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

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Editorial 1/2019

*Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Esko Suoranta, Laura E. Goodin, &
Dennis Wilson Wise*

Welcome to this abundant issue of *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*. We open with Adam Roberts's eloquent musings on the poetic and metaphoric nature of science fiction; his reflections provide a context for the articles that follow, all of which have, in some sense, to do with how works of speculative fiction create meaning within and beneath the words of the stories themselves.

This issue's articles begin with Christopher Bundrick's "'All we know is here we are': Gothic Aspects of Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles" and Kristin Bidoshi's "'The Mindworm': C. M. Kornbluth's Post-War American Vampire Tale at the Dawn of the Atomic Age"; both examine some of the ways these classic works from science fiction's Golden Age express the deeper anxieties of the Cold War era.

Petra Visnyei's "Japanese Apocalyptic Dystopia and the Role of Steampunk in Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle*" and Roger Andre Søraa's "Post-Gendered Bodies and Relational Gender in *Knights of Sidonia*" explore the use of aesthetics and assumptions about gender, respectively, to provide subtext and nuance to animated stories.

Matt Reingold's "Golems in the New World" looks at examples of the transplanting of the Golem myth into new eras and new locations, and its expression in graphic form, as a way of introducing new correlations with current-day social issues, including both anti-Semitism and racism. Similarly, Josué Morales Domínguez's "A Tale of Two Red Hooks: LaValle's Rewriting of Lovecraft's 'The Horror at Red Hook' in *The Ballad of Black Tom*" analyses LaValle's use of the plot and themes of Lovecraft's original story to critique its (and its author's) racism. Katariina Kärkelä's "Enlightening the Cave: Gollum's Cave as a Threshold between Worlds in J.R.R. Tolkien's 'Riddles in the Dark'" examines Tolkien's use of the cave, both metaphorically and literally, through the lens of Plato's Analogy of the Cave and Allegory of the Sun.

Michael Godhe uses a somewhat more personal approach in his reflection on the popular Norwegian children's novel *Jens krysser himmelrommet* (*Jens Crosses*

Space), published in 1954, as an atypically complex work that presents, under the guise of a simplistic space opera, subtle depths of genuine moral struggle.

Stefan Ekman's essay "Vitruvius, Critics, and the Architecture of Worlds: Extra-narratival Material and Critical World-Building" considers the power of elements such as artefacts of a fictional culture or the rule books for role-playing games, which do not in themselves convey narrative, to nevertheless impart richness to a story through implication, association, and resonance.

Next are reports from two conferences: the Legacies of Ursula LeGuin, which was held in Paris in June, and the 40th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, which was held in Orlando in March.

Finally, we present an eclectic collection of book reviews: Paul Williams's review of Audrey Isabel Taylor's *Patricia A. McKillip and the Art of Fantasy World-Building*; T.S. Miller's review of Dale Knickerbocker's *Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from Around the World*, Samantha Kirby's review of J.P. Telotte's *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination*, and *Fafnir* co-editor Laura E. Goodin's review of *Economic Science Fictions*, edited by William Davies.

While submissions to our next issue, which will focus on climate fiction, are now closed, we are very pleased to receive submissions for consideration for our next open issue; submission guidelines can be found at http://journal.finfar.org/for-authors/submission-guidelines/

As ever, we hope this issue intrigues and informs you, and inspires your own research journeys.

Live long and prosper!
Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Esko Suoranta, and Laura E. Goodin, Editors-in-chief
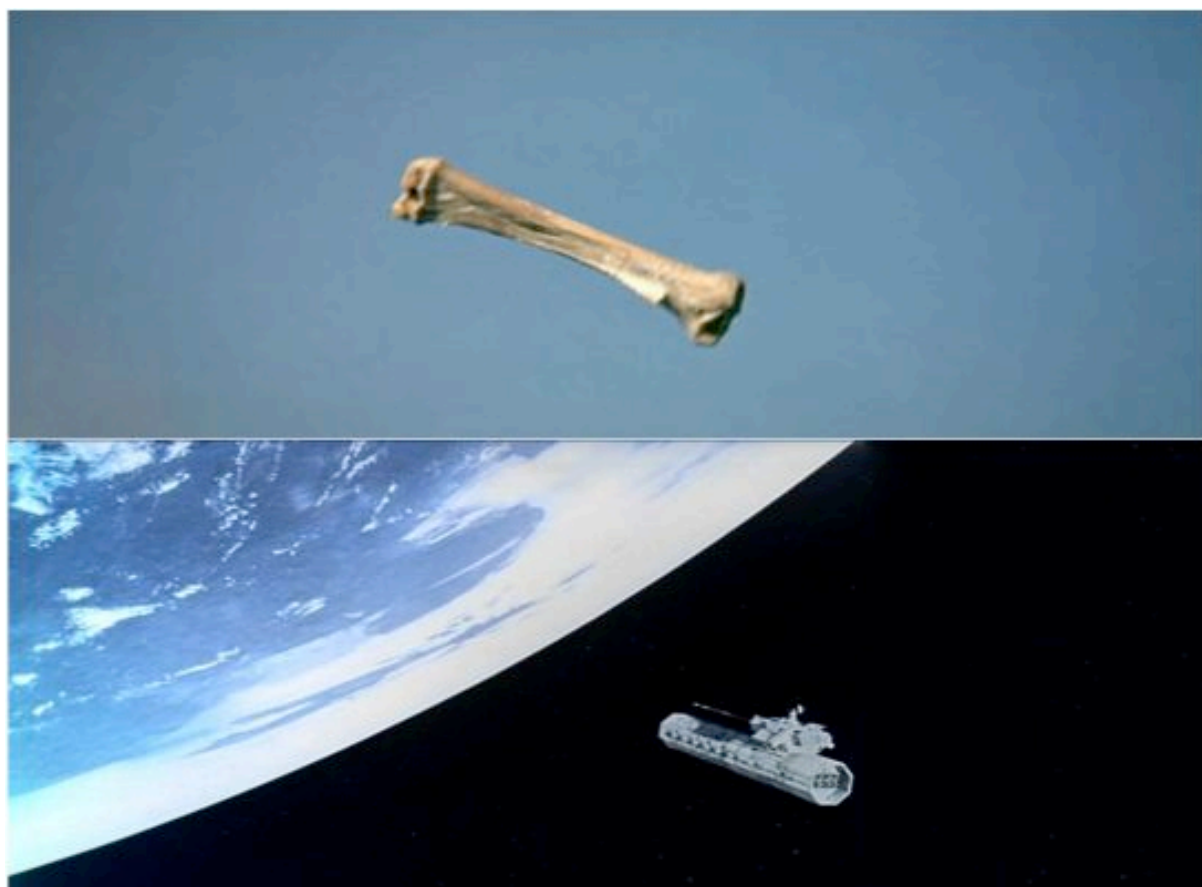Dennis Wise, Reviews Editor
Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

How I Define Science Fiction

Adam Roberts

On those occasions when people ask me to define science fiction, I generally say it's this:

It's probably the most famous jump-cut in cinema. You already know the context, so I don't need to spell it out in exhaustive detail: millions of years BCE a primate throws a bone into the sky. It flies upward. The camera pans with it, following it a little shakily into the blue sky. The bone reaches its apogee and, just as it starts to fall back down, Kubrick cuts to a shot of a spaceship in orbit, AD 2001.

Now, this seems to me an extremely beautiful and affecting thing, a moment both powerful and eloquent, even though I'm not sure I could lay out, in consecutive and rational prose, precisely why I find it so powerful or precisely what it loquates. It is, I suppose, saying something "about" technology, about the way humans use tools, about our habit of intrusively (indeed, violently) interacting with our environments, about the splendour but also the limitation of such tools, about the way even a spaceship is, at its core, a primitive sort of human prosthesis. But when you start explaining the cut in those terms you become conscious that you are losing something, missing some key aspect to what makes it work so well *in situ*. You are failing to grasp its imagistic potency.

The jump-cut works, in other words, not by a process of rational extrapolation, but rather *metaphorically*. I mean something particular when I say this, and I explain what I mean in detail below. But for now, and to be clear: I'm suggesting that this moment actualises the vertical "leap" from the known to the unexpected that is the structure of metaphor, rather than the horizontal connection from element to logically extrapolated element that is the structure of metonymy. Kubrick's cut is more like a poetic image than a scientific proposition; and there you have it, in a nutshell, my definition of science fiction. This genre I love is more like a poetic image than it is a scientific proposition.

The danger, here, is that people will assume that I'm saying something about the *content* of the genre. I'm not. I'm making a statement about the *form*, about the genre's discursive structure. So, for instance, Darko Suvin's common-sense definition of SF as determined by one or more *novums*, things that exist in the SF text but not in the real world (and therefore not in texts mimetic of that real world) is too often, I think, treated only on the level of the *content* of the text.[1] If a given novel or film contains a time machine or a faster-than-light spaceship or radically new concept of gender, then it is science fiction. I'm here neither to bury nor to praise Suvin, but what interests me about novums is the way the novum itself is so often a kind of reified or externalised embodiment of the *formal* logic of the metaphor, rather than just an, as it were, brute marker of difference as such.

Now: I concede that most fans and critics of SF are not likely to be persuaded by what I say here – my definition is *eccentric* in the strict sense of that term. Most people, I think, would argue that a science fiction text *extrapolates* (more or less rigorously and quasi-scientifically) from knowns in our world into possibles in its imagined world. This is, on its face, a perfectly sensible thing to argue, and has the advantage of distinguishing "science fiction", where the extrapolation needs to stay within broader guidelines of possibility, from "fantasy", where magic, surrealism, and suchlike impossibilities may enter in to the equation. If you're writing about a colony on Mars, then you need to stick more or less within the bounds of what we know about Mars, and space travel, and humans-living-in-close-proximity, and so on. Small deviations from probability may be permissible, depending on what they

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[1] See Suvin, Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1979).

are and how cleverly the writer handles them; but large deviations are liable to "bounce" the reader out of her reading experience. Coleridge's willing suspension of disbelief is harder to sustain (the argument goes) in a story where the protagonist is a captain in the Proxima-Centuraian Space Navy than one in which they work in a shoe-shop in Colchester, so writers need to tread carefully not to tip over their readers' delicately balanced sensibilities. I have to say: I don't think that's true, actually. But plenty of clever and knowledgeable people do, and of course I could be wrong.

This more conventional approach to SF tends to lead to prioritising things such as: consistency and scope of worldbuilding, plausibility, rationality, and the scientific accuracy of the way novums are extrapolated from present-day knowledge. But once we get in the habit of judging SF by these criteria, I suggest we are moving away from what makes SF so cool and wonderful in the first place. Put worldbuilding in the driving seat, as writer or reader, and Mike Harrison's clomping foot of nerdism comes stamping down on our human faces, forever.

Don't get me wrong: worldbuilding, the correlative of "extrapolation", certainly has its place in SF. Not in my *definition* of SF, though, and that's what concerns this brief essay. It seems to me that worldbuilding is ancillary to the crucial thing that makes SF (and fantasy for that matter) vital, crucial, and wonderful. I'm enough of a Tolkien fanboy to enjoy reading the appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*, but I'm not enough of a fool to believe that the appendices to *The Lord of the Rings* are the point of that novel.

Put it this way: worldbuilding is part of the *system* of a science fiction text; but the point of SF is not its system. The point is that it transports us – that it takes us somewhere new, that it brings us into contact with something wonderful, that it blindsides us, makes us gasp, unnerves or re-nerves us, makes us think of the world in a different way. I might differentiate a mediocre novum from a great one by saying that the former is embedded in a carefully worked-through and consistent web of worldbuilding, where the latter achieves escape velocity. It desystemises us.

Now, if I say the point of SF is *transport* and your first thought is of a well-integrated network of trains and buses, it may be you're more persuaded by that view of SF as coherent, rationally extrapolated worldbuilding. But if I say the point of SF is transport and you think *rapture*, well, conceivably you're closer to seeing the genre the way I do. Sometimes this transport is the full on mindblowing "sense of wonder", a phrase I tend to take as a modern-day version of the venerable aesthetic category of the sublime (to adapt Edmund Burke, we could say: mimetic fiction can be beautiful, but only SF can be sublime). Sometimes it is something smaller-scale, a *whoa!* or *cool!*, a tingling in the scalp or the gut when we encounter something wonderful, or radically new, or strangely beautiful, or beautifully dislocating: something closer to Wordsworth's "spots of time", maybe. It needs to be at least flavoured with Strange ("weird", old or new) to be properly SF. Great SF can never situate itself inside its readers' comfort zones, though commercially popular SF can and often does.

Fantasy has a related aesthetic uplift, which we might call "enchantment", which can manifest in several ways, but which absolutely needs to be there, somewhere, in amongst your welter of maps and family trees and invented languages and costumery and battles and elves and soap-opera-y comings and goings, if your fantasy novel is going properly to come alive.

I cannot, of course, deny that there is an ideological element to my definition (there's an ideological element to every definition, whether we acknowledge it or not). It cannot be denied that the genre I love exists over a particular political fault line. There are many right-wing SF fans, who, speaking socially, prize proper authority, tradition, following the rules, and a congeries of what are essentially military values, and who prefer SF that embodies all that. Which is fine; there's plenty of that kind of SF out there. For myself I have little time for the whole "the rules of physics prove my ideology is correct!" crowd: the *there's-no-such-thing-as-a-free-lunch* crew, the "the pilot in *The Cold Equations* was *right* to throw that girl into space!" cadre. But that's just me: there are many dedicated SF fans who find truth in some or all of those slogans. I can only speak for myself when I say I see SF as more fundamentally about the encounter with otherness, about hospitality to the alien, to the new and the strange and therefore to the marginal and the oppressed. This means it needs to embrace conventional and unconventional things, to be as much about gay as straight, trans as cis, colour as whiteness, and so on. In all this I see SF as an art of disclosure, not enclosure. That's my ideological bias, and I'm content to own it.

I'll say two more things about my definition of SF as a fundamentally metaphorical literature. The first is to stress I'm *not* saying that (for example) SF's novums are symbols that can be decoded. I don't think so at all – that, as it were, the rocket ships are all symbolic penises, Hydra is a straightforward translation of Hitler's Nazi party and so on. This strikes me as a reductive and foolish way of reading texts. To repeat myself: it is not the *content* of any specific metaphor that defines SF for me; it is *the structure of the metaphor as such.* Mine is a formal, not a content-driven, definition. In order to explain what I mean by that, I'm going to bring in a little theory. Bear with me.

My argument depends upon Roman Jakobson's celebrated distinction between *metaphor* and *metonomy*. Metaphor is that trope that refers something to something it is not, invoking an implicit rather than explicit similarity between the word or phrase used and the thing described (a related but different trope is that of the simile, where words such as *like* or *as* are deployed): Achilles is a lion, all the world's a stage, chaos is a ladder and so on. Metonymy, on the other hand, is the rhetorical device by which a part of something is used to refer to the whole of something: a parish of a thousand souls, a hundred head of horse, calling the monarch "the crown" and so on.

On a simple level, we recognise these rhetorical devices, and they take their place amongst the scores of other rhetorical devices that constitute our discourse. Jakobson, though, makes much more of them than this: although speech-acts and stories and novels only occasionally *contain* metaphors or metonomies, language as communication (he argues) is *structured* on a larger scale by the interplay between metaphor and metonomy. This is what he argues:[2]

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[2] I quote a summary from David Lodge's *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (1977; 2nd ed Bloomsbury 2015). Jakobson's ideas are spread through various of his (many) works, and are hard to represent by directly quoting him. The closest he comes to summary is probably his "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance" in *Fundamentals of Language* (1956).

The message construction is based on two simultaneous operations (the terms *metonomy* and *metaphor* are not used as figures of speech but rather as pervasive forces organizing language):

Combination (horizontal) – constructing syntactic links; contexture.

Relation through contiguity, juxtaposition.

METONYMY: implying time, cause and effect, a chain of successive events

Selection (vertical) – choosing among equivalent options.

Relation on basis of similarity, substitution, equivalence or contrast; synonym/antonym.

METAPHOR: implying space, a-temporal connection, simultaneity.

In poetry the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection (metaphor) is used as the major means of constructing a sequence (combination; metonym). This projection is the *defining characteristic of poetry*, and it expresses itself in rhyme, meter, symmetries, repetitions, motifs.
    The dominant mode in the poetic is therefore that of metaphor. Whereas in Prose the metonym prevails, the chain of events, the plot, successive actions, a sequence of occurrences. (The opposition is not an absolute one, but rather a mark of a tendency).

Jakobson developed his thought when he was working with children on the autism spectrum. What he discovered was that these kids tended to understand metonymy, but tended not to understand metaphor. So, as it were, you could show them a headline that says *the White House today issued a statement on immigration*, and they would understand that "the White House" was a metonym for the US Government. They wouldn't assume the actual building was talking, but would, on the contrary, grasp the connection between the US Government and the White House, since the head of the US Government lives in the White House. In this case there's a logical connection, a conceptual copula, between A and B. But Jakobson discovered that if you said to them *Achilles is a lion*, they were liable to reply: *no he's not, he's a man*; and that more abstract metaphors simply baffled them: *the only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream, chaos is a ladder* and so on – not that Jakobson quoted Wallace Stevens or *Game of Thrones* to his patients, but you take my point.
    I don't have hard data, and stand ready to be proved wrong by people who do, but I suspect that SF fandom contains a higher proportion of people on the autism spectrum than does society as a whole. To be clear: such a statement is not a judgement. I have several friends on the spectrum, and they're clever, sensitive, and wonderful people, precisely as worthwhile and valuable as people not on the spectrum. I make this observation to ask whether this might have something to do with why my way of defining SF is so marginal to how most of the fans and critics I know see the genre. Mine is an eccentric position, in the strict sense, and I know it: most fans who are happier with a metonymic model of the genre (extrapolation – which is to say, cause and effect, a chain of successive events – and worldbuilding: coherence, links, contexture). It may be they're right, of course. But that's not how I define science fiction.
    The structure of metaphor as such is the knight's move, my favourite manoeuvre in chess. It leads you in a certain metonymic direction, and indeed

sometimes leads you quite a long way down that consecutive path, in order to leap suddenly, not arbitrarily, but poetically, expressively, marvellously, in its unexpected direction. It's the way the carefully worldbuilt society of Asimov's "Nightfall" falls apart under stellar sublimity, or the way the intricate anthropological detail of Le Guin's *Left Hand of Darkness* is leavened by actual supernatural foretelling – a.k.a. magic – as a correlative to love, which is that novel's wondrous theme, wondrously handled. It's the way the scrupulously rational computational logic of Clarke's "Nine Billion Names of God" steps, in its last sentence, into amazing impossibilities. It can be the beautifully unexpected *out*going, as when Ellie Arroway enters the alien world-construct at the end of *Contact*, or it can be the beautifully unexpected homecoming, as at the end of Kij Johnson's wondrous "26 Monkeys, Also the Abyss". It doesn't need to happen at the end of a text: it might occur at the beginning (as when Timur's scouts ride through a wholly deserted Europe in Stan Robinson's *Years of Rice and Salt*), or anywhere in the text, actually. It is more affective than rational, more lyric than narrative (though the narrative is usually needful to generate its lyrical affect, I think). It is the hurled bone that turns, unexpectedly, impossibly, yet somehow *rightly*, into a spaceship.

I'll finish on a personal note. I write, as well as write about, science fiction, and have been doing it for long enough to know that the kind of science fiction I write does not find favour with the majority of SF fans. How I define "science fiction" may well have something to do with this: although it's just as likely that my relative lack of genre success is (Ockham's razor and so on) because what I do just isn't very good. But this structure I'm describing here as formally constitutive of science fiction is also formally constitutive of the joke, and jokes are very, possibly unhealthily, important to me. The structure of a joke is a knight's move: it leads you along a particular narrative trajectory only to finish with a conjurer's flourish of the unexpected. The joke can't be capped with a merely random or left-field unexpectedness, or it won't be funny: but the flourish at the end (the, to deploy a term invented by a giant of genre, "prestige") must work. Here's a joke:

> A man walks into a library, goes up to the counter and says brightly, "I'd like fish and chips, please!"
> And the woman behind the counter replies, "But ... but this is a library."
> The man's eyes go wide. "Oh, I'm sorry!" he says. He leans forward and whispers, "*I'd like fish and chips, please.*"

Here's another: my 11-year-old son's favourite joke, as it happens.

> There was once an inflatable boy. He lived in an inflatable house with his inflatable parents. He went to an inflatable school with all his inflatable friends. But one day he took a pin to school.
> The headmaster summoned the boy to his office. Shaking his head sorrowfully he said, "You've let me down, you've let the school down, but most of all you've let *yourself* down."

There is, in a small way, worldbuilding in both of these jokes; but it is not the worldbuilding that makes the jokes delightful. Delight comes from the sudden transport elicited by their twist.

To be clear: I am not saying that SF needs to be full of jokes. Indeed, on the contrary, successful comedy-SF is very rare indeed (*The Hitchhiker's Guide* is really the only undisputed classic in this narrow field). I am not talking content, I am talking *form*; and the point of this form is that the unexpected twist releases a quantum of *joy*.

That's why jokes are great, and that, although its content is very different, is why SF is great.

So when I call SF a metaphorical mode of art I mean it in that Jakobsonian sense: as a structural or formal constitution rather than anything content-level. And, in the unlikely situation that such a thing should be of interest to you, it provides the key to my own creative and intellectual exercises. Structuralism, metonymic and procrustean, interests me less than various poststructuralist freaks and shakes; irony (though it's currently rather out of fashion) interests me more than earnestness, play more than preachiness, epiphanies more than consistencies. I think our genre needs more Keatsian negative capability and fewer grids, hierarchies, and certainties. SF is in the "prestige", not in the setup and the performance, although both the setup and the performance are needful for the "prestige" to come off. SF should transport us, or what's the point of it? At any rate, that's how I define "science fiction".

Biography: Adam Roberts is Professor of Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is the author of twenty-two novels, all science-fiction or fantasy, as well as various academic examinations of the mode, not least if probably not most *The Palgrave History of Science Fiction* (2nd ed rev., Palgrave 2016). His literary biography of H. G. Wells is forthcoming.

"All we know is here we are": Gothic Aspects of Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*

Christopher Bundrick

Abstract: The article discusses implications of the way Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) blends elements of the gothic with more traditional Golden Age science-fiction traditions. I argue that Bradbury's use of the gothic highlights the fundamental conflicts between approaches to the genre that are, on the one hand, more formulaic, optimistic, extrapolatory, or fantasy-oriented SF, and, on the other, those that which addresses fundamental questions of the human experience. I conclude that his work's ability to meaningfully juxtapose elements of SF and the gothic allowed it to transcend simplistic genre conventions and become a meaningful addition to the body of important American literature.

Keywords: Science fiction, Gothic, Ray Bradbury, Mars

Introduction: Ray Bradbury's Gothic Science Fiction

It is a bit of a cliché to point out that although Ray Bradbury was prolific and his sales remain strong, more highbrow literary criticism tends to ignore him. The traditional explanation for this is that Bradbury's work contains something special that allows it to surpass the basic contours of science fiction, and that this complexity left publishers and critics a little confused about how to handle his work. "I don't exist," Bradbury told Jeffrey A. Frank in 1989, listing the more serious publications that had ignored him since his breakout success in the 1950s; "They don't know where my handle is, they don't know how to pick me up," he concluded (Frank). Maybe it's true that Bradbury deserved more critical attention from the *New York Review* or *Harper's*, but his positive review from Christopher Isherwood concludes with unambiguous praise, telling readers, "the sheer lift and power of a truly original imagination exhilarates you, almost in spite of yourself. So, I urge even the squeamish to try Mr. Bradbury. His is a

very great and unusual talent" (58). It's certain that Bradbury owns an important plank in the history of SF, and what makes him so essential to the genre, ironically, is the same thing that made it hard for establishment literary critics to find his handle – that is, the way his work integrates gothic elements that expand his fiction beyond formulaic Golden Age conventions and, in the process, extend his vision beyond the immature, extrapolatory pulp that defined much of the genre, which allows him to address much more fundamentally complex questions of the human experience.

Of course, readers widely acknowledge the link between Bradbury and the gothic. Critics have long understood books such as *Dark Carnival* (1947) or *Something Wicked this Way Comes* (1962) to be examples of American gothic with roots reaching back to Hawthorne and Poe.[1] Further, more than a few critics recognise gothic horror as Bradbury's chief mode. Robin Anne Reid, for instance, writes in *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion* that the "overall plot device of the everyday world being affected by a dark supernatural force is common in gothic novels and a favorite convention of Bradbury's" (83). Another important feature of the more general nature of gothic literatures, and one Bradbury's best work features, however, is that they express a basic fear that the subconscious will stop functioning as a repository of repressed knowledge and the horrors we've locked away will return to haunt us. Valdine Clemens argues that the gothic largely revolves around something "held at bay because it threatens the established order of things" (4). This concern takes on special significance in Golden Age SF, which largely organised itself around the optimistic faith that humanity could leave its worst aspects behind and travel to the stars unencumbered, as it were, by sin; what this essay ultimately purposes to illustrate is that focusing on Bradbury's use of gothic conventions in *The Martian Chronicles* can reveal the ways he interrogates that optimism in order to offer readers a more realistic and sophisticated sense of how exploring outer space might influence our sense of what J. G. Ballard has famously labeled "inner space" (2).[2] In particular, Bradbury seems to have been interested in the ways gothic might allow his work to probe the sometimes disturbingly disconnected relationship between objective and subjective senses of reality. Indeed, one of the key gothic features in American literature is that it allows a story to consciously examine the often subconscious struggle (and almost as often failure) to adequately reconcile the different ways people understand the universe and their place in it. All of the narratives that make up *The Martian Chronicles* contain gothic elements; however, this paper will primarily focus on those stories that use them specifically to caution against unwarranted confidence by showing that the boundary between subjective and objective understandings of the world(s) around us is a lot more fragile than most people usually like to admit.

"The Earth Men": Gothic Sensibility and the Problem of Objective Reality

"The Earth Men", the fourth chapter of *The Martian Chronicles*, in which the eponymous protagonists are mistaken for deranged Martians, shows this with special

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[1] For example, Burton Pollin makes an interesting case for the ways Poe influenced Bradbury, and Steven E. Kagle also connects Bradbury to the American Romantic period more generally.

[2] While Ballard's 1962 argument certainly receives more attention, J. B. Priestley appears to have first coined the phrase in his 1957 essay "They Come from Inner Space", published in *Thoughts in the Wilderness*.

clarity. It depicts what Geoffrey Whitehall describes – although he is writing about SF much more broadly – as "an epistemological and ontological crisis whereby contemporary events are exceeding the conventional categories of understanding" (169). For all the conventional categories of understanding things – genre, logic, or scientific positivism, for instance – Bradbury's approach to the human (and sometimes Martian) experience of his characters is to reveal the intrinsic contradictions that cause those so-called discrete categories to cross lines, overlap, and double back into each other. Facing this reality this forces characters, as well as readers, to consider the somewhat terrifying possibility that they can't simply filter their complex, sometimes irrational experiences through some supposedly proper epistemological framework and expect to reach a satisfying understanding.

When the Earth Men – a name they give themselves – arrive on Mars, they are struck by the natives' failure to recognise the extent of their accomplishment. In fact, the first Martian they encounter scolds them for getting dirt on her clean floor. "This," Captain Williams of New York City shouts, "is no time for trivialities … we should be celebrating" (32). The Martian housewife, however, remains unimpressed and sends the men of the second Mars expedition to see another Martian who, she says, might be interested.

They shuffle from house to house, until finally they meet a group of Martians who respond appropriately to their news. Upon announcing that they are from Earth:

> The rafters trembled with shouts and cries. The people, rushing forward, waved and shrieked happily, knocking down tables, swarming, rollicking, seizing the four Earth Men, lifting them swiftly to their shoulders …
>   The Earth Men were so stunned that they rode the toppling shoulders for a full minute before they began to laugh and shout at each other:
>   "Hey! This is more like it!"
>   "This is the life! Boy! Yay! Yow! Whoopee!" (39)

Their colonising discourse is finally affirmed and the captain, the narrator tells us, is almost moved to tears, but their enthusiasm is dampened considerably when one of the Martians announces, "It's good to see another man from Earth. I am from Earth also" (40). As it turns out, they are in an asylum for Martians who suffer under the delusion that they are Earth Men. All Martians are telepaths and some of the more susceptible Martians had lost the ability to distinguish their own realities from the realities they telepathically received from the spacemen of the first Earth expedition years before.

This failure to maintain strict boundaries between reality and imagination is one of the most fundamentally gothic qualities of Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*. Discussing the same aspect of Walpole's gothic mainstay *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), George Haggerty writes, "In turning from the objective world as represented in the works of contemporary novelists toward a vision of reality less obviously empirical, Walpole was participating in a shift of sensibilities" (380). The gothic, Haggerty submits, is primarily focused on the discomfiting "paradox between private fantasy and public fact" to the extent that "Gothic writers seemed caught between proving the reality of their fantasy and making that fantasy powerful" (381). Similarly, Bradbury's characters often find themselves brought short by their inability to confirm reality even to themselves. This, of course, is closely connected to Freud's idea of the uncanny, "which is terrifying," David Morris explains, "precisely because it cannot be accurately explained" (300). When Bradbury's work recognises this, it transcends the simpler

matters of terrestrial or alien geographies and attempts to chart the more complex landscapes of human perception and understanding. Doing so, Bradbury anticipates the somewhat provocative argument that J. G. Ballard will make a decade later in *New Worlds Science Fiction*, first lamenting that one outcome of the US/USSR space race was "likely to be an even closer identification, in the mind of the general public, of SF with the rocket ships and ray guns of Buck Rogers", and going on to contend that, unless "the medium drastically re-invigorates itself in the near future", the entire genre "will be relegated to the same anemic limbo occupied by other withering literary forms such as ghost and detective stories" (2–3). Ballard holds up *The Martian Chronicles* as an example of the proper course for SF in the 20th century, declaring that "Ray Bradbury can accept the current magazine conventions and transform even so hackneyed a subject as Mars into an enthralling private world" (3). While perhaps highlighting an overlap between Walpole's gothic and Ballard's futurism, either (or both) of these approaches emphasise the value of reading Bradbury's work with an eye toward the ways it exceeds the more prosaic conventions of SF by exploring the mysterious interiority to which the gothic gives it access.

Of course, it can still be tempting to read *The Martian Chronicles* as simple, romantic SF – practically propaganda for an early 20th-century brand of optimism and positivism that imagined that human technological progress was both limitless and always for the good. Bradbury's characters do go to Mars, after all. But a darker strain of doubt also threads its way its way through the book. The most obvious shadow cast by this technological abundance is, of course, the nearly constant threat of nuclear holocaust back on Earth. And, while the stories handle it with more grace than a simple morality play, the balance of technological marvels such as space travel against technological horrors like the atom bomb set the stage for a story arc that is still much more concerned with inner states than outer space. Along these lines, and also considering questions about innovations that don't traditionally fit into what many readers might think of as technology, William F. Touponce sees Bradbury's work as questioning perhaps even the basic fabric of 20th-century life, attempting to "use the tropes of fantastic fiction to get at the heart of the matter: the condition of being modern"; he even argues that Bradbury "devised stories in which the experience of the supernatural is linked in complex ways to the experience of society under capitalism [and to the ways] industrial (and later consumer capitalism) was undermining the very possibility of extended and integrated experience" (8, 9). Similarly, Kevin Hoskinson, alluding to McCarthy's Red Scare and Stalin's Iron Curtain, points out that, even as Bradbury was working on these stories, "events transformed the character of America from a supremely confident, Nazi-demolishing world power to a country with deep insecurities" (346). In short, in *The Martian Chronicles* Bradbury works to combine gothic and Golden Age SF sensibilities, which might seem to be irreconcilable opposites, because he understands that trying to fit these two world views together is one of the ways to wrestle with the similarly paradoxical experience of a 20th century in which technology and progress represent both the salvation and the destruction of humanity.

Approaching *Chronicles* in this fashion makes it clear that one of the private fantasies that the novel addresses most directly is the technological positivism that understood that scientific advancement was invariably for the good of humanity. Although the longing and nostalgia in parts of this book are equal to anything in the work of Sherwood Anderson, for instance, other parts seem to offer something more like Walt Disney's futurist vision of the space age. In a sense, Bradbury's story seems

to be providing two very different perspectives: one in which human technological progress allows humanity to embark on revolutionary and outward-looking journeys of discovery, and another that blinds us to an inward, more retrospective set of values that maintain traditional, community-oriented ideals and is suspicious of the rapid change that the rocket age threatens. *Chronicles* reveals the height of its power, however, when it seems to acknowledge that neither of these approaches is more likely than the other to lead to anything we might call the real truth. In *Return of the Repressed*, Valdine Clemens argues that gothic fiction "provides an antidote for the excessively cerebral" and, thus, the value of the gothic in a text, according to Clemens, is its ability to "stress the fragility of civilized constructs … and demonstrate that the world is much older and less anthropocentric than we would like to think" (4). Using this approach, allows for the argument that Bradbury's gothic SF is a response to hubris – that it attempts to put us back in our place when we become tempted to think that we have figured everything out.

Chronicles does this by undermining both knee-jerk optimism regarding the relationship between technology and human progress and confidence in older truths – in this case, the 19th-century technology of psychology. Bradbury deflates his explorers' confidence in their triumph by having the Martians see them as just another collection of delusional paranoids. But the narrative likewise serves Dr. Xxx, who runs the Martian lunatic ward, a bit of gothic comeuppance. Since Martians are telepathic, they can share each other's hallucinations, which one might imagine severely tests one's ability to distinguish truth from fantasy. Writing off every bit of proof that the Earth Men are what they say, the doctor remains steadfastly convinced that his new patients are simply sick Martians. When Captain Williams shows him the rocket ship they used to travel to Mars, the Doctor responds, "You have done a most complete job! The task of projecting your psychotic image life into the mind of another via telepathy and keeping the hallucinations from becoming sensually weaker is almost impossible … Your insanity is beautifully complete!" (44–45). Unfortunately for the Earth Men, there is no cure for this sort of illness on Mars, and thus the doctor produces a small pistol and kills them, saving them, he thinks, from further misery. When the ship remains, the doctor, who can't conceive the possibility that it's real, draws the only conclusion available to him, that he has been infected by this incurable madness, and so kills himself as well.

Like many of the great examples of gothic literature, Bradbury's story is a cautionary tale. It reminds readers of the things they don't know, and emphasises that humanity's arrogance can be as monstrous as anything lurking beyond the pale circle of light cast by its tiny fire. The lesson here is all the more clear for being told against the backdrop of a second and considerably more powerful generation of American nuclear weapons coming out of Operation Sandstone in the Pacific Proving Grounds; overconfidence in any one particular truth, Bradbury's story warns, is suicide.

"The Earth Men" uses the standard gothic device of emphasising the difficulty people often have (although rarely admit) distinguishing between objective and subjective realities. The world of the gothic is one without orderly, rational truths. Rather, it expresses reality in subjective and disorganised ways that thwart the essential epistemologies that underpin 20th-century social and technological positivism. The vignette builds around a frame of overturned expectations, which reveals the folly of all the characters' confidence in their understanding of the world around them. In its ability to force them all to confront a radically difficult perspective, one totally incompatible with the "facts" that serve as the foundation of their sense of

what reality is, "The Earth Men" reveals what is most essentially gothic in Bradbury's collection.

"The Third Expedition": Our Gothic Selves

The echoes of imperial discourse that reverberate throughout the stories that make up *The Martian Chronicles* add a crucial element to understanding the way the book operates within a gothic sensibility. On the surface, the text seems to emphasise the romance of a (space) age of discovery. The rockets are powerful and the explorers who ride in them brave and wholesome men – the best Earth has to offer. Launching the rocket to Mars is similarly evocative of adventure and romance. "The crowd at the Ohio field had shouted and waved their hands up into the sunlight," the narrator says at the beginning of "The Third Expedition"; the rocket "was a thing of beauty and strength" (49). Yet Bradbury's explorers don't discover strange landscapes or alien cultures so much as they find an increasingly familiar world. "We came sixty million miles," the third expedition's captain complains to an unimpressed Martian (49). What these bold explorers don't realise is that their journeys are more and more obviously inward. This is something that "The Third Expedition" emphasises in an especially interesting way. First published in *Planet Stories* as "Mars is Heaven!" in 1948, the sixth story in *The Martian Chronicles*, now called "The Third Expedition", is set in April 2000. After an arduous trip, during which the Earth rocket "moved in the midnight waves of space like a pale sea leviathan; it had passed the ancient moon and thrown itself onward into one nothingness after another", the men of the third expedition land on Mars (49). The narrator's description of the journey clearly suggests a 19th-century romantic conception of exploration: that brave travelers leave their familiar homes, trek through empty wilderness, and find a strange land on the other side. What the men of the third expedition find on Mars, however, is a quaint mid-20th-century American town.

Hinkston, one of the three crew who leave the ship to investigate, develops a wild theory that the town is made up of "people in the year 1905 who hated war and got together with scientists in secret and built a rocket" (54). As the situation unfolds, however, it seems to become even more improbable than Hinkston's fantasy. Knocking on the door of the closest house, the three scouts meet "a kind-faced lady … dressed in the sort of dress you might expect in the year 1909", who somewhat impatiently explains to the men that they are in the town of Green Bluff, Illinois – the captain's home town. (55). Unwilling to believe, Captain Black begins to take Hinkston's theory more seriously, imagining that had anti-war refugees landed on Mars, they might have, over the years, fallen prey to a mass hysteria that led them to believe they were still on Earth. Black's logical explanation, however, falls apart only a moment later when Lustig, the third member of the scouting party, rushes off toward what he recognises as his grandparents' house from back on Earth. The grandparents are home, of course, and invite all three men in for iced tea. Black's attempts to develop a logical approach to this Martian experience takes another blow when Lustig's grandmother declares that they have been on Mars since they died back on Earth. "All we know is here we are, alive again and no questions asked," she declares, strongly implying that logic isn't what the Captain needs – that the situation won't improve with explanation. Hinkston takes the bait, asking the obvious question, "Is this heaven?" (59). Abandoning material-rational theories and groping for a spiritual context with which to frame the

experience, Hinkston seems to be signaling his willingness to accept that his Martian experience is not one that he's going to understand through pure reason.

