



Editorial 4/2014

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Dead lonely night and all streets quiet now,
Thin o'er the moon the hindmost cloud swims past
Of that great rack that brought us up the snow;
On earth strange shadows o'er the snow are cast;
Pale stars, bright moon, swift cloud that make heaven so
vast

That earth left silent by the wind of night
Seems shrunken 'neath the grey unmeasured height.
(William Morris: "December", from *The Earthly Paradise*)

December is here and with it the historical first year of our journal *Fafnir* is coming to an end. In many respects, the past year has been a success: for instance, *Fafnir* has received well over 20,000 visitors so far! *Fafnir* will continue its mission to serve as an international forum both for scholarly publishing and for discussion on the issues in the field of science fiction and fantasy. As the editors of the journal, we would like to thank you for this year!

The fourth issue of *Fafnir* once again displays the wide spectrum of speculative fiction and the never-ending imaginativeness of the researchers in our field. These texts are closely connected with genuine problems of our world and contextual fields of experience. This shows that research on speculative fiction is important and that the discussion on these subjects should be encouraged and endorsed.

In his article "Women and Women: Use of Women Types as Rhetorical Techniques in Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and Tepper's *Gate to Women's Country*", William Bowman discusses interpretations of two central works of so-called feminist science fiction: Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and Sheri S. Tepper's *Gate to Women's Country*. Bowman searches for use of women types representing "ideal" female gender roles and their relationship to society. The article is also polemically framed against some of the earlier studies on the subject.

In their overview, "The coldest of all cold monsters: state infliction of infertility", Victor Grech, Clare Vassallo and Ivan Callus discuss an interesting phenomena as they review the intersection of state-induced infertility in the works of science fiction. In the discussion, aspects of eugenics, overpopulation and the quality of the remaining population are confrontationally presented.

Päivi Väättänen's essay "Sun Ra: Myth, Science, and Science Fiction" celebrates the 100th birthday of jazz musician Sun Ra, whose music, poetry, and philosophy contained a myriad of science-fictional elements. Retrospectively named as one of the first Afrofuturists, Sun Ra drew influences from technology and science fiction, as well as African American cultural traditions. Väättänen's essay focuses on those aspects of Sun Ra's life and work that are especially interesting to researchers of speculative fiction, and the sometimes quite personal factors that ignite a researcher's fascination with certain artists and their work.

In his report, “Maps for Further Exploring: Experiences from Helsinki Summer School Course ‘Science Fiction in Literature and Culture’” Jari Käkelä discusses the experiences and challenges of planning and teaching a course on science fiction. The course objective was to provide the students a concise view of the birth of science fiction as a literary genre, its development and its increasingly ambitious themes. In addition to teaching the students, the course was a learning experience also for the teachers. The report is designed to provide ideas for others planning similar courses.

In addition to the article and the overviews, *Fafnir* presents a literary review in Finnish. Jyrki Korpua reviews Juri Nummelin's and Vesa Sisättö's book *Tolkien – elämä ja teokset*, which is the first popular overview on J. R. R. Tolkien's life and literary works. For the forthcoming issues, we do encourage writers to propose texts written in the Nordic languages as well as in English.

Fafnir's first year is over, but our work has just begun. We hope that you have enjoyed this year as much as we have - and that you enjoy this issue at hand. Happy holidays!