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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

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Editorial 1/2017

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen & Jyrki Korpua

In this issue, 1/2017, *Fafnir* is proud to present our new editor Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay. Bodhi is SAMKUL Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oslo. He brings to *Fafnir* an expertise in postcolonial themes in science fiction with a focus on World SF and Indian SF. He is particularly interested in issues of worldbuilding and narrative in science fiction, and in his most recent work, he has been exploring how one may utilize the relation between technoscientific innovation and narrative strategies in science fiction for conceptualizing new technologies. Among other things, he has also contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (ed. John Clute et al). He is also a huge Olaf Stapledon fan.

This first issue of year 2017 includes two research articles, an interview with Professor and science fiction author James E. Gunn and one book review.

The first article, Eduardo Lima's "The Once and Future Hero: Understanding the Hero in Quest Fantasy" discusses hero's figure in popular fantasy series – George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* and Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*. The article compares heroes in these series to classical epic heroes from the Old English poem *Beowulf* and Old Norse poems of *(The Poetic) Edda*. There, Lima employs aspects from distinguished theories of Northrop Frye's and Mikhail Bakhtin's genre categorisations in imaginative way. This article in many ways reflects the discussions that went on also in this year's ICFA held in Orlando, Florida that focused on the theme of "Fantastic Epics". So *Fafnir* is, once again, riding on a crest of a wave in science fiction and fantasy research.

The other article in this issue is Chen F. Michaeli's "'Back to the Real London'; or Mapping the City of the Past in Gaiman's *Neverwhere*". The article discusses the genre logics of urban fantasy in Neil Gaiman's praised novel *Neverwhere* focusing on two separate spaces of London Above and London Below that manifest in the novel as (almost) parallel levels of existence. Michaeli's text focuses on how Gaiman uses allusions to the 19th century to construct the city "as both asocially oppressive space but also a fantastical one".

In "13 Questions on Science Fiction: Interview with Professor James Edwin Gunn", we have the pleasure to get to know some of the thoughts of the distinguished professor and author James E. Gunn on science fiction genre and its themes and developments. Sayyed Ali Mirenayat and Elaheh Soofastaei present the author pressing questions ranging from technology and human transcendence to religion in the genre. The interview offers us a glimpse of the genre's past but keeps an eye its future, as well.

Last but not least, we present you Jari Käkelä's thorough review on Jerome Winter's new book *Science Fiction, New Space Opera, and Neoliberal Globalism: Nostalgia for Infinity*.

Our next issue, 2/2017, is scheduled for June–July 2017. After that, *Fafnir's* Issue 3/2017, scheduled for September 2017, will be a themed issue be focusing on reception, audience/s and fandom studies. In the end of the journal, you can find the call for papers for the themed issue.

We would also like to remind you that Worldcon 75 will be held in Helsinki, Finland, in August. *Fafnir's* publisher, The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and fantasy Research Finfar (FINFAR), is hosting the academic track there. The program will be published here soon[1]. We, the editors of *Fafnir* will also be present at Worldcon, and we hope to meet lots of you there, as well!

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[1]   See Worldcon's website: http://www.worldcon.fi/.

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The Once and Future Hero: Understanding the Hero in Quest Fantasy

Eduardo Lima

Abstract: This paper examines the figure of the hero in Quest Fantasy novels, George R. R Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*. It employs Frye's taxonomy for the categorization of genres and Bakhtin's seminal ideas on the Epic and the Novel as references to analyse the characterisation of the Quest Fantasy hero in selected Fantasy texts and compares them with two Heroic works, *Beowulf* and *The Poetic Edda*. This analysis is based on the premise that Fantasy fuses elements of the Epic and the novel in a dialogic tension that is manifest in the setting and in the characterisation of the hero. It starts by looking at the general understanding of the hero figure, especially in the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse tradition. It then discusses how shifts in the way contemporary Western societies understand the world requires a new view of the hero. This is followed by an analysis of the narrative chronotope and its effects on the characterisation of the Quest Fantasy hero, from its beginnings to its journey into the adventurous world.

Biography and contact info: Eduardo Lima completed his doctoral studies at the department of Game Studies at Brunel University London. He has a BA and MA in English Studies and his main area of interest is in narratives in video games, literature, film, and popular culture. His research explores dialogical relationships between works in different media with a special focus on chronotopic and archetypal readings.

Introduction

This paper examines the figure of the hero in Quest Fantasy novels, George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*. It employs Frye's taxonomy for the categorisation of genres and Bakhtin's seminal ideas on the Epic and the Novel (3–40) as references to analyse the Quest Fantasy hero in selected Fantasy texts and compares them with two Heroic works, *Beowulf* and *The Poetic Edda*. In this paper, I use the term *fantasy* with small *f* to refer to the abstract concept of the fantastic imagination and thinking (Coleridge), whereas *Fantasy* with capital *F* is used to refer to the genre (Mendlesohn). The discussion conducted in this paper is based on the premise that Fantasy, as a genre, fuses elements of the Epic and the novel in a dialogic tension that is manifest in the setting and in the characterisation of the hero. It starts by looking at the general

understanding of the hero figure, especially in the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse tradition. It then discusses how shifts in the way contemporary Western societies understand the world requires a new view of the hero. This is followed by an analysis of the narrative chronotope[1] and its effects on the characterisation of the Quest Fantasy hero, from its beginnings to its journey into the adventurous world.

In spite of growing interest and scholarship in the field, Fantasy is still considered by some critics as childish or escapist and not "correct and proper taste" literature (Shippey 1–4) and a "low art form concerned with play and desire" (Casey 115). However, the debt of the genre in its current form to canonical Old English and Old Norse texts is quite well documented in literary criticism. Tolkien's essay *Beowulf, The Monsters and the Critics* still remains relevant to contemporary critics over 50 years after its publication and in it Tolkien rejects the kind of criticism on the poem that resembles the sort of criticism now directed towards Fantasy. By looking at two post-Tolkien works and comparing them with two major storylines of Old English and Old Norse literature this paper highlights the connections between old heroic narratives and contemporary Fantasy literature from a chronotopic point of view, hoping that looking at such connections can bring to the readers of both genres a new understanding of Fantasy and its relationships with other long established literary genres.

Quest Fantasy (Senior 190–199) is perhaps the best known of the Fantasy sub-genres as it has been made famous by the most prominent works of Fantasy such as *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien) and the *Chronicles of Narnia* (Lewis). In it, promising or aspiring heroes are presented with a great mission to be completed and around which the whole narrative takes place, this quest may be visible right from the beginning or make itself apparent slowly throughout the narrative. *The Wheel of Time* (Jordan) and *A Song of Ice and Fire* (Martin) were chosen to represent the genre in this article for their prominence as contemporary works as well as their different configurations.

From Achilles to Rand Al'Thor

Heroes can be seen as two-fold figures. Firstly, they are often the main protagonists of a given narrative. Secondly, they can be seen as archetypal figures. According to Frye archetypal hero figures are an "associative cluster and complex variable" (102) of meaning signifying abstract cognition of all heroes and, as such, intrinsically linked with human psyche (Campbell 337). Frye (33-34) classifies the literary genres on the basis of the nature of the hero. In *Myth*, "the protagonist is superior in kind to "us", and to the fictional environment" (Korpua 126), which often confers him some divine attributes. *Romance* is the genre where the hero is superior in degree others and to his environment as he belongs to a world where the natural laws are somehow suspended. Although he is still human, his actions are extraordinary and his "prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him" (Frye 33). The *High mimetic* genre is that in which the hero is above other men but not to his natural environment. The hero "has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature" (Frye 34); he is the hero of most epic and tragic narratives. The hero in Greek tragedy, such as Oedipus, tends to be highly mimetic. On the other hand, the *Low mimetic* genre is that usually found in comedy and realistic fiction in which the hero is equal to his society and his environment. Frye's division between high and low mimetic does not refer to a higher or lower degree of mimesis, as he himself admits. Rather, it denotes the degree of the heroic greatness. Finally, in the *Ironic* genre, the hero is inferior in some way to how the readers/audiences see themselves so "that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity" (Frye 34).

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[1]   Chronotope is the time and space as present and depicted in a narrative. According to Bakhtin, chronotope is 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Bakhtin 84).

Frye's taxonomy is also chronological to a certain extent since it proposes a classification that moves from the crystallisation of the mythological demigod hero, as in Homer, into a more humane existence, such as that of Oedipus. This progress continues into the Roman Empire as Virgil invokes the form in the *Aeneid* to ground his work and his society in the world of "firsts" and "bests" which is characteristic of the past looking Epic (Bakhtin 13). The fall of the Roman Empire in the West creates the space for quasi-mythological heroes that bring together Christian, pagan Northern European traditions, such as Beowulf, and chivalric tales, such as King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (Malory). The hero thus changes as he moves through time and space adapting to conform to the views of their society, while inheriting their existence and even form to those of previous and even far away cultures that come to influence both the society and author.

While useful, Frye's taxonomy is hardly definitive, especially where epic heroes are concerned. Since these tales are the expression of a society in which "religion is mythological and polytheistic, it is hardly possible to separate the mythical, romantic, and high mimetic strands completely" (Frye 34–35). Frye's statement is especially true in the case of Sigurd's tale since the main action is prefaced by the mythological tale of the source of Fafnir's hoard in 'The Lay of Regin' (Larrington 151–154). Sigurd's main heroic feat is the slaying of the dwarf turned dragon Fafnir, the brother of Sigurd's foster father Regin. Fafnir killed his father so as to be the sole proprietor of the treasure bestowed upon their family for the death of their brother Otter at the hands of the gods, the treasure itself is said to be cursed a fact which creates a sense of predestination to Sigurd's final fate associated with Nordic mythology.

Beowulf's case, however, is perhaps more complex for the poem itself has very strong Christian overtones throughout the text, praising the "glorious Almighty" "Lord of Life" already within the first 20 lines of the poem (*Beowulf* 3). While it is true to say that the poem has Christian connotations, the same cannot be said of the tale itself, as its subject belongs to a pre-Christian warrior society. These tales are thus poised in a space somewhere between myth and history, creating human heroes who, in spite of being fantastical, shaped the narrative of perceived reality of their society (Earl 273–278). Beowulf and Sigurd can thus be seen as mimetic characters – renowned warriors and great leaders in their own worlds. However, their main achievement lies in the realm of the fantastical, in the slaying of monsters, not men. This highlights one of the main aspects of the Epic, which is also present in Romance and Myth: the superior hero. The hero's superiority over other men is also a fairly common trope in Fantasy. The concept of the hero, especially in the highly fantastical and archetypal genre of Fantasy, is highly dependent on a society's and an author's own view of itself and of the world (Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* 8). This is mirrored as such in the various subgenres available that create a dialogical relationship between the hero figure, the character itself as a person, the genre and the culture behind both reader and author. As such, while the hero archetype is somewhat universal every single particular hero and heroic narrative is different in their own right and in relation to the archetype.

