Submission Guidelines

Fafnir is a Gold Open Access international peer-reviewed journal. Send submissions to our editors in chief at submissions@finfar.org. Book reviews, dissertation reviews, and related queries should be sent to reviews@finfar.org.

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

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Book Reviews

Editorial 1/2018

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Laura E. Goodin, & Dennis Wilson Wise

We are happy to present this issue of *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, the first with our new reviews editor, Dennis Wise, and our new co-editor-in-chief, Laura E. Goodin, on board.

The prefatory essay this issue is a retrospective of *Fafnir*'s first five years from one of its inaugural co-editors, Jyrki Korpua. He gives a true insider's view of how an academic journal comes into being and continues to grow. The current editors would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Korpua for his hard work, editorial skill, dedication, and leadership in helping *Fafnir* grow and flourish.

Although our three articles this month cover a broad sweep of topics and approaches, they nevertheless have in common the use of speculative fiction as a lens to probe and critique aspects of society. Michael Godhe's "The Old Stories Had Become Our Prison" discusses how issues raised by globalisation are represented in John Barnes's novels *A Million Open Doors* (1992) and *Earth Made of Glass* (1998); he argues that science fiction can work as a model for a futural public sphere, bridging the gap between the humanities and natural science, and enabling a broader public discourse about the societal impacts of science and technology. In "Mass Surveillance and the Negation of the Monomyth", Houman Sadri uses two modern superhero narratives in the post-9/11 cultural landscape to examine how the notion of heroism itself is challenged somewhat by another seemingly ubiquitous product of the terrorist attacks: the proliferation, and absorption into Monomythical narratives, of the tropes of mass surveillance and technologically-aided snooping. In "The Absence of Madness: Altered States in James Tiptree, Jr.'s Short Fiction", Elizabeth Oakes presents a case study of two of Tiptree's short stories, focusing on her representation of altered states of consciousness, such as madness, drug trips, and dreams, combining a quantitative, computational approach with a qualitative, stylistically framed reading. The reading locates the absences that typify Tiptree's portrayal of altered states in the text and relates these depictions to contemporaneous ideas about mental illness.

This issue also offers an interview by Beata Gubasci with multiple award-winning author, editor, and critic Jeff VanderMeer. The interview not only elicits Mr. VanderMeer's thoughts on the New Weird, a literary movement in speculative fiction with which he is closely associated, it also provides a scholarly review of the context from which the New Weird emerged and continues to develop.

Reflecting the vibrant research environment that speculative fiction is enjoying, this issue includes reviews of nine new books on topics ranging from superhero comics to climate change, werewolves, science-fiction films, and J.R.R. Tolkien.

In our series of "snapshots" of interesting projects and networks relevant to science fiction and fantasy research, Pamela A. Jackson profiles in this issue San Diego State University's Speculative Fiction Collections, which include the oeuvres and personal collections of a number of influential writers, as well as comics, zines, and other ephemera, documentation of fandoms and fan culture, and what is believed to be the world's largest collection of fiction and nonfiction English-language books related to vampires.

We hope this issue intrigues and informs you, and inspires your own research journeys.

Live long and prosper!

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, and Laura E. Goodin, Editors-in-chief
Dennis Wilson Wise, Reviews Editor
Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research.

Preface:
And So It Began – Celebrating the Five Years of Fafnir

Jyrki Korpua

The cornerstone for Finfar – The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research was installed in a meeting after the Finfar seminar at Helsinki Finncon 2013. I participated at the seminar and Finncon, as I had done the previous 10 years. There, also, the idea for *Fafnir*, our own journal, was for the first time spelled out: we should have our own research journal focusing on fantasy, sci-fi, and all the wide spectrum of speculative fiction. And as Liisa Rantalaiho in her historical account for Finfar writes, "[W]hy not make it a Nordic one at the same time, we have the contacts already!" (Rantalaiho 60).

At the journal's launch at the restaurant Kahdet Kasvot, I happened to sit side by side with Päivi Väätänen and Hanna-Riikka Roine. Maybe that was the reason why we three were declared the first Editors-in-Chief for our –then unnamed– journal. Of course we did not object to such an honorary position. Anyway, we knew each other from Finfar seminars and unofficial meetings. Before that, I had been an Editor-in-Chief for *Avain – Finnish Review for Literary Studies* in 2012, edited a scholarly article collection, and worked previously as a freelance journalist. Because of that experience I was the one who originally formulated our year table and editorial policies, as well as policies for our peer-review process, in cooperation with the other editors and Merja Polvinen, Chair of our Advisory Board.

In September 2013, Finfar-society's Chairperson Irma Hirsjärvi had sent me, Merja Polvinen, and Liisa Rantalaiho a draft for our journal's guidelines and future goals. We have followed these precepts ever since. *Fafnir* got its great name at a meeting of the Finfar board at December 17th, 2013. There was a public naming contest where people could propose name for our journal. Altogether eight names were nominated. So *Fafnir* could as well now be "Outo", "Väentupa", or "The Invisible Child". From those names the Advisory Board voted their favorite and suggested that the journal should be named Fafnir, which is of course an anagram of Finfar, but also a dragon (and a shape-changing dwarf-prince) in Norse mythology. A powerful name for powerful journal!

The beginning of our journal also benefited greatly from a grant of almost €5,000 from the Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists (Tiedetoimittajain liitto ry). That grant made it possible to hire our original sub-editor Juri Timonen and form our website and archives. So thank you very much, FASEJ!

After it all went official, my cooperation as an Editor-in-Chief with Päivi Väätänen and Hanna-Riikka Roine proved to be very fruitful. Our first journal came out on 18 March, 2014, only three days later than I had calculated. What a great achievement on scholarly publishing! It was quite a peculiar thing that our first issue included articles from all three of our editors. Of course those articles went through double-blind peer-review, as all our articles do. Hopefully that was an indication that our Editors-in-Chief knew their craft and research topics.

Päivi Väätänen co-edited eight issues of *Fafnir* with me and Hanna-Riikka (from Issue 1/2014 to Issue 4/2015). There was lot of editing work, many published articles and eight great editorials, almost all of them starting with a relevant quote – a bit of a characteristic feature from me. Päivi, a philologist, was perhaps the most pedantic reader of us three, so her stepping out from the editorial post forced other editors to dive more carefully into the world of MLA.

Hanna-Riikka Roine co-edited three more issue of *Fafnir* with me alongside our next Editor-in-Chief, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, who was named Päivi's successor at the meeting in December 2015. Hanna-Riikka ended her term as an Editor-in-Chief after Issue 3/2016. After that we started to search for another editor who could fill her language skills and precision as an editor. Aino-Kaisa proved to be extremely meticulous and efficient in her work. We truly have been fortunate in *Fafnir* that there have been so many professional scholars and skillful sub-editors who are all willing to contribute to scientific publishing even without monetary compensation. This shows how important we find our scholarly field to be.

Fafnir's Issue 4/2016 was a themed issue on graphic novels, comics, and animations. Because of that, we had a comics scholar, Katja Kontturi, as a visiting Editor-in-Chief. At the same time, we searched for a new full-time Editor-in-Chief and found him in Norway. When Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay started at *Fafnir*, our journal officially became the "Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research". Of course there had been members from other Nordic countries on our Advisory Board, but this was an important step for our journal for many reasons. Bodhi brought us knowledge on international dimensions of science fiction outside Europe; he's also the first native English speaker on our editorial team. Later this international dimension spread even wider, when I stepped out as an editor after our Issue 3-4/2017 and Laura E. Goodin became *Fafnir*'s newest Editor-in-Chief. At the same time, *Fafnir* established the position of Reviews Editor, and one of my fellow Tolkien scholars, Dennis Wilson Wise, took charge of that position. So now *Fafnir* truly is an international scholarly journal!

These have been a remarkable five years for *Fafnir*, our society, and also myself. I hope you all enjoy the journal, a bit of an adopted child of mine. I also congratulate *Fafnir* on its five years of existence and hope for prolific future!

Biography: Dr. Jyrki Korpua was one of the three first Editors-in-Chief of *Fafnir* and from 2014 to 2017 the Chairperson for Finfar – The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research. He is currently a university lecturer in literature at the University of Oulu, Finland, and a member of the Advisory Board of *Fafnir*. Korpua's research interests include, among others, fantasy, Tolkien's fiction, dystopian and utopian fiction, Bible studies, graphic novels and the *Kalevala*.

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"The Old Stories Had Become Our Prison": Globalisation and Identity Politics in John Barnes's Science Fiction Novels *A Million Open Doors* and *Earth Made of Glass*

Michael Godhe

Abstract: The article discusses how issues raised by globalisation are represented in John Barnes's novels *A Million Open Doors* (1992) and *Earth Made of Glass* (1998). I will argue that science fiction can work as a model for a futural public sphere, bridging the gap between the humanities and natural science, and enabling a broader public discourse about the societal impacts of science and technology.

Through the novels' protagonists, Barnes discusses matters of authenticity and identity politics triggered by the globalisation discourse of the 1990s – issues that have again been brought to the fore in the political sphere. By setting the stories in our galaxy in the 29th century, Barnes is debating, challenging, and contesting dystopian as well as utopian conceptions of globalisation in our time. Barnes's novels highlight the implications of nationalist ideologies, identity politics, and notions of authenticity.

But Barnes also shows how utopian thinking on a borderless global world and idyllic visions of a post-national society (expressed in some of the more utopian streams of globalization literature) are undermined by identity politics. In this sense, Barnes's novels are opening up a terrain for debating these issues, forming a basis for a futural public sphere.

Keywords: Science fiction, Futural public sphere, Globalisation, John Barnes, Identity politics

Introduction

Between 1992 and 2006, science fiction writer John Barnes published a quartet of novels called the *Thousand Cultures* series. This article analyses how the first two novels, *A Million Open Doors* (1992) and its sequel, *Earth Made of Glass* (1998), represent issues relating to cultural identity, identity politics, and authenticity in a globalised world. By

placing the plot in a fictional future world that is rapidly changing through boundless economic and cultural flows, enabled by a revolutionary technological innovation, Barnes makes it possible to highlight controversial issues regarding globalisation today.

After a long and exciting life, the tetralogy's main protagonist Giraut Leones is looking back on his work as an operative agent for the galactic supranational organisation known as the Council of Humanity in the 29th century. In four chronicles corresponding to the four novels of the tetralogy, he recalls how 1,228 cultures in our galaxy were connected by "the springer", a technological innovation making instantaneous space travel possible.[1] In the first novel, a young Giraut and his male friends live in Nou Occitan on the planet Wilson. They are mimicking what they have been taught is the courtly culture of 12th - and 13th-century Occitan, spending their time drinking wine, trying to write songs for the lute, fighting with so-called Interstellars, and worshipping the young women belonging to their circuit. Friendship, courtly love, loyalty, and *enseingnamen* (the ethos of courtly culture) are the guiding principles for the young men and their female friends.[2] Eventually, Giraut leaves Nou Occitan to work as a kind of cultural ambassador in the city of Utilitopia, Caledony, on the planet Nansen. His encounter with the citizens of Utilitopia slowly changes Giraut, and he starts to reappraise the foundations of his own local courtly culture.

After the outbreak of a civil war in Utilitopia, several of Giraut's new friends are killed in the struggle. The Council of Humanity's armed force restores the order. The old regime is overthrown and Utilitopia becomes more receptive to outside influences. Giraut and the Utilitopian woman Margaret (with whom Giraut has developed a relationship) are enlisted as operational field agents for the Council of Humanity, under the cover of positions as cultural ambassadors.

The Council of Humanity has two tasks. The first is to ensure that the reunion of 1,228 cultures on 26 planets is successful. Some of the local cultures that have evolved over centuries of isolation have xenophobic tendencies and oppose cultural and economic impulses from outside worlds. If necessary, the Council of Humanity will impose the reunion by force. The second task, which is classified so as not to create panic, is to prepare humanity for an external threat, a potential invasion by a hostile alien race against which humanity must have a united front. This task provides the focus of the tetralogy's plot.

This article examines the symbolic production of globalisation based on how it is conceptualised in the novels. The first section discusses the sociopolitical context of the novels. The second discusses how science fiction can be understood as a futural public sphere and how it contributes to and problematises issues concerning globalisation. The analysis itself follows in the next three sections, which discuss how questions of cultural identity, authenticity, and identity politics are played out in the narratives.

In the Wake of the Berlin Wall

Globalisation was certainly on the agenda when the first novel, *A Million Open Doors*, was published in 1992. The second novel, *Earth Made of Glass* (1998), also relates to the rise of the Internet and of utopian visions of limitless communication (cf. Mosco; Yar). Many of the issues raised in the novels are part of an ongoing debate on the social, political, and economic consequences of globalisation. The ideas expressed in the

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[1] The other two novels are *The Merchants of Souls* (2001) and *The Armies of Memory* (2006).
[2] The references to Occitan culture, or other historical cultures, are many, for example the names of Giraut's friends or the names of different cities. The geographical area where Occitan was spoken in the 12th and 13th centuries was called Provence; see also Paden (1998) and Rudin (2011).

narratives are responses to contemporary questions and could not be reduced to mere epiphenomena (cf. Persson; Megill).

After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the global geopolitical map changed. Despite violent conflicts – such as the wars in the former Yugoslavia – Western intellectual debate in the early 1990s was enthusiastic regarding the possible positive effects of globalisation. Sabina Mihelj points to a utopian dimension in some parts of the globalisation debate that "prompted many to deny the importance and endurance of nationalism, and to promulgate idyllic visions of a postnational, cosmopolitan society". In this discourse, national states and national bonds were seen as "merely anachronistic remnants of the past", which would disappear with the global expansion of modernity. Most especially, the increasingly globalised media industry and various transnational cultural flows would eventually change old national vocabularies, and people would learn to think beyond the nation (Mihelj 1).

In contrast to the utopian discourse, part of the globalisation debate was preoccupied with questions concerning standardisation and homogenisation. Mihelj emphasises that even as early as the 1960s, academic studies on the cultural dimensions of globalisation tended to interpret global media flows as the cultural equivalent of economic and political imperialism, as American products became increasingly popular (38). These notions continued to have a bearing on post-Cold War discourse (cf. Ritzer).

The globalisation discourse, or, more accurately, discourses, are a cross-media phenomenon, and notions of a global world are created not only through lived experience but also through various mediations claiming to explain the world, as Shani Orgad points out: "Power relations are encoded in media representations, and media representations in turn produce and reproduce power relations by constructing knowledge, values, conceptions and beliefs" (25). The consequences of this knowledge and these values, conceptions, and beliefs are precisely what Barnes's novels discuss and contest.

Science Fiction as a Futural Public Sphere

Science fiction is an important "place" or "room" for discussing the societal and cultural impact of science and technology. Different activities or arenas can be aimed at opening up "something for a larger *audience*", to make something common in order to create "'places' or 'rooms' for communication and knowledge production" (Bergström et al. 15; cf. Habermas; Goode and Godhe). [3] The science-fiction genre *works* as a special technology of representation and a form of knowledge production, provoking public debates – for example on the war on terror, environmental issues, or, as in the case of Barnes's novels discussed here, globalisation. In this sense, the science-fiction genre can be conceptualised as "a terrain of contest and debate" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 6), and it contributes to "imaginative public debate about the future" – what Luke Goode and I have labelled "a futural public sphere" (Goode and Godhe 109).

Thus, as a futural public sphere, the science-fiction genre is concerned with the impact of science and technology on society. One example is the American television science-fiction series *Battlestar Galactica* (2003–2009). By using and extrapolating the present transhumanist visions on artificial life, *Battlestar Galactica* asks questions

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[3] My translation and emphasis. Original Swedish quotes: "att 'öppna' något för en större publik"; "'platser' eller 'rum' för kommunikation och kunskapsproduktion".

concerning possible consequences of creating new life through applied science and frontier technology. The series also contests the hegemonic political discourse in post-9/11 on the war on terror (Goulart and Joe; Kiersey and Neumann), while, for example, the series *24* (2001–2010) constructs, in real time, a hegemonic tale of the US bringing global civilisation through fighting terrorism post-9/11 (cf. Olsson). To contest this hegemonic narrative involves by extension a struggle regarding the problem-stating prerogative (agenda setting) – a battle between different public discourses (cf. Foucault).

Science-fiction writers, filmmakers, and fans are part of interpretive communities (Fish; Giddens; Gaonkar and Povinelli) who share their understanding of how the science fiction "text" (both the visual and the textual expression) should be contextualised and interpreted. Following that statement, I will claim that intention (the writer's message) is coalescing with processes of reception and "translation" (audiences' and fans' readings of the "texts"). Making room for public discourse in the form of a futural public sphere enables the circulation and exchange of ideas, where contesting as well as reinforcing hegemonic discourses is a key element in the knowledge production of the science-fiction genre.[4]

What if a technology like the springer was invented – what would the political, economic, cultural, and social consequences be? In John Barnes's *Thousand Cultures* tetralogy, more than a thousand cultures scattered on 26 different planets are once again connected after centuries of isolation. Through Darko Suvin's concept of cognitive estrangement, Barnes's novels, especially the first two novels in the tetralogy, interpret and discuss several phenomena that are often highlighted in the globalisation debate, such as de-localisation, acceleration, interconnectedness, global flows, mixing, and identity politics (Eriksen 8–9 et passim), even if the word "globalisation" is not used in the tetralogy.

Traitors to Their Own Culture

> It didn't look good. Five young Interstellars, all dressed in the navy-and-black style patterned on Earth bureaucratic uniforms, sneered at the four of us. All of them were big and muscular, and none were hanging back. Probably they were all dosed on a berserker drug.
>
> The smart thing, if possible, would be to avoid a fight.
>
> On the other hand, I detested Interstellars – traitors to their own culture, imitators of the worst that came out from the Inner Worlds, bad copies of Earth throwing away all the wealth of their Occitan heritage. Their art was sadoporn, their music raw noise, and their courtesy nonexistent – and spirit and style were everything. Anyone could be graceful with nothing at stake. Here was a real test of *enseingnamen*. (Barnes, *Million* 14)

A few pages into *A Million Open Doors*, the reader is drawn into a brutal fight between two cultural factions in the city Nou Occitan on the planet Wilson: the courtly culture versus Interstellars. Giraut and his friends are upset about Interstellars abandoning the neo-Occitan culture and embracing an intergalactic uniform urban culture after the implementation of the springer six years before. Interstellars "dress like petty clerks from

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[4] John Barnes's tetralogy is also part of the mega-text of the science-fiction genre (cf. Määttä). It enters into a dialogue not only with our present societal development, but also with how the science-fiction genre has previously portrayed the boundless expansion of human living space – biologically, temporally, and spatially – and galactic empires. This article, however, does not discuss the intertextual dimension in Barnes's novels; rather, it focuses on the political, social, and cultural contexts.

Earth, forget every bit of their own culture and history, imitate the lowest forms that come from Earth". Their favorite game is to consume and produce "clear-cut imitations of Earth sado-porn". For Interstellars, however, this is "a legitimate protest against the tradition", and Giraut and his circle represent "Oldstyle" (Barnes, *Million* 25–26). Initially, the reunion of 1,228 cultures – enforced by the Council of Humanity – only makes the traditionalist Giraut and his friends more dedicated to their local courtly culture, while Interstellars engage in a growing consumerism and a repudiation of local cultural patterns.

Already in the beginning of *A Million Open Doors*, Barnes depicts what is considered a double and contradictory tendency in the globalisation process – what has been labelled "glocalisation" (see e.g. Beck). With the conception of standardisation and homogenisation came their opposite – an intensification of differences or locality: "both the fetishization and commodification of exotic commodities and of cultural difference as well as local resistance to American hegemony through a reinvention of traditional culture" (Thomas 37; cf. Jameson). This double movement – the production of sameness and difference at the same time – is precisely what occurs in Barnes's representation of globalisation processes.

In the beginning of the story, the dream of a new vocabulary beyond the local, regional, or national is far away. Instead, many of the local cultures depicted in Barnes's tetralogy are expressing their cultural specificity in opposition to the uniform intergalactic culture spreading in Thousand Cultures. When the courtly culture begins to dissolve, its practitioners (re)invent tradition as a project of identity politics. Interstellars, in their turn, are shaping an identity that crosses national and planetary boundaries in opposition to local and regional cultures. They embrace an intergalactic culture of consumption, going back to the origin of the colonies – planet Earth. It is a kind of McDonaldisation of the Milky Way. This, however, turns out to be more complex as the narrative progresses. In some of the cultural encounters in Barnes's novels, forms of cultural hybridity eventually emerge, contesting both rigid local cultures and the intergalactic consumption culture.

The concept of globalisation in the late 20th century provoked both utopian hopes and dystopian fears. Yet, there were also more moderate voices: Mihelj emphasises that the theories of Americanisation and cultural imperialism after 1989 were supplemented with theories that "acknowledged that the patterns of global production, distribution and consumption of cultural products were much more multipolar and multilayered than initially predicted" (39). However, the fear that genuine cultural patterns will disappear and be replaced by a mass-produced form of uniform culture was (and is still) a part of the globalisation debate, and this is contested in Barnes's tetralogy. Jan Nederveen Pieterse claims that the idea of cultural hybridisation is not a new phenomenon, but it is still working as a strategic counterweight to cultural essentialism, especially as entities such as the nation, the state, civilisation, and ethnicity are strategically important: "Hybridity unsettles the introverted concept of culture that underlies romantic nationalism, racism, ethnicism, religious revivalism, civilizational chauvinism, and cultural essentialism" (88).

Cultural Encounters and Mixing

In *A Million Open Doors*, the question of cultural identity and authenticity is contested in the violent encounter between Giraut and his friends on one hand and Interstellars on the other, and later in the meeting between Giraut and the Utilitopians on planet Nansen. In his encounters with Interstellar and other cultures, Giraut begins to see his courtly culture in a new light, and he starts to question its problematic gender roles and cultural patterns, which are beginning to dissolve as the reunion process continues.

Disappointed with his life on Nou Occitan, Giraut follows his older comrade Aimeric and his girlfriend Bieris to the planet Nansen, which recently received its first springer. At the same time, he begins an inner journey, characteristic of the edification novel (Bildungsroman) (Jones; cf. Godhe). As soon they arrive at Nansen, Aimeric's girlfriend Bieris starts to drop ironic comments about the objectification of young women in the shallow but also brutal courtly culture. Giraut's slow awakening from an almost incubator-like existence in the courtly culture of Nou Occitan becomes both painful and embarrassing for him. He begins to realise that the courtly culture of Nou Occitan is one of the most extreme cultures in Thousand Cultures "in enforcing gender differences" (Barnes, *Million* 228). "Sado-porn", being among the first cultural imports since the reunion process, is not surprising, since a form of ritual and symbolic rape could also be found in the courtly culture. Giraut's former girlfriend Garsenda asks him whether he knows that "real, violent rape was common in Nou Occitan". Giraut realises that women generally are treated in a brutal way, and recalls that his friend Marcabru had once told him "that he had gotten a 'little ice princess' to 'open her pretty mouth and satisfy me like the whore she really was' by threatening her with his epee, telling her he would use the neuroducer to give her the sensation of having her breasts slashed off, and of being sliced from anus to vagina" (Barnes, *Million* 229).

On Nansen, Aimeric, Bieris, and Giraut intend to work in the Caledonian city Utilitopia, a Christian culture of capitalist utility maximisation and rationality – a kind of refinement of Max Weber's thesis of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The culture of Caledony is permeated by a Lutheran work ethic, and all citizens and "resident aliens" must work four hours a day, even if it is possible for robots with artificial intelligence to do work. Initially, Giraut suffers from the manual labor, until he receives permission to establish a cultural center – if it does not contribute to a "contamination of Caledon thought", as the authorities of Caledony put it (Barnes, *Million* 51–68, 84–87).

Giraut's ethos is changing not only in the meetings with Bieris and Garsenda, but also in the encounter with the Utilitopians attending his cultural center, especially Margaret, with whom he eventually begins a relationship. For her, Giraut admits that courtly love comes down to surface and conventions, and he feels embarrassed about what he recently thought of as only natural (Barnes, *Million* 191).

Initially, he notices that Margaret would look (less than) ordinary wherever she was, with an "oversized rump …, too-wide shoulders and small, flaccid breasts" and plain face (Barnes, *Million* 155–56). Margaret's appearance differs from the conventional ideal of beauty in the courtly culture. Barnes's portrayal of Giraut's recurring sexist gaze has been criticised in a feminist study by Gwyneth Jones, but I would claim that it has a purpose. On the one hand, it underscores that Giraut has begun to look beyond his own cultural conventions when he falls in love with Margaret. The Utilitopians he encounters on Nansen begin, in their turn, to liberate themselves from their rigid cultural conventions and to create hybrids between the local culture and Giraut's neo-Occitan culture.

On the other hand, Giraut's gaze proves that he still carries aspects of his cultural identity and tradition, despite the personal development he is undergoing through the story. He retains the taste for aesthetics, art, and beauty found in the neo-Occitan culture throughout the entire series of novels; this is reflected in how he continues to describe Margaret as ugly, even though he loves and desires her (e.g. Barnes, *Earth* 16, 114–16, 142). And until the end, he will remain an Occitan – troubadour, civilised, aesthete – and an ambassador for humanity. In the third novel, *The Merchants of Souls* (379), Giraut, with "touchy pride", notes that he has maintained a part of his culture to mark his neo-Occitan origin: "We were still the spiritual heirs of the people who had given Europe – and via Europe, much of the world – all her notions of honor, love, courage, and romance." Even if culture and identity are constructions, the affective dimension remains real.

We Need to Tell New Stories – Identity Politics and Ethnic Utopias

Throughout the novels, Barnes opens up for discussion concerns about what constitutes cultural identity, suggesting that it is a cultural construction that involves how we relate to the past and to historical narratives. It appears that (in Barnes's fictional universe) four world wars and three cold wars were fought before humankind was "reasonably organized" into 1,228 cultures on 26 planets. The scattering of what is conceived of as "genuine" cultures during "the Diaspora" is largely based on "Culture Variant History", informed only by a few remaining sources. Culture founders got permission to let myths "load in as real history", to reinvent tradition, something that is seldom obvious to those living in the different cultures (Barnes, *Million* 124, 188).

Five hundred years prior to the narrative told in *A Million Open Doors*, many of the minority cultures on Earth were almost extinct. Eventually, they decided to colonise the nearest planets in the solar system, and to integrate these planets culturally. It was then believed that neither more colonies nor contact between the planets were necessary. Cultural integration was concerned with the invention of tradition because the survivors from the wars wanted to preserve the minority cultures, which had been almost wiped out (Barnes, *Earth* 29–30). The permission to rewrite history was something Giraut becomes aware of only when he begins attending the university: "I had grown up believing that various French Symbolists and Romantics had led the American Empire and its allies right up through World War Three" (Barnes, *Earth* 206).

In *A Million Open Doors*, Giraut understands that the authorities on Nansen didn't really want the springer, since they are not interested in cultural influences from other planets in Thousand Cultures. The implanted minority cultures are attempts to create culturally homogeneous utopias. In the second part of the *Thousand Cultures* series, the implications of identity politics caused by cultural isolation become obvious with the Council of Humanity's mission to reunite the cultures. It is now not only an issue of recreating homogeneous "authentic" cultures, but also a question of preserving ethnic "purity". Identity politics in this sense does not become a way for marginalised groups in society to organise and liberate themselves from oppression, but instead becomes "identitarian" (cf. Lundahl): that is, a way of forcing people into a homogenous identity. This was an issue when the novels were written, and has continued to set the political agenda today.

Earth Made of Glass explores how a "social imaginary" – in this case collective beliefs about cultural authenticity and purity – makes alternative ways of thinking impossible. The concept of a "social imaginary" was first elaborated by Cornelius Castoriadis as "an enabling but not fully explicable symbolic matrix within which a people imagine and act as world-making collective agents" (Gaonkar 1). As Claudia Strauss emphasises, social imaginary "is becoming common in the place of *culture* and *cultural beliefs*, *meanings*, and *models* in anthropology and cultural studies" (322), and it is used in many ways by different scholars. Charles Taylor defines social imaginary as "the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (106).

