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We publish academic work on science-fiction and fantasy (SFF) literature, audiovisual art, games, and fan culture. Interdisciplinary perspectives are encouraged. In addition to peer-reviewed academic articles, *Fafnir* invites texts ranging from short overviews, essays, interviews, conference reports, and opinion pieces as well as academic reviews for books and dissertations on any suitable SFF subject. Our journal provides an international forum for scholarly discussions on science fiction and fantasy, including current debates within the field.

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

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Editorial 4/2014

Jyrki Korpua, Hanna-Riikka Roine & Päivi Väätänen

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 Väätänen'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. Väätänen'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!

Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

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

Abstract: In this article, I argue both Margaret Atwood in Handmaid's Tale *and Sheri S. Tepper in* Gate to Women's Country *use the same three 'women type' characters to explore ideal female gender roles and their relationship to society. Further, I argue that both authors use these characters as part of their bigger rhetorical engagement with the American gender essentialist political movements of 1980s. In particular, I argue that Atwood's types, despite her empathy with the feminist movement, distance her from both radical second-wave separatist feminism and the American religio-political conservative movement of the 80s, and, against Dopp, that Offred does in fact offer an effective ideal female to be emulated in that, by the end of the novel, she defines and externalizes her self. On the other hand, for Tepper I argue, against Pierson, that Gate is not intrinsically anti-sexual but rather anti-romanticism, sexuality—homosexual and otherwise–only the unfortunate collateral damage, and, further, that Tepper's women types align her much closer to the essentialism of second- and third-wave feminism than Atwood.*

Biography and contact info:William Bowman is an undergraduate English and film production student at Eastern Oregon University.

"There are women and there are women, aren't there? There's Morgot and there's Myra, for example."
(Joshua in Sheri S. Tepper'sGate to Women's Country)

In Sheri S. Tepper's novel *Gate to Women's Country,* when Joshua says there's women and women, what he *really* means is that there's women and there's *women*. Good women and not so good women. Women with virtues beneficial to society and women with traits, well, not so much. There are saints and sluts. Yins and yangs.Nuns and succubae.Cains and Abels, except with pairs of two X chromosomes. Or so men have been saying for thousands of years.

However, today the voices speaking in regard to female gender roles are not all baritone. Two examples of feminist speculative fiction of the late 1980s—Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's*

Tale (1985) and Sheri S. Tepper's *Gate to Women's Country* (1988) —are perfect examples of *women* writers using these types to explore a range of feminine gender roles. Both novels use what I call the *pathetic woman,* the *heroic woman*, and the *enlightened woman* to explore "the complex interconnection of individual and societal identity" and "women's ability to actively construct their places in a social space—either in complicity with existing forms, or in resistance to them" (Wagner-Lawlor "Play"114 and 117).

Dopp in "Subject-Position as Victim-Position in The Handmaid's Tale" notes Offred's stagnancy in relation to victim positions across the narrative (2). Atwood's victim positions are as follows:

Position 1 - To deny your victimization.

Position 2 - To acknowledge your victimization but attribute it to irresistible powers or Powers.

Position 3 - To acknowledge your victimization but to believe in and desire its escapability.

Position 4 - To escape victimization and use creative acts to resist it for yourself and others. (Survival 36-39)

In particular, regarding *Handmaid's Tale*, I argue against Dopp that, despite Offred's timid stagnancy in Victim Position Two, *Handmaid's Tale* still functions as an effective feminist critique in its call for women to possess, define, and externalize their selves. And for *Gate to Women's Country*, I argue, against Pearson, that Tepper uses these women types not to reject sexuality, queer or otherwise, but women's romanticism, as can be deduced from the women types and their relation to each other and Women's Country as a whole.

A Ternion of Women Types

Though it is unlikely each was aware of the other's novels when writing their own, both Tepper and Atwood use the same three women types as part of their respective novels' rhetorical techniques.

First, the *enlightened woman,* the protagonist in both novels, is a woman who has become, or has always been, disillusioned regarding the artificiality of her society's asserted gender roles. The enlightened woman understands the performativity of her external acts, her societal self, required to survive and function in society. As such, she retains a conscious second real self, as Wagner-Lawlor puts it, "a sort of ironical double consciousness," which "thereby initiate[s] a resistance to [her] (en)forced invisibility" ("Play" 116). She is a woman who has become "keenly aware of [her] own theatricality" ("Play" 114) and thus resists the asserted roles internally, externally, or both. The dynamic and conflict between these two selves, the personal and societal, constitutes her primary internal conflict, and the final relationship between the two constitutes, in the two novels, the ideal relationship between a woman's personal and societal self.

The *heroic woman*, however, has already made this transition, in certain ways, and in each story, the enlightened woman idolizes and respects many of her character traits and wants to emulate her, though the enlightened woman's own timidity or rebelliousness hinders her from doing so. She is a masculinized woman, a woman with confidence, knowledge, and power. Because of this, she inevitably comes into conflict with the other masculine entities in the novels: the patriarchal, oppressive society. She both hates and is hated by it, or at least what it represents, and is singularly purposed to escape or eliminate it. She is, at least in part, juxtaposed against the pathetic woman at one end on the spectrum along which the enlightened woman transitions.

And last, directly opposite to the heroic woman, the *pathetic woman* has, unlike the enlightened woman and heroic woman, defined herself in congruence with the essentialist gender roles of the oppressive patriarchal society, roles that attribute a biologically consistent set of behaviors to women and provide a convenient means by which patriarchal society can establish male power as natural at women's expense. The pathetic woman is, as Mary Wollstonecraft terms it in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, a masquerading woman, a woman completely immersed in the artificial gender roles, an "unselfconscious woman who is unaware she is losing herself" to the oppressive society's roles and expectations. Her satisfaction and fulfillment comes singularly from fulfilling these expectations and "being chosen as an object of consumption of desire by masculine subjects" (Wollstonecraft 111). Because of this, the patriarchy approves of the pathetic woman, her fellows dislike her, the heroic woman attempts her succor, but *all* pity her. Her characterization and fate symbolize the practical results of the particular gender roles she adopts and the results of adopting essentialist gender roles as a whole.Will the Real Woman Please Stand Up? The 1970s and 80s American Battle for True Womanhood

Both novels are written in relation to several American gender-essentialist political movements between the 1960s and 80s. Around 1960, first-wave feminism birthed second-wave. Whereas first-wave feminism addressed primarily women's suffrage, labor laws, and women's place in the workplace and post-war society, second-wave, among other issues, focused mainly on women's sexuality, family, and reproductive rights. While the various feminisms within the second wave ostensibly resisted the essentialist gender roles of the post-war period, many espoused liberated roles problematic for their own essentialism. For example, in 1960, Simone de Beauvoir wrote her seminal history of the oppression of women's sexuality by men, *The Second Sex,* and, in the process, defined a radically different, but equally essentialist, set of ideal women's gender roles.

> The emancipated woman... refuses to confine herself to her role as female, because she will not accept mutilation; woman is a complete individual, equal to the male, only if she too is a human being with her [liberated] sexuality (de Beauvoir 682).

Though de Beauvoir does not reject heterosexuality outright, true femininity, true womanhood, necessarily involves a liberated sexuality, a sexuality hitherto "mutilated" in the "age long sex-limitation by men" (de Beauvoir 694), a sexuality hitherto constrained to the institution of heterosexual marriage. Only when this sexuality is liberated—unshackled from the oppressive conservative institutions regulating it—does a woman realize true womanhood. In this, de Beauvoir seeks to liberate women from the largely conservative essentialist gender roles of pre-1960. But while her roles radically oppose any previous, they remain essentialist, asserting liberated sexuality as natural and a pseudo or incomplete status on any woman remaining, by choice or necessity, in a non-liberated sexual relationship. Any women who choose to remain in monogamous, heterosexual marriages are slaves and enablers of the patriarchal institutions that have repressed women for thousands of years.

In America, the urge to essentialize a liberated sexuality resulted in two decades of a hyper-sexualized, anti-marriage feminism, two decades of women who "wanted a sexuality of their own, disconnected from obligations of marriage and motherhood" (Krolokke and Sorenson 10). In literature, long tracts like *Against our Will,* exploring rape and sexual violence against women, were stacked in feminist bookstores next to women's ideology like *Feminine Mystique* and *The BITCH Manifesto*. In *Les Guérillères,* sexually liberated women violently destroy "the man, the enemy.., the domineering oppressors," and married woman is "a chained dog… [who] rarely taste the delights of love" (108). And in concurrence with "the personal is the political," no issue of women's sexuality was ever restricted to the individual sphere. Picket signs in the streets, bra and bikini-babe

magazine bonfires, and all-women rap groups were the flavor for the following 20 years. In the 80s, toward the end of the movement, the sex wars, battles between the sex positive (pro-pornography) and anti-porn feminists, turned feminists against one another, and radical female separatists virulently attempted to assert their own essentialist gender roles politically, forming an invasive gender-essentialist positivist political institution in their own right.

But by the mid-80s, as Susan Faludi notes, even as American women arrived closer than they had ever been to full equality, a full-scale backlash was in effect by both American conservative groups and progressive feminists. Betty Friedan took a stand against the hyper-sexualism of second-wave feminism in her book *The Second Stage*.

> In the first stage, the woman's movement directed too much of its energy into sexual politics, from personal bedroom wars against men, to mass marches against rape or pornography, to "take back the night." Sexual war is a self-defeating acting out of rage. It does not change the condition of our lives (202).

Friedan called for a reorientation of political feminism away from sexuality toward women's growing social and economic concerns. As women now occupied a larger part of the workforce, now had jobs, owned—in addition to cribs and baby-bottles—cars, careers, and bank accounts, men and married women were no longer the enemy, if they ever were. Poverty and class disparity took forefront concern. In Friedan's progressive feminism, sexuality was no longer the central issue but rather economy.

But these recantations and reconsiderations were, in some aspects, too little, too late. The virulent rhetoric, extreme sexualism and essentialist roles of American separatist feminism were, in the minds of conservative Americans, the dogma of *all* feminism and *all* other modern women's liberation movements, and many male and female conservatives wanted nothing to do with it.

Parallel to this, in the late 70s Jerry Falwell saw the decay of the nation's morality and founded the Moral Majority. Other groups such as the Christian Voice, Focus on the Family and The Family Research Coalition were founded near the same time. Falwell rallied his four-million-member Moral Majority and its two million donors in an "idealized version of America, a Christian nation commissioned by God to prevail in the battle against evil" (Tenbus 7) and saw in Reagan a leader for this new religio-political institution. The Moral Majority used direct-mail campaigns, hot lines, and television and radio broadcasts to call for resistance to second-wave feminism and the whole "liberal establishment," promoting censorship of "anti-family" media, opposing the ERA and abortion, and calling for governmental evangelism. Eager to politically declare their gender ideologies, Falwell sought to "unite God and country," asserting that to support abortion, the ERA, alternative gender roles, or homosexuality was both "anti-American and blasphemous" (Tenbus 7). According to Faludi, the New Right's attack on women, a means to simultaneously stage and combat their own sense of emasculation, became the vehicle by which the Moral Majority propelled themselves to political power (237).

Intrinsic to this American conservative movement was deep-seated Christian family-centrism and the biblical essentialist gender role of woman as child bearer. Biblically, as early as Genesis 29-30, children are seen as a blessing from God to righteous women. David writes in the Psalms, the Lord "settles the barren woman her home as a happy mother of children" (Psa 113:9). Sons are a "heritage, reward, blessing, and security to a man" (Psa 127:3-5), and it is the responsibility of women to bear them for their husbands, propagating the tribe of Israel, actualizing God's promise to become a nation more numerous than the visible stars (Genesis 15:2-5). Into the New Testament, Paul, who viewed the Christian church as the continuation/actualization of the Jewish people, writes that Christian women will also be "saved by childbearing" if they continue in

the faith. Biblically, God's covenant is a covenant of children, and it is the responsibility of women to help realize it through motherhood. And feeling the pressure of second-wave separatist feminism to dismantle this scriptural set of family and gender roles, many, though not all, conservative men and women pushed strongly for a return to "traditional values." Helen Andelin's book *Fascinating Womanhood*, a book which promoted husband as leader and woman as helper, the supposed filial structure of a bygone American halcyon age, sold thousands of copies. And even many women who rejected Andelin's ideal Christianized gender roles as eerily reticent of the *Stepford Wives* feared and resisted separatist feminism's devaluing of women as homemaker and mother, roles in which many found value and satisfaction, even those who supported greater economic and social freedoms for women (Trowbridge). Harvard-educated attorney Phyllis Schlafly, for example, saw the ERA as a threat to women's right to be homemakers supported by men (Faludi 239). All in all, by the late 1980s, both American conservatism and second-wave separatist feminism had become equally politically essentialist, asserting in direct contrast to each other their own monolithic "true" female gender roles and ideal selves. And it is in relation to these two gender-essentialist movements that Atwood's and Tepper's novels and women types can be understood.

What's In a Name? Atwood's Use of Women Types in Handmaid's Tale

Janine

Janine is the pathetic woman in *Handmaid's Tale*, and she's characterized as the Moral Majority essentialist woman: woman as child bearer. As Tenbus notes, the biblical gender role of woman as child bearer is "palimpsestuous" to Gilead: "Instead of breasts, Gilead sees wombs. Objectifying women, fragmenting the Handmaid's whole being..., Gilead enacts a kind of pornographic behavior without the pictures" (258). Suppressing her pre-convulsion self as a waiter, Janine embraces these hyperbolized biblical gender roles, and *only* these roles, embracing the ceremonies and duties required by them and finding her satisfaction in their completion. St. Paul is echoed by Offred when she calls Janine "a flag on a hilltop, showing us what still can be done: we too can be saved" (26-27). Offred describes Janine during pregnancy as "glowing, rosy, ...enjoying every minute of this" (26). She throws herself into the Testifying and finds pride in telling the stories of her rape and abortion, blaming herself for them (71). She is the "classic victim figure" (Howells 98), a woman utterly ignorant of her own victimization, and remains in Atwood's Victim Position 1 throughout the novel.

Because of this, different women in the novel view Janine in different ways. The aunts and commanders' wives condescendingly objectify and baby her: "You're a reliable girl, not like some of the other girls" (129). Janine disgusts Moira, though Moira still tries to help her snap out of her stupor. Offred and the other Handmaids simultaneously loathe and envy her, but mostly loathe. At the Testifying, Offred describes her as having

> A red face and a dripping nose.Her hair dull blond, her eyelashes so light they seem not there, the lost eyelashes of someone who'd been in a fire.Burned eyes. She looked disgusting: weak, squirmy, blotchy, pink, like a newborn mouse. None of us wanted to look like that, ever (Atwood 72).

Janine looks disgusting, pathetic, and traumatized. She is unappealing and has no more power than a small, pink newborn rodent. Elsewhere, Offred describes Janine as a dog kicked too many times. Janine speaks "tonelessly, in her transparent voice, her voice of a raw egg white" and feels guilty when she had done nothing wrong. Offred describes Janine as "that whiny bitch Janine" and "sucky

Janine" (Atwood 129), mentioning how Janine cries during prayer and at night, noisier than all the rest. Even the commanders' wives pity her. "A strong girl, good muscles," they say. "Would you like a cookie, dear?" (115) In her desperation to fulfill Gilead's roles, Janine is seen as pitiful by every woman who relates to her, even those within Gilead's power structure. Janine is a pathetic, whiney excuse of a woman, a woman so utterly obsessed with winning her salvation though the fulfillment of patriarchal, oppressive gender roles that she is willing to sacrifice her freedom and self to do it.