The captain, who earlier claimed to be "infinitely more suspicious" than the younger men in the expedition, doesn't seem quite ready to give up on reason (52). But his guard drops entirely when he sees his brother, who died in 1939. Overtaken by his desire to return to the simpler past when his family remained whole, the captain seems entirely to lose his sense of command. Introducing his brother to the others, he increasingly less rationally "appealed now to Lustig and Hinkston, holding the stranger's hand. 'This is my brother Edward … My brother!'" (60). When Edward tells him that their parents are alive on Mars, Captain Black feels "as if he had been hit by a mighty weapon" and, abandoning his command altogether, races home with his long-dead brother (61). The details here are especially significant. In exactly the same moment the captain discovers the truth and loses the power to see it – that the Martians (and the narrative itself, to some degree) are using the emotional uncertainty of nostalgia to derail the third expedition and its attempts to discover the real Mars. It would be easy to think of untangling the confusion between subjective and objective as the point of the third expedition's experience on the Red Planet, but the message is also perhaps more subtle than that. At what appears to be his dead parents' house, Black finds something of a Norman Rockwell fantasy in the making: "There was a big turkey dinner," the narrator begins, but then goes on in slightly different direction, finishing with, "and time flowing on" (62). It's this second bit of description that stands out, suggesting that central aspect of the idyllic pleasure of the scene is an impossible combination of time simultaneously stopping and flowing.

The echoes of age-of-discovery discourse that reverberate throughout the stories in *The Martian Chronicles* add another crucial element to understanding the way this novel makes use of the gothic. The second expedition reveals this when the captain's main concern upon arrival on Mars is that he receives proper recognition. The narrator's handling of the third expedition's journey similarly evokes a kind of adventure and romance, as the crowds watching "shouted and waved their hands up into the sunlight" as they watched the rocket, "a thing a beauty and strength", take off for Mars (49). The men of the third expedition, however, find not strange landscapes and alien cultures, but a strangely familiar scene. "We came sixty million miles," Captain Williams of the second expedition complains to the Martians, who don't seem to recognise the magnificence of his achievement; the men of the third expedition also find the romance of their adventure undercut. The uncanny, David Morris explains, "derives its terror not from something externally alien or unknown – on the contrary – from something strangely familiar that defeats our efforts to separate ourselves from it" (307). This kind of strange familiarity must be exactly what the men of the third expedition experience when they land on Mars only to find that it's just like home. As other scholars have pointed out, however, in "The Third Expedition", the uncanny experience is one that the humans and Martians share. The explorers from Earth – Captain Black in particular – can't shake the strangeness of encountering a perfect American town peopled with their dead friends and relatives, but the Martians, too, seem to feel a sort of strange dread at the events in the story. If Black's suspicions are correct and the Martians were only using the simulation of an Earth town to lull the explorers into dropping their defenses, the alien Martians maintain their disguise for a curiously long time.

The morning after murdering all 16 men of the third expedition, the Martians (still in human form) hold a mass funeral. Everyone forms a tearful line and the mayor "makes a sad speech", the narrator explains, observing that his face was "sometimes

looking like the mayor, sometimes looking like something else" (66). Similarly, the people in the crowd seem to be melting away, "their faces shifting like wax, shimmering as all things shimmer on a hot day" (66). Speaking to one of the more palpably gothic elements of this scene, Eric Rabkin argues that throughout the book, when a human expedition arrives on Mars, "science is left behind; the imagination wins", but this isn't an argument for reading *The Martian Chronicles* as only a simplistic comparison of dream and reality (98). Looking at the funeral at the end of "The Third Expedition" through Rabkin's lens shows that the Martians themselves are also caught up in the imaginary. They continue to simulate human beings long after there is a practical reason to do so, and even seem to feel genuine grief over the men's death. The performance of that feeling, however, is noticeably off key. "The brass band" that the narrator tells us is part of the funeral procession "marched and slammed back into town" (66).

The emotional flat note upon which the story ends suggests that, as much as the astronauts were taken in by the telepathic illusions, the Martians have perhaps also lost some part of their ability to distinguish their real selves from the fake identities they donned to defend themselves from human incursion. As "Ylla", the second story in the collection, seems to predict, the earthlings' desires – conscious, subconscious or otherwise – contaminate the Martian sense of reality to such an extent that the Martians can't hold on to their own identities. The men of the third expedition cross the vast emptiness of space to find something familiar, but impossible to understand. Likewise, their encounter with the expedition seems to have left the Martians of Green Bluff, Illinois no longer capable of fully mapping the borders of their own sense of identity and reality. Considering the gothic resonance on both sides of this encounter, the text complicates an already very complex subtext concerning the rebalancing of spiritual and material concerns and reminds the reader of the most fundamental aspect of gothic literature: that the repressed will return.

"There Will Come Soft Rain": The Gothic in the Machine

Critics like to discuss the homage to Poe in "Usher II", but "There Will Come Soft Rains", the penultimate story of *The Martian Chronicles*, is maybe the most profoundly gothic in the collection. Absent any live humans, the empty house becomes the main character, something the narrative emphasises with descriptions full of the language of affect – tempting the readers to empathize with the automata that are the house's sole occupants. There is a chorus of voices and a lively flourish of activity; the clock sings a jingle when it's time to get up, but is "afraid that nobody would" (200). Another voice in the living room announces the date and adds reminders about birthdays and bills. In the kitchen, the stove produces toast, eggs, and bacon with a "hissing sigh" and the weatherbox "sang quietly 'Rain, rain, go away'" (205). Readers will realise later the reason there are no people, but before getting to that it's worth pointing out that these devices are oddly conflicted; they sing, but are afraid; they hiss and sigh; they speak, but are also quiet. This ambivalence is the first clue that something has gone wrong.

When the story's attention moves outside, the problem reveals itself. The narrative gaze follows the house as it runs through its daily routines and when the sprinklers "whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness", there is a much less delightful scene in the background. The burned face

of the west wall is evenly blackened except for a gruesome mural of silhouettes: "a man mowing a lawn … a woman bent to pick a flower … a small boy, hands flung into the air … and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down" (206). This tableau of wholesome, suburban family life works to illustrate an American dream that Bradbury's nuclear war of 2005 brought to a horrifyingly sudden end. "The house stood alone in a city of rubble," the narrator goes on to explain, "At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles" and both the city and the house serve as monuments to similar strains of the high-tech hubris that led to the total destruction of the Earth (206).

Edward J. Gallagher reads "Soft Rains" sardonically as a "a fitting climax to the stories of humanity's technological achievement", suggesting that in its fevered rush to use state-of-the-art gadgets to solve every little problem of living, humanity ensured that it could not go on living at all (79). Ironically, while arguing against the legitimacy of gothic SF as a genre, Roger Luckhurst articulates a similar point. Science fiction, he argues, "projects the future by the rational extrapolation of the present", while the "Gothic has the present irrationally dominated by the resurgence of the past" (21).[3] While Luckhurst's two definitions are clear and sensible, it isn't out of the question, given that the present is also the past's future, that the wasteland earth has become in the present of "Soft Rains" is dominated by a past whose irrational technological optimism put the world on course for Armageddon. Gallagher and Luckhurst's arguments are certainly concerned with different aspects of SF, but their ideas converge at an interesting detail. Luckhurst's approach – while certainly focused on the way SF and the gothic diverge – also concentrates on the way SF forces readers through "strong special zones, weird topologies that produce anomalies, destroy category, and dissolve or reconstitute identity" (23). His aim is to demonstrate how SF can be a useful way to explore complex and deep interconnectivity that emphasises "not just a conjunction of spaces, but a temporal pile-up, where different times coexist or slice through each other", but his description has a certain parallel to the gothic as well (31). Although perhaps not entirely in line with Luckhurst's aims, one of the benefits of such a vision is that it allows the reader to abandon the misapprehension that science and rational cognition are always the superior framework for understanding the world. Gallagher's argument, on the other hand, is much more specifically focused on what he identifies as Bradbury's "hellfire and brimstone sermon" (82). The nuclear wasteland in the background is certainly cautionary, but the image of suburban domesticity burned into the exterior of the house is an even more important warning that a culture built around ever increasing technological mastery of the world will inexorably steer a course toward some sort of techno-apocalypse. The seeds of humanity's own destruction, Gallagher argues, are visible in the seemingly banal conveniences that turn the home into a utopian island separated from anything so awkward as community, or the natural rhythms of life. Both readings underscore the way *The Martian Chronicles* challenges the assumption that science and technology represent the best routes to domestic comfort, an idea that seems to be at the forefront of much of the more hackneyed pulp-era SF that preceded Bradbury's work.

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[3] Ursula K. LeGuin casts serious doubt on the notion of SF creating value for itself by projecting realistic visions of the future, writing that the methods such fiction use "resemble those of a scientist who feeds large doses of a purified and concentrated food additive to mice, in order to predict what may happen to people who eat it in small quantities for a long time. The outcome seems almost inevitably to be cancer. So does the outcome of extrapolation … Almost anything carried to its logical extreme becomes depressing, if not carcinogenic" (LeGuin xxiii).

The images of the family rendered on the wall seem to preserve the achievements of rational, technological, 21st-century progress, but they also thoroughly locate the family in the wasteland that the entire Earth has become, forcing readers to recognise that the idealised suburban arcadia and the radioactive ruins are aspects of the same reality. The horrors we try to repress in order to maintain our sense of stability and improvement, this scene seems to suggest, can't be buried or forgotten. The story keenly drives this point home when, later in the day, the automated systems begin to break down. When a tree falls through a window and shatters a bottle of solvent near the automatic stove, the whole house catches fire. Mechanised systems leap into action to save the house: "water pumps shot water from the ceiling," the narrator breathlessly relates; "scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain" (210). The next morning the house continues, as best it can, the ritual from the beginning of the story, but the fire has damaged the mechanism so that it's stuck repeating "Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is …" (211). Gallagher points out that this final image illustrates the way that the house is "destined to become further and further out of sync with nature … there can be no hope of life here. Mechanical time stands still while the external rhythms of nature move on" (80). Distinguishing between mechanical and natural time, Gallagher's argument suddenly lines up with Luckhurst's broader concerns about taxonomy and hybrid space. Although taking two very different positions, both critics seem to be arguing for an approach to writing like Bradbury's that emphasises not so much its allegiance to objective, scientific models, but something broader, with room for more complex and organic models that might allow for multiple, even conflicting, perspectives.

Although it might not seem extraordinarily important, the Sarah Teasdale poem that gives the story its title is an interesting allusion, reinforcing the idea that humanity must move forward with heart as well as brains, and also stressing the story's connection to a more explicitly gothic tradition. "There Will Come Soft Rains", which the house's system identifies as long-dead Mrs. McClellan's favorite, begins with images of birds and frogs and wild plums, but by the fourth couplet, which proclaims, "And not one will know of the war, not one/Will care at last when it is done", the poem's thematic emphasis clearly shifts (209).[4] But Teasdale's poem isn't a simple fantasy of natural peace. The definite article in the first half of the fourth couplet is the first hint that this world is not free from war at all, and the second half of the couplet takes advantage of its enjambment to transform innocent-seeming images of the first three stanzas into something else. Rather than a naïve fantasy of a world without war, the poem, in fact, imagines instead a world without human beings – a darker (although perhaps more realistic) vision that seems to argue that so long as humans inhabit the Earth there will be war. Returning to Bradbury's narrative, the silhouettes of Mrs. McClellan and her family burned into the wall by the nuclear blasts that have extinguished all human life on Earth seem to bear mute testimony to Teasdale's vision; however, in Bradbury's version no life at all remains. Rather than the poem's admittedly grim image of a natural world capable of repairing itself only after human violence has rid the world of them, Bradbury can only offer a sterile, radioactive heap, haunted by the broken-down remnants of the techno-consumerist human ways of life that made war inevitable in the first place. The world the McClellan family inhabited

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[4] A response to the American entry into WWI, Teasdale's poem was first published in *Harper's* in 1918, and then again in the collection *Flame and Shadow* in 1920.

was one that looked forward so vigorously that it couldn't hold on to those valuable aspects of the past that might have steered it in a better direction. For most of the book, Bradbury's Mars is equally haunted by the millennia-old ruins of Martian cities and by an imperialist urge to recreate Earth on top of them. If the McClellans and their ilk repressed their consciousness of the self-destructiveness implicit in racing toward a technologically superior future that can only improve if people continuously devalue the past, the human settlers on Mars are also repressing the way their stubborn attempt to force Mars into becoming a new Earth, rather than adopt a Martian way of life, only increases the danger of duplicating past blunders.

Although the book seems to end on something more like an optimistic note, even then Bradbury's gothic sensibilities stand out in the way "The Million Year Picnic" balances the haunting memory of a devastated Earth with a pioneer's optimistic vision of Mars. Part of a small contingent of refugees who launched personal rockets at the start of the war, the unnamed family's arrival on a now twice-emptied Mars signals a genuine attempt not to colonise the planet with external values, but actually start over altogether. A focus on the perspective of Timothy, the oldest child, allows the narrative to begin in memory. Although the family has already arrived on Mars, the narrator tells us that Timothy "remembered the night before they left Earth, the hustling and hurrying … the talk of vacation" (212). Although the nuclear war has already consigned the planet to memory, it belongs to a past that isn't quite yet in the past, and thus exerts an uncanny influence on the present. It could be that this is an effort to achieve the sort of detachment necessary to consider something as horrible as planetary-level destruction, but it seems more likely that this strategy highlights a past-in-present sensibility that many scholars have argued is a central aspect of gothic literature. In other words, opening the story with Timothy's memory of Earth suggests that even though Dad's plan is to bring family to Mars to "turn away from all that back on Earth and strike out on a new line", they inevitably bring a bit of Earth with them (221). Furthermore, that Timothy understood Dad's talk of picnics and fishing as cover for the truth, but "said nothing because of his younger brothers" (212), suggests a dizzying moment of meta-narrative in which Timothy understands that his father is creating a story that not only protects the younger children from the gothic truth they're trying to escape but, also, attempts to shape a vision of the future that corrects the errors that have made the past so menacing.

From the moment they arrive, the children clamour to see Martians, and Dad patiently replies, "You'll know them when you see them" (214). After the family settles into one of the cities abandoned by settlers who had returned to Earth to fight in the war, Dad begins burning great stacks of papers. "I'm burning a way of life," he explains, hinting at what might be the text's elusive but primary theme when he goes on, "Life on Earth never settled down to doing anything good. Science ran too far ahead of us too quickly" (220). This is a common theme in dystopian SF, and one Patrick Brantlinger connects to gothic romance. Invoking the famous Goya etching (while arguing with its conclusion), he argues that both genres rely on the notion that reason taken to its extremes "produces monsters", but points out that in gothic-tinged SF, modern technology becomes the monster and the "imagery of lunacy and nightmare becomes the imagery of the external world of machines and mass society" (31). Returning to the story, Dad makes it clear that he feels the same way, explaining that he blew up the family's rocket as part of an attempt to escape the old nightmare in which "people got lost in a mechanical wilderness, like children making over pretty things, gadgets, helicopters, rockets: emphasizing the wrong items, emphasizing

machines instead of how to run the machines" (220). Dad takes on the mantle of something like an Ahab figure – violently pursuing a course of action in the (perhaps vain) hope of righting the past. In this vein, Steven E. Kagle argues that Bradbury will assume his proper place in the American canon once readers recognize that his work is "closer to that of Herman Melville and other nineteenth-century writers of prose romance than it is to twentieth-century writers of science fiction" (Kagle 19). It's true that elements of "The Million-Year Picnic" do take on a prose style as well as an ideological approach very much like those in *Moby-Dick*, and much of that similarity comes from this use of gothic elements to consider the human conception of the world. An especially lyrical example of this is the passage that describes Mother sitting at the bow of the boat they use to navigate the Martian canals:[5]

> She kept looking ahead to see what was there, and, not being able to see it clearly enough, she looked backward toward her husband, and through his eyes, reflected then, she saw what was ahead; and since he added part of himself to this reflection, a determined firmness, her face relaxed and she accepted it and she turned back, knowing suddenly what to look for. (215)

The complex multiplication of reflections here points to an eerie sort of certainty and leaves it unclear whether Mother actually sees the true way forward or if she has become excessively influenced by the strength of Dad's vision of a future completely freed from history. Having burned the typescript of Earth's failed experiment, he simultaneously burns with hope for the new Mars. Dad, like an Old Testament prophet, dispenses with the old world and announces: "Now I'm going to show you the Martians" (220). They walk quietly to a nearby canal where Dad points to their reflections in the water. Going back briefly to Kagle's point, one can't help but think of Melville's Ishmael, who spends a significant portion of the "Loomings" chapter meditating on the special nature of water.[6] He concludes that people are drawn to it because of the way they see themselves in it, but he is also careful to make clear that what they see is "the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all" (Melville 5). Melville's and Bradbury's lesson here is as simple as it is essential: to escape the gothic crisis that plagued the human expeditions on Mars for a quarter century, Timothy's family would have to let the planet change them.

Conclusion: Bradbury's Gothic Future

Ultimately, the value of approaching *The Martian Chronicles* through a gothic lens is that such a reading reveals that while Bradbury organises the novel around the often simplistic conventions of genre fiction (Golden Age SF and gothic romance in this case), his complex layering of those conventions allows his fiction to transcend their

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[5] The idea that a network of canals crisscrossed the surface of Mars was introduced by Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli in 1878 and taken up by American Percival Lowell, who used his detailed map of Martian canal systems to support the argument – which he presented in *Scientific American* and *The Atlantic Monthly* – that Mars was inhabited by an advanced civilisation. This initial version of life on Mars shaped many of the fictional accounts of Martian life, including Edgar Rice Burroughs's influential Barsoom novels.

[6] As Kagle and others have pointed out, Bradbury's career encountered the white whale in even more explicit ways. He wrote the screenplay for John Huston's cinematic *Moby-Dick*, which came out in 1956, and wrote a radio-play adaption of the book called "Leviathan" in 1968. He also published, as Kagle puts it, "poems of some length about the creation of Moby-Dick" (19).

formulaic limitations. Furthermore, there's something uniquely compelling about the way Bradbury's invocation of a murky gothic undermines the innocent optimism of the SF – setting the story up to be in conflict with itself at the most profound levels.

It might not be too much to suggest that Bradbury is trying to point the way toward the kind of SF (and maybe the kind of readers of SF) that the second half of the 20th century would need. The families starting over on Mars in "The Million Year Picnic" must renegotiate their relationship with the past and truly forget the arrogant materialism and narcissistic imperialism that drove early explorers and steered the Earth onto such a disastrous course. The narrator's final observation that "the Martians stared up at them for a long, long silent time from the rippling water" drives home the essential point that the family can only hope to move forward if they embrace a more gothic perspective and acknowledge that the human capacity to control the world is strictly limited (222).

Precisely because of the way it profligately blends types, *The Martian Chronicles* not only asks readers to reject the naïve optimism of the post-war boom and instead approach the world through a more complex and flexible perspective, but it also begins to teach them how. However, understanding this position relies on the reader's willingness to recognise Bradbury's masterful use of the gothic throughout *The Martian Chronicles*. Like the characters in the novel, only by recognising the complexity of our relationship between past and present and accepting a more fluid, less certain sense of the future can we – Bradbury's 21st-century readers – hope to escape the fantasy of complete mastery that cultivates the seeds of our self-destruction.

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"The Mindworm":
C. M. Kornbluth's Post-War American Vampire Tale at the Dawn of the Atomic Age

Kristin Bidoshi

Abstract: Through a close reading of C. M. Kornbluth's "The Mindworm" (1950), this paper focuses on the socioeconomic and political anxieties of post-war America including: fears of uncontrolled technological development (nuclear weapons), pathologies of consumerism (material affluence), and the McCarthyite suppression of dissent (the second Red Scare and government surveillance) to reveal the author's significantly veiled anti-authoritarian message. Published during the height of revived anti-Communist hysteria, Kornbluth's story challenges the legitimacy of American values of the 1950s, including consumerism, patriotism and conformity. A reworking of the traditional science-fiction narrative where the enemy represents the fear of the Other (i.e. Communists), Kornbluth's story exposes the real threat to American democracy: the American government's suppression of its citizens' rights.

Keywords: science fiction, supernatural, post-war America

"The Mindworm" appeared in the first issue of the science-fiction magazine *Worlds Beyond* (Dec 1950), edited by Damon Knight. Knight is said to have suggested to C. M. Kornbluth the title and story, which would center on "a mental vampire" (Rich 151). Upon first read, "The Mindworm" appears to be typical of the pulp science fiction stories of the Golden Age: the characters seem to be almost indistinguishable and the plot is relatively simple – a mutant vampire protagonist stalks and kills his prey and is himself killed at the end.[1] Kornbluth's story, a beautifully crafted tribute to the author's conviction that science fiction can and should function as social criticism, is in fact a

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[1] This era was also noted for science-fictional vampires in films including *The Thing* (1951), *Not of this Earth* (1956), and *It* (1958).

critique of numerous aspects of post-war American culture. Through a close reading of Kornbluth's story, this paper focuses on the socioeconomic and political anxieties of this "Age of Anxiety", including fears of uncontrolled technological development, pathologies of consumerism, and the McCarthyite suppression of dissent, to reveal Kornbluth's significantly veiled anti-authoritarian message. In *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach famously declares that "every age embraces the vampire it needs" (145). Careful attention to Kornbluth's portrayal of the supernatural suggests to what end his vampire reflects anxieties of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In challenging the legitimacy of American values of the 1950s, including patriotism and conformity, Kornbluth reworks the traditional science fiction narrative where the enemy represents the fear of the Other (i.e. Communists) to reveal the real threat to American democracy: the American government's suppression of its citizens' rights.

Kornbluth (1923–1958), who was of Polish Jewish descent, joined the Futurian Science Literary Society (FSLS), a group of New York science-fiction fans and writers, when he was 15 (Rich 10).[2] He authored numerous short stories and several novels in collaboration with fellow Futurians including Frederik Pohl, Judith Merril, and Donald Wollheim. Most of the Futurians were interested in the political applications of science fiction. Kornbluth's biographer Mark Rich explains that they valued global awareness, activism, and democratic participation; he writes, "they were called Communists … since one or two of them attended Communist meetings in the same meeting hall, other evenings" (14). Wollheim, the founder of FSLS, was attracted to Communism and believed that science-fiction writers and fans "should actively work for the realization of the scientific world-state" (Carr 430). Some members took this call very literally – Merril, for example, supported Trotskyism, and Pohl was a member of the Communist Party. Other science-fiction authors of the 1950s who were especially skeptical, like Kornbluth, took a "debunking position on society's infatuation with technological development", usually, as Jonathan Lethem points out, "in light of some instinctively Marxist sense of how capitalism corrupts the reception of radical technology" (Luter 23).

Kornbluth's most popular works, including the short stories "The Little Black Bag" (1950) and "The Marching Morons" (1951), reprinted in *The Best Science Fiction Stories of C. M. Kornbluth*, portray the United States as a "cynically conformist, economically corrupt, militarily aggressive and politically authoritarian society" (Latham 134). The novel he penned with Pohl, *The Space Merchants* (1953), about two enormous advertising agencies and their domination of the future world, is "an effective satire of the anticommunist oppression of the McCarthy era in which the book was written" (Booker, *Monsters* 40). Kornbluth's *Not This August* (1955; UK title *Christmas Eve* [1956]) portrays a US that is invaded, divided, and enslaved by Sino-Soviet armies (Seed, "Constructing" 75). Isaac Asimov and others have asserted that "Kornbluth was a brilliant writer, and perhaps the most brilliant of them all" (qtd. in Rich 5).

Kornbluth's "The Mindworm" was published in 1950, during the height of revived anti-Communist hysteria that had gripped the United States after World War II. Very little critical attention has been paid to the story. In *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds and the Cold War*, M. Keith Booker calls for "a more sophisticated – and more political – reading of the science fiction of the 1950s than has generally been

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[2] Deborah, Kornbluth's mother, was born in Kalisz, Poland; his father, Samuel, was a second-generation American of Polish descent (Rich 16).

attempted" (Booker, *Monsters* 3). David Seed writes extensively on the Golden Age of science fiction, and specifically on Kornbluth, yet his manuscript *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, which includes a lengthy chapter on Kornbluth, makes no mention of the "The Mindworm" whatsoever. Rich's 451-page seminal study of Kornbluth's life and works devotes one brief sentence to the story (on page 158) and offers no critical analysis.

Kornbluth's sometime collaborator Pohl has himself declared that "there is no good science fiction at all that is not to some degree political" (7). Seed's article on Pohl and Kornbluth delineates how "the authors substantiate this conviction in their fiction dealing with the area where politics and economics intersect" (Seed, *American* 93). The central strategy of science fiction, as Darko Suvin has famously argued, is "cognitive estrangement". Derived from the Russian formalist concept of *ostrananie* (defamiliarization), the literary technique of "making strange", cognitive estrangement in science fiction can be effective as a method of political commentary. Booker explains that science fiction uses unusual settings (distant times and galaxies) to "provide fresh perspectives from which to view the author's (or reader's) own time and place" (Booker, *Dystopian* 27). Writing about science-fiction films of the long 1950s, which is generally considered to span the late-1940s beginnings of the Cold War to the assassination of John F. Kennedy (Booker, *Post-Utopian* 1), Susan Sontag comes to a similar conclusion: these films, she writes, "inculcate a strange apathy concerning the processes of radiation, contamination, and destruction .... The naïve level of the films neatly tempers the sense of otherness, of alien-ness, with the grossly familiar" (Sontag 225). Science-fiction writer and editor Barry Malzberg claims that during the 1950s science fiction was "among the very few mass markets where, sufficiently masked, an antiauthoritarian statement could be published" (34). That Kornbluth engages in implicit social criticism in his works can hardly be contested. In a letter to Pohl dated July 30 1953 Kornbluth writes of a critic:

> He doesn't seem to realize, as *Advertising Age*, or Tide, or whoever it was, did, that we are Consies pure and simple, out to bring down American Advertising even if we are crushed in the ruins of the temple. Any other theory – e.g., that we were writing a story for $10,000.00 and were interested mainly in giving editors and readers value for the dough – is preposterous. (qtd. in Rich 201)

In his January 11, 1957 lecture at the University of Chicago, Kornbluth declared that "science fiction ... should be an effective literature of social criticism" and that "science fiction ... does contain social criticism, explicit and implicit" (Kornbluth, "Failure" 55, 75). Kornbluth's recurrent concerns in his fiction are political and economic in nature; he writes about the deep conflict created by the existence of weapons of mass destruction and the crisis of American consumerism (see, for example, *Take Off*, *Not This August*, "The Doomsman", "The Words of Guru", "The Marching Morons", and "The Last Man Left in the Bar").

Kornbluth's "The Mindworm" reflects the anxieties of his day: fear of possible nuclear catastrophe, the second Red Scare, surveillance, and guilt at increasing material affluence. The direct fear was of nuclear Armageddon based on the knowledge of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In post-war America, anxiety about the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was rampant. In 1947 American President Harry S. Truman introduced the Truman doctrine to fight Communism, and defined post-war US policy by pledging support for any nation defending itself against communism (Fink 63). The spread of Communism abroad

only served to increase anxieties and frustration at home. Anxieties about collaboration with the enemy and the US government's surveillance of its own citizens, for example, reached new peaks of intensity in the US during this time. President Truman signed the National Security Act, establishing a National Security Council in 1947. Steve Budianksy's *Code Warriors: NSA's Codebreakers and the Secret Intelligence War Against the Soviet Union* examines the clandestine surveillance activities that the government was conducting during this time (including Project Shamrock, which operated uninterrupted for 30 years, from 1945 to 1975). In a 1948 article entitled "Loyalty among Government Employees" in the *Yale Law Journal*, Professors Thomas I. Emerson and David M. Helfeld conclude that "no precedent is to be found in foreign experience, outside the totalitarian states, for a comprehensive, continuous system of loyalty surveillance similar to that instituted by the Loyalty Order in the United States" (67).

The unique urgencies of the Cold War, and particularly fear of nuclear war, affected writers' perceptions of the changed status of science fiction. Isaac Asimov dated the shift precisely: "The dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 made science fiction respectable" (qtd. in Seed, *American* 8). In "Empire of Liberalism: Cultural War on the Social under Cold-War Liberalism and Neoliberalism" Miura Reiichi identifies a Cold War literature of freedom that emphasises individualism against the social; of the culture of the Cold War 1950s, he writes that it is "epitomized by the notorious McCarthyism, suppressive, or even ironically and virtually *totalitarian* with its recourse to the aggrandized threat of the Soviet Union and its totalitarian communism" (11). Kornbluth's story can certainly be classified as "literature of freedom", as in its criticism of the culture of the Cold War, it indirectly advocates for an apolitical regime, or a more "perfect liberalism" (Reiichi 44). Sarah Daw, in *Writing Nature in Cold War American Literature*, argues that many Cold War writers engage in a subversive reexamination of the human relationship to its environment that was occasioned by the dropping of the atomic bombs; these authors portray nature "as an infinite ecological structure that is capable of containing both the human and the nuclear within its expansive dimensions" (109). Her analysis highlights overlooked literary portrayals of Nature as an "infinite ecology" and of nuclear science as "something other than a final conquest of Nature" (300).

My analysis is informed by theory from the field of nuclear criticism. Jacques Derrida famously claims that "nuclear war has no precedent. It has never occurred, itself; it is a non-event" (23). Science fiction, Grace Halden writes, seeks to "represent the future 'non-event' and craft a reality out of it" (5). In his examination of post-war fiction in *States of Suspense*, Daniel Cordle asserts that cultural anxiety about nuclear attack, along with the continued deferral of that attack, is the "signature mindset" of the Cold War period (1). Post-war fiction, he writes, is "nuclear anxiety literature", fiction that exists in "states of suspense" and expresses "the experience of living in extended anticipation" (2). Especially pertinent to my own analysis is Cordle's assertion that nuclear criticism can be understood as social criticism.[3]

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[3] For an insightful study on recent work in the field of nuclear criticism, see Kristin George Bagdanov's "Atomic AfroFuturism and Amiri Baraka's Compulsive Futures", in which the author discusses Atomic Afrofuturism as a "historically specific affirmation of black existence that was forged while facing nuclear apocalypse" (51). Bagdanov posits a new life for nuclear criticism that proceeds from Derrida's work to include Baraka's "anti-nuclear jazz musical" *Primitive World*; Bagdanov theorises a new grammatical category, the future compulsive tense, which she asserts allows Baraka to "rewrite the future at stake, rather than merely readjusting its already present structures" (52).

Kornbluth's Mindworm is a mutant conceived during the first test of the atom bomb at Bikini Atoll on July 1, 1946. A reinvention of the "supernatural vampire in science fiction terms", Kornbluth's vampire is a fantastic representation of the new alien: a direct result of biological and genetic engineering gone wrong (Meehan 51).[4] The story opens:

> The handsome j.g. and the pretty nurse held out against it as long as they reasonably could, but blue Pacific water, languid tropical nights, the low atoll dreaming on the horizon – and the complete absence of any other nice young people for company on the small, uncomfortable parts boat – did their work. On June 30th they watched through dark glasses as the dazzling thing burst over the fleet and the atoll …. Unfelt radiation sleeted through their loins. (347)

The Mindworm attacks by scanning minds, feeding on the extreme emotions of his victims and then killing them. As a psychic sponge, the Mindworm also threatens individual identity as he drinks in, feeds upon, and ultimately destroys one's most intimate hopes and desires. At first he is a figure of pity: both his father and mother abandoned him and he was forced to live with horrific foster parents as a child. However, after the Mindworm's first "attack", in which he uses his powers to avoid gang rape, he immediately becomes a predator. Of the first attack, Kornbluth writes:

> He could read the thoughts of the men quite clearly as they headed for him. Outrage, fear, and disgust blended in him and somehow turned inside-out and one of the men was dead on the dry ground, grasshoppers vaulting onto his flannel shirt, the others backing away, frightened now, not frightening. He wasn't hungry anymore; he felt quite comfortable and satisfied. (351)

Kornbluth's vampire, a product of the atomic bomb, scans the thoughts of the people around him, catching random inner monologues, ultimately using this information to stalk and kill his prey. The fragments of thought that the Mindworm feeds on become his means of introduction to his victims. The dialogue typically leads to an explosion of *uncontrolled* emotion (lust, grief, love) in the victim and ultimately the victim's death. The atomic energy that surges through the Mindworm is a metaphor of unlimited human technological capacity as it challenges humanity's capacity to control its force. The atomic bomb was, as Leonard Isaacs asserts, "humanity's *transcendent* creation" (66). At a 1949 Atomic Energy Committee meeting at which the hydrogen bomb was being considered, one member commented of the bomb's monstrous potential that "we built one Frankenstein" (Reid 172).[5] *Time* magazine, in its first coverage of the bomb, declared, "With the controlled splitting of the atom, humanity … was brought inescapably into a new age in which all thoughts and things were split – and far from controlled" ("The Bomb" 19). Loss of control was one fear, and fragmentation was another. The atomic bomb symbolised these two fears in one.

The Mindworm's first use of telepathic force, on the drifters he encounters, is accidental and almost forgivable. There is no question in the second attack, though,

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[4] In pop culture this was the great age of the superhero comics Superman, Captain Marvel, and the British character Marvelman, whose magic word was "*kimota!*" – atomic backwards (Roberts 324). In film, it was the age of science-generated monsters like the Thing, Godzilla, and the Giant Ants ("Them"), most of which were said to be a direct result of nuclear attack. For a comprehensive study of 1950s Cold War science-fiction films, see Cynthia Hendershot's *Paranoia, the Bomb, and 1950s Science Fiction Films* (1999).

[5] The quotation is preserved as written; a more accurate statement is "We built Frankenstein's monster".

that the Mindworm goads the elderly widowed glass-sculptor Sebastian Long into a heightened emotional state:

> Sebastian Long stared at him. "What the devil do you know about my Demeter Bowl?" ... As Long started for him, the stranger darted to the workbench and brought the crescent wrench down shatteringly on the bowl. Sebastian Long's heart was bursting with sorrow and rage; such a storm of emotions as he never had known thundered through him.
> Paralyzed, he saw the stranger smile with anticipation. The engraver's legs folded under him and he fell to the floor, drained and dead. (353)

As the Demeter Bowl is symbolically smashed, the reader comes to understand that Kornbluth's transcendent creation wields power even over Demeter, the goddess who presides over the natural sacred cycle of life and death.[6] Kornbluth's Mindworm preys exclusively on the vulnerable: he attacks the drifters, the elderly widower Long, the poor immigrant Dolly, and finally a community of marginalised Polish immigrants (including a prostitute). Kornbluth's narrative focuses on the home as the location of the Mindworm's attacks; the Mindworm breaks into Long's workshop, which is attached to his home; he picks Dolly up from the steps of her home; and he attacks the Polish girl just outside her home. Cordle identifies the home as a key motif of Cold War ideology; he writes, "nuclear anxiety was frequently expressed in images of threatened domesticity" (126). Cordle further asserts that "family breakdown and self-fragmentation are common tropes that symbolize the potential of nuclear weapons to destroy both the individual and society" (127). The Mindworm's third victim, the young, naive Delores, a Spanish-speaking immigrant from Central or South America, who prefers to go by the more Americanised "Dolly", is preoccupied with domesticity.

Dolly, who "practices sexy half-smiles like Lauren Bacall in the bathroom mirror" and can't wait to get out of her mother's home, is already at a ripe emotional crisis when the Mindworm comes upon her. Her final words, as she storms out of the house, are "'I don't know how many times I tell you not to call me that Spick name no more!'" (353). Dolly is eager to embrace what she believes to be the American dream:

> Then the miracle happened. Just like in the movies, a big convertible pulled up before her and its lounging driver said, opening the door: "You seem to be in a hurry. Could I drop you somewhere?" ... Dazed at the sudden realization of a hundred daydreams, she did not fail to give the driver a low-lidded, sexy smile ... He wasn't no Cary Grant, but he had all his hair ... kind of small, but so was she ... and jeez, the convertible had leopard-skin seat covers! (354)

The Mindworm uses Dolly's innermost thoughts and desires to craft himself into the man of her dreams: Mr. Michael Brent, convertible-driving, sweet-talking advertising man, who is looking for a wife with whom to "share his town house in the 50's, his country place in Westchester, his lodge in the Maine woods" (355). They drive down Long Island, lunch at Medford and find themselves at Montauk Point. As Dolly looks out over the "last bit of the continent before blue water and Europe", she answers the

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[6] Demeter is the Greek goddess of fertility and the harvest who presided over the sacred law and the cycle of life and death. Mary Kornbluth was a potter and ceramicist (Rich 145). In 1950 the Kornbluths moved from a Polish neighborhood to an upscale storefront apartment with a glass engraver for a neighbor, where Mary pursued ceramics (D. Knight 198). "The Mask of Demeter" by Kornbluth and Wollheim was published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (Jan 1953) without Kornbluth's consent (Rich 221).

Mindworm's question "Darling, will you marry me?" with an emphatic "Oh, yes!", and then dies (355). On one level, Dolly's story is a striking reminder that the threat of the bomb (the Mindworm) is real and final, but unseen. Moreover, the Mindworm's attack comes from nowhere; it is sudden and finite. Kornbluth's depiction of Dolly's death forges a direct connection between the Mindworm and the atomic bomb. Like the threat of nuclear war, there's an ominous intangibility to the Mindworm's deadly attack on Dolly; the effects of the attack are not directly experienced until it is too late.