The Wheel of Time's Rand Al'Thor is a good example of the hero's perceived superiority since he is The Dragon Reborn, the hero of prophecy, and a man capable of great feats of magic and swordsmanship. Beowulf, while not magical per se, does possess his own super human traits, namely his Herculean strength with which he grapples the monster Grendel, tearing its arm off (*Beowulf* 53–55) whereas Sigurd shares the super human strength of Beowulf, but is also endowed with an immunity to poison characteristic of the Volsungs (Larrington 142).

For all their fantastical traits, however, both Beowulf and Sigurd are rather lacking in personality traits. We first hear of the Geat hero as the 'Hygelac's Thane', almost as if he had no name. All we are told is that 'There was no one else like him alive./ In his day, he was the mightiest man on earth,/ high-born and powerful' (*Beowulf* 17). A description that is largely interchangeable with Sigurd's. Their identities as heroes precede any identity of the individuals. In Beowulf's case, his allegiance and nationality are expressed first, his position as hero second, his ancestry third (19),

and only then does he name himself as Beowulf (25). They are defined not by their individual traits, but by the judgment of other men, who consider them as superior. Bakhtin argues that the Epic hero,

> is entirely externalized in the most elementary, almost literal sense: everything in him is exposed and loudly expressed: his internal world and all his external characteristics, his appearance and his actions all lie in a single plane. His view of himself coincides completely with other's views of him (Bakhtin 34).

Not only is the hero superior and exemplar to other men, but also dependent on others for his very existence. The Bakhtinian Epic hero is therefore less a character and more a symbolic function himself. Earl (279) analyses this ambivalence of the hero and his society in the form of the ties between Lordship and its people/followers in the light of Freud's analysis of the psychology behind the "primal horde" which denotes that it is the followers' duty to follow and serve their leader. The followers are inspired by the leader's example but also know their own limitations and do not aspire to be equal to him whereas the leader's prerogative and duty is the freedom to set the example (Earl 273–279). This is perhaps best demonstrated by Beowulf's final fight with the dragon, where he feels the presence of his tragic fate yet continues as if compelled to the action (*Beowulf* 165). This compelling act is both personal and social. It is the hero's function to face the dragon as the enforcer of the heroic code and he cannot exist outside his role. Once completed, his death is the only possible outcome. He belongs and is contained to the world of the story told in the distanced epic past. As Earl points out,

> Beowulf himself, then, at the end of the poem, is a representation not of the ego but the superego – inspiring, but terrifying in his heroic freedom and superiority, revealing by his very existence our inadequacy, and punishing us for our inability to be like him (Earl 279).

In giving up the "I" for the plural "We," heroes like Beowulf and Sigurd create a highly symbolical identity whose fate in the narrative is to become a form of martyr of society, a sacrifice for social cohesion by glorifying the memory of the past. It is important to note that unlike the Fantasy hero, whose fate is often involved with the fate of the land itself, the Epic hero is linked to the fate of his society, not to the physical world. In both, however, we can find a sense of diminishing, a loss of vitality. In Fantasy, it is the world that diminishes, both socially and physically, whereas in Epic, human nature and society weaken while the physical world remains indifferently oppressive (Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* 33).

Shifting shapes

Although the overview above is important as a background against which to analyse the figure of the hero as a whole, this reading of the Epic hero is, in many ways, a fantastical generalisation in itself and a feat of abstraction which finds no shortage of problems in the close examination of individual cases. First, it is important to consider the gradual historical disappearance of the Epic hero from fiction as linked to the gradual diminishing of the fantastic towards a greater amount of mimesis. This is the movement which Frye perceives as a shifting of the "narrative centre of gravity down" (34) towards low mimetic and ironic modes of literature. The nature of the Fantasy genre itself may be seen as a reaction to this shifting. Bakhtin (20–23) describes the breakdown of Epic distance in two terms, first the destructive power of familiarity through the closing in of distance by comic laughter and through the movement of perspective from the past to the incomplete and constantly rethought present. In Bakhtin's words,

> Familiarization of the world through laughter and popular speech is an extremely important and indispensable step in making possible free, scientifically knowable and artistically realistic creativity in European civilization. . . . The distanced images of the epic and the images of familiar contact can never meet on the same field of representation (Bakhtin 23–28).

Once entered the zone of the familiar, it is impossible to leave and the Epic is incapable of maintaining its complete meaning and symbolical value. The gap between fantasy and the mimesis of perceived reality becomes too apparent and immersion[2] is broken. Losing its link to the past of its own culture to satire and familiarity, an alternative is to move the Epic narrative to the plane of the past of others, such as in Cyropedia, where Xenophon sets the hero in a foreign land and barbaric past (Bakhtin 28). However, even this refuge crumbles as the process of scientific understanding develops in history, and with it a growing confidence in the mimetic property of the narrative of perceived reality slowly gains ground in the human psyche. Another agent in the downfall of the superior hero is the process of novelisation of narratives (Bakhtin 37–39), where the present and the growing understanding of the human being as both complex and incomplete, therefore resistant to a singleness of meaning or function, expands in prominence.

The process of the decline of the Epic hero and the rise of the realistic protagonist reached its culmination in the twentieth century, until finally confidence in the powers of mimetic narrative turned into disillusionment. The breakdown of the positivistic ideal of absolute mastery of the world through logic, and the goal of an absolutely mimetic narrative of the understanding of perceived reality finally meet their match in the unprecedented social traumas that constituted most of the past century. As the unbridgeable gap between consciousness and reality made itself more apparent, Western society eventually reached a breaking point where "we" no longer believed in heroes or stories (Joy and Ramsey xxxi).

This break in the belief of the human mastery of the world largely coincides with the World Wars (Garth) in which the wholesale slaughter of human beings on both sides of the conflict led to the reinvestigation of humanity's most basic beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality, also around this time the rise of structuralism and the consequent deconstruction of it into post-structuralism acknowledge to a new degree the imperfection of human cognition and the impossibility of a truth (Leitch). This is also the period where the Anglo-American Fantasy genre flourished. As a genre, Fantasy constitutes of stories that are self-consciously false and heavily influenced by Epic and Romance. Thus, it also features the superior hero but, as a form of literature of its time, it is forced to use different methods of distancing itself in time and space from the "real world" to be capable of generating a highly fantastical narrative. These intrinsic differences in form generate some marked differences on characterization between the Epic and Fantasy.

The hero and the world

The time setting makes for a very important difference on the portrayal the Fantasy hero. As an archetype, the hero figure is by definition an abstract, idealised, complete and ultimately indefinite figure and, therefore, resistant to the concrete, realistic, incomplete and constantly redefined present. By placing the narrative time on the present, Fantasy generates a hostile environment to the idealised hero figure of the Epic (Bakhtin 28) and must consequently, generate different strategies to achieve archetypal meaning. In *Beowulf*, for instance, we come into contact with a hero that is already "great": he does not change throughout the narrative; he is wise before becoming king; he is adventurous even after reigning for fifty years. Even the time before his glory, when he was not

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[2]   Immersion is the state of being absorbed into the narrative in such a way that it that the consciousness perceives it as a version of reality. Immersion is achieved through suspension of disbelief (Coleridge 314) and/or secondary belief (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 3–73).

recognized as the hero he is, it was not his own failure to show his greatness, but society's failure to recognise it (*Beowulf* 149). This kind of characterisation is possible because it is done in hindsight.

Conversely, in the ever changing present of the novel, which Fantasy adopts and adapts, "the individual acquires the ideological and linguistic initiative necessary to change the nature of his own image" (Bakhtin 38). Such change in the hero's identity, otherwise known as character growth, is a necessary aspect to Fantasy protagonists. The Quest Fantasy hero cannot be born the Hero, he must become one. That, in great part, is his ultimate quest. Even then, due to the present tense of the narrative and consequent generation of a greater narrative zone of contact with the reader's own present, there will always be a "surplus of humanness" in relation to archetypal function that needs to be juggled by the author (Bakhtin 37). This process of becoming a hero and still retaining a strong sense of humanity is one of the reasons why most Quest Fantasy works deal with younger protagonists in a sort of coming of age narrative.

Part of the solution set for the problem of setting the narrative in the present time is the change of setting to a fantastical otherworld (Wolf), where the abstract and ideal are entwined in the very fabric of the plane of action (Swinfen 75). This location transfer alone, however, is not enough. The early stages of the main narrative must be higher in mimetic content that is familiar to the readers so as to facilitate narrative immersion, which means that there must be a greater emphasis on the beginning of the hero's journey, on the transfer from a position of comfort to the zone of adventure (Campbell 57). The desire of glory for glory's sake that the still unnamed Beowulf demonstrates in sailing out to slay the monstrous Grendel (*Beowulf* 15) on pure hearsay lacks the emotional depth called for by the higher mimetic format of the characterization induced by the greater zone of contact with the hero's inner world. As such, the form of the call of adventure in Quest Fantasy usually varies significantly from the one in the Heroic Germanic tales. Whereas in *Beowulf* and the Sigurd cycle in the *Edda* the heroes leave their zone of comfort and go out in search of their adventure and glory mostly out of their own volition, in Fantasy there seems to be a trend where it is usually the adventure that comes and disrupts the zone of comfort of the characters and forces them into adventure (Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*).

In *The Eye of the World* (Jordan), Two Rivers is the zone of absolute no adventure as "That sort of thing just did not happen in the Two Rivers" (14). In Jordan's particular route for a more idealised heroic figure, the hero and the fantastical land must be shown as one so as to link him to the idealised geographical plane. As a human character, Rand al'Thor must be at the same time a hero and one with his people. The hero must belong simultaneously to the high mimetic environment of his people and to the fantastical adventurous world. To create this connection with the reader's own conception of humanity and facilitate immersion the Fantasy writer must generate ambivalence in the hero's psyche. For instance, when Jordan's hero is first presented to us, he himself recognises that "listening to tales of adventures, even dreaming about them, was one thing; having them take place around you would be something else again" (Jordan 51). Yet, he still cannot hope but to want to listen and dream that "Still it must be different out there, beyond the Two Rivers, like living in the middle of a gleeman's tale. An adventure. One long adventure. A whole lifetime of it" (Jordan 39).

Jordan's characterisation, as much of his work, is highly self-conscious of such ambiguity. Rand's main trait is the stubbornness characteristic of his people which, in turn, is immediately translated into natural elements as "they could give mules lessons and teach stones" (Jordan 9). He is, or so we are told, "solid" (Jordan 60), and rooted in the secluded space of everyday experience from which adventure will necessarily unearth him (Jordan 214). This uprooting only happens after the greatly secluded space of the Two Rivers (Jordan 55), and the main protagonist's own home are invaded and disrupted by the monstrous Trollocs (Jordan 60−90). Home is, in many ways, the absolute zone of comfort and safety, where "it was possible to forget the chill beyond the walls. There was no false Dragon here. No wars or AesSedai. No men in black cloaks" (Jordan 65).

