



Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

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Winter is coming! Or that is what it feels like here in the northern hemisphere after a delightful and relaxing summer. The coming of winter can also be felt from our issue, since there are two articles focusing on George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and a third article which discusses dragons in Martin's novels (among others). Furthermore, we offer interesting texts on world-building and different angles to fantasy. We are glad to offer you such a thrilling issue!

Stefan Ekman's and Audrey Taylor's article "Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building" aims to contribute to a greater clarity in the critical use of the term *world-building* and, thus, introduces the concept of critical world-building, which is distinguished from other types of world-building, such as that performed by an author or reader. The article presents two possible approaches to critical world-building, based on the functions of a world's building-blocks and how to interpret those functions.

In his article "Dragon-riding: Live and Let Fly", Brendan Sheridan examines the dragon rider as a recurring trope within contemporary fantasy fiction and film. Through the analysis of narrative patterns and the theoretical lens of human-animal studies, he interrogates the relationship between dragon and rider, exploring the power dynamic between the participants.

Diana Marques' article "The Haunted Forest of *A Song of Ice and Fire*: A Space of Otherness" discusses forests and those who dwell in them in George R. R. Martin's novels in relation to Medieval conceptualisations of the forest. In her article, Marques argues that the forest is a space of otherness where the real and the symbolic meet, therefore unveiling the fantastic aspect of the narrative in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

Finally, José Luis de Ramón Ruiz examines the relationship between power and religion in Westeros in his article "Religion and Fantasy: Reexamining the Question of Power in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*". He argues that the conflict of Westeros acquires a religious dimension, as the participants embrace religion as a source of legitimacy to gain power and to support their claims.

In addition to these articles we have an overview on Margaret Weis' fiction by Will Slocombe. This interesting literary biography illuminates the career of "Dragonlance-writer" Weis, who undoubtedly is one of the most successful contemporary fantasy writers despite being seldom critically discussed.

We are also proud to present our editor-in-chief Hanna-Riikka Roine's *lectio praecursoria* "Imaginative, Immersive and Interactive Engagements. The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding in Contemporary Speculative Fiction" that discusses the practices of speculative worldbuilding from the perspectives of both narrative and userly engagements. It is based on Roine's doctoral dissertation, which she defended on August 27, 2016, at the University of Tampere. We, her fellow editors, offer our heartfelt congratulations on behalf of Hanna-Riikka's defense!

In addition to the articles, overview and *lectio praecursoria*, this issue includes a conference report and two literary reviews. Megen de Bruin-Molé's conference report offers us a glimpse of the

topical field of monster studies, as it presents an overview of the conference “The Promises of Monsters” held at the University of Stavanger 28–29 April, 2016. The book review on Jamie Williamson *The Evolution of Modern Fantasy: From Antiquarianism to the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series* by Dennis Wilson Wise complements the fantasy-related themes of this issue, while Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Tanja Välisalo plunge to the contemporary phenomena of transmediality in their review on Colin B. Harvey’s book *Fantastic Transmedia: Narrative, Play and Memory Across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds*.

In this issue, it is also revealed that *Fafnir* is looking for a new editor-in-chief to join Jyrki Korpua and Aino-Kaisa Koistinen in the beginning of 2017. We, the other editors, wish to thank Hanna-Riikka for her meticulous work as an editor during these past years. All the best for your future endeavours! So say we all.