Kornbluth devotes just two pages to Dolly's story: a subtle but profound depiction of the degradation of public life under the shadow of the bomb and a critique of post-war consumer capitalism. Specifically, Dolly's story focuses on the power of advertising to corrupt and to promote conformity. Kornbluth places subtle hints within the text that allude to this. Dolly is fascinated with American film stars: she dreams of becoming Lauren Bacall, notices that the Mindworm "smiles shyly, kind of like Jimmy Stewart", and thinks that although the Mindworm "wasn't no Cary Grant, he's still got all his hair" (355). Dolly's sole desire is to live the American dream she reads about in the magazines and sees on the big screen. Dolly is thrilled to learn that the Mindworm likes "dark girls" and thinks that "the stories in *True Story* really were true" (355). As a reader of *True Story*, Dolly would be familiar with the feature stories of girls who had married wrongly as well as the numerous shampoo, toothpaste, make-up items, and feminine-hygiene products advertised in its pages.[7] The Mindworm anticipates Dolly's deepest desires and fulfils her every wish:

> "Advertising!" Dolly wanted to kick herself for ever having doubted, for ever having thought in low, self-loathing moments that it wouldn't work out, that she'd marry a grocer or a mechanic and live forever after in a smelly tenement and grow old and sick and stooped. She felt vaguely in her happy daze that it might have been cuter, she might have accidentally pushed him into a pond or something, but this was cute enough. An advertising man, leopard-skin seat covers ... what more could a girl with a sexy smile and a nice little figure want? (354)

Dolly's story is an illustration not of conformity of the Soviet totalitarianism type, but rather of the perceived loss of American individualism at the hands of new mass standardisation. Kornbluth captures the essence of the corruption of American values as he draws attention to the all-consuming power of the media and advertising to shape Dolly's thoughts and nourish her obsession to conform by concealing her ethnic identity to "fit in". Just after having learned that the Mindworm's name is Michael Brent, for example, Dolly "wished she could tell him she was Jennifer Brown or one of those cute names they had nowadays" (354). Fiona Paton and Booker describe the general tendency of Cold War science fiction to focus on the fear of exclusion. The 1940s and 1950s, Booker claims, developed a reputation for homogenisation, "not only of material life, but of thought itself" which ultimately led to the fear of exclusion, a fear of not fitting in (10). In her critique of William S. Burroughs's controversial *Naked Lunch* (1959), Paton points out that "1950s America also appears compellingly Gothic: the monstrous rhetoric of anti-communism sets up a rigid opposition between American and un-American, and into the category 'un-American' fell not only political but also ethnic and sexual difference" (51). Dolly's obsession with domesticity and

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[7] *True Story*, the first of the confession magazine genre, depicts the heroine as "a battered victim of cruel forces beyond her control, which made a strong male leader upon whom she could depend for strength an attractive source of salvation" (Honey 213).

consumerism is especially telling as it alludes to the sense of meaninglessness that nuclear threat was casting over everyday life.

The Mindworm's ultimate undoing occurs as he moves from threating individuals to attacking a whole community. The wary predator is aware of drawing too much attention to himself, yet is ignorant of the historical precursors of his presence. The modern American society off which he feasts appears equally ignorant of this and is unable to recognise the nature of the vampire in its midst. Instinct tells him that he is safe in his pursuit of the young Polish virgin, but he is mistaken. His last two attacks, and his own demise, occur in a small West Virginia town. Kornbluth writes, "He got off at a West Virginia coal and iron town surrounded by ruined mountains and filled with the offscourings of Eastern Europe. Serbs, Albanians, Croats, Hungarians, Slovenes, Bulgarians, and all possible combinations and permutations thereof" (358).[8] The first victim is a jealous young Eastern European boy; the final death in this community is of a prostitute. Of these attacks, Kornbluth writes, "The Eastern Europeans of the town, he mistakenly thought, were like the tramps and bums he had known and fed on during his years on the road – stupid and safe, safe and stupid, quite the same thing" (359). It is significant that the community is comprised of Eastern Europeans; Kornbluth hits this home in the last line of the story:

> The sharpened stake was through his heart and the scythe blade through his throat before he could realize that he had not been the first of his kind; and that what clever people have not yet learned, some quite ordinary people have not yet entirely forgotten. (361)

The final word the Mindworm hears is *Wampyir*, the Polish literary term for the word vampire derived from the Russian term *upior*' (Perkowski 185); the Mindworm is unable to comprehend the danger he's in because he doesn't understand Polish.

Andrew Ross, among others, notes the tendency in 1950s discourse to connect social difference and disease: this is especially true in the genre of science fiction film, where the 'alien', an embodiment of "biological or genetic engineering gone wrong", also represents "a pan-social fear of the Other – communism, feminism and other egalitarianisms foreign to the American social body" (45). Kornbluth rejects the traditional discourse that the alien represents the fear of the Other (in this case, Communists) as he engages on a much deeper level with the socio-political fears of the day. There is an obvious parallel between the Mindworm, who looks like any normal American but who invades and controls the minds of innocent people in order to harm them, and the typical American post-war view of Communists. Seed points out in "Constructing America's Enemies: Invasions of the USA" that in the period after the Second World War, "the American identification of an enemy shifted to that of the Russians" (Seed, "Constructing" 74). Although it would be two months following the 1950 publication of "The Mindworm", in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia that Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed to have a list of 205 Communists working in the US State Department, the McCarthyite suppression of dissent was already a very real concern for Kornbluth and other science-fiction writers of that time (P. Knight 71).

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[8] The town that Kornbluth depicts here echoes the "fantastic old neighborhood of Polish immigrants" that his wife describes their having lived in in Chicago. In an interview Mary recalls, "When he wrote that story he was attending the University of Chicago. There was a housing shortage and we were stuck back at the stockyards in a fantastic old neighborhood. There were ancient Polish people there, whom he described in 'The Mindworm'" (Platt 63).

Kornbluth would engage with this threat just two years later in *The Space Merchants* (1952), his influential novel co-authored with Pohl. Booker believes it to be one of the most important novels of the 1950s to "counsel against Cold War hysteria" (Booker, "Science Fiction" 180).

"The Mindworm" is about a world under constant surveillance, a political nightmare of total control signified by an elaborate system of monitoring. Upon first glance, it would appear that Kornbluth's vampire anthropomorphises the fear of the Other in an area obsessed with conspiracy theories. This specific fear is that one may never quite know what is lurking in the minds of others. Kornbluth's Mindworm, though, is a different type of post-war enemy: he is a prime representation of US bravado as a product of a US military officer and medical nurse, born in the aftermath of the bombing at Bikini Atoll. As a mutant product of the Atomic Age who has telepathic abilities to scan others' minds, the Mindworm, in its constant mode of surveillance, exemplifies for Kornbluth the problems of scientific progress, as well as the very immediate concern of government control. The Mindworm's use of his telepathic abilities to eavesdrop on the orphanage attendants signals the beginning of this surveillance:

> The doctor told the boy: "Three pounds more this month isn't bad, but how about you pitch in and clean up your plate every day? Can't live on meat and water; those vegetables make you big and strong." The boy said: "What's 'neurasthenic' mean?" The doctor later said to the director: "It made my flesh creep ... and inside my head I was thinking 'we'd call him neurasthenic in the old days' and then out he popped with it. What should we do? Should we do anything?" (350)

With his ability to read minds, the Mindworm also represents the clandestine operations US secret services were conducting on their own people. Kornbluth emphasises this just after the Mindworm has killed Dolly, as he casts his "tentacles" through the city for his next victim:

> "die if she don't let me..." "six an' six is twelve an' carry one an' three is four..." "gobblegobble madre de dios pero soy gobblegobble." "O God I am most heartily sorry I have offended thee in..." "talk like a commie..." "... just a nip and fill it up with water and brush my teeth." "habt mein daughter Rosie such a fella goobblegobble." (355–56)

The Mindworm indiscriminately listens in on conversations that span multiple languages (English, Spanish, and German) and highlight a fear of communism. While Dolly's story centers on a culture obsessed with consumerism and a domestic ideal, this passage illustrates Kornbuth's ability to significantly alter the ideologically powerful trope that links deviancy with communism. In his story the enemy is not a Communist, but rather a purebred American.

Kornbluth calls upon the literary device of *ostrananie* in his reworking of Bram Stoker's traditional story of the sinister Eastern European vampire invading the West. In a subtle, but important, reversal of the nationality of the vampire and the hunters, the Mindworm (100% American) is ultimately killed not by enlightened Westerners with the aid of modern scientific progress, but by Casimir, an old Polish man, through traditional Eastern European folkloric methods – the vampire is staked through the

heart and his head is severed.[9] This curious turn of events is significant as it forces the reader to contemplate a new type of post-war hero. Seed observes of Cold War invasion narratives, "If the enemy is some kind of subhuman creature, that might carry an evolutionary consolation, but it also cues in an essential role for the specialist"; typically, protagonists of these narratives tend to be "*experts* in different fields" (83–84). They are members of elite intelligence agencies, scientists, doctors, detectives, physicists, etc. It is significant that Kornbluth's vampire is defeated by Casimir, a political outsider located in the margins of society. The Polish "Kazimierz" is derived from the words *kazit'* (to destroy) and *mir* (peace).[10] It is Kazimierz (the one who destroys peace, that is, the great warrior) who defeats the vampire, not with scientific prowess, but by calling upon his old-world beliefs to identify and then destroy the enemy who is hiding in plain sight.

"The Mindworm" challenges the validity of American values of the 1950s and offers ripe material for understanding the socioeconomic and political anxieties of the post-war era, including fears of uncontrolled technological development, pathologies of consumerism, and the McCarthyite suppression of dissent. Kornbluth's portrayal of the highly materialistic, compulsively patriotic American immigrant "Dolly", who fantasises about her American dream but will not live to experience it, is highly critical of traditional family values, capitalism, and consumerism (355). By reversing the ethnicities of the vampire and the hunters, Kornbluth's text calls to question the demonisation of the enemy (in this case, the Communists). The author reworks the traditional science-fiction narrative to redirect the reader's focus toward the real threat: the measures members of the US government were taking, in the name of democracy, to significantly curtail the rights of its own people. The story is more than a cautionary account of the dangers inherent in a particular scientific creation: it serves as a warning about the political and social structures that allow for such a creation and that threaten American democracy at its core.

Acknowledgements

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[9] Jan Perkowski's *Vampire of the Slavs* is the definitive source of essays and primary texts documenting Slavic vampire traditions. "Slavic Folk Culture" by Kazimierz Moszynski outlines Polish folk customs related to vampires. Moszynski writes, "The aspen or other type of stake was usually driven into the heart … drove a sharpened aspen state into the head" (183).

[10] See Różycka's *Księga imion polskich* for a detailed history of the origin of the name.

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Japanese Apocalyptic Dystopia and the Role of Steampunk in Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle*

Petra Visnyei

Abstract: Japanese film director, screenwriter, and animator Hayao Miyazaki created an intricate adaptation of Diana Wynne Jones's fantasy novel *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986). Both the 2004 eponymous Japanese anime film and the novel seem to be set in the Edwardian era. The novel operates more as a fable, carrying traditional tropes of European folklore, while the film is closer to a dystopian alternate history. My paper examines how the adaptation, even though Japanese, manages to rework the story as a steampunk fantasy. The examination of the visual aspect of the anime illustrates how a Japanese adaptation of a British novel represents a steampunk story whilst bearing traces of the Japanese sense of apocalypse. The comparison of the source material and the film reveals a cross-cultural phenomenon: an engagement of typically Japanese animation components and an essentially British setting. This paper examines the film as an adaptation that operates with vastly differing plot elements: war and the exploitation of magical powers obtain much more important, sinister roles as subsidiary themes, especially in light of the fact that the Iraq war had started a year before the film's release. This study, focusing on the thematic and visual components, identifies how a Japanese adaptation of a British novel gives a translation of a steampunk story whilst conveying a critique of modern wars.

Keywords: steampunk, adaptation, cross-culture, anime, apocalyptic, war, Japanese, British

Japanese film director, screenwriter, and animator Hayao Miyazaki created a multi-layered adaptation of Diana Wynne Jones's novel *Howl's Moving Castle*, first published in 1986. Both the 2004 eponymous Japanese anime film and the British novel seem to be set in the Edwardian era, yet the latter operates more as a fable, carrying traditional tropes of European folklore, while the former is closer to a dystopian alternate history. I intend to examine the film as a steampunk adaptation which operates with vastly

differing plot elements: war and the exploitation of magical powers obtain much more important and sinister roles as subsidiary themes, especially in light of the fact that the Iraq War had started a year before the film's release and that the shadow of World War II and the atomic bombings still looms over Japan (Napier 250). In the film, magic is used for military purposes, with wizards constrained to follow the orders of the ruling power against their will: the introduction of war as a significant component thus emphasises the Japanese sense of the apocalyptic (249–50). The anime combines the technological advancement that characterised the Edwardian era (VanderMeer and Chambers 9) with the fantasy element of magic in a dystopian setting. This paper will also examine the visual aspects of the anime: the comparison of the source material and the film reveals a cross-cultural phenomenon, a joint product of typically Japanese animation components in an essentially British setting.

Howl's Moving Castle is a fantasy novel set in the world of Ingary, "where such things as seven-league boots and cloaks of invisibility really exist" (Jones 7). It focuses on young Sophie Hatter, who, because she is the eldest of three sisters, believes herself to be bound to fail and lacks self-esteem. The traditional fairy-tale plot of each sibling seeking their fortune is introduced, only to be altered as Sophie's two sisters, Lettie and Martha, decide to switch their assigned places as a witch's apprentice and a bakery-shop assistant, which makes Sophie even more disgruntled. After learning of her sisters' doings and going back to the family hat shop to which her stepmother has assigned her to work, she is visited by the Witch of the Waste, who casts a spell on her that turns her into an old woman; it is this change that finally compels her to go on a quest to seek her fortune. Along her journey, she becomes a resident of the wizard Howl's moving castle, where she makes a bargain with Calcifer, the fire demon tied to the fireplace: should Sophie break the spell that binds the demon to the castle, the demon would in turn help break the spell upon the girl. Sophie eventually regains her youth, frees Howl and Calcifer, and achieves a happy ending at Howl's side.

My study will not simply engage with perspectives of fidelity criticism, as recent scholarship, including Brian McFarlane's seminal volume *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* and the work of scholars such as Linda Hutcheon and Susan Hayward regard fidelity as an issue that has "bedevilled" the discourse of adaptation, partly due to the established view of literature's "greater respectability in traditional critical circles". Fidelity criticism depends on a concept of the text as one bearing and ensuring a single and correct "meaning" to the "(intelligent) reader" which the adaptation either adheres to or violates or tampers with in some way (McFarlane 8). Timothy Corrigan, in an overview of definitions of adaptation, concludes that more-recent definitions offer a useful perspective: adaptation is "an act of reception in which the reading or viewing of that work is adapted as a specific form of enjoyment and understanding" (23). I will regard adaptation as a process of (re)interpretation, as I am primarily concerned with Miyazaki's individual reading of the source text. While it is possible for novel and film to share the same story, "the same 'raw materials'", the two remain distinguished by devices including distinct plot strategies that "alter sequence, highlight different emphases, which – in a word – defamiliarize the story" (McFarlane 23). For instance, novels rely on a completely verbal sign system whilst films involve, often simultaneously, various visual, aural, and verbal signifiers (26). Visual signifiers will be my focus here, as it constitutes the main representation of the anime's steampunk aesthetic, and contribute to the introduction of war as a thematic element that aids Miyazaki's adaptation in translating Jones's novel into a steampunk dystopia.

Susan Hayward argues in *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* that a literary adaptation can be referred to as a product that creates a new story, and, together with the characters, takes on a new life: these notions are certainly applicable to the Miyazaki film. Even though based on the original, both the narrative and characters become independent of the source text, as "film characterization creates a whole new mythology existing outside of the original text" (4). The adaptation, although a "synergy between the desire for sameness and reproduction", functions as an "acknowledgement of difference" as well: to an extent, adaptations are based on "elision and deliberate lack" and at the same time privileging "certain narrative elements or strategies over others", even to the point of excess (6). Moreover, Diane Lake states that the screenwriter's task is to reach inside the core of the source material and find a new way to unwrap the story with cinematographic devices, precisely because there is no possible way in which a film adaptation could simulate the exact same sentience as the book (408). Miyazaki's 2004 adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle*, produced by the Japanese production company Studio Ghibli, while in large part true to the book, also diverges from the original story in significant ways. Several subplots and characters are altered or omitted entirely, and Miyazaki introduces the "subplot of a brutal war between two kingdoms", making Howl an "antiwar martyr after destroying warships" (Lenburg 93). The director's decision can be linked to the fact that, as opposed to Western studios, Japanese anime studios do not simply use children's tales as source material but lean on "well-known dramatic, mythical or literary antecedents" with serious undertones, and even on "realms of tragedy and epic" (Cavallaro, *Anime* 10). In adapting children's fiction, Japanese studios show a general tendency to include more mature themes and infuse the reimagined story with worlds of complex subtexts (10). One reason behind these alterations has been shown to be the looming 2003 Iraq War, which, as noted by Dani Cavallaro in *Hayao Miyazaki's World Picture,* undeniably influenced the film's thematics. Cavallaro also claims that Miyazaki, who voiced his concerns about the involvement of the United States in the ongoing Iraq War, in fact was aiming to alienate the American audience to an extent by making a film that would not be well received in the United States (61).

As Susan J. Napier asserts, the theme of apocalypse has a particular emphasis in Japanese animation; its fascination with the topic is one of its most striking features (249). Even as some animes, such as another Miyazaki work, *Princess Mononoke*, allow for the possibility of "potential betterment alongside their vision of collapse", destruction and loss remain the focus of numerous others. Whether the works are destructive or hopeful, Japanese audiences actively respond to such animes. Napier goes on to suggest that the apocalyptic, often intertwined with the elegiac or even the festival, is not only "a major part of anime but is also deeply ingrained within the contemporary Japanese national identity" (249–50). The reasoning behind this assertion is that times of social change and widespread uncertainty have a tendency to increase apocalyptic imagery and themes (250). Today, Japan still stands as the only country to have suffered the destruction and consequent devastation of atomic bombings. Even though the bomb itself does not always have specific delineation, it haunts postwar Japanese culture "in a variety of displaced versions, from the immediate postwar hit *Godzilla* (1953) and its many descendants" (253). The shadow of the atomic bomb continues to burden even present-day Japan, together with the recession that closed off a period of excessive economic prosperity (250). This shadow looms over Miyazaki's Howl as well, since he is forced to take part in a war, using his magic to fight in a metamorphic form reminiscent of Kamikaze pilots during World War II, while being at risk of losing his human side forever. Thus, Howl's character also embodies what Napier calls an "apocalyptic identity

… easily understood, perhaps even embraced" (250) by the Japanese, represented through the medium of the visual in the anime.

The connection between real-world actions and the fictional apocalypse depicted through the typically Japanese mediums of anime and manga is amorphous; however, as Napier writes, these two mediums are the most influenced by images of apocalypse, and a great number of the most popular genres of anime, including science fiction, fantasy, and horror, can even be said to abound with apocalyptic visions (251). The multifaceted nature of animation as a medium – that is, "its emphasis on image, speed, and fluctuation" – makes it well suited for depicting such visions. By this, Napier does not intend to suggest that apocalyptic animes consist solely of spectacle. She points out that, corresponding to the basic ideology of apocalypse, most works include such elements to formulate an explicit criticism "of the society undergoing apocalypse and an explicit or implicit warning as to why this society should be encountering such a fate" (254). Apocalypse can almost always be linked to human transgression, such as the misuse of technology, and is also frequently tied to the destruction of traditional social values (254), with which *Howl's Moving Castle* (Miyazaki) resonates by formulating a critique of war, the misuse of magic, and the authoritarian exploitation of people.

To create a representation that demonstrates both the world as depicted by Diana Wynne Jones and the Japanese apocalyptic, Studio Ghibli used steampunk and military tropes and settings embedded in a world based on neo-Victorian visual elements (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Steam-powered cars in Sophie's hometown, apparently set in late 19th- or early 20th-century England. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (03:32).

Steampunk, as defined by Barry Brummett in his introduction to *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, resituates aesthetic elements of the Age of Steam and the Victorian epoch to create an aesthetic that would have occurred if steam and electricity had not been overthrown by internal combustion as the primary sources of power (ix). The visual style that Miyazaki adopts originates from the fantasy and science-fiction works of the Victorian period, which were recycled in 20th- and 21st-

century neo-Victorian science-fiction and fantasy novels (Figure 2), also regarded as alternative histories (Beard xvii).
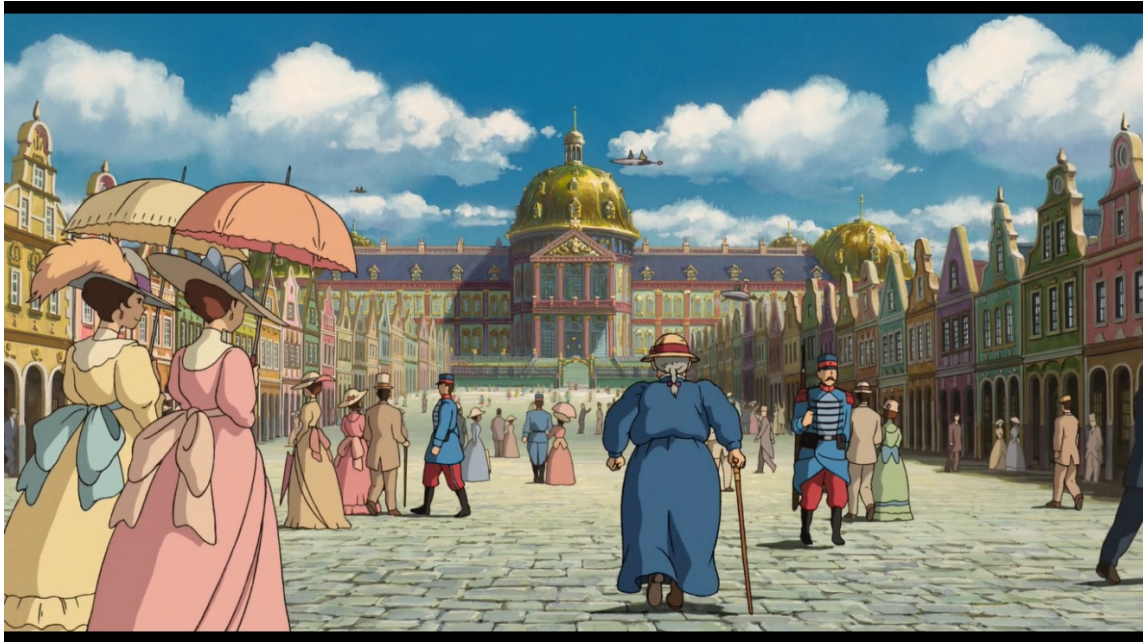

Figure 2. Sophie heading to the royal palace in Kingsbury, which depicts a neo-Victorian setting: men wearing suits and top hats, women wearing corseted dresses and hats adorned with bows and feathers. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (53:15).

The visual representation of the characters is based in steampunk aesthetics, with corsets, top hats, vests being among the most visible elements. Steampunk imagery is dominated by the aesthetic of "the tinkerer, the explorer, the pioneer, the Edwardian, and the Victorian" (Stimpson 20). The Victorian gentleman is depicted with idealised characteristics: he is a powerful man no longer due to the status deriving from his aristocratic origins, but to his own "pursuit of moral and intellectual excellence" (Hall and Gunn 6), and is a subject of public visibility (7). Another significant aesthetic category is the exotic, which is evoked by the look of "the adventurer, the explorer, world traveler, and colonizer" (Stimpson 32).

Howl's figure in the novel is that of the magician-tinkerer who is obsessed with his looks: he frequently wears a blue-and-silver suit, and uses his beauty to steal girls' hearts, only to lose interest in each one in turn. His character is complex: he is a self-regulated magician and an adventurer. Howl's attractiveness draws the public's attention and makes him the subject of gossip, but, at the same time, he seeks to avoid visibility and thus alienates himself from the public. He works under two different names (Jenkins and Pendragon), and he often disappears to faraway lands for days. He possesses some of the idealised features of the steampunk gentleman but also shows some flaws, such as vanity and temper; for example, he is capable of throwing a childish tantrum over his allegedly lost beauty after his blonde hair turns pink as a result of Sophie's tampering with his cosmetic potions. The castle itself can be seen as a retreat, granting safety and freedom: it has a door with four destinations, of which only one is the actual door opening onto the castle's immediate surroundings; the other three function as portals to other places (the worlds of Wizard Pendragon and Wizard Jenkins and Wales, Howl's homeland). In the film, the portal to Wales is replaced by one that leads to a battlefield where the war between the two kingdoms is played out. Miyazaki's Howl fulfills the criteria of the autonomous steampunk hero to

a certain extent; nevertheless, as author Diana Wynne Jones herself notes in a personal interview, the anime characters are "gentler" and "more noble" than the ones in her books (Jones, qtd. in Greenwillow). The alterations might have been issued to make the audience recognise Howl and Sophie as more positive, antiwar characters. Even though the director decides to alter the characters, Howl is in fact Miyazaki's "first consciously beautiful male hero", who has Miyazaki's "first full-on screen kiss", and is also the first Miyazaki hero to "turn into a conventional father figure by the end of the movie" (Clements and McCarthy 289). The Japanese studio made the character aesthetically pleasing as well as the father figure of his family, which partly resonates with the characteristics of the steampunk hero and the Victorian idealisation of the patriarchal family. Filtered through the aesthetics of steampunk, Howl carries typical male sensibilities of the Victorian age, enveloped in an auratic presence that radiates idealised qualities such as eternal optimism (Hall and Gunn 7).

Howl's Moving Castle, like other Miyazaki works, amalgamates different traditions in unexpected ways, thus creating a mythology of its own that uses distinctively Japanese approaches towards animation and incorporates the director's personal messages, as Cavallaro points out (*Hayao* 10). Subsequently, an established director like Miyazaki can be regarded as an auteur who leaves his signature style on original works and adaptations as well, as several critics, including Margaret Talbot in "The Auteur of Anime", argue. As machines and technology are major components of the steampunk aesthetic (Stimpson 29), the director was granted the chance to use his attraction to 19th-century techno-visionaries as inspiration, and encouraged his team to lean on them as the film's visual and cultural sources (Cavallaro, *Hayao* 145), resulting in intricate designs such as steam-powered cars, trolleys, trains, and tanks. Howl's castle itself is a cross-cultural product: it has steampunk attributes and is powered with steam provided by Calcifer (Figure 3), who in the anime actually resembles a "kami" more than the fearful "demon" of the novel. In the Japanese Shintō religion, kamis are spirits, some of which are "kindly and helpful, while others are mischievous or selfish" (Cavallaro, *Hayao* 73–74).

Figure 3. The moving castle; Miyazaki's depiction relies heavily on steampunk machine aesthetics, including the emission of steam and smoke. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (36:13).

The subplot of war gives an opportunity to include, alongside what Napier defines as the Japanese sense of the apocalyptic, the imagery of steampunk airships and weaponry the film is saturated with images of battleships and weapons made of steel and other kinds of metal, together with elaborately designed aircrafts. The director's love of flight is also expressed in the forms of various aircrafts and in sequences centered on Howl in his metamorphic form ("Hayao" 146) as a creature resembling a swallow.

In Miyazaki's films, inspired by classical Japanese aesthetics, even everyday activities such as cooking are shown artistic care on a par with high art (Cavallaro, *Hayao* 43). Such care is applied to the visuals of *Howl's Moving Castle*, also incorporating anime's tendency to adopt painterly effects and elaborately detailed backgrounds along: with "a meticulous approach to product design" that ensures that settings are consistently saturated with accessories to make them convincing (Cavallaro, *Anime* 24).

Figure 4. Howl's room, showing the attention to detail typical of Japanese anime. The setting evokes pictures of Victorian interiors crowded with accessories, together with "exotic" steampunk aesthetics. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (50:54).

Figure 5. Breakfast prepared on Calcifer. Much attention is paid to the animation: the slice of bacon that started cooking earlier is already half done, and the egg that was put into the pan a little later still has some of the transparency of rawness. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (30:02).

Both the book and the anime are concerned with children's struggles with lack of self-belief, set in "magical, mystifying and highly mutable otherworlds" (Bradshaw). However, as I have already asserted, Miyazaki's anime deviates from Jones's work in numerous ways. One difference is the handling of evil: in the book, it is centered on the Witch of the Waste as an incorrigible evil, who wants to get hold of Howl's heart, whilst in the film, evil is lifted from her character and spread out onto others (Bradshaw), such as Madam Suliman and the wizards working for her, as a more complex abstraction. Coupled with a critical attitude towards war, the film expands the moral dimensions of the story novel by making Howl an embodiment of the apocalyptic, adding to the complexity of the character. This is also present in the different levels of interpretation of the question of Howl's heart, which beats inside Calcifer due to a pact they have undertaken: Howl's heart keeps Calcifer alive, and Calcifer places magic powers at Howl's disposal. Consequently, their lives are connected and dependent on each other; however, Jones and Miyazaki present the dangers of borrowed power in different ways. In the novel, Howl cannot fall in love and leaves girls heartbroken after pursuing them, and is at risk of having his heart consumed by magic for having been bound to the fire demon; however, in the adaptation, Howl's use of magic to destroy Suliman's army to prevent a tyrant from gaining more power comes with the risk of his entrapment in swallow form forever. The exploitation of magic is addressed through and tied to war: wizards fighting under the king's command have turned into metamorphic creatures, and Howl himself struggles with this danger (Figure 6). After his return from battle, he finds it harder and harder to turn back – the transformation into a human literally pains him.

Figure 6. Howl in his metamorphic form, flying amidst burning battleships, smoke, and debris.
Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (40:37).

The fact that the metamorphic transformation of a wizard can potentially become irreversible legitimates the question whether this changed form is the consequence of the wizard's innate beastly features or the result of the unnaturally extensive use of magic. Cavallaro contends that the motivation behind the transformation lies in Miyazaki's belief that humans are primarily animals (*Hayao* 22); thus, it can be reasoned that there is a latent animalistic side to humans that overpowers both the body and the mind as the overuse of magic takes away too much of the person's overall self-control. Both the exploitation of magic and the cruel reality of bloodshed function as catalysts that trigger the fateful decline of humanity. Consequently, the fall of the wizards formulates a critique of real-world wars: as Howl says, "they won't recall they were ever human" (Miyazaki, *Howl's Moving Castle* 42:26). Howl's body and mind get invaded by war, and he is forced to commit to possibly irreversible changes; thus he bears within himself the sense of the apocalyptic, represented by his swallow form (Figure 6).

Appearance plays a significant part in the anime, since several characters go through noticeable changes throughout the story. For instance, as the Witch of the Waste is depraved of her magical powers, she turns from a menacing woman into an adorable, somewhat feeble old lady. Howl himself is first introduced wearing a rather grandiose outfit (Figure 7). As the plot progresses and romance strengthens between Howl and Sophie, he acquires a more natural appearance (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Howl in his first outfit: a shirt adorned with frills and a suit that makes his figure appear bigger than he actually is. His hair is also dyed blonde. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (32:23).

Figure 8. Howl, wearing a simpler shirt and no suit, thus appearing as a frail boy. His hair is also back to its natural black color. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (01:22:37).

Howl's increasingly natural appearance hints that he is gradually becoming more aligned with his true self: because of his growing attachment to Sophie, he can let go of the unnecessary facade. Even as he is practically turning into a monster as a consequence of using his magic in the war, his human form becomes truer because of the honest nature of his fondness for Sophie.

Sophie's form also changes constantly: immediately after the Witch's curse is cast on her, she looks like a very old woman (Figure 9). Although the effect seems to be irreversible, the film emphasises that her age alters according to her emotional state.

Figure 9. Sophie facing herself after her transformation, frightened by her reflection. Her posture is hunched and her affect is cranky. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (12:04).

When Sophie is more in touch with her true identity – that is, when she is expressing her most honest emotions – the curse seems to weaken and she grows younger (Figure 10). She also transforms back to her young self when asleep.

Figure 10. Sophie crying in the rain. She is considerably younger in this scene; her posture is straight and her face is much less wrinkly. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (47:48).
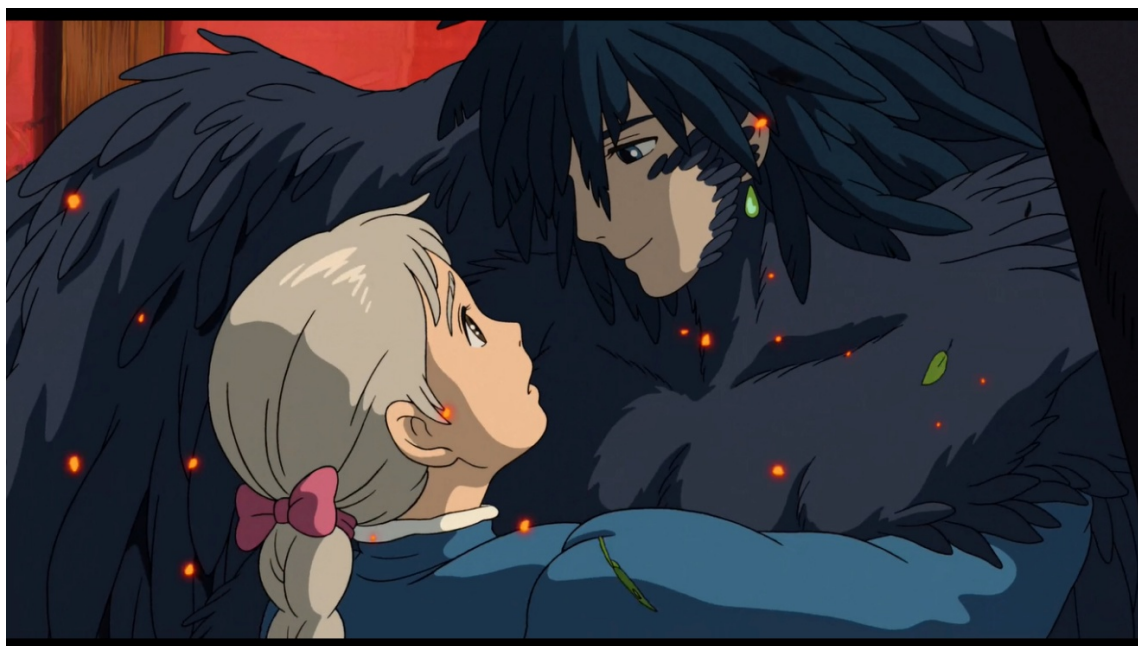
Figure 11. Young Sophie greeting Howl in his swallow form in the midst of battle. Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (01:32:40).

At the beginning of the story, Sophie's character is meek: she is a shy and timid girl, believing herself to be ugly. Her naturally brown hair in the anime might be chosen to make her character seem more average and to put greater emphasis on her starting position as a gray mouse. As her love for Howl progresses, she also acquires self-appreciation, which helps her turn back into her young self. As the conflict of war and Howl's metamorphosis culminate, Sophie turns permanently back to her real age, albeit her hair stays silver (Figure 11). In the novel, after the curse is lifted, Sophie's hair is back to its natural red gold color. The permanent silver color can be regarded as proof of her maturity and accentuation of her new uniqueness.

Miyazaki is an artist whose work repeatedly poses philosophical and political questions relevant to the present world (Cavallaro, *Hayao* 1), including, but not limited to, the politics of greed, which is conducive to global downfall; the growth of aggressive militarism; the distortion and simplification of history in mainstream history books; the erosion of children's innate capacities in the process of socialisation; and the damage to nature caused by humans' arrogant and selfish actions (6). As a result, to enunciate a critique of autocracy, Miyazaki adds the character of Madam Suliman to the story; more specifically, he merges two characters from the novel – Howl's former teacher and the king's head sorcerer – to create the king's head sorceress. In the novel, the main conflict lies between Howl and the Witch of the Waste, who wants to take revenge on him for crossing her in the past. The adaptation shifts the focus from a personal conflict with the witch to Madam Suliman and the war, which turns out to have started because of a prince gone missing from the neighboring kingdom – a character who has far less significance in the original story. Cavallaro identifies Madam Suliman as a manifestation of autocracy: the royal palace, as a locus of power, serves as a symbolic representation of the institutions where the élite professionals shield themselves from the world (*Hayao* 19). The wizards who overuse their powers on military duty lose their humanity and become metamorphic creatures, yet their condition is not regarded as a problem, because they follow the orders of the

king and Madam Suliman. However, both the Witch of the Waste and Howl have made a bargain with a demon: they practice magic that is not approved by the head sorceress, who thus condemns them for misusing their powers. The sorceress invites the Witch to the palace only to deprive her of her magic, rendering her powerless. The royal palace, providing a "vivid literalization of processes through which modern societies ... ensure their subjects' compliance" (19), is the locus of the dominant power, which rejects any divergence.

Figure 12. Howl and Sophie at the end of the film. Sophie's hair is shorter and not braided, and her dress has frills at the skirt. This illustrates that she is content with herself and her beauty.
Screenshot: *Howl's Moving Castle* (01:54:52).

To further accentuate the contrast between the two opposing sides, Miyazaki's adaptation opts to alter the closure of the story. The novel ends with a scene that includes Sophie's stepmother and two sisters, as well as Wizard Suliman, all talking together: the former detachment, driven by uncertainties and disagreements, completely dissolves as the characters engage in friendly conversation after Sophie manages to safely separate Calcifer from Howl's heart and defeats the Witch of the Waste and her demon. The film, however, ends with images of Howl's castle flying amongst clouds, carrying the newly established family comprising Howl, Sophie, Howl's child apprentice, the wicked Witch turned harmless grandmother, and a dog. In the anime, before the happy ending, even family members turn on one another: Madam Suliman forces Sophie's mother to deliver her a peeping bug and a cigar which, when smoked, turns out to be harmful for Calcifer, who runs the castle with his magic. Thus, war interferes even with family relations, further establishing Howl's castle as a place of withdrawal from aggression and corruption: it literally lifts its inhabitants to a higher level, establishing that Howl and Sophie transcend everyday life (Figure 12).