As we meet the hero, or heroes, as personalities in a stable comfortable and more mimetic environment before the entrance into proper miraculous adventure time, another problem arises from the change in the chronological mode when compared to the Epic. Since a hero is defined by action, to determine who the hero is in a plane where action is yet to occur becomes quite problematic. Heroic status, like greatness, is retroactively judged based upon results: we know that Beowulf is a hero because he has already slain the monsters and lived an exemplary life. That is not the case in most Quest Fantasy tales, where most of the action is yet to take place. Consequently, an explanation is needed to justify why the tales of these particular characters are worth heeding to and why they are special. Since the heroic act is still to be accomplished, an explanation for the uniqueness of the protagonist is crucial because without it the reader would be taken away from inside the world of secondary belief (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf: Including Mythopoeia*) into a zone of pure authorial determinacy thus breaking immersion. Interestingly most of the methods utilised by Fantasy authors, even the more unorthodox ones, such as Martin, are already present in the heroic sequence of *The Poetic Edda*.

Foreseeing greatness

First and foremost there is the use of prophecy or the premonition of events. The prophecy is perhaps the simplest, it is a staple strategy of Romance and Fantasy and its use sometimes borders on overuse and trivialisation. In *The Poetic Edda*'s poems concerning Sigurd there is the aptly named poem of 'Gripir's Prophecy', where Sigurd is told by his prophetic uncle Gripir of the events that will come to unfold in his life (Larrington 143–150). These are tinged with the light of inescapable fate making it all the more poignant as even Sigurd's foreknowledge of the facts will not avert them from happening for, as the reader/listener already knows, these facts have already happened. While characteristic and straightforward in the past tense narrative of the Epic, the use of the prophecy on a narration as it unfolds is again problematic. As the narrative is still developing, it must not yet be completely fixed (Bakhtin 31). Thus we have in Fantasy the "obscure prophecy", the meaning of which cannot be properly discerned until after the action takes place. *The Wheel of Time* as a whole makes heavy use of this form of prophecy: The Karatheon Cycle, being its main proponent. As such, the obscure prophecy is intrinsically and seemingly contradictive and delivers its message in allegorical form. For example, the fortress of the Stone of Tear is to be taken by the prophesized hero; however for it to fall the hero must be wielding the "Sword That Cannot be Touched" which is, in turn, guarded inside the impenetrable fortress (Jordan 189–190).

A Song of Ice and Fire (Martin), however, veers away from this type of prophecy and focuses more on the less descriptive type of foretelling, the foreshadowing. The symbol of the Starks of Winterfell is the direwolf, a giant variation of the ordinary wolf and the hue of foreshadowing tinges the scene where they first meet one of these animals. Upon returning to the castle from an excursion further in the north, the Stark men find a dead direwolf and her surviving cubs. The mother had been killed by a broken antler lodged in its throat and this is a clear a bad omen for the Stark family. The event could be seen as an instance of pure authorial determinacy, but Martin avoids so by associating the animal with the fantastic land beyond the Wall. The reader is told that "There's not been a direwolf sighted south of the Wall in two hundred years" (Martin 16). The vision of the dead animal then gains the quality of a spell, which silences the whole party. However, the event only starts to show hints of its full significance later, when we are told that the sigil of king and his family, the Baratheons, which are coming to Winterfell on a royal visit, is the stag (Martin 36).

Prophesy and foretelling set the general outline of why the story to unfold is of interest enough to be singled out and told. However, foretelling alone still does not explain why these characters in particular are at the centre of the fantastical action. It does not explain what sets them

apart and singles them out for an adventurous narrative. Contemporary readers' highly mimetic understanding of the world requires further justification. The Fantasy texts analysed here utilise a strategy to justify a character's uniqueness that is already employed, or alluded to, in the poems of *The Poetic Edda*.

The strategy used in *A Song of Ice and Fire* is that of dynastic descent to the mythopoeic and Epic past of heroes and legends. Sigurd is a descendant of the Volsung clan whose origins lie in myth (Larrington 35–37), and as such, while he himself already belongs to an already absolute and warded off past of Epic, he also has a direct relation with the even more remote and fantastical mythological world inside the narrative. Similarly, all the characters of interest in *A Game of Thrones* belong to distinguished noble families most of which can trace their family lines to fabled figures of the Age of Heroes, Martin's own internalisation of the Epic past. The Starks can trace their descent to Brandon the Builder, who built the Wall; the Lannisters, whose crest is the golden lion, claim to come from the trickster Lann the Clever, who "stole gold from the sun to brighten his curly hair"; and Daenerys Targaryen, "the dragon's daughter" is "of the blood of Aegon the Conqueror and Maegor the Cruel and old Valyria before them" (Martin 733). The dynastic motif works especially well for Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* due to its higher mimetic value. A relation by blood is a more fitting motif for the kind of world he has built as it also creates a sense of social distancing from the average reader. The main protagonists are all nobles, which distinguishes them from ordinary individuals and helps with the transition into adventure time, which is by its nature extraordinary fantastic action.

As *The Wheel of Time*'s secondary world is much higher in magical abstraction this extra aristocratic layer of distancing could detract rather than enhance the reader's empathy. The point of contact with the reader's sphere of mimetic perceived narratives must be maximised from the beginning as his marvellous world in adventure time requires a greater fantastical imaginative effort from the part of the reader to achieve secondary belief. Some glimpses of the hero's uniqueness are given at the beginning of the narrative such as Rand's different physique to those around him, such as 'Gray eyes and the reddish tinge to his hair' (Jordan 3). His peculiar hair colour, alongside his surname Al'Thor and the association made with him and lightning, later on the story, create an allusion to the Norse thunder god Thor. However, this is not the principal strategy Jordan employs in his work to link the main hero to the internalized Epic past. The link in *The Wheel of Time* belongs to the more fantastical realm of reincarnation, which can be also found mentioned at the very end of the 'Poem of Helgi Hiorvardsson' (Larrington 131) and in the 'Second Poem of Helgi Hundingsbani' (Larrington 141) both preluding and foreshadowing Sigurd's death due to association with a Valkyrie. Rand Al'Thor is not related to the Age of Legends by the more mimetic and distancing bloodline, but through the fantastical superiority of his reincarnated soul: he is 'The Dragon *Reborn*' (my emphasis) (Jordan 782).

The aforementioned justifications for the hero narrative prevalent in the Quest Fantasy, while present in *The Poetic Edda*, are not an absolute necessity of the Epic per se. *Beowulf* in particular does not make prominent use of any of these techniques with the exception of a high degree of foreshadowing in the side plotlines that are introduced in the main narrative before each monster fight. As such, Fantasy's reliance on tropes seems to emerge from an attempt to achieve a form of epic unity of narrative action, high in fantastical idealisation and powerful mythic qualities while moving to a different narrative chronotope which focuses on the more immersive novelistic chronological field of narrative as quasi-simultaneous to action. That is not to say that these works observe the unity of action in the same manner of the Epic, with its single hero and linear quest.

In both *Beowulf* and Sigurd's tale in the *Edda*, there is a certain linearity of movement and a prevailing simplicity, not of the tale or poem as a whole, but of the general action. Readers follow the adventure of a single hero with a single objective and, more often than not, a single antagonist. *Beowulf* is comprised of three such movements: the fight against Grendel; the fight against

Grendel's dame; and the Dragon fight. Each one of them is interspersed with side narratives and flashbacks are given, highlighting the main narrative. This is much of the same narrative structure found in Quest Fantasy, with the difference that here there is usually a final quest and the adventures that happen on the way to the final confrontation are interspersed with areas of comfort or no-adventure. In Epic, however, there is an overall sense that the reader or listener is told only that which is deemed important to the tale. For example, Beowulf upon hearing of Grendel simply enlists fourteen of the best men he could find and sets on a quest (*Beowulf* 15) There is no mention of how he enlists them, where he enlists them from, who they are, what their names are, or why they decide to follow him. That kind of novelistic detail is expected in a Fantasy work and accounts in great part for their much larger length. Without such detailed information, the Fantasy work would probably fail in generating the necessary level of secondary belief and greater immersion.

The faces of a thousand heroes

Unlike the Epic tales here analysed which concern themselves with a single hero - or in the case of *The Poetic Edda*, a single hero at a time − Quest Fantasy works often have more than one protagonist who serve as narrative focus, and who act out simultaneously in different areas of the world. This gives Fantasy a sense of higher narrative complexity than the Epic as it weaves different narrative threads into one single text. Nevertheless, if we isolate the narrative threads of each of the main protagonists one would be left with a unity of action very close to that of Epic (James and Mendlesohn 3). This narrative interweaving of several heroic threads is especially true in the case of *A Song of Ice and Fire* where the balance of the threads is kept, not allowing for any of the characters to claim the position of main protagonist, or of The Hero. This is an aspect directly related to the higher mimetic nature of the world building, becoming very close to the characterisation of in Frye's terms low mimetic realistic novels. It goes as far as incorporating some of the maxims of the mimetic novel into its discourse: "Life is not a song" we are told, "You may learn that one day to your sorrow", "*There are no heroes*" and "*In life, the monsters win*" (emphasis in the original) (Martin 720).

Yet, there are still heroes in Martin's narrative and they often are presented with quests of their own and are superior to others, even if not necessarily superior to each other. What makes it seem like there are no heroes is the way in which Martin built his fantasy world, with a mimetic centre and fantastical edges, embodied in the Land Beyond the Wall and the continent of Essos. He can then play on the tension between idealised and realistic characterisation, what is superior in the idealised fantastical plane is a weakness in the mimetic realistic environment. This tension is perhaps best highlighted on the narrative thread of Eddard Stark, the Lord of Winterfell.

On first contact Eddard has much in common with the Beowulf of the second half of the poem: he is now the lord of his land, and his adventuring days of glory and youth are mostly behind him. As such, he is a hero/father figure compound which is at home in the heroic stronghold of the North, but that is not to say that the archetypal dimension is the whole of his characterisation. As mentioned earlier, Fantasy necessitates ambivalence in characterization so that the dialogic relation of mimesis and fantasy are internalised into the character itself. Ned Stark is, thus, almost in equal parts function and an individual. His final call to adventure comes in the form of the visit of the king who commands him to go South to become "The Hand of the King", a position akin to that of a Prime Minister (Martin 44). The heroic lord's overall reaction is strangely prophetic, "The only truths I know are here. The south is a nest of adders I would do better to avoid" (Martin 60). His Beowulf-like foreboding of his own death turns out to be precise (*Beowulf* 165). While not necessarily a metaphor for the dragon that kills the Geat hero lord, the serpentine politics of the mimetic King's Landing with all the betrayals, lies, power struggles and second intentions inherent to that mode of representation, conflict with his noble heroic ideals. The same ideals which made

him a superior heroic figure in the quasi epic North of Winterfell are shown to be naïve, insufficient and simply out of place when dealing with a more highly mimetic and thus realistic environment (Martin 341–342) eventually leading to his execution by beheading with his own sword (Martin 703). The successful completion of the quest, the eucatastrophe[3] characteristic of Fantasy, is not possible on the mimetic centre of the narrative. Ned Stark, as a representation of the epic hero, cannot succeed in his quest in the highly mimetic King's Landing.