As Strauss states, Taylor's elaboration of social imaginary is influenced by Benedict Anderson, and refers to "a cultural model (i.e. a learned, widely shared implicit cognitive schema)" (322). Although there are some problems with Taylor's use of the concept, it fits well into the discussion of identarian politics in Barnes's novels. Social imaginaries, according to Taylor, are not always articulated or conscious, but rather carried through "images, stories, and legends" (106). The point of discussing these social imaginaries is to

make the taken-for-granted visible (Strauss 331). This is the central issue in the second novel of Barnes's tetralogy, *Earth Made of Glass*.

On a mission for the Council of Humanity, Giraut and Margaret travel to the planet Briand, an area of one of the most devastating conflicts in the Thousand Cultures. The two implanted cultures on Briand, *Maya* and *Tamil*, detest each other, and violence between the cultures is common. Both cultures strive to minimise outside influences and are opposing the implementation of the springer, delaying the Council of Humanity's ambition to unite humanity again.

On Briand, the controversial Mayan philosopher and prophet Ix has started to proselytise. He preaches coexistence, love, and understanding between the two militant cultures. Ix soon gathers a crowd of followers from both cultures, including Margaret and Giraut. The message is quite simple: the cultures on Briand must abandon their old stories that have become mental limitations. Ix asks his followers, what "can 'really true' mean in a world where most of the past is invented anyway?"

> We are the evolved version of some culture-designer's idea of the Maya; we are an embodiment of what some mostly-European academics – motivated by their love of their own eccentric readings of the few texts, and Asian quadrillionaires, motivated by a grotesque sense of guilt – made up about the Maya. They copied Maya genes into embryos, and Maya texts into computers' memories. Then they loaded it all onto a colony ship and sent us off to be the thing they wanted us to be. (Barnes, *Earth* 270)

What Ix is pinpointing is how cultural identity has been reinvented out of a state of emergency; when citizens in both the Maya and Tamil cultures are forced to adapt to a homogenous culture, identity politics becomes a mental prison (cf. Lundahl 282–83). Gayatri Spivak once coined the idea of "strategic essentialism", referring to the idea that repressed or marginalised groups sometimes form alliances to overcome obstacles and gain advantages. The problem here, and one of the reasons why Spivak abandoned the concept, is that identity becomes fetishised. As Mikela Lundahl states, there is a risk that the members of the marginalised group forget that their own constructed identity is constructed only for a certain purpose and to achieve a certain goal (11–13).

The members of the Maya and Tamil cultures have not even produced their own identities to begin with. As Ix points out, their identities have been fetishised by culture-designers, and primarily by European academics' eccentric readings of a few historical sources. Their images, stories, and legends have built up taken-for-granted conceptions of ethnic homogeneity and purity and correspondingly stable identities. In this way, the novel represents the double movement of the globalisation process (standardisation and homogenisation followed by their opposite, an intensification of differences or locality), but also how the Western World exoticises the Third World.

In this case, this representation goes even further when the leaders in the Maya and Tamil cultures use the myths to achieve a status quo and to avoid influence from other cultures and from the Council of Humanity's reunion process (i.e. the globalisation process). The cultures on Briand are entrenched in identity politics and notions of authenticity. Leaders have kept the population ignorant of the reinvention of their history, mainly to preserve the "essence" of their cultures. In the Maya culture, priests and leaders are hiding new technologies that can prevent farmers from starving: "if they are to be real subsistence farmers, when the crops fail, they have to starve. You can't tell them that with foodmakers, nanos, and electric power you can make all the food they could possibly want" (Barnes, *Earth* 187).

A Million Open Doors and *Earth Made of Glass* depict a process of forced globalisation in which ethnic and cultural affiliation are still important, making it difficult

for the Council of Humanity to reunite the 1,228 cultures in the galaxy. As Mihelj emphasises, globalisation has hardly contributed to making nationalist thinking an anachronism of the past – something that the *Thousand Cultures* series portrays, e.g. in the drama of identity politics that unfolds between the Tamil and Mayan cultures in *Earth Made of Glass*. Instead of cherishing the intergalactic modernity that the Council of Humanity is trying to spread, the two cultures on Briand continue on the road to destruction. Not even Giraut, undergoing a remarkable development and personality change throughout the novels, can free himself entirely from his own cultural identity (which has become authentic to him). His cultural gaze permeates the novels in the tetralogy. As Mihelj notes: "In often hardly noticeable ways, national belonging continues to inform people's perception of the world, collective memories and expressions of belonging" (1).

The Ix character in Barnes's story questions the social imaginaries in the Mayan and Tamil cultures. To stop the ethnic violence, the Mayans and Tamils must take control of the narratives. Human society is based on lies, and, as one of Ix's Tamil followers puts it, "the old stories had become our prison" (Barnes, *Earth Made of Glass* 188). The leaders of the Tamil and Maya are using taken-for-granted notions of ethnic homogeneity and purity to undermine Ix's ideas of cultural exchange and tolerance, which are similar to what is often attributed to Western modernity in its most utopian form. Similar examples can, of course, be found in the Fascist and Nazi ideologies in the 1930s, where historical notions of master races and inferior people were reinforced and recontextualised.

The novels' main protagonist, Giraut Leones, has abandoned some of his courtly culture's social imaginaries, and together with many others he embraces visions of a borderless world where dialogue between different cultures is possible. For Giraut, cultural encounters are eventually seen as assets, and not as threats to his own culture. When the prophet Ix finally has some impact on the Mayan and Tamil cultures, he and his followers are assassinated by fanatics. The conflict on Briand escalates into a full-scale war. As Giraut, Margaret, and the other operational agents of the Council of Humanity's special force leave the planet Briand, antimatter clouds are destroying all life and making the planet uninhabitable for decades.

Conclusion

John Barnes's *Thousand Cultures* tetralogy is multilayered. Despite the somewhat didactic style, the story is complex in its structure. In this article, I have chosen to primarily discuss how the first two novels contest and debate issues of cultural identity, authenticity, and identity politics. The question initially set in *A Million Open Doors* (1992) – the first novel in the series – is what would happen if someone developed a technology that made instantaneous travel possible? Barnes's answer to that question is a story about a variety of cultural encounters that captures and interprets much of the globalisation debate after the end of the Cold War. (The story is also a response to the representations of large galactic empires depicted in numerous science fiction novels and movies.)

In *A Million Open Doors* and *Earth Made of Glass*, globalisation themes and issues are explored through how a young man, who is devoted to his own local culture, experiences societal change and gradually changes himself through his encounters with other cultures. In this way, *A Million Open Doors* and *Earth Made of Glass* may be conceptualised as edification novels. It is not only the reader who is distanced through cognitive estrangement, but also the protagonist Giraut, who frees himself from his cultural background and partially changes his worldview. The novels depict how humans re-create and reorient their individual and cultural identities in an environment

characterised by technological change in this case by a communication revolution that breaks hundreds of years of isolation.

As a venue for cultural and political debate, Barnes's science-fiction novels discuss, debate, and contest the globalisation process and become part of a larger discussion on globalisation in the 1990s. In this way, the novels open up a futural public sphere, enabling discourse on globalisation issues. In a critical manner, the novels contest the most simplistic features of the globalisation debate in the 1990s. Barnes is depicting a world where different cultures are influenced by each other and different levels of hybridisation occur (or are destroyed when they claim their cultural specificity). Hybridisation is also portrayed as a good thing because there is no essential culture: everything is constructed through mythical stories, but these constructions also mean something. In encounters with other people, individuals gain knowledge of other ways of thinking, grow as cultural beings, and uncover their social imaginaries – for good or ill.

The novels also transcend the times when they were written, since current political trends in the Western World and the Middle East – the refugee catastrophe, emerging right-wing movements, Brexit, illiberalism and neo-conservative notions of the nation, the presidential election in the US – once again raise issues of cultural essentialism and imagined threats from global flows, nationalism, and identity politics. In this sense, John Barnes's novels remind us that we still must learn to think beyond our nationalist vocabulary and break out of our social imaginary prison.

Acknowledgements

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Mass Surveillance and the Negation of the Monomyth

Houman Sadri

Abstract: The enduring popularity of superhero narratives in the post-9/11 cultural landscape testifies, to some extent, to the continued cultural ubiquity of Joseph Campbell's 'Hero's Journey', but the notion of heroism itself is challenged somewhat by another seemingly ubiquitous product of the terrorist attacks: the proliferation, and absorption into Monomythical narratives, of the tropes of mass surveillance and technologically-aided snooping. It is my argument that the ability to perform such acts of surveillance essentially precludes and negates the Hero's Journey itself – not for moral reasons, but because these acts represent the use of a power beyond that of a mortal hero, and the essential repositioning of the characters in question as godlike beings. As a result of this repositioning, the Monomyth – a pattern which, after all, describes the progress of mortal humans through dangerous terrain that they do not always understand – no longer applies, and thus neither do the terms *hero* or *heroic*. Thus, the Batman of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*'s Nick Fury negate their own heroism and, by committing acts of hubris, invite the miasma and nemesis they are seen to suffer by the respective films' conclusions. In this way, the paranoia and, indeed, surveillance possibilities of the post-9/11 age can be seen to inform and, to an extent, redefine, both the Monomyth and the very concept of the Monomythical hero.

Keywords: Mass surveillance, Monomyth, Superhero, Panopticon, Hubris

Introduction

The Hero's Journey or 'Monomyth', as defined by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, is essentially a structural pattern common to a wide range of stories from around the world, in which an ordinary yet heroic figure leaves the comfort of home, immerses him or herself in the unfamiliar and extraordinary events of an outside world of which he or she has no real experience, fights and wins a decisive victory and, once this is

done, returns home with some essential boon or blessing. The enduring popularity of superhero narratives in the post-9/11 cultural landscape testifies, to some extent, to the continued ubiquity of this structure, but the notion of heroism itself, especially that defined by Campbell's pattern, is challenged somewhat by another seemingly unavoidable product of the situation the world has found itself in since those terrorist attacks: the proliferation and absorption into Monomythical narratives of the tropes of mass surveillance and technologically-aided snooping. In a way, these tropes can be perceived as logical extensions of the heroic archetype, in as much as the hero himself must be seen to become increasingly skilled and resourceful as his journey progresses and the ability to predict the movements of an adversary or threat is unequivocally useful.

On top of this, as Hagley and Harrison argue, "The post-September 11 resurrection of the superhero genre, particularly in film, is a direct response to the feelings of helplessness and terror that Americans experienced in the days and years following the attack" (120), and so it stands to reason that the heroic figure should be presented as being willing to do what is necessary to protect people within this frightening new landscape. This is especially true when one considers the extent to which post 9/11 governments have endeavoured to safeguard the populace from the nebulous threat of attack by means of the cross-institutional panoptic methods of discipline and surveillance outlined by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (209–18). It would seem to stand to reason that 'heroes' whose self-appointed tasks involve the protection of innocent people from forces that would do them harm would seek to use such methods.

Interestingly though, it is increasingly the case that heroes portrayed as performing such acts tend also to be seen to suffer for having done so, often to the point where whatever victories they enjoy essentially become pyrrhic ones. It is easy to imply from this that these narratives contain some kind of intrinsic moral judgment woven into their fabrics, and that the writers or film-makers are inviting audiences to disapprove of the protagonists' actions: after all, mass surveillance and the resultant erosion of personal privacy and liberty is a subject that tends increasingly to invoke strong feelings in the population. As Burke points out, while the post 9/11 discourse often tended to evoke superhero iconography and semiotics in order to make a frightening new sociopolitical status quo more understandable and perhaps less daunting to a nervous populace – see, for instance, terms such as *Axis of Evil*, which seems engineered to sound like a comic book supervillain team – these films also invited "more liberal assessments" (36–37). It is my argument, however, that the ability to perform such acts of surveillance essentially precludes, negates and resets the Hero's Journey itself – not for moral reasons, but because these acts represent the use of a power beyond that of a mortal hero, and as such signify an essential repositioning of the characters in question as attempted usurpers of divine power. As a result of this repositioning, the Monomyth – a pattern based around mythological tropes and stories which describes the progress of mortal humans through dangerous terrain that they do not always understand – no longer applies, and thus neither do the terms *hero* or *heroic*.

So it is that the examples I have chosen to focus upon – the Batman of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*'s (2014) Nick Fury – negate their own heroism and, by committing acts of hubris, invite the miasma and nemesis they are seen to suffer by the respective films' conclusions, leaving each of them needing to begin their Hero's Journey again. In this way, the paranoia and, indeed, surveillance possibilities of the post-9/11 age can be seen to inform and, to an extent, redefine both the Monomyth and the very concept of the Monomythical hero. In fact, it is my position that the situations in which these characters are left at the denouement of their respective stories can only be seen to make sense within the context of their having succumbed to temptation and the resultant failure of their respective monomythical journeys.

Enlightenment versus Hubris

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Joseph Campbell outlines the monomythical pattern, naming seventeen separate stages, spread across three sections or subheadings. While not all of these stages are either vital to or omnipresent within heroic narratives, some are extremely important and cannot be substituted out or omitted. The first subheading, *Departure,* features stages wherein the putative hero is called to venture out on a quest or adventure, temporarily refuses to do so, but eventually crosses the threshold that separates the safety of home from the wider world outside. The second subheading, *Initiation*, sees the hero beset by trials and temptations, facing a need to reconcile with a parental figure or proxy, and experiencing death and rebirth – either figurative or literal – before finally being able to receive his or her boon. The final subheading, *Return*, is often given less importance in modern heroic narratives, for it describes the stages of the journey that occur after the main struggle is over, which is to say the hero's journey back home, crossing of the return threshold and new status as master of two worlds. In *The Monomyth in American Science Fiction Films,* Palumbo makes it plain that the Monomyth describes transcendence and the individual's journey toward enlightenment (2), and as such it can be no coincidence that Campbell's formulation of the pattern is partially derived from the lives of religious leaders, as well as mythological heroes whose tales represented aspects of pantheistic belief systems. The Hero's Journey concerns the navigation of life's transitions within the movement from what one is now towards the person one is going to become, and this movement is one of continuous rebirth, self-discovery and rediscovery. As such, the hero must explicitly be seen to be human, as opposed to divine, and 'apotheosis' – the final stage before the granting of the boon – is defined by Oxford English Dictionary online as "the action, process, or fact of ranking, or of being ranked among the gods; transformation into a god" (*OED Online*). This, of course, is not something that can happen if one is already there, so to speak.

Equally, the transcendence or enlightenment that represents the ultimate monomythical boon must be seen to depend on the hero surmounting the individual stages of the journey. It is through perseverance and endurance that we reach our boon, or else power is usurped without being properly earned. Transcendence is the natural surpassing of human traits, while to challenge or attempt to artificially replace the divine is hubris which invites nemesis or even miasma. It is my argument that mass surveillance is the opposite of transcendence, because being able to 'see' all without the heightened consciousness of a god must imply a lack of vision and the commensurate inability to properly decode that which one is observing, and thereby an absolute inability to see truth. As Campbell himself has it, "If the hero has, like Prometheus, simply darted to his goal (through violence, quick device, or luck) and plucked the boon . . . then the power that he has unbalanced may react so sharply that he will be blasted from within and without" (37). In other words, the hero may be subverted from his true path by the lure of easy or unearned power – indeed, he or she may even see it as the only way to successfully complete their tasks – but power unearned is equal to power without responsibility, which precludes enlightenment without some kind of course correction. Mass surveillance represents this, and this is why Batman and Nick Fury each meet some form of nemesis, their heroic journeys are reset, and they are forced to begin anew.

A Dark Knight's Fall from Grace

Explaining his childhood preference for Batman to other superheroes, Stephen King writes that "There was something about Superman that I always found a little . . . preordained. He was too strong for me, too capable. Batman, however, was just a guy" (2). In fact, as Morrison points out, Batman was created specifically as "a deliberate reversal of everything in the Superman dynamic" (25–26), a successful attempt to emulate the latter's huge popularity by creating his polar opposite. In other words, Batman's humanity is an absolute prerequisite for the character's success. Bruce Wayne is a hero in the same way that classical figures such as Odysseus are heroes: a mortal man whose perseverance, survival and victories rely on skill, cunning and physical prowess, as opposed to super powers so potent that they could reasonably be deployed as a *deus ex machina* solution to even the most threatening of situations. Indeed, while it could be argued that to be a costumed superhero is to be akin to a god in the pantheistic sense, it is important to note that Batman has always been an exception to this.[1] Kaveney stresses this exception, pointing out that he is "an extraordinary human being who has trained many standard human abilities to their limits and beyond, but has no special abilities," stressing that the character can only really be classed as a superhero as a result of corresponding to certain tropes, such as the loss of his original family or his status as a "figure of the twilight" (5).

Jonathan Nolan, the co-writer of *The Dark Knight*'s screenplay[2], makes the connection between Batman and the heroes (as opposed to gods) of antiquity explicit, explaining that *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* informed the script's creation: "What struck me about *the Iliad* was the reason for its enduring appeal is it's an examination of what it means to be a man . . . he (Bruce Wayne) wrestles with those things" (viii), expanding upon this by explaining that "To me, there's no moral there other than the individual choices Batman makes along the way . . . It's about a man. It's about the individual decisions made by a hero . . . answering the question of how far is too far" (xvii–xviii).

Within the context of *The Dark Knight*, the pivotal decision made by Bruce Wayne (Batman's alter ego) is to employ methods of mass surveillance in order to anticipate and attempt to stop the plans of his antagonist, The Joker. Alongside the research and development wing of his company, he has developed a device that essentially transforms every telephone in Gotham City into a transmitter that simultaneously listens in to all the conversations of Gotham's citizenry and creates a form of sonar panopticon. In other words, it both hears and sees all, at the cost of the privacy and civil liberties of Gotham's citizenry. Interestingly, Wayne is self-aware enough to realise the implications of what he is doing and to know that he cannot trust himself with this amount of power, but is simultaneously oblivious enough to instead impose the implementation of the device upon

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[1] Indeed, Marvel Studios' hugely successful series of superhero films have featured several characters who actually are gods of the Norse pantheon, most notably Thor and Loki.

[2] Jonathan Nolan is also the creator, Executive Producer, and head writer of *Person of Interest,* a television show expressly concerned with digital mass surveillance and the effects this has on the people both engaged in and affected by it. The show features an artificial intelligence called The Machine, which was designed specifically to watch and monitor the population in order to prevent another 9/11-style attack. The Machine's creator, Mr Finch, is often confronted with evidence of his own hubris, and it is made plain that his choice to use a backdoor he has programmed into The Machine to accrue information he uses to help those in need represents, in effect, the monomythical journey upon which he embarked after the nemesis that this hubris inflicted upon him and his loved ones. There is no irony in the idea of the show's protagonists engaging in mass surveillance to achieve their ends, as The Machine is framed as a new god, so those that work for 'her' can be seen as heroes in the pantheistic sense, and 'she' is unaffected by postlapsarian human frailties and is thus able to process the information accrued without committing hubris.

his employee and confidante Lucius Fox, telling him that only he is trustworthy enough to wield that sort of power (Nolan 293). He is at once making as if to refuse the lure of godlike power while using the equivalent of such power to force an ordinary man to do his bidding, and as such is behaving very much akin to the mercurial gods of several pantheons. Fox is placed in a position where the use of this device is presented as the only effective way to save a large number of lives and prevent the city from devolving into anarchy, and so is effectively blocked from refusing on moral grounds, though he does insist that he will resign his position as CEO of Wayne Enterprises if the machine is not dismantled after its initial use.

Batman's actions affirm Slavoj Žižek's assertion that while "the traditional *hero* sacrifices himself for the cause; he resists the pressure of the tyrant and accomplishes his Duty, cost what it may", the hero who betrays his or her beliefs in pursuit of victory enters "the domain of *the monstrosity of heroism* where our fidelity to the Cause compels us to transgress the threshold of our 'humanity'" (Žižek 320, emphasis original). Batman's monstrous action is, essentially, to attempt to usurp the power of the divine – in this case the physical ability to see and hear all – without possessing the divine attributes necessary to properly process and wield such power. Without the godlike wisdom necessary to understand, contextualise and parse all the information that these usurped abilities provide him, the data is open to misinterpretation at best and is at worst meaningless, and therefore useless. For Batman, it represents the height of hubris and the beginning of a corresponding fall from grace. Beattie agrees that Batman's humanity marks him out as specifically *not* a superhero (Beattie), and points to the fragility of human goodness in the face of overwhelming terror – when confronted by an enemy whose actions and ideals one can neither predict nor comprehend, even the most noble among us can be tempted to over-reach, and this is what Batman does. It is instructive, also, to view the events of *The Dark Knight* as allegories for both the threat of international terrorism and the 'war on terror' itself.

In his article, "The Dark Knight's War on Terrorism," Ip makes plain the parallels between Batman's sonar-based mass-surveillance system and that set up by the American National Security Agency after the September 11th attacks (221), drawing attention to the resultant tension within the actions of Batman (and therefore the forces of justice and protection for which he acts as allegory) between what is legal/good and what is right. This tension, Ip argues, reaches its apex at the end of the film when Batman decides to accept blame for the crimes of the late Harvey Dent, the erstwhile District Attorney driven to murderous madness by the actions of the Joker, in order to enable Gotham City to remember the dead man wholly as a hero (and as a result allow the passing of draconian detention laws with more than a passing resemblance to the Patriot Act), in a way that Batman, who is steeped in violence, darkness and anger, perhaps cannot be. Ip's interpretation is that by "accepting responsibility for Dent's crimes, Batman accepts his status as an outlaw and implicitly acknowledges that his previous acts of vigilantism, while laudable and even necessary, must nonetheless be treated as illegal" (229).

It is my argument, however, that Batman takes the blame and allows himself to be hunted as a criminal by the Gotham Police as a direct result of, and reaction to, his act of hubris in engaging in mass surveillance; in fact, his fall from grace at the end of the narrative only truly makes sense on these terms. There is no good reason why Batman should choose to take the blame for Dent's actions, less still for Police Commissioner Gordon, whose young son was kidnapped by Dent and is an eye witness to events, to agree to go along with the idea. Batman is a hero to the people of Gotham: he could very easily be held up as an example, and unlike Dent he has not murdered or kidnapped innocent people. Their actions and decisions only make sense if one sees that they essentially have no choice: Batman's hero's journey has been interrupted and, to an extent, negated by his attempt to usurp divine power, and it is the knowledge of this that makes it necessary for

him to begin the journey again. In effect, his own feelings of guilt serve as both his nemesis and the plague upon his house, and so it is beholden upon him to find some way to atone for his actions.

Equally, Brooker points out that *The Dark Knight*'s conflict is centred around the "ambiguity between hero and villain . . . Joker's agenda is to make Batman cross the boundary between them, and Batman struggles to resist," adding that the film is "not about fear, but terror, with all the specific cultural associations that word evokes in the twenty-first century" (199). Indeed, as Brooker further notes, the film itself is at pains to label the Joker as a terrorist, the better to allow Batman to justify his act of mass surveillance (200). In itself, this creates an interesting juxtaposition between the hero and his adversary, in as much as Batman's entire modus operandi is predicated upon the idea that "criminals are a superstitious and cowardly lot" and thus that dressing as a creature of the night and striking from the shadows would keep them in a state of fear, perhaps even acting as a deterrent to any criminal act (Finger and Kane 25). In the context of Nolan's films, Bruce Wayne explains in *Batman Begins* that, "Bats frighten me. And it's time my enemies shared my dread" (Nolan 65). In other words, Batman's tactics rely on terror, and the Joker's actions in the film represent an attempt to blur a set of boundaries that are already indistinct at best by using the hero's methods against him. Batman's resultant use of mass surveillance signifies the complete obliteration of these boundaries and his abandonment of the tactics of a mortal hero, however temporarily.

Temptation

The third stage of the *Initiation* section of Campbell's pattern is entitled *Woman as the Temptress*, and deals with that which can lure the hero off the monomythical path to enlightenment. Despite Campbell's choice of title, temptation does not need to take a gender-based or sexually specific form; rather it represents anything that can derail the Hero's Journey by luring the hero in question away from his or her task. As Campbell puts it, "every failure to cope with a life situation must be laid, in the end, to a restriction of consciousness. Wars and temper tantrums are the makeshifts of ignorance; regrets are illuminations come too late" (121). In other words, this temptation represents, as Vogler has it, "a crisis of faith" (168), specifically faith in the correctness of the righteous course of action upon which the hero originally embarked. The temptations of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels are perhaps the ultimate examples of this idea – Jesus is able, if he so desires, to implement the power of his divine father in order to escape both his temptation in the desert and the crucifixion, but to do so would represent the negation of both his role and his final transcendence. In other words, while sexual temptation is a common cause of heroic testing, especially in classical narratives – see, for example, Odysseus' rejection of Calypso in *The Odyssey* (88–101) – godlike power must be seen to be more tantalising still, especially when the hero is beset by seemingly insurmountable odds. To fall to temptation, especially under terms such as these, represents the outright failure of the Hero's Journey, and if the hero in question survives it becomes necessary for him or her to begin again from the first stage of the Monomyth, *The Call to Adventure,* if he or she is to achieve the enlightenment that their initial crossing of the threshold implies that they have sought.

And indeed, this is the case here: as *The Dark Knight Rises*, the third film in Nolan's trilogy opens, we are told in voice-over that eight years have passed since Harvey Dent's death and that in that time Batman has disappeared and Bruce Wayne has become a seldom-seen recluse (Nolan 358–59).[3] It is only as a result of an extraordinarily pressing

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[3] *The Dark Knight* is the second.

threat to Gotham (*The Call to Adventure*) that after some prevarication (*The Refusal of the Call*) Wayne is moved to don the cape and cowl and once again cross the threshold and return to his journey. On top of this, the physical frailty Bruce Wayne displays at the start of *The Dark Knight Rises* does not appear to correspond to any injuries sustained in the previous film: indeed, at the end of *The Dark Knight*, Batman is fit and healthy enough to be able to escape the Gotham police fairly handily, and the clear implication is that he ceases to fight crime on the night he takes the blame for Dent's actions. It is clear that, as per Campbell, he has been "blasted from within and from without" (37) as a result of his attempt to use godlike power to skip the stages of the Journey ahead of him, and it has left him broken, both physically and spiritually. Even when Wayne does reclaim the mantle of Batman, these frailties are still apparent, and it is only by besting the physical and mental injuries he has amassed and summoning the fortitude to escape the impenetrable prison in which Bane has left him that he is able to properly resume his journey.

Nick Fury and Project Insight

Batman is, of course, amongst the most instantly recognisable superhero characters, and as such is well placed to be of use in investigating the implications of modern narratives and ideas for the Monomyth. However, it is arguably of even greater interest to examine the effects of hubris and mass surveillance on a character that is far less iconic, indeed one who has never been more than a supporting player within a series of interlocking superhero narratives. Nick Fury has, to date, appeared in eight films and a handful of episodes of a television show within what is referred to as the 'Marvel Cinematic Universe (or MCU) but never in a capacity larger than that of supporting player.[4] Despite this, Fury's position as Director of the 'Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division' (or S.H.I.E.L.D.) and evident willingness to work toward some version of the nebulous idea of the greater good, implies that he himself has, at some point, embarked upon his own hero's journey, and as such it is worth analysing the events surrounding and leading up to Fury's downfall and course correction in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* in order to examine the culpability Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D.'s engagement in acts of mass surveillance and other such hubris has in causing the reset of this journey.

It is also worth reflecting that while Fury does not fit the profile of a costumed superhero in the way that Batman – despite his lack of superpowers – does, he is still presented as a character who is fundamentally heroic: he sees the protection of the Earth as his remit, and in the context of the MCU even goes so far as to ensure that the constituent parts of The Avengers come together as a team. In other words, it can be argued that these two characters have heroism in common, and that the biggest difference between them is that Batman is the main protagonist of the stories in which he features, while Fury fulfils the role of a supporting character.