　　　Even though the anime has been criticised as hard to follow (Lenburg 95), director Miyazaki decided to stand by the film's ending (96). In fact, he stated that it is in this film "that his belief that life must go on at all costs is expressed most exhaustively, and in the most fulfilling fashion for him personally" (Cavallaro, *Hayao* 171), naming *Howl's Moving Castle* as his favorite amongst his works (171–72).

This study identified how a Japanese adaptation of a British novel presents a steampunk story whilst conveying a distinctively Japanese rendition. I investigated how the adaptation reworks the story as a steampunk fantasy that successfully draws attention to the highly relevant topic of the destruction and dehumanisation caused by war, drawing on the Japanese fascination with the apocalyptic. An in-depth examination of Howl's character concluded that he is an amalgamation of the steampunk hero and the Japanese apocalyptic identity. The typically Japanese elements and modes of adaptation and animation, intertwined with the use of steampunk features, function not solely as an illustration of the critique of present-day militarism, but also as an echo of both the post-war Japanese standpoint and the Victorian age, on which the steampunk genre builds in an often uncritical manner, disregarding the fact that it was an epoch of imperialism and aggressive expansion (Beard xxvii). Miyazaki's disapproval of the Iraq War results in a work that bears traces of what the steampunk genre tends to overlook, thus often idealising the Victorian era and betraying a lack of critical subjectivity, yet takes a critical standpoint by formulating a critique of war, underscored by the Japanese sense of the apocalyptic.

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Post-Gendered Bodies and Relational Gender in *Knights of Sidonia*

Roger Andre Søraa

Abstract: This paper analyses representations of non-binary bodies in the animated television series *Knights of Sidonia*. For some time, posthumanist and gender studies have used the gendered body of the future in television series and other media as a framework to reflect on contemporary human bodies. How are bodies imagined and experienced in this animated TV series, and how is our understanding formed by these representations? I argue that the bodies in *Knights of Sidonia* can be understood as "post-gendered", which I analyse in relation to understandings of future gender representations drawn from science fiction.

  The main case study is the character Izana who, in the first episode, proclaims an agender identity that is biologically sexed as neither male or female. Izana's biological gender is presented throughout the series as relational: it changes in response to the character they are in love with. A close viewing and analysis of the two seasons released so far shows that, although Izana is initially presented as a character with an alternative third gender, their transition to female reinforces a heteronormative view of sexuality, as their attraction to a male character, Nagate, pushes them to develop female genitalia. This biological sex change prompts Izana to also develop a female gender identity, which I conceptualise as "relational gender". Although it initially represents gender in a novel manner, the anime partly reinforces traditional gender norms.

Keywords: Post-gendered body; Cyborg anthropology; anime; relational gender; posthuman sexualities

The Gendered Bodies of *Sidonia*

How can representations of gendered bodies in science fiction contribute to a deeper understanding of how bodies are constructed and gendered? Posthumanist and gender

researchers, most notably Haraway ("Manifesto"), Braidotti, and Hayles, have long used the gendered body of the future in fiction as a conceptual framework to reflect on contemporary human bodies. Such reflections on representations of gender come vividly to life through popular culture, especially in science fiction. The topic of gender in science fiction has gained renewed research interest in works such as Melzer's *Alien Constructions,* Attebery's *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*, and Hellstrand's "Normative Body Identity in Science Fiction", which gives a techno-science discussion of readers' relation to alien ideas in science fiction.

Heinricy has described Japanese animated series (*anime*) as "a particularly rich medium for exploring cultural attitudes towards the posthuman" (4). This paper uses the anime *Knights of Sidonia* (originally *Shidonia no Kinshi* in Japanese and hereafter abbreviated "KOS") as a case study of these questions. The series is based on a Japanese comic-book series (*manga*) created by manga artist Tsutomu Nihei, which was published from 2009 to 2015. The first season of KOS was released on Netflix in 2014, with a second season released the following year.

The series is set in the year 3394. Approximately 500,000 humans have fled Earth in a spaceship called the *Sidonia* after the planet was attacked by a gory, shape-shifting alien race called the *Gauna*. Biological entities striking back at technologically advanced humans has been a recurring theme in anime, such as in the popular Studio Ghibli anime *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. In KOS, this dualism is depicted in a gendered fashion through "a masculine fantasy of rational society, of 'clean,' controlled technological reproduction versus a maternal, embodied, non-hierarchical sodality, an anti-culture" (Johnson 198). In her study of KOS, Ohsawa concludes that "all the characters are posthumans though they are living as human beings", which might prompt a reflection on the human versus the posthuman as concepts (192). Are all future humans posthumans, or is there a particular threshold of when something is posthuman, specifically in relation to human conceptions of sex and gender?

Hayles writes that "the posthuman is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). This could also be said for the characters in KOS. Aboard the *Sidonia*, the remnants of humanity are far from safe from their alien enemies, as the Gauna continuously pursue them through space. Living in such harsh conditions can spark extreme societies, as Williams shows in his analysis of communities on the moon in science-fiction works. In this paper, I will treat posthumanism as a concept more in line with transhumanism, connecting it to an understanding of drastic changes of human bodies in the future. However, there are multiple ways of reading and using posthumanism as a concept; for example, in a critical contemporary manner (Wolfe).

The series contains numerous examples of posthuman topics such as genetic engineering, cloning, digital immortality, and human photosynthesis, as well as some strikingly original post-gendered characters. One of these characters is Izana Shinatose. Izana's only known family is Yuke Shinatose, the Head Science General of the *Sidonia*. The series hints that Izana may potentially be a clone of Yuke based on the available technology and their similar appearances. Izana is introduced in the first episode as a "hermaphrodite third gender" with the ability to become male or female after selecting a mate.

Although Izana initially does not have a love interest, eventually, they fall in love with the main character and male protagonist of the series, Nagate Tanasake, leading them to become female. This "relational gender" development between Izana

and Nagate will be explored in the paper. However, as Izana has existed in this third-gender space up to this point, their transition to a female allows for an examination of both novel and traditional gender roles as imagined in this posthuman setting. This initial third-gender identity can thus be understood as independent of biological sex and traditional conceptions of gender identity and expression; the fan-maintained Sidonia wiki initially describes their gender as "non-binary" and later as "female" ("Izana Shinatose"). The character, by being androgynous, agender, and queer and having multiple trajectories for their own sexuality and even body features, begins to embody an exemplification of what a post-gender individual can be; moreover, within KOS, heterogeneous components are used as a framework to show how social constructs can be shaped through fictional challenges to (and, in some cases, maintenance of) heteronormativity.

This research is methodologically based on critical qualitative media studies. I engage in a close viewing on the series in question and analyse Izana's gendered body as it is presented and as its representation changes over the two seasons. I have elected to use the non-gendered pronoun "they" when referring to Izana. The awkwardness of such pronoun usages (at least among English speakers not used to interacting with non-binary individuals) showcases some of the challenges of the English language when writing about non-binary gender(s), whereas in Japanese this would not be strange, since Japanese relies less on gendered pronouns. All quotes are taken from the official English subtitles.

The manga book series *Knights of Sidonia* is ongoing, and the material for further anime episodes is thus available. Based on the popularity of the series, new seasons may be forthcoming. This paper analyses the anime series to date without directly addressing the manga. This is particularly due to the fact that anime has the extra dimensions of sound, movement, and color that make the gendered dimensions of the characters more explicit. Drawing androgynous characters is easier when there is no sound added; for example, Ohsawa shows how Tsumugi gains an uncanny aspect when voice is added in the anime (199). In the next section, I will explore what makes this character post-gendered, which I use to mean future gender representations working in synchronicity with existing gender terms to showcase multiple trajectories of what a post-gender individual can be, with components shaping social constructs of gender specifically, as distinct from the broader term "posthuman".

Posthuman Gendering of the Body in Anime

In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Donna Haraway, working in the context of socialist feminist subjectivity, shows how the posthuman body can be understood by using the concept of the *cyborg*, an amalgamation of a biological organism and technology. She suggests using the cyborg as an "imaginative resource" when discussing social and bodily reality (*Simians* 150). This imaginary resource has been expanded upon in fiction, where the merging of humans and machines is often portrayed as resulting in ethical conundrums (for example, the films *Ex Machina, Metropolis,* the *Matrix* series, and the *Terminator* series).

I have discussed this dichotomy between bodily sex and social gender in machines in "Mechanical Gender: How Do Humans Gender Robots?"; I show that humans tend to have more of a need to gender robots the more anthropomorphised they become. The cyborg concept has spawned its own research tradition of *Cyborg*

Anthropology, which discusses the intersections of humans and machines, and what might happen to human characteristics in a posthuman world.

Building on the cyborg concept, in the introduction of her book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*, Hayles discusses how gendered bodies relate to the erasure of embodiment – which she exemplifies this in the Turing Test, a well-known concept in science fiction – and the merging of machine and human (xi). Hayles's erasure of embodiment in the context of cybernetics and information science is perhaps more digitalised than the roboticised cyborg-organism of Haraway, although they both share a human-machine symbiosis.

This human-machine interaction is becoming increasingly prominent in contemporary society, which is heavily affected by science-fictional representations of technology. As a cultural phenomenon, Japanese robots and gendered representations have received increased research attention (Robertson; Søraa) and comprise one of the areas where cyborg posthumanism is consistently pushing boundaries in contemporary society. How the technology of the future is imagined can inspire current technological developers according to the theories of socio-technical imaginaries (Jasanoff and Kim), while at the same time affecting how gender and gendered technologies are imagined. Heinricy also argues that popular culture has an important impact on cultural attitudes towards technology (5). If technologies are portrayed in a positive light, society might be more willing to accept them, but if they are portrayed as dystopian, society might be more reluctant to domesticate them. An example is how human-robot affection is currently portrayed in contemporary films and series such as *Her* and *Westworld,* showing complex human-machine love relations. Romantic relations to and through technology have traditionally been contested (e.g. the public perception of internet dating, which was initially portrayed as quite disturbing, even transgressive).

Posthuman gendering is analogous to contemporary discussions of third-gender and intersex studies (Butler; Gough et al.; Turner). Some intersex activists advocate a post-gender position, proposing that intersex children do not have to binarily choose either male or female; they view intersex individuals as a vanguard of post-gendered rejection of the gender binary. In queer phenomenological studies, Ahmed observes how bodies orient themselves in the lived space. She finds that bodies that fail to orient, thus creating "queerness", which has a different denotation from post-gender in that it relates more closely to already existing gendered realities; this is, however, not a dichotomy, as bodies can be both post-human and queer at the same time.

Science fiction, on the other hand, is free to redevelop gender identities from scratch (although certain presupposed genre traditions may play a part in this creation). In her thesis *Changes in the Conceptualization of Body and Mind in Japanese Popular Culture, 1950–2015,* Yuki Ohsawa has thoroughly analysed different posthuman body representations in anime such as KOS. Although Ohsawa focuses primarily on the character Tsumugi, a human-Gauna hybrid and another love interest of Nagate, she does have some observations on Izana:

> Sidonia describes diverse sex and sexuality, in the queer sexuality between the non-sexed/ambi-sexed person, Izana, and Nagate. Illustrating characters such as these has a lot of potential to challenge normative conceptions of sex, gender, and sexuality (though I must point out that Izana's sexuality, while interesting, is nonetheless absolutely heterosexual, which to some extent limits the queerness of Izana's depiction). (193)

This absolute heterosexuality will be challenged in this paper, as I argue for a queering of Izana's apparent heterosexuality. Posthuman sexualities are perhaps not that closely tied to the body as contemporary human societies would have it, and this is where science fiction can provide interesting thought experiments. Japanese science-fiction anime provides a rich literature within which posthuman research has been conducted, such as in body representations in the famous anime *Ghost in the Shell* (Napier; Orbaugh), science-fiction cyborg bodies in anime of traditional Japanese puppet theatre *Bunraku* (Bolton), and the relation between space, body, and aliens (Mari and Nakamura). Japanese anime is accustomed to challenging contemporary gender norms, as can be seen through the *yaoi* and *yuri* tradition, where non-heterosexual couples are vividly described. Science fiction can also be an important outlet for experimentation with sexualities that might not be possible in contemporary societies where, for example, same-sex marriage may not be allowed.

Izana's Body

How do physical body representations affect a gendered understanding of a person? Izana is taller than the average female but shorter than the average male in the series (not counting human-alien hybrids). Izana has a slim build and a bob haircut. Upon meeting Nagate for the first time in the first episode, Izana recognises that their gender will be perplexing:

> You're wondering which one, right? Am I a boy or a girl? I'm neither. I guess you didn't know living underground, but there are genders besides male and female now. It doesn't matter who my partner is for conception. When I choose one, my body changes on its own. ("Commencement" season 1, episode 1, 15.13)

Izana does this in a quiet, calm and academic manner, as if explaining to a child how to use cutlery. The series's pilots and cadets wear gendered uniforms. Males are shown wearing long pants, short boots, and pockets on their thighs. Female uniforms feature longer boots and often skirts with a "breastplate armor" which genders the character as female. Izana does not wear either uniform, but rather a mix between the two, adding to the androgynous features of the character (Figure 1).
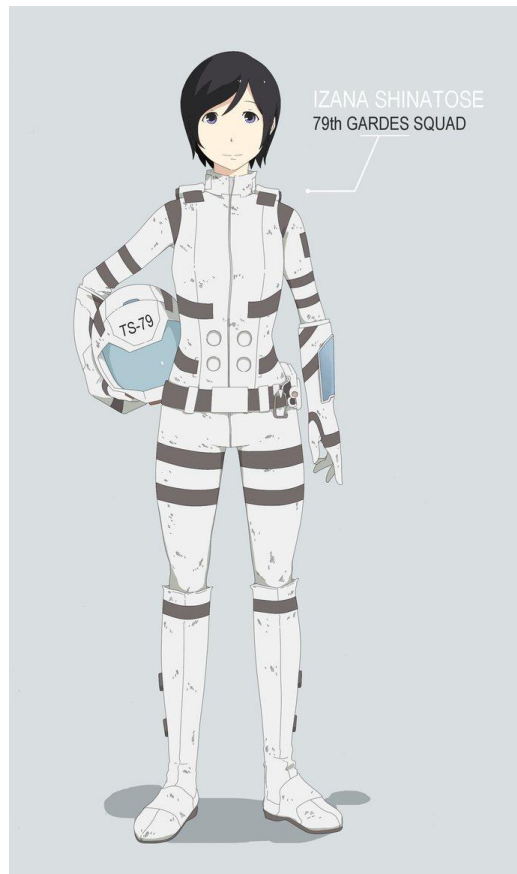
Figure 1. Illustration of Izana in their
uniform (Imam Subekti, used with
permission).
https://www.deviantart.com/cemungudh/a
rt/Izana-Shinatose-456761422

One defining characteristic of the world imagined by KOS is that humans lack the ability to become pregnant, instead using cloning to reproduce asexually. Thus, the series provides another example of the trend identified by Haraway ("Manifesto") in which future societies are conceived as being post-gendered, using technological means to accomplish what had previously required biological processes, such as reproduction. Haraway's post-gender discussion does not necessarily lead to the obliteration of gender (most of the characters in KOS are, after all, gendered in the conventional sense). However, it can result in the conception of a world where gender is not an essential force around which either society as a whole or individual lives are structured. In such an imagined world, Izana can transform from having a posthuman, gender-fluid body to a normatively embodied gender expression by means of a relational gender transition and bodily augmentation. This posthumanism, while comparable to Haraway's thinking, can also be employed when analysing different societal groups in addition to sexualities.

Another example of this imaginary in KOS is that military roles are not accompanied by the gendered stereotypes one might expect. Women are not imagined to be any less militarily capable than men; a fighter pilot is just as likely to be a woman as a man – although traditional female roles such as nurses are still portrayed as being carried out by female staff. Such a world where gender remains but in which it has a different significance allows space for characters such as Izana to explore novel gender arrangements. According to Ohsawa, Izana is an "ambi-sexed person":

> For example, if Izana takes the male Nagate as a partner, Izana will become a female. But, when Izana has a female partner, Izana's body becomes male. At the beginning of the story, Izana has both maleness and femaleness, masculinity and femininity. So, Izana's sex and gender are very ambiguous. (186)

This ambi-sexed concept has been explored in feminist science fiction, such as in Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, where a human is sent to explore a newly discovered planet called Gethen. The inhabitants on Gethen are ambisexual, with no fixed gender, resulting in a society that is not configured around gender. This poses a challenge for earthlings who, with their binary conception of gender, are so used to a gendered society that they are utterly perplexed by the Gethen society, while the Gethen view the humans as perverse. The Gethen society, however, does employ gender as an ordering characteristic during their mating season. This is a parallel to Izana's transition, which is tied to romance and the potential mating this might entail.

Hayles shows how a homophobic society can enforce its gender policies on its citizens, using the example of Alan Turing, who had to take hormone treatments to cure his "homosexual disease" (xi). In contrast, little is said in the series about how Izana's post-gendered body affects the other citizens of *Sidonia* (besides Izana's love interest, which is discussed in the next section). Even if its status as a non-issue can perhaps be tied to the more pressing issues of fighting gargantuan flesh-eating aliens, the lack of gender controversy in Sidonian society is noteworthy. Johnson describes KOS as strictly materialistic, "a rigorous thinking-through of life under the most biologically diminished conditions – call it a cyberpunk ecology" ("Manga" 113). This is similar to what Ohsawa finds when analysing the inseparability between body-mind relations, showing how the character cannot escape gender (193). It is worth noting the language that is used in the series. As Ohsawa notes, Izana uses the Japanese pronoun "*boku*", which partly expresses masculinity, whereas in the dubbed English version, Izana simply uses "I", which is gender-neutral (187). This shows how languages can signal gender quite differently. Another example is the English binary "girlfriend/boyfriend", whereas Japanese has the gender-neutral "*koibito*" ("lover").

In Season 1, Izana's body and sexuality are not featured much, as Nagate is busy with another love interest, Hoshijiro Shizuka, a human female. After Shizuka dies horribly in the season finale, Izana becomes one of Nagate's main love interests in Season 2. After Nagate is thrown out of his apartment, he stays overnight at Izana's place and eventually they move into a new, larger apartment together. It is through this period that Izana undergoes their "gender transition" from agender to female in terms of both biology and identity.

As Ahmed advocates in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Oothers*, "being oriented" is about feeling at home. Izana has in this example found a physical home with Nagate, but Izana's body has also "found a new home" by developing to female. As can be observed during their first meeting, Izana is quite calm with the fact that their gendered progress is quite deterministic: 1) Find a mate, and 2) Develop to male or female, according to the mate. However, the heteronormativity is not completely clear here. It is not stated whether or not Izana would have transitioned to male if, for example, they had fallen in love with a gay male (which by all means could have been a valid anime storyline, as LGBTQ+ romances are increasingly popular, see e.g. *Yuri!!! on ice, Uragiri wa boku no namae wo shitteiru,* and *Loveless*).

Izana's transition becomes especially apparent to viewers in "Rumbling" (season 2, episode 7), when Izana is faced with a suit that does not fit them anymore. Despite being given multiple warnings by the suit, Izana continues to wear it due to an important imminent mission against the Gauna. This results in their suit practically bursting at its seams while floating behind Nagate through a shaft on their way to their combat stations (causing the shocked Nagate to bump his head on a metal door). Izana is rendered naked in front of Nagate, making it again apparent that the transition is complete. Izana is, in this example, projecting what Ahmed describes as "disorientations", a bodily sense of losing your place, an eerie sense that something might be somewhat wrong, i.e. disoriented.

Izana's life is chaotic because their body is undergoing its transition at the same time as Izana is experiencing a chaotic transition in other facets of their life. This is similar to contemporary trans-issues seen by Salamon, who problematises how the experience of having a material body leads to epistemic truths about sexuality, identity, and gender. In *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*,

Salamon discusses how transgender might not primarily be about material change, but also about phantmastical being.

Izana is not only transitioning from non-gendered to female during the series, but also from a human to a cyborg. An encounter with a malignant Gauna costs Izana a right arm and left leg, which are replaced with robotic limbs. Izana's hand in particular provides an advantage, as it adds a set of ten fingers. Through this "second transition", Izana is becoming closer to Haraway's concept of a cyborg with its inherent sociological consequences.

Thus, Izana has not only gone through a posthuman gendered transition, but also a posthuman mechanical transition. This is a moment in the series where Izana's body is undergoing one posthuman transition by receiving artificial limbs. However, one can argue that Izana already had a posthuman quality, due to their ambiguous cloning birth and relational gender. The new prosthetics give Izana a significant combat ability. Closing their eyes allows Izana to see Gauna from a far greater distance than anyone else, making them a much more valuable military asset. One's military capability is an important character trait in the series and highly tied to the characters' jobs.

One aspect of posthumanism's obliteration of traditional gender stereotypes is the non-gendered jobs that the characters have. Izana, Nagate and Shizuka are all pilots, which seems to not differ much between males or females; the head scientists are an immortal woman (Izana's grandmother Yuke) and a resurrected mad male scientist kept alive through bio-engineered parasites, who uses worms to control bodies (Ochiai). The captain of the ship is an immortal woman (Kobayashi), only answering to an "immortal council", which she eventually has assassinated. The head nurse of the ship is a female bear (Lala). Although this applies a novel view of animal cyborgs, it still presents nursing as a gendered profession, as the nurses in the series are primarily female. Had the series been representative of a stricter, more traditional set of gendered stereotypes, Izana's gendered body might have been more contested. But, since it doesn't matter if one is a male or female pilot, Izana's transformation does not lead to conflict, at least not concerning their career path. The glass ceiling in KOS is not bound by gender, but rather by immortality and access to cloning technology.

This gendering through technology disturbs the traditional heteronormative matrix. When technology becomes the arena of sexual reproduction e.g. through cloning, binary? sexuality has the potential of losing its ability to govern societies in the alternative worlds that science fiction can portray. Izana's body is not initially tied to reproductive ability, and Izana themselves was not conceived in the normal biological sense, but through cloning. What does affect Izana's gendered body, however, as the next section discusses, is the relation to other characters, especially Nagate.

Developing Gender Through Relations

Representations of gendered bodies in science fiction can show novel ways of constructing and thinking about gender. In KOS, Izana's gendered identity was, as explained in the first meeting with Nagate, "neither male nor female" and dependent on a chosen "partner". This apparently applies biological sexes, gender identity (the gender[s] Izana identifies with personally), and social gender (how society genders Izana). To understand the triple gender identity being developed in this posthuman

gendered setting, one must understand the relations between the characters. In season 2 it is revealed (after being hinted at in Season 1) that Izana's chosen partner, the most important relationship for consideration in this paper, is the main character of KOS, Nagate Tanikaze.

The story's development around Nagate follows a traditional hero's path. Nagate, trained in the underground by his grandfather, enters the surface area of *Sidonia*, where the richer population lives. Due to his exceptional piloting skills, and a special interest that the ship's captain takes in him, Nagate is soon promoted to pilot. Through his journey, he becomes close friends with Izana, who acts as a guide to the upper levels of Sidonian society, both in exploration and in relaxation activities. It becomes apparent that Izana develops feelings for Nagate, (e.g. when girls flirt with him, especially Season 1's female protagonist Shizuka, Izana gets jealous and angry). Nagate is, however, quite oblivious to the romantic gestures going on around him and prefers to focus his affection on food. In fact, since Izana, Shizuka, and most other humans have developed photosynthesis and gain energy from starlight, Nagate must eat much more often than anyone else.

Just as Izana's gender is fluid throughout the series, Nagate Tanikaze's sexuality is a moving target. As Ohsawa writes: "Tanikaze's sexuality is neither normative heterosexuality, nor homosexuality, but queer sexuality. In fact, his sexuality changes through the development of the story" (186). Not only do Izana's sexuality and gender develop in accordance to their relation to Nagate, but a mutually developing relation of sexualities encompasses Nagate as well. Izana is shown throughout the series to only have feelings for Nagate, but he has several different love interests. The two most notable are Shizuka Hoshijiro and Tsumugi Shiraui, who both actually share some genetic components.

As noted earlier, Shizuka was the main female character of Season 1, and Nagate's main love interest. Being highly skilled pilots, Shizuka and Nagate are sent on numerous extremely difficult missions together, one resulting in them being stranded in a small spaceship far from the main ship *Sidonia*, apparently doomed to die in space, but together. The situation reaches the point where Nagate, not being able to photosynthesise as Shizuka can, has to drink her distilled urine to survive. After they are saved, their romance grows, only to abruptly end when Shizuka is killed by the Gauna on a mission. Izana, however, takes up the mantle and becomes the new main love interest early in Season 2.

Izana's female-gendered identity was indirectly hindered by Shizuka. Although Izana started to develop feelings for Nagate as well as a female body, it seems a full transition could not occur when Nagate was otherwise romantically occupied. However, with Shizuka dead, Izana was free to develop a female identity, although this was hindered by Shizuka after her death, due to the Gauna's advanced resurrecting abilities. After killing Shizuka, they somehow managed to recreate parts of her in Gauna-human hybrids, one being the series's archenemy *Benisuzume*, a blood-red deranged version of Shizuka, intent on terminating all humans.

Part of this resurrected hybrid is in turn captured by humans, and, by advanced bio-genetic manipulation, they manage to create their own "female" hybrid, Tsumugi Shiraui. Tsumugi, although a giant bio-mecha war-robot (hundreds of times larger than a human), becomes another one of Nagate's love interests late in Season 2. Tsumugi's physiology allows her to have a moving "tentacle" that serves as a human-sized avatar that can extend and follow Nagate and Izana around *Sidonia* (at one point actually moving in with them). Although the giant bio-mecha Tsumugi is stationed in

a war-preparation hangar, her avatar tentacle can extend through the pipe system, and socialise with Tanake and Izana.

Although Nagate shows much affection towards Tsumugi, even ignoring Izana, Izana holds no grudges against Tsumugi. This might be because Tsumugi is a different species, and thus not as much a threat to Izana's relationship with Nagate as Shizuka, a fellow human, might be. Tsumugi, as a non-human, might offer another challenge to expected relationship norms by questioning the primacy of monogamous couples. Expectation about the nature of aliens and how humans relate to them has also been explored by Helford, who, in her article on Stanisław Lem's *Solaris*, argues that human explorers must expect the unexpected when trying to meet aliens. Some posthumans are more posthuman than others, and it appears that alien relationships might pose less of a threat to human relationships when the human characters perceive the posthuman characters as quite alien.

Previous research on KOS has focused more on Tsutomugi; this includes both the work of Ohsawa, who studies her as an example of "ontological queerness – a hybrid between a human and a plant" (40), particularly her development of self, and the perspectives of "Cyberpunk Ecology" (Johnson, "Nihei Tsutomu", "Manga", and "Abjection"). As an intersection between biology and technology, the character makes for an interesting read. In a gendered context, the tentacle is described by Johnson as "a congeries of genitalia, visually speaking, a marvel of multipurpose biological design – at once oral, vaginal, anal, and phallic" ("Abjection" 70).

In the world of posthuman bio-mecha robots and alien-possessed ex-girlfriends, perhaps the gendered identity of Izana as "just" agender, in the series' beginning, and then followed by a queering process, is not perceived as strange in comparison. The real weirdness apparently lies elsewhere. In the first episode, before talking calmly about Izana's third-gender identity, Nagate is, for example, dreading the possibility of being labeled a "sub-human" and "unwanted", and thus sent to the human fertiliser facility. In a posthuman world the concept of gender is perhaps not as dangerous as the perilous nature of social status.

Whereas most characters in *Sidonia* are driven by the ambition to survive against the Gauna, Izana is driven more by love. Izana constructs their identity through their gender – that is, an actual gendered identity – by falling in love with Nagate. The reasoning for falling in love is thus tied to the development of Izana's body as male or female. At the same time, love is generally portrayed as a bittersweet and even dangerous feeling in *Sidonia*. When characters, especially pilots, fall in love, it gravely affects their job. A great many pilots in KOS actually die either because they are trying to save someone they love who has been captured by the Gauna or because they are distracted at a crucial moment by thinking about their loved one. However, in addition to being a mental process, Izana's love is tied to bodily transitions. In the posthuman future that KOS depicts, gender can be developed through relations, and, as Ahmed discusses, those with whom one inhabits spaces have a great impact on how one's own body inhabits spaces. This shows an intricate relation between gender, technology, and societal structures. As with Haraway's concept of the cyborg, there are inherent sociological consequences:

> … theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. (150)

Using gendered bodies to reflect on the cyborg concept, gender can be used as a conceptual tool to understand what makes us human, and what imaginations of future societies, lives, and structures can imply for personal identity – here exemplified through different conceptualisations of gender identity. If we, as Haraway writes, are already cyborgs, the future of intertwined trajectories of science and body, technology and being, and individuals relating to societal structures in novel ways will be an exciting time.

Further Considerations of Post-gendered Bodies

This paper has discussed the concept of *post-gender* which has been theorised in relation to understandings of future gender representations of posthumans in the science-fiction series *Knights of Sidonia*. By looking specifically at posthumanism in relation to conceptions of sex and gender, this paper has explored how contemporary conceptualisations of sex and gender are radically challenged through media representations, allowing for a richer discourse on how gender can be understood in future cyborg realities. The paper has also explored whether all future humans are posthumans, or if there is a particular threshold that determines when something is posthuman, specifically in relation to concepts of sex and gender.

The KOS anime can be useful for understanding non-binary and intersex individuals in contemporary societies, as these individuals might also have a certain posthuman quality to them – e.g. qualities that go beyond the human status quo as perceived by society. As I have shown in previous research (Søraa), the more humanoid a robot becomes, the more gendered it becomes. However, within the context of science-fictional explorations of posthuman gender, there is a different possible trajectory, as science and technology allow the cyborg body to be agendered – as long as it is independent from romantic relations.

KOS has not been confirmed as completed; thus Izana might continue to develop a gendered identity beyond what this paper has described. However, despite showing a somewhat cis-gendered normativity in Izana having to become *either* male or female to further develop their body, Izana does represent a "tacit queering" of the series. Not being able to retain an agender identity shows that a transition is forced upon the character. This is perhaps best demonstrated through Izana's love interest with Nagate, who also likes Izana when Izana is agendered. As Ohsawa writes, "representations of queerness operate to help us accept any kinds of sex, gender, and sexuality" (187). Gender in this science-fiction work is determined when connecting with a romantic partner and is predominantly heterosexual.

Although Izana is presented as an androgynous character, their transition to female reinforces a contemporary heteronormative view of sexuality. Izana's attraction to the male main character, Nagate, pushes the character to develop female biological genitalia. This biological sex-change of the until-then sexless character prompts Izana to also develop a female gender identity. Although Izana at one point becomes a mechanical cyborg through the replacement of their lost arm with a robotic arm, Izana does not adhere to Haraway's conception of a post-gendered cyborg. Izana's gendered body and mind develop in reverse of what Haraway imagines – that of gendered bodies transitioning into a posthuman, non-gendered state. On the contrary, in KOS, gender is developed to fulfill an important part of *human* identity: love.

Concerning Izana's body and phantasmagorical identity, when is the posthuman threshold breached? Is Izana transitioning to the posthuman through their relational romantic involvement with the cis-male gendered Nagate? Or is it perhaps while receiving the artificial limbs? Or, perhaps Izana was posthuman before, simply due to an ambiguous birth and gender. Although the anime begins with Izana representing gender in a posthuman science-fiction context of agendered individuals, the anime ultimately reinforces some heteronormative gender norms from which it had initially broken away, particularly concerning the issue of Izana's sexuality.

However, even while engaging in this reinforcement of heteronormativity, Nagate's character is at the same time representing a queer sexuality. He loves people of multiple genders and races: he falls in love with both female and agender humans as well as giant fleshy aliens with their own alien gender(s). This tacit queering is subtler than Izana's sexuality and makes their relation a posthuman gender conundrum.

A post-gendered individual will thus not necessarily be conceptualised as an external component, but rather work in synchronicity with existing gender terms, as does the character Izana Shinatose. Izana is presented as an androgynous and agender person in the beginning of the series, but through a relationship with another person they develop more queer characteristics; when mixed with cyborg components, these characteristics transform the character's gender. By exploring radical human biotechnology and cyborg innovations in this fictional story, the character, by being androgynous, agender, and queer and with multiple trajectories for their own sexuality and even body features, begins to embody an exemplification of what a post-gender individual can be, thereby showing how heterogeneous components can shape social constructs. With an increasing interest in both the production and consumption of science fiction, and a more open society regarding both technology and gender, further studies can benefit from applying different ways of approaching the understanding of post-gendered bodies.

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Golems in the New World

Matt Reingold

Abstract: This essay considers the ways that the legend of the Jewish Golem has been used in two recent graphic novels. The original legends of the Golem presented him as a creature that would protect the Jews of Prague against anti-Semitism and persecution in the 16th century, while leaving open the possibility that he could return again in the future. Both James Sturm's *The Golem's Mighty Swing* and Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero's *The Silence of Malka* make use of many of the original tropes of the Golem narrative, but by making significant changes to the story including location, time period, and even what a Golem is, the texts offer new ways of understanding the Golem legend. These narratives suggest that despite immense progress for global Jewry since the 16th century, a Golem – albeit a new one – is still needed to protect Jews, sometimes even from themselves.

Keywords: Golems, James Sturm, *Golem's Mighty Swing*, *The Silence of Malka,* Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero, graphic novels

In a May 2009 article in the *New York Times*, reporter Dan Bilefsky identified a revival in Golem culture in Prague. In his visit to the city, he found Golem hotels, Golem figurines and action figures, a musical about the Golem, and even Golem-themed restaurants serving non-kosher foods like the "crisis special", a roast pork and potato dish. In her analysis of the renewed interest in Prague's legendary creature, Eva Bergerova, director of the Golem play, sees in the Golem a "projection of society's … fears and concerns. [The Golem] is the ultimate crisis monster" (qtd. in Bilefsky).

Bilefsky and Bergerova's observations about the Golem are reflected in Cathy S. Gelbin's statement that "the Golem has become a global signifier of the Jews" (9). The appeal of the Golem is, according to Gelbin, its nostalgic echoes to pre-Holocaust Eastern European Jewish culture and civilisation, and its strong cautioning against the dangers of abusing science and technology. The Golem's positioning in both the

medieval and modern worlds results in it symbolising "Jewish particularity in a globalised world" (Gelbin 9).

Over the last 25 years, Golem-mania has moved beyond the Golem's geographical birthplace of Prague, and Golem-inspired texts have been written by both Jews – the historical creators of the Golem – and non-Jews, and published in countries around the world. These texts include Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize-winning text *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* and even an episode on Fox's popular 1990s television series *The X-Files*. This paper will analyse two graphic novels published in English that prominently feature the legend of the Golem[1]. Both James Sturm's *The Golem's Mighty Swing* and Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero's *The Silence of Malka* echo the trends set by Chabon and *The X-Files* in transposing the Golem into modernity by relocating him to the early 20th-century Americas, and through significant alterations to the original Golem story, offer new ways of understanding the legend of the Golem.

Jewish Graphic Novels

The past 30 years have seen the publication of many Jewish graphic novels. Unlike other graphic novels, write Samantha Baskind and Ranen Omer-Sherman, a Jewish graphic novel is an "illustrated narrative produced by a Jew that addresses a Jewish subject or some aspect of the Jewish experience" (xvi). Initially a small field that began with the publication of Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* (1978) and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986), Jewish graphic novels are now recognised by scholars and academics as their own distinct field of study, and journal articles, full-length works, and even university courses are dedicated solely to their study.[2]

Since the publication of Eisner's and Spiegelman's works, graphic novels have been written and illustrated that address all aspects of Jewish cultural, political, and religious life. These include graphic novels set in Israel, such as Rutu Modan's Eisner Award-winning *Exit Wounds* (2008); the United States, including Liana Finck's *A Bintel Brief* (2014); Morocco, including Joann Sfar's *The Rabbi's Cat* (2005); Poland, such as Sfar's *Klezmer* (2006) and Modan's *The Property* (2013); and Canada, such as Jamie Michaels and Doug Fedrou's *Christie Pits* (2018). These Jewish graphic novels cover all eras in Jewish history, but, perhaps not surprisingly, many address either the Holocaust or the State of Israel, two of the defining events of the 20th-century Jewish experience.

Not many Jewish graphic novelists make use of fantasy in their works. In addition to the two Golem texts that are explored in this paper, Israeli cartoonist Asaf

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[1] Eli Eshed and Uri Fink have published a Golem story in Hebrew that has not yet been translated into English and is not available for purchase outside of Israel. Entitled *HaGolem: Sipuro shel comics Israeli* (*The Golem: The Story of an Israeli Comic*), it introduces the Golem into seminal moments in Israeli history.

[2] For examples of book-length studies, see Stephen Tabatchnick's The Quest for Jewish Belief and Identity in the Graphic Novel or Tahneer Oksman's "How Come Boys Get to Keep Their Noses?": Women and Jewish American Identity in Contemporary Graphic Memoirs. For examples of collected volumes, see Samantha Baskind and Ranen Omer-Sherman's The Jewish Graphic Novel or Derek Parker's Visualizing Jewish Narrative: Jewish Comics and Graphic Novels. In 2011 the journal Shofar also published a full issue focusing on Jewish graphic novels. Courses on Jewish graphic novels have been taught at Washington University in St. Louis by Erin McGlothlin and at the University of California Santa Barbara by Ofra Amihay.

Hanuka's series "The Realist" regularly engages with the fantastical in his autobiographical exploration of daily life. Elsewhere, I have termed Hanuka's use of fantasy in this way as fantastical autography, as he often uses fantasy as lens for exploring his feelings about what he is experiencing. Hanuka's "presentation of the 'real' world is that it is bleak and dreary, but fantasy provides him with a way of interpreting and recasting this world in new and alternate ways" (Reingold).