It is no surprise then that the protagonists in *A Song of Ice and Fire* whose movement is towards the magical outer edges of the fantastic world are the ones who more closely resemble the archetypal hero figure, Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen. The more interesting of the two, for the purpose of this analysis, is the character of Jon Snow as he *seems* to be Martin's take on the more traditional Fantasy hero. Like Sigurd and the young Beowulf, Jon Snow is not called to adventure but actively seeks it out of a thirst for honour and glory, and to carve out a place for himself in his society (Martin 51). Due to the greater mimetic nature of the Fantasy narrative this need to make a reputation and the struggle for a place of belonging does not mark Jon out as a champion of his people but as a pariah who does not currently have a place of his own, which is a situation that the Beowulf poet hints at concerning his own hero (*Beowulf* 149). Jon's own bastard surname, Snow, associates him not with Winterfell itself but with the whole of the heroic North (Martin 17). It is then perhaps no surprise that, as a potential hero in the first book of the series, *A Game of Thrones*, his movement towards adventure is the inverse of Eddard Stark's. Instead of going to the more mimetic South, he moves towards the more fantastic lands further North (113), closer to the artificial division between the mimetic and the fantastic, The Wall, and the mythological lands beyond it. The contact with the fantastic, however, is not followed by a realisation of the ideal and elation, but by disappointment. The fabled brothers of the Night's Watch turn out to be a group consisting of "Sullen peasants, debtors, poachers, rapers, thieves, and bastards" (Martin 119).

Rand Al'Thor's movement from the stories he dreamt about into the zone of experiencing them first hand describes them as becoming "horribly real" (Jordan 94). His and his companions' own adventures in the first book, *The Eye of the World*, are also marked out from the very beginning as a journey North: "We take to the North Road, now. For your lives, follow my lead, keep up and keep together" (Jordan 147). However, their move towards adventure is not so much a choice but an absolute necessity. With the exception of his companion Egwene, the fantastical mode forcefully disrupts the mimetic environment and forces the heroes to flee for survival, effectively robbing them of any zone of comfort (Jordan 126). Interestingly, this difference between an unwilling hero and the more Epic-like hero eager for adventure is rooted on a similarity rather than on a difference as Rand shares with Beowulf and Sigurd a defined sense of self. Rand, as he is before adventure time has begun, has a clear sense of self similar to the Epic hero (Bakhtin 35). Anything the author, the world or anyone has to say about him at this point, he can say it himself. This is made possible by the enclosing of the narrative to the confining space of the pastoral mimetic land and its people and Rand's association with it. Therefore, the opening of the world by a call to adventure and the invasion of the fantastic monstrous Other is almost, instantaneously followed by a shattering of identity and belonging. In Rand's case the discovery that not only he is an outsider but also that he is adopted, leads to the ultimate question and the generator of the intrinsically psychological fantastical journey, "*who am I?*" (Jordan 88).

This breakdown of the narrative-of-self, and the consequent search for self-definition, also lies at the heart of Jon's desire for a place of belonging. However, in Jon's case, it makes for a marked different characterization from Epic heroes, such as Beowulf and Sigurd. Those are already defined and self-knowing, as complete figures they are flattened out; their post adventure and pre adventure selves are the same (Bakhtin 34–35). As such, they are, like Eddard Stark, hero/father

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[3]   Eucatastrophe is a neologism coined by Tolkien from Greek ευ- "good" and καταστροφή "destruction". Esp. in a fictional narrative: a (sudden or unexpected) favourable turn of events; esp. a resolution of this type; a happy ending.

figure compounds, but unlike Eddard, they are complete inside their archetypal functions and hence do not need guidance of other mentor figures.

These mentor figures, while usually present in the heroic tale such as *Beowulf*'s Hrothgar, are displayed as equal to the hero, not superior to them, as can be seen when Beowulf chastises Hrothgar and reminds him of the heroic code that they should follow (*Beowulf* 97). For the self-seeking heroes of Quest Fantasy, who are about to move through the intrinsically psychological and dream like landscape of the marvellous world in adventure time, the guidance of the self-knowing fantastical archetype mentor figures becomes paramount. For Rand and Jon, who are led into the harsh, unforgiving, cold, noble and honourable fantastic North of Heroic Epic, it is crucial to find mentors in patriarchal figures of seemingly Epic stature to guide their first steps into adventure.

The Wheel of Time's Lan is king of a lost kingdom of the Borderlands, born to fight a losing battle against the impinging monstrosity and darkness of the Blight upon the world. He is the ultimate internalisation of the Epic hero of the North and the Borderlands notion that "what I do" is "why" and what "I am" (Jordan 722). Whereas Jon's mentor figure is a much more direct link to the heroic narrative of Beowulf whose name could be seen as a kenning meaning bear. As Beowulf, Jon's mentor has a remarkable fondness for wrestling and hand-to-hand combat due to his prodigious strength (*Beowulf* 171). The character in question is Lord Commander Mormont, the Old Bear of the Night's Watch, the failing order dedicated to keeping the Wall and protecting the realm from the lands beyond. We are told that, "Old as he was, the Lord Commander still had the strength of a bear" (Martin 197). These are the characters that, due to their already greater defined fantastical archetypal unity and sense of self, guide and validate the hero's journey through the fantastic landscape in search of their own self-definition.

Conclusion

The Quest Fantasy texts here analysed, and perhaps the genre as a whole, are a self-conscious search for the complete archetypal meaning of Epic in a novelistic and, therefore, completion-resistant mode. Fantasy thrives in the dialogic relationship between both archetypal meaning and novelistic mode. It has to carefully balance mimetic and fantastical impulses within both parts of its chronotope, the narrative time and the narrated space. It has to find a balance between the depiction of character as actor and actant (Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* 86). As such, Fantasy's narrative world seems to be filled with dialectical images such as ice and fire, dark and light, male and female, West and East, North and South, which has led to much criticism of fantasy as simplistic (Attebery, "Structuralism" 86–87) Yet, in successful Fantasy narratives these are paired in such a way as to bring out the ambivalences inherent in each notion. For example, *The Wheel of Time*, Dragon is both the bringer of light and rebirth but also the bringer of shadow and destruction. In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, ice can burn stronger than fire, mercy can kill, and the noble ideals of the North are a weakness in the mimetic land of the South.

The two Fantasy works discussed in this paper seem to internalise much of the attributes of the Heroic Epic tales of the North, such as *Beowulf* and *The Poetic Edda*, and this is evident in their construction of the hero figures. A link between the heroes and this epic past of the fantastic world is made, either by dynastic link (in *A Song of Ice and Fire*), reincarnation (in *The Wheel of Time*) and or prophecy (in both) so as to justify why these heroes are of interest. While the topographical internalization leads to a Heroic Epic North region built into the fantastical world, which serves as a border with the monstrous and uncharted lands beyond. The North is a land filled with epic idealised meaning. As such, the North becomes the destination of validation of the fantastic quest for the hero-to-be. Its main proponents, the hero/father figures reminiscent of the Epic North serve as the guides and mentor figures to the hero in the process of becoming. The Fantasy hero, however, loses the self-assuredness and identity completeness characteristic of Epic, but gains in the process

the capacity for greater character growth and complexity, thus opening a new dialogue lane for the contemporary reader to engage with the distanced heroes of Epic and the heroic archetypal figure.

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'Back to the Real London'; or Mapping the City of the Past in Gaiman's *Neverwhere*

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Abstract: Neil Gaiman's acclaimed novel *Neverwhere* belongs to the rapidly growing sub-genre of urban fantasy. Set in 20th century London, the novel evokes fantastical and supernatural elements to paint the history of the city and encompasses its historic memory. The city is divided into two separate spaces, London Above and London Below, that are parallel to one another and mirror each other. Lower London contains all that is suppressed by London Above and inhabits all that is lost and forgotten (certain moments in history, those in need, broken objects, etc.) The repressed 'things' eventually haunt the city of London Above and exist within their own terms of fantastical reality in London Below.

This paper focuses on Gaiman's emphasized allusions to the 19th century as the main influential era on the city's development as both asocially oppressive space but also a fantastical one. Therefore, associating it with neo-Victorian fantastical genres; steampunk and gaslamp fantasy. Drawing upon known Victorian symbols, such as the London Underground or the London fog, Gaiman renders them into having double meanings and thus, deepens our understanding of the city's historical and social memory. The dichotomy of classes and societies presented in both versions of London stresses the cultural and social gaps of the city. Examining the purpose of the fantastical and the way it functions in the novel with relation to history (the 19thcentury in particular), leads to a thorough understanding of the city's social milieu in past and present.

Keywords: urban fantasy, London, Neil Gaiman, 19th century, social history, memory.

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Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) is an urban fantasy novel, taking place in 20th century London and reimaging the division of the city's space as a social one, in which lower classes live in "London Below" while middle and upper classes inhabit "London Above". The protagonist, Richard Mayhew, arrives to London as an outsider, consequentially, enabling him to view the city as a neutral spectator. Mayhew's extraordinary ability to notice the disregarded lower classes (such as

the homeless and the poor) serves as a mediation between the separate spaces. London Below is a space of fragmented time and space, constructed of different "tiny spurs of old-time" as well as people who have been forgotten by dwellers of London Above (Gaiman 78). More importantly, it functions as the space in which history and fantasy bleed into one another.

In this paper I will review specific historical representation of the Victorian era (the Underground, the London Fog and social researcher, Henry Mayhew) and discuss the way in which the author modifies them to function in the fantastical realm of London Below. This modification, however, also facilitates a repurposing of past representations as a way of commenting on the present. Furthermore, by reviewing facets of the Victorian era (often described as the peak of social class division), this paper suggests that the London represented in *Neverwhere* is an allegorical representation of a class-society, one that is a fantastical projection of the present, and one that spatializes class divisions on to space.

The process of Richard Mayhew's both physical and metaphysical ascendance from contemporary London to the fantastical one, due to its nature as described above, involves an inevitable indulgence with different social classes of different centuries. However, his ascendance is not a consensual one; he is drawn by accident into the fantastical underworld of London which lies beneath the pavements and streets. The urban landscape is an all-encompassing, active and occasionally humanized participant, its force represented in the final chapters of the novel as an actual monster living in the underground heart of the city. According to Alexander C. Irvine's definition of urban fantasy, Gaiman's London operates as a separate being because, unlike other urban fantasy novels "in which urban is a descriptor applied to *fantasy*", in *Neverwhere* "*fantasy* alters *urban*" (Irvine 200). Indeed, Gaiman's novel applies fantastical tropes to the urban landscape, however, he extends, to borrow Irvine's words, the "contingent dread of the historicized urban present" (211). The tension between the tradition of fairy tales and fantasy and the history of the city shapes our understanding of London's past; through which, we can then, criticize the present.