And in the end, Janine's suppression of her old self and adoption of the roles result in a mental breakdown and non-conscious resurgence of that past self:

> Moira took Janine by the shoulder and shook her. Snap out of it Janine, she said roughly…
> Janine smiled. You have a nice day, now, she said.
> Moira slapped her across the face, twice, back and forth. Get back here, she said. Get right
> back here! You can't stay *there*, you aren't *there* anymore. That's all gone (216).

Janine's pre-Gilead self has been so repressed that, when her baby dies and her Gilead self is traumatized, her past self resurfaces in a mental break. When Janine's baby dies, her self temporarily aborts with it, leaving her without a center, causing the resurgence—not a healthy one —of her repressed past self in a mentally unstable state. And despite Moira's attempts to help Janine, later, after the Particicution, Janine breaks completely:

> There's a smear of blood across her cheek, and more of it on the white of her headdress.
> She's smiling, a bright diminutive smile. Her eyes have come loose.
>
> "Hi there," she says. "How are you doing?..."
>
> "Janine," I say. But she's let go, totally now, she's in free fall, she's in withdrawal (280-81).

In this is the greatest danger of essentialist roles; namely, any woman failing or unable to fulfill the roles ceases to exist, not only as a woman but as a person as well. In Gilead, "if the woman refuses the identity ascribed, she becomes a nonperson, a nothing. [Janine] is a baby maker, procreator, womb vessel. Failing this, she is nothing in the eyes of the Gilead system" (Raschke 259). When Janine fails to fulfill Gilead's gender roles, she ceases to be a woman, to have a self, in Gilead's eyes and, more destructively, her own. Without a self-identity outside those asserted, she ceases to be an entity, and with her self-definition goes her ability to function. Janine's fate shows the possible dangers of women's suppressing their selves and adopting essentialist gender roles and is a direct attack on the particular roles associated with the American conservative movement of the 1980s.

Moira

Directly opposed to Janine is Moira, the heroic woman in *Handmaid's Tale*. If Janine is the essentialist Moral Majority woman, Moira is characterized as the essential woman of second-wave separatist feminism. Offred first remembers her, along with Offred's own mother, in the chapter when she possesses her nights, alluding to the famous second-wave mantra "take back the night." Moira is characterized as a badass: in Offred's first memory, her legs are crossed, she has an earring and gold fingernails, smokes, and craves a beer (37). She repairs her own car, at least in minor ways, always means what she says (131), and calls men a social disease (172). She is a masculine entity, a woman who desires control and power over herself, a woman, according to Offred, who subverts Gilead's power structures: "In light of Moira, the Aunts were less fearsome and more

absurd. Their power had a flaw to it" (133). Moira is the "typical feminist separatist" (Howells 98), and her choice to "prefer women" for the equal power dynamic of homosexual sex links her directly back to the Beauvoirian liberated woman:

> The woman who achieves virile independence has the great privilege of carrying on her sexual life with an individual who are themselves autonomous and effective in action, who —as a rule—will not play a parasitic role in her life (Beauvoir 695).

Moira has liberated her mind, sexuality, and person from the illusion of patriarchy. She does what she wants in her sexual life, is tied down to no one sexual partner, especially male, and guards her autonomy closely. She is the essentialist woman of late second-wave separatist feminism, the Beauvoirian ideal woman.

Because of these character traits, Offred idealizes Moira, reflecting the common female attitude toward the second-wave separatist feminism in the 1970s and 80s. Offred says she feels "ridiculously happy" with Moira (73) and feels safer when she is around. Moira is always "braver" and "more logical" than Offred and, thus, throughout the book, Offred has a bad case of *What Would Moira Do?* She constantly asks herself what Moira's course of action would be and tries to ape it, though her timidity hinders her more often than not. "Moira was our fantasy," says Offred, implying her idolization of the cigarette smoking, lesbian, hyper-masculinized Beauvoirian ideal woman, lustful for power, sexually liberated, and free to become a, supposedly, real woman, an idolization shared by many American women at the time of *Handmaid Tale's* publication.

But despite this idolization, Moira's fate warns of the dangers of adopting the equally essentialist gender roles proposed by second-wave separatist feminism while simultaneously expressing Atwood's deep sympathy for it. As Tolan notes, Jezebel's is a concrete realization of radical feminist desires and social ideals as represented by Moira's desires because it apes many late 1980s feminist ideals of communal living and shared labor ("Feminist" 23). Moira calls Jezebel's "Butch paradise" (249), an all-woman community, a place where many of her separatist feminist desires are actualized. Near every juncture, Moira craves substances (37, 56, 73), a liberty hitherto denied most conservative "ladies," and now she is allowed all she wants (249). She has successfully taken back the night, works late hours, and is afforded all the power-equal without children, marriage and obligations she wants.

But though many of Moira's desires have become a reality at Jezebel's, this hardly makes her free. Jezebel's is a prison, and Moira is little more than a sex slave. Offred says Jezebel's is "like a masquerade party "(235) and "a stage play, a musical comedy" (236). "A movie about the past is not the same as the past," (235) Offred says, meaning that, though Jezebel's recreates certain two-dimensional, flat "freedoms" of pre-Gilead society, it fails to recreate real freedom.

And in Moira's capitulation to Jezebel's, readers see Atwood's love-hate relationship with second-wave separatist feminism. When given the choice of slavery in Jezebel's or death in the colonies, Moira chooses slavery in Jezebel's. In this, like Offred, readers both condemn and sympathize with her. Offred says she is "dressed absurdly" in uncomfortable, government-issued outfits she never would have chosen for herself. Offred says, "I don't want her to be like me. Give in. Go along" (249). But when confronted about her compromises, Moira rationalizes them away, saying Jezebel's is "not that bad," citing the many benefits she is afforded: face cream, food, substances, and free sex. Despite Moira's vehement desire to escape Gilead's oppression, when all else fails, she surrenders to the oppressive regime, gives up true freedom for fake freedom, freedom that, while it affords her satisfaction in her gender roles and many surface-level desires, refuses her the ultimate freedom, freedom of self-definition and choice, her urge for liberty or death deadened by Gilead's brutal power and softened by their gender-role allowances. Exhausted Moira sells her

true freedom for false freedom. Moira's surrender—judging by Atwood's personification of her as radical second-wave feminist—though forced, reveals essentialist movements, even second-wave separatist feminism, as movements concerned not with real freedom but only about the particular definitions asserted as "true" and "essential" and often willing to subvert this realfreedom for the particulars considered to be essential to womanhood.

But simultaneously, Moira's "choice" is not a choice, and we know it. Moira's initial decision between Jezebel's and the Colonies is not really a choice: "no one but a nun would pick the Colonies," she says (249), and Moira certainly is not pious. And as Moira herself notes, now that she is in Jezebel's, "nobody gets out of here except in a black van" (242). There is choice, but there is no choice. And so, like Offred, readers sympathize with Moira's capitulation, understanding the tragedy and brutal inevitability of selling her freedoms for the false-freedoms afforded by Jezebel's. The power of the symbolic Gilead is irresistible, hinting back to the immense power of the American conservative movement of the 1980s. And so, in Moira, readers, one, experience the brutal power of patriarchy and Atwood's prognostication of a hyper-conservative regime. And two, we see Atwood's response to second-wave separatist feminism, a movement that, despite its laudable resistance to conservative essentialist gender roles, and Atwood's sympathy with them for this, has missed the root of oppression, mistaking it for the particular gender roles rather than the essentialism behind them. Separatist feminism is not concerned with real freedom of self-definition but only with changing the roles seen as ideal. "Have they chosen it?" Offred asks about the women in Jezebel's (235), a question that could be the nutgraf of Atwood's entire novel. The question of women's freedom of self is not the particular definition, as is represented by Moira's and Janine's fates, but the choice and freedom of self-definition, the freedom explored in Offred's transition from self-internalization to self-definition and –externalization, Atwood's ideal relationship between women's personal and societal selves.

Offred

As opposed to the essentialist Moira and Janine, Offred, the enlightened woman in *Handmaid's Tale*, is a hodgepodge of conservative and liberal traits. In pre-Gilead society, on the one hand, she had a job, held a bank account, smoked cigarettes, and had a college education. On the other hand, she married Nick, birthed a daughter—whom she loved dearly—read *Vogue*, used face cream, and, though she questions the rituals of Gilead, practiced spirituality. Offred "highlights the paradoxes and dilemmas of contemporary feminism" (Howells 98) in that her self comprises conservative and liberal traits, elements, and attributes, and she claims allegiance to no institution. She is a muddled, synchronistic self, a much more realistic picture of a typical 1980s young woman than Janine or Moira, not a radical feminist or good church woman but one who has incorporated elements of both, a woman caught between the poles of liberalism and conservatism, warring to define the ideal female self while she swims somewhere in between.

But when Gilead takes over, all facets of Offred's self not in congruence with the regime's essentialist definitions are suppressed. She becomes, externally, a Handmaid, a child bearer, although, unlike Janine, she never loses consciousness of her pre-Gilead self, despite all Gilead's attempts at brainwashing. Offred's "enlightenment" is her understanding of this real self, that synchronistic and muddled internal self, versus the artificial societal self she externalizes. "I compose myself," she says. "My self is a now a thing I must compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present now is a made thing, not something born" (66). Offred's external acts are not in congruence with her real self; she knows this but must perform the acts anyway to survive. In the

past, she never looked good in red, listened at closed doors, or liked small talk, but she finds herself doing all these things as a part of Gilead's society (9-11). She sees herself as "some fairy-tale figure" (9), a caricature of womanhood. Gilead's real oppression is of Offred's self-expression, her external manifestations of her internal self. Though she must compose herself, Offred, unlike Janine, never loses the consciousness that it *is* a composed self, not a real self, an agonizing enlightenment but an important one nonetheless. This consciousness is the seed which grows into the sapling of self-expression she cultivates and nourishes through the novel.

This plant begins small, dissatisfaction resulting from Offred's enlightenment. "We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, this talent for insatiability?" (3-4). Though she says her desire is for the future, Offred's real desire is for the past, or a future reminiscent of the past, a future where she can, again, express herself. She still sees the past as "normal" and Gilead's society as abnormal and salivates for things of her life before her oppression. The smell of nail polish makes her "hungry" (29), she is "ravenous for news" (20), and she says she "hunger[s] to commit the act of touch" (11). Her palate is slaked only by experiences and freedoms from the past world, though she knows the future to be the only possible place for their return. She retains a deep dissatisfaction with her gender roles that serves as the impetus for her later self-externalization.

Initially, though, Offred is too terrified to externalize these facets of her self. "There's a lot that doesn't bear thinking about," she says. "Thinking can hurt your chances, and I intend to last" (8). Her only initial concern is survival, and she "can't take chances" (19) which may jeopardize this; thus, she continues performing. "I stand on the corner, pretending I am a tree" (19).

However, small apparent holes in Gilead's system cultivate hope for Offred and give her courage to perform small acts of subversion:

> The cigarettes must have been from the black market, I thought, and this gave me hope.
> Even now there's no real money any more, there's still a black market. There's always a
> black market, there's always something that can be exchanged (14).

Small pockets of resistance reveal chinks in Gilead's system and give Offred hope for a future without it. As a result, she begins small acts of subversion. She imagines caressing the guardian's face, her hips swaying as she walks away (22). She redefines words like "egg" and "God," words and ideas central to Gilead's monolithic stranglehold on language and definitions. She begins telling stories, small ones at first, of pre-Gilead experiences, small paragraph-length memories of gardening (12), watching Serena Joy on television (16), the way men caress good cars (17), long romantic walks with Luke (23), and the "undone women" Kathryn Hepburn and Lauren Bacall (25). Each of these internal acts is an "event, a small defiance of a rule, so small as to be undetectable… possibilities, tiny peepholes" (21), peepholes into the possibility of a past-like future in the absence of Gilead. Though she is too terrified to self-externalize, these peepholes feed her dissatisfaction and increase her internal (literal) *self*-confidence, her surety of herself in regards to her pre-Gilead experiences and roles.

Soon, as Offred's confidence increases, these internal acts become longer, more subversive, and manifest externally, simultaneously feeding her internal reflections, her memories increasing in length and reflexivity, resulting in a slowly rising, self-fueling cyclone of memory, desire, and possession. "The night is mine, my own, to do with as I will," (39) she says, and just following this possession of the night, she has her first long memory, one of Moira and her own mother, the novel's two feminists. Then she possesses her room: "My room, then. There has to be some place I call my own, even in this time" (50). And her possession of this "escape route into the spaces of private memory" (Howells 99) prompts a two-page recollection of her and Luke's hotel-room trysts. "I would like to steal something from this room. I would like to take some small thing, the scrolled

ashtray, the little silver pillbox from the mantel perhaps, or a dried flower… It would make me feel like I have power" (80-81).Offred's possessive acts feed and are fed by her internal reflections, culminating, finally, in her desiring woman's ultimate subversive possession from her Commander:

> "What would you like," he says…
>
> "I would like… I would like to know…"
>
> "Know what?" he asks.
>
> "Whatever there is to know." (188)

Offred desires knowledge, the desire that resulted in the primal pair's excommunication from Eden. It is the ultimate symbol of rejection of a patriarchal authority, the triumph of desire over authority. In this, she reaches near the climax of her possessiveness, the result of her turgid confidence, though she is still conflicted inside: "Maybe I don't really want to know what's going on. Maybe I'd rather not know. Maybe I couldn't bear to know" (195). Following this, her memories become long, emotionally charged, and extremely reflexive. And after a long memory of Luke, she finally manifests her internal self externally through emotion:

> I wipe my sleeve across my face. Once, I wouldn't have done that, for fear of smearing, but now nothing comes off. Whatever expression is there, unseen by me, is real. (227)

Desires, memories and emotions are means by which Offred accesses and externalizes her past life, a life in which her self was self-defined and freely externalized. As the novel progresses, though she remains in Victim Position 2, slowly this externalization increases. Slowly but surely, she defines, through memory, her past self—who she was, what she believed, what she desired, and how she acted—and externalizes it though her small acts of possession in the present world, hinting toward the real essence of freedom in Atwood's view as seen in the pre-Gilead society:

> If you don't like it, change it, we said, to each other and ourselves. And so we would change the man, for another one. Change, we were sure, was for the better always. We were revisionists; what we revised was ourselves… We were free to shape and reshape forever the ever expanding perimeter of our lives. (227)

This freedom, the freedom of self-definition and externalization—not "love," not cigarettes, not particular gender roles—is the real freedom oppressed by Gilead, the lost ideal of pre-Gilead society. Change was not always for the better, and certainly there were better choices of self-attributes and roles than others, but women were free to choose for themselves, for the good or bad, to make a name and a self for themselves:

> I want to be held and told my name. I want to be valued, in ways that I am not; I want to be more than valuable. I repeat my former name, remind myself what I could do, how others saw me (97).

Offred tells her name to Nick in the finale, culminating her self-externalization. Her name represents the myriad oppressed facets of herself, liberal and conservative, traditional and feminist, oppressed in Gilead's reduction of her to her role as a handmaid. According to Atwood, it is her "secret sign of her own identity," a "guarantee of her hopes of a different future" (Atwood). By telling it to Nick, she externalizes herself as a person, not just as a Handmaid, a role, a categorized childbearing mass of flesh. This act is not, as Dopp says, "just another emblem for the determination of political relations by sexual instincts" or a symbol of women's concerns again "betrayed by women's own insatiable duplicitous desire" (Dopp 8) but the ultimate act of Offred's

self-externalization and resistance to Gilead or Moira's reduction of her to a single role as child bearer or "liberated" woman.