As a result of this, an issue that complicates a proper analysis of Nick Fury is the relative lack of previous scholarship that exists on this iteration of the character: unlike Batman and, to some extent at least, Marvel Comics heroes who have headlined their own films such as Iron Man and Captain America, Fury has not been analysed in any great detail, and in this sense this close reading is an attempt to break new ground. In their analysis of *The Avengers,* Hagley and Harrison do point to Fury and his agency's

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[4] This term is used to refer to the films and television shows produced by Marvel Studios, as well as the interlocking continuity between them. Nick Fury has, to date, appeared in *Iron Man, Iron Man 2, Thor, Captain America: The First Avenger, The Avengers, Captain America: The Winter Soldier, Avengers: Age of Ultron* and *Avengers: Infinity War* as well as episodes of the TV show *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*

infringement on both the public and the individual heroes' privacy, ostensibly in order to protect the people and gather the Avengers together as a team, as well as pinpointing the parallels between the alien attack in that film's final act and the events of 9/11 (222–23). This juxtaposition makes explicit Fury's own justification for the ruthlessness and dishonesty of his actions: he does what he feels he needs to do in order to protect the greater good. However, even the few existing analyses of monomythical tropes within *The Avengers* tend not to look particularly closely at Fury, focusing instead on his more colourful co-stars. Fernandez, for example, examines the ways in which the individual heroes featured within the film are each given the opportunity to show how they have been updated to fit a more modern socio-political context than the ones into which their original comic book counterparts were first introduced, but Fury is mentioned only in passing, or as a foil to Loki (the film's main antagonist) (5).

As a comic book character, Nick Fury first appeared as part of a war strip created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby named *Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos*, but as Peter Lee notes, he was soon repurposed into the role of superspy and S.H.I.E.L.D. director in line with early Marvel Comics' general reinforcement of 1960s anti-Soviet unease (42). The character received varying degrees of exposure over the decades, but it was only when the writer Mark Millar updated the more traditionally super-heroic Avengers as part of their 'Ultimate' publishing line that a retooled Nick Fury was positioned as the Machiavellian force behind the formation of the hero team (DiPaolo 240).[5] The cinematic version of the character hews closely to this template: it is clear within the context of the films in which he appears that Nick Fury is in possession of more knowledge than he could conceivably have amassed using conventional means of intelligence. He first appears at the end of *Iron Man*, having managed to bypass Tony Stark's state-of-the-art home security, making plain to Stark that he is savvier and more knowledgeable than him. In *Thor* he has located and taken possession of the Tesseract, and knows to appoint Erik Selveig to study it. In *Iron Man 2* he shows Tony Stark that he has greater knowledge of and insight into the latter's late father than Stark himself does. In *The Avengers,* even the chaos and uncertainty brought about by the Asgardian trickster god Loki does not prevent Fury from being able to micromanage the disparate personalities of the heroes who will come to make up the eponymous team, and while Stark, followed by Captain America, become aware of Fury's machinations, it is plain he has taken even this into account in his calculations, for when the team stands united in the film's final act they do so in apparent defiance of the S.H.I.E.L.D. director's ploys, despite the fact that this unity was Fury's plan all along, as was the Avengers' decision to continue away from the agency's umbrella.

Indeed, even Fury's appearance implies the usurpation of divinity in order to see all. According to the *Poetic Edda,* the Norse god Odin is also one-eyed, having plucked one out in order to leave it in the well of Mimir, and consequently gain the ability to see all (Larrington 7). Fury, too, is missing an eye – indeed in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, it is only his milky-white eyeball that is able to open files that are locked by retina scan technology, further implying that his physical part-blindness is inexorably linked to his pursuit and guarding of knowledge. Odin, though, is an Aesir, and as such is equipped with the wisdom to see all. Fury is not, and so his assumption of the role is not only an act of hubris but also doomed to be curtailed by his own human limitations. Odin's sacrifice of his eye, crucially, enhances both his vision and perception, whereas for Fury, the loss of an eye must surely signify a lack of depth perception and curtailed peripheral vision. Equally, Odin's ravens Huginn and Muninn have the task of flying around the world in order to bring information back to their master, and S.H.I.E.L.D.'s resources up to and

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[5] The character, previously depicted as Caucasian was presented in *The Ultimates* as resembling the African-American actor Samuel L. Jackson. Jackson would eventually play the character in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films.

including Project Insight could be seen to serve the same purpose for Fury, but again he lacks the divine wisdom to be able to properly process and use this information.

Captain America: The Winter Soldier presents the falls of both Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D. as being the inescapable results of the miasma brought about by the hubris of challenging the gods. S.H.I.E.L.D.'s infiltration by Hydra is shown not only to be thorough, but also a direct result of the agency's decision to use Nazi war criminals as assets in order to be a more efficient espionage operation, ensuring that the plague within this house is one that is not so easily cured, and that Hydra is aptly named, in a mythological sense. For all his knowledge and abilities, it is worth repeating the observation that Fury is blind in one eye, and as such (unlike Odin) his actual vision will always be limited: his suspicions about the activities of his agency come far too late. Fury's peripheral involvement in *Project Insight*, alongside the slow build-up of other acts of mass surveillance inexorably leads to the abrupt end of this particular iteration of his monomythical journey. There is also a parallel here with the protagonist of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King,* in as much as that play's eponymous king strikes himself blind upon the realisation that the hubris that has brought about the miasma that besets Thebes. Oedipus' actions inadvertently challenged the gods, but he performed them with open eyes, and his kingdom suffers for it. The one-eyed Fury's involvement in *Project Insight* is inadvertent to a point, but he has long benefitted from the godlike powers that his position afforded him, and so when his kingdom falls it does so far less accidentally.

Project Insight itself is a plan set in motion by S.H.I.E.L.D, which for decades has slowly been corrupted from within, to take the godlike power of mass surveillance to its logical conclusions and, in doing so, usurp still more power. By using the DNA of individuals deemed as enemies, the agency will be able not only to follow, watch and listen to their every movement, but also to use that DNA as a target on which to lock their weapons. Here we see an explicit correlation of knowledge and power, with the ability to see all leading to the potential to destroy all that can be seen. For Fury, this is the final straw in more ways than one: he has tacitly supported this plan by simple dint of turning the other way and enjoying the surveillance abilities his overreaching agency has afforded him. By turning against S.H.I.E.L.D. he precipitates his own fall and the resultant necessity of starting the Hero's Journey from scratch, but like Batman before him, it is necessary that Fury be 'blasted from within and from without,' before he can begin again – and in his case, the resetting of his journey is far more complicated.

Pseudo Apotheosis and a Boon of Sorts

Within the context of the Monomyth, the ultimate boon can only come after the hero has endured *Apotheosis*, or death and rebirth, and so Fury's need to begin his journey again must be seen to be complicated by the fact that this is exactly what happens to him. The Winter Soldier, a seemingly-unstoppable assassin, is sent to kill him, and Fury is critically wounded before appearing to die on the operating table. It is revealed to Captain America and the Black Widow that this death was faked, the better for Fury to quietly appraise and use the element of surprise to gain the upper hand over the Hydra forces within S.H.I.E.L.D, prevent *Project Insight* from reaching fruition and then disappear into the shadows, seeking literally to work on a smaller scale. We see then that unlike Batman, Fury's second hero's journey takes place after the achievement of a *Boon* of sorts – in this case, his hubris has been so total and the miasma has seeped so deeply into that for which he is and has been responsible, that the only boon he can possibly attain after dying and being reborn is the right to begin again. The enlightenment he achieves allows him to understand that he has not yet done enough to become enlightened: the actual process of apotheosis, as opposed to death, is part of this boon, coupled with the right to a second

chance. Unlike Batman and his sonar panopticon, Fury does not intend to allow *Project Insight* to be activated, and it is this that affords him the chance to begin again after his 'death.' Bruce Wayne's penance and negated journey involves the retirement of a persona: Fury's death and rebirth are far more literal.

Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D, it is clear, represent facets of an archetypally postlapsarian narrative: Fury's rise, fall and methods mark him out as intrinsically similar to Alexander Pierce, the driving force behind Hydra and *Project Insight*. It is no coincidence that the two were so close – Pierce represents the path down which Fury could well have found himself proceeding had he not had the residual conscience and moral wherewithal to draw a line in the sand. It is clear that Pierce too was once a good man, but his need for power without awareness, while founded upon good intentions, ultimately corrupted him, as Hydra's presence – literally the serpent in Eden – corrupted the agency both men purport to serve. In a postlapsarian world, man cannot hope to emulate the divine or attain perfection, and any attempts to do so must necessarily result in failure: so it is here. S.H.I.E.L.D. as it stands is a lost cause and, like Fury himself, must die in order to be reborn.

At the end of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, Fury is seen to literally burn the apparatus he helped create, before meeting Captain America and the Falcon at his own grave – in other words the physical marker of his death and rebirth – telling them that he is headed to Europe, literally embarking on a new journey. He is next seen in "Beginning of the End," the final episode of the first season of *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.,* helping the protagonists of that show to further curtail Hydra's activities, and stop the threat of a former colleague who, crucially, is attempting to harness powers that would render him unstoppable. He tasks Phil Coulson, one of the few S.H.I.E.L.D. agents he has always trusted, to build the agency back up from scratch, making it plain that this is because he knows Coulson will not be tempted to play god. When asked what he himself will do, Fury says that he is, "Trading in my bird's eye view for two solid feet on the ground" ("Beginning of the End"), confirming that he is aware of the reason for his fall, and that he plans to undertake his renewed journey the proper way, without attempting to usurp power, as well as making explicit the thematic link between the surveillance apparatus he is abandoning and Odin's ravens. When one's monomythical journey is taken on foot as opposed to in the sky (on the S.H.I.E.L.D. helicarrier, with all the surveillance technology that location implies) it is far harder to be tempted into taking shortcuts.

Conclusion

Describing the way in which a panopticon functions, Foucault states that "the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders . . . he will be able to judge them continuously," adding that, "enclosed as he is in the middle of this architectural mechanism, is not the director's own fate entirely bound up with it?" (204). In other words, as Caluya explains, it is "a machine of power in which everyone is caught" (625). The implication is that in order to set up any kind of mechanism of mass surveillance, it must be necessary in any postlapsarian world for the person watching to be watched him-or-herself, but it is my argument that the trap is a larger and more complex one than this implies. In Biblical terms, man first succumbs to temptation when Adam eats the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and his punishment is to be banished from what is effectively paradise, forced thereafter to live in an imperfect, postlapsarian world. In other words, the fall of man occurs as a result of his desire for proscribed or divine knowledge, and as such we can see the actions of both Batman and Nick Fury in these terms.

As Kaveney points out, superheroes' arch nemeses tend often to be dark mirrors of the heroes themselves (12), and within the context of *The Dark Knight* the Joker is explicit in reinforcing this belief (Nolan 262), while Fury's close friendship and bond of trust with the duplicitous Pierce strongly highlights the similarities between those two men. In "Dark Knights and the Call of Conscience," Howard observes that Batman's "quest to purge Gotham of crime and avenge his parents' death is played out on the moral equivalent of a razor's edge" (198), and it is clear that the events of *The Dark Knight* correspond to his blurring of these lines at the very least. Lucius Fox is very clear when he tells Bruce Wayne that his sonar-based panopticon is "Unethical. Dangerous . . . *wrong"* (Nolan 293), and it is striking that Wayne does not disagree with him: he is aware of the line he chooses to cross. This is made plain when he tells Gordon "You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain . . . I'm not a hero" (321), and he chooses to take the responsibility and blame for Harvey Dent's murders, elevating the latter to the status of Gotham's saviour. In other words, he has failed so entirely as a hero – in his own eyes at least – that he is willing to see his name attached to the same crimes he originally set out to avenge and prevent. He has been blasted from within and, as I have pointed out, the physical frailty he shows in *The Dark Knight Rises* corresponds to being blasted from without. It is clear that in a postlapsarian world – in other words, a world brought about by man's inability to resist temptation – even the best among us are still susceptible to this outside stimulus, and that to succumb to it represents a microcosmic re-enactment of man's original fall.

In discussing this stage of the Hero's Journey, Campbell states that "every failure to cope with a life situation must be laid, in the end, to a restriction of consciousness . . . regrets are illuminations that come too late" (121). Both Wayne and Fury are seen to regret their actions, but by the same token neither man is surprised by his fall. They are both keenly aware that in giving in to temptation and, figuratively at least, partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they have not only negated their individual monomythical journeys, but have also given up the moral high ground upon which they have heretofore stood, however precariously. Hence they have both lived long enough to see themselves becoming 'the villain' and this knowledge corresponds to the final detonation that leads to their ultimate internal blasting, as it were. The choice with which they are subsequently presented is whether to allow themselves to fade into memory in their new perceived roles – in Batman's case, that of duplicitous murderer, and in Fury's that of traitor and potential terrorist sympathiser – or to re-embark upon the Hero's Journey from the start, by heeding the *Call to Adventure.* Ironically, it is perhaps this very willingness to again cross the threshold to adventure and set out upon the road of trials that marks both Batman and Fury out as ultimately heroic figures, and while their physical suffering and ultimate understanding of their transgressions do not correspond to *apotheosis* or *the boon,* they do allow them some kind of understanding of the dangers they face in their respective second attempts at the Hero's Journey.

Biography: Houman Sadri is a PhD candidate and teacher at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. His research examines the continued relevance of Joseph Campbell's theoretical concept of the Monomyth, and the ways in which this pattern has continued to inform and augment literary and pop-cultural texts. His PhD project takes the form of a portfolio of articles, and is designed to encompass and use a variety of texts, forms, and critical approaches to reflect the diversity of popular culture and the pervasive nature of the Monomyth. Houman also co-hosts GU's bi-weekly *GotPop Popular Culture Podcast.*

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The Absence of Madness:
Altered States in James Tiptree, Jr.'s Short Fiction

Elizabeth Oakes

Abstract: Speculative fiction opens a window into the cultural resonances of madness, drug trips, and dreams. Thematic nuance may arise from the stylistic specifics involved in representing these states of consciousness. This paper presents a case study of two of James Tiptree, Jr.'s short stories, focusing on her representation of altered states. A quantitative, computational approach is combined with a qualitative, stylistically framed reading. The reading locates the absences that typify Tiptree's portrayal of altered states in the text and relates these depictions to contemporaneous ideas about mental illness.

Keywords: James Tiptree, Jr., Stylistics, Madness, Computational analysis

Introduction

Madness, drug trips, dreams – altered states have fascinated people for millennia. Such states of consciousness and their resultant behaviours have been variously stigmatised and celebrated. Fiction may open a window into the cultural resonances of these states, but speculative fiction especially may also postulate alternate ways they could function in or be perceived by society. During the 1960s and 70s public perceptions of mental illness were largely negative. The closing of institutions and the move towards community care in the 50s and 60s had increased visibility of the mentally ill. However, the discussion accompanying this shift often revolved around perceived risks. Depictions of the mentally ill in the popular media of the time reinforced associations between mental illness and violence. While the exact causes are not clear, the social distance between the mentally ill and society in general expanded in the 21st century (Rössler 1251). During the 1960s and 70s in particular, speculative-fiction works increasingly began to employ altered consciousness as a window into political, social, and gender issues as the genre transferred focus from adventure and technology-driven narratives to questions of human concern.

Speculative fiction bears a special relation to both altered states and style. While the language of psychiatry speaks about altered states, it is only in the language of literature, in the patterns created by the style of a text rather than in the particular meanings of its words,

that altered states can be represented (Felman 62). Felman argues that style and theme have a clear, if to her mind hierarchical, relationship. Style is subordinate to theme, reinforcing it and serving as a channel for its delivery. The thematic import of altered states in a text is accessed, therefore, through the play of signs, the lexical relationships at the patterned level of style, rather than at the level of meaning. The language of fiction is a conduit for altered states that cannot be expressed in language otherwise than fictionally. Paraphrasing Derrida, Felman states that madness, as essentially silent, is not present "in the *logos* of the book but *rendered present* by its *pathos*, in a *metaphorical* manner, in the same way that madness, *inside of thought*, can only be evoked through *fiction*" (47). In other words, altered states, although they may connect to theme and meaning within a text, reside within style.

Mandala opens her monograph on style in speculative fiction with the observation that despite the legitimisation of the genre through increasing critical attention over the last 50 years, studies focusing on style in works of speculative fiction are relatively rare (2). Yet, in his chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Broderick demonstrates that style played a key role in speculative fiction's transformation into a literary genre in the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast to the science- or pseudoscience-driven narratives of the previous decades, speculative-fiction writers, situated within the culturally broader New Wave movement, "took, as their model, narratives drenched in artful subjectivity" (Broderick 56). The stylistic experimentation embraced in these decades and the relative paucity of stylistic criticism invites investigation.

The short stories of James Tiptree, Jr., provide fertile ground for such investigation of style as it relates to the representation of altered states. Tiptree's depiction of altered consciousness illuminates the desire to escape oppressive gender roles, commenting on contemporaneous views of altered states and offering alternate interpretations. While Tiptree echoes the scepticism about psychiatry and the negative assessment of mental illness common in the 1970s (Rössler 1251), her portrayal of this altered state is more sympathetic than many contemporaneous depictions. She views it as consequent of, rather than a rupture with, social and gender constructs. Tiptree locates negativity in the vulnerability of the mentally ill rather than in the supposed dangers they pose. To understand how she communicates this attitude towards mental illness, it is essential to understand the style she uses to convey it relative to the style she uses to indicate default states. In fact, thematic nuance in certain of Tiptree's short stories relates to the stylistic specifics of the representation of default and altered states.

This paper analyses two of James Tiptree, Jr.'s short stories: "Your Faces, O My Sisters! Your Faces Filled of Light!" (hereafter "Faces") and "The Women Men Don't See" (hereafter "Women"). To analyse "Faces", depictions of altered and default states of consciousness are compared to elucidate features particular to the author's style of representing altered states. As Felman observes, "Madness integrated into literature immediately raises the question of how the unreadable can as such be read: How and why does nonsense produce sense? We cannot gauge the import of delirious language without reflecting simultaneously on the language we call 'normal'" (104). Understanding what elements of a style are specific to the representation of altered consciousness hinges on comparison to default-state styles in the same text. However, representations of default-state consciousness themselves often are shaped to accommodate and accent the representations of altered states that accompany them in a text. Altered states are read not in relation to a linguistic "norm", but bracketed by a state that is contrastive, one that has been crafted to present altered states to the reader at the angle the author desires. For this reason, analysing how a particular author represents default consciousness in a text that contains limited and thematically unaccentuated representations of altered states, as in "Women", can further illuminate the styles she produces when she does depict altered consciousness.

This study aims to underline the importance and relevance of style in speculative fiction, demonstrate the richness of altered states as a thematic element, and provide an example of how computational approaches may be fruitfully wedded with traditional analyses, building a bridge between distant and close reading methods. Tiptree's concept of mental

illness as an essential lack and her practical yet sympathetic attitude towards it as a byproduct of socially constructed gender inequalities are demonstrated.

Methods and Materials

This study employs the terms *default* and *altered* to distinguish states of consciousness to avoid connotations of hierarchical or moral judgement that terms like *normal* and *abnormal* may carry. While this study focuses on a depiction of mental illness, "altered state" is a more broadly applicable term that encourages future investigation of similarities with other forms of altered consciousness.

William Lowe's Yoshikoder loaded with Colin Martindale's Regressive Imagery Dictionary (RID) is used in this study. The program tags the words of a text according to the categories provided by the dictionary and outputs the frequencies with which words in these categories occur. The RID is designed along broadly psychoanalytical lines, and its use in literary studies has been well documented. David Kaufer and Suguru Ishizaki's DocuScope 3.21 is also used. The DocuScope 3.21 2012 dictionary is designed to identify rhetorical features of a text, tags strings as well as individual words, and can differentiate between word senses. Both dictionaries have nested structures, facilitating movement between general and fine-grain analyses. This quantitative approach is similar to the content-analysis methods used in the social sciences. Here, the computational reading serves as a guide that directs, focuses, and supports the human-performed stylistic analysis. According to Hockey, computers are more suited than human readers to detecting patterns and features within a text, literary or otherwise, and to collecting *all* occurrences of such patterns and features. The resultant collection of target features creates a more accurate view of a text at a general level and may point to features in a text that a human reader might have passed over but are worth investigating. Complemented by other methods, the computational approach can facilitate the study of literature (66).

Although Yoshikoder offers integrated percentage difference and risk-ratio calculations and DocuScope provides a suite of statistical analyses, this study does not attempt to statistically establish a significant difference between passage types within the text for each category. Calculating the risk ratio can establish that a percentage change is statistically significant. Establishing statistical significance demonstrates that a change in the frequency of some category has a low likelihood of being a product of chance; in other words, it establishes author intention or the degree to which a reader can detect such a change. Yet, whether as a result of author intention or chance, words from certain lexical categories exist in differing distribution patterns in the text. An examination of style through human reading reveals whether the difference in percentage is meaningful. Demonstrating both the significance of this distribution and the ability of a human reader to detect it depends on the researcher. This inquiry is founded on anchoring changes in lexical category distribution in the text as a whole through an analysis of style by traditional methods.

Only categories with a frequency of 1% or higher and differences in frequency greater than 1% were considered in this study. At some point, a lexical pattern becomes too scant to be perceived by a human reader; similarly, a computer-detected "pattern" comprised of only a few words is far more likely to be coincidence than an element of a style. The following example illustrates what constitutes a percentage noticeable by the reader. In "Faces", Tiptree distinguishes altered from default-state passages by a reversal of emotional valence. The focalising character of the altered-state passages, a woman undergoing hallucinatory madness, believes that she inhabits a world of possibility and adventure where everyone is her friend. The default-state passages shift perspective between a series of characters expressing anger, disgust, and distress at the madwoman's flight from reality. The human reader easily detects the emotional valences of both passage types without the aid of computational reading. However, the RID registers a corresponding shift in the Affection and Aggression categories of

the Emotion summary category. Altered-state passages contain 1.13% Affection category words and less than 1% Aggression category, whereas default-state passages contain 1.05% Aggression category words and less than 1% contained in the Affection category. Therefore, a frequency of around 1% is a pattern noticeable to the unaided human reader.

First published in 1976, "Faces" alternates between passages representing altered consciousness focalised through a woman who thinks of herself as a westward-travelling courier and passages of default consciousness focalised through multiple characters who have met the woman or who are searching for her. The courier is revealed to be a young suburban housewife who has retreated into delusion after the birth of her child. She has been institutionalised and treated with electroconvulsive therapy, but after escaping the hospital, she travels westward through a Chicago half-ruined and filled with abandoned junk that she imagines as inhabited only by women. It is to her mind a happy world devoid of men. This has left women free to share knowledge, wander, and experience sisterhood in safety and peace. In the end, she is pursued, and it is implied that she is killed, by a group of men whom she believes to be a pack of wild dogs.

"Women" also chronicles an escape, literal rather than figurative. Published in 1973, "Women" is one of Tiptree's most-studied stories. It follows two ordinary women as seen by the male focaliser, Don Fenton, as they snatch the opportunity to leave earth with extraterrestrial explorers, convinced that a world without male humans is likely to be preferable to Earth. In contrast to the courier in "Faces", who travels through a city, the women move through the wilds of the Yucatan after their small plane crashes, stranding them. The mother, Ruth, displays many of the same knowledge domains and competencies as the courier, unimpeded by the courier's inability to grasp reality.

Style and Altered Consciousness in "Your Faces, O My Sisters! Your Faces Filled of Light!"

Tiptree indicates the shift between representations of default and altered states by a pronounced shift in style. While "Faces" is a polyvocal text, the sane voice of the main focaliser, the courier, is never encountered. The courier's mad perception is contrasted by and commented upon by a handful of sane characters who briefly focalise the text. The style in altered-state passages in "Faces" is oppositional in many respects to the style in default-state passages.

The courier moves constantly toward "points west" through a cityscape partially reclaimed by nature. Her experience of the world is direct and physical, at times almost sensual:

> Beautiful cool clean breeze on her face, and clouds are breaking up. Old moon is trying to shine out! The path is deep in leaves here, okay to get the sandals off and dry them awhile. She balances one-legged, unbuckling. The left one is soaked, all right. She hangs them over her pack and steps out barefoot. Great. (Tiptree "Faces" 113)

Tiptree uses uncomplicated lexis rich in nature and body words. Repetition is, however, avoided: though "sandals" could appear as many as five times in this passage, she uses a variety of pronominal references and omission in all instances but the first mention. The syntax is also simple and direct. Telegraphic constructions, in which a finite verb or subject is dropped, add a vigour to the style that is compounded by the use of specific verbs of physical action, such as "are breaking up", "balances", and "steps out".

Yet the same structures that impart a sense of vigour also convey a sense of absence. What is done or who has done it are frequently left unsaid. Paired with more directly stated uncertainties in the altered-state passages, such as an inability on the part of the courier to specify exact time or the distance she has covered or to identify an object of which she is having

immediate experience, this absence creates an unanchored, indeterminate quality in the altered-state passages, despite the use of concrete, specific nouns and verbs of physical activity:

> Lightening [sic], growling noises – in a minute it fades away. A deer, maybe, she wonders, rubbing her head. But what was the noise? One of those dogs, maybe? Could it be a dog pack? (113)

Of the 33 words in the quote, eight, nearly a quarter, are concrete nouns. Of the five verbal forms, three are specific and active versus one copula and a modal construction. Yet whatever has passed directly in front of the courier remains indeterminate.

Computational analysis with the RID reveals a corresponding pattern. The altered-state passages of "Faces" contain 5.52% Concreteness subcategory words, a 1.87 percentage point increase compared to the default-state passages. Concreteness belongs to the category Regressive Knowledge, and it contains words of spatial reference, mostly prepositions and adverbs of place (Martindale and West 381). Such words map the setting and create a pattern of movement that grounds the reader in the fictional world. Similarly, altered-state passages in "Faces" contain 4.15% Sensation words, a category containing subcategories pertaining to the five senses, which in turn contain concrete nouns and adjectives related to touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound. Default-state passages contain 1.16 percentage points fewer Sensation words than altered-state passages.

Both Concreteness and Sensation words are necessary in fiction to enable the reader to experience the fictional world and orient herself within it. The greater frequency of these words in the altered-state passages creates a feeling of richness and immersion. As noted, the style in the altered-state passages displays a tension between strongly sensory language and absence. Similarly, while Concreteness subcategory words do orient the reader in the text, they lack specificity. Although the courier bounds over, roams through, and ducks under, there is a paucity of concrete landmarks in an area she claims she has come through before. She orients herself to the Dan Ryan Expressway, a landmark never actually reached, but she expresses uncertainty about the name of the nearby Great Lake, and she names no other landmarks (Tiptree, "Faces" 108, 112).

Sane characters experience objects and with a greater degree of specificity in the default-state passages. Brand names and locations are stated:

> She undoes her plastic Rainflower bonnet. "Oh God, my set."
> "You don't usually pick up hitchers, Mom." Bee is sitting *in* the dinette, doing her nails with Plum Love.
> "It was starting to storm," the mother says defensively, hustling *into* the genuine Birds Eye kitchen area….
> "I dropped her right *at* Stony Island. That's as *far* as we go, I said. (110, emphasis added)

Concreteness subcategory words are still frequent. The added italics demonstrate that "in", "into", "at", and "far" would be counted, but they head prepositional phrases that contain a noun denoting a specific location, such as "the genuine Birds Eye kitchen" and "Stony Island". Objects are preceded by particular brands, which occasionally stand for the object name itself, as in the case of "Plum Love". Indeterminacies and absences as found in the altered-state passages are lacking.

In the altered-state passages, the courier is pursuing her madness as much as she is traveling westward. The happiness the courier feels, as reflected by the frequency of RID Affection category words, is secured by repeatedly willing herself not to experience what is truly there:

> Even the memory of the deer seems strange, as if she'd glimpsed some kind of crazy machine with a sister riding on it. Crazy! The uproar around her has voices in it too, a ghostly whistle blows.… Go away, dreams.… (113)

In the altered-state passages, Tiptree's style of absence, in which richly described sensory experience veils a lack of concrete or precise objects, underscores the futility of the courier's journey. The courier's "points west", never named, can never to be reached. Tiptree portrays madness as the lack of vital knowledge. While characters in default-state passages possess brand-name items, rather than sensually experiencing nature, and Aggression category words are the dominant descriptors of their emotions: it is their acceptance of specifics, however unfulfilling or negative, that preserves them. The courier's denial, present at both the story and style levels, leads to her death. Thematically this suggests a view of altered states as a fruitless and dangerous escape. The courier's journey across Chicago mirrors her journey further into her madness, a wilful denial of what is there. Her act of walking alone in the city as well as her refusal or inability to acknowledge and identify a gang of criminals result in the courier's violation and possible murder.