Since the genre of urban fantasy is not limited to London nor neo-Victorianism, it would be appropriate to refer to the fantastical Victorian elements of the story as belonging to the rapidly emerging steampunk aesthetic (an intergeneric hybrid of neo-Victorianism, science-fiction and fantasy). Taking into account the novel's preoccupation with social hierarchy and the distress of the lower classes, it correlates when discussing Victorian symbols, with Catherine Siemann's characterization of the "steampunk social problem novel" (3). Its main purpose is to incorporate the distinctly Victorian genre of the social problem novel (mostly associated to Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, etc.) with a the present, and provides us with a "present-day perspective on the Victorians and their legacy" (Siemann 4). The structure of the city, its division into two stratified spaces, provides a clear and quite visible distinction between the present and the past and serves as a convenient arrangement for comparison. By applying the steampunk aesthetic to the city's past, Victorian symbols are transformed, have alternate interpretations, and presents us with "a way of engaging with issues", of the past and which "are present for us now" (Siemann 5).

Seeing the Past

London Above presents a hyperbolized representation of commercialism and aggressive touristic propaganda of the late 20th century and contemporary London. Gaiman describes the city as despising tourists while needing and luring them with its "red bricks and white stone, red buses and large black taxis, bright red mailboxes and green grassy parks…" (8). Whether in the actual streets or the underground stations, London Above is a spectacle of advertisements and colourful shops stuffed with touristic memorabilia which blatantly cheapen London's historic symbols such as "the shop that sold souvenir London police helmets and little red London buses" (Gaiman 43). This fixation on tacky and cliché representations of the city's past, diverts tourists from some of Britain's

and London's darker historic periods; colonialism and racism, extreme social-economic gaps, exploitive conditions of labour and the impoverished masses. As Gaiman puts it "London grew into something huge and contradictory... it was a fine city, but there is a price to be paid for all good places, and a price that all good places have to pay" (10). Put differently, London sacrifices those who cannot or will not conform to social standards and supresses them, both literally and figuratively, into its underground core, leaving an inviting and mesmerising veneer.

The hierarchical spatialization of the city accentuates its distinct social division and enables the reader to observe the space below, which also represents the past, from an elevated viewpoint and 'read' the city and its history. In his chapter, "Walking in the City", Michel de Certeau gazes upon the metropolis while standing on top of a 110 story building. "To be lifted" he writes, "transfigures (the observer) into a voyeur. It transforms the bewitching world… into a text that lies before one's eyes" (Gaiman 92). However, he asserts, the elevated position of the voyeur means he is no longer in the "city's grasp" and therefore, as he does not immerse in the city, he is no longer an integral part of it. The inhabitants of London Above are unable to read the city in de Certeau's sense for two reasons: firstly, they are blind to the poor and the homeless; Richard's fiancée at the beginning of the novel literally "stepped over (a) crumpled form" (Gaiman 23). Therefore, they cannot comprehend and in turn see or acknowledge the validity of London Below and its existence. If one cannot observe the city below them from an elevated viewpoint, they cannot 'read' the city. Secondly, they are an integral part of the city; rather than having the ability of comprehending the it as detached spectators, they are the spectacle of its rhythm. The dwellers of London Above are faceless masses pouring in "hundreds . . . onto the platform, and hundred . . . trying to get on" (Gaiman 248) The reader, on the other hand, has the privilege of viewing both levels of the city as a detached observer, or rather voyeur, who due to Gaiman's mapping of it can better understand its narrative.

As reference point, appearing at the preface of the novel, Gaiman uses an actual map to navigate through London, a map of the London Underground. Yet, it is a map he has constructed by gathering all of the Underground stations, in past and present and is therefore, not rooted in any specific historic moment. But more significantly, he chooses to mention the stations that were once opened and, from a certain point in time to this day, have been closed. By doing so, he acknowledges the inevitable relation between space and time and provides both a spatial and temporal mapping of the city. Furthermore, his choice to include forgotten stations, or rather 'ghost stations', that still exist in non-fictional London, recognizes the impact of those spaces on the shaping of the city's both actual and fictional geography. Gaiman's inclusive map becomes a representation of the historical materialism of the city in itself – shaping the infrastructure of the city, both of the present and past.

Denis Cosgrove argues that maps are a representational illustration of the landscape, structuring the world "so that it may be appropriated by a detached, individual spectator to whom the illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space . . ." (55). The 'composition of space' offered to Richard Mayhew at the beginning of the novel, in the form of an umbrella with the Underground map (a contemporary one, not Gaiman's), is meant to assist him in making sense of London as a newcomer. However, the map bears no significance to him as he gives away the umbrella to a homeless woman (an action foreshadowing his character and future actions throughout the story). Once he arrives to the city, unlike other city dwellers who live according to the Tube map, he rejects it and soon realizes the "map was a handy fiction that made life easier but bore no resemblance to the reality of the shape of the city above" (Gaiman 9). Cosgrove asserts that representations of the landscape, such as maps, are formed to portray the point of view "produced by the sovereign eye" (48). Richard's refusal to navigate through London using the map, a conventional and unchallenged perception of space, marks him as a potential individual who will

eventually be spat out of the ordinary city space of London Above and become a part of the alternate space of London Below.

Moving Through Space and Time: The Underground

In his book *London Underground*, David Ashford discusses the ways in which the Underground has unrecognizably changed the cultural geography of the capital, not only in the demographic and cultural sense but also, its conceptual space. The method of its construction was named 'cut-and-cover' in which the entire street was dug out and then covered. It was the railways' proximity to the surface and the process of its creation that, according to Ashford, "was itself a blatant staging of the interrelationship between the two spaces, gaping wounds opened up in the middle of public thoroughfares" (xi). The process of digging and revealing layers of the city's architecture and history, only to cover them again created physical layers of history suppressed under the industrialized space. Hadas Elber-Aviram argues in her article, reviewing the relation between architecture and urban fantasy, that the layers of history in any city perform as "successive (layers) beneath the present-day veneer of the routine city life" and are applied in *Neverwhere* to the fictional depiction of space (2). If history is imagined to occupy space as literal layers of time one on top of another, the Underground, particularly, would be the closest to the surface of 20th century London. Its proximity, is not only spatial but also temporal, being a creation of the preceding era.

The Underground's construction began in 1854 and was promoted by reforming campaigner Charles Pearson who, according to Heawon Hwang's *London's Underground Spaces*, "envisaged the railway service (as having) a standard low fare for the working classes" and was meant to serve them primarily (83). However, his vision was not met and fares ranged depending on the class-divided coaches, rendering the train into another socially torn space and perpetuating the socio-economic gaps. Although it did immensely improve the working classes' transportation conditions, the "private Underground enterprise also aimed to attract middle-class passengers" and offered first class carriages and separate waiting areas (Hwang 84). Eventually and despite all these efforts, the "commingling of classes was inevitable" and fare rates were standardized in the 1880's (Hwang 84).

Consequentially, as Ashford asserts, the train became a familiar space shared by all social classes of the city. The train in *Neverwhere* correlates with the socially unified conception of the Underground in the sense that both commuters of London Above (representing the middle and upper classes) and London Below (representing lower classes) use the train and it functions as the only space both worlds share. Be that as it may, it alludes to mid-Victorian attempts of spatialized class distinctions. Although there are no coaches in the contemporary Underground, at least not in the sense used in the preceding eras, the train serves the two separate societies in very different ways. For the dwellers of upper London, the train moves in orderly structured tracks and conforms to the linear progression of time, enabling them to use it in a strictly functional and practical manner. On the other hand, inhabitants of London Below can move by will to any station they choose, and the train metaphorically transports them into sporadic pockets of history. In fact, there are cars used solely by the people from London Below and others used by London Above.

Gaiman's reimagining and repurposing of a clear Victorian symbol, taps into the term "retrofuturism" as it is used in the steampunk context. Mike Perschon defines the term as "conjur(ing) up images of antiquated technology" motivated by nostalgia (21). The actual physicality of the train is not transformed in the novel (it is still our contemporary version), the retrofuturism aspect is expressed in the figurative and conceptual image of the train since it functions and is perceived, in an allegoric way, through a Victorian perspective. In this sense, the function of the train in the novel resembles Victorian society more than modern one. The apparent separation between the two types of passengers mimics the social dynamics of the former century.

London Above passengers do not seem to notice the people of London Below who "have fallen through the cracks" of the city's streets and consciousness (Gaiman 136). According to Ashford novels such as *Neverwhere*, embody modern society's fear of the progression of the machine. They provide a vision of "society threatened on one hand by the sterility of a mechanical functionalism and on the other by the catastrophe that the elimination of the human must eventually bring about" (Ashford 8). These novels express the dread of society becoming a faded ghost of the machine as industry and technology surpass humanity. Although it appears that the inhabitants of lower London haunt the present, the question to be asked is whether the ghosts of the city are commuters of upper or lower London. As the former get on and off the train in synchronised masses, they are attuned to the "standard time", a timetable of the trains, governing their lives. These time conventions began in the early 19th century with the railway's expanded mechanization, and since then "the entire population move(s) in mechanical synchrony" (Sussman 244). Therefore, they move as a coordinated machine and are oblivious to anything but their formulated reality; they cannot see the fantasy of the world parallel and below them.

Although the novel is generically categorized as urban fantasy (by works such as *Core Collections in Genre Studies* and scholars such as Irvin and Karin Kukkonen), its metaphoric treatment of society as a machine, along with its allusions to steampunk, associate the novel with Science Fiction. One of the prominent themes Sci-Fi touches upon is the perception of time. Fredric Jameson observes that in Sci-Fi time is spiral rather than linear, to create a "feeling that any other moment of the past would have done just as well" which is exactly what the novel does, as different capsules of times exist side by side or one instead of another (Jameson 150). History in London Below is fractured and reassembled to create an alternative interpretation within a similar context such as the "floating market"; a medieval street market taking place in the prestigious "Harrods" department store, featuring stalls with curries, blacksmith's service, weapons, lamps with candles, tattooists and a slave market (Gaiman 109–11).

Furthermore, in terms of Sci-Fi, the novel also correlates with Seo-Young Chu's definition of the genre. According to Chu, Sci-Fi is rather a mode and not a genre that can be applied to any narrative. Her definition of it asserts that while in reality "literal dimensions operate independently from (their) figurative dimensions", in Sci-Fi, metaphors are literalized and "bring to life the complex ambivalences latent in figures of speech associated with the global world" (Chu 86–87). While Chu refers to Sci-Fi, this assertion can be applied to other genres of fiction as literalized words, names, phrases as well as metaphors, usually pack in several meanings that are either parallel or layered. Chu's definition is significant since it offers an analysis relevant to the way in which literalized figures of speech operate in London Below.

