethical Judgments in Samuel Delany's *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand*", Päivi Vääänen discusses the rhetorical and narrative strategies that are used to represent and deconstruct ideologies of sexuality, gender, and difference in Delany's novel. Vääänen places a specific focus on the *ethical* positioning of readers. Vääänen sees that by reading their way through the abundance of sexualities and opposing ideologies in the novel, readers can question, and perhaps change, their attitudes towards different aspects of gender, sexuality, and alterity.

Esko Suoranta, in his article "Agents or Pawns? Power Relations in William Gibson's Bigend Trilogy" sets out to explore the issues of agency and power in the so-called Bigend Trilogy, three novels *Pattern Recognition*, *Spook Country*, and *Zero History*. Article focuses on the forms of surveillance, power and its abuse, as well as possibilities of resistance. The focus is also on the contemporary context, the nature of global security apparatuses that have "cast an Orwellian hue on life in the 21st-century".

Hanna-Riikka Roine's article "What is it that Fanfiction Opposes? The Shared and Communal Features of *Firefly/Serenity* Fanfiction" ponders the ways in which the textual conventions and structures of fanfiction writing are connected with promoting and sustaining communality. Roine sees that fanfiction studies ought to put less emphasis on people-centred metaphors such as poachers and nomads. Significantly, as fanfiction activities centre on texts, it is necessary that we analyse the processes of both producing and disseminating stories. This also casts light on why the genres of fantasy and science fiction seem to offer a more fertile ground for fanfiction writers than some other source texts.

In the fourth and last article, "Good and Evil in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Legendarium*: Concerning Dichotomy between Visible and Invisible", Jyrki Korpua explores the complex relationship in Tolkien's fictive world and universe between mortal and immortal existence and imagery of light and shadow, good and evil, and physical and spiritual.

In addition to the articles and the FINFAR report, this issue contains a thought-provoking piece on the relationship between speculative fiction and mainstream literary theory by Dr. Merja Polvinen. Polvinen's "Peeking into the Neighbouring Grove: Speculative Fiction in the Work of Mainstream Scholars" calls for active and open dialogue between researchers and theories of these two fields. Next issue, *Fafnir* 2/2014, will be out in June 2014. Furthermore, we are thrilled to announce that the third issue of *Fafnir* is now open for submissions, see the call for papers at the end of this issue for details.

In the epigraph above, Fafnir the dragon wears "the Helmet of Terror". This very first issue of *Fafnir* challenges its readers to put on their thinking caps instead, and get engaged in the discussion!