Style and Default Consciousness in "The Women Men Don't See"

In contrast to the altered-state passages in Tiptree's "Faces", specific place names, objects, occupations, and historical events occur frequently in "Women". However, the tensions between men and women and women's need to escape an oppressive system are themes in both stories. Unlike the courier, Ruth Parsons, the main female character in "Women", is never the focaliser. The reader views her and her daughter Althea from Don Fenton's male point of view. Despite the specificity of the text's language, the female characters remain indeterminate, reflecting Fenton's character rather than the women's nature. The ending of the story reveals the female characters' actual consistency as well as the gaps in Fenton's ability to view and understand them.

Focalised through Fenton, the narrative contains an overdetermined specificity and concern with what is concrete and able to be categorised. The character uses place names, historical reference, and cultural generalisations to convey his familiarity with the foreign setting and his competence to meet the trying circumstances within the story:

> The coast on our right is the territory of Quintana Roo. If you haven't seen Yucatán, imagine the world's biggest absolutely flat green-gray rug. An empty-looking land. We pass the white ruin of Tulum and the gash of the road to Chichén Itzá, a halfdozen coconut plantations, and then nothing but reef and low scrub jungle all the way to the horizon, just about the way the conquistadors saw it four centuries back. (Tiptree, "Women" 89)

An urge to name and a preoccupation with history rather than the immediate circumstances mediates Fenton's experience. The 75-word quotation above contains four place names, comfortable reference to three landscape features unusual to an average North American like Fenton, and one mention of history. The style associated with his character, rich in exotic place names and historical monuments, recalls the frequency of named products and places in the default-state passages of "Faces".

Fenton also addresses an indefinite you, a feature typical of his focalisation. The frequency with which the character uses the indefinite you gives some passages a patronising and didactic flavour. The description of the aftermath of his plane crashing in an isolated mangrove swamp typifies this: "If you've been in one of these things, you know the slow-motion inanity that goes on" (90). Reference to the crash is offhand ("one of these things"),

the word "inanity" conveys a sense of boredom, and the two uses of "you" impart a patronising familiarity. However, the overall effect is to depict a man who is fighting to stay in control of circumstances increasingly beyond his abilities, experience, and knowledge. Tellingly, Fenton's injury of his knee, a turning point after which he loses a great deal of physical control over his situation, contains the thickest occurrence of the indefinite you:

> For instant basket-case you can't beat kneecaps. First you discover your knee doesn't bend anymore, so you try putting some weight on it, and a bayonet goes up your spine and unhinges your jaw. Little grains of gristle have got into the sensitive bearing surface. The knee tries to buckle and can't, and mercifully you fall down. (96)

"You" occurs seven times in the quotation, displacing the traumatic event onto an unreal other and asserting an illusory control through the didactic tone.

While Fenton experiences his physical and social environment categorically and displaces sensory experience, the glimpses of Ruth Parsons seen through the Fenton-focalised narration show her observing the environment and interacting with it physically. The lexicon associated with her is rich in DocuScope's Sensory Language dimension words. The difference between the earlier discussed Sensation category and the Sensory Language dimension should be noted. The RID's Sensation category captures embodied experience, while DocuScope's Sensory Language dimension captures representations of the exterior world. In the altered-state passages of "Faces", the action or object described by Sensation words is often missing, which conveys a sense of absence. In "Women", no such absence exists in the diction, but Sensory Language dimension words relate to clearly stated objects and actions and convey a sense of presence, indirectly representing Ruth Parsons as a grounded character. Her sensory experience demonstrates an understanding of her environment, as in the following quote:

> She's *making a smudge* of chaff and *twigs* to singe the *fillets*, *small hands* very quick, tension in that female *upper lip*. The *rain* has eased off for the moment; we're sluicing *wet* but *warm* enough. Ruth brings me my *fish* on a *mangrove* skewer and sits back on her heels with an odd *breathy* sigh. (97; emphasis added)

Like the courier, Ruth is active. Her activity, however, is aimed at a real, concrete goal: to secure the survival of herself and her daughter. Correspondingly, the Sensory Language words describe specific actions directly perceived and partaken in, in contrast to the courier. The quotation highlights the variety of sensory stimuli evoked. Touch, smell, hearing, and even implied taste all occur, strengthening Ruth's situational immersion.

In thinking first of her position in the world rather than viewing it through a veil of history and categories, Ruth avoids the blindness of the courier and often preempts Fenton. Several times a problem will occur to him, immediately followed by Ruth Parsons acting of her own initiative to solve the unspoken problem:

> ...But what about drinking water?
> There's a small splat! behind me. The older woman has sampled the bay. (91)

The Sensation category words in the text often describe Fenton's perceptions. These perceptions are presented confidently and are tightly aligned with Fenton's specific, categorical language. Fenton misses essential information, but the specific language paired with the Sensation words masks that absence of knowledge, whereas the high frequency of Sensation category words without clear referent associated with the courier reveals the same lack. Thematically, this lack of knowledge is in both cases critically dangerous, and is the point at which the style of representing madness and the themes linked to madness meet. In this meeting, Felman argues, the rhetoric or style of the text itself becomes mad. In her conception, "the infinite" refers to the altered consciousness's inability, as manifested in the style, to fix on

one concrete sign: "The infinite is not a thematic excess: It is, on the contrary, the rhetorical *lack* that makes the discourse function. The infinite is composed not of an excess of signified, but rather of a *missing signified*, of an *excess of signifier*" (Felman 87, emphasis original). Even though Fenton's perception, as represented by the Sensation category words, is flawed, his signifiers point to a signified, contributing to a style that suggests a default-state consciousness. The altered-state passages of "Faces", however, are often lacking what is signified. In this way, the theme of the danger posed by a lack of knowledge may be manifested also in a default-state passage without disrupting the overall interpretation of Fenton's consciousness as sane. However, the suggestive power of this lack should be noted: while the style in which Fenton is portrayed reads as default, it is viable to question how firm a grip on reality the character actually possesses.

Fenton demonstrates lack of knowledge in two other ways throughout the story. His attempts to understand the female characters are limited by his view of women which, when he notices them at all, has a tendency to veer toward the carnal:

> The woman doesn't mean one thing to me, but the obtrusive recessiveness of her, the defiance of her little rump eight inches from my fly.... Like the butterfish that float around a sated barracuda, only to vanish away the instant his intent changes, Mrs. Parsons knows her little shorts are safe. Those firmly filled little shorts, so close.... (Tiptree, "Women" 95)

While the indeterminacy with which Fenton views Ruth Parsons momentarily collapses as she is reduced to an object of sexual desire, the experience itself is always conveyed through metaphor.

Similarly, in his attempts to understand the other characters in "Women" nonsexually, Fenton relies on categories of ethnicity and occupation. Tiptree uses a higher frequency of DocuScope's Person Class words, which refer to categories of occupation, race, social class, and so forth, than Person Pronoun cluster words. As Kim Kirkpatrick notes of Fenton's focalisation of Ruth, "He switches his definition for Ruth from Mother Hen to Librarian to Girl Scout to Female Predator Preying on Poor Unsuspecting Men to Man-Hater to Insane Other.... He is incapable of dealing with her directly, and asking her what she is thinking and why" (62). Fenton runs through a series of interpretations of Ruth, trying to understand her as a type because he is unable to relate to her as a human person in her own right. However, Fenton's inability to relate extends beyond the female characters. The male captain of the plane, Estéban, a man of Mayan descent, is consistently described in terms of his race. Person Class words have been italicised in the following quotation:

> [Althea:] "He's a *Mayan Indian*, isn't he? The *pilot*, I mean."
>
> "Right. The real thing, straight out of the Bonampak murals.... Have they told you that *Maya mothers* used to tie a board on the infant's forehead to get that slant? They also hung a ball of tallow over its nose to make the eyes cross. It was considered *aristocratic*."
>
> She smiles and takes another peek at Estéban. "People seem different in Yucatán," she says thoughtfully. "Not like *the Indians* around Mexico City. More, I don't know, independent."
>
> "Comes from never having been conquered. *Mayas* got massacred and chased a lot, but nobody ever really flattened them. (Tiptree, "Women" 91, emphasis added)

While Althea Parsons attempts to move the conversation beyond types and discuss personality traits of real, present-day people, Fenton brings the conversation repeatedly back to race, particularly as historicised. Althea Parsons opens with three Person Class words ("Mayan", "Indian", and "pilot"), but goes on to discuss "people" as "different" and "independent". Fenton

immediately relates Estéban to an ancient painting, transitioning to a discussion of history through three more Person Class words ("Maya", "mothers", and "aristocratic"). Notably, while Althea Parsons uses the masculine third-person pronoun during the conversation, Fenton employs only pronouns with explicit or potential inanimate meaning to refer to people.

Estéban is also reduced through Fenton's sexual imagination to an object. As with his sexualisation of Ruth Parsons, metaphor obscures the imagined act.

> Captain Estéban's mahogany arms clasping Miss Althea Parsons's pearly body. Captain Estéban's archaic nostrils snuffling in Miss Parsons's tender neck.... The memory of Honduran mahogany logs drifting in and out of the opalescent sand comes to me. (99)

As Ruth Parsons is metaphorically reduced to a fish in the earlier quotation, Estéban becomes a log. Rather than use male or female third-person pronouns, Fenton repeats Person Class words such as "Captain" and "Miss". This move from category to object, from captain to log, illustrates the core of Fenton's inability to understand his situation. The human participants are no more than objects to him.

While the stylistic specificity that creates a sense of rationality and sharp perception in "Women" is similar to the specificity in the default-state passages of "Faces", it masks a lack of deep understanding in Fenton similar to the courier's lack of knowledge. Tiptree sets sane Fenton apart from the mad courier, however, in part by a lower frequency of the RID's Emotion summary category words in "Women" than in the altered-state passages of "Faces". This lessening of the emotional qualities of the text is one stylistic choice that creates the impression of a rational default state. While altered-state passages of "Faces" contain 3.98% Emotion summary category words, default-state passages contain 2.75%, and "Women" contains a nearly equal frequency, 2.72%.

As Fenton's control begins to slip, more emotion words enter the text. In evaluating a difficult, potentially frightening situation in a scene near the beginning of "Women" when Fenton still feels in control, the language indicates very little emotion and contains no Emotion summary category words:

> Furthermore, the diesel-truck noise on our left is the Caribbean piling back into the mouth of the bay. The wind is pushing it at us, and the bare bottoms on the mangroves show that our bar is covered at high tide. I recall seeing a full moon this morning in – believe it, St. Louis – which means maximal tides. Well, we can climb up in the plane. (91)

After Fenton injures himself and loses a great deal of control, the language of his focalisation becomes much more tinted with emotion. Tellingly, the most emotionally charged passage occurs at the one point in the story that might be read as altered-state. Fenton has taken a large dose of the analgesic Demerol, an opioid with potential consciousness-altering side effects:

> "Ruth!" My voice cracks. "Ruth, get over here behind me!"
> She doesn't look at me, only keeps sidling farther away. My *terror* detonates into *anger*. "Come back here!" ...At this moment the nearest white monster *whips* into a *great* S-curve and sails right onto the bank at her, eight feet of snowy *rippling horror*. (103, emphasis added)

In addition to Emotion summary category words like "terror", "anger", and "horror", phrases such as "white monster" suggest disgust. The number of question marks in the passage from which the quotation was drawn and of exclamation points in the quotation itself is much higher than previously in the story.

Passages of high emotion are brief in "Women", but in the use of Emotion words, exclamation points, and partial sentences they resemble the altered-state passages in "Faces". The majority of the text in "Women" is closer akin to the default-state passages of "Faces", with a lower frequency of emotion words. While Fenton and the courier share a flaw, the styles in which Tiptree portrays them differ to depict the sanity of the former and the altered mental state of the latter.

Conclusion

The courier journeys literally across Chicago and metaphorically further into her madness. The plot moves from one scene of attentional blindness to another, which creates the theme of the absence of knowledge, even as the style is built around absent grammatical elements and lack of specificity. The style of representation of this altered state is oppositional to the specific style of the default state. At the story level, default consciousness is grounded in scenes built on the stylistically delineated and fully perceived elements of the fictional world. The opposition is complete and the connection between the two states of consciousness has been severed. Altered and default consciousness encompass two different worlds. In Tiptree's conception of altered consciousness, the stylistic and thematic absences are irrecoverable disjoints.

The courier's altered state arises from an internalised absence imposed from outside: a lack of agency dictated by gender and social norms. In "Women", Ruth independently makes decisions and takes action. However, to maintain this agency, Ruth constantly preempts and deflects men. Her defensive attitude is portrayed as reasonable; when confronted with aliens, it is Ruth that Don Fenton shoots (103). Her exercise of agency, counter to expected gender roles, is more monstrous than apparent monsters. Ruth has organised her life outside of gender and social norms in defence of her agency, and the resolution of "Women" is an escape from human society that is a dramatic exercise of her agency. The courier's participation in social and gender norms prior to her mental illness ensures her lack of agency, a state intolerable for her. Unable to recover agency within social constructs, she transfers its absence to her perception and thought. It is the resultant rupture with default consciousness, rather than the act of escape, that Tiptree portrays as an unsustainable strategy.

Tiptree's view aligns with feminist views of mental illness in women that had been developed during the 1960s and 70s. Whereas popular psychology held that women were physiologically disposed to mental illness (Roth and Lerner 792–93), feminists argued that social oppression created stress, resulting in higher occurrence of mental illness among women. Marital roles were viewed as a particularly potent stressor (Busfield 523, 525). Tiptree's depiction of psychiatry as repressive, even abusive, towards women also fits with feminist ideas of her time (530) that arose in response to the conception of a healthy woman's psychological makeup as "more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, more easily hurt, more emotional, more vain, and less objective" (Roth and Lerner 795) compared to men.

Comparison of altered and default styles in "Faces" and "Women" reveals how Tiptree decouples this lack of agency, a stressor that produces mental illness, from gender. This move counters contemporaneous popular views that would label susceptibility to stress as particular to feminine physiology. Stylistically, the representation of Fenton most resembles the representation of the courier when his agency is the most reduced. Unable to act effectively in the outer world, characters shift this absence to thought and perception, creating at least the illusion of agency. The theme of thwarted agency accompanies a shift in style towards that of an altered state. In line with feminist thought of the day, Tiptree portrays women as particularly susceptible to altered states, as social forces constantly mitigate their agency, while she counters popular ideas of natural susceptibility. Her speculative fiction becomes a vehicle for contemporaneous feminist ideas about mental illness that differed significantly from popular conceptions.

This study has demonstrated how an author may craft certain aspects of her styles and examined the thematic significance of stylistic choices. Speculative fiction is far from a genre in which focus on ideas and themes supersedes any serious style (Mandala 18–19): its authors make varied and ample use of styles to convey their ideas and themes. Tiptree's apprehension of altered consciousness has been elucidated through an examination of her style, connecting her understanding of altered states to the social and human themes of her short stories.

More could be said about Tiptree's styles in "Faces" and "Women". Indeed, the styles are so rich that multiple analyses employing different approaches most likely would produce novel results. This study serves to illustrate the importance of style in representing altered states in speculative fiction, and indicates one method by which further research into the subject might proceed.

Biography: Oakes received her MA from the University of Helsinki. She studies style and representations of altered consciousness in speculative fiction, particularly New Wave.

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Birds, Bears, and Writing Humanimal Futures:
An Interview with Jeff VanderMeer at the 75th Science Fiction WorldCon, Helsinki, August 2017

Beata Gubacsi

The following interview questions were inspired by the 75th Science Fiction WorldCon's Academic Track, entitled "100 Years of Estrangement", and my own PhD research. The conference, as the title itself suggests, was meant not only to revisit but also to revise Schlovsky's "ostranenie" with respect to its use in the field of fantastic literatures before and after Darko Suvin's coinage of "cognitive estrangement", differentiating between science fiction and fantasy. Consequently, a great portion of the academic discussion revolved around the question of genre; this is relevant to the position of New Weird within fantastic literatures and the interpretation of Jeff VanderMeer's fiction, whose work has been closely related to New Weird, and, most recently, critical posthumanism.

The lack of completely satisfying definitions and the intention to define science fiction alongside speculative fiction, fantasy, horror, gothic, Weird and New Weird, magical realism, and other related genres have been the focal point of ongoing debate. While these "narrative grammars" (Clute 19) overlap in their engagement with defamiliarisation as a means of encountering or capturing the fantastic, there seems to be a commercial need for the maintenance of boundaries, even though it appears to be increasingly challenging to do so. The debate is not only concerned with the placement of boundaries between genres, especially between science fiction and fantasy, but also the very necessity of such classification. There are strong arguments for both keeping and discarding genre, and the conference itself allowed a platform for both considerations. For one, the already existing corpus of fantastic literatures is so overwhelmingly large that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to work with it without an artificial generic breakdown. On the other hand, these boundaries can lead to the loss of nuances of the subtle intertextual engagement. In addition, genre itself seems to marginalise "genre literature", preventing it from becoming more present in the mainstream, with the exception of a few authors (one such is Jeff VanderMeer, one of the major authors of New Weird).

Before discussing New Weird, it is necessary to elaborate on Suvin's take on estrangement, its closeness to the uncanny, and John Clute's "fantastika". Suvin, in his

1979 book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, attempted to distinguish science fiction from other forms of fantastic literature based on its *modus operandi*: what he termed the process of cognitive estrangement. He defined this as the plausible spatio-temporal distancing of the historic context of the author (and, by extension, the reader). Although in this case defamiliarisation (or a certain aspect of it) has been set as the basis for separating genres, it can also be instrumental in the unification of them. In Suvin's terminology, estrangement seems to work as a meta-framework for genre: these forms of literature show a great sense of self-awareness regarding their own aesthetics, "jargon", and audience, which means that they actively exercise defamiliarisation to create a distance from other literary traditions, forming their own. (Web) The difference in the poetics of the several strands of fantastic literatures emphasises the similar effect of the encounter with the fantastic: "the suspension of disbelief", estrangement from reality.

John Clute's promotion of the term "fantastika", originating from Slavonic literatures, provides an approach focusing more on the similarities between the three major strands of fantastika: science fiction, fantasy, and horror (which he prefers to call terror). In his 2007 keynote lecture at the *Cultural Landscapes/Fiction Without Borders* conference, entitled "Fantastika in the World Storm", he proposes to "describe fantastika as the necessary form of planetary fiction since 1750" (19). He argues that the absolute overtaking of Enlightenment in Western civilisation resulted in repressing the human mind and culture's natural inclination toward the irrational, which was deemed as inappropriate and abnormal by the ruling normative rationalism. Relying on ancient Greek tales and Freudian psychoanalysis, he suggests that "what is repressed will come back" (21), and explains that from 1750 onwards stories begin to "*consciously* subvert the ordered world above" (21, original emphasis). One of his examples is Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which he and others consider the debut of gothic in literature, "the contemplation of the new discovered category of the Ruin, and the sense of the quite extraordinary *precariousness* of the civilized world" (22, original emphasis). In this sense fantastika appears as a counter narrative, criticising Enlightenment, and in a broader sense, humanist ideology, also marking "the point when Western Civilisation begins to understand that we do not inhabit a world but a planet" (23). In my understanding, the difficulty of locating the individual narratives of fantastic literatures (science fiction, fantasy, horror) is their simultaneous timelessness – in the sense that engaging with sublime imagination, which seems to be a primordial trait of human sentience – and locality in both time and space. Clute's timeline of fantastika, which begins in the mid-18th century, reflects on the technological advances of the First Industrial Revolution, which were beyond most people's cognitive reach and catalysed immanently threatening processes to the environment and the understanding of the category of life. These profound changes resulted in literary expressions of anxiety, predominantly linked to monstrosity and the supernatural, both glorifying and diminishing human life.

Similarly, there has been a heated debate over the beginning of the Anthropocene (a term resurfacing in 2016), which has also been linked to the First Industrial Revolution – a suggested historical turning point in the relation of human activity and the environment. The Anthropocene has become a major theme in posthumanist discourse, especially its most recent narrative development, turning to animal and climate studies: critical posthumanism. Critical posthumanism seems to originate from both modernism's destabilising the ego through psychoanalysis and Marxism (Badmington 4–5), and the following sceptic, anti-humanist approach of postmodernism. In Rosi Braidotti's words (critical) posthumanism seeks to deconstruct the normative model of the human represented by the Vitruvian-man (13). Consequently, "narratives of otherness" (such as feminist criticism, postcolonialism, and animal studies) are instrumental in forming critical posthumanism. One of the most important areas of academic discussion within the field is the problem of subjectivity. Critical posthumanism seeks to offer an ontological framework with fewer ontological constraints (Roden), imagining a certain "porous

subjectivity" that discards the previous models of hybridity and symbiosis and focuses on constant exchange, metamorphosis, and contamination (Nayar).

Clute, arguing for the inherent conceptual unity of fantastic literatures, establishes 12 terms – four categories describing the features of science fiction, fantasy, and horror narratives – which being juxtaposed demonstrates the "permutations of one Ur Story, like three snakes mutually entwined, each snake undergoing the same morphological transformations" (28). The speakers on the genre panel at the "100 Years of Estrangement" conference suggested that the category of estrangement could be used as a unificatory force rather than a source of boundaries. In the Q&A section, New Weird, a relative new-comer as a "rogue" genre, was offered as a model for the unification of genres, or more precisely, redrawing the boundaries between them. Both estrangement and the New Weird are relevant for discussions revolving around genre and the unruly categories of Western civilisation, culminating in the understanding of human and non-human. Estrangement seems to offer an epistemological framework in which previous binary categories can be rejected. Defamiliarisation, as many of the conference's papers pointed out, is related to the Freudian "unheimlich". The uncanny is, of course, a complex cognitive and emotional response to the familiar, which, for some reason, can no longer be understood within the framework of the ordinary. Freud's example is the corpse, once human but at that particular material state lacking "humanness". Posthumanism, and the often monstrous posthuman, reflects on the problematic nature and maintenance of categorisation.

New Weird seems to be situated somewhat outside of fantastika, or more precisely between the "narrative grammars" of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. The creation of New Weird can be linked to authors primarily associated with one (or more) of the main strands of fantastic literatures, and their attempt to come to terms with their own work. The spark of discussion has been ignited by the publication of novels like China Mieville's *Perdido Street Station* or Jeff VanderMeer's *City of Saints and Madmen*, presenting a problem of rendering these works into any of the primarily established narratives of fantastika. VanderMeer has been active in this discussion not only as an author but also as an editor, working with Ann VanderMeer, carefully archiving and curating the weird tradition – associated with, for example, H.P. Lovecraft, Lord Dunsany, and William Howard Dodgson – providing a platform for authors, previously categorised in one of the strands of fantastika, to publish their works and have a more stable access to the mainstream. In the 2008 anthology *The New Weird*, VanderMeer gives a thorough explanation of the foundation of New Weird, and a detailed definition of the genre, linking it to various literary traditions:

> New Weird is a type of urban, secondary-world fiction that subverts the romanticized ideas about place found in traditional fantasy, largely by choosing realistic, complex real-world models as the jumping off point for creation of settings that may combine elements of both science fiction and fantasy. New Weird has a visceral, in-the-moment quality that often uses elements of surreal or transgressive horror for its tone, style and effects – in combination with the stimulus of influence from New Wave writers or their proxies (including also such forbearers as Mervyn Peake and the French/English Decadents). New Weird fictions are acutely aware of the modern world, even if disguise, but not always overtly political. As part of this awareness of the modern world, New Weird relies for its visionary power on a "surrender to the weird" that isn't, for example, hermetically sealed in a haunted house or the moors or in a cave in Antarctica. The "surrender" (or "belief") of the writer can take many forms, some of them even involving the use of postmodern techniques that do not undermine the surface reality of the text. (xvi)

The introduction of New Weird draws attention to the creation of genres and the artificiality of the process, and hence the impossibility of maintaining clean boundaries. New Weird incorporates the previously described ontology of porousness and contamination both on conceptual and aesthetic levels: New Weird defines itself as a chimera, showing self-awareness of its genealogy and closeness to gothic alongside the later influences of science fiction and fantasy. The closeness of critical posthumanism is apparent in the emergence and increasing popularity of the term "global weirding".

"Global weirding", coined by Hunter Lovins, co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Institute, and popularised by Thomas L. Friedman, columnist at *The New York Times*, is a suggested substitute for "global warming" and "climate change". This addition to the climate discourse was necessary, as "global warming" (a) has been abused by politics and energy politics and (b) it is not descriptive enough of the complex processes of climate change. As Friedman emphasises it in his article "Global Weirding is Here":

> Avoid the term "global warming." I prefer the term "global weirding," because that is what actually happens as global temperatures rise and the climate changes. The weather gets weird. The hots are expected to get hotter, the wets wetter, the dries drier and the most violent storms more numerous. (Friedman 2010)

In 2016, Paradoxa, devoted a special issue to global weirding, which I find significant, as it not only signals that the term has been accepted by the climate discourse of humanities (or rather, posthumanities), but also that it is associated and juxtaposed with the literary tradition of the New/Weird, suggested by the contribution of both Jeff VanderMeer and China Mieville, two major authors of the genre.

I interviewed Jeff VanderMeer at the World Science Fiction Convention in Helsinki in 2017.

Beata Gubacsi
The academic track, "100 Years of Estrangement" is focusing on the various use of defamiliarization, especially in relation to the history of science fiction. One of the papers pointed out that both science fiction and fantasy are defined by estrangement, so there's no point in separating them. What do you think of that?

Jeff VanderMeer
Something instinctually makes me not think of science fiction in terms of estrangement, but maybe it's my own personal definition of science fiction. I'd define science fiction as something I don't do and instead usually writing something that's in a weird fiction tradition, or an uncanny tradition that happens to include elements of science fiction. Or with *Borne*, there's definitely less of an issue of estrangement but it's more based on anime and manga, combined with the weird impulse.

BG
Do you see your "weird impulse" as part of the weird tradition and fantastic literature?

JV
I think only in modern times is fantasy more thought of as something lighter or not containing some kind of darkness to it, right? So I definitely see it in that way. I just think that there's maybe a tactile element and that's where things like contamination and estrangement come from, but you don't find that in its raw form in science fiction, if that makes any sense, except maybe very weird space opera. You can find some of the same elements of the new weird in Alastair Reynolds's strangest space opera, but I'm mostly

interested in contamination and the idea of contamination in fiction, which sometimes takes the form of estrangement.

I do have to say that I try in my readings of philosophy and academic papers to read outside of genre criticism because I feel it can get a little bit too tied up into particular, very narrow windows debating stuff, like whether some other science-fiction academic is correct, when there's kind of a wider world out there, especially when it comes to environmental stuff. Like the stuff Timothy Morton is doing about dark ecology.

BG

Your works seem to be interpreted in terms of posthumanism. Do you read academic pieces analysing your work? Does it affect the way you write or do you distance yourself from it?

JV

This may seem irrelevant, but it is relevant. My dad's an entomologist and research chemist, studying invasive species, and my early knowledge of the academic world was through scientific papers and things of that nature, which I always found fascinating. And I think that's carried through to the fact that I'm fascinated in academic responses to my work in part because I both synthesise what I learn from that and sometimes apply it consciously.

There was one paper on Area X that about contamination and the porousness of skin, basically, in the modern era with regard to contaminants and I thought that was really fascinating. It was talking about all these times in the *Southern Reach* trilogy where the porousness of barriers is mentioned and in both bad and good ways and about the body and it made me more aware of something that I didn't actually consciously think about when I was writing those books, but will come out consciously later. Sometimes, I have to be honest, I also send up academic papers in my fiction because I'm very interested in using non-fiction forms in a fictional sense.

I'm also resistant to Marxist interpretations of my work, the main reason being that as much as I think capitalism is responsible for our problems, I think there is something irrational in the human psyche that comes out in bad ways regardless of the ideology that we're using. I see Marxism useful in response to capitalism, but I don't see it as the unalloyed solution for political systems, for example. So sometimes I see people mapping *The Southern Reach* to that, and the whole idea behind the book was to try to reject any kind of entrenched ideology and push to something new even if it failed.