In subterranean London, names of stations, people and idioms, are all literal and are treated as us such by its inhabitants. As previously mentioned, the dwellers of London Above, Richard Mayhew among them, are unaware of the fantastical world below and are not exposed to the multi-layered interpretation of every word and name surrounding them. Although Richard is treated throughout the novel by the London Below people as an outsider, an "upperworlder", he has an exceptional ability for seeing things that others ignore (he notices and endorses each and every homeless person he encounters). Once he enters the world of London Below, Richard's talent is tested as he is required to notice and question the most mundane of things to every Londoner. For instance, while walking in the Underground with his London Below companions, he ignores "the disembodied male voice that warned 'Mind the Gap'… Richard barely heard it anymore – it was like aural wallpaper" (Gaiman 141). However, as people and historical events do not go unnoticed in London Below, so do the sounds that shape the urban experience; everything has a deeper implication. Richard soon discovers that the gap should be minded not because one might fall into the crack between the platform and the train, but rather because a "diaphanous, dreamlike, (a)

ghost-thing" shaped as a tentacle wraps itself around people's ankle's and "pull(s) (them) toward the edge of the platform" meaning to swallow them into the dark cracks (Gaiman 141–142).

Furthermore, the names of the stations are literalized places, articulating the idea that layered meanings along with abstract concepts occupy physical space. Richard was wondering "whether there really was a circus at Oxford Circus: a real circus with clowns, beautiful women and dangerous beasts" (Gaiman 4). He soon discovers that in Shepherd's Bush station there are actual shepherds and sheep whom Richard should "pray" not to meet, in Knight's Bridge station there are knights guarding a bridge as well as the darkness of night, and Earl's Court station is both a royal feudal court and a place of legal judgment. These places have a tendency to "take their toll" and incorporate people into their existence, such as when a character named Anaesthesia is taken by the creatures of the night on Knight's Bridge (Gaiman 105). Words have numerous meanings, yet in Gaimans' version, space is threatening to consume the living for the sake of self-preservation. Similarly to the tentacle-figured monster living in the gaps, the literalized and fantastical representations of London Below literally feed on people and drag them into darkness. Those people, such as Anaesthesia, never reappear and become an actual part of the places that swallowed them; people physically merge into landmarks and locations constructing the urban mosaic. For Gaiman the toll or rather price the city pays to maintain its visual façade is the sacrifice of people who live in London Below; people who have been rejected from mainstream society.

Exploring the Underworld: Henry Mayhew

Gaiman's division of London Above and London Below is a simplified and highly visual structure of social geography; the lower-classes live beneath the upper-middle classes. The notion, however, that the social dichotomy divides the city into two separate spaces, both known as "London", derives from ideas rooted in the Victorian era. Herbert Sussman discusses the process of industrialization and its socio-economic influences on the population and the landscape. The contrast between the urban middle and upper classes in London's West End versus the impoverished masses in the East End was severe to the extent that Sussman refers to the two spaces as "two nations"(Sussman 249). Any attempt to mediate between the two districts "necessarily involved a journey, socially between classes, geographically between districts, imaginatively between cultures . . ." (Sussman 249). In the novel, the social tensions of the previous century are exemplified and offer a literalized mapping of the city's social geography; rather than placing all classes on the same level, they are hierarchically reorganized in the city's space. Thus, Gaiman's London encompasses similar spatialized distinctions between classes as those of Victorian London in the sense that they both inhabit the same place comprised of two different spaces.

Sussman extends his metaphor of the distance between the two classes and refers to the "journey" from the West End to the East End as "analogous to colonial exploration" (a metaphor used by earlier scholars such as Raymond Williams and Asa Briggs). Middle class writers felt it was their moral and social obligation to write about and represent the strives of the working classes to improve their conditions by filling in the huge gaps of lacking information regarding their situation. One of the writers Sussman points out is Henry Mayhew who recorded "his own travels into the unknown country of the poor" (249). In Mayhew's work, *London Labour and the London Poor*, he explores the slums, records and talks to the people, and categorizes the population into racial, occupational and social groups. The remarkable aspect of Mayhew's work was his lively descriptions of the different characters he encountered as well as his insistence on a vast amount of details. Although Mayhew's study is a distinguished and thorough account of the working classes, it is a controversial one, as James Buzard argues that it refers to "the lower orders of British society as parasitic nomads" (451). Nevertheless, Henry Mayhew and his work are considered "far ahead of

their time in insisting that any steps toward social reform must be firmly based on detailed, dispassionate investigation of a sort that had never been done before . . ." (Hibbert, xvi).

Richard Mayhew's character and name, as Gaiman has confirmed on several interviews as well as his official website, is based on Henry Mayhew and his work. The resemblance between the journeys of the two into the "lower" realm of London cannot be ignored as Gaiman's attempt appears to be one of exposer of social injustices by evoking Mayhew's figure. Similarly to Henry Mayhew, Richard serves as a guide to his uninformed reader and his exploration of the underworld is structured to map the labyrinth of the unexplored past. Walking in London Below, Richard cannot tell apart the different tunnels of the underground system; he asks his companions "Don't all these tunnels look the same? … How can you tell which is which?" to which he is scoffed at for his ignorance (Gaiman 135). The omniscient narrator stresses that the tunnels look nothing alike, mentioning one is from Regency while another was modified during WWII. Richard's incapability to differentiate between them echoes Henry Mayhew's reports of his findings. As the latter walks down the section assigned to the impoverished immigrants he writes:

> The little courts and alleys that spring from it (the quarter) on each side. Some of these courts branching off from them, so that the locality is a perfect labyrinth of "blind alleys;" and when once in the heart of the maze it is difficult to find the path that leads to the main-road (Gaiman 109).

Both Mayhews are outsiders who cannot truly perceive the textuality of their surroundings, they belong to another layer of society and try to translate their findings into terms appropriate to the reality they know.

To make sense of the sights in this unfamiliar world, Richard begins to write a mental diary – a Victorian Bourgeoisie action in itself - recording facts and details of the people around him. Much like Henry Mayhew he tries to remain a detached spectator, however, ends up commenting on what he perceives as peculiarities: "We had some fruitcake for breakfast; the marquis had a large lump of it in his pocket. Why would anyone have a large lump of fruitcake in his pocket?" (Gaiman 136). A comparable observational and surprised tone can be detected in Henry Mayhew's writing. He notes in his preface "people have been mostly found to be astonishingly correct in their statements"; genuinely surprised by the lower-classes' ability to express themselves truthfully (Mayhew iii). The lower classes were "reduced to a monolithic identity" by the upper classes and Henry Mayhew, serving as the advocate between the two, tried to categorize the poor as a "collection of different social groups" (Keunen and de Droogh, 105) Therefore, he divided the population into races, classifying them according to their exterior appearance thus, alluding to the popular discipline of phrenology. He assigns them names such as "running patereres" and "death-hunters", and expresses his surprise from the "odd and sometimes original manner in which an intelligent patterer, for example, will express himself" (Mayhew 214, 255).

As Gaiman, or rather the narrator, focalize on Richard, he satirically mimics Mayhew's classification of the lower-classes and hyperbolizes it by referring to people as "rat-speakers" or "upperworlders". In his writing, Gaiman employs the collective descriptors of groups to enhance the fantastical element rather than to racially profile. He portrays the rat-speakers as "mov(ing) in scurries: moments of stillness, followed by hasty dashes . . ." (Gaiman 68). Furthermore, he incorporates phrenology as a discipline determining individual or group characteristics according to external attributes, only to reject it. In his description of the two villains, Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar, he provides four visual characteristics to assist in telling them apart, however, ironically concluding, after an extensive account, "also, they look nothing at all alike" (Gaiman 7). Thus, Gaiman, in addition to evoking Mayhew's character, mockingly employs a similar anthropological approach to better map and study the underworld classes.

Apart from his role as a mock anthropologist, Richard's character correlates with urban literary tropes, such as the flaneur and the detective, as well as a mythological one. Irvine, argues that the notion of the fantastic city can be traced all the way back to Babylon known as "both the City of God and the City of Man" (202). Therefore, it is no surprise that urban fantasy alludes to its roots by employing mythological tropes. Specifically to *Neverwhere*, Irvin detects that the trope used is of the anti-hero who has to travel through the underworld, eventually transcending and "return(ing) with a prize" often in the form of wisdom (Greek mythology references such as Hercules and Orpheus come to mind) (204). On the other hand, the flaneur is a more modern trope originating in 19th century Paris, elaborately discussed in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. The flaneur is a male middle class urban pedestrian who has the privilege of lingering, wandering, browsin gand walking down the streets in a "combination of distracted observation and (a) dreamlike reverie" (Benjamin 36). Gaiman integrates these figures with a third one, the urban detective (such as Sherlock Holmes), a Victorian character defined by Raymond Williams as an individual "who can find his way through the fog, who can penetrate the intricacies of the streets" and make sense of them (227). Thus, Richard epitomizes a fusion of all three figures, resulting in a character who is observant, knowledgeable, able to explore the deep of the city and produce a coherent narrative of it on all its levels.

Suffocating the Weak: The London Fog and Death

The London fog appears in the final chapters of the novel and functions as an element of initiation; an ordeal that the protagonist has to face before the climactic scene of his journey. Once Richard crosses the London fog, which occupies the darkest spaces of London Below, he is able to fully comprehend the underworld and its "intricacies". Relatively lifted in 1956 due to the Clean Air Act, the London fog, according to E. Melanie DuPuis, was caused by a rapidly industrialized nation and culminated in the 19th century. It soon became a dominant literary motif for Victorian novelists who's cause for writing was similar to Henry Mayhew's in the sense of raising awareness to the lower classes' condition. The fog performed as a symbolic visual representation of the ramifications of industrialization and created "many vivid descriptions" in 19th century fiction (DuPuis 18). For instance, in his *Oliver Twist*, Dickens writes: "The fog was much heavier than it had been in the early part of the night . . . Oliver's hear and eyebrows . . . had become stiff . . ." (253) It symbolized society's disregard of lower-classes' circumstances as it effected the working class more than others and as DuPuis asserts resulted in an approximate of 12,000 deaths and numerous diseases.

In the novel, the fog is referred to by its cockney street name "pea-souper" and therefore alludes to and is used within the context of the lower classes. It leads Richard to his final reflection of the oppressive dynamics of the city. Walking through it, Richard reacts badly to the smothering fog and unaware of its fatal influences, exhibiting the common ignorance of both the standard "upperworlder" (as referred to in the novel) as well as middle class Victorian individuals. When he is told by his companions of London Below of its fatal consequences, he asks whether the people it killed belonged to upper or lower London. One of his companions replies "your people" and Richard "was willing to believe it", thus marking his recognition of the catastrophic influence of the upper and middle classes obliviousness (Gaiman 228). London Below contains the fog because it is formed by "things and places (that) stay the same, like bubbles in amber" (Gaiman 228). Once he crosses the fog, the final barrier between him and the "prize", he is able to successfully reject his own past and battle the demons of society.