Dopp has noted, along with Atwood herself, Offred's stagnancy in relation to victim positions across the narrative: from beginning to end, she stays in position 2 (Dopp 2). Dopp, in her article "Subject Position as Victim Position," argues that for lack of ideal subversive roles models, female role models which achieve and remain in Victim Position 3, and also the lack of hints to create critical distance between Offred and the reader, *Handmaid's Tale* fails to function as an effective or satisfactory feminist critique. Because Janine, Moira, and Offred, not to mention the plethora of other women in the story, all fail in one way or another to subvert the various patriarchal institutions which oppress them, the novel ends little better than a dystopic jeremiad about women's continued oppression at the hands of patriarchal, chauvinistic institutions.

But Dopp has missed the point. Though Offred remains surely in Victim Position 2, she *does* transition—though not in Victim Position—from internalization to externalization of the self. She defines, possesses, and finally externalizes her self and in this represents Atwood's ideal relationship between society and the individual woman: an ideal society is one in which the latter is afforded and protected in her freedom of self-expression. Offred's heroic act, Atwood's critique of the 1980s essentialist institutions, is her self-expression in a society which tries to oppress it. In *Handmaid's Tale,* Offred expresses her self, not her self as defined by Gilead, not her self as defined by Moira, but her own self-defined desires and acts, her own person, her name. In this transition, Atwood not only rejects the American essentialist political institutions of second-wave feminism and the conservative majority but also calls for women to reject *any* institution which reduces them to and attempts to enforce its own externally-defined self. Offred's courage and transition emulate this, and in this, contrary to Dopp's assertion, women can find a role model in the tale to emulate.

Gate to Women's Country: Sheri S. Tepper's Passionate Polemical against Romanticism

> "The behavior of women in Gate, although it is not generally passive, is certainly muddle-headed when it comes to sex."
> Wendy Pearson

While the behavior of Tepper's women in *Gate to Women's Country* is *certainly* muddle-headed, in Wendy Pearson's scholarly witch hunt to expose Tepper for the homophobe that she is, Pearson has, in typical feminist form, over-sexualized it. In her interpretation of *Gate To Women's Country* as "a kind of working out of the American ethos of homophobia" (220), a novel in which "there is far too much collateral damage..., and the major victim is the queer" (218), Pearson misses the least common denominator of Tepper's *real* target for extermination: the thing underlying sexuality in males *and* females, heterosexuals and homosexuals, and hyper-masculinity and hyper-femininity as well: romanticism. Contrary to what Pearson asserts, Tepper uses *Gate to Women's Country* not to reject sexuality, but to reject *romanticism*, the idealistic worldview that clings to chivalric understandings of love and war. Instead, Tepper's novel calls for both male and female self-suppression of the romantic impulse, affirming, in its place, a cold, brutal realism as practical for both personal and societal progress. This rejection and affirmation can be seen in the characterizations, transitions, and fates of the women types and their relation to Tepper's own personal philosophy.

In *Gate to Women's Country*, men and women are born with the capability for both romanticism—i.e., feeling-based seeing things how they ought to be or in their ideal form—and realism—i.e., reason-based seeing things and people honestly and realistically—but always the

biological predilection for the former. This predilection, however, manifests in different "modes of behavior," as Pearson calls them, specific to males and females (Pearson 210). Male romanticism can be seen in the warriors and Chernon, in their hyper-masculine gender roles, in their obsession with honor and glory, resulting in violence toward each other and, more unforgivably, toward women and children. Female romanticism, on the other hand, manifests in misplaced love of these oppressors and hyper-emotionalism, resulting in seemingly illogical self-abnegation and slavery by these oppressive patriarchal authorities. And Tepper uses the characterization and fates of the novel's three women types to reject this romanticism and affirms realism, its opposite.

Myra

In *Gate to Women's Country*, Myra is the pathetic woman, the woman who is ruled by her romanticism. Parallel to Chernon (the purely-romantic masculine character in the novel) and opposite to Morgot, Myra acts entirely on emotional impulses. From adolescence to adulthood, she is characterized by Tepper as a pathetic, emotionally volatile teenager. The narrator describes her with adjectives such as "impatient,""mopey,""sulky," "rebellious,""confused," "angry,"and "ill-used." Myra purposefully walks in a "slithery" way (22), talks in a "dramatically fed-up older sister voice" (37), and only cries for effect (9). Unlike Morgot and Joshua, she is uncompassionate, insensitive, abrupt, angry, and emotionally unhinged. Like Janine, she finds her joy in the fulfillment of the gender roles assigned by the patriarchal society of the novel, the warrior's culture: "In bearing a son to a warrior, a woman earns her life" (143). Her only desire is to please Barten and bear his warrior-sons, and, when she has his first, she calls him "my little warrior's son" (89). She is only happy when Barten is satisfied, becoming mopey and depressed after his rejection during festival (80). She quotes Barten's opinions, rationalizes away Barten'sflaws (59), and adopts the warriors' philosophies on returnees, servitors, Women's Country, and the ordinances. "The rules are stupid anyhow," she tells Morgot. "He's out of Women's Country, and I wish to hell I was, too" (91). But at Barten's death, Myra is devastated, and when her son fails to resemble Barten, Myra's dreams of motherhood are "riven into sharp-edged fragments" (88). Even after Barten's death, she remains fickle, one moment utterly possessive of her sons, the next complaining how she "would simply enjoy getting out of the house and away from babies once and a while" (190). In the end, she rejects all societal responsibility, living "carnival to carnival," attending the warriors' games (179), only wanting to dance, and ultimately rejecting her Council-assigned responsibilities and Women's Country in general. In Myra, we see Tepper's view of women embracing their romanticism: pathetic, unconsciously enslaved, emotionally volatile, bitter, and dissatisfied women who begin and end with, in Tepper's view, the worst possible vice: societal uselessness.

Morgot

Ironically the mother of Myra but directly the opposite of her, Morgot, the heroic woman in *Gate to Women's Country*, represents women's ideal realism. Like Atwood's Moira, Morgot has many traditionally masculine character traits: rational, brutally honest, pragmatic, calm, collected, and in control. She examines the gypsies in public and is brutally honest with Tally about Barten's intentions (45-46). She is educated: medically trained (the chief medical officer of Women's Country), historically and culturally informed, and scientifically oriented. And because of this, She is disillusioned regarding the female's romantic self. She says that Myra is

> any of us Stavvy. . . . I've had a few romantic or sentimental notions myself, from time to
> time. We all like to invent worlds that are better than this one, better for lovers, better for
> mothers. (72)

Like Moira's and Offred's pre-Gilead experiences, Morgot's old romantic trysts have enlightened
her to the results of embracing romanticism. Every girl is inclined to see men how they *could* be
rather than how they are, to imagine the world as a place where women and children are not
oppressed, where love is true, where men are deep-down caring and tender, and where good always
overcomes evil purely on the merit of principle. But looking at the world this way leads womento
suffering, pain, disillusionment, bitterness,and men to egregious violence toward each other and
innocent women and children. War, domestic violence, rape, abuse, and women's acceptance, all of
it rooted in emotional idealism and romanticism, death and suffering caused by both women's and
men's intrinsic inclination to see themselves and their oppressors as they ought to be rather than
how they are.

Because of this enlightenment, Morgot holds irascibly to the ordinances, the reason-based
edicts instituted by the council who "keep sentimentality and romance out of [their] deliberations"
(73), despite the emotional agony and moral guilt of doing so. They are her categorical morality.
Instead of a feeling-based objection, Morgot responds, "That's not allowed!" in regards to Joshua's
story about the warriors' beating of the returnees (25). When Jik objects to public examinations of
his prostitutes, she cites the ordinances: "You know the rules, Jik. Examinations are done in public"
(45). She directly contrasts the warriors' romanticist opinions and philosophies with the ordinances,
and the greatest sin Myra commits is disrespect of them by blathering on about the warriors'
ideologies (89). Fighting one's emotions is difficult, and Morgot knows from experience that it
hurts. But Iphigenia at Ilium, the Council ceremonies, and the desolations are all reminders of a
time when romanticism influenced decisions and the results thereof, and thus Morgot, for the sake
of society, Women's Country, and its inhabitants, painfully suppresses this romanticism, holds to the
rational, societal self required as a Women's Country Council member, accepts the pain of
following and enforcing the ordinances without compromise, and tries to teach Stavia to do so as
well:

> "Half of what we do is performance. Ritual.Observances. If we are seen to be in control, the
> people are calm and things go smoothly... Doing nothing with the appearance of calm may
> be more important than doing the right thing in a frantic manner" (126).

Morgot understands the necessity of acting calmly even when she is not calm and accepts the pain
and theatricality of doing so. When threatening Myra's excommunication, Morgot sounds "like she
was delivering a rehearsed speech" (89) and sounds "stilted and rehearsed" when telling Stavia why
they do not disclose fathers' identities (114). She is "in considerable pain" to take pride in Joshua's
sperm being used to inseminate other women—"It does not come naturally," she says but still
affirms its necessity (293). When discussing the selection plan prescribed by the ordinances,
"[Morgot] might have been discussing the breeding of sheep or the crossing of grain. Her voice was
as unemotional as the wind on a distant ridge" (293). Despite her blatant emotional repulsion
against the breeding plan, Morgot subjects her feelings to its rational necessity, suppressing
romanticism and adopting the council-approved plan to exterminate romanticism in men. In this,
Morgot is the ideal, rational, societally-inclined woman: Tepper's ideal woman. Her entire ethics
and morality are divorced from her emotional feelings and subjected to the rational, passionless
ordinances. Her adherence is categorical, uncompromising, and complete. And though her
romanticism remains active and vocal in opposition, at every juncture Morgot painfully subjugates
it to the ordinances.

Initially, readers side with young Stavia against Morgot's rigid and draconian adherence to the ordinances. But, as the story progresses, seeing the results of the warriors' romantic hyper-masculinity and the results of Stavia's embracing of romantic attachment to Chernon, we increasingly—or so Tepper seems to hope—empathize, understand and agree with Morgot's rejection of this emotionally-driven, romantic self, as Stavia comes to do.

Stavia

Stavia, the enlightened woman in *Gate to Women's Country*, swings between the poles of Morgot and Myra, embracing her romanticism and realism intermittently as the story goes on. Like Offred, she begins her story enlightened to the theatricality of her societal self:

> She reached down inside herself and gave herself a shake, waking up that other part of her, making it come forward to take over—that other Stavia who could remember lines and get up on stage without dying of embarrassment... It was the first time she could remember purposefully making her everyday self step aside, though it had happened before, in emergencies, all by itself. (13)

Stavia is conscious of her core, everyday emotional self *and* her actor self, required to function practically and interpersonally. On the one hand, her "observer" self is passive, repressed, often "bitten by the viper of indecision" (194). It is "stuttery and worried about appearing wicked or stupid on stage" (13), goes into "fits of self-consciousness," and does things "hideously gauche" in stressful and emotionally charged situations (105-06). Her actor self, on the other hand, is calm, collected, confident, and dominant. It can "get up on stage without dying of embarrassment" (13), is "capable, endowed with the extemporaneous force of grace" required to function in society (1), and makes all acts performable, regardless of their morality or ethics (194). Stavia is consciously aware of the "inevitable conflict of personal and societal desires" (217), and, like Offred in *Handmaid's Tale*, is hyper-aware of her two selves in agon.

And while her emotional, observer self wants only to express her feelings and emotions, Stavia often reasons herself to a place of calm and adroit exterior conduct, displaying her actor self despite her internal turmoil, at least initially. She tells Morgot,

> "Myra doesn't have any sense at all."
>
> "No," yawned Morgot. "None of them do. Neither did I at that age."
>
> "I refuse to be that age."
>
> "I wish you luck." (81)

Stavia is emotionally inexperienced. Her biggest influence is her mother. In fact, she imagines herself early in the novel as a sort of little Morgot: she sounds, looks, and even sees herself as similar. As such, she realizes the senselessness of Myra's romanticism and resulting demeanor, and therefore, initially, rationally, rejects it. Like Morgot, she rejects Myra's pathetic romanticism in favor of a callow, ideological realism. Morgot affirms her, but, remembering her own past struggles with romance, is skeptical of Stavia's continued resolve. Morgot believes both men and women biologically inclined to romanticism (72). And without experiential knowledge of its consequences, any ideological stance against it will fail.

And as Morgot predicts, Stavia's rejection does not last. Soon Stavia's romanticist impulses causes her emotional turmoil, especially in regards to Chernon. He gives her a "liquid, giddy

feeling," causing her to feel "not at all practical." Romantic attraction is to Stavia "a strange, indecent feeling, and she did not want to deal with or even consider it" (64-65). But despite her logical understanding of and distaste for it, Stavia's attraction to Chernon persists. Chernon's effect on her is so subliminal and powerful, she begins sacrificing reason and the ordinances in order to please him. Chernon's desiring of books shows "just how stupid some of the ordinances were" (78), and she feels distant and separated from Morgot because of her mother's categorical adherence to them. Her romanticism slowly but inevitably shifts her beliefs and actions, until, deciding to see Chernon in the best light, as an exception to the rule of warrior conduct, she gives him a book, overlooks his cruel manipulation and misogyny, and embraces her emotion:

> She perceived the cold-bloodedness of it, the chill manipulation of it, but decided to ignore it. She let everything within her melt and actor Stavia was waved off into the wings.
>
> "Oh, Chernon," she said, opening her arms. (241-42)

Stavia desperately wants to believe Chernon is or can be different than the rest of the warriors. As a result, she waves off her rational self entirely, suspends judgment, and embraces romanticism. In this moment, she steps away from Morgot and over to Myra; in fact, her passionate swoon could easily transpose to her sister's lovelorn pathos for Barten and not seem out of place. This surrender ultimately leads to her imprisonment and torture in the Holy Land where she sees, finally, Chernon for the chauvinistic, patriarchal, woman-oppressing monster that he is. There, Stavia's romantic attachment is shattered, and she finally comes to terms with Chernon's actuality:

> Stavia could not believe what she was hearing. What she was hearing was not as bad as what he was seeing, however—an expression on Chernon's face which was frankly collusive. He understood these animals. He understood them from a place inside himself which empathized with them. In that instant she comprehended much that had been unclear to her before (251).

Stavia's romantic ideals of Chernon are destroyed; she realizes, despite her desire otherwise, he is really no less of a monster than those patriarchal men by whom they are enslaved. At this moment, she realizes the falsity of her ideals and the truth of Morgot's rational warnings.

After her rescue and convalescence, Stavia finally understands the need to suppress her romantic self, accept her rational self, and utilize the actor self to function in society in the process of enacting the selection plan. In this approach, Stavia totally rejects Myra and becomes Morgot, or very near to her:

> She felt self-conscious in [the council robes], and yet there was a kind of inevitability about their substantial weight. She remembered thinking once long ago that she was a kind of Morgot, a younger copy. Now the copy was even closer than before (309).

By becoming a Council member, Stavia becomes Morgot and assumes the cold rationalism of the Council. In reality, she has always been an incipient Morgot, her realism lying latent waiting to be enacted, only suppressed by the betrayal of her emotional self:

> In that moment she realized she'd broken the ordinances for no good reason and wondered, with a surge of deep, nauseating guilt, whether Morgot would ever forgive her for it—whether she could ever forgive herself (246).

Morgot is always present in Stavia as her rational self. Stavia only needs recognize and welcome her. Stavia's transition is complete when she, as is "inevitable," becomes a Council member, acknowledging the ordinances and, concurrently, the selection plan, accepting the genocide of 4,000

warriors as a necessary cull of a group incurably afflicted by the romanticist "infection." With this, she becomes one of the "Damned Few," those "who keep things running, those who do what has to be done" (313). What they do is suppress their everyday emotional selves and eliminate, by whatever means necessary, the romanticism in men who will not suppress it for themselves. What is kept running is Women's Country, hopes for a better future, and the means of its actualization, the selection plan.