The Golem as Jewish Fantasy Trope

Even though the legend of the Golem is "one of the most enduring and imaginative tales in modern Jewish folklore and ... perhaps the most famous of all modern Jewish literary fantasies" (Dekel and Gurley 241–42), a short review of the story's origins may be helpful for those less familiar with it. The earliest versions of the Golem myth were written in the 19th century, but they date the Golem's creation to 16th-century Prague, where Jews were victims of persecution by the neighbouring Christian communities. These versions include Franz Klutschak's version from 1841 and Leopold Weisel's from 1847, which are the earliest known written versions of the story. The Golem legend was then radically altered by Yudl Rosenberg who, in 1909, published a full-length work about the Golem's origins that added many previously unpublished details about the Golem's life; this version has become the template for all subsequent Golem works. According to legend, under the direction of God, the rabbi of Prague's Jewish community, Judah Loew, and his two assistants, build a human-like creature from mud found on the banks of the Vltava River. Employing mystical incantations, Loew brings the creature to life, clothes him, and names him Joseph. Traditionally, the Golem is both mute and impotent. Some versions of the story include that Loew inscribes the name of God on the Golem's forehead or mouth. Loew instructs Joseph that from now onward, he will be Loew's servant, bound to follow any of Loew's requests.

Joseph protects the Jewish community from harm and saves the lives of many Jews in Prague when they are attacked by non-Jews. He also takes care of daily tasks around the community, such as chopping wood and hewing water. These tasks reflect what David Honigsberg sees as part of the Golem's essence: "purity of purpose ... a Golem cannot be created for the purpose of evil" (139). On the Sabbath, the Golem rests after Loew puts him to sleep for the day. Despite the Golem's service to the community, Loew ultimately chooses to kill him. Golem Elizabeth R. Baer identifies two possible reasons for Loew's removal of Joseph's lifeforce. The first is that Joseph becomes violently destructive to the Jewish community on a Sabbath when Loew forgets to put him to rest, and the second is that the Jewish community no longer needs his services because non-Jews have stopped harming Jews. Regardless, the Golem's body is stored in the attic of Prague's Old-New Synagogue, where it can be reawakened in the future if necessary. In his analysis of Golem stories, Gershom Scholem suggests that Golems are, on their own, not dangerous, but that it is the "creative process" (191) itself that is dangerous, as the fashioner of the Golem has assumed the role of God and created life in an unnatural way. Therefore, regardless of the reason, the individual who makes a Golem must recognise the danger inherent in the act of creation.

As a trope, the Golem is central to the essence and origins of the science fiction genre, given his similarities to the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Despite many differences in the stories – especially Shelley's use of Christian beliefs as a

foundation of her text – there are numerous similarities that suggest that in some capacity Shelley was influenced by the Golem. These include the idea of bringing a creature to life, struggling to harness the creature and rein it in once it is created, and the eventual need to kill it.

Danusha V. Goska sees in the mythology of the Golem an attempt by Jewish communities to wrestle with their inferior status as outsiders in many of the societies that they have inhabited, coupled with a desire to also be part of these exclusionary societies. The Golem's own religious status is never clarified in any of the original texts; yet, as Goska argues, the Golem typifies how Jews perceived non-Jewish behaviour, and in this way is very "not Jewish". These behaviours include the Golem's lack of education and his willingness to use violence. Ironically, the Jewish community's perception of the Golem as "not Jewish" is refracted by the Golem's non-Jewish victims' perception of the Golem's very Jewishness. Ruth Gilbert sees the Golem's limitless strength and energy as a grotesque caricature of anti-Semitic tropes. These anti-Semitic beliefs see the Jew as "larger than life, uncontrollable and basely embodied … the Jew has been depicted as a useful and sometimes necessary part of non-Jewish society but one that has repeatedly and profoundly troubled its sense of gentile self" (56).

In her study of Golems, Baer argues that like the Golem itself, which was put to sleep with the understanding that it might one day be reawakened, so too the legend of the Golem has gone through periods of obscurity, and other periods, such as after the Holocaust, where it has featured in many works of fiction. Much of this post-Holocaust literature, suggests Baer, relies on the reader's ability to construe meaning out of intertextual references. This intertextuality involves "references, quotations, or allusions to other texts. It allows for the re-vision and appropriation of older texts to suit new situations and meanings" (8). Baer refers to this literary process as "metafictions: a fiction about fiction" (8). Most importantly, the appropriation of the Golem away from Prague and into new cultural and ideological milieus across time and space creates "a network of texts that at once destabilizes meaning and enables the writer to render ideological commentary" (8).

According to Lewis Glinert, the new Golem stories have been infused with a "desire to create a creature for the greater good" (85). As explained by Edan Dekel and David Gannt Gurley, the "literary Golem can be shaped and molded to resemble any form" (244). These iterations move far beyond differences in genre. Goska traces the evolution of the Golem into the 20th century and argues that current Golems are now verbal, sexual, and dangerous. Whereas the original Golem was created by the spiritual leader of 16th-century Prague's Jewish community and limited by his inability to speak and act independently, contemporary Golems are created by average Jews who awaken Golems that possess powers and abilities that previous Golems did not. These abilities, while granting the Golem more independence and humanity, also make them much more difficult to control: the almost-human in these modern versions wants its freedom, and this tension often results in disaster.

One final important and salient feature of the modernisation of the Golem legend is how it has become increasingly ecotypified. As defined by Dekel and Gurley, an ecotypified legend is one that is "free to take on the locality of the place it arrives in because it is essentially and narratologically located in no one place" (246). Relative to the Golem, they argue, is the fact that most Golem mythology situates him in Prague and local flavours and variations do not exist; the Golem is therefore not ecotypified. When this fixedness occurs, the myth "ceases to be legendary and undergoes a

transformation into a full-fledged literary phenomenon, which somewhat counterintuitively allows for all sorts of expansions and revisions" (246). What this means is that once Loew and Prague become fixed in the story, the Golem comes alive and is set loose upon the city. While the city of Prague remains a prominent feature in many Golem narratives, one literary genre that has rebuffed this aspect while still offering original interpretations of the Golem's legend is comics and graphic novels. To date, both of the largest mainstream comics publishers – Marvel Comics and DC Comics – and the publishers of the two graphic novels considered here have included Golems in some of their stories, but these stories are consistently disconnected from Prague, and as a result, the Golems in these texts are ecotypified and assume radically new identities from the more fixed ones based on the Golem of Prague. Changing the Golem's birthplace and creator opens up the narrative in new ways that reflect the societies and worldviews of the fictional worlds that these authors and artists build, and through these changes, and many others, the Golem can be considered in an entirely new way.

Golems in Superhero Comic Books

Marvel Comics has created two different characters that have been called the Golem, both of which draw on Jewish mythology[3]. The first, a very short-lived, four-issue story published in 1974 and 1975 in the series Strange Tales, introduced a number of changes to the Golem legend, most notably shifting the location of the story away from Eastern Europe to the Middle East and changing the villains from Christians to Arabs. Written and illustrated by a number of different individuals, including Mike Friedrich (1974) and Len Wein (1974), the Strange Tales' Golem narrative is a retelling of the story that positions it away from Jewish persecution in Eastern Europe and towards Israeli persecution at the hands of Arab armies. This sentiment is expressed through a story that revolves around a group of archaeologists in the Middle East who are searching for the Golem in the desert. Surprisingly, since the Golem did not live in the Middle East, they are able to locate him. Just as the group extracts him from the ground, a group of Arabs kidnap the archaeologists, save for their leader Professor Adamson who is shot and left to die. As his life ebbs, Adamson chants prayers over the Golem's lifeless body and sheds a tear on the Golem's foot, resulting in the Golem's reanimation. Channeling the Golem of Prague's commitment to saving lives, this Golem tracks down the kidnapped archaeologists and saves them. The comic ends with one of the archaeologists recognising Professor Adamson in the Golem's eye. In the subsequent issues, the Golem continues to help the archaeologists and ensure that they are not harmed. In an explanation to the readers, the creators of the comic explain that their Golem should be understood as having human intelligence, and that this intelligence comes from Professor Adamson giving "up his life to instill a life-force in old Stone-face" (Friedrich, DeZuniga, et al. 32). Unlike the original versions of the Golem story, in which creator and created exist within a symbiotic relationship, the Marvel Comics version involves the Golem being unable to become human without the death of his creator: only through Adamson's death can the Golem be brought back to life.

[3] As Robert G. Weiner has correctly noted, Marvel Comics has had many other characters called Golem, but these do not make use of any tropes from the Jewish mythology of the creature.

The second Marvel Comics Golem was created in 1977 but has also been used by the company in more recent issues, including in 1993. This Golem is created as a result of a freak accident in which a Jew named Jacob Goldstein creates a clay man to protect Jews from Nazis during World War II, and in the process, Goldstein's body becomes unintentionally fused with the Golem's body. This new creature is "part a human and part a holy being, but one with total free will" (Weiner 67). Unlike Marvel Comics' first Golem, the Goldstein Golem can transition at will between being a Golem and being Goldstein. While other superheroes want Goldstein to help fight for the Allies in World War II, like the original Golem, Goldstein explains that he must remain with the Jews to ensure their safety before he is willing to fight in the war.

The publishing run of DC Comics' Golem series "The Monolith" spanned 12 issues between April 2004 and March 2005. Written and illustrated by Justin Gray, Jimmy Palmiotti, and Phil Winslade, the series features a Golem created in 1930s New York during the Great Depression by Alice, a Jewish immigrant from Prague, Rabbi Rava, a Chinese carpenter, and a bootlegger to help Lower East Side immigrants. The story is actually set in the 21st century in the home of Alice Cohen, the granddaughter of Alice the immigrant, and focuses on Alice Cohen's discovery that the Golem has been hidden in her grandmother's home for over 17 years. This Golem follows many of the modern iterations of the Golem story in that he can speak, dresses in contemporary clothing, and experiences feelings of love. Baer writes that "though there are Jewish characters and themes, the Golem's sense of responsibility is to the wider world of oppressed people in New York, a city often depicted as dark, menacing, snowy, and decrepit" (119). The larger issues with which the story engages include drug addiction, racism, sex-slavery rings, and child pornography. Tackling these problems transitions the Golem away from serving the uniquely particular Jewish experience and towards solving contemporary universal issues and the protection of all vulnerable and needy people.

Golems in Graphic Novels

Like Marvel's and DC Comics' Golems, both of the English-language graphic novels examined here situate their Golems away from 16th-century Prague, and instead take place in the Americas of the early 20th century. Despite their geographical and temporal distance from the birthplace of the Golem, the texts draw heavily on the mythology of the Golem while interpreting the text for the societies and places to which they are transposed. These two texts thus reflect Baer's assertion about other Golem adaptations in that they "call attention … to the use of the imagination over the centuries as a tool for exploring human nature" (9). In this exploration of human nature, each author does what Leslie Jones identifies as taking "the skeleton of the plot from 'tradition' and reworks it to his or her own ends, in his or her own style" (89).

The first graphic novel that will be considered here is Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero's *The Silence of Malka*. Originally published in Spanish in 1996, it was translated into English in 2018. The story begins in Bessarabia, Russia, in the late 1800s, and the reader is immediately introduced to the main characters: Malka, a precocious and feisty pre-teen; her first cousin David; and her uncle Zelik. The family is preparing to move to Argentina following a pogrom, a violent attack on the Jewish community. The four-panel depiction of the pogrom is devoid of any words, and the reader must therefore fully rely on Pellejero's brutally graphic renderings. Throughout

the entire depiction, the panels fade increasingly to red; in the final panel the entire sky is blood-red. Pellejero's depictions of non-Jews who first cavort while destroying sacred objects, then destroy Jewish lives, and finally destroy the entire town itself powerfully convey the fear and devastation of the Jewish community (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Depiction of pogrom: Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero, *The Silence of Malka*, 2018, p. 17.

Despite Pellejero's depiction of the pogroms, the characters build their Golem not in Russia, but in Argentina. For while the anti-Semitism that existed in Russia seems non-existent in Argentina, extreme poverty and famine threaten Malka, David, Zelik, and their families as they struggle to survive as farmers during a drought. After his request for a loan to buy supplies to last the season is rejected by the wealthy Jews who help settle impoverished Eastern European Jews in Argentina, Zelik builds a Golem out of mud from a nearby riverbank, and inscribes Hebrew letters on the Golem's leg and chants prayers over him to bring him to life.

Over the rest of the work, the Golem helps Zelik farm and manage the property. He runs errands on behalf of the family and works to ensure that their wishes are fulfilled. While the Golem is mute, he does attract the attention of an Argentinian girl who tries to seduce him using local and indigenous herbal remedies. The blending of Jewish and Argentinian folklore results in the Golem becoming confused and violent, and he murders Zelik and his entire family, save Malka, who hides. In the final section of the work, the reader learns that Malka has dedicated her life to trying to destroy the Golem, who has willingly become a hired assassin due to his absence of conscience.

Upon seeing her in person, the Golem remembers her and becomes frightened; he is killed when he runs into the path of an oncoming train.

The similarities between *The Silence of Malka* and the original Golem story are numerous. In both tales the Golem is created by a pious Jew who feels that creating the Golem is the only way to ensure that his community can survive. Moreover, both Golems are created from mud from a riverbank and infused with life as a result of having words drawn on their bodies and prayers chanted over them. Similarly, like Loew's Golem, Zelik's Golem is devoted to him and follows all of his commands. Also, both are mute and asexual. Most importantly, both lose control, rise up, and harm the very communities that birthed them, before eventually being destroyed.

Despite these similarities, there are many differences, and it is their differences that offer the best understanding of the metafictional insights inherent in Zentner and Pellejero's reworking of the legend of the Golem. Zentner and Pellejero's Golem is a new-world Golem who was born in a country that openly welcomed Jews. Argentina's willingness to take in impoverished Eastern European Jews and provide them with land to farm directly clashes with the Golem's initial role as a defender of the Jews. Their appropriation of his secondary role as community helper seems to miss or obscure the very purpose of a Golem. However, his new role reflects the divergent natures of global attitudes towards Jewry, and the text's absence of any anti-Semitism once the family arrives in Argentina is a notable departure from other Golem texts and from the legend itself. The absence of anti-Semitism in the entirety of the rest of the text is tied to the idea that in comparison to life in Europe and the difficulties of adjusting to an entirely new lifestyle, anti-Semitism in Argentina was comparably a non-factor for these Jewish immigrants.

The Golem that Zelik creates in the new world protects the Jews not against threats of death from external foes, but against the economic and agricultural hardships that affect the family as they struggle to adjust to life in a new country. Farming becomes his most essential task in ensuring his master's survival, in the same way that fighting was the most essential task for Loew's Golem. Creating a Golem in Argentina, as opposed to Russia, also suggests the novelty of the challenges the family faces; this is compounded by the optimism that they feel for what life will now be. In one of the texts most charming images, Pellejero illustrates David and Malka imagining themselves playing amongst apples the size of boulders, being showered by candy, and running around rainbows (Figure 2). The enjambment created between the expectations and the realities of the harsh life of a farmer is sharper than that felt between their expectations regarding non-Jews in Russia. For while the pogrom was awful, they were habituated to it and did not expect anything different from their non-Jewish neighbors.

Figure 2. Depiction of Argentina: Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero, *The Silence of Malka*, 2018, p. 20.

The most surprising aspect of why the Golem in *The Silence of Malka* is created is that the Jews need the Golem after they are mistreated by other Jews. Zentner and Pellejero hold a mirror up to the Jewish community itself, depicting Jews who necessitate the creation of the Golem, in contrast to the Christians who physically tormented the Jews in Russia. Dressed as modern figures and depicted devoid of any discernably Jewish caricatures (Figure 3), the wealthy Jewish businessmen with their politely dismissive words thrust Zelik into the role of mystic who calls forth the Golem, as it is from Jews that the family needs protection.
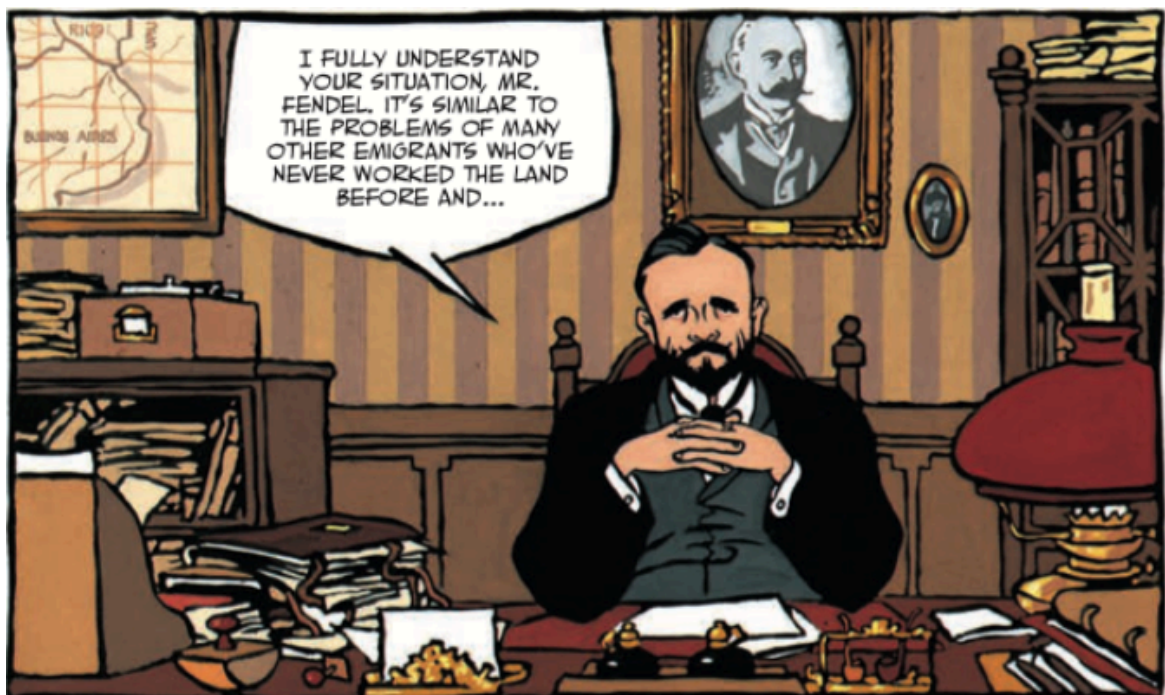
Figure 3. Depiction of a wealthy Jew: Jorge Zentner and Rubén Pellejero, *The Silence of Malka*, 2018, p. 26.

Unlike traditional Golem stories, in which irrational anti-Semitism forces Jews to play the role of God, in *The Silence of Malka*, the persecutors are Zelik's modern coreligionists, who are devoid of any sympathy for the famine that is wreaking havoc on the family. Conversely, non-Jews are consistently depicted in positive ways. Whether it is the non-Jewish doctor who helps the family, or the non-Jewish

neighbours who are curious about the Jewish community, the non-Jews are polite, friendly, and likeable. Zentner and Pellejero's rereading of the Golem story and their decision to create him in the wake of negative behaviour committed by Jews cuts to the core of the identity of Loew's original Golem. There, the very reason why Loew turned to God and created a Golem was because non-Jews were persecuting Jews and Jews had no other recourse to protect themselves. By writing the story in this way, the text challenges Jewish communities to more carefully consider who are its enemies and who are its friends, and questions what really are the bonds that exist within Jewish communities and between Jews and non-Jews.

Significantly, what Zelik never does in the text, perhaps because of his own prejudices towards non-Jews as a result of his personal experiences in Russia, is turn to the non-Jews around him. Bypassing them and moving straight to harnessing the fantastical, Zelik fashions a Golem, thus bringing about his own undoing. And yet despite the Golem's role as a peaceful farmer, and being given no specific commands to employ violence, he still turns violent and kills his master. Brigitte Natanson sees in the Golem's inevitable turn to violence as a result not of the historical cause of anti-Semitism but the commingling of two disparate magical and fantastical elements. Seemingly, Zelik should have at least first turned to his neighbors – irrespective of their religious traditions – before resorting to the mystical, as the consequences associated with Golems are radically unpredictable. Equally, Zelik should also have turned to these same non-Jewish neighbors before turning to the wealthy Jews, because he has more in common with his rural farmer-neighbours, as they are all experiencing the same challenges of trying to remain alive during a drought.

Like *The Silence of Malka*, James Sturm's graphic narrative *The Golem's Mighty Swing* also focuses on a group of Jews who live in early 20th-century society in the Americas. Instead of the narrative revolving around the agrarian calendar and how a family adjusts to becoming farmers, in Sturm's text, the lives of a travelling group of Jewish baseball players revolve around the baseball calendar. The narrative follows a predominantly Jewish baseball team called the Stars of David as they tour the USA, playing against non-Jewish teams. The team experiences anti-Semitism in many of the cities they visit, including opposing players intentionally trying to hurt them, raucous fans yelling curses at them, and children throwing stones at them.

The central narrative of the text revolves around a game against the Putnam All-Americas that has been arranged by their publicist, Victor Paige. In an attempt to increase interest in the game and to turn the team into a more marketable entity, Paige crafts a narrative that one of the non-Jewish players on the Stars of David, Henry Bloom, is actually a Golem who plays first base and pitcher for the team while wearing a costume from a European Golem film. Unintentionally, the aggressive advertising and the promotion that the Jewish team is fielding a fantastical monster draws an aggressive and hostile crowd to the game that is eager to attack the Jews. When Bloom throws a pitch that hits a non-Jewish batter, a group of non-Jews storm the field and Bloom, in his Golem costume, protects the team as they escape to their bus and leave town, even though the local policeman says that if it were up to him, he would let the non-Jewish mob attack the Jews.
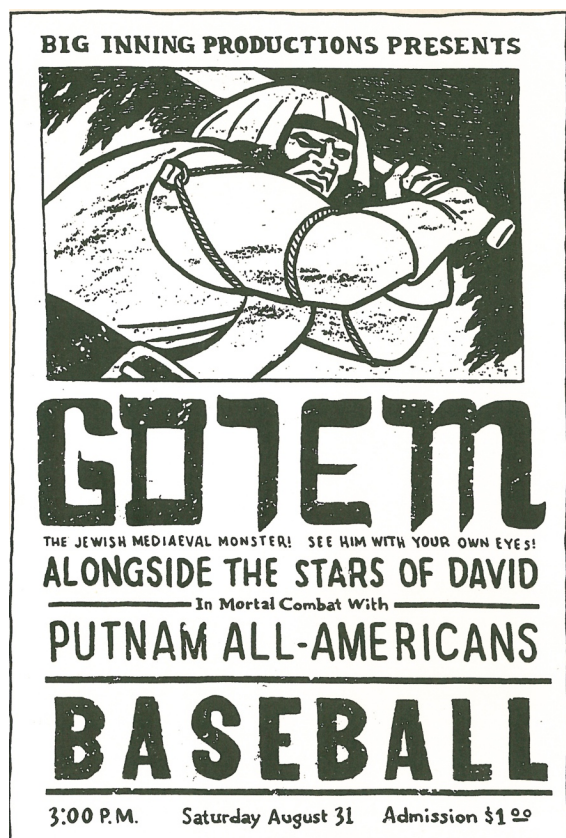
Figure 4. Baseball game poster: James Sturm, *The Golem's Mighty Swing*, 2007, p. 125.

The similarities between Loew's and Sturm's Golems are less readily apparent than those between Loew's and Zentner and Pellejero's Golems. Yet what clearly link Sturm's *The Golem's Mighty Swing* to Golem fiction are the numerous and diverse scenes of anti-Semitism throughout the text. While the establishment of Bloom as the Golem and the menacing posters that Paige creates exacerbate the anti-Semitism by depicting Jews as evil and violent (Figure 4), hatred towards the Jewish baseball players is readily apparent even before Bloom becomes a Golem. These include when the baseball umpires make intentionally incorrect calls against the Stars of David, when Lev Sheeny is beat up by a group of men, and when Mo is attacked by children who want to "see his horns" (Sturm 110) after they take his hat off. Mo chases the children, who then accuse Mo of trying to hurt them. The accusation that a Jew is trying to catch and harm a Christian youth is an example of the types of charges that were levied against Jews in Europe as part of blood-libel or ritual-murder charges that were prevalent during Loew's lifetime. In Rosenberg's extended version of the Golem's origins, he introduces blood libels as one of the core reasons why the Golem was needed in the first place. While Mo is able to defuse the situation and impress the local Christians with his knowledge of baseball, his fear of being lynched as a result of being falsely accused of trying to harm a child is palpable, and the connection to European blood libels is evident.

Beyond the instances of physical violence, the text is also replete with examples of verbal and written anti-Semitism, all of which "startle the reader into recognition" (Baer 124) of how prevalent anti-Semitism was. At all of the games that Sturm depicts, there are fans who attend not because they like baseball, but because they want to sate their curiosity about the stories that have been told about Jews in their local newspapers. These stories include the headline: "Exclusive: When the Golem Comes to Town, Hide Your Women" (Sturm 136) (Figure 5). When analysing this headline, Baer sees more than just a fear that the Jews are going to harm women; she argues that the headlines "calls to mind the stereotypes of Jewish men as licentious rapists, [which are] prevalent in such Nazi films as *Jud Süss*" (125).

Figure 5. Newspaper story: James Sturm, *The Golem's Mighty Swing*, 2007, p. 136.

Like the original version of the Golem, which was created for the purpose of preventing violence but ultimately came to cause violence as well, Sturm's Golem also contributes to the violence that takes place on the baseball diamond. While anti-Semitism is readily apparent throughout the text, it is Bloom, dressed as the Golem, who throws the ball with the intention of causing injury that directly triggers the riot and fight. Through the use of dark shading around Bloom's body and by hiding his eyes, Sturm clearly depicts Bloom as the cold-hearted and remote figure that the

Figure 6. Bloom hitting opponent: James Sturm, *The Golem's Mighty Swing*, 2007, p. 167.

non-Jews perceive him to be (Figure 6). Furthermore, the posters designed to draw in crowds position the Stars of David as violent, aggressive, and – through the use of a Hebrew-style font – other, and not like fellow Americans, even if their game is being played on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath (Figure 4). By calling attention to the otherness of the Jews, Sturm effectively nullifies their attempt to be Americans by playing the most quintessentially American of sports: baseball. While Bloom is able to protect the Stars of David, the police officer's openness to sharing that he would have no moral compunctions allowing the non-Jews to murder the Jews shows that the Golem has not actually provided a long-term solution to the ills of anti-Semitism. If anything, creating the Golem has stoked the fires of anti-Semitism, as Noah Straus, the manager and third baseman of the team acknowledges when he says that "it is not surprise that things got out of hand. That is the nature of a golem" (Sturm 176).

Despite the inclusion of the anti-Semitic elements, Sturm's Golem text is very removed from the original narrative of the Golem of Prague. Sturm's Golem is a real-life black American male who is capable of speech and independent thought, including when dressed in the Golem costume from Paul Wegener's German-language film *Der Golem*. Therefore, he is no more created than any other actor who assumes the role of a character in a film or television episode. Furthermore, his actual creation is borne not of the need to respond to persecution, but of the need to make more money. While Bloom does protect his Jewish teammates (Figure 7), he does not actually cause any physical harm to any of them, nor does Bloom suffer or die as a result of assuming the role of the Golem; all he does is remove his costume. Sturm's text contains a nod to the

fantastical, but it is heavily grounded in the realities of daily life for Jews in early 20th-century America. Elements of the fantastical, while not explicit, are still present in Sturm's story, even with his removal of the fantastic component of creating a creature from mud. Sturm has transposed the fantastical to present-day America, where rabbis and spiritual leaders, as well as the magical acts they performed, are replaced by the religions of sport and showbiz, and where a baseball player can turn into a pseudo-fantastical creature. Yet even these do not ameliorate the anti-Semitism that affects the Jewish community, as the persecution persists even after the game is over and the Golem is retired, just as in Judah Loew's Prague after his Golem was retired.

Sturm's inclusion of an African-American Golem offers insight into the uniqueness of what a Golem actually is. By redefining the Golem as not

Figure 7. Bloom protecting teammates from rioters: James Sturm, *The Golem's Mighty Swing*, 2007, p. 170.

something that is fantastical but something that is other, Sturm's text reifies the precarious positions held by Jews and African Americans throughout history and the need to find solutions to the scourge of hatred. The turn away from science fiction and fantasy and towards real people trying to solve problems moves the Golem myth away from a fairy tale about a helpless community with no other recourse; instead, it uses historically fantastical elements to offer a model for interethnic dialogue as a means for problem-solving.

Conclusion

In a 2006 article for the New York Times, Edward Rothstein explained that "the Golem involves more than just a legend. It also embodies a strategy: to meet irrational hatred head on, to undermine terror and mitigate its impact with resolve and persistence. Death is the threat; the Golem is the response". Rothstein's understanding of the Golem as a tool that fights against irrational hatred is as applicable for understanding 16th-century Prague as it is for 20th-century Argentina and America. Yet neither

Zentner and Pellejero's *The Silence of Malka* or James Sturm's *The Golem's Mighty Swing* are mere transpositions of Prague's Golem into modern settings.

Each text questions central elements of the original story and, through adaptation, offers a new way of interpreting the legend of the Golem and the relationships between Jews and non-Jews. These new readings emerge as metafictional commentary that, while disrupting the original intentions of the text, offer equally compelling explanations for why a Golem is needed to protect Jews. Whether the issue is anti-Semitism in America or Jews mistreating other Jews in Argentina, the texts suggest that even in the New World, away from the persecution that plagued Jews in Europe, external help is still needed to ensure the survival of the Jewish community. Where the two texts most markedly differ is, of course, in relation to who the Golem is, and how he is created. While Sturm's Golem is more realistic, this realism reflects the circumstances that the Jews experienced. For even though there was anti-Semitism, there were also many non-Jews, including Bloom himself, who were willing to work alongside the Jews and to collaborate together to build a more tolerant America. Conversely, Zentner and Pellejero's Golem, while more similar to the original Golem, is needed for a situation that Loew could never have imagined when he made his original Golem: Jews turning their backs on fellow Jews. And yet this is leads in this text to the creation of a Golem. In this way, what links the two texts together is a recognition that while some things might not have changed – difficulties for Jews – the circumstances have, and that human Golems replete with feelings and emotions, like Bloom, are more effective than fantastical ones that cannot be controlled, especially when approachable non-Jews are nearby. In this way, Sturm's text articulates a clearer vision for contemporary Jewish responses to anti-Semitism by actually showing two communities working together, and by transcending the trauma of persecution, it offers a model for moving forward united against tyranny.

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A Tale of Two Red Hooks: LaValle's Rewriting of Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook" in *The Ballad of Black Tom*

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Abstract: This article analyses and compares the representations of the monster in H. P. Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook" (1927) and Victor LaValle's *The Ballad of Black Tom* (2016), the latter being a rewriting of the former, both rooted in the Weird tale. The aim of this article is to illuminate the process through which LaValle turns Lovecraft's narrative into one where racism becomes evident. The framework for this analysis is Cohen's "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)*"* (1996), which argues that monsters are bodies of text that have an iterative nature; each iteration adds new layers of meaning to the monstrous body. Whereas Lovecraft's text arouses racist fears, LaValle's analyses how these fears turn the racial other into a monster.

Keywords: H. P. Lovecraft, Victor LaValle, Monster, The Horror at Red Hook, *The Ballad of Black Tom.*

1. Introduction

H. P. Lovecraft has become an influential figure in modern literature, as demonstrated by the amount of scholarly attention the author has gained in the fields of speculative literature and posthumanist philosophy (see especially Sederholm & Weinstock 5–7), but also by a vast list of Lovecraft-inspired media that range from movies to board games. Lovecraft's current importance has prompted a discussion about his stance on issues like racism, misogyny, and anti-Semitism (Moore xi–xii). The monsters Lovecraft used in his narratives act as allegories for the other, inspired by fear of contamination of the Anglo-Saxon stock that settled in America (Poole 222–28). The evident racism present in Lovecraft's writings cannot be overlooked. The fear of the unknown that he describes in *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1926) becomes fear towards the other. Lovecraft posits that the origin of horror in Western folklore is due

to "hideous cults" from "pre-Aryan" times, giving the monster in Western tradition a historical explanation: the religious and racial differences become monstrous features; therefore, the religious and racial other becomes a monster that inspires horror. In his fictions, Lovecraft uses the concept of a racial other as a danger to white society, but supplants the religious tones of the Gothic for 20th-century scientific and pseudo-scientific approaches (Luckhurst, Introduction xiv–xv).

In "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" (1996), Cohen argues that monsters, which are present in cultural and historical spaces, are projections of fear towards difference – racial, sexual, economic, religious, and politic (3–6). These projections involve giving difference monstrous characteristics and creating a narrative surrounding them; thus, granting the monster a function within the cultural space in which it is created. As Cohen exemplifies in describing an encounter with a Bosnian Serb militiaman who claims with certainty that Muslims feed Serbian children to zoo animals, the monster's function is to make sense of the other's difference within a self's own cultural space and its norms – independently of whether the beliefs that inform the understanding of the monster are accurate or not (8). The monster's body becomes text; its reading provides further understanding of the culture that shapes it.

Halberstam reads the monsters present in the English Gothic novel of the 19th century as allegories for the fears present in English society of that time: when the non-English and non-heterosexual are turned into monsters, these are rendered abhorrent (21). While she focuses mainly on the sexual aspect of the monster, her insights into race relate to Lovecraft's own interpretation of the monster. For example, when discussing Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Halberstam argues that "vampires are precisely a race and a family that weakens the stock of Englishness by passing on degeneracy and the disease of blood lust. Dracula, as a monster/master parasite, feeds upon English wealth and health" (95). As Halberstam explains, 19th-century English society could enforce racial, sexual, economic, and religious norms through the Gothic novel by creating monsters out of differences. Count Dracula was inspired by stereotypes and collective fear of Jewish people; through him, Jewishness was enforced as inferior to Englishness (93–97). As Cohen would put it, Jews have always been part of "monstrous history" (8), which is the practice of projecting a monstrous image on the other to the point it becomes an accepted view. The Gothic novel monster is also defined by its invasion of English land; it no longer inhabits the outside; instead, it is present in English homes. When immigration to England grew, English worries about miscegenation became present in the Gothic genre in the form of monsters (Halberstam 79). These aspects of the monster are also found in Lovecraft's work, as shown below.

Scholars like Jed Mayer propose that Lovecraft's racism is a reaction against anthropocentrism (119). However, this article argues that in "The Horror at Red Hook",[1] his racist beliefs are transparent statements, and so they be neither avoided nor excused. When discussing Jewishness and 19th-century psychology, Halberstam clarifies that any pseudo-scientific justification for prejudice "obscures the political agenda of racism by masquerading as objective description and by essentializing Jewishness in relation to particular kinds of bodies, behaviors, and sexualities" (97). Echoing Halberstam's statement, this article compares Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook" and Victor LaValle's *The Ballad of Black Tom* in their depictions of the monster

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[1] This article uses the version of "The Horror At Red Hook" in *The Classic Horror Stories* (2013), edited by Roger Luckhurst, pp. 3–23.

and the process that turns the other into a monster. Both stories share a similar plot, but from the points of view of distinct characters. Monsters "ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression" (Cohen 20); therefore, this article aims to shed light on what Lovecraft's monster means and how its meaning changes once it is reincarnated in LaValle's rewriting of *Red Hook*.

"The Horror at Red Hook" (1927) narrates the story of New York police officer Thomas Malone, who is investigating Robert Suydam – a wealthy old man, leader of a group of immigrant criminals he has gathered in Red Hook. Once Malone discovers that Suydam is planning to summon an elder god with help from his criminal group, horror arises. When Malone confronts Suydam at the end of the story, the building they were in collapses, leaving Malone physically and mentally strained but killing Suydam and ending the summoning. *The Ballad of Black Tom* (2016) follows the eponymous Black Tom, an African-American man and one of the people recruited by Suydam to assist him in the summoning of the Sleeping King. Previously an unseen character, Black Tom kills Suydam and takes control of the ritual.

Before discussing the works analysed in this article, it is important to delineate – although not define – the Weird. There is no concession on whether the Weird is a genre or an approach to fiction (where any genre can have Weird elements), but there is agreement on its characteristics: it is concerned with the liminal and the undefinable, it is transformative, and it rejects literary conventions in favor of achieving a bewildering and strong emotional reaction – such as fear – that goes beyond the ontological security of the human (Luckhurst, Introduction xiv–xvi). The Weird "acknowledges failure as sign and symbol of our limitations" in a literary space where the expressions of "dissatisfaction with, and uncertainty about, reality" become an exploration of the incomprehensible or hard to understand (VanderMeer and VanderMeer). This article will use Weird as an approach to horror fiction where monstrous transformations are at the centre of fear.

2. The Horror at Red Hook

Lovecraft's influence on expressions of popular culture is vast. There are annual events such as the *H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival* and the *NecronomiCon*, the latter of which takes place in his natal Providence, Rhode Island. Alan Moore has written various Lovecraft-inspired comic book series, *Providence* (2015) being the most recent. Video games *Call of Cthulhu: The Official Video Game* (2018) and *The Sinking City* (2019) also draw heavily from Lovecraft's work. Although this shows that he has been widely accepted, there have also been examples of critical questioning, such as Nnedi Okorafor's rejection of the 2017 World Fantasy Award because of her discomfort as a black writer at possessing an award modeled after Lovecraft, a demonstrable racist. Poole recognises that Lovecraft's views on race informed his writing, and that it would thus be irresponsible to separate them (228).

When Lovecraft's characters face the unknown, they face the racial other in monstrous form. Both "At the Mountains of Madness" (1936) and "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928) put their scientifically minded protagonists against a bigger-than-life force bent on erasing humanity; each protagonist is defeated by racially mingled monsters and left with a sense of impending doom. The racial component in Lovecraft's cosmic horror of elder gods manifests in his fear of these cosmic forces

working in tandem with the other to overthrow the Anglo-Saxon centre (Poole 223). This sentiment surfaces in the monster of "The Horror at Red Hook".