But even when I'm using something in a negative context, if I spend that much time researching it, using it, that doesn't actually mean that I hate it or have a fear of it. Quite the opposite, no matter how it's deployed, like fungi.

BG

You mentioned that you do a lot of research for your writing. This puts you in a really interesting position where you're a reader, a researcher, and a writer. It's a fascinating, complex, and somewhat disjointed mindset. How do you cope?

JV

I basically log myself off. When I'm working on a novel, I'm not on the internet, I'm not doing research. I'm simply living in the world of the novel. One reason I think I'm able to create, at the very least (whether people like the novels or not), an immersive experience is because *I'm* immersed in it. I tend to write the kind of novels where everything in my environment can somehow have an influence on it.

And then there's what I think of as mathematical equations to solve, which are editing anthologies. That's more of a mathematical equation, whereas writing a novel is kind of like being immersed in a dream, being immersed in a relationship or something.

It's very visceral and lives in the body, so to speak. I feel it – like when I was writing *Authority*, I felt that and I actually became more paranoid.

The point is [that] compartmentalisation is very important. It's very important for a long-term career too, because a way you get burned out is when you start trying to mix writing and social media, mix writing and promotion – and then also the line between what's creative and what's promotional gets blurred. I actually welcome doing the research, because that also is a way of getting away from the fiction, seeing it with fresh eyes. But I always do the research several years ahead of time, so it kind of organically comes out.

I even see *The Weird* [an anthology of weird stories from Borges to Neil Gaiman, edited by Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, published in 2011] as being a kind of research for the *Southern Reach*, in that it was kind of a crash course. Even though I knew weird fiction, I had to read six million words, or at least skim some of that. Obviously, you can skip a story and know it's not for you, but we did look at over six million words to get to our word count of 750,000. When you do that, it creates sedimentary layers in your head that you don't even realise are there, and so that's how I do the research for the novels now. If I do all that philosophical research a couple years before I actually write anything, I don't refer to my notes later. It's just whatever comes out from that.

BG

We've been discussing the academic attention on your works and the New/Weird in general. Do you think it has changed the genre in the past decade or two decades?

JV

I think that it created a pathway or a corridor for some of us towards something that…and you can say some of Clive Barker's *Books of Blood* is political, even in *In The Hills, The Cities* is political…but I think it created a corridor towards the weird taking on more present-day concerns in an organic way. I think also that the weird is ideally positioned to deal with things like climate change, which are part of the physical laws of the universe but manifest in uncanny ways.

Even a non-fiction text like *Imperial* by William Vollmann, to me, is an uncanny text because there are all these repetitions and weirdnesses in it that are more or less because he's grappling with this place being haunted by climate change, and he can't quite deal with it on a conscious level. He has to engage in a repetition to kind of protect himself from ecological devastation. In general, I just feel like it's also a way for the weird to become more progressive because obviously there's still an old guard out there that is using the weird in the regressive, and sometimes very conservative way even in the stories where the weird element encountered is something beautiful and not something that's horrifying. Even when there's no return to status quo, there's still a conservative element to it.

So when you add something like the environmental issues or you add something political in the social-justice sphere, you can integrate it in such a way that you still get that frisson of being somewhere unexpected and somewhere strange, like you do from the best classic stories, but create something new. I think there's a real value there. It puts people in a psychological space where maybe they can better see the reality that they're living through. I'm really energised by that idea, and I'm still working in that space for that reason. But ecological concerns are pretty much in all my fiction…. It astonishes me when people act like climate change awareness is a new thing, because I remember being aware of it in the late 1980s, early 1990s, and almost all of my major fiction deals with it. It just deals with it in a more weird way now, in a less science-fictional way.

The other thing I was going to say is that the weird creates the necessary distance to be able to write about the present, which is important because it's almost like when as a writer you try to assimilate an autobiographical element and then manifest it in your

fiction, but you have to wait because it's too personal or raw. Well, the current situation is too personal or raw to sometimes show directly, and the weird is a filter that gives the necessary distance for perspective and context, to say something useful in a narratological way.

That said, the next novel I'm working on, *Hummingbird Salamander*, has elements of the weird but no uncanny or speculative element. It's like a very slight one, and it's set about 10 seconds in to the future, because I feel like the future, and that uncanniness of the future, is bleeding into the present more and more.

In a weird way, it's almost like history is coming towards us faster and faster. I know that sounds very strange. But the point is I don't really feel like I need distance anymore because the present is itself very strange.

BG

Do you see yourself becoming a political writer?

JV

I feel like I've always been political; it's just that people haven't recognised it because they haven't seen certain topics as being political. It's only recently that we've seen climate change as being a huge political issue, which is so stupid but it's true. People haven't seen the plight of animals as being a political issue, but yet it's so tied to climate change. It's so tied to all these other issues.

It's also about underused opportunities in narrative because so many writers use animals in an unthinking way in their stories, but what they're really doing is depriving themselves of additional interesting choices. It's kind of terrifying because I feel like I'm becoming more political the more urgent the situation becomes, by default, without changing anything about how I write, and that's a bad feeling. But there's also the idea that it's not the books themselves but the fact that I get to talk about ecological issues because of them that can make an impact on behaviour.

BG

I find this "underused" narrative opportunity fascinating. From a writer's point of view, how do you approach the non-human?

JV

Certain kinds of animal life are still kind of regarded as alien on this planet, but that doesn't stop speculative-fiction writers from writing about aliens or writing about any number of scenarios that, to my mind, you can apply the same question to, if you wanted to.

Nature photographers deal with this issue all the time when they want to try to remove the human gaze from the composition. And one of the answers is that you can never actually do it, but that by trying to do it you get closer, and in your failure you do something more interesting than if you didn't try.

Now, the other answer is that, for example, "The Strange Bird", which is from the point of view of a piece of biotech that's in *Borne*…. The way I hedged my bet was that you find out that the strange bird also has some human DNA, and so that is the way in which I kind of compromise to the point where you can believe that you're actually reading the story from a bird's point of view. That kind of gets you halfway there.

But you can definitely extrapolate. A bird lives in a vertical and not a horizontal world, for example. I know we're not supposed to anthropomorphise, but to be absolutely honest, the propaganda about animals every day is an anthropomorphising act. We have memes about wise owls; owls are actually the stupidest of the birds. It's not even accurate. We also have all kinds of things that are actually acts of violence against animals that are taken as being cute in internet memes.

And if you really think about it, it's just objectively distasteful not to consider the ethical and moral obligation we have toward animals. And so we have all kinds of issues that go well beyond a failed experiment in anthropomorphising an animal. You also have animal-behaviour scientists beginning to second-guess their attempt to not anthropomorphise animals because they've interpreted data as very different from humans as a result, so they've over corrected, in a sense. You begin to see in animal-behaviour science too this recognition that sometimes we're trying to push a similarity away because we've been taught all our lives that they're not like us, and it's actually skewing research, so this is a very complicated question.

If there is one thing beyond social-justice issues that people 100 years are going to come back and say "They were barbarians", it's going to be treatment of animals. Also, an inability to work within our environment instead of pushing against our environment using the soft-tech that's all around us in nature, rather than constructing hard-tech that destroys the world, and animals are part of there.

Not to go on too long, but there's also this thing where with gene splicing, what's happening is that the distinction between animal as object to be used as art, science…if you can create a creature, and you may create it as an art form, and you can also manipulate genes to the point where you can create a hybrid creature, there are all kinds of ethical and moral questions that we haven't engaged with.

One thing that the laboratory fiction can do is get ahead of that, and it can show how capitalism is creating a situation where we don't even think about those questions anymore. We just think about animals as objects, even as we're reaching this pressure point where changing our foundational values is important to our own survival.

BG
Did you have this in mind when you were writing *Borne*?

JV
Yes, in fact, I was trying…. I wasn't entirely successful, but there is a little mini-narrative involving the foxes. If you read the scenes just for what the foxes are doing, they're doing their own thing. They have their own story. That's another way you can get across an animal perspective, and I'm going to continue to experiment with those kinds of ideas, even if I know that I'm doomed to failure, because I think it's very important.

BG
Earlier, you mentioned that you are happy that we have an academic track at the [Helsinki] WorldCon. How do you see the critique/fan divide? Do you think it's important to do academic research in fantastic literatures?

JV
Yeah, I think it's very important. It's actually more important than with literary mainstream because even today, even though pop culture has given genre fiction a great "in" to the mainstream in a way… if you look at a typical review of a contemporary novel set in a contemporary place without a speculative element, even in *The New York Times*, there's a fair amount of literary analysis going on, whereas in the same venues, if it is a book with a fantastical element, the fantastical element will absorb the attention to the point of there not actually being much analysis of what is going on with the subtext. It's almost like there's a bright and shiny object that distracts. And also just simply in terms of respectability and what students get taught in classes and what they see as valuable in fiction.

I love all kinds of literary mainstream material, and half of my influences are from that realm. But I am glad to see that there's more and more serious discussion of genre fiction. I think it is very important, and, as with most things, you just have to ignore the

naysayers and recognise [that] the genre is still very tribal. There's always going to be people who disagree with what your particular role in all of this is.

BG

Is there anything that nobody has ever asked you, and you really want to be asked and you really want to answer that question?

JV

I don't know that there's a specific question. I do know that there's a kind of weirdness where if you write something that isn't mainstream realism people seem to think it's not autobiographical. The whole *Southern Reach* trilogy, for example, every detail of setting, everything that the characters encounter that isn't uncanny, is something that I know first-hand with all five senses, so to speak. Even in the *Ambergris* books, where there's a more hidden autobiography, there are a lot of autobiographical elements. What I don't see is people asking questions about that or realising that most of all of these books are based on some kind of personal experience.

But I've been really lucky. Ever since I've switched to a mainstream literary publisher in the US, the whole conversation about my books has changed. Ever since *Annihilation*. And to be honest, I don't know that the academic reaction in the US would have been the same otherwise.

BG

How do you see the authorial position in changing media?

JV

I'm very playful on social media, and I think that helps. I'm also very welcoming and nurturing to fan art, fan fiction, things like that. Luckily, the *Southern Reach* books created this space for reader imagination through their ambiguity that was very useful in generating creativity. So, I haven't experienced it yet in the negative so much. Things like that I just kind of ignore. There was a point at which authors were getting more upset about it, and then they got used to it, this idea that readers were more prevalent. I just inoculate myself. People say, "Don't read your Goodreads reviews or your Amazon reviews." But I actually do. I actually read them and I kind of inoculate myself against worrying about that by reading them.

BG

How much do negative reviews affect you, however scarce they might be?

JV

First of all, *Annihilation* and *Southern Reach* and *Borne* have gotten incredible reviews all over the place that have helped, so when you go to read the reader reviews and there are some that are negative, it doesn't really sting. But I would also say if I was a new writer starting out, I don't know how it would affect me. I've been in the business for 30-plus years, I've been in almost every kind of situation publishing-wise, so after a while you have so much scar tissue that it doesn't really register that way.

If I feel like I'm emotionally vulnerable, I won't read that stuff. But I've never been blocked by reading that. Part of that, to be absolutely honest, is that earlier in my career, there were a lot of genre gatekeepers that didn't like my work, and so the only way that I could sustain my career was by ignoring a lot of advice about what to do. I have to be careful about that now because my instant reaction sometimes is to reject certain kinds of advice, and I have to ask myself, "Is that a knee-jerk reaction because of where you came from or is it legitimate?"

The long answer is that it doesn't affect me as much, but I don't know.... I have seen beginning writers who have been destroyed by it because they just internalise it to the point that it affects their ideas.... So I do recommend that you try to keep a certain distance and know the things that can get into your head and avoid them.

BG

Speaking of beginner writers, do you think fan fiction can be a good first step for new writers?

JV

I do, and we do this Shared Worlds SF/F teen writing workshop, 60 students every year, and the first week they build their own world in groups of 10 and then they write it in the second, yeah, which allows them a way to have something personal that's not too personal so they don't get frozen. But a lot of them come in absolutely beating themselves up because they're writing only fan fiction.

If a 13- or 14-year-old is only writing fan fiction, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. It's all practice writing. Chances are, you're not going to get published anyway until you're in your 20s. And so we often have writers come in who also write fan fiction in addition. There are bestselling *New York Times* writers who also write a lot of fan fiction still, so we have someone like that come in and stop them from beating themselves up over this and then provide them with strategies so that they finish more of their own original work, but also recognise that they can do both things. It's all practice. It all teaches you something.

My only rule is that if I'm still working in a universe, I absolutely do not want to see the fan fiction until I'm finished working in that universe, just because I don't want it influencing me. I don't want somehow to inadvertently to copy it, but I also just don't want it in my head. That's why I didn't want to see the movie [*Annihilation*] for the longest time because I'm still writing *Southern Reach* fiction.

The interview draws attention to the recent changes in understanding genres and the position of the author. New Weird seems to have a unique awareness of otherness – not only the political scene but also the academic. While estrangement has been predominantly associated with science fiction, New Weird seems to be related to the uncanny, which opposes the suggestions that fantastic literatures can be unified under the aegis of estrangement only. As suggested in the interview, New Weird as a genre is linked to the uncanny, rather than to estrangement, which makes it relevant to the current discussions of the category of life, human and non-human, manifesting in the different strands of posthumanism, especially critical posthumanism. Nayar defines critical posthumanism:

> Critical posthumanism is not a simple binary of the human/anti-humanist positions outlined above but a whole new conceptualisation of the human as a more inclusive, non-unitary entity whose boundaries which the world, with other life forms and species, are porous. Critical posthumanism is thus a *discourse* of life itself in which interconnections, messy histories, blurred origins, borrowings and adaptations, cross-overs, impurities, dependency and mutuality across species are emphasized over boundedness, self-containment, distinctiveness and agency. 'Life' in posthumanist discourse is discussed as a process of becoming through new connections and merges between species, bodies, functions and technologies. (30)

The timeline of New Weird is synchronic with the emergence of the founding texts of posthumanism. It has to be noted that the ties between postumanism and fantastic

literatures have been longstanding: posthumanist philosophy tends to either merely illustrate or explicitly draw its arguments from iconic works of fantastic literatures, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, or, more recently, VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* trilogy. Both posthumanism and fantastika rely on estrangement and uncanniness as they revolve around the nature of cognition, sentience, and subjectivity, experimenting with thoughts of internalising the other and self-othering. In Jeff VanderMeer's work the uncanny appears in his depictions of the juxtaposition of human and non-human experiences. Cary Wolfe in *What is Posthumanism?* proposes that "we must take yet another step, another post-, and realise that the nature of though itself must change if it is to be posthumanist" (xvi). New Weird has already been working on developing a poetic toolkit for channelling expressions of "ultimate otherness", sublimating the deeper contents of the collective unconscious and animal past. Humanism has relied heavily on language, authorship and authority (all tying into the idea of human exceptionalism) in building up its epistemology. Thus further research would be required within posthumanism, which until now has been concentrating on primarily ontological problems whilst the creation of a convincing epistemological framework is still in the making.

> *Biography*: Beata Gubacsi is a final year PhD student at the University of Liverpool. Her current research project, provisionally entitled as *Literature of Monstrosity: Posthumanism and the New Weird*. She has been involved in Bluecoat's science fiction projects as part of her LiNK placement, and co-hosted workshops at the Being Human Festival, Tate Exchange and Nottingham New Art Exchange in 2015-16. She is the co-ordinator of the Current Research in Speculative Fiction Conference since 2017. Most recently, she has started a column, Medical Humanist 2.0, for The Polyphony, the blog of the Institute for Medical Humanities.

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San Diego State University's Speculative Fiction Collections: A Growing Center for the Study of Popular Culture

Pamela A. Jackson

Keywords: Speculative Fiction, Science Fiction, Comic Arts, Special Collections, Libraries

SDSU's Special Collections & University Archives is home to all things rare, unique, fragile or valuable in the library: approximately 80,000 rare books, over 500 archival/manuscript collections, and well over half a million pieces of ephemera. The collection's strengths include historic astronomy, history of printing and graphic design, fine press and artist's books, children's books, science fiction and fantasy, horror, surfing, comics and zines, and alternative religious movements. Archival and manuscript collection strengths include local history, civil rights, performing arts, identity politics, and women's studies. Some of the rarest items in the collection include a first edition (including papal marginalia) of Nicolaus Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (1543) which models a sun-centered universe, and a rare fourth printing of Heinrich Institoris's *Malleus Maleficarum* (1494), which offered a step-by-step guide to interrogating and prosecuting suspected witches.

SDSU's ever-growing speculative fiction collections are a major source for research in science fiction, proto-SF, utopian and dystopian fiction, alternate histories, fantasy, horror, Gothic literature, weird tales, and the comic arts. Related holdings in pseudoscience, the occult, UFOs, and alternative religious movements support diverse inquiries into imagined or invented realities (Culbertson 1).

Elizabeth Chater Science Fiction and Manuscript Collections

Elizabeth Chater was the author of more than 24 novels and numerous short stories in the genres of science fiction, horror, mystery, and historical fiction and romance. Under the pseudonym Lee Chaytor, she published several stories in the popular science fiction magazine *Fantastic Universe* during the 1950s. Chater joined the English Department at San Diego State University in 1962. Among her peers on the SDSU faculty at the time were science fiction authors Vernor Vinge and Joan D. Vinge.

Chater began teaching creative writing in the mid-1960s, focusing on science-fiction writing; Greg Bear was her teaching assistant.[1] By the early 1970s, Chater was teaching courses in fantasy literature and distaff magic.

In 1977, Chater began donating her collection of science fiction and fantasy books to the library. The Chater Collection has a strong focus on new wave science fiction and feminist writings, and is distinguished by many notable first editions, as well as numerous rare pulp titles dating to the early 1920s, such as *Amazing Stories*. This sizeable collection now totals more than 6,000 volumes, as items from newer donors that fit the scope of the collection are added daily. The Chater Manuscript Collection documents Chater's own creative research and writing process. Included in the collection is the original manuscript of Chater's *The Bridge and the Sepulchre*, as well as manuscripts by noted science-fiction author Suzette Haden Elgin and original manuscripts, both typed and handwritten, by author Joan D. Vinge that reveal changes made to works before publication.

Image 1: The Elizabeth Chater Science Fiction Collection includes numerous rare pulp titles dating back into the early 1920s.

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[1] Now a noted science fiction author and SDSU alumnus, Greg Bear sold his first short story to *Famous Science Fiction* at age 15 and, along with high-school friends, helped found San Diego Comic-Con (now Comic-Con, International). He is the recipient of two Hugo Awards and five Nebula Awards and has had more than 60 works published. A modest collection of Bear's literary manuscripts, including drafts, corrected galleys, and correspondence can also be found in SDSU's Special Collections.

Edward E. Marsh Golden Age of Science Fiction and Ephemera Collections

Edward Marsh donated his world-class science fiction collection to SDSU in 2013 and continually adds to the collection. His extraordinary collection, currently valued at approximately $2.25 million, features over 5,000 volumes and archival collections. Among the volumes are nearly 400 rare signed books, many of them first editions, by science fiction and fantasy writers, including Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Robert Heinlein, Frank Herbert, L. Sprague de Camp, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Ephemera in the collection include pulps, magazines, fanzines, photographs, art, and original manuscripts from key figures in the development of science fiction and popular culture, including Forrest J. Ackerman, Robert Heinlein,

Image 2: Signed works of Ray Bradbury with a small bronze cast portrait bust of the artist from the Edward E. Marsh Golden Age of Science Fiction Collection.

Frank Herbert, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Will Durant, and Jules Verne. The ephemera collection contains a wide range of film props and collectibles from movies such as *Battlefield Earth*, *Dune*, and *Blade Runner*, including limited-edition toys and games, prop knives used in *Dune*, and the eight-foot-tall costume worn by John Travolta in his role as Terl for the film *Battlefield Earth*.

The Marsh Collection also includes signed original pen and pencil drawings, lithographic prints, and published magazine covers from prominent science fiction and fantasy illustrators such as Frank Kelly Freas, Frank Frazetta, Gerry Grace, Charles Wildbank, Greg Winters, Shun Kijima, and Gary Meyer, many of which now hang on the walls of Edward E. Marsh Golden Age of Science Fiction Room. Marsh commissioned portrait paintings and both life-size and small-format original cast sculpture busts of Golden Age science-fiction and fantasy authors. Unique pieces include a life mask of Forrest J. Ackerman and a marble resin bust of Robert Heinlein. Additional sculptural works are items from Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth*, including a bronze cast sculpture rendered after Frank Frazetta's illustration "Man the Endangered Species."

Larry McCaffery Collection

Larry McCaffery is a literary critic, editor, and retired professor of English literature at San Diego State University. An expert in postmodern literature, McCaffery is credited with helping to establish science fiction and cyberpunk as major academic literary genres. He is well known for his cyberpunk anthology, *Storming the Reality Studio* (1991), which features the work of

Image 3: John Travolta's costume as Terl in Battlefield Earth *(2000). Edward E. Marsh Golden Age of Science Fiction Collection, SDSU.*

William Gibson, Samuel R. Delany, Don DeLillo, Kathy Acker, J. G. Ballard, and Thomas Pynchon, among many others.

McCaffery focused great effort on recording conversations with 72 contemporary authors, such as Ursula K. Le Guin, Samuel R. Delany, Theodore Sturgeon, Jack Williamson, Suzette Haden Elgin, Thomas M. Disch, Gregory Benford, Joanna Russ, William Gibson, and Bruce Sterling. McCaffery published numerous books featuring transcripts of these interviews,[2] and the original audio recordings are preserved in SDSU's collection. In addition to McCaffery's personal library, which features hundreds of books from postmodern and speculative fiction writers, many of them signed first editions, SDSU also holds the Larry McCaffery Papers; these consist of manuscript drafts, research files, recorded interviews, and personal and professional correspondence with science-fiction and fantasy authors, such as Octavia E. Butler, Harlan Ellison and Don DeLillo, in addition to the authors he interviewed. Items from McCaffery's collection will be exhibited in the SDSU Library from autumn 2018 to summer 2019.
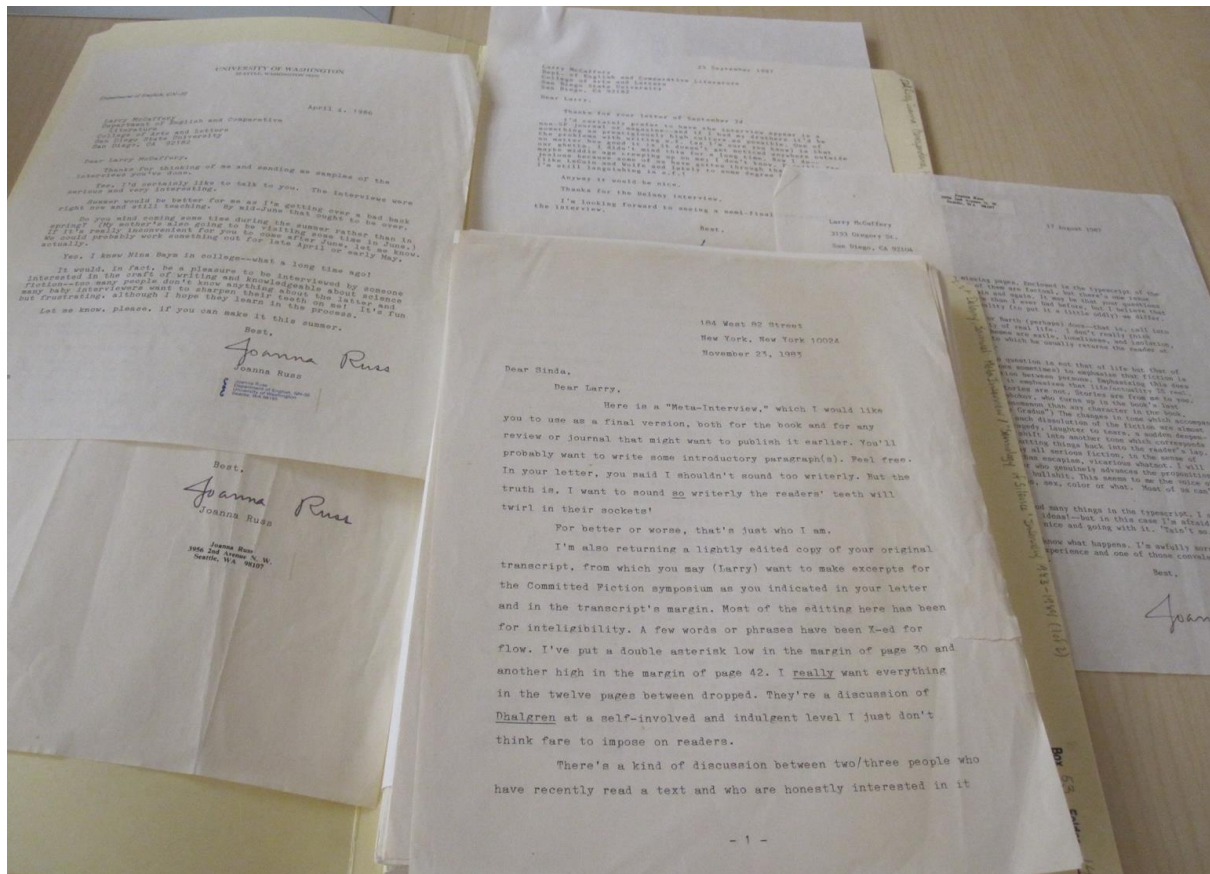

Image 4: Pictured here is correspondence from Joanna Russ and Samuel Delany from the Larry McCaffery Collection.

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[2] See *Anything Can Happen: Interviews with Contemporary American Novelists* (with Tom LeClair). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.; *Alive and Writing: Interviews with American Authors of the 1980s* (with Sinda Gregory). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.; *Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Authors*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1990.; *Some Other Frequency: Interviews with Innovative American Authors*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

J. Gordon Melton Vampire Collection

Dr. J. Gordon Melton, a Distinguished Professor of American Religious History at Baylor University's Institute for Studies in Religion in Waco, Texas, founded the Institute for the Study of American Religion in 1968. Dr. Melton is a pioneering scholar in the field of New Religious Studies, helping to create the sub-discipline. Melton's research focuses on new and alternative religions, western esotericism (more commonly known as occultism), parapsychology, New Age, and Dracula and vampire studies, in which he explores the historical, literary, mythological, biographical, and popular aspects of vampirism.

Melton amassed what is believed to be the world's largest collection of fiction and nonfiction English-language books related to vampires (the major competing collection has been auctioned off). Melton is in the process of a giving his entire collection to SDSU in a multi-year donation. To date, SDSU has acquired his vast collection of vampire comics, which includes more than 10,000 issues of twentieth-century English-language titles (including Canadian, Australian, and British titles) primarily covering the years 1960 through 1999. The collection includes complete publication runs of titles from some of the longest-running vampire-oriented English-language comics, such as the original *Vampirella* series, the original *Tomb of Dracula* series, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which also includes a number of French-language editions. A regular attendee at San Diego Comic-Con for over two decades, Melton systematically sought signatures of the comics' writers and artists. Many of the *Tomb of Dracula* comics are, for example, signed by the late artist Gene Colan and by writer Marv Wolfman. Some of the *Vampirella* issues are also signed by the models who posed as Vampirella.

Image 5: A sampling of signed titles from the J. Gordon Melton Vampire Collection, including Vampirella*,* Tomb of Dracula*, and* Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.*

In addition to the near-complete collection of English-language vampire-related comics, Melton's collection includes many titles in Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Swedish, as well as English-language translations of Japanese manga. Highlights in the foreign-language collection include an autographed Italian edition of *Dracula* drawn by the late artist Guido Crepax and one of the very few complete collections of the longest running vampire-oriented comic books ever issued, entitled *Jacula*, an Italian comic or fumetto.

Comics, Zines, and Fandom Collections

Due to the generosity of donors, SDSU has amassed more than 50,000 non-circulating comics in "floppy" format: the thin, stapled paper periodicals that are universally thought of as comic books in the United States. The collection emphasizes alternative and independent titles, underground comix, drawn books, superheroes, and Modern Age comics, as well as materials that document the history of comic-book culture, fandom, and the creative process behind comic-book production. SDSU's *Zines and Minicomics Collection* contains over 1,600 independently published works that concentrate on identity politics, sexuality and reproductive rights, punk rock, anarchism, activism, alternative lifestyles, creative writing, and popular culture.