Readers are initially appalled with Stavia's transition,and we would dismiss Stavia and Morgot as inhuman but for the cross-cutting of the play Iphigenia at Ilium with the earlier narrative and the characterization it shows of the women and servitors who help them:

> Stavia leaned over Joshua, putting her cheek against his own, her eyes fixed on the half-empty garrison ground, seeing in her mind the thousands who had marched away. Gone away, oh, gone away.Wetness between her face and his as he—servitor, warrior, citizen of Women's country, father—as he wept.

> Wept for them all. (315)

Stavia and Joshua agonize over the sacrifices necessary to purge Women's Country of romanticism. They are hardly the robots and inhuman genocidal maniacs our initial emotional reaction suggests. It would be very easy, were the narrative of young Stavia, Myra, and Morgot not coupled with the later story in which they are agonized and morally distraught, to see them as unfeeling monsters. But with the play and the adult narrative surrounding it, Tepper simultaneously re-humanizes Stavia, Morgot, and all others who affirm the cruel process by which male romanticism is eliminated and justifies, through mythology, the necessity of their brutality. "Either you men kill us and are honored for it, or we women kill you and are damned for it. Dead or damned" (315). When romanticism reigns, women are forced into a lose-lose situation of death or moral damnation. Either the men kill and dominate them, or the women defend themselves and are seen as monsters for it. Thus the Council chooses, in their eyes, the lesser of two evils in hope of a future in which women will have to embrace neither. In the play *Iphegenia at Illium*, Hecuba says, "Women don't have to make choices like that in Hades." and Iphegenia responds, "Hades is Women's Country" (315). The Council dreams of a future society in which romanticism *does not* reign, where *reason* is at the center of decision-making, and where such a diametric is no longer required of women. But Women's Country is a "painful construction" (Wilson 127), and so the Council accepts damnation and their own and our emotional repulsion as inevitable, hoping their decision will be justified by time and someday women will no longer be required to make the decision. Tepper uses the Iphigenia narrative to realign us with Morgot and Stavia and rationalize the need for suppression of romanticism.

While Pearson's reading of *Gate to Women's Country* as intrinsically homophobic is understandable, given that homosexuality *is* eliminated in Tepper's utopia, in the end, Tepper's women types resist Pearson's feminist impulse to sexualize the novel—making it plain that *romanticism* isthe real enemy, not sexuality in and of itself, homosexuality only the unfortunate collateral damage of Tepper's ruthless crusade against romanticism. But though we disagree on Tepper's target, I share in Pearson's and Fitting's response to Tepper's means. "A nonviolent world cannot be built using violence," says Fitting (44). "Can we bear," asks Pearson, "even in fiction, to pile the bodies of any more young men on the funeral pyres of hatred, fear and bigotry"? (221) No, Mrs. Tepper, I think we cannot.

Conclusion: Tepper vs. Atwood's Use of the Women Types in Relation to the 1970s-80s Essentialist Political Regimes

Atwood and Tepper are *both* political writers. Early in life, Atwood attended Harvard where, according to Sullivan, she learned that "writing [is] a political act, the assertion of the individual against the social structures that confine" (855). And, though she strongly resists labels, Atwood has since become, according to Sheckels, more comfortable being known as a "political writer." She defines politics as, according to Sheckels, "who gets to do what to whom with impunity and with what level of profit," and she writes as representative of the power-down in the world (VII-VIII). Tepper, however, is far more didactic in her political rhetoric. In his article "The Importance of Sheri S. Tepper," Gordon notes the "outrageous anger" with which she writes, an anger that is, as he notes, largely political and manifests in "thunderous sermons" he personally never gets bored of (10). Tepper herself says of her work: "I have a feeling I would have done a better literary job if I had been able to avoid polemicizing" ("Speaking,"qtd. in Tenbus 10). Both Atwood and Tepper are itching for a political fight.

As such, both use the same women types as tools for their political commentary, commentary with very different messages. On the one hand, Atwood's distaste foressentialist gender roles—both of the conservative majority and second-wave separatist feminism—is clear. In *Handmaid's Tale*, Janine, the Moral Majority essentialist woman, is pathetic and concludes the story insane after the failure of her gender roles destroys her womanhood. Moira, the heroic woman, a character that both readers and Offred respect, vehemently resists Gilead, a nation which "mirrors all too closely American problems" (Raschke 257). Both these facts make Atwood's warning clear: the essential roles of the conservative movement are deadly to women, and, if not carefully restrained, conservatives will try to assert them politically. But, though she also simultaneously shows her sympathy with second-wave separatist feminism, Moira's inevitable surrender of her freedom of self-definition to Jezebel's also distances Atwood from separatist feminism's essentialism as well. Atwood resists strongly the idea of an "ideal woman" in general, any set of definitive attributes which make a woman ideal, even that of second-wave separatist feminism. Rather, Atwood's women types argue for the necessity of each woman to define her own ideal and for a society that affords her freedom to do so.

Tepper, on the other hand, gives little commentary on the conservative movement and patriarchy using the women types themselves (these are seen in Tepper's characterization of the Holylanders and warriors). Rather, her types can be understood purely in the context of second- and third-wave feminisms, aligning herself much more closely to second-wave separatist feminism than Atwood while still remaining distant from its hyper-sexualism. For example, whereas in the conclusion of *Handmaid's Tale*, we pity Janine to a point, no such redemption is given for Myra. She ends her life bitter, angry, and useless, with no redeeming qualities whatsoever. Little more than a caricature for all things pathetic, the reader and other female characters look at her with nothing but scorn. With Myra, Tepper outright rejects all romanticism, especially in regards to male-female romance and emotional dependency, alluding back to the relational nonattachment of Beauvoirian sexuality in which sex is seen as obligation-free and liberated from the shackles of marital covenant. Further, Morgot is *clearly*Tepper's ideal woman and remains so across the novel. Rational, sexually independent, pro-separatist, and ruthlessly purposed in her resistance to patriarchy, Moira is characterized with many attributes of the 1980s second-wave separatist feminist ideal woman. But unlike Moira, there is no fall, no surrender to oppressive powers: though she is agonized to do it, Morgot incorrigibly perseveres in her agonizing but heroic resistance to masculine romanticism.

And in the end, unlike Moira, she finishes the story as an ideal female destination for Stavia who *becomes* her in the finale, very unlike Offred who, rather than arriving at either pole of heroic woman or pathetic woman, cuts her way off of the spectrum of essential women entirely. And unless one interprets Tepper's entire message as ironic (Knowles), there is no indication that readers should read Morgot as self-critical. With her, Tepper affirms an ideal woman who is rational, anti-patriarchy, and masculinized, very near to ideal women proposed by second-wave feminism. That being said, both Stavia's and Morgot's anti-romanticism conclusions serve to distance Tepper from the hypersexualism of Beauvoir and separatist feminism's ideal woman, placing Tepper between second-wave and third-wave feminisms, embracing neither fully, but, unlike Atwood, remaining essentialist nonetheless, policing an essentialist binary between women and women.

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The coldest of all cold monsters: state infliction of infertility.

Victor Grech*, Clare Vassallo and Ivan Callus

Abstract:The state may decide to limit its population due to a variety of reasons. This paper reviews the intersection of state-induced infertility in science-fiction, exploring eugenics, overpopulation, along with state-devised strategies to control both overpopulation and the quality of the remaining population.

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Infertility is a common problem that afflicts many couples, and has been used as a springboard for many SF narratives. The trope of infertility in SF is too vast to embrace in one paper. In a previous essay, the trope of the state manipulation of the human sex drive was discussed, with a focus on the deliberate tampering of the sex drive and on gender orientation as methods by which fertility can be reduced (Grech 2012). In this paper, only the intersection of deliberate, state-induced infertility on the large scale in other ways will be examined. All of this work is derived from a doctoral thesis (Grech 2011).

Infertility may be perceived to be a desirable form of contraception, deliberately and selectively induced by the state as in the absence of intelligent restraint, it is natural biological law and instinct that drives reproductive behaviour, and hence, the presence or absence of offspring and their numbers. In the modern world, factors which determine the desired number of children are economic, cultural, political, historical, or geographical. Children are now often viewed as commodities, and the cost-benefit ratio of offspring can actually be calculated as an economic value to the parents and on the state. In developed countries, these factors appear to be consciously or unconsciously but accurately calculated by potential parents, and children are now produced where the overall benefits are perceived to be positive to their parents (Tian).

Thomas Moore originally depicted utopia as a dream of heaven realised on Earth, and in the setting of this paper, dystopia represents a demographic "version of hell as a projected societal future" (Domingo 725). Domingo has coined the term "demodystopias" for "[d]ystopias that are brought about by demographic change or that make population matters a salient concern" (725). Shriver classified such literary works into three categories: fear of population excess, of population

decline, and of population professionals, referring to groups of individuals that attempt to influence demographic change (Shriver).

This paper will attempt to exhaustively list all narratives in SF wherein the dominant trope is the wide-scale state inducement of infertility, for whatever reason, although most of the narratives depict the State as controlling the population for fear of excess, or influencing demographics through eugenic principles. All narrative forms will be included, and hence, only a brief synopsis of each story will be given. This paper will inevitably have an interdisciplinary leaning as the first author is a medical doctor, and hence, any scientific inaccuracies that surmount acceptable poetic license will be pointed out.

Narratives

Brave New World was one of the earliest works to anticipate the social impact of improved reproductive technology and it is the state's dystopian strategy to regulate and regiment all aspects of individual and group life. In the same year, von Otfrid's "In The Year 8000" depicted a dystopia with rigid birth control and a with a substantial proportion of the female population voluntarily desexualized and neutered.

Reality may soon catch up with Huxley in that manipulation of rhesus monkeys has shown that behaviour can be permanently altered, turning subjects from aggressive to compliant creatures by blocking the effects of a gene called D2 that is expressed in the brain. This destroys the link between the monkeys' motivation and perceived reward, and monkeys were made to work enthusiastically for long periods without the need for a reward at the end of their labours. Humans have an identical gene that could potentially be used to create individuals akin to Huxley's Omegas in *Brave New World* (Liu). The novel depicts 'ectogenesis', that is, extrauterine fetal incubation, a term coined by J. B. S. Haldane, the transhumanist pioneer. Indeed, Japanese researchers have created an artificial uterus and kept goat fetuses alive for several weeks (Kuwabara). Haldane argued against the automatic rejection of transhumanist advances due to our innate conservative biases and fear of the unknown, predicting that the 'abolition of disease will make death a physiological event like sleep'(73).

Celibacy is actually imposed by brainwashing techniques in Knight's "Hell's Pavement" (1955) wherein the protagonist, who is immune to the brainwashing imposed by State machines, attempts to embrace a girl, who automatically shies away from him. Similarly but more benignly, the ruler of a religious cult in the *Star Trek* universe enforces his member to pledge a covenant of abstinence (Kretchmer). However, the first major dystopian novel incorporating the total State control trope, including interference into ordinary citizens' sex lives is Zamyatin's *We* (1924), where sex frequency, timing and partners are all selected by the state. In a more technological vein, in Levin's *This Perfect Day* (1970), the programmers of a master control computer dictate every aspect of marriage and reproduction.

A more recent take on this trope is depicted in Oliver's *Delirium* (2011) where government is a right wing dictatorship, love is outlawed, and on their run-up to their eighteenth birthday, teenagers are evaluated, their career mapped out, and given three choices of prospective spouses. At around their eighteenth birthday, they then undergo a lobotomy-like procedure that renders them emotionless. All of these stories restate foreboding with technology and science, and where these might lead us, as "SF […] is a popular literature that concerns the impact of Mechanism […] on cultural life and human subjectivity" (Luckhurst 4).

On the other hand, the state may decide to logically limit births according to eugenic principles. Eugenic population control is a common trope, as we shall see time and again, not only for humanity, but also for alien species. The English scientist Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, coined the term "eugenics", which he defined as "the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage" (Galton 1).

In 1907, for this reason, the state of Indiana passed the world's first compulsory sterilisation law, and other states and countries, including Nazi Germany, followed suit. The result was a program of compulsory sterilisation of physical, mental, and social "inferiors." In 1955 Alan Gregg likened the human race to a cancerous growth on the face of the planet and in 1960, Raymond B. Cowles proposed a "nonbaby bonus" to be paid by governments to potential parents for not having children. In 1967, William and Paul Paddock proposed a system that would cancel all American food shipments to countries that failed to control their population problems, proposing that such countries should simply be left to die out of mass starvation (Chase).

Perhaps the greatest influence however was Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* which forecast massive famines for the 1970s in the Thirld World and encouraged authors to "to write novels or plays emphasizing near-future worlds in which famines or plagues are changing the very nature of mankind and his societies" (170).

More recently, between 1990 and 2003, the Roma minority in Czechoslovakia experienced coercive sterilisation to curb their fertility (Bertram). This exact scenario was depicted in Lester's "The Reign of the Ray" (1929) where, after a superpower war, the American people live under a dictatorship, with the unfit and criminal sterilised by the State. Similarly, in the future represented in Tucker's "The Cubic City" (1929), defectives and the insane are sterilised.

Eugenics feature in Walter M. Miller's "Conditionally Human" (1962), wherein overpopulation forces all governments to limit births eugenically. Overpopulation is blamed on science that has made it easier for the individual to survive into a long old age. The solutions to this conundrum are seen to be euthanasia, an increase in the retirement age, working the elderly to death or impeding scientific progress. Since the elderly are able to vote but the unborn are not, birth restriction is enforced. Couples who break the law and have children are separated and reassigned to a common labour pool. The state allows the sublimation of the parental instinct in 'neutroids', semi-intelligent animals with induced infertility and growth failure derived from chimpanzee gametes. Women have voluntary medically induced false pregnancies and then undergo 'pseudoparts', at which point they are united with their chosen neutroids, who are exogestated.

The desperate substitution of human babies with surrogates, including those of primate origin, is also seen in Jensen's *Ark Baby*, James's *The Children of Men* and Kresses *Maximum Light*. It must be reiterated, at this stage, that in these narratives, which are generally representative of SF, 'ambivalence towards technologies is often the presiding spirit of engagement' (Luckhurst 5), particularly in this context where individuals, including notable figures such as Aldous Huxley, were convinced that without eugenic population control, the overall intelligence of the populace would inevitably plummet, since in terms of numbers of offspring, the less intelligent outnumber more intelligent (Huxley, "What Is Happening," "Are We Growing Stupider?").

Mankind has also inflicted infertility on cloned dinosaurs in Crichton's *Jurassic Park* (1990) by limiting the creation of clones to those that are only female. Human clones created specifically for fighting are also created sterile in Kojima Productions' futuristic computer game *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* (2008), and also age more quickly and die more quickly. The inclusion

of computer games that also deal with infertility in SF bolsters the contention that humanity has entered "the third stage of capitalism, […] which issued in the radically different technology of cybernetics and computers" (Jameson 21), a world dominated by "the new abstractions of the computer and of globalization and finance capital" (Jameson 93).

Eugenics also plays a role in Silverberg's *Tower of Glass* (1980) which recounts that starting in the 20th century, humanity reduced its numbers with war, famine and anarchy, particularly in Asia, Africa and South America, while developed countries reduced their populations through contraception. Since machines and androids performed all menial labour, the proletariat, feeling itself redundant and encouraged by free government contraception, slowly bred itself out of existence, spurred on by "genetic laws" that only permitted those considered fit to have children to reproduce. Conversely, in Čapek's *R.U.R.* (1921) human-created and human-looking androids continue the race when humanity finds itself becoming sterile.