According to Frye, Lovecraft echoes in his writings the works of eugenicists Henry Goddard and Madison Grant, who claimed that the mixing of races would ruin the "superior" Aryan bloodline (238–53). In his 1905 treatise, *The Color Line: A Brief On Behalf of the Unborn*, William Benjamin Smith condemns the decision of the Democratic party to free enslaved African-American people, arguing that black people are inferior to white people, and a source of pollution to its racial purity (10). Based on similar arguments, the Immigration Restriction League was founded in 1894 to limit the number of immigrants entering the US, under the belief that the growing immigrant population would cause an increase in poverty, unemployment, and crime. These events mirror the ones that created the parasitic monster in the Gothic novel, and they have the same effect in "Red Hook": a monster already lives among the society it threatens to destroy.

Unlike other Lovecraft stories, "Red Hook" does not take place in an isolated town or a place that would seem far away to a white American. It is set in Red Hook, New York, about 100 kilometres north of New York City along the Hudson River. Furthermore, while there are various mentions of the supernatural, these entities barely make an appearance in the tale. Yet Lovecraft creates a horror story in the mundane setting of Red Hook when he turns the metaphor of the unknown into plain text: the monster does not allude to the other, it *is* the other. Influenced by Margaret Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) – an anthropologic genealogy of witch cults in Europe – "The Horror at Red Hook" centres on the ancient magic practices of the non-white American coming in contact with the white American, and the ensuing horror that comes with the union of such powers – this premise can be read as a response to fear of miscegenation. The tale was written during Lovecraft's marriage to Sonia Greene (Joshi). He was appalled by the multicultural lifestyle that surrounded him in New York City. As Greene writes:

> He became livid with rage at the foreign elements he would see in large number, especially at noon-time, in the streets of New York City, and I would try to calm his outbursts by saying: "You don't have to love them; but hating them so outrageously cannot do any good". It was then that he said: "It is more important to know what to hate than it is to know what to love". (qtd. in Joshi)

The "purity" of the Anglo-Saxon bloodline and the "threat" that other races posed to it were an integral part of both Lovecraft's work and life; the Weird was a tool that enabled him to encode the racial other as a monster and interact with miscegenation, where his reaction to the immigrants of New York is identical to how his characters behave upon discovering alien races, or that they are descendants of said races (Luckhurst, Introduction xxv–xxvii).

Luckhurst points out that border zones, where the unknown inhabits, are a common part of the Weird tale (*Weird* 1055–57). Cohen writes that the monster polices the Outside border, where the racial, sexual, religious, or politic norms of a social and cultural group are broken (15–16). In "Red Hook", the monster inhabits the border zone of Red Hook, and it is represented by a racial difference that, because it cannot be homogenised into white America, erases norms.

Lovecraft describes Red Hook with negative connotations, giving monstrous features to different aspects of Red Hook's people: religion becomes "spiritual putrescence", language plurality "assails" the sky, groups of people become "hordes of

prowlers", and their faces – signs of race and identity – are "sin-pitted" (6). Lovecraft's immigrant population is not a community of individuals, but a hive-mind that attempts to contaminate white American society. The monster in *Red Hook* is a parasite, standing in for the fear of miscegenation and the corruption of race.

Suydam's criminal associates are "the blackest and most vicious criminals of Red Hook's devious lanes … offenders in the matter of thievery, disorder, and the importation of illegal immigrants" (9). Malone's objective is to "to compute their numbers, ascertain their sources and occupations, and find if possible a way to round them up and deliver them to the proper immigration authorities" (10). The problem the Red Hook criminals present is a "category crisis" (Cohen 6–7): there are too many of them, they participate in multiple illegal activities, their "sources and occupations" are unknown. In this manner, Lovecraft continues to blur the line between horror story and his actual racism through the process of othering (creating a monster). He describes immigrant criminals wearing American clothes as grotesque (10). The combination of something other and something American equating to nothing else but the grotesque is sign of Lovecraft's fear of the parasitic monster invading and corrupting home.

The only characters of importance in "Red Hook" are Thomas Malone and Robert Suydam: hero and antagonist. Malone, a police officer, is meant to reflect the author's thinking: he is an observer of the chaos caused by the immigrants living in Red Hook. He's curious about the immigrants' religious practices; when he becomes aware of the elder god, he – as Lovecraft's protagonists do – loses his sanity, unsure as to when the eventual end of (white) humankind will arrive, but assured that it will happen (22–23).

In Lovecraft's "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1927), the narrator discovers that he is a descendant of an Innsmouth resident, a town that has being breeding with the Deep Ones (a race of humanoid fishes) for decades; later, his body acquires the characteristics of the monsters (639–41). The parasitic and alien Deep Ones stand for the racial other, while the degradation of the Innsmouth townspeople and the narrator stands for miscegenation. Similarly, Robert Suydam is an expression of miscegenation where the source of corruption is a direct – if still exaggerated and fantastical – representation of the racial other in the form of Red Hook's people. Malone expresses the supposed dangers of allowing the other to mingle with white "civilised" society:

> He would often regard it as merciful that most persons of high intelligence jeer at the inmost mysteries; for, he argued, if superior minds were ever placed in fullest contact with the secrets preserved by ancient and lowly cults, the resultant abnormalities would soon not only wreck the world, but threaten the very integrity of the universe. (5)

Cohen argues that the monster is a double narrative: a story of how the monster came to be and a cautionary tale on how to avoid becoming the monster by following the established rules of society (13–14). Suydam embodies this double narrative. When his knowledge of the "inmost mysteries" of "lowly cults" increases, he undergoes a monstrous transformation. The "superior mind" (the white) establishing a relationship with "lowly cults" (the other) serves as a warning on the dangers of miscegenation.

Red Hook's inhabitants act as a single force, which aligns them with Cohen's interpretation of the monster as a "category crisis" (6–7). Lovecraft mentions the "Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and negro elements" of Red Hook, but still relegates them to

a single unit when he describes its people as a "hopeless tangle and enigma" and a "maze of hybrid squalor" (6). All differences that white society cannot homogenise are merged into one uncategorisable monster. Lovecraft translates the racial and cultural differences he finds in Red Hook into the fear of a breakdown in white society through the intervention of an outside other. The fact that Red Hook houses difference in every corner only adds to the chaos of trying to classify it.

In this regard, Lovecraft's Red Hook acts like a monster from another of his tales. In "The Call of Cthulhu", he describes the eponymous creature as "of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws … and long, narrow wings behind" (134). The category crisis here arises from the varied number Cthulhu's animal characteristics, unrelated to one another and fused into a single body. In "The Horror at Red Hook", Lovecraft opts for exaggerating what is already different and heterogeneous to him.

A – perhaps unconscious – consequence of the way Lovecraft portrays Red Hook is its lack of depth. Suydam is the one who moves the plot forward by leading his criminal group, while Red Hook's people have the only characteristic of being the monster bent on disrupting white society. In this, both "Red Hook" and *Dracula* are similar, in that their monsters lack voices of their own, while their actions are told through the points of view of other, non-monstrous, white characters (Halberstam 90–91). Lovecraft writes with what Rieder calls the colonial gaze: the tendency of white authors to write the other as technologically impaired relative to a white counterpart, and thus inferior to them. The white reader marvels along with the characters at the customs of the other, although never reframing it outside of being "inferior" (7–9). While Rieder uses the colonial gaze to explain the other in early science-fiction literature – hence the emphasis on technology as an indicator of status – this same tendency is visible in the relationship between Suydam and Red Hook. Suydam is the white "superior mind" who commands the "lowly cults" of Red Hook and takes away the voice of its people.

Lovecraft's monster as a parasite is further indicated by the line: "Policemen despair of order or reform, and seek rather to erect barriers protecting the outside world from the contagion", where the other is referred to as a sickness that needs to be contained to avoid further contamination outside of Red Hook (6). He uses physical elements of the other to create differences between the self and the other, but these aspects also come from nationality and the foreignness of Red Hook. As Florack argues, stereotypes can be used in fiction to form characters; whether these stereotypes are portrayed with good intention or not depends on the cultural and historical context of the author (494). Florack also mentions how these national stereotypes ossify when certain pieces of information regarding a nation's people become accepted by the self's group regardless of their accuracy (482–92).

One example of this in Lovecraft's fiction is "The Picture in the House" (1921), in which, as Klinger notes in *The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft,* Lovecraft uses nonfactual information about a Congo tribe to inform the reader of the cannibalistic horror that unfolds in the tale (34). Similarly, Lovecraft's Red Hook is informed by the beliefs that immigrants bring poverty, crime, and unemployment, as well as by Lovecraft's own biased interest in the ancient mysticism of the other (Poole 221). Lovecraft's racist discourse informs Red Hook as a monster; therefore, Red Hook is described only through exaggerated physical difference and other aspects of nationality, such as language and religion.

While influential, Lovecraft's Weird tales have a deep connection to his racist views, making it impossible to separate them. When interviewed by Weinstock, author China Miéville posits that, in order to approach Lovecraft, one cannot simply acknowledge his racism or excuse it; rather, it must be confronted head on to "metabolize" it ("Afterword" 241–42). This means that, as with biological metabolism, new approaches to the Weird must ingest Lovecraft as a whole, while seeking to confront and eliminate the most distasteful elements of his fiction. Often, Lovecraft's racism is excused as a natural characteristic "of its time", but this posture only obscures racism as if it were an archaic anomaly that no longer exists (Miéville, Introduction). The Weird should not write along with Lovecraft, but counter to him. The following chapter shows how LaValle's rewriting of "Red Hook" counters the racism of Lovecraft's monster.

3. The Ballad of Black Tom

Victor LaValle's *The Ballad of Black Tom* is written as a direct answer to Lovecraft's "Red Hook". In a similar way to how Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* (1969) focuses the plot of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610–1611) on Caliban, *The Ballad of Black Tom* tells Lovecraft's Weird tale from the point of view of a previously unseen character. In LaValle's version, Thomas Tester – an African-American "hustler" and failed street musician from New York – narrates how he meets Robert Suydam and joins his criminal group. LaValle's work is a commentary on Lovecraft's views on race and how those relate to African-American people of both Lovecraft's time and now – LaValle being a 21st-century African-American author from New York himself. Unlike Césaire's rewriting of Shakespeare, which reinterprets the functions of the characters – if Caliban is now the oppressed hero, then Prospero must fulfil the role of villainous oppressor (Vaughan 302) – LaValle does not negate Lovecraft's portrayal of Red Hook and its people as monstrous. What LaValle seeks to do instead is to explain how Red Hook's immigrant and African-American populations became a monster.

While Lovecraft's monster appears fully formed in "Red Hook", LaValle shows Thomas Tester's transformation into the monster Black Tom. The actions and behaviours of Thomas Tester/Black Tom act in opposition to Lovecraft's monster: where Lovecraft's monster acts as an extension of a white character (Suydam) and the only characteristics of it Lovecraft offers are descriptions to accentuate difference and horror, LaValle's monster starts as a human character that reaches monster status when the white centre shuns him and makes him the marginal other. When we see the monster arise, Thomas Tester/Black Tom becomes a victim of horror instead of being the sole perpetrator of it.

Cohen argues that the cyclic nature of the monster allows it to convey a deeper understanding of how people perceive the world in each new iteration of itself (20). Halberstam's reading of Gothic novels asserts that the separation of monstrosity from what it makes monstrous (sexual, racial, religious, economic, national difference) might lead to a discourse that opposes the norms the monsters were meant to enforce (112). LaValle does not separate the monstrous from racism; he focuses the plot on the people made monolithic by Lovecraft in order to dissect the systems that make the other monstrous. In this manner, when Lovecraft's "Red Hook" monster returns in the form of LaValle's monster, it brings with it a wider understanding of racism. However, Lovecraft's Weird tale is separated from racism as the source of horror.

When questioned about Lovecraft in an interview with Maurice Broaddus, LaValle uses a metaphor where Lovecraft stands for a relative who, despite faults, he still loves (122). When LaValle confronts "The Horror at Red Hook", he understands that the separation of the Weird tale from its racism is a key process to counter its prejudices instead of obscuring them or erasing them completely. The relative loved in childhood (Lovecraft's Weird tale) is still loved, but its racism is made explicit and condemned.

At the beginning of *The Ballad of Black Tom*, Thomas Tester's father urges him to get a job at the same construction company at which he works. Thomas refuses due to the poor health in which years of construction work has left his father. Thomas's mother has died because of her extremely demanding job as a maid. Rather than accepting the jobs that white society offers him, Tester prefers to live as a "hustler", as he has had little to no success in his musical career (LaValle 10–11). Unlike Lovecraft's monster, LaValle's Thomas Tester/Black Tom is introduced as a character with a personal life and intrinsic motivations. From here on, Thomas's interactions with white society are about his attempts to survive it. When leaving his home in Harlem to do his "hustle" in Queens, he restrains himself from behaving in his usual manner:

> The open arms of the natural world worried him as much as the white people, both so alien to him. When he passed whites on the street, he kept his gaze down and his shoulders soft. Men from Harlem were known for their strut, a lion's stride, but out here he hid it away. (LaValle 13)

When interrogated by Malone and another police officer, Tester's response is to acquiesce to white society's assumptions about him to protect himself: "He decided to play a role that always worked on whites. The Clueless Negro. 'I cain't says, suh,' Tommy began. 'I's just a simple geetar man'" (LaValle 25). The way Tester recoils when in contact with white society mirrors Fanon's assertion that "willy-nilly, the Negro has to wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him" (22).

Yet Tester's view of the other is not based solely on his perceptions of white Americans. He takes his father to the Victoria Society, a social club for Caribbean immigrants, for a night of excess; he assumes the place is an opium den with women performing erotic dances, but he feels guilty and disappointed when he discovers the place "might as well be a British tearoom" (LaValle 29), which contradicts his image of Caribbean immigrants. As Cohen would put it, Tester had already changed one aspect of Caribbean people – their nationality – into another: crime and eroticism (10). Tester cannot avoid othering or being othered himself because he lives in a system obsessed with one group being superior over the rest. However, he is willing to reverse his views on the other.

Suydam, still the "superior mind" with an interest in "lowly cults", offers to pay Tester a large sum of money if he plays guitar at a party in his house, which he accepts. Once in Suydam's mansion, Tester starts to play when Suydam begins to rehearse a speech that he plans to deliver to his band of criminal immigrants from various parts of New York. Words of Suydam's speech are lifted from "Red Hook": "'Your people,' Robert Suydam began. 'Your people are forced to live in mazes of hybrid squalor. It is all sound and filth and spiritual putrescence'" (LaValle 47). By repositioning the words from Lovecraft's omnipresent narration to the villainous speech of Suydam, LaValle creates a polyphony – a contrast of the original meaning of the words and the one LaValle gives them – that puts Lovecraft into question, displaying his racism under critique (Bakhtin 31; Hutcheon 91–92).

Suydam narrates how, in pursuit of his wealth, his family gathered evidence of his mental inferiority to convince the police to launch an investigation of him. LaValle maintains Suydam's role of white man turned monster by interacting with the other, but reframes him as a victim: his family uses his interest in mysticism to convince the police he is "feeble minded" – a reference to Lovecraft's support of eugenics and the forged results of eugenic research, such as Henry Goddard's manipulation of photos, where he made his subjects appear as "mental and social defectives" (Black). LaValle demonstrates the negative effects of othering: Tester hides his confident self when othered by police, he feels guilt when he others Caribbean people, and Suydam's othering exiles him from white society.

After Suydam confesses to his plan to wake the Sleeping King, Tester escapes Suydam's mansion only to find out that his connection to Suydam has made him part of the investigation, and that a police officer has killed his father. The murder of Tester's father, innocent and defenseless, reflects the ways American police officers treat African-Americans, where police killings of black people. Martinot asserts that the United States has seen numerous cases where police agents create situations where the "only" course of action is to shoot and kill innocent people of colour, often resorting to the excuse of feeling threatened by harmless objects that looked like firearms (58–59); in this case, Tester's father's guitar is the gun-like object, and serves as a pretext that replaces race as a reason to treat black people as monsters. It can be argued that black people are part of Cohen's concept of "monstrous history" as well.

Consumed by grief after his father's murder, Tester joins Suydam's group, thus beginning his transformation into a monster. As Suydam addresses his group with the same speech, Tester reconsiders his purpose: "Destroy it all, then hand what was left over to Suydam and these gathered goons? What would they do different? Mankind didn't make messes; mankind was the mess" (LaValle 76). LaValle's monster differs from Lovecraft's in that it does not threaten to shift the *status quo* of white society over to the other, but instead seeks to eliminate the systems that perpetuate the existence of monsters; in other words, eliminate racism. To Suydam's shock, Tester enters the Outside realm where the Sleeping King lives, completing his transformation.

The rest of the tale follows Malone's investigation after discovering that Suydam and Tester – now Black Tom – take ownership of three buildings in Parker Place. Inside one of the buildings, Suydam and Black Tom begin their ritual to wake the Sleeping King while Malone observes; however, Black Tom kills Suydam and takes command of the ritual. Black Tom explains to Malone that he does not seek to obtain power, but to cause destruction, and the following exchange occurs: "'You're a monster, then,' Malone said. 'I was made one'" (LaValle 136). Thomas Tester's transformation into Black Tom is the result of surrendering to white assumptions about him. This sentiment is echoed at the end of the story: Black Tom returns to the Victoria Society to talk with Buckeye, a Caribbean friend of his, and tells him that "nobody here ever called [him] a monster, so why'd [he] go running somewhere else, to be treated like a dog?" (LaValle 147).

As the ritual to wake the Sleeping King continues, Black Tom cuts Malone's eyelids and tells him that he won't be able to "choose blindness when it suits [him]" (LaValle 133). This is symbolic of Malone's role in "Red Hook". Lovecraft's Malone is an observer as described by Edward Said: like an Orientalist observer, Malone chooses to be fascinated by the other's mysticism, but repulsed by everything else about the other (98–99). When Black Tom cuts his eyelids, he robs him of his ability to choose what pleases or interests him about the other. Houellebecq describes Lovecraft's

characters as ones that only perceive (62). Since Lovecraft's characters perceive race in the same manner he does (Luckhurst, Introduction xxvi), by attacking Malone's eyes, LaValle reinforces his critique of Lovecraft's world*view*.

The building collapses with the ritual inconclusive. Malone is rescued, but Black Tom is nowhere to be found. Unable to recover his humanity, Black Tom informs Buckeye of the eventual arrival of the Sleeping King, then vanishes. When Malone shares his account of the events, no one believes him. This may represent the triumph of white culture over otherness: without eyelids, Malone cannot choose to ignore the other, but remaining white people persist in observing and imposing their own white values.

4. Conclusion

Cohen states that the monster always returns with a major understanding of human condition; each iteration of a monster is the same theme as seen through the lenses of current social context (20). LaValle's reincarnation of the "Red Hook" monster comes back with Miéville's stand on Lovecraft: Black Tom is not separated from the racism that originates him, nor is this racism excused and never mentioned again. Instead, the racism inscribed in Black Tom is confronted and questioned. In Miéville's terms, LaValle metabolises – appropriates, then faces and erases – the racism within Lovecraft.

While Houellebecq acknowledges that Lovecraft's hatred, even if tragic, is the source of his narrative's horror (115) and Poole distinguishes between Lovecraft and his fiction to warn others about the implications of using him as a paragon for modern schools of philosophy (228), LaValle attains Miéville's metabolisation. Halberstam writes that "monsters have to be everything the human is not and, in producing the negative of human, [monsters] make way for the invention of human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual" (22). When Black Tom affirms that "Mankind didn't make messes; mankind was the mess" (76), he becomes an expression of the non-human that sees the human as intolerant and prejudicial. He favors the elimination of systems that propagate monsters (othering) instead of establishing a new *status quo* that fosters the proliferation of monsters. Although LaValle casts Black Tom as the monster, the resulting invention of the human is a negative one where monsters (othering) are a consequence of the human condition, not an Outside invader. The monster might threaten to destroy society, but those who made it a monster were the ones who gave it its mission.

Monsters always return, bringing with them a further understanding of the culture that produced them (Cohen 4–6). Black Tom, a reincarnation of "Red Hook's" monster, brings a deeper knowledge of the one-sided process of othering, taking as a central argument racial stereotypes. Black Tom works as a symbol of rejection of a white system of values that has systematically diminished and demonised other cultures in reality as well as fiction.

Acknowledgements

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Enlightening the Cave: Gollum's Cave as a Threshold between Worlds in J.R.R. Tolkien's "Riddles in the Dark"

Katariina Kärkelä

Abstract: This article presents a parallel reading of the chapter "Riddles in the Dark" from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Plato's Allegory of the Cave that appears in *The Republic.* Plato's metaphysical and epistemological views, known as the theory of forms, provide the theoretical foundation for the analysis in which the literal and figurative meanings of the cave motif are of primary interest. The Allegory of the Cave will be examined alongside the Analogy of the Sun in a manner that takes into account both their literal and analogous aspects, and *The Republic* will be seen not only as a theoretical work of philosophy but as an eloquent literary dialogue as well. The analysis focuses on the characters of Gollum and Bilbo and considers the moments of entering and leaving the subterranean cave as a transition between different metaphysical and epistemic positions. This article is centred around the cave-thematic, but also takes into account the motifs of light, seeing, and blindness that are very common in Tolkien's fiction: the preliminary assumption is that light and darkness have great epistemic value in Tolkien's fiction not only symbolically but literally, and Plato's Analogy of the Sun will be used to illustrate and justify this reading. The questions pondered in this article rise from the overall problems of the metaphysical structure of Tolkien's fantasy universe as well as its epistemic laws as represented by the symbol of the cave.

Keywords: Literature and philosophy; theory of forms; knowledge in fiction; Plato; J.R.R. Tolkien

Introduction

There are strange things living in the pools and lakes in the hearts of mountains: fish whose fathers swam in, goodness only knows how many years ago, and never swam out again, while their eyes grew bigger and bigger and bigger from trying to see in the blackness; also there are other things more slimy than fish.

Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, pp. 62–63

In this blackness that so distresses Bilbo Baggins as he is separated from his companions deep in the tunnels of the Misty Mountains lives another creature with large, gleaming eyes well accustomed to life without sunlight. Gollum, who is said to be "as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 63), has dwelt for years in solitude by a subterranean lake until suddenly joined by Bilbo, the protagonist of J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*, first published in 1937. Bilbo, who is recruited on a quest with 13 dwarves and Gandalf the wizard, gets lost in the mountains after his company is ambushed by goblins. Wandering in the dark, he comes across Gollum and unwillingly gambles for his own life in a game of riddles with him. Their encounter sets in motion a series of events that is significant not only to the future of Middle-earth but to the characters themselves.

This article examines the literal and symbolical meanings of Gollum's cave with respect to Plato's theory of Forms, and his famous Allegory of the Cave in particular. Gollum's cave can be interpreted as a symbol that represents the twofold nature of Tolkien's fictional universe: it consists of the abstract world of ideas and the physical world of perception, with the division between them influencing the entire universe both metaphysically and epistemically. Alongside the cave, the recurrent motif of light has an important role in the analysis: in Plato's philosophy sunlight holds great epistemic significance, and this also can be said to apply to Tolkien's fictional universe. The Allegory of the Cave and the Analogy of the Sun are closely connected in Plato's theory, and this paper also brings them together: the workings of the cave are centred around the motif of light and the tensions between the sun, shadows, and darkness – the world that *is* and the world that *seems*. The following analysis focuses mainly on two significant chapters: the aforementioned "Riddles in the Dark" from *The Hobbit* and "The Shadow of the Past" from *The Lord of the Rings*. Including the latter in the analysis is required because in this chapter Gandalf sheds light on important details that received less attention in *The Hobbit*, including Gollum's personal history and his decision to live underground: the role of the cave is further explained in this chapter, permitting a deeper analysis.

Theoretically, this article draws mostly from Plato's philosophy, particularly his view on epistemology and the role of sunlight. The theoretical constructions later known as the theory of forms have been formulated by scholars based on Plato's dialogues, including *The Republic*, in which the Allegory of the Cave and Analogy of the Sun are presented. My reading of Gollum's cave and its symbolical significance is in many ways parallel to Plato's allegories; however, I also intend to find deeper structural and thematic connections that are more fundamental than the literal, mostly superficial similarities. Since the theories have largely been constructed by later scholars and the traditions of interpretation concerning Plato's philosophy are many and multi-faceted, for the purposes of this article, I have chosen to focus on fairly canonical and generally accepted notions. The motif of light in Tolkien's legendarium, on the other hand, has been thoroughly discussed by the well-known Tolkien scholar Verlyn Flieger in her book *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*. Her analyses have significantly shaped the approach of this article.

My approach is to read the two chapters by Tolkien side by side with the Allegory of the Cave and the Analogy of the Sun; in other words, I approach *The Republic* not only as a theoretical work of philosophy but also as a literary dialogue. When such perspective is adopted, the problematic – and undeniably long – relationship between literature and philosophy needs to be acknowledged. Jukka

Mikkonen, for instance, has studied this connection in his dissertation *Philosophy through Literature: The Cognitive Value of Philosophical Fiction*. According to Mikkonen, the traditions of the two branches often overlap: while philosophical theories sometimes receive their expression in the form of literary writing (including Plato's dialogues, in spite of his own sceptical attitude towards art and literature expressed in *The Republic*; see p. 673 [600c, 610a–b]), works of literature and fiction can entertain philosophical issues (14). In this article *The Republic* is primarily used as the foundation of the theoretical framework, but the analysis of the two caves – Gollum's and Plato's – includes instances where quotations from *The Republic* are treated as pieces of literary art.

Because of the chosen literary-philosophical approach, the literal and allegorical perspectives become intertwined: I pay attention to the literal aspects of Plato's cave while the actual, physical cave under the Misty Mountains is revealed to hold great symbolic significance with respect to knowledge and the structural hierarchy of the world, including Gollum's twisted notion of the surrounding reality. The literary nature of Plato's dialogues also requires cautious interpretations for another reason: it is far from clear to whom the philosophical views can be attributed in the end, since it is usually Plato's version of Socrates who delivers the crucial notions; it is therefore uncertain whether the views are genuinely congruent with Plato's own opinions. For clarity's sake I have decided to refer to the theories as Plato's, although the character of Socrates occasionally surfaces.

The first section of the analysis begins with an account of the two caves, the allegorical and the literal, then presents a more thorough examination of their epistemological and metaphysical characteristics. In particular, anamnesis, Plato's theory of learning as a process of recalling forgotten ideas is a matter of interest: my assumption is that the cave deprives the mind of things with which it was once familiar, and that this is precisely and quite literally what happens to Gollum. Gollum's character is also at the centre of the analysis in the second section, which looks more closely at the sense of sight and the two-way blindness caused either by entering the cave or leaving it behind. In this section Gollum's aversion to light and the outside world is of particular interest, and the Analogy of the Sun alongside the recurring motif of light in Tolkien's fiction becomes more prominent.

Turning Away from the Idea: The Cave and Gollum's Chosen Imprisonment

In Plato's philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology are tightly intertwined, and the metaphysical structure of the world determines not only what is genuine and what is not, but also what knowledge concerns and what it does not. According to theory of forms, which is one of the classical solutions to the problem of universals, the world consists of two levels: the everyday perceptible world and forms or ideas. Of these two Plato holds the world of forms primary and true: it is aspatial and atemporal, permanent and unchanging, whereas the physical world of perception is uncertain and unreliable. The forms are substantial and represent the most accurate reality. The physical world, on the other hand, is a mere shadow of the higher ideas, their imperfect copy. Perceptible objects are subject to change and circumstances, but the forms they mimic are not: the forms contain the essence of every particular object, the very core without which they would not be the exact thing they are (Kraut).

Plato uses the Allegory of the Cave and the Analogy of the Sun to illustrate the problems of perception and the different levels of reality. In the Allegory of the Cave a group of prisoners is kept chained in a cave, never getting to know the outside world. The only things they see are shadows on the walls cast by a fire, and to them these shadows appear to be the only reality, things they name and believe in. The prisoners are indeed reluctant to face the world outside due to its strangeness and alien nature. Should one of them be released and led to the world outside, they would discover the truer reality and finally the sun that for Plato represents the highest of ideas, but they would be dazzled by its brilliance and unable to look at it. Once they return to the cave, after they have become used to the sudden brightness of Idea, the darkness makes them blind, just as the sun did outside, making them seem ridiculous in the eyes of those who never perceived the truer world outside (469–75 [514a–517a]). The Analogy of the Sun is presented when Glaucon, the interlocutor of Socrates, asks him about the definition of Good, a question that Socrates is hesitant to answer (455 [506d–e]). The sun has great epistemic significance in Plato's philosophy: it has the power to illuminate objects and to reveal them in their true form and nature. Metaphorically it is the sun, the Form of the Good or "the child of goodness", as it is called in the Analogy, that makes knowledge possible by illuminating reality with truth. Because knowledge does not concern the world of perception, truth and knowledge are to be striven for with mind rather than senses (460–61 [508c–e]).

Applying the theory of forms to Tolkien's fiction is not a straightforward task given the multi-layered structure of the fictional universe of Arda, its creation, and its metaphysical hierarchy. The Platonic elements in Tolkien's fiction, especially regarding creation and the layered nature of the universe, have been a matter of interest in several previous studies.[1] My approach in this article is based on the assumption that Tolkien's fictional world consists of both the primary world of abstraction and that of physical objects. The first thing to mark is that when Plato's notion of metaphysical hierarchy is applied to the fantasy universe, it necessarily follows that the world outside Gollum's cave is secondary and less genuine as such – leaving the tunnels of the Misty Mountains does not mean entrance to the world of Forms but an entrance back to everyday reality. However, the cave works as a figurative illustration of the overall structure of the fictional world and the transitions between different levels, both epistemically and metaphysically.

I argue that even though all the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* are involved with the world of perception and the physical reality of which Middle-earth is a part, the characters vary greatly. Gollum, as I intend to show, has turned his back on the reality to which he belongs, shunning sunlight and rejecting the chance to see the world as it truly is. This rejection, the clearest turning-point, takes place when Gollum seeks shelter under the Misty Mountains and lives voluntarily in the cave, turning his back on the sunlit world. The first – and extremely important – similarity between Plato's cave and Gollum's dwelling is that the inhabitants are not born there. In *The Republic* the character of Socrates explains that the prisoners have lived in a cave-like dwelling since childhood – not since birth (469 [514a]). This is a matter I will soon return to. The moment of transition between the above-ground and underground worlds assumes that Gollum is drawn to things deep and dark already by

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[1] These include for instance Jyrki Korpua's dissertation and Gergely Nagy's article "Saving the Myths: The Re-creation of Mythology in Plato and Tolkien". Korpua studies the metaphysical hierarchy of Tolkien's world (see especially 45–71, 87–94), while Nagy focuses on the similarities between Plato's and Tolkien's use of myths.

nature, which means that his problematic relationship with the reality outside the cave had already begun before his self-chosen imprisonment:

> The most inquisitive and curious-minded of that family was called Sméagol. He was interested in roots and beginnings; he dived into deep pools; he burrowed under trees and growing plants; he tunneled into green mounds; and he ceased to look up at the hill-tops, or the leaves on trees, or the flowers opening in the air: his head and his eyes were downward. (Tolkien, *LotR* 54)

> All the 'great secrets' under the mountains had turned out to be just empty night: there was nothing more to find out, nothing worth doing, only nasty furtive eating and resentful remembering. He was altogether wretched. He hated the dark, and he hated light more: he hated everything, and the Ring most of all. (56)

The above two passages are both included in the account given by Gandalf in the chapter "The Shadow of the Past". In particular, the first paragraph creates a sharp juxtaposition between low and high, dark and bright. A moral estimation is also present: metaphorically the dark and low are seen as something negative, whereas the high and bright are considered good and worth pursuing. This, of course, is a common division; Korpua, for instance, has pointed out the tendency in Tolkien's work to associate light with good and shadows with bad (54). Gandalf's account reveals that Gollum has, literally and symbolically, turned his gaze to the ground, peering into the dark and eventually shunning light completely – and this quality is innate, not induced by the foul, corruptive power of the Ring or Gollum's life in the cave. Additionally, the descriptions of Gollum's movements emphasise the way he is drawn to the ground, the deep, and darkness rather than light and air: he crawls rather than walks, using both his hands and his feet to make his way. Taking all of this into account, Gollum can be said to be a creature fond of cool and dark places in which he can see and perceive others but remain safe from inquisitive eyes himself. The chance to hide, to see and not be seen, is something the Ring enables by making its bearer invisible. A similar sense of safety is also provided by the cave under the Misty Mountains where Gollum has dwelt for centuries: despite the complete darkness, Gollum himself can see, whereas intruders cannot. The sense of sight and the motif of blindness become essential in the next section, but for now the analysis focuses on the role of the cave as an epistemic prison that severs connection with the outside world, obscures perception, and erases memory.

Interestingly, Gollum's decision to abandon the aboveground world is triggered by reflections and indirect contact with the sun:

> One day it was very hot, and as he was bending over a pool, he felt a burning on the back of his head, and a dazzling light from the water pained his wet eyes. He wondered at it, for he had almost forgotten about the Sun. Then for the last time he looked up and shook his fist at her. (Tolkien, *LotR* 55)

Plato's allegory is rich with shadows and reflections, and they make regular appearances in the descriptions of Gollum's worldview. Shadows and echoes form the only known world to the prisoners of Plato's cave, and should they be released and led outside, shadows and reflections of things would be all they could see at first because of the unbearable brightness. For Gollum as well, the transition between the different levels happens gradually, but the direction is the opposite: living in the aboveground world, he begins to resent the reality and seek the shadows, and is finally appalled by

the mere reflection of the sun. The cave offers that which Gollum sought already before descending underground where he dwelt until Bilbo's unintended visit and the loss of the One Ring.

The wandering Bilbo breaks Gollum's isolation in an exchange of riddles. Of these one in particular is fascinating in the context of the motif of light and the slowly breaking walls of Gollum's epistemic prison. Gollum had spent centuries in the cave as his memories of the world as it truly is were wiped away. The process of recollection is most essential, and Plato's theory of anamnesis becomes relevant once Bilbo asks one of his riddles. The cave isolates Gollum quite literally from light and, surprisingly, reunion happens by the sun coming into the cave, not by Gollum leaving the tunnels behind:

> An eye in a blue face
> Saw an eye in a green face.
> 'That eye is like to this eye'
> Said the first eye,
> 'But in low place,
> Not in high place.'
>
> 'Ss, ss, ss,' said Gollum. He had been underground a long long time, and was forgetting this sort of thing. But just as Bilbo was beginning to hope that the wretch would not be able to answer, Gollum brought up memories of ages and ages and ages before. (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 65)

The answer to Bilbo's riddle is, as Gollum successfully guesses, the sun on daisies. Bilbo's presence reminds Gollum of his earlier years, his life with his family before the Ring – indeed, the game of riddles itself is something he has secretly missed (64–65). In addition to all this, Bilbo brings with him a memory of the sun that Gollum has denied for centuries. It is not meaningless that light enters Gollum's life verbally rather than directly as something perceptible. It could even be said that at first it is only the long-forgotten idea of light with which Gollum again gets in touch: with Bilbo's riddle the name and the memory of the sun return to Gollum, unwelcome as they are. The cave is no longer without sun, the enemy Gollum shunned in the first place – its idea has returned and, if the Analogy of the Sun is brought into the analysis, made everything else clearer with it, enabling access to knowledge, truth, and genuine reality. For Plato, the sun represents the Form of the Good without which all knowledge is inaccessible. The riddle thus ignites the process of recollection, and Gollum's self-wrought cage of epistemic isolation begins to fail.

I claim that relative to Gollum's epistemic position represented by the cave it is the process of recollection that is of highest importance. According to Plato's concept of anamnesis, gaining knowledge and learning are, in fact, rediscovering something that has merely been forgotten, because knowledge is innate to the immortal soul. Plato, basing his theory on the process of rebirth, claims that the ideas innate to the soul are wiped away in the moment of reincarnation and must be learned again (Kraut). Anamnesis is something that is presupposed in the epistemic whole of Arda, but it seldom surfaces. Anamnesis – although it is naturally never called so in Tolkien's fiction – is discussed most thoroughly (and, ironically enough, in the form of a dialogue between two characters) in a section named "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" from the posthumously published *Morgoth's Ring*, and I interpret Gollum's recollection as one of its implied instances. Bluntly stated, Gollum has foresaken the

knowledge he once possessed when descending into the cave, and has wilfully remained ignorant until Bilbo's riddle evokes his memories: the name of the sun, the metaphorical Form of the Good, reopens access to knowledge for him even before he leaves the darkness of his cave. The process of recalling initiated by Bilbo's riddle cannot be undone: the idea of the sun has returned to Gollum, if only on a verbal level, and that which was intentionally forgotten and abandoned is creeping back. In fact, a reunion that happens on the level of thought could be seen as the most valuable one, since for Plato, as noted above, true knowledge should be pursued through mind, not perception. I read this reunion as a chance for Gollum to take a step closer to the world of Forms, to the truer (albeit not quite genuine) reality. Gollum, however, refuses to take this opportunity to reconnect with the world: it is his obsession with the Ring that eventually leads him out of the cave, but his hatred of light and, according to my interpretation, of reality in its truest state, remains. Thus the process of anamnesis begins but is disrupted by Gollum himself.

The Cave as a Threshold of Seeing: Transitions Between the Two Worlds

This article began with a quotation in which the impregnable darkness and the sense of sight are brought to the fore. Seeing and blindness are significant motifs that continue to surface in the descriptions of Gollum's cave and the moments the characters spend there. Read in the context of Plato's epistemological views, the question of seeing must be approached metaphorically: Plato's philosophy is founded on the notion of physical reality as the secondary one, and therefore perception cannot provide genuine knowledge. In my reading the motifs of seeing and blindness do not refer to perceptual knowledge and the sensory world; rather, they work as illustrations of the characters' epistemic situation, especially transitions between the different levels of reality. This section continues the cave analysis but focuses more specifically on blindness that is induced either by light or by its absence.