The *Comics and Science Fiction Fandom Collection* is largely unprocessed to date, but consists of publications, ephemera, memorabilia, and artwork from various comics, science-fiction and fantasy conventions and conferences, with a particular focus on Southern California conventions. The collection not only documents the evolution of fandom and shows a rise in the study of popular culture, but is also useful in the study of business, advertising, and marketing. Items in this extensive collection include official publications from fan conventions; badges, tickets, bags, flyers, posters, and other official promotional materials and "freebies" such as buttons, postcards, toys, trading cards, and even foam chainsaws promoting *Sharknado* and *Evil Dead*. Also included is a sizeable collection of rare and early fanzines dating back to 1934 that reflect the evolution and involvement of the science-fiction fandom community over the years.

Image 6: Ephemera from various fan conventions, particularly from Comic-Con, International in San Diego, California. Comics and Science Fiction Fandom Collection, SDSU.

Donna Barr Collection

Donna Barr is best known for her comic book series *Stinz* (1984) and *The Desert Peach* (1986). Subsequent publications include *Hader and the Colonel* (1987), *Bosom Enemies* (1987), *Barr Girls* (1990) and *Afterdead* (2007–). Barr's drawn books cross the boundaries between art and writing and combine elements of traditional novels, artist's books, graphic novels, and book design and illustration. Her background in 20th-century German culture and language, literature, world mythologies, history, and religion informs her artwork.

Her most intricate work is a series of handmade ornate, stitchery-covered bound sketchbooks called the *Black Manuscripts*. The manuscripts contain dozens of separate stories using pencil, ink, watercolor, and silkscreen. Of her *Black Manuscripts*, Barr states,

They are set in a mythical Reich that I consider my true homeland – and I don't claim it's a nice one, or that I ever want to go back, or want anyone else to live there. The stories all deal with new characters, like anthologies of short stories. They're politically tumultuous, insular and complex, dealing with everything from changing status of Jews and women in that Germany, to the place of gays and vampires and black people. It was drawn after my time in the army, when I was coming to grips with the ideas of the early '70's. I don't claim they're valid or relevant for today. Or maybe they are. They were drawn and written for myself, and I don't claim anything else for them. (Barr)

Barr donated her life's work to SDSU and continually adds to this large collection. In addition to her published works, SDSU holds her *Black Manuscripts*, numerous sketchbooks, drafts and unpublished manuscripts, correspondence with fans, original paintings, rough sketches, penned ink art, line drawings, colored panels and covers for her comics, musical production files, and audio and video recordings from *The Desert Peach* musical production.

Image 7: Six of Donna Barr's twelve handmade ornate, stitchery-covered bound sketchbooks called the Black Manuscripts.

Richard Alf Papers and The Comic-Con Kids

Richard Alf was an entrepreneur at a very young age. An avid fan of comics, Alf began selling comic books at age 12, and by age 15 he was running his own successful mail-order comic-book business. In 1969, at age 17, Alf, along with a group of teenagers and one adult, co-founded what would become one of the largest conventions celebrating comics, science fiction and film in the world: San Diego Comic-Con. In 1970, Alf served as co-chairman of

the first three-day convention, then called San Diego's Golden State Comic-Con, and was chairman of the convention in 1971. Among other co-founders, Alf is often affectionately credited with having the funds and the 1954 Volkswagen Bug that made those early Comic-Cons possible. In 1975, Alf opened Comic Kingdom, one of San Diego's first brick-and-mortar comic-book retail stores. He created and ran many other businesses, including a mail-order baseball-card collecting and trading business and a video-game mail-order business. In 1989, Alf was honored with a Comic-Con Inkpot Award, given annually to individuals for their contributions to comics, science fiction/fantasy, film, television, animation, and fandom services.

Alf's collection documents the early roots of San Diego fandom and Comic-Con through convention-planning documents, correspondence, flyers, forms, posters, and photographs. The collection also includes personal correspondence with family and friends, original art, Vietnam draft materials, marijuana materials, business inventory lists, promotional materials, advertisements and correspondence with his mail-order customers. Collection highlights include Comic-Con planning invitation flyers, hand-drawn by cartoonist, Scott Shaw, rare correspondence between convention organizers, and original tickets to the first 1970 three-day Comic-Con in San Diego.

Before his passing in 2012, Alf worked with SDSU to plan a grant-funded project called *The Comic-Con Kids: Finding and Defining Fandom* (https://comiccon.sdsu.edu/). The website collects personal histories, through a series of video interviews, of individuals involved in San Diego's early Comic-Cons and fandom communities. These stories explore the emergence of comics, science fiction, and fantasy in the youth counterculture movements of the 1970s and help bring together the cultural histories of San Diego and Comic-Con. The project was made possible with support from Cal Humanities, an independent non-profit California state partner of the US National Endowment for the Humanities.
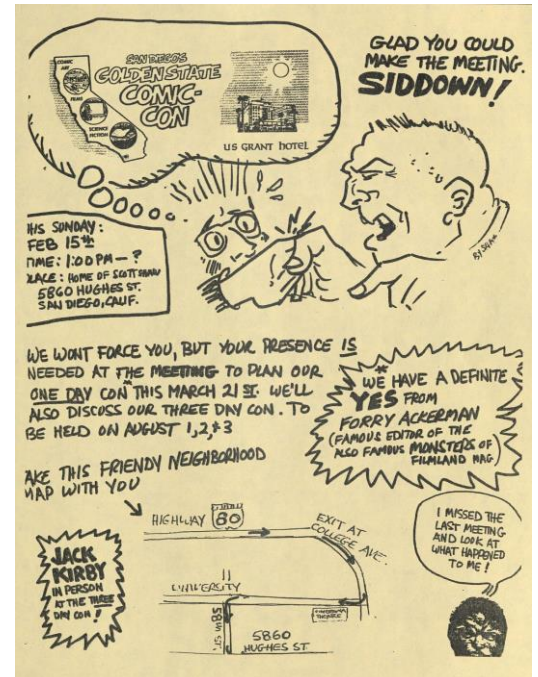

Image 8: Flyer for one of the first San Diego Comic-Con planning committee meetings, drawn and hosted by cartoonist, Scott Shaw! Richard Alf Papers, SDSU.

Outreach and Teaching

SDSU has seen an increase in the number of instructional visits to Special Collections that embed its popular-culture resources into course assignments. The library also regularly exhibits materials from these collections and has, in recent years, displayed two major year-long exhibits on science fiction and the comic arts, with a third exhibit planned for 2018–19 on postmodern literature showcasing the Larry McCaffery papers.

In 2012–13, the exhibit *Strange Data, Infinite Possibilities: Science Fiction Literature in Special Collections & University Archives* explored the ways science fiction fuels and inspires imagination and creativity. Rich with rare pulp fiction, sheet music, and original correspondence from authors, the exhibit included Ray Bradbury's unproduced screenplay for *The Martian Chronicles* and L. Ron Hubbard's original manual typewriter. A three-part lecture series with science fiction authors Greg Bear and Vernor Vinge and scholar Larry McCaffery was held in conjunction with the exhibit.

In 2017–18, the exhibit *DemoGRAPHICS: Voices and Visionaries from the SDSU Comic Arts Collection* explored how identity, in its most broadly defined sense, is cultivated and nurtured in the imagination. Comics that explore history and society through diverse lenses, such as culture, race, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ableness, and age, were displayed. The exhibit included a three-part lecture series featuring John Jennings, Eisner Award-winning author for the essay collection *The Blacker the Ink: Constructions of Black Identity in Comics and Sequential Art*; Roberta Gregory, Inkpot Award-winner and creator of *Naughty Bits and Bitchy Bitch*; and political cartoonist Joaquin Junco Jr., also known as "Junco Canché."

Image 9: DemoGRAPHICS: Voices and Visionaries from the SDSU Comic Arts Collection *exhibit, held at SDSU in 2017–18.*

Facilities and Next Steps

In September of 2017, the SDSU Library debuted the Edward E. Marsh Golden Age of Science Fiction Room, which will serve as a major research location for science-fiction scholars and the cornerstone of the new location for SDSU's Special Collections & University Archives. In addition to more space to house collections, the new location will feature exhibit space and a larger, modernized facility for researchers. Also planned is an innovative self-service "comics nook" that will allow visitors to browse long runs of Modern Age comic-book titles in a supervised and secure Special Collections Reading Room, but without the barrier of mediated collection retrieval from closed stacks. Finally, SDSU is in the beginning stages of planning a formal, competitive research fellowship for scholars worldwide who are conducting original research on topics supported by its collections.

Acknowledgements

Biography: Pamela Jackson is the Popular Culture Librarian in Special Collections and University Archives at San Diego State University. Her research interests include diversity and culture as reflected in comic art and the impact of popular culture collections on teaching and learning. Her works include a grant-funded humanities website, The Comic-Con Kids: Finding and Defining Fandom, which explores the emergence of comics, science fiction and fantasy in the youth counterculture movements of the 1970s. Pamela has an MA in English with an emphasis on Creative Writing from Sonoma State University and an MA in Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. https://library.sdsu.edu/scua.

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Book-Review:
Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction

Sean Guynes-Vishniac

Murphy, Bernice M., and Stephen Matterson, editors. *Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction*. Edinburgh University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1474414852.

As most of us in the field intimately know (given that the usual rationalization of our worth to the academy tends to be based in the fact), popular fiction makes up the vast majority of the literary market, in terms of both annual sales and new titles published each year. Scholars, like me, just coming into our own have benefited from the pioneering work of earlier generations of literary and cultural studies scholars who have paved the way for science fiction studies, romance studies, crime and detective fiction studies, Gothic studies, and others. Murphy and Matterson's nearly encyclopedic volume of essays, *Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction*, demonstrates, however, that a significant amount of work still remains for academics wishing to steer popular fiction into theory-infested, tenure-anxious waters – even 40 years after Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979) seemingly legitimized sf and 35 years after Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* applied reader response theory to romance novels. This volume shows that the work of popular fiction studies lies not so much in "legitimizing" popular fiction as an object of study (though some still need convincing) as it does in diving head-first into the vastness of the popular fiction catalog. Though Murphy and Matterson limit their scope to the popular fiction of just the past two decades, the contributors to *Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction* signal that our work has just begun – but, if Murphy and Matterson's volume is any indication of the state of that beginning, we're off to a good start.

    Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction should be best understood as a dense overview of and introduction to the scope of genres that populate the twenty-first-century popular fiction market, emphasizing those texts and genres that have had significant cultural influence in the past two decades. With twenty chapters, plus an introduction, all in 250 pages, the collection trades depth for breadth. While many will no doubt lament the exclusion of this or that genre, the overall effect is a capaciousness that comes as a relief. Murphy and Matterson ensure that an incredible range of authors and popular literary genres are covered, bringing together critical introductions to authors who have rarely appeared between the

same covers on account of the usual separation between scholarship on the major genres. Thus Max Brooks, Dan Brown, Suzanne Collins, Gillian Flynn, Tana French, Neil Gaiman, Hugh Howey, E. L. James, Stephen King, George R. R. Martin, Larry McMurtry, Stephanie Meyer, China Miéville, Grant Morrison, Jo Nesbø, Jodi Picoult, Terry Pratchett, Cherie Priest, Nora Roberts, and J. K. Rowling – whew! – are all covered. The collection thus provides an author-centric approach to popular fiction and genre, which only makes sense since the craft, success, and reputation of popular genre authors are regularly measured against their genre's respective "giants" – one has only to look at book blurbs for new authors that claim they are a blend of authors X and Y to see that success in popular fiction is often measured in relation to the major names.

The book arranges chapters chronologically by birthdate of the authors they study. The effect, however, is not relentless, since the chapters are relatively short, ranging between eleven and thirteen pages, nor is it boring, since the tight work of each chapter is new, exciting, and thought-provoking. *Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction* is thus a rather energizing read through which even the best-read among us will find something new. Such is the ethos of the collection: to suggest new directions for popular fiction studies while also modeling the kind of writing – mixing a love for the fiction with a serious, critical approach – needed to enliven the field. Murphy and Matterson refer to this in their introduction as "changing the story" of the field. They establish that the purpose of the collection is not to offer more histories of popular fiction but to "provide an informed, accessible and authoritative snapshot of the current state of popular fiction" by emphasizing "key contributions to both the individual genres or sub-genres," bringing together essays that will serve "as starting points for further reading and research" (2).

The introduction charts some key features of popular fiction in the twenty-first century, noting, for example, the increasingly blurred boundaries between "genre" and "literary" markets; the preponderance of transmedia extensions and adaptations; the "increasing elasticity of genre" as genres increasingly blur and break rules; and the subsequent creation and hybridizing of new ones. Admittedly, however, this latter feature is not particularly new; while it is certainly possible to historicize genre hybridity in this specific historical moment, the editors make no attempt to do so. It might be that we are witnessing a moment of "genre confusion" akin to that of the late-nineteenth-century that first saw the emergence of the popular fiction market. Of course, the editors could only have addressed this by including fewer chapters and permitting a higher per-chapter word count. As the introduction demonstrates, word count proves a minor problem throughout the collection; after all, when you've got twelve pages to summarize the significance and cultural position of an author with a catalog as vast as Nora Roberts's, as complex as China Miéville's, or as transmedial as Stephen King's, let alone to generate an original scholarly argument, much will be lost. This is an understandable – and by no means detrimental – symptom of the previously noted overall spirit of *Popular Fiction*: breadth over depth. This leads to occasionally regrettable exclusions or underdeveloping certain aspects of an argument. Matterson's own chapter, for example, on Larry McMurtry is misbalanced toward a general history of the Western, doing very little to advance critical knowledge of McMurtry's role, aside from noting that McMurtry produces an important dialectic between representing the "actuality" of the West's history and the significance of (inaccurate) cultural memory and its cowboy mythology to readers. On the whole, however, the chapters generally outshine their limitations.

All twenty chapters are competently written and fulfill well their duty to provide a "snapshot" of individual authors who represent the state of popular fiction. Perhaps because of the limited length and thus limited ability to break new ground, the most impressive chapters are those that focus on writers who are truly untouched by scholarship, even as they are selling millions of copies worldwide. Jarlath Killeen's chapter is on Nora Roberts's romance novels and Clare Hayes-Brady's is on Jodi Picoult's "women's fiction"; ironically, Killeen and Hayes-Brady reference Stephen King's approval of both women writers in

establishing their significance, though their avid readerships and dozens of novels (over two hundred, in Roberts's case) bespeak their importance. Hayes-Brady, for example, demonstrates Picoult's masterful "movement between voices and times [that] allows Picoult to drip-feed the major moments of narrative significance to the reader, while contextualising these developments amidst moments of crisis" (150). In doing so, Picoult's *The Pact* "consolidates Picoult's abiding interest in narrative, memory, and testimony" as significant to the lives of American women (151), though it might have been useful to note the demographics of Picoult's readers. Likewise, Brian Cliff's chapter on Tana French's Irish mystery novels, Stephen Kenneally's chapter on science-fiction writer Hugh Howey's use of self-publishing, and Catherine Siemann's chapter on Cherie Priest's race- and eco-critical steampunk novels all offer excellent critical dissection. These youngest authors surveyed in the collection represent the greatest prospects for popular fiction studies modelled by Murphy and Matterson's collection.

Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction is an important resource for the growing field of popular fiction studies. It marks "popular fiction" as something separate from, but imbricated with, the study of popular culture more generally (see, for example, the work of *The Journal of Popular Culture*, where popular fiction articles regularly show up but by no means as the majority of what they publish), and a field that needs greater vision of sight than the limited scope offered by science fiction studies or romance studies. Murphy and Matterson's collection is, in essence, an argument for the formulation of a sincere field of popular fiction studies like that put forward by Ken Gelder in his 2004 book *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field*, but never truly advanced since then; Murphy and Matterson's book makes clear the need for something like a journal of popular fiction studies.

Of course, *Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction* falls victim to some of the issues plaguing the study of popular fiction more generally; it is Ameri- and Eurocentric in its survey of authors, and though it covers women and men nearly equally (nine to eleven), not a *single* writer of color is surveyed, nor is there much diversity with regard to sexuality, (dis)ability, or religious background. This is partly because, like most aspects of popular culture production, popular fiction is largely written by white men and women, with significantly different disparities across genres (for example, sf and the Western have been predominantly written by men, romance by women). Still, it would not have been difficult – to take one example – to reach out to scholars of black popular fiction, whether of science fiction, horror, or romance, especially given that important new work has been forwarded in each of these areas in recent years, particularly given the rise of Afrofuturism and the growth of black romance imprints/publishers. Truthfully, any survey of twenty-first-century popular fiction that does not cover non-white, non-heterosexual authors should not be considered a very thorough survey of twenty-first-century popular fiction.

Regardless, Murphy and Matterson have created an important model for future work that accomplishes the sort of scholarship, despite sacrificing depth for breadth, desperately needed to develop the field. *Twenty-First-Century Popular Fiction* is a must-need for scholars of popular fiction across the genres and across media, and it even raises questions about the place of a comics auteur like Grant Morrison and, by extension, the place of comics themselves within the fold of popular literary studies. It is a volume that I hope marks the beginning of a new era in popular fiction scholarship.

Biography: Sean Guynes-Vishniac is a PhD candidate in English at Michigan State University. He is editor of *Punking Speculative Fiction* (a special issue of *Deletion*, May 2018); co-editor of *Unstable Masks: Whiteness and American Superhero Comics* (The Ohio State UP, forthcoming) and *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling* (Amsterdam UP, 2017); editor of *The SFRA Review*; and book reviews editor of *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*. He can be found online at www.seanguynes.com or at @guynesvishniac.

Book-Review:
Superhero Comics

Laura Antola

Chris Gavaler's *Superhero Comics* is a chronological volume that traces the history and development of superhero comics since the 1930s but also their pre-comics roots since the late 1800s. Following its straightforward title, the book covers in detail all major parts of the history of superhero comics: influences, controversies leading to censorship and the implementation of the Comics Code, the de-militarization of superheroes, and the emergence of minority superheroes. The book ends in a section in which Gavaler has gathered tools for the critical visual analysis of comic books. As Gavaler reminds us in the first paragraph of his introduction, a "superhero comic is a superhero story told in a graphic narrative. Superhero is the content; comics the form" (1). In order to understand superhero comics, it must be kept in mind that not only are there several other genres of comics but several other types of superhero narratives as well. *Superhero Comics* is built around these two understandings. Gavaler provides a comprehensive, engaging account of the evolution of the superhero bolstered by a fine concluding section on the visual analysis of comics. *Superhero Comics* is a great book for a teacher of comics studies or popular culture. As described in the *Bloomsbury Comics Studies Series* editor's preface, the book is meant to "satisfy the needs of novices and experts alike" (n.p.).

Colonial Supermen

Superhero Comics outlines the history of its subject in a detailed way. Offering insights into the early influences of superheroes, such as the Scarlet Pimpernel and Spring-Heeled Jack, the book makes it clear that, although the creation of Superman in 1938 is often cited as the birth of the superhero, that series was preceded by decades of other

supermen. Gavaler starts from the very beginning in a chapter titled "The Mythic Superhero" where he offers support for the popular claim that superhero comics are contemporary versions of ancient mythology and folk tales. The chapter uses Joseph Campbell's work on monomyth and Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) to conclude that superhero comics are micro-epics that depict individual transformation while featuring extraordinary powers and events that fall within the framework of "minimal counterintuitive", a concept coined by Pascal Boyer (1994). Minimal counterintuitive (MCI) refers to a balance between the humanness of the characters and the extraordinary powers they possess. According to the idea of MCI, people easily remember stories and characters that contain a few, though not too many, fantastic elements – a fact which might help explain the global popularity of superheroes.

After laying the groundwork by describing the universality of superhero comics as well as the superhero character, Gavaler focuses on a more specific dimension in superheroes' history: imperialism. In the following chapters, Gavaler traces the development of superheroes through their imperialist origins and early influences from 19th-century British literature to American pulp heroes. Following in the footsteps of Spring-Heeled Jack and John Carter, who receive their extraordinary powers in an encounter with the Other, characters such as Superman and Wonder Woman received their fantastical powers from a mystical site: Superman has Krypton, Wonder Woman has a mythical island in colonial waters. The foreign and even intimidating powers are, however, used for the benefit of the colonizing power against suspicious threats coming from the outside.

From Fascism to the Atomic Age

In the following three chapters, "The Wellborn Superhero", "The Vigilante Superhero", and "The Fascist Superhero", Gavaler moves from colonialism to the British and American eugenics movements in the early 1900s. Even though much has been written on superheroes and fascism, and for example Batman has been described as a feudal lord who protects his realm and his fellow aristocrats from threats coming from the underclass, these chapters about masked vigilantes' roots in eugenics and Thomas Dixon's Ku Klux Klan novels are fascinating. As Gavaler notes, the original idea of privileged dual-identity heroes who are wellborn aristocrats by day but who fight crime by night is largely lost in contemporary iterations of the superhero type. Both Superman and Captain America originally bore the characteristics of a Nietzschean superman (both are perfect specimens who defend their own people against outside threats), but later their origin stories have been altered, as have their attitudes towards vigilantism and violence. The historical section ends with a chapter on superheroes in the Atomic Age, where Gavaler describes how nuclear threats and the Red Scare influenced superhero comics during the Cold War era. Especially during the Cuban missile crisis, radioactive rays simultaneously opened new possibilities to gain incredible powers and posed an enormous threat for the characters.

Cultural Impacts

After going through the historical eras of superhero comics, Gavaler analyzes their social and cultural impacts. This is the part where some more depth and broadness

might have been desired. A somewhat list-like quality pertains to both chapters, "The Black Superhero" and "The Gendered Superhero". In the former, tens of black superheroes are mentioned and their outfits described, but the analysis stays surface-level. It is unfortunate that the reason cited by Gavale for the scarcity of successful black superheroes remains valid today: black and other non-white superheroes make less money because white consumers do not read (i.e. pay for) their stories. I also find it problematic that the title and content of this chapter concerns only *black* superheroes instead of a wider specter of non-white heroes. There is no mention, for example, of the multiple Asian superheroes and villains in the Marvel universe. Similarly, the chapter on gendered superheroes concentrates mainly on listing historical pioneer characters instead of a deeper analysis of gender representations in superhero comics. Furthermore, while "The Black Superhero" mentions several non-white comics artists, Gavaler never mentions female artists, writers, or non-cis-gendered comics creators in "The Gendered Superhero".

Unlike other previous histories of comics, Gavaler dedicates the last third of his volume to a concise beginner's guide on how to study comics. This section offers a set of tools for someone interested in the analysis of superhero comics. Following in the footsteps of Scott McCloud, Gavaler describes different panel sizes and layouts, angles, framing, as well as levels of abstraction – all with visual examples. After providing the reader with the necessary tools, the chapter ends in a visual analysis of Frank Miller and Bill Sienkiewicz's *Elektra: Assassin* (1987). The analysis is thorough and follows the themes introduced in the chapter, and the combination of the tools set and a model analysis will surely help guide teachers of introductory courses on comics studies.

Conclusion

With the first parts of the book focusing on the history of superhero comics as well as cultural and social impact, Gavaler's volume provides a good starting point for anyone interested in superheroes. Combined with a conveniently presented set of tools for visually analyzing comics, and a list of suggested reading from each era of superhero comics, Gavaler's book will be useful for university classroom usage. Despite a few shortcomings, *Superhero Comics* is an interesting read for anyone who wants to understand how superhero comics have developed into what they are today.

Biography: Laura Antola is a media studies PhD student at the University of Turku, Finland. Her research is focused on transnational adaptations of American superhero comics and films. In her doctoral thesis, she analyzes the different roles played by editors, translators, and fan communities in how Marvel's superheroes have been adapted for the Finnish audience.

Book-Review:
Travails with the Alien: The Film That Was Never Made and Other Adventures with Science Fiction

Anwesha Maity

Ray, Satyajit. *Travails with the Alien: The Film That Was Never Made and Other Adventures with Science Fiction.* Edited by Sandip Ray (in association with Dhritiman Chaterji, Arup K. De, Riddhi Goswami, and Deepak Mukerjee). HarperCollins India, 2018. ISBN: 978-9352779154.

To connoisseurs of world cinema, Satyajit Ray is likely to be a familiar figure as the creator of masterworks such as the *Apu Trilogy* (1955, 1956, 1959) and *Charulata* (1964); he is also the only Bengali (and Indian) filmmaker to have received an Honorary Academy Award (1992). To a lesser extent, recent scholarship has focused on Ray's science fiction (sf) short stories and novellas, which present a complementary yet divergent vision (from Euro-American sf) for the genre as practiced in Bengali. *Travails with the Alien* brings to an international audience for the first time a confluence of the auteur's commitment to both filmmaking and science fiction. It also shines a spotlight on one of the biggest controversies in Bengali and Indian film history – one that continues to be hotly debated in Bengali intellectual circles, as Ray remains the greatest Bengali cultural icon after Rabindranath Tagore: i.e., did Steven Spielberg plagiarize *ET* from Satyajit Ray's *The Alien*?

Travails with the Alien has three main sections, including a foreword by Sandip Ray, Satyajit's son and a renowned filmmaker himself. Sandip Ray sets the tone by outlining Satyajit's contribution to Bengali science fiction through reviving the Ray family flagship children-and-young adult periodical *Sandesh*, as well as his contribution to creating the Science Fiction Cine Club in Kolkata in 1963 – the first such establishment in the non-western world. We are next greeted with a full-page image of a spaceship travelling past erupting and pock-marked planets – one of Ray's many iconic illustrations, this one for his serialized science-fiction hero Professor Shonku's debut "Journey of a Space-farer" for *Sandesh* in December 1961.

The first section contains three articles by Ray and his interview with All India Radio on science fiction as a genre and its cinematic history and appeal. Some previously uncollected facsimiles of memorabilia from the Science Fiction Cine Club and two personal

letters from Ray Bradbury and Arthur C. Clarke conclude the section. The short essays reveal Ray's innate and unique sensibilities on science fiction, as he discusses H. G. Wells's and Jules Verne's *oeuvres*, iconic sf films such as *A Trip to the Moon*, *Metropolis*, and *The Shape of Things*, plus the work of filmmakers François Truffaut and Stanley Kubrick. The short essay "SF" succinctly encapsulates Ray's vision for the genre:

> sf thrives on wonder and will continue to do so as long as there are men willing to dip into a tale that will make him feel small in the face of the expanding universe, and let him share the triumph and the futility of men probing into spheres of darkness – in space, on earth, on an alien planet, or in his own mind and body. (7)

In a "Look at Science Fiction Films", originally published in 1966, Ray analyzes and categorizes a proliferation of sf themes in film – monsters, genetic mutation, alien planets, technology – foreshadowing Carl D. Malmgren's typology in *Worlds Apart* (1991*)* a quarter century later (10). With the proliferation of scholarly criticism on sf since Darko Suvin's 1979 *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction*, Ray's analysis may not have the critical edge that one might expect today; we must remember, though, that he was more creator than critic, and then-contemporary American and British sf authors such as Clarke and Bradbury produced criticism on much the same scale as Ray. He does not delve into the "science" component of "science fiction" to any great degree; as Andrew Robinson (an American critic of Ray's cinema) comments, Ray's "thoughts were as uninhibited by convention and his lack of higher scientific knowledge as were Tagore's" (*Inner Eye* 299). Indeed, the diffuse and often outright *unscientific* premises in Ray's Shonku stories have been a matter of contention among Bengali critics, even though we learn in the All India Radio interview that Ray attempted to keep abreast of current scientific trends (22). In this interview, Ray also discusses his own growing *oeuvre* and visuals for the film that was never made; for instance, the interior of the spaceship in *The Alien* should have "a feel of veins and arteries" like "a living thing" (26). One of the more fascinating sections from the SF Cine Club memorabilia is a selection of quotes from well-wishers: Walt Disney, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, Kingsley Amis, and Brian Aldiss. In his interactions with Kubrick, Clarke, and others, plus his discerning critiques of "western" sf and sf films, Ray's persona comes across as unfailingly cosmopolitan – an equal among equals. It is then ironic indeed that Ray's venture into Hollywood came to the end it did.