It has made some writers and thinkers harbour (somewhat social Darwinist) ideas about the success of modern medicine. As physician and poet William Williams put it:

> [b]y and large we couldn't live in the world today were it not for the medical profession […] we'd plain die, masses of us, tomorrow, if medical techniques were not kept up […] on the other hand, we may be populating the world with idiots. No one knows the answer (Williams 291).

This is famously depicted in two of C. M. Kornbluth's stories, "The Little Black Bag" (1950) and "The Marching Morons" (1951). Kornbluth was a satirist who, in the style of Jonathan Swift, wrote about worlds where idiots take control, and in these two narratives, Kornbluth explains that while the intelligentsia of the past were being prudent and demonstrating foresight by curtailing their total number of offspring, the shiftless, short-sighted and less intelligent outbred them, leading to an extreme but logical conclusion: that self-imposed fertility limitation by the intelligent leads to an overall decline in humanity's collective intelligence. These two narratives also highlight a common Straussian strain in SF, the somewhat fascist notion that the enlightened should administer and rule for the betterment of all. These narratives all support the assertion that SF

> notoriously reflects contemporary realities back to us through the lens of a particular type of imagination, one associated with the future, with the potentials of technology, and with the important idea that life does not remain static; what we know today may be entirely different tomorrow (Pearson 3).

An even more chilling and drastic solution to the overpopulation problem is envisioned by Hoffman in "Soundless Evening" (1972), where each individual is given one "life permit", the right to have one child, and couples are therefore only allowed to rear two children. Any extra children are only allowed to live up to the age of five as up to this age, such individuals consume relatively little resources. At this age, by a chilling methodology that is reminiscent of the deaths of Magda Goebbel's children, these children are murdered by their parents through the use of a painless poison that is collected from a government agency, and official arrangements are made for the corpse to be collected on the following morning.[1]

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[1]   Magda Goebbels was the unofficial First Lady of the Third Reich and wife of the Third Reich's Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, from whom she had six children, Helga, Hilda, Helmut, Holde, Hedda and Heide (all deliberately starting with the same letter as Hitler). During the invasion of Berlin, at the end of the Second World War, she poisoned all six children and then committed suicide with her husband in the garden of the Reich Chancellery (Meissner)

This unsettling short story unquestionably lives up to Ellison's *Dangerous Visions* anthologies notoriously contentious reputation (which commenced with the original *Dangerous Visions* in 1967).

Similarly, in Disch's "334" (1972), both compulsory contraception and eugenics are practised in response to global overpopulation. Keller's older "A Biological Experiment" (1928), depicts the progression with time from the populace requiring a permit to marry and to have a child so as to control overpopulation, to compulsory sterilisation for the unfit, to children fertilised outside the body from selected gametes and gestated in artificial wombs, with a permit also needed to raise such a child, once again depicting the techniques with which SF showcases humanity's "concerns over the creeping advance of Mechanism" (Luckhurst 5).

Eugenic constraints also feature in Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968) where only the genetically approved may have children. Likewise, in the overpopulated Earth depicted in Asimov's *The Caves of Steel* (1954), the protagonist and his wife are allowed to have two children because of their intelligence rating, genetic status and position in Earth's bureaucracy. Conversely, and binding in two more tropes that will be discussed later, extrasolar spacers have life expectancies that are far longer than Earth humans, and hence, population increase is rigidly controlled, and this is associated with distaste for physical (including sexual) contact.

A similar development in Heinlein's "Beyond this Horizon" (1942) leads to self-imposed infertility. In this particular future, genetic technicians enable couples to have the best possible offspring which they could potentially procreate by combining their genes in a process of artificial selection instead of by blind chance alone, prefiguring *GATTACA* (1997). A group of completely unaltered humans are left untouched, so called control naturals. One such couple applied to undergo the process of artificial selection, only to be told they had no characteristics worth reinforcing in a baby, and they therefore decide not to have any children.

In an even crueler twist, in Nourse's *The Bladerunner* (1975), the general population's access to medical care is dependent upon their acceptance of medical sterilisation, a true Hobson's choice that will be encountered again within the general trope of medical treatment. Interestingly, Kirby stipulates that Niccol's *GATTACA* suggests that bioethical issues arise when society blithely accepts the genetic-determinist ideology constructed by geneticists who envisage humanity enslaved by its genes, and "blood provides the dominant metaphor" (Kirby 206), a symbol for the individual's genetic make-up, and hence the film's subtitle 'there is no gene for the human spirit'.

In a more sinister vein, in Cowper's *Kuldesak* (1973), an overpopulated Earth gives free rein to a controlling artificial intelligence (AI) to find a solution for overpopulation before humanity destroys itself. The AI's solution is to cull huge swathes of humanity, and imposes itself as a god over the remainder, the majority of which are 'budded'. Budding refers to 'cortical implantation', presumably of electrodes of some sort that allow direct individual stimulation of pleasure centres in the brain. Males are inexplicably rendered infertile by this process and both sexes are rendered docile and malleable to the AI's purposes. This is erroneous as deliberate damage to the areas controlling sex hormone and sperm production – the hypothalamic-pituitary axis located in the base of the skull – may be caused by electrode implantation, but the novel only mentions cortical implantation, a reference to the forebrain.

Some humans, referred to as 'roamers', are not budded and allowed to run free, and their function is to be milked of sperm during physical punishment for transgressions in an almost sado-masochistic ritual. These narratives illustrate humanity's concerns, possibilities "in which our own war machinery begins to function for itself, computer intelligence now turning against the human

intelligence which once constructed it and, in its autonomy, turning against the human beings which are now its enemy" (Jameson 114).

In Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), a "utopian community manages successfully to integrate advanced technology, social planning, individual liberty, and a close connection to nature […] all citizens […] are treated equally regardless of race, gender, or other differences" (Booker 340). The population is controlled by having children to only replace deaths, and children are raised by groups of three co-mothers who may be male or female. Any of the trio may lactate, even males, as milk production is stimulated artificially, and all infants and toddlers are housed communally in large nurseries. Monogamy, the nuclear family and sexual exclusivity are obsolete. Language is therefore not gendered, the word father is lost, mother may denote a member of any sex and the third person pronouns "he" and "she" are replaced by "per"', a contraction for "person". Piercy also depicts an alternative dystopia in a parallel universe wherein "women function only as the property of men and the men themselves are little more than machines," (Booker 340), and a privileged clique of capitalists enjoy long life and affluence on space platforms, while the majority live on a decayed Earth, living on a diet of drugs and sex with ultimately death to look forward to in middle age after selling their organs to the rich for transplantation. Once again, SF clearly cautions us; "the message seems clear: we can continue the way we are going until we reach this dystopian state, or we can change our ways and work toward utopia" (Booker 340).

In Damon Knight's discursive utopia *A Reasonable World* (1991), the impact of a totally foolproof contraceptive leads to the development of sexual intercourse as a performance art form. Silverberg extrapolates this theme even further "In the Group" (1973), where sexual experiences (including the input of all senses) during copulation are transmitted through technological means to the rest of the members of an entire group, a assemblage that is dispersed around the world.

In complete contrast to state imposed overpopulation measures, Silverberg's *The World Inside* (1971) is an overpopulation story with a paradoxical twist in that a global population of 75 billion live in basic comfort, in a state of total promiscuity and unrestricted population growth. Questioning the *status quo* may brand the individual incurably insane with the imposition of an immediate death sentence.

In Del Rey's *The Eleventh Commandment* (1962), anti-contraceptive matters are taken even further when the Vatican is vaporised in a nuclear war and a new pontiff is chosen from among the American cardinals resulting in a schism, with the establishment of an eleventh commandment: "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the Earth" with contraception actually being illegal. The protagonist, a human colonist from Mars, visits Earth and wears a contraceptive patch, but this fails, and the reason given is the higher gravity of Earth, rendering the patch ineffective. Conversely, in McDevitt's *The Engines of God* (1994), in the setting of an overpopulated Earth, the State gives benefits to childless couples and the Pope exhorts the faithful with regard to the advantages of celibacy.

A similar scenario is depicted in Taylor's *Star Trek* episode "The Mark of Gideon" (1969), when the *Enterprise* crew discover a grossly overpopulated planet and Kirk suggests to the rulers that his Federation would be willing to provide any kind of contraceptive devices that the populace would need. These narratives particularly illustrate SF's need to pass a reality-test, a test of plausibility, often resorting to direct or indirect technical explanations to support narratives, thereby emphasising "the necessity and possibility of explicit, coherent, and immanent or nonsupernatural explanation of realities" (Suvin, *Metamorphoses* 67).

The state subversion of population control into eugenics is also used in Larry Niven's *Known Space* stories (Niven, *Protector*), and the best known novel set in *Known Space* is *Ringworld* (1970). This refers to an artificial, ring-shaped structure, a million miles wide with the diameter of Earth's orbit, and therefore a total habitable inner surface area of three million times that of the Earth, a slice of a Dyson sphere (Dyson). In this future, complete contraceptive birth control is achieved by the annual subcutaneous administration of a crystalline drug.

As in *Ringworld*, since the early 1990s, modern medicine has provided injectable depot contraceptive hormones that are released over several months, for both sexes. With an estimated 60% of all unplanned pregnancies in the developed world occurring in women using some form of birth control, it is anticipated that this range of options will provide more effective contraception, albeit without preventing sexually transmitted diseases due to the lack of the barrier nature of these systems (Johansson). Other alternatives, of course, include the daily contraceptive pill, developed in 1951 by Djerassi and colleagues, earning him the 1973 National Medal of Science.[2] Djerassi is yet another interdisciplinarian, having turned, in later life, to writing SF and plays.

Contraception in *Known Space* is enforced with humans on Earth only allowed one "Birthright" each unless one has proven abilities such as useful psychic powers, or for survival genes such as natural longevity or perfect teeth. Conversely, a select few (200 on all of Earth) with highly prized traits are allowed unlimited birthrights. Birthrights can also legally be bought for very large sums of money as the ability to make money is considered a proven survival trait, and this avenue incidentally supplants bribery attempts. One can also fight for Birthrights in the arena. The winner earns two Birthrights and the loser loses Birthright and life, evening out the equation (Niven *The Long Arm*).

Two other sentient species exist in this setting: the herbivorous (and therefore cowardly) "Puppeteers" (*Ringworld*) and the carnivorous "Kzin", evolved from plains hunting cats ("The Warriors"). Brave Puppeteers are considered to be insane and not allowed to breed forcing the (relatively) courageous Puppeteer protagonist in "Ringworld" to volunteer to visit the Ringworld in return for being allowed to breed. Kzinti are not allowed to breed until they display bravery and loyalty. Kzinti are occasionally allowed to go to the "sterile ones" (infertile female Kzinti) as a reward for valorous deeds (*The Ringworld Engineers*). A small percentage of Kzinti are telepaths, shunned and viewed with contempt as they are stunted and addicted to a drug that makes them telepathic, yet sought and used for these special abilities until they are burned out. However, this subgroup is despised and not allowed to breed ("The Warriors"). Therefore in all three species, despite radical differences, individual worth is deemed important in allowing members to breed according to eugenic principles. A recurring focus that is recurrently raised by these stories is that SF is a literature of "technologically saturated societies, a genre that can therefore emerge only relatively late in modernity" (Luckhurst 4).

A state imposed, fertility-limiting theme is portrayed in Card's *Ender's Game* (1985), and a particular family that produced two brilliant children were allowed to have a third child. State coerced infertility has also been seen in our times in China, with the "one family one child concept" (Pao).

The State enforcement of abortion has also been depicted in Anderson's "The Big Rain" (1954) where the protagonist's female love interest is made to undergo an abortion so as to have an excuse to meet the protagonist – and use this opportunity to inveigle him into sedition – since she is depicted as not having become pregnant at a previous tryst.

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[2] It is ironic that a prize was also given to the scientists to who made great inroads into infertility (Alok).

Only "worthy" individuals are allowed to breed in McMaster's *Ethan of Athos* (1986), a male-only world where individuals' works and actions that benefit society gain credits towards eventually having offspring.

The tables are turned on the white Caucasian population in Heinlein's *Farnham's Freehold* (1964) set in the future after a nuclear exchange. Whites are slaves and also livestock, bred solely to provide servitude and food for the State that consists of cannibal blacks. White male servants are used as breeding studs or as servants, and for the latter purposes, they are castrated for the purposes of domestication. A soma-like drug called 'happiness' provides further docility.

Discussion

A common theme that surfaces from these narratives is that SF has both questioned and explored the problematics of eugenic population control, including both pros and cons for this type of manipulation. Like *Brave New World*, many of these narratives fulfil several roles: "satire on contemporary culture, a prediction of biological advances, a commentary on the social roles of science and scientists, and a plan for reforming society" (Woiak 106), along with "a denunciation of totalitarian systems" (Domingo 726), reiterating the versatile nature of the genre through the wide variety of different depictions of dystopian futures.

Such narratives, particularly the older works, "reflected public anxieties about the supposedly degenerating hereditary quality of the population and how this decline would affect [...] economic and political future", real and perceived worries as to the impending decline of entire empires and nations (Woiak 106). For individuals like Huxley, "in this social context, eugenics was not a nightmare prospect but rather the best hope for designing a better world if used in the right ways by the right people" (Woiak 106), an attitude that is nowadays considered not only reprehensible but also repugnant. These modern attitudes stem from our experience of how power corrupts and SF warns us that once such trends are initiated, it is almost impossible to stop the state juggernaut, since no one watches the watchers.

This admittedly small corpus of works also demonstrates that SF is "a literary response to scientific change ... [which] ... can run the entire gamut of human experience. Science fiction, in other words, includes everything," (Asimov, *Asimov's Mysteries*) facilitating our understanding of what might come about, and prospective ways of avoiding dystopic circumstances, potentially through simple prevention.

The demodystopias that have been reviewed have clearly demonstrated the perception that "demography plays in the contemporary exercise of power, particularly in reconciling the conflict between the individual and the collective" (Domingo 740). Again, our experiences have taught us that once utilitarian impulses take control and individual liberties become trampled for the ostensible good of masses, the state can continue to erode away at these hard-won liberties.

It is in such far-reaching narratives that "modern SF [...] also presupposes more complex and wider cognitions: it discusses primarily the political, psychological, anthropological use and effect of sciences, and philosophy of science, and the becoming or failure of new realities as a result of it," cautionary tales developing from *gedankenexperiments* that allow us to anticipate potential future problems (Suvin, "On the Poetics" 381). Clearly, "[a]s with other dystopias in their own spheres, demodystopias seek to identify the negative population tendencies [...] and to pin responsibility for such an outcome on ourselves" (Domingo 740), a Sartrean indictment that prevents us from condoning excessive state control or manipulation.

The demodystopias also remind us of Nietzsche, who commented that the state "the coldest of all cold monsters […], lies in all languages of good and evil; and whatever its says, it lies - and whatever it has, it has stolen […] only there, where the state ceases, does the man who is not superfluous begin" (75), a warning that unless the state is restrained, it may result in highly dystopic circumstances, except perhaps for a chosen few who may further manipulate the state in order to retain power.

While "criticising the excesses, inefficiencies and injustices of the extended State", these stories indicate that "only beyond the State, it appears, can a life worthy of free human individuals begin" (Rose and Miller 172), a difficult conundrum that inevitably raises the perennial Huxleyan query: "How then must we live?" (Murray 169).

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Sun Ra: Myth, Science, and Science Fiction.