While the Allegory of the Cave still forms the basis of the analysis, the Analogy of the Sun requires a more detailed examination. The absence of light is what makes Plato's Cave what it is after all: a place not of knowledge but of conjecture and illusion. Gollum's departure from the cave and his reactions to the outside world in particular bear great resemblance to Socrates's description of the released prisoner who sees the real world again, although the crucial difference is that in Gollum's case, as stated in the conclusion of the previous section, the process fails to become complete: he never readjusts to life outside the cave, and many things remain hateful to him until the end. In the deep dark of Gollum's cave, subterranean creatures struggle to see, and their eyes grow ever bigger and bigger. Seeing is, naturally and also physically, a matter of adjustment, and Gollum's eyes no longer have need of sunlight – quite the contrary, in fact. I will now give two descriptions of seeing and light, one uttered by Plato's Socrates, one written about Bilbo's poor state and confusion:

> And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities (Plato 472 [515e–516a]).

> When Bilbo opened his eyes, he wondered if he had; for it was just as dark as with them shut. No one was anywhere near him. Just imagine his fright! He could hear nothing, see nothing, and he could feel nothing except the stone of the floor (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 61).

When Bilbo regains consciousness at the beginning of "Riddles in the Dark" after being ambushed and attacked by goblins, what strikes him the most is the surrounding darkness. Bilbo is nearly helpless when he finds himself in the darkness of the cave – quite as helpless as Gollum once he returns to the world above. Plato's Socrates says, "Any one who has common sense will remember that bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye" (Plato 476–77 [518a]). Here the importance of the difference between having been born in the cave and entering the cave surfaces again: blindness (or, depending on the translation of Plato's texts, sometimes referred to as "bewilderments of the eyes", as above) occurs when descending into the cave but also when returning to the world outside, and it is the transition that matters. According to Plato, the shadows and the cave begin to seem false and unintelligible only after one has first seen the Ideas and their truth. The released prisoner has experienced enlightenment and understanding, but once back in the cave he is made the target of ridicule and his position is vulnerable (474–75 [516e–517a]).

The quotation from *The Republic* explains the situation of a released prisoner who is – not unlike Gollum – unable to see things properly in sunlight. In *The Lord of the Rings* Gollum is clearly uncomfortable with the sun, even afraid of it, as the text often mentions (see, for example, pages 636–37). As implied in the first paragraph of this article, Gollum's large, lamp-like eyes are well used to seeing in the dark, and both daylight and moonlight disturb his perception. In the darkness of his cave, Gollum is superior: he has all the advantages of familiar surroundings and the ability to perceive things that are invisible to others. This, I argue, is the strongest sign of Gollum's descent. When chasing all the "great secrets" under the mountains, trying to unearth roots and beginnings and delving deeper into the empty night, Gollum is moving further away from the world of Forms, from the Ideas and the truth. What he seeks could be referred to as false truth, and the transition into the truer world causes him great confusion, making him hostile and doubtful.

A reading of "Riddles in the Dark" side by side with the Allegory of the Cave reveals very literal similarities, even to the point where it may seem like a self-evident line of analysis to pursue. I argue, however, that the similarities are crucial and deserve to be pointed out: this kind of approach can also be defended based on Verlyn Flieger's study on Tolkien. Flieger claims that in Tolkien's fiction it is central to "confer literality on what would in the primary world [i.e. the real world] be called metaphor and then to illustrate the process by which the literal becomes metaphoric" (49). It should not therefore be presumed that the cave-thematic in all its literalness would automatically mean there is no need for deeper analysis. The role of the cave is epistemologically significant in Gollum's case: there is no real perception in a cave, merely shadows, conjectures, and impressions. Nor is there real knowledge: it can be argued that Gollum's thoughts gravitate towards images and knowledge of things that are somehow hollow and less real than those revealed by sunlight.

Regarding the problems of sight and perception, Michael Wodzak and Victoria Holtz Wodzak provide an interesting interpretation of invisibility in their article "Visibílium Ómnium et Invisibílium: Looking Out, On and In Tolkien's World". In

their analysis concerning Gollum, they point out that his gleaming eyes seem to emit light despite the complete darkness of the cave – the light must come from the eyes themselves, as there is no light available for them to reflect. The authors' interpretation is that the pale, greenish light in Gollum's eyes appears when he is most heavily affected by the Ring; that is, when evil is taking over. They note that extramissionary sight, or visual perception that is connected to beams of light coming from the eyes of the observer, is also demonstrated by dragons like Smaug (Wodzak and Wodzak 133–34, 136.) It is interesting that Gollum, whose eyes are so often described to be glowing, is appalled by elves for a seemingly similar reason: "Dwarves, Men, and Elves, terrible Elves with bright eyes" (Tolkien, *LotR* 630). Gollum refers to the bright-eyed elves more than once, and his comments are intended as negative ones.

Taking into account the Tolkien's tendency to associate light with goodness, Gollum's aversion becomes a complicated issue to analyse. Light very literally has the power to reveal things, and this is what Gollum is most afraid of: darkness keeps him hidden from the sight of others. An interesting question is whether that which Gollum avoids is perception itself or being perceived by others. The fear of becoming an object of perception is implied when Frodo and Sam are glad to see and feel the sun, and Gollum expresses his doubts most clearly: "'You are not wise to be glad of the Yellow Face,' said Gollum. 'It shows you up'" (Tolkien, *LotR* 636–37). This interpretation receives support from Wodzak and Holtz Wodzak's analysis that Gollum's night-vision and his light-emitting eyes allow him to see in the dark when others are helpless – Bilbo, for example, does not see much besides Gollum's lamp-like eyes in the cave (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 64, 67, 70–71). Throughout Tolkien's fiction, the theme of seeing is heavily emphasised, and one of the clearest indications of this is the Eye of Sauron, the all-piercing omnipresence of evil. Given Gollum's fear of being exposed, being the object of perception, it is ironic that in deepest darkness it is his eyes that give him away: Bilbo sees them gleam even though everything else remains in shadows, and Gollum's superior night-eyes are actually what makes him vulnerable.

My parallel reading of "Riddles in the Dark" and the Allegory of the Cave highlights a problem that has not yet been addressed. In Plato's philosophy knowledge drawn from the world of Forms is largely associated with originality and permanence, and this is where my interpretations of light and knowledge are in discord with the theoretical frame. The problem is that in Tolkien's legendarium the sun is not in any way the original source of light: in fact, the sun and the moon appear relatively late in the chronology of Arda. The world is first illuminated by two high lamps that are cast down by Melkor, the main antagonist of *The Silmarillion,* after which they are followed by two shining trees, the silvery Telperion and golden Laurelin. These are corrupted by evil, and it is not until then that the sun and moon are created. Thus, they both have two sets of predecessors, lights more ancient than they (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27–32, 108–114). A fascinating analysis of the motif of fractured light in Tolkien's legendarium has been provided by Verlyn Flieger whose book *Splintered Light* thoroughly examines the historical stages of lighting, its diminishing nature, and its relation to language and creation.

It would be erroneous in the context of Tolkien's work to hold on to a notion of the sun as the primal, purest source of light when it is actually a mere fragment of ancient light. Despite this significant detail, I stand behind the reading I have proposed: as remarked in the beginning of this article, to apply Platonic theories to a literary analysis is also to interpret Plato's literature as being rich in allegories, metaphors, and analogies. Therefore, an interpretation concerned with the epistemic

value of light should not in my opinion be shunned based on a formality, the conceptual difference between the sun and light in a general sense – the Analogy of the Sun is indeed an analogy after all, intended to explicate the Form of the Good.

Conclusion

Gollum's cave in *The Hobbit* can be read as representative of the metaphysical and epistemic structure of Tolkien's fictional universe in general. The chapter "Riddles in the Dark" and the later accounts given by Gandalf create an image in which the established metaphysical and epistemic positions of the characters change, and the threshold of this transition is the cave. Plato's theory of forms, as expressed in the Allegory of the Cave and the Analogy of the Sun in particular, is the theoretical basis for this reading, and the literary nature of the dialogues is taken into account. The two caves, Plato's and Gollum's, are interpreted as epistemic cages in which knowledge and truth are inaccessible, as is reality in its truest state: for Plato, the cave represents the imperfect, changing world of perception, while the immaterial world of Forms is primary and true. The Platonic approach has been ventured before in Tolkien-studies, and the division between the two worlds can be found in the fantasy universe; not the least when examining the cave-thematic.

Alongside Forms and physical copies, light and dark, knowledge and conjecture, the greatest tension is between the literal and the allegorical or figurative. Plato's cave is clearly an allegory, but Gollum's cave, too, has remarkable metaphorical significance in spite of its literal nature. The theory of forms as theoretical source material crosses paths with "Riddles in the Dark" on levels that are both straightforward and ambiguous, and this paper places the two texts side by side instead of plainly applying philosophical tools to literary analysis. I hope to have sufficiently emphasised that the similarities between the two caves are deeper and more significant than the ones easily found on the literal level. The encounter between Bilbo and Gollum results in a literal act of stepping out of the cave, first verbally in an anamnesis-like process and then physically. To properly understand the epistemic rules of Tolkien's Arda and the role of the metaphorical cave and light in it one should ask if there are other, perhaps more subtle examples of such an event. Throughout Tolkien's fiction there are incidents where characters – Frodo, for instance – suddenly gain deeper insight into the world, perceiving something more clearly and poignantly. These occurrences, I argue, could be read as brief glimpses into the world of Forms, and more often than not they are enabled by divine light, as is the case in Elven-realm Lothlórien. This is a line of examination that could reveal much about the different possibilities of knowing and perceiving in Tolkien's world.

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The Right Kind of Curiosity

Michael Godhe

Abstract: In this reflection, the author examines Tenfjord and Oxaal's popular Norwegian children's novel *Jens krysser himmelrommet* (*Jens Crosses Space*), published in 1954, as an exceptional case among typical juvenile novels of the time, in that it portrayed in moral terms both the practice of science and the attitudes and attributes of scientists. He argues that in the early (and politically charged) days of the space race, this novel was unusual in offering young readers moral and intellectual models that aimed to encourage them to move beyond a simplistic enjoyment of science fiction for children to the rigors of mature scientific exploration.

Introduction

In the middle of the 1950s, humanity was knocking on the door to the heavens. During the preparation for the International Geophysical Year 1957–1958, both the US and the Soviet Union announced that they had the intention of launching artificial satellites (Smith 120). Although military implications were discussed, the conquest of space was filled with utopian and cosmopolitan visions. The crossing of space, as Arthur C. Clarke wrote in 1951, may "do much to turn men's minds outwards and away from their present tribal squabbles. In this sense the rocket, far from being one of the destroyers of civilization, may provide the safety-valve that is needed to preserve it" (194).

There were also scientists who believed that the science-fiction genre could promote interest in space exploration, while others were more skeptical. In Scandinavia, science-fiction literature from the US as well as comics like Buck Rodgers and Flash Gordon were translated into the Nordic languages. In the 1940s and 1950s, the pedagogic debate on children's books was comparatively quiet, with the exception of the year 1954, when comics were fiercely debated (Mählqvist 12–13). One of the interventions in this debate was made by the Norwegian writers Jo Tenfjord and Gunnar Oxaal, who in 1954 published the novel *Jens krysser himmelrommet* (*Jens Crosses Space*); the novel was translated into Swedish in 1955. Tenfjord was one of the

most acclaimed authors of children's books in Norway, and Oxaal was one of the founding fathers of *The Norwegian Interplanetary Society* (*Norsk Interplanetarisk Selskap*), later renamed *The Norwegian Astronautic Association* (*Norsk Astronautisk Forening*). Oxaal had also co-written *Reisen til månen blir alvor* (*The Journey to Moon Becomes Reality*, 1952) with Erik Bergaust (Bergaust 6).

In the novel *Jens Crosses Space*, a science-fictional narrative is used for contesting and debating science-fiction imaginations, especially in comics. In this article, I analyse the novel; however, I go beyond situating it in the pedagogic debate in Scandinavia in 1954.[1] There was much more at stake. As a culture historian I read the ideas in the novel as proposed answers and solutions to contemporary questions. As Alan Megill puts it, "The history of ideas attempts to situate ideas into one or another historical context and to interpret those ideas in the light of that contextualization, without reducing the ideas in question to mere epiphenomena of something more fundamental" (184). The novel is therefore more than just part of the historical context: it constitutes it (cf. Ekström 263–64).

In *Jens Crosses Space*, Tenfjord and Oxaal are debating and contesting notions of space travel expressed in science-fiction comic books; at the same time the novel is also connected to traditional ideas of the frontier and the idea of progress (cf. McCurdy). They use the classic generic form of edification novels, extrapolated to a future of space travelling, to make statements about society, culture, technology, and science. But the narrative is not simply a tale of a young boy's *rite de passage* to manhood: it also co-produces notions, imaginaries, and visions of society, culture, technology, and science, and of the expectations of youth living in the 1950s (cf. Jasanoff). The edification novel (Bildungsroman) is concerned with the main protagonist and his (it is most often a he) intellectual and spiritual development toward insight, control, and maturity (Hallberg 27). In science-fiction narratives it is not unusual that writers use the patterns from edification novels to portray a young boy's progress to adulthood through different difficulties and challenges that must be overcome; examples include Robert Heinlein's juveniles written in the 1940s and 1950s (Mulcahy 33–34).

The right kind of curiosity

In the novel *Jens Crosses Space*, the 12-year-old boy Jens is taken on a journey into space. Jens's father is captain on the ship *M/S Lyckoland* and the boy is used to a life at sea. In the beginning of the novel they are travelling to Mombasa in Kenya as the first stop on a long journey. In Mombasa, Erik Gårder, a friend of Jens's father, arrives and picks up a mysterious box from the ship's cargo. Gårder is a famous scientist with a chair in aviation technology. For Jens this is exciting: "He collected comic books with air battles and Martians. Now, talk about exciting things!" (8).[2]

In Mombasa Gårder invites Jens, his father, and the ship's first navigation officer Storstrand on a journey to Lake Victoria, where the professor is preparing secret experiments funded by several rich research foundations. Already in the beginning of the novel, Jens's boyish impatience and childish fantasies are

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[1] Parts of this article, but with a slightly different angle, have been published in each of the three Godhe entries listed in the works cited.

[2] Original quote: "Han samlet på tegneseriehefter med luftkamper og marsboere. Snakk om spennende saker!"

emphasised. When Gårder asks the boy if he is interested in the moon, Jens answers that he has "a very nice comic book here about a war on the moon between humans and Martians". The professor, smiling at Jens, asks him how the humans could travel to the moon. Jens answers that they use spacecrafts and "they are battling in the desert" (19).[3]

Gårder tells them that he has built an experimental laboratory southwest of one of the waterfalls at the outlet of Lake Victoria: "The technology penetrates right into the heart of Africa, barely one hundred years after the regions were explored by people from the homeland of technological culture, Europe" (20).[4] In the novel, technology, culture, and nature are consolidated (cf. Marx). But it is understood that nature submits to culture, that is, technological development. Thus, the spacecraft in the story becomes a symbol for progress.

The take-off to the moon is moved up, since the secret project has been exposed by mass media. Jens and his dog, in exploring the ship through a door inadvertently left open, are trapped on board and take off with the expedition.

After discussing the matter with Jens's father, Gårder decides to continue the journey. Jens's education starts, and his childish fantasies that have been nourished by comic books are met with scientific arguments. One example is how Jens learns about meteors: "In one of his comic books there were some cruel Martians who disappeared in heavy flames from such a disaster". Gårder tells him that meteors for most part are not spectacular, and that many of them "are just like small grains of sand" (57).[5]

The journey to the moon and the expedition to its surface contain several didactic episodes. The text contains a number of apologias for scientific endeavor and the narrative becomes more or less an illustration of how far astronautics and rocket science have developed in these times (cf. Godhe, *Morgondagens*). The heroes in the novel are the silent and humble scientists expanding the frontiers of human knowledge: "Every man [on board] was prepared to sacrifice their own life in case they had to, and they were willing to do so because they thought the sacrifice was worth it, for providing humanity with more experiences" (58).[6]

The Swedish geologist Pettersson teaches Jens the importance of curiosity for scientific progress. If no-one had been curious, humanity would still be living in tents, making fire with sticks. "And the adults are also curious," Jens tells his dog, "but they think twice. It was completely wrong with that door here on board. Tom, shall we try to be curious in a more – adult way?" (65)[7] This is a matter of disciplining oneself to refrain from childish or infantile curiosity.

And Jens is successful in disciplining himself. When he looks at Earth from the rocket he understands "how small a human is" in a cosmological perspective. After resisting the temptation of walking on the moon shortly after the landing, he is rewarded for being patient: he is allowed to take a walk on the moon. "He was not just

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[3] Original quotes: "har en veldig fin tegneserie her om krig på månen mellom mennesker og marsboere"; "kjemper de ørkenslag".

[4] Original quote: "Teknikken trenger like inn til hjertet av i Afrika, bare snaue hundre år etter at disse traktene første gang ble utforsket av mennesker fra den tekniske kulturens hjemland, Europa".

[5] Original quotes: "I et tegneseriehefte han hadde var det noen grusomme marsboere som forsvant i veldige flammer fra sånne katastrofer"; "er bare som små sandkorn".

[6] Original quote: "Hver enkelt av mennene var forberedt på å måtte ofre livet, og de var villig til det, fordi de syntes forsøket på å skafe menneskeheten utvidete erfaringer var et slikt offer verd".

[7] Original quotes: "Og de voksne er også nysgjerrige"; "de tenker seg visst mer om. Det var galt det med den døra her ombord. Tom, skal vi försøke å bli nysgjerrig på en mer – voksen måte?"

an annoying Peter-Curious anymore; he had behaved in a way that didn't disturb the expedition!" (72, 90–91).[8]

After a lecture on asteroid pieces, Jens decides to be a scientist and "penetrate reality's enormous adventure!" He wants to know about the cause of every phenomenon, and to feel the joy of being an explorer. This little piece of an asteroid is even more thrilling than the Martians he had hoped to meet on the moon. The stone is now in "the hands of a scientist, who gladly had risked his life to get it…. But the scientist must not work for his own recognition, the research in itself must be his pleasure" (88–89).[9]

While Jens is walking on the moon, he is seized by the remnants of the childish boy within him. Turning towards the space rocket, he picks up a big stone and throws it away, eager to show Gårder and Pettersson how far he can throw it. Too late he discovers that the stone will hit the rocket. A firm and stern Gårder tells Jens not to do that it again. The boy is so disappointed with himself, despite the professor's appeal to let it go, that he sees his dreams of becoming a scientist dissolve.

The scientific journey to the moon is depicted with almost no drama. But this is also part of the story's didactic structure. As Gårder says to first navigator Storstrand: "Science and technology progress slowly"; in the same way, the novel's narrative progresses slowly, and the real drama of science takes place in quiet laboratories, "in libraries and workplaces". At the same time, Gårder emphasises the tragic nature of science, since "the result of the hard work is often: nothing new" (97–98).[10] However, one adventurous episode remains: a didactic episode that lets Jens regain his self-respect.

On the journey home Jens is sad and tries to distract himself with comic books, but he realises that science-fiction comics have little to do with reality. Pirates in space and Martians "were nothing for a real moon traveler!" Jens tears apart his comic books and he notices that the pieces are moving upwards in a spiral toward the wall. After a while he goes to bed but "something in the back of his mind was struggling to get its way out of the darkness, into the light, forward, away from something dangerous" (100–01).[11] Jens pushes the alarm button. The spacecraft is leaking, and after a dramatic episode they manage to find the leak, after Jens has shown them the spot on the wall to which the pieces from his comic books have been drawn.

Gårder now praises the boy for rescuing the whole expedition. And at the same time Jens gets his last lecture on what it means to be a scientist. It is not enough to be curious. It must be "the right kind of curiosity", the capability of being amazed. Gårder says, "If you hadn't continued to tear paper pieces to see if they were drawn to the same place, we would not have found the hole" (104–05).[12] Jens regains his confidence, and once again he decides to be a scientist. This is a key scenario in the novel: when Jens

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[8] Original quotes: "hvor lite et menneske var"; "Han var ikke bare en brysom nysgjerrig-Per lenger, han hadde da oppført seg slik at han ikke ble till bry for ekspedisjonen!"

[9] Original quotes: "trenge inn i virkelighetens veldige eventyr!"; "i neven på en vitenskapsmann som gladelig hadde vågd livet for å få tak…. Men vitenskapsmannen må ikke arbeide for ytre anerkjennelse, hans glede må ligge i forskningen selv".

[10] Original quotes: "Vitenskap og teknikk går langsomt fram"; "på bibliotek og arbeidsplasser"; "ofte blir resultatet av de tunge strabaser: intet nytt".

[11] Original quotes: "var ikke noe for en virkelig månefarer!"; "noe bak i bevisstheten hans kjempet for å komme ut av mørket, opp i lyset, fram, vekk fra noe farlig".

[12] Original quotes: "den rette sorten nysgjerrighet"; "Hade du ikke fortsatt med å rive opp papirbiter for å se om alle drev samma steds hen, hadde vi neppe funnet hullet".

is tearing apart the link to his youth – the comic books – he is also establishing a link to the adult life and to science – to reality's enormous adventure.

The Ethos of Science

The detonation of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 raised the question of the scientist's responsibility (see Rip and Boeker), and some scientists feared that research would be restricted (Godhe, *Morgondagens* 55–56). It is within this context that Gårder gives a speech when the expedition is back on earth again. The speech, directed to other scientists, to journalists, and to the kin of the crewmen on the rocket, manifests the ethos of science. The professor pays tribute to those scientists whose achievements preceded the moon expedition, and to the anonymous scientists working silently in their laboratories.

Gårder says that scientists must resist prestige, hubris, and profit that may divert them from the path to knowledge. Science has too often been used as a scapegoat, but with increased knowledge there are more opportunities for humankind, which can be used for both good and evil. But there are also many who want to go back to the past: "They also forget the terrible circumstances people were living in, while science yet had not succeeded in fighting plagues and hunger. The knowledge of our times provides us with tremendous possibilities, but with them comes responsibility. The knowledge of our times demands mature people" (115).[13]

Jens and his generation must learn how to evaluate and think, since radio, television, and comic books have also made it possible for many people to stop thinking and become passive and idle. The mind must grow accustomed to endeavour, says Gårder "Build yourself model planes and see for yourself. Do not settle for what other people say. If you get used to doing that, you will never be a real asset for the world. Bring your friends along with you. Boys of your age have a great gift – the capacity to be surprised" (116).[14]

The journey ends with Jens internalising Gårder's words about *the right kind of curiosity*. He has interpreted his newly achieved experience, and found that comic books cannot compare with it. The science-fictional story by Tenfjord and Oxaal was a revision of comics like Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon, and their view was not far from the view of popular culture that existed in pedagogical circles. Here is one example from the pedagogical debate in Sweden during the 1950s, claiming that children were getting preoccupied, worried, and distressed by popular culture: "the motion pictures, often on a very low artistic level, the constantly operating radio broadcasts, the idiotic and unrealistic comic books about 'supermen' and other mystic monsters are relentlessly shaping the children growing up, maybe more than the parents, the teachers and school" (Olsson 39–40).[15]

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[13] Original quote: "De glemmer også hvilke kår de store masser av mennesker levde under mens vitenskapen ennå ikke klarte å sette noe inn i kampen mot pest og hungersnød. Vår tids viten gir oss veldige muligheter, men den fører ansvar med seg. Vår tids viten krever voksne mennesker".

[14] Original quote: "Bygg deg modellfly og se selv. Nøy deg ikke med andres påstander. Venner du deg til det, vil du aldri bli till virkelig nytte i verden. Få kameratena med deg. Gutter i din alder har en stor gave – evnen till undring".

[15] Original quote: "den ofta på ett mycket lågt konstnärligt plan stående filmen, den evigt pådragna radion, idiotiska och verklighetsfrämmande serier om 'stålmän'" och andra mystiska monstra formar obarmhärtigt det uppväxande släktet i kanske högre grad än föräldrar, lärare och skola".

Jens Crosses Space was an attempt to write a moral tale in the form of a science-fictional story about a young boy learning to be responsible, which could serve as a counter-weight to comic books. At the same time the authors depended on science fiction to capture the children's interest. In popular-science books about space in the 1950s, the tension between utility and enjoyment was always was present (Godhe, *Morgondagens* 193–95).

Recapturing the Modern Project and Mapping out a Male Terrain

During the 1950s, the works of many Anglo-Saxon science fiction writers and many popular-science books about rocketry and space research were translated into the Scandinavian languages. At the same time, the Scandinavian space literature that was appearing discussed many of the same questions (Godhe, *Morgondagens* 89–121). The American tradition of *the frontier* was often appropriated into a Scandinavian context. Where science fiction usually depicted space as an adventure for bold young men, the popular books about space also emphasised that the bold young men must work hard and be willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of humanity. In this sense, *Jens Crosses Space* is more affiliated with popular science than science-fiction stories.

Space exploration would recapture the belief in progress, and humanity would be joined together in a common vision – despite the nuclear threat and the Cold War. In popular space literature during the 1950s it was young men who were depicted as the heirs of the drive to explore space. As the Swedish author Albert Wemmerlöv wrote in 1953, "It should be healthy, strong, mentally and physically well-trained boys who get the honor of becoming the first astronauts in the world – drivers of spacecrafts – boys who in the best sense of the word do earn the title 'supermen of space'!" (88).[16] Space became a metaphor for future utopias, a symbol for a technological and scientific leap bringing a remarkable cultural progress for humankind.

The writings of Arthur C. Clarke express this even more directly. He claimed that the colonisation of space would bring cultural development. Different cultures may be developed on different planets, but they would have one thing in common: "they will all be based on a very advanced technology" (Clarke 185). This broadening of humankind's horizons may very well be an outburst of creativity comparable with the Renaissance. This may result in humanity leaving its old standards, increase its tolerance and consequently decrease the risk of international conflicts. In fact, space exploration is impossible without international cooperation.

Clarke was not the only one tying utopian future prospects to space exploration during the 1950s. Many popular-science writers were hoping it would provide a way out of the international tensions of the Cold War (Godhe, *Morgondagens* 98–114). The story of Jens's adventures on the moon shows how Clarke and many other popular-science writers conceptualised space exploration. Youth (read: boys and young men) should recapture space exploration and the belief in progress. The popular-science books were mapping out a male terrain that excluded women. Virtues like a passion for seeking out the truth, creative imagination, hard work, and sacrifice were emphasised, and the ability to cooperate was the final virtue tying the others together.

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[16] Original quote: "Det ska vara friska, starka, psykiskt och fysiskt vältränade pojkar, som får äran av att bli världens första astronauter – förare av rymdskepp – pojkar som i ordets bästa bemärkelse gör skäl för namnet 'rymdens stålmän!"

When Jens conquers the ability to exercise the right kind of curiosity, he also incarnates these virtues (Godhe, *Morgondagens* 114–20 et passim).

Using the patterns from the edification novel (Bildungsroman), *Jens Crosses Space* describes a world where technology and science penetrate into human existence and ordinary life in a profound and dramatic way. In this sense, Jens represents an adult's conception of the engineers and scientists of tomorrow.

Acknowledgements

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Vitruvius, Critics, and the Architecture of Worlds: Extra-Narratival Material and Critical World-Building

Stefan Ekman

All works of fiction build imaginary worlds in which they set their stories. What makes genres such as science fiction and fantasy different is that their worlds are often created not as twins to our actual world but as cousins or even distant relatives to it. Some of these worlds are built to stage a particular narrative, others to house certain casts of characters, and yet others to offer exciting possibilities for exploration. They can be shaped by, for example, text, film, graphic novels, computer games, or combinations of these media. I find such worlds fascinating objects of study, not only as backdrops to particular stories but as aesthetic and cultural objects in themselves, and I am intrigued by how worlds can be built by elements that are not part of the narrative. Such *non-narratival* elements are often ignored in world-building analyses, while potentially being of great importance to the world to which they contribute. In this essay, I look exclusively at non-narratival world-building. My first example shows how a collection of "lore" in a computer game or (in my case) a graphic-novel app can offer material for a scholar who analyses the world of the story. Then I turn to a world without any explicit narrative, using the illustrations from a Dungeons & Dragons rulebook to demonstrate what they can say about the implied game world. Before that, however, I introduce the concept of critical world-building and outline my view of world-building as architecture. *World-architecture* provides the basis for my analysis of the examples.

Critical World-building[1]

Fictional worlds are artistic creations, expressed through one or more media, but they are, in a sense, treated as having an existence beyond the medium or media through which they are created. The text is, in Marie-Laure Ryan's words, "apprehended as a

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[1] This section is based on Ekman, "Map" (67–70).

window" through which the reader observes something that exists outside of language and extends temporally and spatially beyond the "window frame". A textual world implies a distinction between "a realm of language, made of names, definite descriptions, sentences, and propositions, and an extralinguistic realm of characters, objects, facts, and states of affairs serving as referents to the linguistic expressions" (91). Ryan's observation can be extended to worlds expressed through media other than text (also noted by Wolf 19–20), and her basic point would still remain valid: fictional worlds are *treated* as if they are described or referred to by a medium (or media), rather than created by the use of this medium. Even worlds that are very different from the actual world of their creators and audiences "serve as referents" to the expressions – words, images, sounds – that bring them into being. Moreover, it should be stressed that "world" in this sense refers not only to a (fictional) physical space. In keeping with other scholars (e.g. Ryan 91; Wolf 25; Taylor 7–8), I consider a fictional world to consist of its physical space along with all that this space contains, such as flora and fauna, climate and time, and beings and their cultural and social expressions.

World-building can be approached from several directions or discussed as different, if overlapping, types of processes. It is possible to look at the creative endeavours of an author, the cognitive processes of a reader, or the compilation of information performed by a fan. My main interest is the critical methods that a scholar uses in constructing a world out of a work of fiction in order to analyse and interpret it. Such "critical world-building" is distinguished by focusing on the medium from which the world is built, rather than the strategies and methods of which the author avails themselves, or the processes through which a reader re-imagines it (Ekman and Taylor; Taylor and Ekman). Critical world-building constructs the fictional world as a composite, combining the mainly sequential presentation of the world in text and images with a more holistic view of it, and places the world in its larger critical context of genre conventions and theoretical discourses (Ekman and Taylor 11–12). The various building blocks – "elements" – of such a composite, critical world relate to each other dynamically rather than statically. Combining one detail with another in the analysis, (re-)interpreting something in light of a new genre trope, or adopting a different theoretical perspective could cause a chain of new realisations of how the world functions in relation to its narrative(s). (In my discussion below, "world-building" should be understood as "critical world-building".)

If a building is considered as a metaphor for a fictional world, as the term "world-building" implies, that fictional world can also be considered, metaphorically, in terms of its "architecture". *The Oxford English Dictionary* offers several definitions of architecture. These cover the skill and knowledge required to build, the process of constructing, the actual result, and particular (aesthetic) styles. The fact that the word can be used in a general or figurative sense is also acknowledged ("Architecture"). Because of its breadth of meaning, *architecture* is a useful concept for analysing and interpreting how a fictional world is planned and put together, but also how it works and is described. As a concept, architecture spans all structural and aesthetic aspects of a building, from its conception and planning to its execution and final result. It also looks to more than the work itself, taking into account how a building relates to its surroundings as well as how it fits its various purposes. Audrey Isabel Taylor and I therefore argue that *architecture*, as metaphor, is a useful conceptual tool for dealing with the building of a fictional world, and with the fictional world as a building (Ekman and Taylor 12).

A world-architectural approach to world-building makes it possible to draw on architectural theory for the analysis. The Vitruvian triad, a traditional way of looking at architecture, can be easily applied. In his *The Ten Books on Architecture* (*De architectura libri decem*), Vitruvius explains how a building must have the qualities of solidity (*firmitas*), utility (*utilitas*), and beauty (*venustas*): it must be able to remain structurally sound even after extended use and exposure to the elements, meet the requirements of its intended use and inhabitants, and be aesthetically pleasing (in its cultural context). Thinking of world-building in these terms means using them as metaphors, and depending on how a scholar views a world, their meanings may shift slightly. *Solidity*, in a fantasy context, could be taken to refer to the consistency with which the world is constructed (a common criterion for a well-constructed fantasy world [Taylor 20]) but, depending on one's critical perspective, could also refer to the stability of its societies or the very world-order's susceptibility to change. Prompted by David Smith Capon's extensive discussion of Vitruvius' triad, Taylor and I propose that in analysing world-architecture, the related triad of *form*, *function*, and *meaning* is more useful (Ekman and Taylor 13–14; cf. Capon). Close to Vitruvian *solidity*, *form* would encompass the structure and design of the world, both in direct descriptions and in how the structure itself stresses or de-emphasises elements in text, image, or other kinds of portrayal. Discussing only formal qualities of world elements is a descriptive exercise, even if it may require close-reading, an eye for how an image is constructed, and detailed examination of how structures work. Understanding the *functions* of elements means adopting a more analytical approach. All elements in the fictional world have one or more functions, depending on their form as well as on how they interrelate with each other and the narrative(s) set in the world. Through interpretation of forms and functions, the elements' *meanings* can be uncovered. The critical progression may seem one-directional, but in actuality, the forms, functions, and meanings uncovered affect each other, requiring the holistic perspective of critical world-building. Any of the abundance of elements that make up a world can be analysed through this triad, whether they belong to the natural or cultural part of that world.

World-Building Beyond the Narrative

Imaginary worlds do not have to be built by narration alone. For organising the information about imaginary worlds, "*narrative* is the most common form of structure, and the one that usually determines which elements in a world are most defined and developed, or at least mentioned" (Wolf 154). And while a narrative is possibly the most common structure used to communicate a fictional world, as Mark J. P. Wolf claims, world-building is by no means limited to narration. Extra-narratival forms of communication can also contribute to building the world. These forms can be visual (for example, cover images, fictional maps, *mise-en-scène*, illustrations), audible (for example, voices and sound effects), or textual (for example, glossaries, timelines, footnotes, game rules). In *The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien included a range of extra-narratival material in the form of maps, illustrations, a prologue ("Concerning Hobbits and Other Matters"), and appendices. The published parts of roleplaying-game worlds are built largely from extra-narratival material; the narrative is then constructed verbally by the players and the game master while drawing on such material.

I have previously discussed the nature of fantasy maps, how they contribute to world-building, and how they interact with the narrative (Ekman, "Entering"; Ekman, *Here*; Ekman, "Map"). Here, I turn to two other forms of extra-narratival material for my examples in this essay: a contextualised collection of world-information and illustrations that are not related to a story. Through these examples, I demonstrate how world-architecture can be used to draw attention to the dynamic interplay between narratival and extra-narratival elements of a world.

Example 1: Contextualised Codex in the *Anomaly* App

Anomaly was created and written by Skip Brittenham and Brian Haberlin as an app for Apple's iOS.[2] Apart from the traditional graphic novel features (such as panels, splash pages, speech balloons, captions, and onomatopoeia), the digital form allows for the use of some limited parallax animation, background music, and voice acting. These features can be turned on and off by the reader. *Anomaly* also contains two collections of world information, the "Macodax" and "Tonni's Journal", which are accessible in their entirety from a menu, or entry by entry via "touchpoints" inserted on the pages (the touchpoints can also be turned on and off). Such world information includes, for instance, character backstory, historical information, details on various technical devices, and descriptions of particular places or races.

In computer games it is common to collect world information that the player discovers in a journal or encyclopaedia. In games, such a collection is often referred to as a "codex".[3] "Macodax" and "Tonni's Journal" are both similar to game codices in that the reader comes across information at various places in the story and can choose to read the entry at that point, or access it later, and I have therefore adopted the game term for them. The codices in *Anomaly* differ from many game codices, however, in that they are available in their entirety from the beginning.

To some extent, *Anomaly's* additional features serve to shift attention from story to world. The animation determines the speed at which a reader can take in a panel and directs the reader's gaze; the voices and occasional sound effects also determine reading speed and define what someone or something sounds like (rather than leaving it to the reader's imagination). The touchpoints and associated codex entries constitute the clearest shift of attention from story to world. Text and pictures that give details on various entities and are hyperlinked to various places in the story interrupt the narrative with world information. Because it is possible to understand the plot without the codex information, that information expands the story but also draws the reader's attention away from the story. Thus, the extra-narratival material in the codices helps build the world, not the story.

Accessing codex entries via touchpoints contextualises the world information. This context needs to be taken into account when analysing any particular entry, just as a single entry needs to be analysed from the perspective of the entire fictive world. The entry on the soft drink Binky Cola can be used to illustrate how codex entries can be read in terms of world-architecture.

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[2] *Anomaly* is also available as a print version, which can be read with an "augmented reality" app for other features.

