



Editorial 1/2025

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research's first issue of 2025 welcomes midsummer with a blazing selection of cutting-edge speculative fiction research, essays, and book reviews.

We extend our special thanks to Marek Oziewicz, Professor of Literacy Education and Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota, for his timely prefatory, “The Cultural Work of Fantasy in the Anthropocene.” Oziewicz gives us a sobering yet hopeful outlook to the grand task fantasy storytelling is called upon to perform in this era of a multitude of global crises with existential stakes. Celebrating the genre’s potential to provide new models and patterns of thinking to counter the ecocidal status quo, he makes a strong case for the importance of fantasy in educating democratic citizens.

The peer-reviewed articles continue weaving the ecocritical thread introduced in the prefatory by addressing questions concerning the rhetoric of solastalgia in the Anthropocene and the role speculative fiction plays in moving beyond anthropocentric environmental discourses. In “‘Attuned to Loss’: Rhetoric of Solastalgia in Richard Powers’ *Bewilderment* and Emmi Itäranta’s *The Moonday Letters*,” Radvilė Musteikytė offers a nuanced comparison of the texts’ key themes and functions, from their Earth-centeredness through to their depiction of environmental crisis. In so doing, Musteikytė applies James Phelan’s rhetorical theory of narrative to examine the ways in which each text invites solastalgia and attunes readers to environmental loss. Moving on to a discussion on anthropocentrism, Peter Melville’s “Ecocritical Perspectives in Naomi Novik’s *Uprooted*” offers an insightful critical reading of the celebrated novel’s environmental themes. Distinguishing between the intertwined concepts of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, Melville interrogates the potential of fantasy to transcend human-centered viewpoints in its depictions of nonhuman perspectives.

The issue’s first essay, “Satire in Egyptian Speculative Fiction: Short Stories as a Borderline Case Study” by researcher and author Emad El-Din

Aysha brings critical attention to an understudied topic in speculative fiction studies. This essay offers a comprehensive survey of the function of satire in contemporary Arabic speculative fiction, focusing on examples of SF short stories by Egyptian authors. Furthermore, Jyrki Korpua's Finnish-language essay, "Hengellisyys J. R. R. Tolkienin fantasiafiktiivisessä: johdatuksesta ja rukouksesta," presents a perspective to the religious undercurrents of Tolkien's oeuvre, exploring the significance of the author's writing to catholic thinking, and especially that of Pope Francis.

The issue's book reviews section, curated by our dedicated Reviews Editor, Jari Käkälä, is packed with an eclectic selection of thirteen insightful reviews. In the area of science fiction research, Paula García-Rodríguez reviews Jesse S. Cohn's *Hot Equations: Science, Fantasy, and the Radical Imagination on a Troubled Planet*, which examines the strategies science fiction, fantasy, and horror works present for both reflecting and resisting contemporary ecological and political crises. Maintaining the ecological focus, M. E. Boothby reviews the collection *Animals and Science Fiction* (edited by Nora Castle and Giulia Champion), which offers diverse perspectives on the role science fictional imaginaries play in shaping conceptions of animality, nonhuman agency, and human-nonhuman relationality. Shifting focus to historical approaches in science fiction studies, Zichuan Gan reviews *Chinese Science Fiction: Concepts, Forms, and Histories* (edited by Mingwei Song, Nathaniel Isaacson, and Hua Li), which provides a comprehensive overview of the genre's development in China while situating Chinese SF within broader global literary trends. Patricia Coloma Peñate reviews another historically informed study, *Black Speculative Feminisms: Memory and Liberated Futures in Black Women's Fiction* by Cassandra L. Jones, who adopts a feminist approach to discuss how Black women authors engage speculative fiction to explore memory as a tool for liberation. Finally, Jaime Segura San Miguel reviews Carroll S. Jordan's *Speculative Whiteness: Science Fiction and the Alt-Right* – a timely study that continues the recent trend of analyzing the alt-right's connections to and (mis)appropriation of science fiction for right-wing ideological purposes.

From recent publications in fantasy research, Maryem Ben Salem reviews *Female Heroes in Young Adult Fantasy Fiction* by Leah Phillips who examines how young female characters in YA fantasy can operate in heroic roles that challenge conventional heroic narratives. In the specific field of Tolkien studies, Paula Lobato Díez reviews *The Romantic Spirit in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (edited by Will Sherwood and Julian Eilmann), which brings together articles exploring the affinities of Tolkien's work with Romanticism. Another review of Tolkien scholarship comes from James Hamby, who reviews Hamish Williams's *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics*, which argues that Tolkien's dialogue with antiquity makes it possible to assess his importance as a utopian thinker amid 20th-century fiction authors. Reviewing a more biographical strand of Tolkien studies, Kristine Larsen discusses the essay collection *Celebrating Tolkien's Legacy* by Nancy Bunting, Seamus Hamill-Keays, and Tody Widdicombe who take a largely biographical-psychological look on the life of Tolkien in relation to his fictional works. Additionally, David A. Brewer reviews Anahit Behrooz's *Mapping Middle-earth: Environmental and Political Narratives in J.R.R. Tolkien's Cartographies*, which explores the political dimensions of Tolkien's maps, arguing that they become more than

illustrations to his stories. Zooming out from Tolkien studies to a broader discussion on contemporary fantasy literature, Robert Finnigan reviews *Imagining the Celtic Past in Modern Fantasy* (edited by Dimitra Fimi and Alistair J.P. Sims), which examines the use of Celtic motifs and traditions in contemporary fantasy literature, from Celtic elements as narrative intrusions to the way they have been commodified in popular culture.

Closing the issue are two reviews of PhD dissertations. Nicholas Wanberg reviews Smita Dhantal's *Identifying Self through Society: A Socio-psychological Perspective of A Song of Ice and Fire*, which takes a novel approach to the analysis of fictional characters, and Smita Dhantal reviews Wanberg's *The Human Race Vs. the Minorities: Racism, anti-racism, and intelligent non-humans in the world architecture of speculative fiction*, which explores new ways of looking at how works may encode racism also on the level of their world-building.

May this midsummer issue be a thought-provoking companion, inviting moments of contemplation, insight, critique, and hope. From the lair of Fafnir, we wish you all happy reading!

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