Päivi Väätänen

> . . .
>
> *I am not a fantasy in a real sense*
>
> *I am a fantasy in a false sense*
>
> *yet I exist*
>
> *there are no shadows where I am*
>
> *because I am the fire of the lightening*
>
> *and the flame of the sun*
>
> *my name is the sun*
>
> . . .
>
> *– Sun Ra, "Stranger from the Sky"*

This essay celebrates the 100th birthday of Sun Ra (1914-1993), a jazz musician, composer, poet, bandleader, mystic—and a myth. My aim is to explore the science-fictional and Afrofuturist aspects of Sun Ra and his work: his use of science and technology, and science-fictional imagery.

It is hard to pinpoint what it is exactly, but for me there is something very intriguing and sympathetic about Sun Ra, something that keeps me coming back to his films, music, and poetry time and time again. I was not at all astonished to find out that he had the same effect on his biographer John Szwed, who describes Sun Ra as a person who was "never easy to follow, whether in person or in reading a transcript of what he said, he was nonetheless fascinating, even compelling, and on reflection what he said made peculiar sense, though one that might not be easy to convey to others" (Szwed 346). After all, how could a science fiction scholar not be interested in a person, who claimed that it was time to think of the impossible, "because everything possible has been done and the world didn't change" (qtd. in Lock 26).

When I first read about Sun Ra, I was finishing my Master's thesis at the University of Helsinki and kept stumbling upon mentions of Sun Ra and his band, the Arkestra, later on when I was starting my dissertation on African American SF writers. And, when Szwed's biography described Sun Ra as a person who, due to insomnia, "seemed never to sleep except for brief moments of napping, usually at the keyboard in the middle of rehearsal" (Szwed 37), it was definitely something that a tired doctoral student, nodding off by her computer having been up late researching some interesting new avenue of research, found easy to identify with. The more I familiarized myself with Sun Ra and his texts, music, and film, the more I wanted to know about

this man also in a "professional" sense, as part of the roots of Afrofuturism and African American science fiction.

The Man from Saturn

Even though he was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1914 and named Herman Poole Blount by his parents, the pioneer Afrofuturist changed his name to Le Sony'r Ra and lived, played, and philosophized science fiction to the extent that he claimed to be from Saturn. The claim was often taken quite literally, thus earning Sun Ra a reputation of an eccentric, if not a madman. Lock quotes the obituaries after the death of Sun Ra in 1993 describing him as a "nutter" and "galactic gobbledegook" (Lock 13). But as Lock points out, Sun Ra never actually insisted on being from Saturn in a concrete sense—instead, Sun Ra's mythic identity and claims of originating from Saturn were metaphorical, meant "to initiate a discourse on Otherness" (Lock 62). For Ra, the alien was a metaphor for being different and alone: as Sun Ra described his life in an interview when he was 76: "I left my family, I left my friends. I left them *for real*. I left everything to be me, 'cause I knew I was not like them. Not like black or white, not like Americans. I'm not like nobody else. I'm alone on this planet." (Lock 38.) And besides, as anyone with talkative siblings knows, it would be pointless to claim anything outrageous as the truth will come out: Szwed quotes Sun Ra's older sister commenting on his origins, backed up with firm evidence: "He was born at my mother's aunt's house over there by the train station. … I know, 'cause I got on my knees and peeped through the keyhole. He's from no Mars." (7.)

He did claim having been to outer space, though, when he had an alien abduction experience in 1936—even though he seems not to have mentioned the experience to anyone before 1953 (Szwed 31). Sun Ra recounts how the "space men" asked him to come with them, and he was lifted up in a column of light: "it looked like a giant spotlight shining down on me, and I call it transmolecularization, my whole body was changed into something else." He ended up on Saturn, where the aliens told him that "when it looked like the world was going into complete chaos," he should speak to people, "and the world would listen." (qtd. in Szwed 29-30.) Szwed interprets Sun Ra's alien abduction story as an "act of personal mythology" that connected his past and future into one coherent narrative (Szwed 31-32). Whether Sun Ra really believed that he had an abduction experience, or whether the story was the result of his artistic creation, the story does have that effect, connecting pieces of his life into an understandable, mythic whole.

Space Music

After Sun Ra left Birmingham, he moved first to Chicago. During the Chicago years, Sun Ra founded his band, the Arkestra, whose whole name varied from the Myth Science Arkestra to the Intergalactic Research Arkestra among others—Swed lists several dozens of variants (94-95). In addition to the names of the Arkestra itself, space and science-fictional terminology were an important part of the Arkestra's music, titles of songs and albums, and abstract and futuristic album covers. Even Sun Ra's instruments were futuristic. According to Amiri Baraka, Sun Ra was a "pioneer in using various—then weird—electronic instruments" (254). He was among the very first to own a Minimoog synthesizer, and the Outer Space Visual Communicator (OVC), "the much-vaunted color organ extrapolated by science fiction writers of the 1930s" as Bhob Stewart describes the instrument, was developed by its inventor Bill Sebastian only for Sun Ra's use (Stewart xvi). With the OVC, Sun Ra's music could be turned into colors reflected on the wall, creating a kind of synesthetic effect.

Playing avant-garde jazz—or in Baraka's words, "[s]ome space metaphysical philosophical surrealist bop funk"—in exotic capes and gowns inspired by outer space and ancient Egypt, Sun Ra

Arkestra's concerts seem to have been quite an experience. The result of the fantastic clothes, the space-themed show, lights, and the music itself always made an impression on the audience—even more so on that part of the concert audience who increasingly "came prepared by hallucinogens and stimulants," as often happened during the 1970s (Szwed 339).

For Sun Ra, music was the tool that could fix the sorry state of the world through creating "positive vibrations" (Corbett, "Sun Ra in Chicago" 9). He thought that music, especially his "space music" was the tool to comprehend "the meaning of the impossible and every other enigma" (qtd. in Lock 26). While Sun Ra was by no means the only one to use space imagery and space themes in his music, this utopian feature, the genuine belief in the power of his music to create a better world, sets him apart from other jazz artists of his time (Kreiss 63).

The Sun Ra Arkestra never gained enormous success in the US, but they toured the world quite extensively from the early 1970s onwards. They gave concerts in cities all over Europe, including Helsinki and Stockholm of the Nordic capitals, and they also visited African countries like Nigeria and of course Egypt. Later, with the revival of experimental music during the 1990s, Sun Ra was rediscovered—as Camille Norment points out, thus in a way proving Sun Ra right when he thought that his music was from the future (25).

Science Fiction, Science, and Myth

Sun Ra was a bookworm already as a child, and among his readings were books of science fiction and popular science (Szwed 21). He also liked to watch science fiction films, even though he did not agree with the premise of the early sci-fi films:

> They make strange and horrible ones, and I don't see any reason why space is horrible. I believe, rather, that people who make these movies show a sort of portrait of the Earth. Moreover, in these movies you often see people from space who after doing something worthwhile, are conquered by Earthlings. I believe that someday Earth will be invaded by beings from outer space. It will be necessary that people from space and Earthlings teach each other, or else it will be general destruction for us all. (qtd. in Szwed 131-132)

He got a lot of influences from the films, sometimes as implicitly as to including "a midget dressed as Darth Vader dueling with light sabers with characters dressed like aliens from the bar scene" in their performances (Szwed 348). However, despite being interested in science fiction and getting inspiration and influences from it, as Leroy Jones (a.k.a. Amiri Baraka) argued in 1966: "It is science-fact that Sun-Ra is interested in, not science-fiction" (227). Sun Ra saw technological and scientific knowledge as a key for African Americans to keep in the pace of the American society. Whoever failed to keep up with technology, that is, "to both use and reinvent the tools of white society," would be left behind, Sun Ra though (Kreiss 61). Therefore, he was always urging people to be prepared for the space age and future technology, even his band got their share of education during rehearsals (John Gilmore, qtd. in Lock 28; Szwed 49).

However, as Lock and Szwed note, there are at the same time certain quite unscientific sides to Sun Ra's science. As Szwed puts it: for Sun Ra, "'science' was somewhere between or beyond science fiction and science. More than a method of reasoning and a set of laboratory practices, it was also a mystical process, and . . . a kind of secret or suppressed knowledge which had the power to create new myths, erase old ones, altering our ratio to each other and the rest of the universe." (Szwed 132.)

The mystical side of Sun Ra's science was most evident in the group Sun Ra was part of in Chicago, called "Thmei Research," which was interested science, technology, and the future, but on the other hand, also in numerology, things mystical and paranormal, as well as "highly original readings of the Bible" (Corbett, "Sun Ra in Chicago" 7). They began to publish some of their

research and findings in the form of leaflets distributed in street corners and parks. The leaflets are a good example of Szwed's point which I quoted in the beginning of this essay, that what Sun Ra said usually made peculiar sense, but was hard to explain. The leaflets are logical and the arguments make a lot of sense in a way—but then again, not always. For example a leaflet titled "The Wisdom of Ra," which begins by explaining the "[t]he way to True Living Life," perhaps belongs to the latter category:

> The movement called time is based upon 2. In the English alphabet 2 is ten (X) from Z which is a non curved 2. Z then is equal to 2 because the first is the last. The last in alphabet-numerical form is 2 because the first being Z is two. The way to True Living Life is the phonetic of two which is to because the way to is the way ot and the way owt is the way two, the way tuo is the way tu and to. (Sun Ra, "Wisdom" 122)

Alton Abraham, Sun Ra's manager and business partner, describes the motivation behind the Thmei Research group as an educating one, ensuring that African Americans were also a part of future history: "Southern blacks were still living in the past, because the future was hard in them: blacks would have to become disciplined and prepare for the Space Age to come, for the U.S. had a role to play in Space. Sonny wanted to do things not the right way, but *another* way, a *better* way." (Abraham, qtd. in Szwed 76.)

Outer space and technology were present also in the politics of Sun Ra's contemporaries—for example the Nation of Islam, whose teachings included, among others, a giant Mother Ship waiting in the sky ready to wield destruction to the world (Szwed 132). Sun Ra and the Black Muslims both spent time in the Washington Park in Chicago, where they discussed, argued, and at the same time shared influences during the 1950s. According to Arkestra saxophonist John Gilmore, the Black Muslims "embraced a lot of [Sun Ra's] philosophy and started outing it in their newspapers as their own thing" (qtd. in Corbett "One of Everything," 5).

The Black Panthers, who even housed Sun Ra and his Arkestra for a brief time in the early 1970s, were also avid users of imagery of technology and space (Kreiss 74). However, whereas for Sun Ra outer space was almost entirely positive and something worth striving for as a utopian concept, Black Panthers saw space exploration as continuation of colonialism driven by white capitalism (Kreiss 73). After a while, the Sun Ra Arkestra members were evicted from the Panthers-owned house, which Kreiss interprets as "the symbolic moment when these two incompatible approaches to consciousness and technologies clashed" (74).

Sun Ra's and his contemporaries' use of outer space as inspiration was not completely new in the African American cultural tradition either. Lock argues that Sun Ra's art and teachings were in many ways tied to "the broader African American intellectual context": he points out how space, in the form of the "celestial road," featured in the sermons in Southern Baptist churches during the early decades of the 20th century (Lock 26-31). For example, Szwed (134) describes how Reverend A. W. Nix, Baptist preacher from Birmingham, leads his congregation across the solar system in a sermon in 1927: they would "view the flying stars and flashing meteors and then pass on by Mars and Mercury, and Jupiter and Venus . . ." (qtd. in Szwed 134). Therefore, in addition to science fiction books and comics, Sun Ra as a teenager may well have drawn inspiration for his space travel metaphors also from church, where, according to Szwed, his "strict and pious" grandmother used to take him (9).

An Afrofuturist

The term Afrofuturism was coined and defined by cultural critic Mark Dery in 1992 as "[s]peculative fiction that treats African American themes and addresses African American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African American

signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" (180). As is often the case with aesthetic movements, they are named and their origins charted only afterwards. This is also the case with Sun Ra's status as an Afrofuturist pioneer. As Ytasha Womack points out, "[t]he roots of the aesthetic began decades before, but with the emergence of Afrofuturism as a philosophical study, suddenly artists like avant-garde jazz legend Sun Ra . . . were rediscovered and reframed by Afrofuturists as social change agents" (17).

The often very unscientific science of Sun Ra can be seen as an effective Afrofuturist strategy, especially if Afrofuturism is defined as Rollefson does: "Through playful engagement with the primitivist tropes of voodoo or black magic and their ironic juxtaposition to science fiction as a sort of white magic, Afrofuturism strikes blows to both the black nativist stance (read: essentialism) and the white poststructuralist argument (read: anti-essentialist)" (91). Furthermore, in Sun Ra's case, Womack's description of the Afrofuturist strategy is also most fitting: "At its heart, Afrofuturism stretches the imagination far beyond the conventions of our time and the horizons of expectation, and kicks the box of normalcy and preconceived ideas of blackness out of the solar system. … Afrofuturists write their own stories." (16.) Sun Ra did indeed write his own story, and the term "normal" seems not to have been meaningful to him in any way.

Space Is the Place

All of these aspects of Sun Ra's life—his relationship to science, myth, and science fiction—are concisely illustrated in the science fiction movie *Space Is the Place* (1974). The film, directed by John Coney, is for me one of the most interesting Afrofuturist things Sun Ra left behind. It is clearly science fiction, but contains many other elements as well. David Kerekes describes it as "dallying with a wealth of other cinematic forms, notably documentary, art house, blaxploitation and the concert film" (183). It combines a science-fictional plot with Sun Ra's philosophical teachings and his music, both as sound track and as part of the plot as the fuel for his space ship.

In the beginning of *Space Is the Place*, we see Sun Ra in his Egyptian garments on an alien planet, musing that he could set up a colony for black people there. The means of transport could be "isotopic teleportation, transmolecularization, or better still, teleport the whole planet [there] through music." And he sets on his way in his music-powered space ship, landing in Oakland, California, in the early 1970s. His mission is to save the black people of Earth; however, faced with obstacles ranging from a black nemesis "The Overseer" and NASA scientists he finally manages to save only a few. After they have taken off, the Earth explodes behind them.

Perhaps the most interesting scene in the film is one in which Sun Ra visits a community hall and talks to the black teenagers there. After materializing in the middle of the hall shoes first, he greets the "black youth of planet Earth," who understandably are somewhat skeptic at first as to whether he is "for real." Sun Ra answers:

> I'm not real. I'm just like you. You don't exist in this society. If you did, your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights. You're not real. If you were, you'd have some status among the nations of the world. So we're both myths. I do not come to you as a reality; I come to you as the myth, because that's what black people are. Myths. I came from a dream that the black man dreamed a long time ago. I'm actually a presence sent to you by your ancestors.

Then he tells his audience, who seem to be more receptive now, that white people "take frequent trips to the Moon," whereas, obviously, none of the youngsters have been invited. Sun Ra asks them: "How you think you going to exist—the year 2000 is right around the corner." In addition to beautifully illustrating Sun Ra's philosophy and his use of the concept of myth, this scene also

expresses Sun Ra's worry that African Americans would be left behind as technology develops in the world around them.

There are also many events from Sun Ra's life inserted in the film, including the fallout with the Black Panthers (Kreiss 74-75). Lock points out how *Space Is the Place* is "a response perhaps to the heated debates on nationalism and separatism that engaged African Americans in the 1960s and that were given a wide public airing by the rise of the Black Muslim and Black Power movements" (Lock 69). Also, the time the Arkestra spent with the Black Panthers is reflected in the movie in a more mundane sense: when living in a house owned by the Black Panther Party, they were, according to Szwed, "under surveillance by both the FBI and the Oakland police" (286). In the film, the FBI and NASA are doing their best to prevent Sun Ra from playing in a concert and taking the black people with him. The reasons behind this operation are the traditional sci-fi motivation, i.e. craving for alien technology, but also the conservation of racist social structures. This interpretation is encouraged in the movie when, slightly after the landing of Sun Ra's space ship, were hear news on the radio reporting: "Today a party of Negroes claimed to know the secret of space travel, threatening to undermine both the economy and social structure of the strongest nation of Earth and destroy our way of life. They are on the FBI's most wanted list." (Zuberi 87.)