The second short section contains "Bonkubabu'r Bondhu" ("Bonkubabu's Friend") – Ray's much-anthologized first sf short story and a TV script based on the story, both in translation, which served as a "springboard" for *The Alien*. The narrative focuses on the plight of a docile schoolteacher, Bonkubabu, who is bullied by his peers. The turning point occurs when he meets the alien Ang who, giving lie to the common precept that aliens would only land in metropolitan centers like New York and London, accidentally lands in a forsaken field in suburban Bengal (Kankurgachchi in the story; Lochanpur in the TV script). Ironically, Bonkubabu is shown exotic wonders of this world (the North Pole, the Amazon rainforest) by this extra-terrestrial alien, and he regains self-confidence through the interaction, the process being more pronounced in the TV script than the short story.

The third section is the longest and contains a miscellany of material on the unmade film *The Alien* – the complete script that Ray wrote for Columbia Pictures, including the script's facsimile excerpts, interviews, articles, news reports, and correspondence.

The film screenplay introduces a whole new cast of characters: a poor boy Haba, a Marwari industrialist Bajoria, a scientific-minded journalist Mohan, an American engineer Devlin, and of course a re-imagined, mischievous, unnamed Alien. Embedded is sense of cultural degeneration and nostalgia for times past, whether for the glories of the ancient Hindus (who discovered the mathematical concept of zero) or for a depreciation in the quality of life (i.e. diluted cow's milk, failing crops). The screenplay also comments on social issues peculiar to Bengal that recur in Ray's other fiction and films – that indigenous Santhal women are exotic sexual objects; Marwari industrialists are greed personified; the rural population is gullible and easily exploited; and so on. For instance, the relevance of Bajoria's assertion that "business and religion make the . . . most effective, the most miraculous, the most extraordinary . . . the most

wonderful cocktail in the world" (95) is likely not lost on the contemporary reader. The ironic twist, recurrent of Ray's other sf, occurs when the alien spaceship, an artifact of science beyond human comprehension, is interpreted as a supernatural, divine object, a long-forgotten temple emerging out of a pond. The Alien is likewise seen as a mischievous god who first bestows largesse on the village but then withdraws it, possibly after witnessing the everyday acts of cruelty and immorality rife within rural Bengal. Interestingly, the Alien neither speaks nor shares screen space with any other character, with the exception of an unconscious Habu and an inebriated Devlin – both marginal characters, and both beyond rational consciousness in those moments. The screenplay ends on a somber note.

The remaining part of this section deals with what Ray calls "Ordeals with the Alien", supported by facsimiles of letters, newspaper reports, and photographs, all of which begin with optimism and promises but end in a long-drawn-out process of rejection. Ray writes that he was encouraged by Arthur C. Clarke to present his screenplay to Columbia Pictures; Mike Wilson was slated to direct it, and Peter Sellers was initially enthusiastic about playing Bajoria's role. The project received much media attention and the script was widely circulated, but even after several trips to the UK, the US, and France, the project remained unrealized. Then, 15 years later, Steven Spielberg's *ET* was released with uncanny resemblances to the plot and character designs initially presented in *The Alien*. Ray was dejected but chose not to take any legal action. Particularly interesting among the facsimile documents are two letters from Arthur C. Clarke in 1983 and 1984 requesting Ray not to sue Spielberg on charges of plagiarism, citing "unconscious plagiarism" and taking at his word Spielberg's indignant reaction: "Tell Satyajit that I was a kid in High School when his script was circulating in Hollywood" (186-87). Critically evaluating the "truth-value" of historical documents of this nature leads to a conundrum, as there is no way to factually prove or disprove Ray's contention (supported by other investigative journalism included here) – that *ET* did in fact plagiarize large sections from Ray's *The Alien*. As the plagiarism charge is often much more heavily skewed against "non-western" practitioners (say a Kaavya Vishwanathan or a Yambo Ouloguem), it remains crucial to shed light, as this volume does, on alternative versions of history which are not represented in Hollywood film history, for one, and Spielberg's *oeuvre*, for another.

The volume, though, ends on a sweeter note with the Appendix, which contains two additional short stories in translation – Sukumar Ray's "Henshoram Hunshiyar's Diary" and Satyajit Ray's "Tipu, the Maths teacher + The Pink Man", which are delightful reads. One of the strengths of this volume is indeed the wealth in translations from Ray's original Bengali, making his work accessible to a larger reading public.

Travails with the Alien collects illustrations, photographs, film stills, letters, book covers, tickets, posters, telegrams, etc., lending to its value as a research sourcebook, but the proliferation may be a little overwhelming for the lay reader. The volume also fails to provide any overarching narrative linking the various sections or the rationales for volume organization. Overall, though, it brings together under one cover much fascinating, previously unpublished material related to Ray's broad-ranging interests in filmmaking and science fiction, as well as the unmade film *The Alien*, which will be particularly useful for researchers, scholars, film enthusiasts, and lay readers interested in learning more about the controversy around the unmade film.

Biography: Anwesha Maity is a recent PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her dissertation on Bengali science fiction explores the impact on the genre of colonial and postcolonial history, the question of what "science" is, and indigenous aesthetic-philosophical systems. She has published in *Science Fiction Studies*, *Studies in the Fantastic*, and *Jadavpur University Essays and Studies*, and her co-edited volume, *Indian Genre Fiction: Pasts and Future Histories*, is currently available from Routledge.

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Book-Review:
Science Fiction Adapted to Film

Don Riggs

It seems that many more people know science fiction through films than through the literary works on which the films are based, which paradoxically contradicts the common axiom concerning cinematic adaptation of text that "the book is always better than the movie". Nicholas Ruddick, in his study of a wide range of such adaptations, contributes a useful distinction between science fiction and other fantastic modes of narrative, then uses this distinction to winnow out what would otherwise be a plethora – that is, an excess – of both literary texts and cinematic "texts" derived from them: for Ruddick, science fiction starts with H. G. Wells as the first fabulist to take into account Darwin's Theory of Evolution as a principle of his speculative fiction. Although this may ruffle the feathers of those who, following Brian Aldiss, regard Mary Shelley as the mother of science fiction and Robert Louis Stevenson as her successor, or even Jules Verne through his meticulously designed futuristic hardware in *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* and other adventures, Ruddick makes up for this dismissal of such authors and works from the SF canon by discussing some of the many films that have been inspired by these works of "proto-science fiction", evidently because of their significance for the genre over the years.

Ruddick eschews the term "adaptation" in favor of "remediation" since most of the worthwhile films derived from literary SF texts are what he terms a "tertiary translation", or translation from one medium (text) to the very differently constituted medium of film – a "multitrack audio-visual medium" (16). In his first, and shortest, section, Ruddick discusses the expressed attitudes of SF writers towards film makers and vice-versa, generally arising from mutual incomprehension between print vs. video media manipulators.

The second, slightly longer (34 pages) section deals with theory, although Ruddick acknowledges that theory "in the humanities is a term too often used to give an [sic] spurious aura of objectivity to subjective analyses" (22). Ruddick's definition of SF as literature and film within the Wellsian/post-Wellsian "tradition" of Darwinian evolutionary consciousness gives Ruddick a defined understanding of what is and is not science fiction; for example, the three major films associated with the genre to be released in 1931 – "Frankenstein", "Dr.

Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and "Dracula" – are considered horror rather than SF. Ruddick defines horror as "a mixture of primal emotions associated with a malign Other: fear, loathing, disgust, nausea" (51). However, the first two of these films had an impact on what Ruddick considers to be "Wellsian" SF with Darwinian implications. In fact, the Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey* does have a Frankensteinian A.I., HAL. Ruddick does find one element of the 1931 film of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to be Darwinian; the way Frederic March's Hyde is developed via makeup represents a human devolving into a Neanderthal with the characteristic low brow and flattened skull, reaching back towards the "missing link" towards the primordial pre-human hominid (59).

The theory outlined by Ruddick in his chapter on theory, despite the snarky tone of his comment on the use of theory in the humanities, is what enables him to judge adaptations of novels to films along the lines of their science fictionality. In discussing John Wyndhams's novel *The Midwich Cuckoos* and Wolf Rilla's film version of *Village of the Damned*, Ruddick analyzes the evolutionary elements of the novel and their total absence from the subsequent film: "Note that the film's title acknowledges the generic shift from the source text: 'Damned' evokes the quasi-theological frame of supernatural horror, not the agnostic-rational frame of sf" (37); likewise, very "little remains of the novel's evolutionary frame" (41).

Ruddick is a very learned and perceptive reader and viewer of SF texts and films, and in many respects this work is a fine example of connoisseurship. For example, concerning George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Ruddick says, "Orwell proposes that totalitarian regimes maintain power as much through the scientific manipulation of language as through intimidation and torture" (104). Then, concerning Michael Radford's 1984 film *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (the fourth film remediation of Orwell's novel), he calls it an

> intelligent reading of the novel, concentrating on exploring how a totalitarian regime might control reality via propaganda, surveillance, and violent coercion. As we have seen, the theme of reality control is more conducive to cinematic exploration than, say, that of linguistic manipulation. (112)

In other words, in order to convey the essence of Orwell's message in film, the emphasis has to shift from language to depiction. Ruddick's touchstone of successful remediation is summed up in his section title "Fidelity and Spirit Capture" – fidelity is not, despite what many assume, the retention of as many particulars in plot, setting, and detail from a novel in a film, but whether the essential project of the film has been successfully transferred between the genres.

Once beyond these opening chapters, the majority of the book is taken up with specific analyses of individual literary works and one or more of their remediations in film. Part III in over a hundred pages tackles 15 different instances of "High Adaptability" in a historical perspective. Here, despite his earlier relegation of Shelley, Verne, and Stevenson to "proto-science fiction", Ruddick devotes a chapter to adaptations from one text by each, presumably because of their extreme popularity. He then moves on to assess remediations of texts by Wells, H. Rider Haggard, John W. Campbell, Stanislaw Lem, Pierre Boulle, and others, plus two chapters devoted to remediations of works by Philip K. Dick.

As with many of the literary and cinematic texts in the study, Ruddick gives a commendably brief yet detailed assessment first of the novel or story, then of the film or films. One may agree or not with his assessments, depending upon one's individual tastes or vision, but Ruddick always supports his assertions with examples or quotations from relevant critics. One may be dismayed, as this reviewer was, by Ruddick's assertion that *Blade Runner*, director Ridley Scott's remediation of Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, has "little more to offer than an immersive visual experience" (161). What about Rutger Hauer's closing monologue as the replicant Roy Batty, dying atop the Bradbury Building in the rain, as Harrison Ford's Decker looks on in awe? Still, Ruddick's assessment of Richard Linklater's rotoscoped remediation of Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* – the film shares the novel's

title and is correspondingly closely faithful to the novel's text – is detailed, nuanced, and places both novel and film in historical context. For example, concerning the rotoscoping of the images, he points out that in the flesh "neither [Keanu] Reeves nor [Winona] Ryder are versatile performers, but when simplified to line, colour and highlight, their facial expressions matched by animators to the dialogue, the improvement is remarkable". Also, while acknowledging that Linklater is "highly literate", Ruddick asserts that by dropping Dick's direct quotations in German from Goethe, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and Heine, Linklater knows that the "visual motif of the blue flower, an ironic allusion to the Romantic poet Novalis's mystical *blaue Blume*, does the job of culturally elevating his film more subtly and efficiently" (175).

The final section of the book, roughly the same length as "High Adaptability", is "Successful Adaptive Relationships: Ten Case Studies". The historical range goes from H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* in two remediations made a half century apart to Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, with its one film version from 2009. In between, there are eight examples from various times in the 20th-century, including the adaptation of Serbian-born but French-adopted Enki Bilal's graphic novels to a film that Bilal himself directed. The analyses of these texts and films are, as in the preceding section, precise, concrete, and expressed with a stylistic flair delightful to read. For example, in assessing David Cronenberg's adaptation of J. G. Ballard's novel *Crash*, Ruddick succinctly says that "Cronenberg found an elegant solution to the problems of adapting a very literary text: he abandoned any attempt to be literary" (248). Ruddick states that the "dense poetic texture of Ballard's novel does not lend itself to translation into film", quoting a representatively "unfilmable passage" to the effect that in "each sexual act together we recapitulated her husband's death, re-seeding the image of his body in her vagina in terms of the hundred perspectives of our mouths and thighs, nipples and tongues within the metal and vinyl compartment of the car" (247). Ruddick says that "very little of Ballard's actual text" is preserved in Cronenberg's published screenplay of the film and "even less appears in the laconic film itself" (247).

Furthermore, in discussing Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and its first (1990) adaptation for television by Volker Schlondorff, Ruddick, who has taught in Canada for over four decades, shrewdly observes that one explanation for Atwood's aversion to being called a "science-fiction writer" is that the "label is associated with American popular culture, while she is the leading literary figure in Canada, a nation that defines its identity by contrast with its giant neighbor" (264). This is an example of how *Science Fiction Adapted to Film* pays at least equal attention to the literary side of the equation as to the films arising – or shooting away – from it.

Ruddick quotes Russian SF novelist Arkady Strugatsky in his first epigraph: "Explicitness, full statement, it seems to me, are only good in books on the care of houseplants" (1), and as initial conditions are important in subsequent developments of any dynamical system, this statement is a warning to the reader not to expect an encyclopedic investigation of the topic. A glance at the 19½ pages of the small print "Checklist of Significant SF Film Adaptations and Their Sources" at the back of the book will show why writing an exhaustive treatment of all the SF films adapted from or indebted to original SF texts would be impossible in a book of a mere 365 pages. One may regret certain omissions – this reviewer would have loved to read Ruddick's treatment of David Lynch's *Dune* film, for example – but what Ruddick does is provide the reader with a set of interpretative tools and a good number of examples of their application for them to follow when next reading a text and then seeing the film made from it, no matter how distant in time. This book will be of great interest to a wide variety of readers and film viewers, even outside the golden ghetto of science fiction; indeed, Ruddick's book fills a gap in SF critical literature: while there are numerous anthologies devoted to the evolution or various themes in SF films, there are none in this reader's experience devoted to the relationship between SF texts and the films that were made "after" them.

Biography: Don Riggs has been watching SF films since one could glimpse the zippers running down the backs of Martians and reading SF books since Heinlein's juvenile fiction. More recently, he has taught courses on science fiction in texts and the films made from them, as well as the cinematic remediations of *The Lord of the Rings* and *A Game of Thrones*.

Book-Review:
Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making through Science Fiction and Activism

T. S. Miller

Shelley Streeby's *Imagining the Future of Climate Change* is a unique and necessary book that bridges the too often too distant spheres of environmental activism and SF scholarship. The scope of book, however, remains somewhat narrower than even its more specific subtitle – *World-Making through Science Fiction and Activism* – would suggest, and a reader already well versed in the long tradition of ecological SF may find it strange, for example, that this monograph on climate change and SF mentions the name of so towering a figure in the field as Kim Stanley Robinson only in passing. But Streeby makes it clear from the outset that, rather than attempting to cover the vast subject of climate change as it has been represented in science fiction as such, she is more eager to foreground the ways in which Indigenous people and people of color use forms of speculative thinking "to remember the past and imagine futures that help us think critically about the present and connect climate change to social movements" (5). It is clear that Streeby hopes to reach multiple audiences with different degrees of familiarity with the territory the book covers – for instance, she even reserves several pages of her introduction for an admirably concise "Brief History of Global Warming" – and I am confident that she has succeeded in that ambition. Accessible in the extreme and relatively short for an academic book (the main text runs to fewer than 130 pages), *Imagining the Future of Climate Change* should, I expect, work very well in an undergraduate classroom setting, and it will certainly improve my own future teaching of climate fiction whether or not I decide to assign the text itself.

      Streeby writes in an almost conversational style without sacrificing depth, although readers expecting new and original readings of particular texts in the emerging canon of climate fiction will, again, not find many here. Rather than advancing a series of new interpretations, the book reads more as a primer or guide to a set of interlocking issues as they play out across a tremendous swathe of cultural territory. Streeby repeatedly and

quite accurately describes what she is doing in the book as "telling a story": "I tell the story of imagining the future of climate change by focusing especially on movements, speculative fictions, and futurisms of Indigenous people and people of color – work that is all too often excluded from the category of cli-fi and that extends beyond cli-fi in its rich and deep connections to social movements and everyday struggles and to other cultural forms such as film, video, music, social media, and performance" (4-5). This overarching story turns out to be grim at bottom, as so much climate writing must be, though not without notes of hope in the "networked local strategies, direct actions, and collective envisionings of the future" documented by Streeby (126).

Although Streeby groups climate activism and speculative arts of all kinds under the umbrellas of futurism and world-making, insisting that we miss a great deal "when the focus is only on nation-states, transnational corporations, research scientists, and politicians as significant agents and explainers of change" (6), in practice she organizes the book around a few central figures, texts, and movements. For instance, the first chapter, titled "#NoDAPL," uses the Dakota Access Pipeline protests of 2016 – high-tech in its hashtags but with an emphasis on a politics of place – as an armature around which to build a much longer and broader history of Indigenous futurisms of various kinds, including the slipstream fictions of Gerald Vizenor and Leslie Marmon Silko, but also the much earlier activism of Hopi leader Thomas Banyacya and the 1990 Declaration of Quito. The second chapter, "Climate Refugees in the Greenhouse World," chiefly uses the life and work of Octavia E. Butler to think about the prehistory of the current public discourse surrounding climate change. Streeby makes extensive and indeed striking use of the recently opened Butler archive at the Huntington Library, and her methodology differs intriguingly from the conventional ways in which authorial archives are so often deployed to support particular textual interpretations. Instead, Streeby invites us to consider Butler as a storyteller of another kind: an archivist and historian of climate change who scrupulously researched and documented climate change, climate-influenced disasters, and other ecological issues while working on her 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* – which, as Streeby demonstrates, made considerably more explicit reference to climate change in discarded drafts. Streeby's third and final chapter, "Climate Change as a World Problem," emphasizes contemporary intersectional social movements and particularly the work of adrienne maree brown as an author and organizer, epitomized in her co-edited 2015 anthology of stories titled *Octavia's Brood*.

If this mixture of activism and literary speculation from various groups and communities can seem eclectic, it should. Part of Streeby's goal is to sketch possibilities for connection across, for example, black and Indigenous futurisms. Only one section in the book seems (to me) to cross the line from the productively eclectic into the possibly arbitrary, namely, the tenuously connected treatment of the Māori web series *Anamata Future News* that concludes the first chapter. It is not that I object to the inclusion of this particular piece of media for any reason, but its distance from many of the other texts and communities surveyed more broadly and deeply in the book necessarily led me to wonder why this obscure web series, rather than any number of other cultural productions, should appear here. I suppose the disappointment then lies more in all that Streeby had to exclude from this book. In general, however, I found Streeby's chosen methodology – described by the author herself as building on "'social movements and culture' methodologies in American Studies" (6) – to be highly effective in how it links clear and concise historical summary and key political "flashpoints" with the development of ecologically minded SF before and after the landmark publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Certainly, parts of all the stories that Streeby tells will be familiar to different groups of readers within her wide audience, but everyone will also learn some new detail from the collective tapestry she weaves. I had no idea, for example, that in 1962 Monsanto produced and circulated its own SF short story to counter the radical futurism of Rachel Carson, which it called "The Desolate Year."

The bigger picture that emerges in the book, however, is more important that any such details, and Streeby convincingly demonstrates the success with which artists and activists have begun decolonizing the climatological imagination: for example, she shows how the #NoDAPL water protectors imagined "a future connected to the past beyond the global fossil fuel economy" (40), and she contextualizes the protests using both past incidents of resistance against resource extraction and Traci Voyles's concept of "wastelanding," that is, the "extraction of resources in racialized spaces that combined with environmental racism renders 'space marginal, worthless, and pollutable'" (44). One of the central – and most hopeful – tensions that she identifies at Standing Rock is the way in which the movement contributes to "a revitalized politics of place" while simultaneously showing how activist futurisms can "connect people who are widely separated geographically but bound together in confronting common antagonists and sharing common goals" (44). The third chapter expands on this point usefully in its profile of adrienne maree brown, an activist and thinker described as both "attuned to the particularities of place" while thinking about "climate change as a world problem," and whose work points to "direct action as a crucial method" (105).

While one may disagree with certain individual claims or exaggerations in the book – for instance, that Butler's *Parable of the Sower* was necessarily "one of the first to imagine possibilities in the wake of climate change disaster" (70) – the larger argument invariably holds. In this specific case, the argument is that Butler's "memory work" collecting and annotating newspaper articles as she attempted to imagine new forms of symbiosis in her fiction both challenges neoliberal failures in the face of climate change and "models an interdisciplinary engagement with the sciences" (24), making Butler – along with Silko – major "intellectuals" of climate change. In fact, I would highly recommend this book to any scholar of Butler's work, as that second chapter itself models a promising method of making sense of all "the unpublished fragments, blueprints, and drafts of . . . prequels and sequels" that fill the Huntington archive, which Streeby understands as "a kind of dreamwork" (81).

Equally stimulating are Streeby's treatments of the many other "world-making projects" covered in the book, which are not necessarily utopian yet still challenge the fossil fuel industry through visionary futurisms (43). Of course, writing about climate change is always "timely," always "urgent," but *Imagining the Future of Climate Change* boasts a very useful bibliography that is almost shockingly current. And, despite the obvious speed with which this book was, for an academic title, conceived, written, and brought to print, I detected no real signs of overhaste save the minor mistake in Streeby's brief reference to Supreme Court Justice Gorsuch with the first name "Adam" rather than "Neil" (88). Also, the lack of an index, which one suspects to be a time- and/or money-saving move, is offset by the other paratextual materials included in the book, such as a list of key figures, a more descriptive table of contents labelled "Overview," and a glossary of important terms. That the first two entries in this glossary should happen to be "direct action" and "speculative fiction" perhaps tells us all we finally need to know about the mission of *Imagining the Future of Climate Change*: Streeby insists persuasively that our "answers about the future of climate change must not come solely from the sphere of science and technology, or they will be too narrow, not capacious enough," and that we vitally need these "visionary fictions created by activists and artists who struggle to conceive of worlds that diverge from dominant narratives of power and privilege" (30–31).

> *Biography*: Trained primarily as a medievalist, T. S. Miller (ts.tsmiller@gmail.com) has taught both early English literature and contemporary science fiction at Sarah Lawrence College and Mercy College. His current work explores representations of plants and modes of plant being in literature and culture.

Book-Review:
She-Wolf: A Cultural History of Female Werewolves

Jonathan W. Thurston

Priest, Hannah, editor. *She-Wolf: A Cultural History of Female Werewolves*. Manchester UP, 2017. ISBN 978-0719089343.

At first glance, what struck me about Hannah Priest's *She-Wolf: A Cultural History of Female Werewolves* was the crimson highlighting of the word "she" on the cover. In recent years, scholars have tackled the complex cultural myth of the monstrous feminine, applying historical stances (*Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, 2009), gender studies (*Grotesque Femininities*, 2010), and cultural analysis (*The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair*, 2006). Priest's new book provides an innovative addition – and response – to this scholarship. On one hand – or paw – werewolf literary discourse has remained dominantly masculine, whether examining the oft-cited Brian Frost or even the much older Sabine Baring-Gould. And on the other hand the scholarly discourse of wild women has largely avoided the "popular werewolf" as worthy of serious study. This text, far from just a cultural history as the subtitle suggests, is the first serious collection of essays on female werewolves, and it offers scholarly examinations of the female werewolf in history, literature, cinema, and gender as well as sexuality studies.

Priest organizes the book into three major sections. The first begins with an introduction by Priest that details many of the threads integral to the following chapters, namely the domestication of the female werewolf as well as the masculinisation and hypersexuality frequently attributed to the female werewolf by Western culture. Her introduction serves also as a generalized survey of the literary character of the female werewolf across history, reaching as far back as the 12th-century *Topographia Hiberniae* by Gerald of Wales and delving into such recent media as Disney's TV series, *The Wizards of Waverly Place*. First and foremost, though, Priest claims that, if we are to see werewolves by themselves as creatures of contradiction, female werewolves will demonstrate what a true contradiction is (20).

The rest of section I then proceeds to trace some of the historical significances of the female werewolf, such as the legends collected in Saaremaa or the werewolf trials in early modern French Burgundy.

Along these same lines, Merili Metsvahi in "Estonian Werewolf Legends from Saaremaa" provides a summary of the 1,400 werewolf folkloric archive entries from Estonia – the third largest national archive of folklore in the world – while noting in particular that, although many of the traditional European motifs of the werewolf story appear here – such as the silver bullet or many of the modes of transformation – the tales contain a unique twist in how their female werewolf tales allow for more opportunity for female empowerment. Estonia's history of gender equality has generally been much more progressive than Western Europe, and Metsvahi is persuasive in making these historicist connections.

What happens when we take this historicist–folkloric approach, though, and shift it more gradually into a historicist–legal one? Rolf Schulte summarizes several of the judicial cases of female lycanthropy in "She-werewolves in Early Modern French Burgundy". What makes his study captivating is his combination of quantitative research methods – such as his statistical analysis of both male and female lycanthropy cases in court – and qualitative research methods – such as the examination of evidence of transformation or the lack of eyewitness accounts of the beast. By doing this, he differentiates the two sexes as both victims of this early modern court system, with men labeled sexual aggressors and women adulterers, and he also creates a comprehensive portrait of the gender implications of these cases.

The second section – the bulk of the book – is a series of literary chapters analyzing the varying faces of the female werewolf figure in specific fictional texts and film. While the section starts with a work, discussed by Jay Cate, as far removed from the werewolf literary canon as the roleplaying board game *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, the section quickly moves onto Clemence Housman's classic *The Werewolf*, analyzed by Carys Crossen, before Hannah Priest tackles Angela Carter's more recent collection of darker fairy tales *The Bloody Chamber*. While these chapters cover substantially different periods (from the Gothic to the 21st-century), different cultures (across the West), and different works (both textual and non-textual), they manage to weave together a much more nuanced figuring of the female werewolf as the product of cultural mythos, often a response to contemporary cultural and sexual mores.

A good starting place for this analysis is in popular culture itself. Jay Cate in "Participatory Lycanthropy" tackles the often underrepresented genre of the tabletop roleplaying game by academia, particularly *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*. Much of the chapter serves as a primer on the imagined universe of the game, and what follows is a series of close readings of the core rulebooks that help to establish a gendering of the universe. While the author does discuss "lunar determinism" in addressing the potential for female characters in *Apocalypse*, he seems to dance around extant terms in feminist studies, even ones as frequent in this volume as the "monstrous feminine". His language is grounded heavily in genre studies – certainly a necessity for such a rarely studied mode of literature – but, for a thesis centering on concerns of gender representation, his attention to feminist studies at large seems cursory at best.

Perhaps nothing better represents the study of the monstrous feminine than examining the werewolf through its animal appearance, much as Jazmina Cininas does in her chapter. The 2006 text *The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair* does much in terms of examining a long Western cultural history of both loathing and fearing the wild woman aesthetic. But, as Cininas argues in "Fur Girls and Wolf Women", the werewolf becomes more than just a caricature of that aesthetic. She builds upon Priest's introductory claim that female werewolves are even larger contradictions than

werewolves in general. The chapter relies on Justine Larbalestier's novel *Liar* as a case study for examining the significance of the trope of fur in werewolf stories – not just the hair itself but the method of gaining it as well. Cininas is ambitious in her scope, cycling from Pliny to Carter, mingling schools of history, literature, gender, and culture fluently throughout. Still, she keeps *Liar* at the core of the study. Readers can now approach this novel with a stronger grasp of the multiplicity of the layers of meaning. Furthermore, the essay serves as an alternative means to read the werewolf story: one attached to the *aesthetics* of the werewolf.

However, if the aesthetics of fur are one indicator of a literary figuring of the werewolf, then the skin beneath the fur represents another aesthetics entirely. Thus, we can begin to connect the werewolf not just with women but even with racial minorities. Honore Beaugránd's story, "The Werewolves", is the subject of study in Shannon Scott's "Female Werewolf as Monstrous Other". Largely, the chapter is what might be termed an old historicist reading of the story's treatment of the werewolf as indicative of the dehumanization of indigenous women in America in the late 19th-century. While Scott only in conclusion connects the story with the larger corpus of werewolf literature, she employs in-depth historical and cultural research, grounding the tale firmly in its contemporary contexts. My greatest concern for this chapter, however, was in the lack of any clear implications for the analysis. The article leaves much to be explored in terms of what the indigenous female werewolf *means* and how we as scholars should approach this character when we encounter her in literature.