Richard is then thrown into a metaphysical version of Blackfriars station (guarded by friars wearing black) and must choose whether to complete the process of his present erasure from history and kill himself or remain a part of the past by staying in London Below. From the moment Richard associates with dwellers of London Below his former life no longer exists and he vanishes from the

city's memory. In her discussion of *Neverwhere*, Elber-Aviram argues that "the worst part of the protagonist's erasure from collective history and individual memory is that (he) too begin(s) to doubt the validity of (his) existence" (7). That is to say, once Richard no longer belongs to London Above or rather upper-middle class, he is marginalized and is lead to believe he bears no significance to society. Furthermore, Ashford claims: "kicked and buffeted by commuters in London Underground, Richard's profound alienation, his status as a non-person, is forcibly impressed upon him by the space itself"; the familiar space of the station alters into his worst personal nightmare (Ashford 172).

Surrounded by hallucinations of his former best friend and ex-fiancée (from London Above), a horrific version of the recorded Underground message, distorted advertisements and a consistent "savage sequence of jump-cuts, freeze-frames, fast-forwards and flash-backs", Richard questions his place in society as well as his sanity (Ashford 172). As the Underground posters keep belligerently promoting credit cards and holidays abroad they offer Richard to "END IT ALL" and "HAVE A FATAL ACCIDENT TODAY" (Gaiman 247). They lure Richard, tempting and pushing him to return and become a part of present reality, of London Above, by throwing himself onto the tracks and causing a delay in the train's schedule by becoming "an incident at Blackfriars Station" (Gaiman 249). In other words, his death would disrupt the steady pace of life in London Above, therefore, the impact of his death would make him a part of it, even for a brief moment. Once again, the train becomes an indicator of time. If London Below represents the past and London Above represents the present, then Richard has to figuratively stop time (or rather the train) to transport from one temporal space to another.

After Richard overcomes "the ordeal", the final test of his journey, he is offered the opportunity to return to his former reality to which he agrees. However, life back in London Above appears dreary and worthless. He recounts to Gary, his best friend, the adventures of London Below, exposing him to the reality of the homeless and poor, the space below London and all its fantastical sights. However, his friend replies "I've passed the people who fall through the cracks, Richard: they sleep in shop doorways all down the Strand. They don't go to a special London. They freeze to death in the winter" (Gaiman 366). Gary belongs to London Above, to the social class that is blind to the condition of those in need, he tries to face Richard with his perspective on what he conceives to be the only existing reality. When Richard insists that there is more to the city that can be seen, Gary cannot or perhaps will not believe; he says that anything "is more likely than (a) magical London underneath" and declares: "give me boredom" (Gaiman 366). People in London Above would rather live in oblivion, whether they are ignorant of the condition of the lower classes or the existence of a parallel fantasy world is insignificant. The point is, that they are content with their blindness. Richard, whose eyes have been opened, has become acutely aware of the people around him, attentive to the homeless and poor, while the city remains a cold and cruel entity. Now that he is fully aware of the lower-classes and the world below he "must continue to live on the margins, in the realm of the forgotten", he eventually returns to London Below and quits London Above indefinitely (Elber-Aviram 7).

Conclusion

Although *Neverwhere* draws upon symbols of other centuries and does not exclusively belong to the category of neo-Victorian texts, the Victorian impact on the structure of the city is inevitable. Even more so since the actual space below London was made possible by the digging of the underground railway and the sewage system; both constructed in mid-19th century. Other than the three elements reviewed in this paper, the novel employs a variety of other Victorian representations: an abandoned Victorian hospital, cockney accents, Victorian attire (trench coats and high collars), etc. The important thing is that the fantastical setting of the novel is the same tunnels and pipes that the 19th

century produced. Gaiman's transformation of the space and use of Victorian inventions forces the reader to link and compare the past to the present, correlating with the steampunk aesthetic.

The reader is then left to question the purpose for which the fantastical is applied to these elements. This paper has suggested that Gaiman means to comment on the severe social gaps of contemporary London, which in many ways are similar to London of the 19th century. His reconstructing and mapping of the city and mimicking the social geography of Victorian London enable such a reading. The novel, therefore, employs the fantastic to draw our attention to concerns that have been drowned by the hectic modern metropolitan. In the final chapter, Richard Mayhew's reaction to the world around him in London Above is exactly the kind of awareness the novel strives to raise; he chooses to skip buying his regular newspaper, preferring to read "the other people on the train, faces of every kind and colour" (Gaiman 360). It appears that he favours the recognition of the people around him over the narrative London Above has to offer. The actual city is no longer a mesmerising spectacle, but rather the vast variety of people and characters who inhabit it.

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13 Questions on Science Fiction: Interview with Professor James Edwin Gunn

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The present text is an interview with James Edwin Gunn (born July 12, 1923), Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Kansas (US), on science fiction literature. The purpose of this interview is to ask questions related to themes central in science fiction, such as human transcendence, immortality, apocalypse, and so on. As a science fiction writer, Gunn can provide insight into pressing questions relating to technology and its influences on human life as expressed in fiction. Due to his long career in writing science fiction, Gunn also possesses knowledge on the changes that have occurred within the genre.

In 1976, Gunn won the Locus Award for *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. He received the Hugo Award for *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction* in 1983, and Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) presented him as their 24th Grand Master in 2007. Professor Gunn has written or edited 45 books. His works include *This Fortress World* (1955), *The Immortals* (1962), which was adapted into a TV movie called *The Immortal* (1969) and became a TV series the following year, *The Listeners* (1972), *Human Voices* (2002), and *Transcendental* (2013). He is the founding director of the Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas.

The Questions

1) How do you see the relationship between science fiction and culture? How about the boundaries between science fiction and reality?

I have three short definitions of science fiction: 1) a literature of ideas; 2) the literature of anticipation; and 3) the literature of the human species. All three have some applications to culture – that is, the way people get their concepts of the way people and their associations operate, and the way they apply these concepts to their behavior. Science fiction, unlike fantasy, is speculation about how changes in circumstances will affect the human condition, and science (and particularly technology, which is the application of scientific understanding to human affairs) is one of the major influences on change. So science fiction is shaped by the reality we share (while fantasy creates a different reality).

2) Shall we include Science Fiction under the category of Speculative Fiction? Please explain why or why not?

Speculative fiction is a term used by involved people who think that Science Fiction isn't accurate enough. But "science fiction" – or its predecessor, "scientific fiction" or "scientifiction" – has more tradition and is more clearly defined. And, as Theodore Sturgeon has written, "science" means "knowledge," and science fiction can be viewed as "knowledge fiction."

3) What, in your view, are the earliest works of science fiction?

It depends on what aspect of fiction you're looking for. In some respects the earliest forms of fiction, going back to "Gilgamesh," have elements that evolve into later science fiction. But what we now consider science fiction requires a change in human attitude toward existence, a change brought on by the Industrial Revolution, that the world was being changed by science and technology, changes visible within a person's lifetime. Some scholars, including Brian Aldiss, consider *Frankenstein* (1818) to be the first SF novel, but I think the first SF story is Edgar Allen Poe's "Mellonta Tauta" (1849), the first SF writer to be Jules Verne, and the first English SF writer to be H. G. Wells.

4) To what extent can science fiction affect or improve the developments in science and technology in human life? Is it right to say that science fiction can change what human life looks like in the future?

John W. Campbell once wrote that science fiction exists between the laboratory and the marketplace, that is, between the time when something is possible and when it has been applied to everyday life. And further, he wrote that science fiction is a way to practice in a no-practice area, that is, to consider scenarios that might lead to human catastrophe. That applies to the many stories about atomic bombs that were published before World War II and the many post-catastrophe stories that have been published more recently. But it also is true of other scenarios yet to be acted out in real life. It is also true that science fiction can inspire young people to pursue careers in science and engineering. As Carl Sagan wrote once, "The reality of science must be preceded by the romance of science." Scientific and engineering laboratories (and NASA) are filled with science-fiction readers.

5) Is classic science fiction literature different from modern science fiction literature? Have the key aims of the genre changed considerably or not?

Classic science fiction was much more clearly a literature of ideas and evoked what Sam Moskowitz described as "a sense of wonder." Modern science fiction is much more like mainstream literature, concerned more with words and character than ideas. That may be because most of the wonder-inspiring ideas have been written out and modern science fiction is in the process of reconsidering them rather than evoking them. When you speak of "literature," you may mean many things. Traditional literature considers the human condition as it is, not how it might be, and focuses on individual responses to everyday reality. In that sense modern science fiction is more "literature." But in that sense maybe less science fiction. What I've tried to do is to apply literary skills to traditional science fiction scenarios.

6) What do you think are the main reasons of the popularity of science fiction? To what extent has the film industry helped in popularizing the genre? Will sci-fi motion pictures substitute science fiction novels one day?

There's no doubt that science fiction on film or TV is more popular than written SF, but I'm not sure it has done anything for the popularity of written SF, except for movie and TV tie-in novels. They sell better than most written SF and in a number of cases have crowded out what is called the "mid-list" book. It may be critical to understanding the connection between film and TV SF to written SF is that they are different media with different philosophies and different capabilities. Film SF is primarily conservative and doesn't do ideas (the visual media believe that ideas can't be filmed; I think they're wrong, as the first 25 minutes of *2001: A Space Odyssey* demonstrates). So, I think SF film and TV have done much to make an acceptance of the "concept" of SF acceptable, but it hasn't done much of anything to advance the consideration of SF and its concerns.

7) How do you see the future of science fiction literature? Will science fiction maintain its independence or intertwine with other literary genres?

In my 1975 book *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*, I concluded with a prediction that science fiction and the mainstream would grow closer together until they were indistinguishable in the middle, and I think that is how it has worked out. But I also said that there still would be science fiction that is clearly science fiction on the outskirts, and I think that is true as well. But today I think there is also a merger with fantasy. I also mentioned in that book that science fiction has been transformed every dozen years by new editors and new writers. We haven't had such a transformation in recent years, mostly because the magazines have lost their dominant positions as creators of change, unless one counts cyberpunk and the new weird, but it may still happen – or maybe it has happened and we haven't recognized it yet.

8) For long, humans have been looking for immortality at all costs. Do you think this will lead to our eventual dehumanization? How have you depicted immortality and transcendence in your fiction?

Certainly immortality would lead to major social, economic, psychological, and cultural change. Science fiction has dealt with many of these, often pointing out the negative over the positives. I chose not to tackle these issues in *The Immortals*, which ends with the protagonist, having defeated the efforts of powerful aging people to control immortality for their own benefits, going out to face the problems of species-wide immortality. I was more concerned with the impact of the "possibility" of immortality on society, and the novel's depiction of the growth of the medical system and the way in which it is assisted by the deep fear of disease and death in us all have largely been realized in today's world.

