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Editorial 4/2016

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*Fafnir*'s issue 4/2016 is all about comics and animations, inspired by *The Arctic Comics Festival* held in Oulu, Finland (November 3–6, 2016). For this issue, we also have a guest editor, Dr. Katja Kontturi – also known as “The Ducktor” – who defended her PhD dissertation on fantasy and postmodernism in Don Rosa’s Disney comics in 2014.

In his book *Science Fiction Comics: The Illustrated History*, Mike Benton makes a bold claim that “science fiction was ultimately responsible for the future and success of the entire comic book industry” (Benton 4). Though he speaks from the perspective of American comic industry, it is hard to deny the authenticity of his claim. It was, indeed, superheroes of the 1930s such as Superman (1938) and Batman (1939) – characters that can surely be considered *science-fictional*, or at least speculative – who started what we now call the “golden era” of comic books that lasted until the late 1950s in the United States. Comics and science fiction, as well as fantasy, have therefore always walked hand in hand. Together they have experimented on the possibilities of human imagination; and not just through narratives but also by their visual imagery. That’s why it is important to examine speculative fiction through the lense of comics and animation studies. This issue therefore presents analyses on intriguing speculative panels, inviting you to wonder what happens during the gutter (i.e. the space between the panels).

This issue includes four research articles, one essay, three conference reports and one book review. In the first article “Speculative Architectures in Comics”, Francesco-Alessio Ursini examines how comics authors employ architecture as a narrative trope. The article investigates how cities are used as complex narrative environments in order to create speculative fictions. It is argued that comics authors exploit the multimodal nature of comics as well as the potential of architecture to construct complex worlds and narrative structures.

In the second article, “Superhuman Cognitions, Fourth Dimension and Speculative Comics Narrative: Panel Repetition in *Watchmen* and *From Hell*” Oskari Rantala discusses how panel repetition is used to represent superhuman cognition and argues that the comics medium is especially suitable for representing extraordinary cognitions and experiences, as the medium utilizes a narrative form operating on fragmentary visual matter.

Sofia Sjö’s article, “Religious Themes and Characters in Nordic Children’s Fantasy Films: Explorations of ‘Acceptable’ Religion” discusses and analyses four Nordic children’s fantasy films which include religious beings or themes. Sjö argues that the films seem to present religious spheres as unthreatening, but often also as related to the ‘Other’.

Last but not least, our guest editor Katja Kontturi’s article “Science fiction parody in Don Rosa’s ‘Attack of the Hideous Space-Varmints’” offers us an analysis on the Don Rosa comic from a parodic perspective. In doing so, the article focuses on how Rosa uses – and ridicules – traditional science fiction tropes. One of the aims of the article is to suggest that the subgenre of Disney

comics should be more comprehensively introduced to the field of comics studies as a serious research topic.

Reijo Valta's overview, "Koipeliinin matka Suomeen – Miten Rodolphe Töpfferin sarjakuva *Monsieur Cryptogame* muuttui tekijättömäksi *Koipeliini*-kuvasarjaksi", written in Finnish, offers us important inklings on the history of comics in Finland. Valta discusses how Rodolphe Töpffer's early 19<sup>th</sup> century comics, or *proto-comics* (often called *la littérature en estampes*, or "graphic literature"), came to Finland. The overview concentrates on Töpffer's *Monsieur Cryptogame* and how this work was rendered authorless in Finland and published in papers as anonymous "Koipeliini"comics.

We are also proud to present Jari Käkälä's *lectio praecursoria* "The Cowboy Politics of an Enlightened Future: History, Expansionism, and Guardianship in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction". It is based on Käkälä's doctoral dissertation, which he defended on the 9th of September 2016 at the University of Helsinki, Finland. In the *lectio praecursoria*, Käkälä discusses the view of the world that Asimov's work promotes and argues that the idea of building a better future for humanity with the help of science and technology is a key idea in Asimov's fiction.

In addition to the four articles, overview and *lectio praecursoria*, this issue includes a book review and three seminar reports. Minna Siikilä's report offers an overview on the *Uses of Fantasy in Changing Media Landscape* seminar held at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland in October 2016, and Reijo Valta reports on the aforementioned *Arctic Comics Festival*. The review by Essi Varis, however, does not focus merely on one seminar but offers a broader outlook on the year of a comics researcher. Last but not least, Reijo Valta offers a book review on *The Comics of Hergé – When The Lines Are Not So Clear*.

Finally, starting from January 2017 we will have a new editor, Dr. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay from the University of Oslo, Norway. We wish Dr. Chattopadhyay a warm welcome to our editorial team!

## Works cited

Benton, Mike. *Science Fiction Comics: The Illustrated History*. Taylor Publishing Group, 1992.