Separatism or preaching an approaching apocalypse were not usually typical of Sun Ra's work, yet both themes are clearly present in *Space is the Place*. Lock sees it as an indication of "the starkness of the choice that he saw facing black people between a 'real' world in which they were trapped in a history of slavery and racist dehumanization, or a 'myth' world in which black creativity was celebrated from the splendors of ancient Egypt to the spaceways of a future heaven" (Lock 73). *Space Is the Place* makes the comparison between the two options very clear. On the one hand, there is the utopian alien planet; on the other there is Earth, where African Americans seem not to have a future. Outer space has never been more inviting.

The Living Myth

Just as *Space Is the Place* contains documentary-styled parts presenting Sun Ra's philosophical reflection about myths, in the same way almost everything he did, played, or said had a mythic dimension. He enjoyed giving mystic and somewhat outrageous answers to interviewers; for example once he remarked that "I'm not here you see—I'm just my image and shadow. I wouldn't be caught dead on a planet like this. So my real self is somewhere else, and I'm talking with this self. The same way you look at a TV set." (qtd. in Lock 73.) In today's virtual reality terms, Sun Ra could be called "the very incarnation of an avatar" (Norment 25). However, as Szwed notes, the shock value was not an end in itself for Ra: there was always a reason for his "tricksterism" and elusiveness. Among other things, it masked or dissolved binaries (Szwed 346). Lock calls Sun Ra's mythology, which was in many ways based on African American history and tradition, "one of the most brilliant and comprehensive acts of self-representation in black culture" (Lock 74). One good example of this combination of African American cultural tradition and history, science fiction, and personal myth-making is Sun Ra's telling of the alien abduction experience (regardless of whether he actually had an experience or not). Szwed described the narrative as creation of personal mythology, while Lock points out the many similarities of Sun Ra's narration of his experience with former slaves' conversion testimonies, but expressed in science-fictional terms, where angels were replaced by aliens and heaven with Saturn (Lock 55).

Even though Sun Ra was completely unique, he was also deeply immersed in the African American traditions as well as the American society and the scientific advances happening around him. He took a little of everything, conducted his own research and original thinking, and formulated it into what Kreiss calls a "black knowledge society":

a metaphorical utopia of consciousness facilitated by science and technology and grounded in the cultural values of ancient Egypt and a reimagining of outer space. Sun Ra's engagement with artifacts and metaphors of energy, outer space, and advanced technologies represents a black cultural uptake and reconception of cold war science in terms of long-established African-American social narratives of liberation and empowerment. (60-61)

Sun Ra's Astro Black Mythology shares something in common with African American science fiction writer Charles Saunders's point that African Americans should write and read science fiction, because, "[w]e have to bring some to get some in outer space and otherspace, as we have done here on Earth. Just as our ancestors sang their songs in a strange land when they were kidnapped and sold from Africa, we must, now and in the future, continue to sing our songs under strange stars." (404.) Sun Ra was truly the first Afrofuturist. He used science and science-fictional elements to create a mythology of his own and to keep aiming for a better future. In an interview with John Sinclair in 1966, Sun Ra explained his conception of myth and the future:

> since this planet for thousands of years has been up under that law of death and destruction, it's moving into something else which I choose to call MYTH, a MYTH-SCIENCE, because it's something that people don't know anything about. That's why I'm using the name MYTH-SCIENCE ARKESTRA, because I'm interested in happiness for people, which is just a myth, because they're not happy. I would say that the synonym for myth is happiness. Because that's why they go to the show, to the movies, they be sitting up there under these myths trying to get themselves some happiness. (qtd. in Sinclair 28)

Does this not beautifully sum up what science fiction is about, as well? Happiness. Either in the form of entertainment, as movies or as reading of an enjoyable book, but also as changing our consciousness, alerting us to future dangers and possibilities, thus shaping the world of tomorrow.

Sun Ra loved equations and he wanted to "associate words so they produce a certain fact" (qtd. in Szwed 319). Therefore, I will end this essay with an equation of my own, pointing out the importance of Sun Ra to all and everyone interested in speculative fiction: if myth equals happiness and happiness is one of the aims of science fiction, the man who can easily be said to have been a living myth was the most science-fictional man in our solar system.

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Maps for Further Exploring: Experiences from Helsinki Summer School Course "Science Fiction in Literature and Culture"

Jari Käkelä

In August 2014 we held a course of "Science Fiction in Literature and Culture"[1] at the Helsinki Summer School, which is an international academic event that takes place every August at the University of Helsinki and offers three-week intensive courses on a wide variety of specialized topics.

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 which both connect with, and propose to change reality. Our class topics included the history and definitions of science fiction, SF in different media (TV, films, games), the relationship between SF and both natural and human sciences, and the study of SF fan culture. We also strived to direct the students' attention to some of the central themes present in contemporary science fiction, among them identity politics, posthumanism and postcolonialism, and also to explore some of the formal ways in which SF creates its weird worlds and temporalities.

The course included lectures by specialists in various areas of science fiction research, and in-class discussions based on the lectures and assigned readings. In addition to class attendance, the requirements included assigned readings of Hannu Rajaniemi's novel *The Quantum Thief* (2010), short stories and theoretical texts, and a learning journal that the students revised and submitted for grading at the end of the course.

The course program, including the assigned readings,[2] was as follows:

Week 1
Session 1: Practicalities
Session 2: Definitions of Science Fiction, Genre literature
Session 3: History I: "From Frankenstein to the Golden Age." Assigned reading: *Frankenstein*, chapters II-IV, vol. I.; Asimov's "Runaround"
Session 4: History II: "From New Wave to New Weird." Assigned reading: Gene Wolfe, "The Death of Dr. Island"
Session 5: Subgenres I: Hard SF. Tow Godwin, "Cold Equations"
Session 6: Subgenres II: Soft SF. Jack Vance, "Dodkin's Job"

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[1]   The course was organized by a group of Finnish SF researchers; course coordinator Päivi Väätänen, Dr. Merja Polvinen, who also acted as the course director, Mika Loponen and myself, and we also taught several lectures each. In addition to this, we had guest lectures by Dr. Irma Hirsjärvi, Kaisa Kortekallio, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Hanna-Riikka Roine, and Dr. Howard Sklar.

[2]   The fairly extensive course reading list aimed at offering the students a look at some of the genre classics while also giving insight into new works in the field. In addition to the texts mentioned in this program, the students read The Quantum Thief before the course and used The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction as its textbook. In addition to this, students with no background in literary studies were expected to catch up by reading Peter Barry's Beginning Theory: Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory prior to the course.

Week 2
Session 7: Science fiction games. Johanna Koljonen, "Carolus Rex." In *Nordic Larp*
Session 8: Fan studies
Session 9: Sciences in science fiction
Session 10: Humanities in science fiction. Ted Chiang, "Story of Your Life"
Session 11: African American SF. Nnedi Okorafor, "The Magical Negro"
Session 12: Colonialism/Postcolonialism. Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"
Session 13: Posthuman subjectivity
Session 14: Student presentations on SF in their country
Session 15: Student presentations continue

Week 3
Session 16: SF and media
Session 17: SF and narratology
Session 18: Fictional worlds.
Session 19: it's about time. Also this class used Ted Chiang's "Story of Your Life"
Session 20: SF and your brain
Session 21: SF, metaphor and allegory. Catherynne M. Valente, "Silently and Very Fast"
Session 22: Group work on course journals
Session 23: Realistic assumptions. Excerpt from Ursula Le Guin's "Betrayals," Octavia Butler, *Kindred* chapters "The Prologue," The River," and "The Fire"
Session 24: Summing up

The following is a report on our experiences and the challenges we encountered while teaching the course, and a discussion on ways to meet those challenges on next versions of the course, including some student and teacher interviews. We hope this will also provide ideas for others planning similar courses.

Making SF teaching more accessible also outside the Anglo-American academic world

In many American (and some British) colleges and universities there already exists something of a tradition in teaching SF – demonstrated also by the fact that all the major academic journals in this field are British or American (*Science Fiction Studies, Extrapolation, Journal of Fantastic in the Arts, Foundation*). In contrast, in the continental Europe, Scandinavia, and Asia, the prospects of studying science fiction literature or other media are often left to scattered courses dependent on individual teachers enthusiastic enough to set them up. While for example Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright in *Teaching Science Fiction* are able to track the history of the growing acceptance of SF research (3–5), they do this with regard to the Anglo-American academia.

Science fiction is only now starting to receive serious attention also in the rest of the academic world. Still, even today teachers and researchers may often find it difficult to get the academia in general to recognize the need to study science fiction, and in particular to convince their departments of the value of doing so. As one of our visiting teachers, Dr. Irma Hirsjärvi from Research Centre of Contemporary Culture at the University of Jyväskylä noted, from the point of view of the Finnish academic "the stigma of popular culture and UFO stories or sort of nonsense is still hovering on the genre, despite the several decades of legitimation project." On our part, we sought to address these issues by offering a course that takes the field seriously, utilizes an

interdisciplinary approach, and gives access to SF scholarship to the international student base created by the Helsinki Summer School.

Fortunately, the Summer School was enthusiastic about our course proposal, and validating the study of SF turned out not to be a particular issue in our case. In general, the teachers of our course felt no need to justify the study of SF to the students either, as many of them came from the SF fan background. The teachers found themselves using largely the same methods to teach SF as they do on other literature courses, although some additional concepts and theories were needed to take into account the speculative and non-realistic dimensions of the genre, as Dr. Howard Sklar pointed out. On the other hand, some of the students also came from fandom with an already strong appreciation of the genre, and seemed to take the value of SF as an intrinsic quality. During these discussions, the teachers found it necessary to step back and urge the students to consider the larger socio-cultural implications of the genre and its connection with the mainstream literary establishment. The course aimed to help students look past generalizations and stereotypes of the genre, while also analysing the origins of those stereotypes and pointing out the literary self-awareness of science fiction, from the 1940s Golden Age era onwards.

Student backgrounds and their general experiences from the course

The Helsinki Summer School system brought in a wide variety of students with different cultural backgrounds and fields of study. They came from eight countries: Lithuania, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United States, China and Japan – and numerous disciplines, from literary studies, psychology and linguistics to creative writing and business administration, to name a few. Some of the students applied for the course because they were fans of science fiction, but many also viewed it as an opportunity to combine an interesting topic with an experience of studying in a foreign country, even if they were not very familiar with the genre. For many of the students this seemed a rare chance of studying SF, as they explained that at their home universities they are hard pressed to find courses that would focus on science fiction, let alone fit them in their study plans.

There were also returning students who had participated in some other HSS courses the previous year, like Regina Kanyu Wang from Fudan University, China, and Simona Falato from University of Rome Tor Vergata, who came to repeat their Summer School experiences.

Some of the students came from fields not related to humanities and only a few of them had previous experience of cultural or literary studies as such, but they liked the multidisciplinary approach and the way our guest lecturers were able to offer in-depth sessions on their specialized fields. For example Neal Simons, majoring in English at Finlandia University, Hancock, MI., appreciated the course's fluidity combined with its underlying structure, saying: "I liked how we always had different [teachers] for each class, each one specializing in the field that he/she was talking about. You could feel the enthusiasm and passion as they spoke." This enthusiasm that a researcher feels at a receptive audience of their chosen field was contagious and also led to lively in-class discussions that only rarely needed encouragement.

Student presentations and discussions at the course

During the course, the students were also asked to give presentations on science fiction in their own countries, with the view of providing both the students and the teachers an insight into works of SF that we might not otherwise encounter. As the globally present Anglo-American tradition in SF may often obscure more local works, the students were delighted to discover a science fiction heritage in their own countries. Lithuanian Oksana Grajauskaitė, who is currently working on a BA in Creative

Writing at the University of East London, said: "I discovered that my country actually *does have* a history of sci-fi, I was under impression that it's non-existent." The same was true also of the Italian tradition for Simona Falato and Alice Carbone, who majors in psychology at the La Sapienza Rome University, as they listed Dino Buzzati's *The Great Portrait* and Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* among the discoveries they made while preparing their presentation.

In addition to broadening perspectives beyond the usual Anglo-American canon, the student presentations also helped to add to the issues discussed in the lectures, for example to "rethink the limits of forms in which sci-fi can exist, and ask … can a theatrical performance be sci-fi," as Oksana noted. Or as Neal pointed out, to analyse more in depth the significance of science fiction in the USA as an affirmation and a source of national mythology in a young nation – leading to fruitful discussions about how science fiction often ends up being thematically representative of the authors' own time, even if the plot takes place in some completely different temporal or spatial universe.

With regard to the fluid nature of the course that the lively discussions created, one of our teachers, Kaisa Kortekallio from the University of Helsinki, noted when looking back at giving a lecture on posthuman subjectivity: "When teaching a class on contemporary science fiction, it's almost impossible to keep fiction apart from actual events. Talking about cyborg characters leads to discussion about our relation to everyday technology, talking about genetically modified posthumans leads to discussion about stem cell research. I find this a positive aspect, especially when the course is titled 'Science fiction in literature and culture.'"

Mark Brake and Neil Hook point out that science fiction is often taught without linking it with the actual sciences that it draws on (*Teaching SF* 203). For our part, we sought to address this issue with Päivi Väätänen's lecture on sciences in science fiction, and as she noted, also the students found this connection between the science and the fiction fascinating. With today's speculative science, it is sometimes hard to draw the line between science and science fiction - or even pseudoscience - and the class discussions on the topic were lively. Väätänen's class got to try out all three aspects in an exercise where, divided into small groups, they described a planet with certain conditions, gave it to the next group to describe a plant living in that world, and so on along the food chain. As the Helsinki Summer School is always open for alternative teaching methods, the course was also a good place to try out fun approaches alongside the more theoretical discussions.

As for the literary theoretical side of things, the interest shown by the more advanced students would have well warranted delving more deeply into matters like the definitions of science fiction, the sense of wonder, and their theoretical implications. However, a short intensive course like this that has to take into account the students' varying backgrounds and entry levels makes it difficult to cater for all levels at once. In hindsight, it would be good to have some way of assigning alternative projects to groups on different levels to facilitate their interest so that the more theoretical discussions could be held, while also making sure that most students leave the course satisfied that they have been able to follow the general strain of teaching.

Some of the issues raised frequently in the discussions were the race and gender conventions, and the (often even overt) sexism in SF storylines and characters. In addition to the lectures focusing on these issues, attention to these matters arose from students who were actively interested in the topics of race and gender equality through their own studies, and they also challenged the other students' assumptions or attempts to dismiss these matters in the discussions. The students seemed to be inspired by this enthusiastic participation as they realized the many levels of relevance to cultural and societal concerns in science fiction. All in all, this resulted in fruitful debates, but also reminded the teachers of the need to be able also to sum things up and move on – when the debate could have carried on indefinitely.

Because of the enthusiastic discussions, we felt that debates and discussions should perhaps be allotted even more space within the next iteration of the course, provided of course that the next group is as motivated as this one.

The pedagogical potential of SF

The course syllabus was planned according to the idea, voiced for example by Lisa Yaszek, that if an effective SF critic ought to work also in the realm of the cultural historian, also students of SF should from the beginning be led to the direction of considering science fiction as cultural history (Yaszek 113). As she sees it, science fiction is "a body of literature that developed in tandem with modern literary, political and technoscientific systems" so that students can be encouraged to "make active connections between individual sf texts and other primary scientific and social documents" (ibid).

