



Editorial 1–2/2024

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Welcome to *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*'s 2024 issue 1–2 as we glide into the new year with a fascinating collection of the latest research in speculative fiction for our readers!

Warm thanks to Susan Mandala – expert in stylistics, author of *Language in Science Fiction and Fantasy: The Question of Style*, and founder of Writing Works Consulting, a writing and language consultancy dedicated to helping people achieve more effective writing and critical thinking – for her prefatory, “Science Fiction, The Future, and Now: Some Mid-Life Reflections from a Life-Long Fan.” In it, she follows the threads of speculative fiction woven through her life and reflects on how a genre of imagination nevertheless deeply entwines with the reality we inhabit. While SFF fans may find much in this essay deeply relatable, Mandala also prompts us to ponder how our engagement with emergent, science-fictional technologies shapes our societies and our own psyches.

Taking off from the interconnectedness of science fiction and reality, we fly on to the issue's brace of peer reviewed articles, starting with Juha-Pekka Alarauhio's “Ant Similes in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* – an Analysis of Literary Technologies.” Alarauhio introduces a novel perspective on Tolkien's beloved work by foregrounding the author's innovative usage of epic simile, creating new insight into his repurposing of traditional storytelling devices. Suvi Korpi also takes a language-focused, empirical approach to a classic speculative work in “SF Estrangement in Literary Translation: Translation of Neologies in the Finnish Version of *Dune*,” where she demonstrates the importance of translation strategies to preserving the estrangement that invented words may induce in translated works of science fiction. Then, Faeze Rezaii examines the important issue of environmental agency and trauma in “Ice and Ecotrauma in Isaac Asimov's “*The Martian Way*,” where she analyzes Asimov's depiction of space mining in the novella. Mobilizing the concept of “ecotrauma,” which she defines as the entangled

suffering of the environment and humans, Rezaii argues for the ethical mattering of inorganic matter, such as water.

The issue loops back to Tolkien with Jyrki Korpua's essay on speculative worldbuilding, "From Middle-earth to Duckburg. Worlds of Fantastic Mythmaking and Mythbreaking. On J.R.R. Tolkien's Sub-Creation and Carl Barks' Organic World Building." As not only a chairperson of the board of The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research (*Fafnir's* governing organization), but also Finland's leading Tolkien scholar, Korpua presented this essay as his Guest of Honour speech, a keynote that capped Finncon 2024's academic track in Jyväskylä this July. If you were not able to catch this culmination of two days of stimulating SFF scholarship live, you will definitely want to read it here. In his essay, Korpua draws surprising and thought-provoking connections between the storytelling practices of Tolkien and Barks, two authors especially beloved by Finnish audiences. SF scholars also gathered this summer in Tartu, Estonia, for the SFRA 2024: Transitions conference. *Fafnir's* former Editor-in-Chief, Essi Varis, relays the highlights in her mixed-media "Conference Report on SFRA 2024: Transitions in Tartu, Estonia on May 7–11." Varis weaves the observations she has gathered from the opening speech, keynotes, panels, and a multimedia performance into a tapestry of insights on imagination, linking past speculations to future transitions.

Evgenia Amey and Garrett "Wereyoi" Moore also explore creativity and imagination in environmental worldbuilding in video games and novels. Their "Interview with Nicolas Lietzau: Approaches to Storytelling, Worldbuilding, and Fantasy Geographies in *Enderal* Mod and the *Twelfth World* Novels" dives into the imaginative process from the perspective of a multimedia creator. Rounding out the issue's extra content, Esko Suoranta's lectio praecursoria, "Technonaturalist Speculative Fiction and Literary Affordance," examines how a technonaturalist mode of speculative fiction affords insight into the inherently complex and abstract realities of contemporary capitalism, using poetic features shaped by the material and social structures of capitalism and its technologies.

Finally, our ever-active Reviews Editor, Jari Käkälä brings us no fewer than 10 book reviews. Karl Bell reviews *Space(s) of the Fantastic – A 21st Century Manifesto*, edited by David Punter and C. Bruna Mancini, which demonstrates a variety of ways that literary geography can be applied to the interpretation of fantastic literature. Jeremy Brett reviews Ida Yoshinaga, Sean Guynes, and Gerry Canavan's edited volume, *Uneven Futures: Strategies for Community Survival from Speculative Fiction*, which highlights the imaginative power of speculative fiction to reshape the ways in which we consider the world around us. Ananya Buragohain and Lakshminath Kagyung review *The Evolution of African Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Francesca T. Barbini, a collection of five essays that trace the route of African science fiction's emergence, identify the forces shaping its development, survey readers' expectations, and examine the portrayal of African characters in popular entertainment. Sabina Fazli reviews Mike Ashley's *The Rise of the Cyberzines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Magazines from 1991 to 2020*, an encyclopedic history of science fiction periodicals. Carol Franko reviews John Rosegrant's *Tolkien, Enchantment, and Loss: Steps on the Developmental Journey*, which points to a coupling of enchantment and loss that shapes Tolkien's art. Aino-Kaisa Koistinen reviews Pablo Gómez-Muñoz's *Science*

Fiction Cinema in the Twenty-First Century: Transnational Futures, Cosmopolitan Concerns, which offers a timely analysis of the possibilities and limitations of science fiction cinema to interrogate transnational concerns through the lens of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. C. Palmer-Patel reviews *Gendered Defenders: Marvel's Heroines in Transmedia Spaces*, edited by Bryan J. Carr and Meta G. Carstarphen, a volume packed full of facts and contextual information about the publication histories, character arcs, and media battles of many of Marvel's famous female heroes. Michael Pitts reviews Stephen C. Tobin's *Vision, Technology, and Subjectivity in Mexican Cyberpunk Literature*, which illuminates the centrality and significance of the screen in 1990s–2010s Mexican cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk fiction. Noah Slowik reviews Ross Clare's *Ancient Greece and Rome in Modern Science Fiction: Amazing Antiquity*, which identifies works of science fiction that implement stories and figures from antiquity and examines what such use says about the legacy of classical thought in popular culture. Rounding out the issue, Essi Varis reviews Merja Polvinen's *Self-Reflective Fiction and 4E Cognition*, in which Polvinen demonstrates through speculative fiction examples how literary narratives constitute particular "cognitive environments" for fostering layered effects of fictionality and self-reflection, and how interacting with them can potentially give rise to entirely new ways of thinking.

Here's to a new year of fiery imagination, winged dreams, and hopeful speculations! We hope this issue provides a stimulating start to your 2025 reading. Happy New Year from the lair of Fafnir!

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