While much in the volume regards *reception* of these werewolf tales, Carys Crossen changes tack by focusing on authorship, particularly in Clemence Housman's *The Werewolf* and Rosamund Marriott Watson's "A Ballad of the Were-wolf". Both these tales of female werewolves are united by being written *by* women. Crossen lays out the historical context for these works, the biographical information on the authors, the plot synopses, and even the works' factoring into the larger werewolf literary corpus before turning to the gendering of the werewolves. What fascinates Crossen is how the she-werewolves are not overtly sexual or violent so much as they simply deviate from societal norms and expectations.

Social norms are further challenged in the editor's own contribution to the volume, "I Was a Teenage She-Wolf: Boobs, Blood and Sacrifice". As the title suggests, Priest tracks the motif of the female adolescent werewolf in fantasy and horror literature, starting from the film adaptation of Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves* to *The Twilight Saga*. With this specific scope, Priest is able to address not just the general concerns of femaleness and femininity but also those of puberty, adolescence, and menarche.

The book returns to Angela Carter in Willem de Blécourt's "Angela Carter's Werewolves in Historical Perspective". Rather than trying to provide a "new interpretation" on Carter's famed werewolf tales, de Blécourt works toward an envisioning of these stories as collages of an already diverse werewolf tradition; that is, these stories are not *just* a re-telling of "Little Red Riding Hood" but are chimeras of folklore, essentially literary collages of multiple werewolf folktales. De Blécourt is persuasive in his tracing of various motifs throughout the corpus.

As one can imagine, many of these folkloric motifs appear even across film. In "The She-Wolves of Horror Cinema", Peter Hutchings traces the evolution of the female werewolf in the film industry. He prefaces his analysis with the acknowledgment that there are few she-werewolves in cinema; however, the films that do have such characters, he notes, alter the transformation to be more about loss of identity than loss of physical comfort, as is the case for many male werewolves. His primary case study is *She-Wolf of London*, but he does examine twenty-first century

films such as *The Descent* (2005) and *Trick 'r Treat* (2007) in the second half of the chapter.

The final section of the book focuses much more specifically and explicitly on the gender and sexuality approaches to understanding the female werewolf, outlining how scholars should address the werewolf as a representation of feminine concerns, not just as a product of bestial folklore. Barbara Creed in "*Ginger Snaps*: The Monstrous Feminine as *Femme Animale*" points to two terms often thrown around – the monstrous feminine and *femme animale* – to show not just the subtle differences between them but also how that distinction should ultimately alter the way we study hypersexuality and the masculinisation of women in literature. Laura Wilson follows this chapter with the question of how these literal and often visceral transformation scenes affect – or should not affect – the reader's understanding of female subjectivity. When this question compounds with Derrida's conception of – and fascination with – the animal gaze, Wilson's findings are provocative. How would, for example, we address the cat in *The Animal That (Therefore) I Am*, if the cat's gaze included such implications as hunger or carnal desire?

For Barbara Creed, the female werewolf signifies an exploration of natural – as opposed to civilized – femininity, femaleness, and sexuality. She does this by reading the female werewolf as a type of *femme animale*, like the Sphinx or gorgon. This feminist interpretation takes the character as an archetypal uprising against patriarchal and phallocentric structures, and she reads the character as possessing more agency in this uprising than many of the other authors in the book have claimed.

Finally, Laura Wilson takes the 2002 film *Dans Ma Peau* as a case study in female werewolves and the concerns of female subjectivity. Seeing the werewolf as more than just the "fur, the teeth, the claws, the label" (197), Wilson argues that the female werewolf myth is much more about the embodiment of dichotomies than about the "body" in general. The analysis defies claims of essentialism – that the werewolf has to be on one side of multiple dichotomies at all times – to call back to Priest's ideas of female werewolf contradiction, that the female werewolf can indeed embody *both* sides of the dichotomies used in this discourse.

Due to Priest's introduction, readers should have a clear sense of the themes that connect the chapters, both of sexuality and of folkloric types. We as readers follow these concerns of wild womanhood, of menarche, of the monstrous feminine, across film, culture, history, and literature. Each of these themes evolves and shifts through the chapters, becoming more and more nuanced and complex, painting us a complex cultural image of the she-werewolf, in all her many faces and forms. The chapters address many of the standards in werewolf literature but, ultimately, they strive to *challenge* this canon, arguing both that werewolf literature is not restrictively a masculine archetype and that feminist studies of the wild woman should not simply sweep she-werewolves under the monstrous feminine rug. But by the end even with these complications – and contradictions – they merge at last, readers will find, into a multifaceted beast who stares readers in the eye and grins wickedly, hungrily. For, after all, like the adolescent protagonist giggling in the burly wolf's arms in Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves", "[we are] nobody's meat".

Biography: Jonathan W. Thurston is a PhD student at Michigan State University, specializing in animal studies, early modern literature, horror literature, and queer theory. His own fiction has been recognized by *Publishers' Weekly* and is under consideration for the Lambda Literary Award. For some of his historicist work, check out the upcoming *Horse Breeds and Human Society: Purity, Identity and the Making of the Modern Horse*, edited by Kristen Guest and Monica Mattfeld (Routledge).

Book-Review:
There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale: More Essays on Tolkien

Megan Fontenot

Flieger, Verlyn. *There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale: More Essays on Tolkien*. Kent State UP, 2017. ISBN 978-1-60635-308-0.

Verlyn Flieger has long been recognized as one of the leading voices in Tolkien Studies. Her diligence in the field and her work's accessibility to lay readers and scholars alike have made her an acknowledged Tolkien expert, and as such she has been at the forefront of many of the field's critical conversations. In particular, Flieger has often focused her scholarship on Tolkien's theory of sub-creation, especially as it can be used as a lens to read his fiction. She has written extensively on Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-stories" and was also one of the first to seriously address his unfinished time travel novel *The Notion Club Papers*.

Flieger's latest collection, *There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale*, falls neatly into the established pattern of her work. The first section of the book, for example, is dedicated to "On Fairy-stories," and the final section examines Tolkien's debt to foreign literary traditions, especially as they interacted with his Númenor/Atlantis obsession. These are the areas in which Flieger's expertise shines: readers will find here a deft and sensitive handling of Tolkien's complexities that manages to retain a reverence for the man and his work while asking probing, challenging questions that often lead to unexpected answers. The collection is not the cohesive whole that one might expect from a monograph, however; instead, it is an assortment of distinct essays which form "an unpatterned mosaic whose tiles touch a variety of subjects" (xii). Flieger's description is fitting: readers expecting or searching for any sort of linear argument – a pattern to the mosaic – will be disappointed.

The essays largely remain in their original forms (all but two were written for other occasions) and are, as Flieger puts it, "grouped loosely by theme" (xii), a gross understatement considering the variety of topics represented. Given the limits of

space, this review will focus on a handful of essays that stand out as representative of the collection's strengths and weaknesses.

In the first and titular essay, "'There Would Always Be a "Fairy-tale"': J.R.R. Tolkien and the Folklore Controversy," Flieger reads "On Fairy-stories" as a response to the debates between three branches of folklore studies represented by the theorists Max Müller, George Webbe Dasent, and Andrew Lang. In Flieger's eyes, what is at first a scholarly response to an intellectual debate becomes a deeply personal apology for fantasy in a world ravaged by war and catastrophe: at the end of the day, the solution to the controversy is less important than the recovery, consolation, and escape fantasy offers a world emerging from the bloodbath of the First World War only to find itself on the threshold of the Second. Flieger's enchanting resurrection of the historical and intellectual background of Tolkien's famous fantasy manifesto returns the essay to its natural context – a move rarely made by scholars – and thus underscores Tolkien's rejection of each of the three divisions and his unconventional decision to emphasize the *effects* of fairy-stories rather than their origins.

Next, "Re-creating Reality" describes fantasy's relationship to the primary world. Flieger defines Tolkien's term "Faërie" through the suggestion that fantasy literature differs from "realistic" literature not in category, but in degree; and explains that words "produce fantasy by rearranging reality" (36). For Flieger, *The Lord of the Rings* embodies the journey from the primary world to a secondary one – a compelling reading that deserves further exploration. It is unfortunately overshadowed by Flieger's choices elsewhere in the essay, however, beginning with the claim that the importance of *The Hobbit* relies on its foreshadowing of *The Lord of the Rings*. While many scholars agree that the latter exceeds the former in artistry, few have gone so far as to suggest that *The Hobbit*'s progeny is its greatest significance, and it is unexpected coming from one who tends rather to champion Tolkien's minor works. Flieger's own essay "Tolkien's French Connection" exists in tension with the tendencies of "Re-creating Reality" by reading *The Hobbit* as both a classic and a parodic *aventure* narrative – i.e., where a knight goes off into the Blue to seek adventure – that is completely independent of the quest narrative of its sequel. The essay is further troubled by her assertion that the book's conclusion lacks "a eucatastrophe" because Bilbo "has never been in any real peril" (40), a claim on which she does not elaborate or support with evidence, leaving her readers as much in the dark as Bilbo in Gollum's cave. Finally, the essay concludes with a section titled "The Inheritors," which discusses only Philip Pullman in any meaningful detail. The essay is encumbered by this final section, leaving the reader confused as to exactly what Flieger means by it, why Pullman was the most appropriate "inheritor" to include, and to where the original topic has vanished. The final paragraph asserts that Tolkien the theorist will exist as long as Tolkien the story-teller, but it is difficult to see how this relates to fantasy's alteration of reality.

The collection's second section opens with "Words and World-making: The Particle Physics of Middle-earth," a tour de force in miniature, in which Flieger studies the ways in which the various names of a single location reflect the worldviews of the peoples who named it. She examines the etymology and definition of each name of the mountain Caradhras, for example, concluding that "words change the phenomena; the Elves do not see the mountain differently from Men and Dwarves. They see a different mountain" (74). Despite being outside Flieger's usual areas of interest, this essay is perhaps the best in the collection: it is fascinating, insightful and, despite its emphasis on etymology and language, clear and accessible. Regrettably, it is also short: less than five pages; and, just as the reader becomes truly excited by what might be said next,

the essay ends. Indeed, many of the pieces in this collection are not traditional academic essays, "Words and World-making" included. "Eucatastrophe in the Dark," for example, is a description of Flieger's strategies for teaching Tolkien's major fiction in higher education.

The prize for holding the collection's most radical claim, though, belongs to "The Jewels, the Stone, the Ring, and the Making of Meaning." Flieger compares Tolkien's three treasures (the Silmarils, the Arkenstone, and the Ring) and evaluates the relative success of each. She concludes that while the Arkenstone is a success because it lacks ambition and the Ring because Tolkien's skills were fully-developed at the time of writing, the Silmarils' "role in the story is counter to their essential nature" (111), and they are evidence that here Tolkien's "reach exceeded his grasp" because of "the limitations of his skill" at the time of writing (106). Flieger rejects the idea that the Silmarils could contain unsullied light and yet incite the most horrific misdeeds in Middle-earth's early history. While she does indicate significant Silmaril-related discrepancies within the texts, Flieger may have erred in assuming the Jewels were meant to play the same role as the Ring. Indeed, one might point out that it is not the Silmarils but the Oath of Fëanor that wreaks havoc in Arda – and that both the Ring and the Oath (not the Jewels) threaten to bind in everlasting darkness. Flieger is surely accurate in that Tolkien improves with time, but she too hastily assumes that the Silmarils and the Ring are parallels in kind and purpose.

The second section's final essay, "Making Choices: Moral Ambiguity in Tolkien's Major Fiction," addresses a criticism often leveled at Tolkien: namely, that his stories are simple matters of Good fighting Evil and that his characters are one-dimensional and face no real temptations. While the essay is a thoughtful, complex defense of Middle-earth's moral/philosophical landscape and a must-read for anyone who has found themselves defending said landscape, Flieger's title is misleading: apart from one obscure case in *The Notion Club Papers*, she offers examples from *The Lord of the Rings* only, inexplicably ignoring the moral quagmires of *The Silmarillion* that so often depress first-time readers.

Flieger reaches again for those dark undertones in the third section's final piece, "Fays, Corrigans, Elves, and More: Tolkien's Dark Ladies." She follows the archetypes of the title as they appear in Tolkien's works. These figures, she argues, reveal "the danger of underestimating the power of a woman," and they "all derive from the dark side of Tolkien's perilous realm of Faerie. They balance and round out his gallery of female portrayals" (177). One might wonder why Flieger did not include the River Woman, Goldberry's mother, in her reading, but her exclusion is only a minor drawback in an otherwise compelling piece. The essay is an important voice in Tolkien Studies as recent trends encourage scholars to reassess Tolkien's representations of gender and sexuality.

There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale is, as with many collections, a mixed bag. Flieger's expertise is to be admired, certainly, and it is on display here, particularly in her treatment of "On Fairy-stories," the Númenor cycle, and Tolkien's personal and creative contradictions, but occasionally the essays fail to live up to her reputation. As a whole, the volume's greatest drawback is its lack of cohesion. Flieger's defense – that it is consciously "an unpatterned mosaic" as well as "loosely" organized – only stretches so far. Though she sees "a more coherent picture than [she] had anticipated, a picture of a man as complicated as the books that bear his name" (xii), that picture is less clear to the reader, primarily because the collection does not include any final postscript, note, or conclusion to draw the loose ends together.

This makes the volume difficult to read straight through. Flieger advises that the essays are to be read "one by one and in no particular order" (xvii), but this prompts the reader to question the strict necessity of the collection, given that the essays, or at least their concepts, are available elsewhere. "How Trees Behave – Or Do They?" was published in *Mythlore* in 2013, for example, and "Tolkien, Kalevala, and Middle-earth" is quite similar to "Tolkien, *Kalevala*, and 'The Story of Kullervo,'" of *Green Suns and Faërie* (2012). Three of the essays, "Tolkien's Celtic Connection," "Drowned Lands," and "Voyaging About," share titles and a significant amount of information with the sections of an *Interrupted Music* (2005) chapter.

This highlights the deficiency of the essays in a more individual sense: they tend to rehash material with which the veteran reader of Flieger will be familiar. "On Fairy-stories" and topics like ecology and world-building will perhaps always be fixtures in Tolkien Studies, and Flieger has been a worthy champion of *The Notion Club Papers* and other of Tolkien's lesser-known works; but this is ground she knows by heart. This means that readers are offered on the one hand the very best of Flieger's knowledge, keenly honed, and on the other the same map of the old country with a few more details drawn in.

For those new to Flieger, these essays are invaluable, and for more experienced scholars they remain worth reading to see how Flieger continues to develop themes long in her repertoire (even the disappointing essays provide food for thought) – although it would be difficult to broadly describe what she presents here as new. Rather, *There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale* celebrates an expertise brought to its height by long and careful study, ultimately revealing as much about Flieger and her dedication as it does Tolkien and his.

Biography: Megan Fontenot is an MA student at Michigan State University whose research interests include Tolkien, mythology and folklore, and the relationship between Western religious mysticisms and the fantastic in 19th and early 20th century trans-Atlantic literature. She holds a dual BA in English and Humanities from Milligan College.

Book-Review:
Binding Them All: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on J. R. R. Tolkien and His Works

Jyrki Korpua

Kirner-Ludwig, Monika, Stephan Köser, and Sebastian Streitberger, editors. *Binding Them All: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on J. R. R. Tolkien and His Works*. Walking Tree, 2017. ISBN 978-3-905703-37-5.

Binding Them All. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on J. R. R. Tolkien and His Works, edited by Monika Kirner-Ludwig, Stephan Köser, and Sebastian Streitberger, is an article collection of selected papers that emerged from a series of lectures given by various scholars at the University of Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany in 2014. Individual contributors range from experts to doctoral students in interdisciplinary fields such as literature, linguistics, geography, history, cultural studies, and communications. Therefore, the title "Binding Them All" proficiently addresses this wide spectrum of approaches. The wide interdisciplinary approach of the book and the different levels of academic authority are at the same time the major strength and the major weakness of the collection.

In the introduction, the editors explain that the series of lectures behind the making of this book aimed originally to bring together two fields of study, linguistics and literature, which have "forcefully been kept apart too often" (1). This of course is a problem that many studies on Tolkien ever since the work of Tom Shippey 1980s have been trying to resolve, and Tolkien scholars today, usually, are well aware of the opposition between "Lit" (Literature) and "Lang" (Language), which was a fundamental conflict within English departments, especially within the British University system, since the early 20th-century.

The editors also explain that they find Tolkien's fiction an important topic because of "his endeavors to create worlds of absolute and minute detail" (3). Since this book is based on lecture series aimed for students held at the University of Augsburg, it soon becomes clear from the tenor of this book that the position and reputation of Tolkien studies and fantasy studies as whole is very different in Germany than in the Nordic Countries, England, or even the United States, where there are many meritorious scholars producing work on fantasy, speculative fiction and Tolkien. In a German university context, writers and publishers perhaps have to justify Tolkien's fiction as their subject and claim its applicability for "a university context" (3). For me, this suggests that fantasy scholarship still occupies a quite

minor position within German (and Swiss) academia. In addition, the intended audience for the original lectures – students from eleven different fields of study, not fellow scholars – means that this volume's starting point is relatively basic from a scholarly perspective, assuming little prior knowledge on any given topic.

Because of that, the introductory style of this interdisciplinary book brings up a question: for a scholar of Tolkien or fantasy literature, what can this book contribute? The book contains interesting viewpoints but, because hundreds of works on Tolkien studies have been published since the 1990s, few of which have been cited in this volume, the innovativeness of the research essays presented here can be underwhelming. Although notable exceptions include the contributions by Thomas Honegger and Birgit Schwan, some essays simply make basic observations on Middle-earth's geography or provide didactic, even simplistic, commentary on the film adaptations. For example, Sebastian Streitberger in his article describing the usefulness of fictional films as didactic tools, "Concepts of Space in Middle-earth's Landscapes or the Potential of Fantasy and School Geography," tells us that the "vast scope of Tolkien's closed world with its own immanent history, languages and geography can be studied almost as thoroughly and coherently as the physical existing earth in which we live" (199).

Nevertheless, the book has its virtues. The strongest contribution in the volume may be Professor Thomas Honegger's lively overview of Tolkien's academic life and work, "'Meet the Professor' – A Present-day Colleague's View of Tolkien's Academic Life and Work." Honegger discusses how J. R. R. Tolkien, after his professional retirement, had to adjust himself to a position where he was "no longer primarily perceived as an academic and professional philologist" but a celebrated fantasy author with eager readers, followers and fast-growing fan base (17). Honegger supplements this remark with an overview of Tolkien's professional lectures, seminars, tutorials, thesis supervisions, and his now well-known print publications. Honegger incisively points out that "Tolkien's scholarly work is indissolubly connected with his literary writings, the one influencing and interacting with the other. However, the wider public remained ignorant of this interconnectedness for a long time" (31).

Another notable essay comes from Birgit Schwan's close reading of Tolkien's *The Fall of Arthur*, "Searching 'For a Better Rhythm, or a Better Word of Phrase': J. R. R. Tolkien's Re-Telling of the Legend of King Arthur in Alliterative Metre." Schwan sees Tolkien's long unfinished poem as simultaneously "archaic" and "modern." In the analyses and interpretation, Schwan compares Tolkien's text with Sir Thomas Malory's classic *Le Morte Darthur*, noting general characteristics of metre, syntax, word-order, vocabulary, morphology, and phonology. Schwan's study emphasizes differences in the poetic styles of Tolkien and Malory but also highlights the notion that although "both authors used very different methods to achieve similar and, on the whole, equivalent effects. . . . In fact, both create a different picture of the legend of King Arthur while keeping the story in its essence alive" (130-31). Schwan's article therefore gives the reader an insight to Tolkien's quite recently published text *The Fall of Arthur*, published posthumously in 2013. The article also applies an interesting combination of philological text analysis with the interpretative close reading usually connected with literary studies.

By and large, the book itself is quite well written and easily accessible. The style and layout is functional. Some direct quotes lack page numbers (e.g. the very first quote of the book) but, overall, the book is well edited and competently made. I suggest the book to general readers, but in most parts – excluding the given examples – it does not bring important extra value to Tolkien scholarship.

Biography: Doctor Jyrki Korpua is a literary scholar and a cultural researcher from the University of Oulu. His doctoral dissertation, *Constructive Mythopoetics in J. R. R. Tolkien's Legendarium* (Oulu University 2015), focuses on constructive poetics and Christian Platonic elements in Tolkien's fiction. For the last thirteen years Korpua has published articles, monographs, and participated in international conferences on a wide range of subjects. Korpua's research interests include fantasy, dystopian and utopian fiction, *Bible*-studies, graphic novels, sport narratives, and the *Kalevala*.

Book-Review:
The Sweet and the Bitter: Death and Dying in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

Nicholas Dalbey

In a letter written in 1956, J. R. R. Tolkien states that the principle theme of *The Lord of the Rings* is "Death and Immortality" (*Letters* 246). Although scholars have engaged with Tolkien's theme in his broader legendarium, no one has published a monograph devoted to the variety of deaths encountered in his most popular work. Amy Amendt-Raduege's recent book, *The Sweet and the Bitter*, however, has filled the critical gap. The aims of her project are twofold. First, she catalogues and analyzes the instances of death that occur throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. Second, she assesses the influence of medieval and modern notions of "good" and "bad" deaths on Tolkien's theme of "hope without guarantees," as well as the corresponding memorial practices. She points out that the three great themes of death that connect medieval Northern Europe, *The Lord of the Rings*, and contemporary culture are "the way we die, the need to remember the dead, and . . . the lingering apprehension of what lies beyond the grave" (4). Her book attempts to trace each theme as it develops throughout the story. This is a daunting task for a relatively slim volume, but by limiting her scope to *The Lord of the Rings*, Amendt-Raduege has produced an insightful and comprehensive study on the thematic and contextual importance of death in Tolkien's work.

The book divides into two sections. Chapters one and two establish the criteria and the instances of "good" and "bad" deaths. Examples of good deaths include Théoden, Gandalf, Boromir, and Aragorn. Bad deaths, in contrast, include Denethor, Gollum, Saruman, and Gríma Wormtongue. Chapters three and four consider the memorial practices of each culture in Middle-earth and their various beliefs about the afterlife. Since Tolkien was a medievalist, medieval Christian and pagan literature set the criteria for determining the moral quality of each individual death. Amendt-

Raduege, however, is careful not to assume that Tolkien was simply re-packaging medieval beliefs. Rather, she wants to "show how *The Lord of the Rings* makes visible those residual, specifically medieval, concerns about death and the nature of dying that have been often overlooked" (4).

In the opening chapters, her analysis hinges on a distinction between Anglo-Saxon heroic ideals, as seen in stories like *Beowulf* and the *Battle of Maldon*, and the Christian attitudes toward death outlined in the *ars moriendi* – a popular fifteenth century ecclesiastical guide that taught people how to prepare for death. Whereas the stories of Anglo-Saxon heroes portray good deaths as occurring while performing courageous deeds motivated by the desire for fame and glory, the *ars moriendi* teaches the average Christian to die well through a series of procedures: to accept the manner of their death, to avoid temptation, to affirm the values of the Church, and to focus on Christ's passion as a guide for dying well. Amendt-Raduege applies this distinction in her analysis, noting the ways each character's death adheres to and/or deviates from heroic and Christian ideals. Among the good deaths, Théoden symbolizes ideal pagan heroism, though Tolkien has smoothed "over the rough edges of Anglo-Saxon and Gothic motivations that inspired the character" by emphasizing the self-sacrificial nature of his death (12); Aragorn "follows the step-by-step process outlined by the *ars moriendi*" (28); and Boromir's death represents a moment where "the conventions of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse heroic ideals and the *ars moriendi* meet and merge" (27). The bad deaths have similar medieval parallels. The death of Denethor, for example, results from a form of *ofermod* – an Old English word that loosely translates as "excessive pride" and was closely associated with the fall of Satan in the Old English *Genesis B*.

In the second half of the book, chapter three analyzes gravesites, monuments, and songs as commemoration practices that "become part of the cultural identity of the peoples of Middle-earth, defining both individual cultures and the collective heritage of the free peoples" (51). Amendt-Raduege's analysis includes Orcs, Hobbits, Dwarves, Elves, and Men. Monuments such as Balin's tomb, Cerin Amroth, the district of the dead in Minas Tirith, and the burial mounds of Rohan bespeak each culture's attitude toward death and its connection with the past. Chapter four shifts focus and considers the three occurrences of the haunting dead: the Dead Marshes, the Oathbreakers, and the Barrow-downs. Each instance points to Tolkien's ability to blend "medieval folklore with modern experience" (83). The Dead Marshes has strong parallels with medieval stories of corpse candles, and the "real landscape of the Somme" during WWI (83); the Oathbreakers correspond with the medieval story of Hellequin's Hunt (92); and Frodo's experience in the Barrow-downs bears a close resemblance to stories of walking corpses, known as *draugar*, in the Icelandic sagas (98).

If the first four chapters primarily focus on the medieval influences underlying *The Lord of the Rings*, then chapter five reasserts the interplay between the theme of death and Tolkien's notion of "hope without guarantees," and the strong link between modern Western society and medieval Northern European culture. None of the characters espouse certain knowledge of life after death, yet all the good deaths demonstrate that a life well-lived affords hope beyond the grave. The uncertainty of death also establishes the foundation for the enduring relevance of Tolkien's work. Amendt-Raduege argues that "by showing death as both a positive and negative . . . Tolkien's text offers each of us the means to prepare for our own eventual ends" (110). Her emphasis on the practicality of Tolkien's theme leads her into a somewhat digressive discussion about how our contemporary Western society remains rooted in

medieval practices of dying while also developing new practices in response to modern science.

The strength of Amendt-Raduege's book lies in its series of interconnected close readings. She devotes a significant amount of attention to each character and culture of Middle-earth, parsing their differences and similarities. Additionally, the robust historical context, which draws on both medieval and twentieth-century history, enhances the significance of her conclusions. At times, her generalizations of medieval history and literature tend toward oversimplification. Anglo-Saxon literature and the *ars moriendi* occupied very different epochs during the Middle Ages, so it is difficult to gauge the accuracy of a sweeping claim such as, "In the Middle Ages, perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' death were heavily influenced by societal ideals of the heroic death as well as the traditions of the *ars moriendi*" (9). The conspicuousness of this kind of generalization stems from the fact that the book also contains impressive close readings of other medieval texts. Her analysis of the Old English poem "The Wife's Lament," for example, admirably engages with the nuance and ambiguity of the poem's themes – especially regarding life after death and the potential for ghostly hauntings – by highlighting some of the translation difficulties. *The Sweet and the Bitter* is an impressive achievement: focused, nuanced, and comprehensive, and it marks what I hope will continue to be a growing area of research in Tolkien studies.

Biography: Nicholas Dalbey recently graduated with a Master of Arts in English Literature from Middle Tennessee State University. His thesis work focused on medieval literature, specifically the classical and medieval philosophical context of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. He was the editor in chief for the 2017-2018 issue of *Scientia et Humanitas*, and he currently works as a high school English teacher in Middle Tennessee.

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Call for Papers: Fafnir 1/2019

Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research invites authors to submit papers for the upcoming edition 1/2019.

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The submissions must be original works written in English, Finnish, or Scandinavian languages. Manuscripts for research articles should be between 20,000 and 40,000 characters in length. The journal uses the most recent edition of the MLA Style Manual (MLA 8). The manuscripts for research articles will be peer-reviewed. Please note that as *Fafnir* is designed to be of interest to readers with varying backgrounds, essays and other texts should be as accessibly written as possible. Also, if English is not your first language, please have your article proofread by an English language editor. Please pay attention to our journal's submission guidelines available in: http://journal.finfar.org/for-authors/submission-guidelines/

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The deadline for article submissions is 15 February 2019, and for other submissions (essays, overviews) contact the editors. For book reviews, contact the reviews editor.
This edition is scheduled to be published in June 2019.

Best regards,

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Laura E. Goodin, and Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Editors;
Dennis Wilson Wise, Reviews Editor;
Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research.