To some extent we were able to anticipate the fact that coming from various academic disciplines, even those students who took the course because they were SF fans, might not be familiar with the cultural-literary-analytic approach we adopted. Indeed, one of the tasks the teachers faced (and which would certainly require even more attention next time around) was to help the students distinguish between the discourse and terminology that originates in the fandom, the marketing discourse that the everyday consumer of SF entertainment encounters, and the discourse and approach of the scholars and the academics (see also Wolfe 38–54; Sawyer and Wright 12–13). In terms of literary criticism, the lectures sought to address these issues by showing how the chosen themes and historical/cultural developments were visible in the texts discussed by giving the students tools they can actually use to analyse the texts. As Sawyer and Wright put it:

> Students who take pleasure in science fiction's speculative qualities, its engendering of a sense of wonder or estrangement, its exploitation of language's rich possibilities and inherent tensions, can be introduced to theoretical concepts and reading protocols specific to the genre which will enhance both their learning experiences and their understanding of literature's diverse potential. (6)

However, because of the variety in the students' entry levels, at times this noble objective had to recede into the background in favour of explaining the more basic notions that would then enable the students to explore the more complex issues. On the other hand, this also generated interesting debates, as the more well-versed students eagerly contributed to these explications. While many of the students who were not familiar with the whole concept of close reading or literary analysis in general first struggled with this kind of an approach, in the end they appreciated the way the texts opened up in a new way. Ideally, we would want the students to familiarise themselves with some basics of literary, media or cultural criticism before the course begins (e.g. the recommended volume by Barry), but this is difficult without making the course reading list even heavier that it now was. Ultimately, however, this version of the course was planned to be accessible for students from various fields; therefore, we strove to keep the literary theory to the minimum.

The assigned texts

For the course as a whole, the question of what to choose as material was a considerable challenge. In the end we decided on a selection of canonical texts which would illustrate the birth of the canon and enable discussions on the development of themes and the origins of certain (stereotypical) motifs and narratives – accompanied by texts less frequently seen to broaden the vista also for the

students already well-versed in the genre. In addition to this, we let the guest lecturers assign texts that suited their own presentations best.

To fuse the cultural history and criticism with the more theoretical issues, our selection of assigned reading and the course structure was devised to first give the students a basic run-through of the history of SF and the development of its themes to make sure everyone is closer to the same starting level, and only after this to investigate certain themes in more depth.

Ted Chiang's "The Story of Your Life" was one of the student favourites, and as Dr. Merja Polvinen, our course director from the University of Helsinki and Collegium for Advanced Studies notes: "Chiang dealt with temporal conventions in a way that I found immensely useful for explaining narrative temporality to students, and it has generally been received well - this time also." The other work to gather most attention from the students was Rajaniemi's *Quantum Thief*. Partly this was of course because it was the only novel-length text and was to be read before the course began. The role of Rajaniemi's novel was also emphasised by the fact that throughout the course, it was used as a touchstone for discussing many of the course themes and concepts, ranging from hard SF and posthumanism to metaphor and cognitive studies. In addition to the students' initial bafflement with the 'difficulty' of the novel, it also sparked discussions like the session on SF television by Aino-Kaisa Koistinen from University of Jyväskylä, where she led the students to consider the possibilities and difficulties of audiovisual science fiction narratives through a group work on what a TV adaptation of *Quantum Thief* might look like.

If the literary theory proved to be challenging for the non-literature students, that was also the case with some of the assigned texts. As Merja Polvinen said: "the text I would change is Valente's "Silently and Very Fast" - it was clearly too long and too difficult for students on this level, and its particular themes (metaphorical thinking) can be dealt with through other texts." Personally, on the next version of the course I might drop Tom Godwin's "Cold Equations" in favour of using Asimov's "Runaround" both for the discussion on hard science fiction and SF history, alongside with the *Frankenstein* excerpt, to leave more room for in-depth analysis and discussion that the students can engage in. In general, many of our teachers felt that next time we might do well to shorten the reading list and leave more room for discussions – and give the students time to get more in depth with specific texts.

Experiences, challenges and lessons for future course planning

For the students, the course was very work-intensive and the long reading list was clearly a challenge to many. Rajaniemi's *Quantum Thief* was almost uniformly felt to be the most difficult text, especially for the students who were less familiar with the genre's tropes and vocabulary. However, in the end it thankfully proved for many also the most interesting one, properly opening up only in the in-class discussions that analysed its complex themes and allowed the students to share their initial confusion when reading it. Despite the initial difficulty, many found the work rewarding, in the end "restoring my faith in modern sci-fi and reinvigorat[ing] me in a way," as Neal put it. Among the most educational texts, the students listed Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild" and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, undoubtedly for the strong ethical issues they raised. Another favourite along with Rajaniemi seemed to be Chiang's "The Story of Your Life" which stood out for its narrative style. For example to Oksana, it amounted to "the most beautiful thing I have read in my life so far." Chiang's compact yet complex story elicited enthusiastic replies both with regard to the linguistic and philosophical themes and the narrative structure.

Coming in with such different levels of familiarity with the genre, some of the students found themselves introduced to much greater variety than they expected also with regard to the assigned readings. For example Alice said: "When I started the course I didn't know anything about

Science Fiction and I thought that the whole genre was about robots, space or aliens." On the other hand, some of the students who were already deeper into the genre found the course to expand their existing understanding of, seeing is as "a map for further exploring," as Oksana said. With regard to our objectives, these enthusiastic comments seemed to prove our course objective satisfactorily reached.

However, one of the surprises was the divergence in the students' language skills. While there were native speakers and students who spoke English as their second language with ease and actively participated in the discussions, there were also a number of students who were visibly shy about expressing themselves in English. This proved to be a challenge throughout the course, and necessitated the teachers to act as moderators of the in-class discussions. In practice, from time to time we also had to ask the students to rearrange into different groups for their discussions to make sure that all of the students got to participate in the discussion. The differences in language skills were also visible in the students' learning journals where it became obvious that some had difficulties grasping the more complex concepts during the lectures. The students were required to submit their journal entries soon after each lecture, and as the teachers were reading these alongside the course, we were able to revisit some of the subjects that seemed to need more elucidation. In hindsight, this is also a practical issue that could be remedied by requiring a certain level of language competence from the students accepted to the course. Letting the students clearly know in advance the language skills required to successfully take part in the course would also benefit the students.

While the language issue was something of a surprise, we were better prepared for the differences in the students' familiarity with the genre and its canon, and all of our teachers tried to take this into account. Rather than a cultural difference, for example Dr. Hirsjärvi noticed considerable differences between the individual students' ability to understand the nature of the genre. Hanna-Riikka Roine from University of Tampere, who gave a guest lecture on science-fictional worlds from the point of view of game studies, also found that her specialised topic brought these divisions clearly to the fore: "some students were immediately able to put the games discussed in class into wider perspective and into relation with other games (and question, for example, my choice to classify the games as RPGs) while others had perhaps played *Tetris* once in their lives." However, she saw this also as a more general problem with regard to lectures on game studies to less specialized audiences. As she noted, the course needs to be able to find a balance between giving the newcomers an introduction to the genre, while giving also the hardcore fans something new to chew on. An additional thing to consider is the fact that the students who come to the course as members of fandom may be very well versed in SF canon, or at least very enthusiastic about certain works, but they may easily look at the genre so exclusively through the "fannish" glasses that they find it difficult to critically analyse their beloved works.

For the teacher, there are several challenges in encountering such a varied group of participants. Having taught several rounds of SF courses both in Finland and abroad, Dr. Polvinen noted: "In general, I do think that SF courses run the risk of implying that they will be easy – this has a lot to do with the image of SF as a popular form of art/literature, which leads people to think they will only have to read fun stuff and not work very hard." This certainly was the implication from some of our course feedback: our extensive reading list and work-intensive classes seemed to have resulted in one of the most demanding courses within the Summer School syllabus for that year, and some of the students found this to be a bit of a shock, even when they found the learning experience also rewarding.

Conclusions

To sum up, organising the course was a positive experience and left us filled with ideas. The student presentations were felt to be successful in exploring voices different from the Anglo-American canon, and they ended up educating both the students and ourselves on the science fiction traditions in their native countries. This is definitely something we will see in the next version of the course as well, perhaps allocating more time for them and the resulting discussion. In general, too, we felt that if the next group of students seem as able to engage in thoughtful discussions on the topics, they should definitely receive more time to do so. Also our reading list needs to be slightly slimmed down to leave more time for more in-depth sessions. In addition to this, we realized the need to specify more clearly the level of language skills expected for successfully participating in the course. The highly varied student body that a course like this gathers can create both its weaknesses – some will feel it is too easy, while for some it is clearly too difficult – as well as its strengths – the interdisciplinary and intercultural discussions.

The interview sections are a result of a series of email interviews with the Summer School teachers and students and are quoted with their permission.

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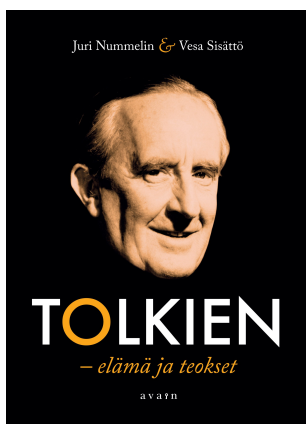
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Kirja-arvio:
Juri Nummelin & Vesa Sisättö – *Tolkien – elämä ja teokset.*

Jyrki Korpua

Nummelin, Juri & Sisättö, Vesa: *Tolkien – elämä ja teokset*. Helsinki: Avain, 2014. ISBN: 978-952-304-043-4.

Juri Nummelinin ja Vesa Sisätön teos pureutuu yleistajuisesti 1900-luvun suosituimpaan kirjailijaan ja fantasian merkittävimpään yksittäiseen vaikuttajaan J. R. R. Tolkieniin. Teoksen takakansiteksti huomioikin kyseessä olevan ensimmäinen suomeksi kirjoitettu yleisesitys Tolkienista ja hänen kirjallisesta tuotannostaan. Ensireaktio kirjaan tarttuessa on, että tämänkaltaista suomenkielistä teosta on todellakin tarvittu.

Teos on jaettu kolmeen pääosaan (elämä, teokset ja vaikutus) sekä lähdeluetteloihin ja täydentävään bibliografiaan. Tolkienin elämän ja teosten läpikäynti on nyt sopivassa kuosissa, sillä muissa yhteyksissä kovin tarkasti läpikäytyyn kirjailijan elämään käytetään 20 sivua ja teoksiin kronologisessa kirjoitusjärjestyksessä (ei julkaisujärjestyksessä) reilut 110 sivua. Sen sijaan Tolkienin teosten representaatioihin ja vaikutuksiin muissa mediumeissa käytetään miltei toiset sata sivua. Tämän jälkeen tuleekin miettineeksi teoksen otsikointia, sillä Tolkienin elämän ja teosten ohella kolmas pääluku "Vaikutus" tuntuu jopa teoksen sisällöllisesti merkittävämmältä osalta. Ainakin se on läpikäynnissään tuorein, vaikuttavin ja eniten ajatuksia herättävä.

Teoksen alkupuolta lukiessa huomaa, että Tolkienin elämänvaiheita ja teosten valmistumista käsiteltäessä yleinen painopiste tuntuu olevan Humphrey Carpenterin *J. R. R. Tolkien: Elämäkerta* (*J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 1977) -teoksen tarjoamissa näkemyksissä. Tämä siitä huolimatta, että kyseisen elämäkerran tiettyjä osia on myöhemmin kritisoitu tutkijoiden joukossa. Esimerkiksi Carpenter näkee, että Tolkien kirjoitti "mytologiaa Englannille" ("a mythology for England"). Nykynäkemys on, että Tolkien paremminkin halusi *omistaa* mytologiansa Englannille ("mythology dedicated for England") (kritiikistä, ks. esim. Whittingham 35 ja Flieger 6). Tämän ansakuopan Nummelin ja Sisättö onneksi taiten väistävät. Sen sijaan teoksessa yllättävän hallitseva lähdeteos on Brian Roseburyn *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon*, jota itse en pidä kovinkaan keskeisenä teoksena.

Erityisen mielenkiintoista antia teoksia ja niiden representaatioita läpikäydessä on kotimainen aikalaiskritiikki teosten ilmestymisten yhteydessä. Näiden kautta teosten muuttuvat kontekstit avautuvat kiehtovalla tavalla. Esimerkiksi *Demarin* Jaakko Lensu kommentoi tuoreeltaan *Tarua Sormusten Herrasta* nyttemmin huvittavilta tuntuvin sanoin: "Tolkienin sadussa on runsaasti henkilöitä joilla on vaikeasti muistettavat nimet. Kirjoittaja käyttää myös monia itse keksimiään sanoja. Taru Sormusten Herrasta teettääkin lukijalleen melkoisesti työtä, enemmän kuin tavanomaiset seikkailukertomukset."

Erinomainen lisä nykylukijoita ja ehkäpä tulevia lukijasukupolviakin ajatellen on Tolkienin suomen- ja ruotsinkielistä tutkimusta erittelevä bibliografia, joka on kerätty Arto-tietokannasta sekä Jussi Vainikaisen internet-bibliografiasta. Kielivalinnan vuoksi suomalaisten tutkijoiden muilla kielillä kirjoittamat artikkelit, esimerkiksi omat englannin- ja puolankieliset artikkelini, jäävät ymmärrettävästi pois. Toisaalta artikkelien julkaisufoorumi on ollut ankara joillekin artikkeleille. Esimerkiksi Johannes Kellomäen sangen ansiokas *Raamatun* myyttejä ja Tolkienin tekstejä vertaileva artikkeli "Mytologia elää Tolkienissa" (*Etsijä* 4/2002, s. 37–40) jää nyt bibliografian ulkopuolelle. Puutteena lähdeluettelosta pitäisin niin ikään Tolkien-tutkimukseen tutustumisen tärkeitä lähtökohtia Michael Droutin, Hilary Wynnen ja Melissa Higginsin artikkelia "Scholarly Studies of J. R. R. Tolkien and his Works (in English)" sekä Droutin toimittamaa teosta *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia. Scholarship and Critical Assesment* (2007).

Itse teos on kauttaaltaan tarttuvasti ja mielenkiintoisesti kirjoitettu. Kyseessä on sisältönsä ja sanomansa puolesta ehdottoman tärkeä ja kaivattu lisä kotimaisten Tolkienia koskevien teosten joukkoon. Teos sopii sekä Tolkienista kiinnostuneille uudemman polven lukijoille kuin vuosikymmenten ajan Tolkienin teoksiin uppoutuneille faneille ja tutkijoille. Lisäksi tekijät tuntuvat sisäistäneen erinomaisesti Tolkienin tärkeyden 21. vuosisadan ihmisille, minkä Sisätön kirjoittamat *Tolkien – elämä ja teokset* loppusanat (242) hyvin osoittavat:

> Mikä on J. R. R. Tolkienin sanoma 21. vuosisadan ihmisille? Vastaus: Tolkienin arvo on hänen omaperäisyydessään, vastarannankiiskeydessään ja taidossaan fantasian lumon luojana. Hän yritti synnyttää uudestaan muinaisen yhteyden ihmisen, hänen kielensä ja maailmansa välille. . . .

> Paradoksaalisesti Tolkien saattoi luoda tämän kaipaamansa yhteyden vain kielestä rakentamassaan fantasiamaailmassa, joka sekin oli eräänlaisessa haikean muutoksen tilassa. Tolkienin lukija pääsee katsomaan tätä maailmaa, jota modernismin tyhjiö jumalan kuolemineen ei ole koskettanut.

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