I think I've dealt with immortality substantively only in *The Immortals* (it plays a minor part in *Gifts from the Stars* mainly because I wanted to keep alive a character I was fond of). I chose a mutation that improved the blood circulatory system because my research suggested that this was the most likely, but today I think that DNA improvements may be the probable direction in longevity. I used transcendence in Transcendental as a shortcut for evolutionary change, and species improvement to meet increasingly more complex environmental challenges seems necessary.

9) In your view, who are the best science fiction writers?

I'd credit different writers for different reasons. H.G. Wells for getting it all started and launching many of the concerns that writers have pursued ever since. Robert A. Heinlein for his innovative techniques and bringing ideology consciously into the SF field. Ted Sturgeon for literary skills and changing the focus to the social outsider. Isaac Asimov for his contribution of intelligence as a narrative focus. And Frederik Pohl for his making satire and social concerns a central part of SF. But something could be said about the contributions of dozens of others.

10) Science fiction has a long history. Which era do you consider the most effective period in whole history of the genre?

It depends on what you mean by "effective" and whom you're asking the question. There's an old saying that the golden age of science fiction is 12, and for that reader the most effective period is when you started reading passionately. More generally, I would point to the Golden Age between 1938 and 1950, when much of the foundation of contemporary science fiction was laid down. But the period between 1950 and 1960 also deserves consideration because this was the period of postwar expansion in magazines and books, when *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Galaxy* were expanding science fiction's horizons. And some critics would like to consider the succeeding decade when *New Worlds* attempted a literary revolution, or later when science fiction broke out of its ghetto into the literary mainstream.

11) Ray Bradbury considers science fiction as "the important literature in the history of the world, because it's the history of ideas, and the history of our civilization birthing itself" (Segal & Lupesco 11). Do you agree with him, as many science fiction stories do, indeed, depict disaster?

Sure. I like to describe science fiction as "the literature of the human species. "It's about humanity, not about individual humans, and so it tells us about our mutual survival or destruction. Science fiction can be about disaster (Brian Aldiss' short definition is "hubris clobbered by nemesis") but it doesn't have to be. There are lots of stories that tell us how to survive in changing times.

12) In many science fiction stories, the existence of God is denied. Could we call science fiction as an atheist literary genre?

Science fiction seeks to find answers to the same questions that religion says it has answers for: who are we, where did we come from, where are we going, how is it all going to end. Religious science fiction, like C. S. Lewis's *Perelandra* trilogy tends to read like Christian apologia. It's difficult to write serious science fiction when the answers have already been answered by your faith.

13) Finally, in *Left Hand of Darkness*, Ursula K. Le Guin says that "science fiction is not prescriptive; it is descriptive" (Le Guin 151). Do you agree with her?

Certainly that's true of a good part of science fiction, and if the terms are broad enough of all of it – that is, authors are moved to write on topics that come out of their experience. But in more specific terms much science fiction attempts to imagine something different, and its success depends on the ability of the individual author to imagine something truly different.

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A Book Review:

Winter, Jerome – Science Fiction, New Space Opera, and Neoliberal Globalism: Nostalgia for Infinity

Jari Käkelä

New Space Opera is generally understood to repurpose the stories of space-operatic intrigue on an interstellar scale. Often positioned in conscious opposition of the quasi-fascistic undertones of early twentieth-century space opera and its fascination with superweapons and supermen, the emerging subgenre has employed higher literary standards, more believable science, and more ethically considerate political commentary. Especially topical is the way many of these recent works hail from deliberate refutations of the sociopolitical assumptions of traditional space opera, often refocusing the genre on minority narratives in capitalist societies. However, critical scholarship in this area is still relatively sparse.

Jerome Winter's *Science Fiction, New Space Opera, and Neoliberal Globalism* – the first installment in the new series New Dimensions in Science Fiction by University of Wales Press – makes a compelling case for reading works of New Space Opera as multilayered political allegories that respond to the globalization and neoliberalism of our time. Arguing that whereas traditional space opera links with corporate and technocratic visions of global capitalism, the 1990–2000s "globally oriented New Space Opera . . . pitches itself outside and against" (13) these neoliberal interests, Winter constructs a picture of the subgenre as a deliberate rehabilitation of the ideological presumptions of space opera.

From Neoliberal Hegemony towards Transnational Inclusion

The study opens with an introductory section which outlines the prehistory of New Space Opera, and draws parallels between traditional space opera and the development of neoliberal globalism into the hegemonic ideology of the twentieth century. Building on these notions, the first chapter delves into refined analyses of the reinvention of the subgenre from 1960s onwards by examining how New Space Opera begins to sketch out political allegories of global cultural politics. In order to analyze this development, Winter takes the work of Samuel R. Delany as an example of the rising cyberculture and the unrest of the 1960s, and M. John Harrison as an indication of a move toward more sophisticated responses to the emerging technoculture. In his reading, the works of Bruce Sterling and C.J. Cherryh become further anticipations of the New Space Opera as they acknowledge the complexities and ambiguous alliances of the emerging neoliberal era, for example taking note of military Keynesianism, Reaganomics, and the dawn of the neoliberal era.

After laying this groundwork, Winter focuses on how fairly recent works of New Space Opera take on questions of class, gender, and race in respective chapters. With regard to class, Winter presents the works of Ian M. Banks and Ian MacLeod as central examples of the way New Space Opera employs progressive anarcho-socialist desires to combat neoliberal globalism. The fruitful comparison between these two authors allows focus on their radical left-wing politics, as extrapolated from living in a postcolonial globalized Scotland – and suggests that while they begin to reclaim space opera to the Left, they also reanimate the utopian potential of the subgenre in a search for emancipatory utopias to replace neoliberalism.

Following this, Winter focuses on issues of gender through Gwyneth Jones's Aleutian trilogy, and her employment of critical global feminism to combat the double colonization of imperialism and gender-based repression. As Winter compellingly demonstrates, Jones exposes the patriarchal presumptions of fetishized technocracy in traditional space opera and explores the contradiction of global feminism at the divide between neoliberalism and patriarchalism. In Winter's reading, these approaches constitute a nuanced body of work where Jones is looking for tools to fight against inequality which still severely affects women globally.

The final chapter examines the local and global resonances of transnationalization in the science fiction of Tobias Buckell, Karen Lord and Nalo Hopkinson as a way to discern how New Space Opera approaches questions of race. Terming their works as "Caribbean New Space Opera," Winter demonstrates that these authors depict the resistance to monocultural homogenization and map out routes for locally based micropolitics and the postcolonial public sphere to work against the detrimental effects of the privatization and deregulation campaigns of neoliberal globalism. As Winter sees it, Hopkinson, Buckell, and Lord interrogate the hegemonic ideal of free flow of capital, and thus illustrate a utopian, anti-globalization impulse.

By this combination of readings, Winter posits that contemporary science fiction from the Caribbean, Scotland, and global South is beginning to merge with global literature as it responds to American and British popular science fiction by engaging with sociopolitical and historical developments specific to the cultures where they are written. Acknowledging the ongoing development of the subgenre, Winter closes with a prognosis that the most powerful science fictional critique of neoliberal consensus is still to come – taking the works of Caribbean New Space Opera as an anticipation of a rich cultural representation which is enveloped by utopian impulse that contests the neoliberal present.

Exploring New Space (Operas)

Winter's study offers a plethora of insightful analyses on recent works which have not yet received their due attention in science fiction criticism. However, there are some unfortunate issues with the presentation of his argument, as compelling as it is in itself. The fact that the book is based on a PhD dissertation and some previously published articles shines through at times. In addition to matters of practical editing which are likely to be avoided in subsequent installments of the new series – such as negligible slips where a chapter is sometimes called an article and some individual paragraphs which have the feel of a research proposal – the overall structure of the book resembles that of an article-based dissertation.

While the introductory chapter presents the theoretical framework, it is also a densely packed treatment of the prehistory of New Space Opera, and a discussion, insightful in itself, of how even the crudest pulp era political allegories evoke the emergence of the global phenomenon of neoliberalism. This results in a lengthy and somewhat fragmented introduction which is in danger of burying the outline of the general argument under theoretical and historical concerns. Given the length of the chapter, the sections which track the neoliberal impulses in space opera from pulps to the present could have been more effectively presented in a separate chapter.

The individual chapters, on the other hand, have the feel of standalone academic articles that combine theoretical concerns with rich and highly detailed readings of the chosen examples. This brings about a similar issue as the lengthy introductory section: while the final chapter implicitly concludes the entire monograph, there is no actual concluding chapter which would bring together and assess the implications of Winter's insightful analysis of New Space Opera through the themes of class, gender, and race in the preceding chapters. Apart from structural issues, this lack of a conclusion also leaves Winter's compelling analyses without a more explicit discussion of how each of his chapters points toward utopias within or beyond neoliberalism. Indeed, it would seem a logical conclusion to venture into further comparison of how differently these works address the utopian desire in their examinations of our neoliberal contemporary culture.

The need for a more extensive concluding section is made especially acute by Winter's style of writing where very complex syntax and long, verbose sentences with a high level of detail are at times in danger of overwhelming the overarching line of argumentation. As it is, Winter leaves it up to the reader to work out the final conclusions of his study, but while making the reader work hard is often welcome, framing the analysis with robust introduction and a concluding section would greatly enhance the accessibility and effect of the argument, especially in a study with this level of analytical sophistication. The chosen approach excludes most course textbook usage, which is unfortunate since Winter's study holds potential for offering a sweeping vista into the development of science fictional responses to neoliberalism.

Regardless, Winter's study provides a valuable foray into the analysis of New Space Opera and its potential for effective political allegory. Winter's main implication, that New Space Opera is "hard-wired to address the hyperbolic science-fictionality of our neoliberal present, if primarily from a globally Northern perspective" (129) certainly deserves further critical attention. As Winter surmises at the end of his study that the most powerful science fictional critique of neoliberal consensus is still to come, also his study can be seen as fruitfully breaking the ground for future critical examinations in this field.

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research invites authors to submit papers for the upcoming edition 3/2017. Theme for the edition is 'reception, audience/s and fandom studies' (e.g. The World Hobbit Project). *The theme issue has been moved from issue 2/2017 to issue 3/2017.* We invite papers that focus on all aspects of the study of 'audiences' for cultural and media products and practices that are connected to speculative fiction. As Finland is hosting the 75th Worldcon in 2017, for this edition we would also be interested in studies of fan societies, conventions, and their history in Nordic countries and beyond. 'Audience' is here understood broadly without any specific theoretical orientations.

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This edition is scheduled for the end of September 2017.

Best regards,
Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen & Jyrki Korpua
Editors, *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*