[3] Some examples of games with codices include *Oxygen Not Included* (Klei Entertainment, 2018), *Masquerada: Songs and Shadows* (Witching Hour Studios, 2016), and BioWare's *Dragon Age* (2009–2015), *Mass Effect* (2007–2017), and *The Witcher* (2009–2015) series.
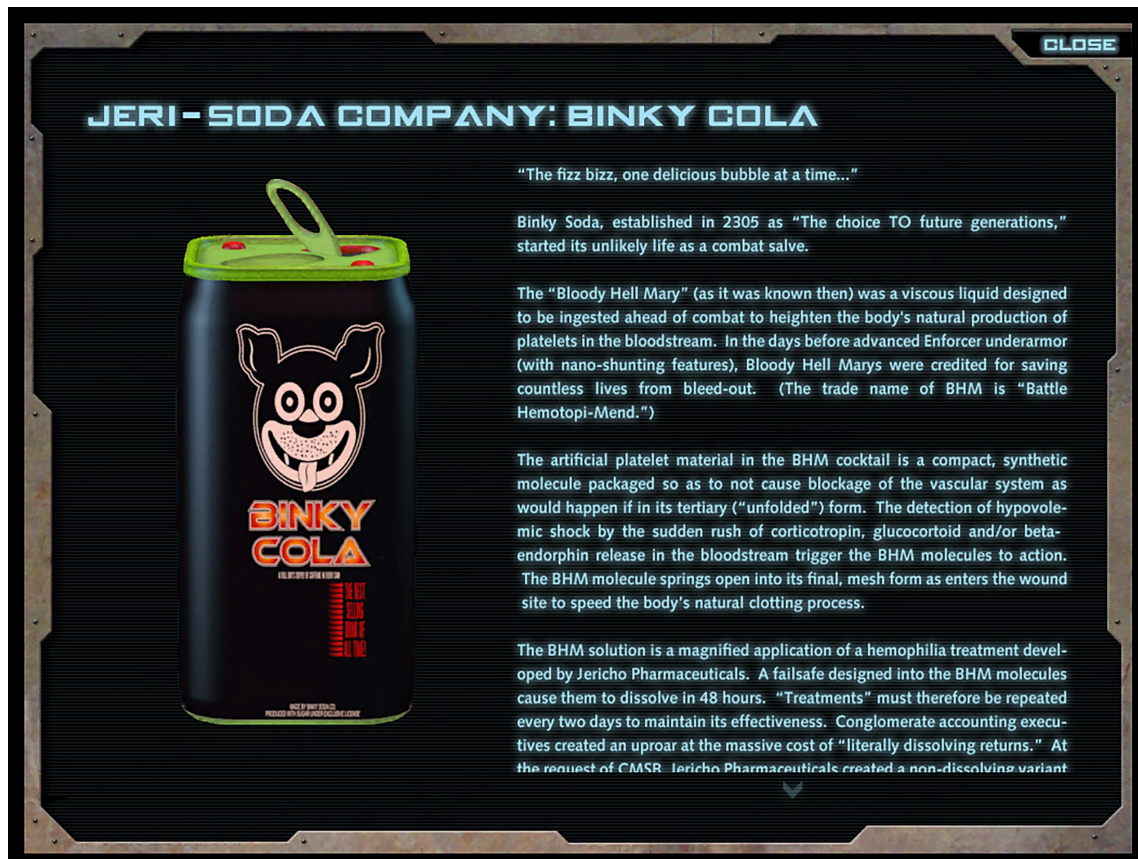
The beginning of the Binky Cola entry from the Macodax codice in *Anomaly*. © 2012 Anomaly Productions. Used with permission.
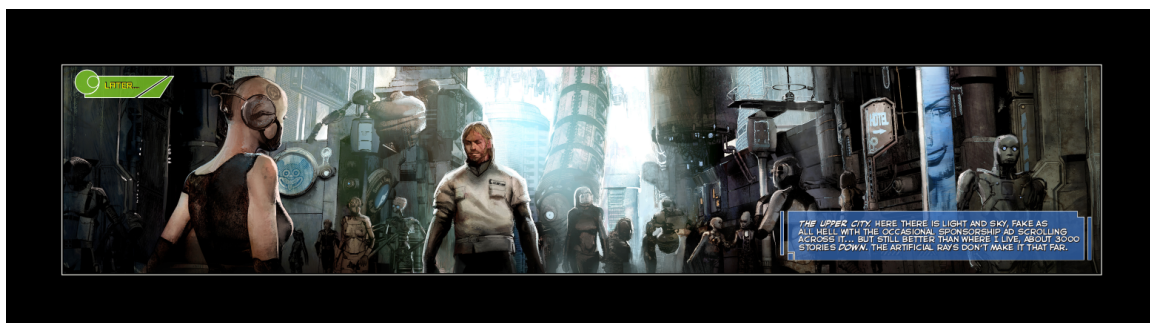
The panel on page 7 in which a touchpoint can take the reader to the Binky Cola entry. (The Binky Cola ad can be seen to the left in the panel, in the middle distance.) © 2012 Anomaly Productions. Used with permission.

Binky Cola plays no part in the story in and of itself. Its entry (approximately 600 words long) is linked to a touchpoint next to an image advertising the beverage in a street view (7), and it provides a background to Jeri-Soda, the company that manufactures the drink, along with an explanation of Binky Cola's popularity and a note on the manufacturer's commercial power. It also shows an image of a can of Binky Cola. The codex entry contributes to the architecture of the world by extending the various military campaigns (referred to by, and driving, the narrative) backwards in history; by adding to the narrative's portrayal of a world under plutocratic rulership; and by introducing themes of artificial food and the (mis-)use of biotechnology. The

touchpoint/codex entry also emphasises how important parts of a world can be seemingly irrelevant. By the time the touchpoint sends us to the codex entry, the Binky Cola mascot has already shown up (uncommented) on page 6 and illustrates the codex entry to "Ad ORB (external)" linked to from a touchpoint on page 5. There, it is easily overlooked or ignored. Not until the touchpoint draws attention to the ad in the panel on page 7 and the codex entry explains it does the relevance of the previous instances come across and reinforce the sense of Binky Cola's (and Jeri-Soda's) importance to the *Anomaly* world.

The codex entry's contribution to the world can be discussed in terms of *form*, *function*, and *meaning*. The entry provides descriptions of numerous elements, such as how an earlier product of the company works in biochemical terms, the efficacy of that product in combat, the fatal experimenting on "lab clones", Jeri-Soda's use of sugar in drinks, and its control of "all sugar-producing plant material in the Agrogenetic Catalogue". The structures to which these elements contribute – biochemical high-tech, aggressive imperialist expansion, plutocratic rulership, disregard for lives – are parts of the world's form. They show a world in which future advances within the field of biochemistry do not help humanity to stay on Earth but help the rich to stay in power as they lead the human expansion into the universe, a world in which the marginalised poor and Other are valued only insofar as they contribute to accumulation of wealth. The entry shows how the structures combine and make sense together rather than contradict each other. These structures could be read in terms of various themes: the totalitarian plutocracy, the history of military conquest, the disregard for human life vis-à-vis economic gain, the testing of bioengineered substances on people, and the imperialist structure of the space age, for example. Some of these themes have already surfaced in the narrative, others appear later, but they all have functions.

A function always relates to a purpose, and in *Anomaly*, the purpose of the world is to provide a setting for a story. Worlds are often created as settings for particular stories, although they can also be meant to house several stories or even just provide a good potential for stories (roleplaying-game worlds are examples of the latter). Analysing the themes suggested by the codex entry through questions such as "how do they contribute to the story?" reveal that they add to the plausibility of the events of the plot and the motivation of various characters. For example, the main character's background as an "Enforcer", who accidentally started a war with an alien culture and thus caused their total eradication (Brittenham and Haberlin 3), ties in with several of these themes; they also foreshadow his being subjected to an experimental treatment. The time span of the entry (Binky Cola was established in 2305 and Jeri-Soda secured certain cell-sample rights in 2619, but events both prior to and after those dates are included; the present of the story is 2717) adds to a sense of historical continuity, connecting the events of the story to the present of the reader (and the fictive world to the actual world). Ultimately, the world elements in the codex entry, in the form they are given, function in a way as to give an impression that this is the only world in which the story could be set. Events are engendered by the way the world is built.

How the world is built and what themes its elements create have deeper meanings than how they function together with the story. To find meaning in a world means to interpret the way its elements are thematised, structured, and presented. It also means picking a particular perspective or theoretical stance for such an interpretation. The *Anomaly* world could be interpreted from a feminist, or

postcolonial, or ecocritical perspective – or from any other theoretical point of view that a critic finds useful. Applying an ecocritical perspective to the entry, for example, would draw the critical focus to issues such as the artificiality of food ingredients, the commercialisation and patenting of genetic material of plants, and the creation of "agro-planets". Through the panel in which the touchpoint is located, it is also possible to put such elements in a context of other environmental themes, such as the need to live in artificial environments (the text in the panel describes how even the sunlight and the sky are "fake as all hell" [7]). The need for artificial environments has already been introduced: in an earlier Macodax entry ("Earth [2717 A.D.]") the reader finds out that Earth's environment in *Anomaly* is very different from the actual world – warmer, with incredible storms and no polar ice caps, and the narrator blames humans for this (5). The narrator portrays such environmental issues as negative; the voice of the codex entry comes across as neutral or even positive about Jeri-Soda's success. The world is meant as neither warning nor encouragement, it seems; but the story paints the ruling plutocracy as power-hungry at best and totalitarian at worst, showing the Macodax up for the voice of the elite and thus undercutting its neutrality. The meaning of the world, from an ecocritical perspective, is to serve as a dystopian warning, made easy to relate to by connecting it to something as innocuous as a soft drink.

Taylor and I point out that critical world-building requires "a holistic approach to a world as well as a sequential one" (Ekman and Taylor 11); the critic needs to shift back and forth between the details of a singe codex entry to the entire world to re-interpret the world elements in the entry in a new light. Particular passages, including the contextualised codex entry, must be read in the light of the totality of the world. By shifting to the entire *Anomaly* world and back to the codex entry, it is possible to access more meaning in its various elements. There is another perspective to take into account, however: how the world elements in the entry relate to the (implied) reading experience. By using something as commonplace as a soft drink, the entry establishes a point of identification for the reader: Binky Cola, despite its unusual background, becomes something ordinary in an extraordinary world of space stations, androids, and a totalitarian plutocracy. Through it, the fictive world can be related to the actual world, its issues possible to translate to actual concerns. It encourages a discussion of what the actual implications of these social and political issues are, transforming the dystopia presented in *Anomaly* into a dystopia *relevant to its reader*.

Example 2: Illustrations in the Dungeons & Dragons Rules
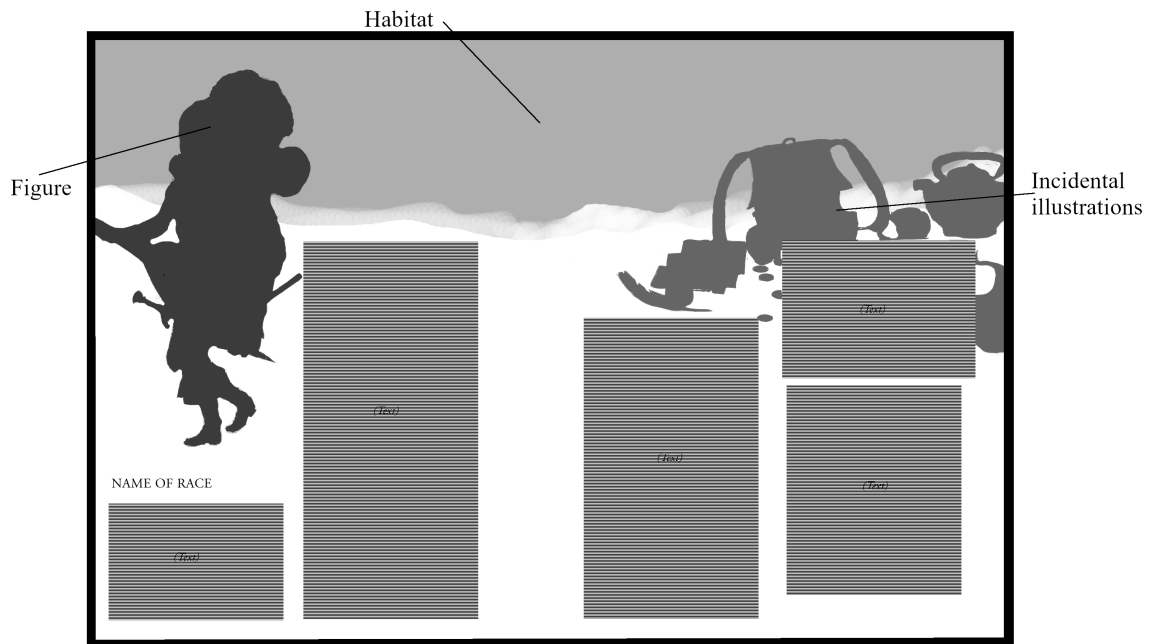
Schematic representation of the Halfling spread (pages 26–27) in *Player's Handbook*,
Dungeons & Dragons, 5th ed.

My second example of extra-narratival world-building material is the illustrations in a rulebook for the table-top roleplaying-game Dungeons & Dragons (5th edition). I have limited my analysis to the illustrations in chapter 2 of *Player's Handbook*, which presents the various races available to player characters. Each race is typically presented on two or three pages, with at least one full-size figure of a person of each race dominating the first page by its size and clear colours. Behind it is a racial "habitat" in muted colours covering the top third of two pages, and there is a scattering of smaller pictures of various objects or settings throughout the text. These illustrations serve to create a world with structures that mean to include all kinds of players in a traditional fantasy adventure. (I read the rule book as building a single world, even though this is not explicitly stated, and thus I analyse and interpret findings from one element in the light of other elements.)

In terms of world-architectural form, the illustrations bring out three prominent structures in the world that are addressed here. These structures concern pseudomedievalism; familiarity and homeliness; and adventure and travel.

The pseudomedieval nature of the world, the first and possibly most prominent structure, is communicated forcefully through the characters that represent each race, and more precisely through their garments and gear. The representatives for the various races are dressed in clothes that broadly suggest the Middle Ages. The gnome, for example, wears what appears to be a hood and a cloak over a tunic, with unspecified legwear that could be brais or hose, and boots with buckle straps. Cloaks, tunics and boots (and unspecified legwear) are common among the other races as well, with occasional garments of more fluid cut, such as the long surcoat worn by the half-elf and the tabard the dragonborn wears over their chain mail. Many of the figures wear armour, ranging from the metal armour that covers most of the dwarf to the halfling's wrist and shoulder guards of leather. The dark elf is even portrayed with what looks

like a codpiece. Clothes, armour, and equipment are attached by straps, belts, and clasps. The weapons are similarly pre-modern, comprising swords, bows, staves, and daggers. Staves occur at least in four illustrations, each adorned in a way as to suggest mystic or magical properties. Books and scrolls of parchment are worn or carried by the human, dragonborn, and high-elven figures. Other kinds of equipment are of simple design but with a great deal of decoration. The overall effect is one of a pre-modern setting that alludes to the (Western) Middle Ages.

Kim Selling describes neomedieval worlds as "environments where the characters wear medieval dress, fight with swords, and live in hierarchical, vaguely feudal, semi-pastoral societies with low levels of technology" (212). She draws on Umberto Eco, who refers to both "fantastic neomedievalism" and "pseudo-medieval" phenomena in *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperrealities*. In a categorisation of secondary fantasy worlds, Zahorski and Boyer include "pseudomedieval settings" (61), and according to Brian Attebery, fantasists often "fill in empty fictional space" with references to what is "essentially a simplified version of the Middle Ages" (132). It is not surprising to discover that the illustrations in a Dungeons & Dragons rulebook build a world that has the kind of pseudomedieval environment that can be found in much (but not all) fantasy literature. If the text of *Player's Handbook* had been taken into account as well, this would have been clear from the beginning. The introduction informs the player that the game "is about storytelling in worlds of swords and sorcery" and that these worlds "begin with a foundation of medieval fantasy" (5).

This foundation is modified in various ways, resulting not just in a "simplified version of the Middle Ages" (Attebery 132) but in a world that expresses a fantasy aesthetic. Rather than simplifying the Middle Ages, the illustrations mix different time periods. While largely medieval, the garments of the figures also include more recent dress elements, such as the halfling's fluffy collar and laced sleeves, which recall the Renaissance. The turned-down tops of the boots most figures wear suggest the 17th century. Even more modern is the way in which the illustrations appear to portray both male and female characters as ready to take up arms or use magic. This mirrors the fantasy world's modern views: female warriors were rare during the Middle Ages (but not non-existent, as Stefan Högberg demonstrates in his exhaustive book on the topic); and medieval people accused of using magic risked terrible fates. So while not unheard of, the apparent acceptance of female warriors and open use of magic indicate something other than medieval characteristics.

To the mix of time periods is added the fantastic, both through specific elements and through a particular fantasy aesthetic. The non-human races are clear indications of fantasy, but different forms of magic are also implied in a range of ways, from items that convey a sense of magical or ritual use to environments that suggest the presence of magic. The use of magic is signified by mysterious light around the hands of the high elf, half-elf, and tiefling. Along with these fantasy elements, a particular aesthetic pervades the illustrations. The armour of several figures is constructed based on aesthetic choices rather than martial requirements, for example, offering sub-optimal protection or combining parts in an unusual ways. The outlandish costumes of the high elf and the tiefling are also designed largely according to a fantasy aesthetic rather than being modelled on historical apparel. Their fluid lines and (seemingly) light fabric vaguely suggest modern evening gowns but, according to textiles historian Viktoria Holmqvist, these clothes are more typically generic fantasy costumes. She observes how the elf's dress has a sleeveless top and halter-neck with layers of heavier fabric over lighter skirts, combining traits of a modern evening gown with traditional

Japanese garments that use layers of loose-hanging fabric. The wide sleeves for the lower arms, attached to embossed leather bracelets above the elbow, make little practical sense and are, Holmqvist argues, the product of the artist's fancy. The belts around her waist, which hold a large scroll case and a girdle book, respectively, appear ready to slip down at the slightest movement, and the book itself looks very little like its medieval model (Holmqvist). Yet, the figure conveys common perceptions of the lightness, mystery, and timelessness of elven magic.

The pseudomedieval world is, ultimately, one in which aesthetics, or art, is more important than verisimilitude or historical facts. It is a world of make-believe, a world that requires its players to not only suspend their disbelief but to maintain what J.R.R. Tolkien refers to as "Secondary Belief", the ability to make what is in the Secondary World "true" (132). The world in *Player's Handbook* is, in other words, a fantasy world. Based on the Middle Ages but rendered both more modern and more fantastic, the pseudomedieval world is encoded in the illustrations of the representatives of the different races.

The habitats behind the figures, as well as the incidental illustrations, draw attention to a second structure in the world: that of familiarity and homeliness. The nine habitats vary from abstract and vague to concrete and detailed, and portray a range of different environments: underground caverns, forests, camps or villages, and towns or cities. They differ in brightness, level of detail, and style – the detailed city seen from afar, with blue mountains and a blue-grey sky in the background (half-elf), contrasts starkly with the dark façades and indistinct ship shapes of harbour quarters (human). However, they all present the habitats of the race in question, mainly through various types of dwellings.

The elven habitat, for instance, shows buildings in a forest: two visible, a third partially obscured by the elven figure, but several more suggested in the gloom by lit windows and dark contours against a lighter background. Stairs and lights can be seen winding up tree trunks, hinting at unseen structures above. The buildings are tall, with steep roofs and high, vaulted windows, decorated with spires, columns, and towers as well as balconies and galleries, and use contrasting light and dark material. The architecture strives upward, mixing a Gothic style with elements more suggestive of Art Noveau in their rounded shapes, but also evoking national romanticism through their rustic features, the suggested half-timbering, and the way the buildings meld organically with the surrounding forest. Tiny figures give a sense of the massive scale of the architecture as well as of the surrounding trees. The visible buildings reach for the treetops, and in the darkness, the settlement melts into the vegetation. The forest is deep and shady, a mix of conifers and deciduous trees, some of enormous height and girth. Light from above illuminates some roofs and trees but most lie hidden in shadows, only lights from windows revealing the extent of the settlement. The combination of architectural styles and the size of the houses suggest that they have been built over centuries, as ancient as the elves who live there; the blending between buildings and trees suggests a life in harmony with the surrounding forest. For an elven character, it is implied, this could be *home*. The other habitats offer other possible homes for other races, such as the half-orc's camp, the halfling houses, and the underground dwarven stronghold. As part of understanding what it means to play a character of a certain race, the player is offered a glimpse of a racial home.

This sense of homeliness is stressed in many of the incidental illustrations. They add to the sense of the familiar and commonplace rather than the exotic and adventurous. With the exception of the dragon theme of the dragonborn jewellery,

there are no fantastic beasts: the animals portrayed can be found in the actual world, which suggests that the fictive world is a familiar place in which a player would feel at home. The various everyday items also indicate things about the culture to which they belong. The dwarven objects – a pick axe, a lock, a goblet, a coarse comb – capture a dwarven society of mining, valuables, feasting, and, apparently, hair grooming; and, apart from the feasting, all are traits mentioned in the text. Each item is decorated with the stylised face of a bearded dwarf, however. As the female dwarf figure is beardless, the decoration could be interpreted as a male dwarf and thus an indication of a patriarchal society (only male faces are used for decoration). An alternative interpretation is that it is the face of the god Moradin, who is "revered by dwarves of the Forgotten Realms, Greyhawk, and many other worlds" (*Player's Handbook* 293). The male deity would still suggest a dwarven patriarchy and the god's ever-present face adorning everyday items would indicate a society in which religion plays a very central role.

The items that illustrate the halfling section, although equally practical, suggest a very different society. A backpack and map with quill and ink pot, along with a handful of small coins, sit next to a matching cup and tea pot made from what seems to be glazed earthenware, with a simple, bright pattern and a stylised frog's head. There is also something that looks very much like a bib, with a stylised fox's head (the same fox adorns the backpack). Overleaf, there are a pumpkin, two (dessert) pastries decorated with berries, and a wooden flute. The items are uncomplicated, with simple design, reflecting a similarly uncomplicated society: halflings are not artisans or great craftspeople, nor are they warriors. Theirs is a society concerned, on the one hand, with staying at home, eating, drinking, and making merry, and, on the other, with wandering off and exploring the world.

That is the third structure made visible in the illustrations: travelling, adventures, and an exotic world beyond what is portrayed. Both the halfling and human figures are dressed for travelling, indicating that what is a familiar home for someone of one race is a foreign place for people of other races. The habitats are both familiar and strange, known and unknown, a place of origin and a place to visit during adventures. The world is homely but also obscure, unseen, to the point where there are only abstract colours flowing into each other, evoking a mysterious atmosphere but little else (such is the case in the tiefling picture: no concrete habitat is portrayed). Both home and away, the illustrations evoke a sense of departure into an unknown world. The human habitat does this most clearly: a port, ships suggested, incidental illustrations of a sextant and a map, and a human figure dressed in travel gear. The unknown lies ahead, adventure calls in the form of the strange habitats of other races, and it is time to leave the familiar behind.

The world's form has been in focus for this example, but I should add a few words on how the Dungeons & Dragons world can be seen in terms of function and meaning as well. The function of these structures is not to build a world for a story but rather a world with a great *potential* for story, inviting everyone to play. This is a world in which all players can be heroes. The structure of familiarity and homeliness works with the structure of adventure and travel to create a foundation for a hero's tale: there is a home, with familiar objects and animals, from which the heroes can venture out into an unfamiliar world. Whether this departure into the unknown that the world-architecture reveals is interpreted in terms of Vladímir Propp's folktale morphology, Joseph Campbell's monomyth, or Farah Mendlesohn's Portal-Quest fantasy, the adventures on offer by the world – as it is constructed by the illustrations in the chapter

on races – follow a trajectory of leaving the familiar and venturing out into the unknown. This is not the only fantasy trajectory there is, but it is certainly very common (Attebery 87–88). It has the advantage of putting the player and the character on something of an equal footing in confrontations with the strange and fantastic.

Conclusion

To approach worlds critically is quite as scholarly an exercise as to approach the stories set within them. By applying even a simple architectural model to world-building, it is possible to reveal not only how the world is constructed, but what function the structures have, and what they mean. In this essay, I have shown that even extra-narratival material can be fruitfully engaged in this manner, offering not only additional information about a world described in a narrative, but even offering a way to approach worlds that are built entirely without narrative. Having demonstrated how much it is possible to learn about a world from a single codex entry or the illustrations of a single rule-book chapter, I propose that the world-architectural way of reading a world would work just as well with worlds built in any medium, textual or non-textual, narrated or non-narrated. The worlds are there, waiting for us to reveal their secrets, and I hope that you are encouraged to take them on, critically and architecturally.

Acknowledgements

Biography: Stefan Ekman (stefan.ekman@snd.gu.se; ORCID: 0000-0003-0902-5637) is Research Coordinator at the Swedish National Data Service. He has a PhD in English literature from Lund University, Sweden, and is the author of *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings* (Wesleyan UP, 2013).

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Conference Report:
The Legacies of Ursula K. Le Guin

Science, Fiction, and Ethics for the Anthropocene
June 19–21st, 2019
Paris, France

Dennis Wilson Wise

When Ursula K. Le Guin passed away last January, her absence left a hole in the hearts of many in the speculative-fiction community, as much for loss of her personal grace and wit as for her outsized contributions to the field. Understandably, many felt a deep desire to commemorate Le Guin in some way – and the result, at least on the European side of the pond, was a conference dedicated to her many great achievements. Set in Paris during a balmy three-day period, the City of Light's summer life in full bloom, the *Héritages d'Ursula Le Guin: Science, fiction et éthique pour l'Anthropocène* offered fit testament to how Le Guin has become, not just a treasured national writer firmly ensconced in the American canon, which we already knew, but a figure of ever-widening international scope.

As one of the conference organisers, Christopher Robinson (École polytechnique), explained to me, when he first came to France some decades ago, some puzzlement by French academics had always met his scholarly interest in Le Guin. Now, no more. When the idea was first floated of hosting a Le Guin conference, there was (in one of those serendipities all too rare in academe) an enthusiastic well-spring of institutional support, and this did much to give *Héritages d'Ursula Le Guin* its amiable character. Three separate institutions – the Chaire Arts & Sciences, École Polytechnique, and Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – all provided official funding. Not only did their generosity eliminate conference fees, certainly a great relief for those of us traveling internationally, it opened attendance to anyone interested in attending. Most panels, in fact, had anywhere between 30 and 45 people in attendance, thus ensuring lively Q&As and many friendly post-presentation discussions. Additionally, this financial support also funded cocktails on Wednesday and a community-building Thursday-night dinner for all presenters. It even enabled us to attend the Paris premier of *Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin*, director Arwen Curry's skillfully done 2018

documentary, which, coming on the evening prior to the conference's first day, kicked off events with style.

Overall, 26 presenters from universities across six countries, including as distant as Dayalbagh Educational Institute in India, offered papers on a wide range of topics: the Anthropocene and Le Guin, obviously, as the conference title suggests, but also the idea of indigeneity, new epistemologies, childhood and family, utopia, plus the translation and transmission of texts. A majority of the presentations were in English, although two panels and a keynote by Isabelle Stengers (Université Libre de Bruxelles) were given, appropriately enough, in French. All presentations achieved an impressively high level of quality – a function, most likely, of the conference's high selectivity, as its international Scientific Committee accepted just under two-thirds of abstracts submitted. Over the course of the three-day event, the only hitch came from the acoustics in the Institut du Monde Anglophone, where the panels were held. Our conference room, fronted by a gorgeous high bust of Louis XV, was a small, circular, chapel-like building that had once served as an anatomy theater; its high dome caused presenters' voices to echo, however, and – exacerbated by outside ambient noise – many of the early presentations were quite difficult to hear. Yet we soon learned how to work around the echoes.

For all that, a number of panels deserve particular mention. In the opening talks, for example, Chessa Adsit-Morris (University of California, Santa Cruz) and Brad Tabas (ENSTA Bretagne) both raised questions about the usefulness of the "Anthropocene" concept as applied to Le Guin; Tabas himself advocated for a more poetic understanding of time, pushing against the need to make ersatz periodising distinctions. On Thursday, a panel on "new epistemologies" saw Liesl King (York St John University) arguing that Le Guin's fiction could teach us to move more slowly through life, with increased mindfulness and "sensual receptiveness", whereas David Creuze (Université de Lille) praised *Always Coming Home* as a novel of *yin* over *yang*: passive, dark, weak, cold, slow, receiving. Later in the day, Meghann Cassidy (École Polytechnique) ably analysed Tenar's subject formation in *The Tombs of Atuan*.

My own panel saw two presentations on *The Dispossessed* and another on *The Lathe of Heaven*. I argued that, following the philosopher Leo Strauss, we can read Plato's *Republic* as an "ambiguous utopia", just like Le Guin's novel, and that doing so can help us – contra one prominent critic, Tony Burns – keep *The Dispossessed* within the utopian tradition; that reading also highlights the problematic relationship shown by both works between civil society and the intellectual or philosopher. Next, Joshua Abraham Kopin (University of Texas at Austin) argued that Le Guin's utopian novel is marked by an "anarchism of fidelity", forming bonds and strengthening them. Finally, Justin Cosner (University of Iowa) offered a notable talk on the revolutionary rhetoric in *The Lathe of Heaven*, which raised a fascinating discussion during the Q&A on just how "liberal" a text that novel is. Such a short list of mentions, however, can hardly do justice to the breadth of disciplinary perspectives and ideas offered by all the participants, which ranged from STEM pedagogies and graphic novels to ethnography and psychology. Hopefully, many of these talks will find eventual publication in some form or another – and, indeed, the organisers of this conference – Sarah Bouttier (École polytechnique), Pierre-Louis Patoine (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle), and Robinson – are in the preliminary stages of soliciting presentations in revised and expanded form for a peer-reviewed edited collection.

Yet the highlight of the conference, needless to say, was its three keynote addresses. All were gems. The keynote by Stengers, for example, given in French,

argued that SF narratives, in contrast to thought experiments in the social sciences that tend to oversimplify their parameters, create dense, complex, and consistent fictional worlds that, though retaining some ambiguity, still allow us to experience moral, psychological, and physical situations in an immersive way. Thinking in the SF mode, Stengers argues, thus implies a richer process of imagination than the simplified and static "imaginary" situations common to thought experiments.

For the English-speaking members of the audience, the other two keynotes were just as compelling. Already the author of a highly admired biography on James Tiptree Jr., Julie Phillips (independent scholar) is now the biographer for Le Guin, and she provided us a snapshot of Le Guin's time in France. According to Phillips, France was a formative experience for her subject, offering the "promise of intellectual creative life", and Le Guin's immersion in French literature and culture would show up again and again in her later fiction. Also, Phillips's tale of the whirlwind Parisian courtship between Le Guin and her future husband Charles, who proposed after only three weeks, added an endearing personal touch. One day after her Wednesday evening keynote, Phillips led us on a small excursion to the Hôtel de Seine, where Le Guin had stayed, and there was some talk of petitioning the city for a commemorative plaque.

Brian Attebery's (Idaho State University) keynote took a different angle – the possibility of a "hinge" in Le Guin's career, an earlier and a later Le Guin. The hinge, he argues, centers on *Always Coming Home* (1985). In the period immediately prior, Le Guin had begun making an effort to re-identity herself as a writer simply, not just a SF writer; likewise, in 1983, Le Guin and her husband spent five months at the Kroeber ranch in the Napa Valley, using minimal technology, and Le Guin also began rethinking her ideas on narrative during the early 1980s. All this combined with a discovery (or rediscovery) of oral poetry. The end result, of course, was *Always Coming Home*. After this book, though, Attebery suggests that Le Guin's editorial work on *The Norton Book of Science Fiction* helped redirect her *back* to science fiction, as she grew excited about the new work being done in a genre whose conventions she had been struggling to shatter for over two decades. Indeed, Attebery's keynote helped crystallise perhaps the strongest emergent theme from this conference: the importance of *Always Coming Home* in Le Guin's *oeuvre*, which – while rarely cited as her most beloved book by fans – nonetheless formed a key text for multiple papers during the conference; for example, the presentations by Eli Lee (*Minor Literature[s]*) and Creuze.

In the end, this conference in honor of Le Guin was much like Le Guin herself: welcoming, warm, nuanced, insightful. A chance to cross boundaries, whether national or linguistic, which so often divide scholars, or boundaries more disciplinary in nature. Even if none of us (to my knowledge!) followed Le Guin's example and "fell in love in Paris", which as Julie Phillips reminded us is what one is *supposed* to do in Paris, this conference certainly set the stage for many of us to fall in love with Le Guin's work all over again. Few more fitting outcomes, I think, can be imagined for an event dedicated to the memory of one of speculative fiction's most cherished icons.

Biography: Dennis Wilson Wise is a lecturer for the University of Arizona and primarily interested in the relationship between political theory and genre fantasy. Previous academic work has appeared in *Tolkien Studies, Extrapolation, Mythlore,* and others. His current project, thanks to support from a R. D. Mullen Postdoctoral Fellowship from *Science Fiction Studies*, involves studying the alliterative poetry of Poul Anderson in various fanzines. Wise also serves as the reviews editor for *Fafnir*.

Conference Report:
40th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts

Fantastical Politics and the Politics of Fantasy
March 13–16th, 2019
Orlando, Florida

Paul Williams

Even at 6 a.m. in mid-March, Florida is humid, and, after a restless four-hour red-eye flight from dry and chilled Salt Lake City, the sudden exposure to the polar opposite environment gave me a sense of whiplash and made me a bit cranky. Happily, 30 minutes later I checked into the Orlando Airport Marriott Lakeside. After a few hours of sleep my own spirits flipped as suddenly as the weather. Once again I found myself amidst my tribe, namely fellow scholars gathered for the 40th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts.

During my first year of graduate school I initiated what has developed into this annual pilgrimage. At the time I felt that I had overcome some Goliath-sized task in getting accepted to the conference, but now it is routine. This means that the fae glamour of the conference has waned a bit, but its meaning has grown more personal for me. Instead of wandering around awestruck by authors and scholars alike, I now openly visit with members of the IAFA, hearing and sharing about research projects. Throughout the conference and the following days my Facebook pings with a flurry of new friend requests.

After four decades of trying to subtly advocate for the relevance of fantasy literature in the modern world, the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts did away with pretense and chose the subject "Politics and Conflict" as the conference theme. ICFA 2019 gathered together more than 100 authors and nearly 500 academics (graduate students, professors, and independent researchers) in Orlando from 13–16 March 2019 to discuss the intersections between fantasy and the mounting obstacles that trouble our society.

Conference Proper

One hundred forty panels, each with two to four presenters, featured at the conference. Papers addressed questions such as the representation of women and LGBTQ+ individuals, both as characters in and producers of stories; gun control; immigration; the looming spectre of climate change; and more.

For every ICFA panel I attended there were several I missed. Still, I did make an effort to hear a variety of topics. Valerie Hegstrom (Brigham Young University) showed how the recent *Wonder Woman* (2017) film echoes and updates certain traits and tropes of female-warrior stories from the Spanish Golden Age, while Brian Attebery (Idaho State University) interrogated the concept of conflict as the driving force and organising principles of stories, suggesting alternative paradigms that authors, readers, and critics might adopt for creating, enjoying, and evaluating stories. My own paper on community-building through self-narration was paired with ecocritical essays based upon novels classical and modern. Presentations on graphic novels, epic poetry, clowns in horror fiction, and more highlighted and demonstrated the deep political concerns felt by members of the IAFA and the relevance of fantastical literature when looking ahead at uncertain times to come.

This year's Author Guest of Honor was G. Willow Wilson. She is best known as the creator of Kamala Khan in Marvel's *Ms. Marvel* comics, but she has also written in prose, first with her World Fantasy Award winner *Alif the Unseen* (2012) and now *The Bird King* (2019), newly released the week of the conference. I was fortunate enough to be standing in the right place (i.e. three feet away from Wilson) minutes before the opening ceremonies and introduced myself. I told her how I had recently read and greatly enjoyed *Alif the Unseen* and her standalone comic, *Cairo* (2007). Time was short, but we spoke for a bit about the role religion plays in her fiction and how she avoids evangelising while still taking her Muslim faith seriously in her art. Thanks to this ice-breaker meeting, I was able to hold an ongoing conversation with her throughout the conference, stealing minutes together at functions and between panels. She is a wonderful conversationalist and an insightful speaker.

The author with G. Willow Wilson, ICFA 2019.

Wilson regularly raised interesting questions about the political nature of fantasy literature. During the conference's opening panel discussion about politics in fantasy, for example, she readily responded to questions with acute insights. Perhaps her most striking comment was when she suggested that speculative fiction has brought us to the point where we might question whether or not the value of individuality as an end unto itself has expired. In other words, has the explorative nature of fantasy and science fiction revealed that humanity's interconnectivity supersedes the utility of pure individuality unto itself? It's a bold question to ask, and

certainly cannot be answered in a 20-minute panel. The ensuing Q&A had no shortage of hands raised or guests eager to join the conversation. While no decision on these matters was (nor can be) reached, Wilson's asking the question set a tone for the conference to come.

Wilson's keynote speech, titled "Who Are You Calling Political? (Or, which labels are applied to which stories, and why)", began with the intriguing observation that "not everybody who writes about politics is considered to be a political voice, and some people are considered political by their very presence". She shared how, when she was asked to temporarily fill in as writer for *Superman* in 2009, she received a particularly pointed piece of hate mail accusing her of being part of "the socialist, Islamic, homosexual" cabal aimed at destroying America. She had not yet even written a single issue of the comic and was only filling in so J. Michael Straczynski could rest for three months. Still, for some reason Wilson – who is female and an American convert to Islam – found herself a politicised entity by virtue of her existence, independent of any work she had (not yet even) produced for the *Superman* line. In contrast, many other writers (typically white men) actually make political comments in their fiction but somehow escape the label "political writer". To Wilson, texts, including escapist fantasy, are inherently political because humans are so politically minded, but those political labels are arbitrarily applied.

Wilson's invitation to us was to consider how we as readers politicise some authors while failing to politicise others. By reminding us that all texts are political, emerging from the author's own political context, she sought to destabilise some of the tropes readers use to dismiss one text in favour of another.

Response to the talk was enthusiastic. Wilson held the audience's attention effortlessly, garnering thunderous applause. All copies of *The Bird King* in the conference book room were sold out within five minutes after the keynote. The remainder of Wilson's visit was marked by a general tendency to find her seemingly mobbed by attendees increasingly excited to follow up on her comments. One friend of mine posted a representative comment on social media, "I could listen to G. Willow Wilson for hours! What a delightful, insightful, creative example she offers – both personally and in her characters".

For those interested in Wilson's talk, it will be published in the corresponding conference issue of the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* (anticipated Volume 31.1). In addition to the keynote address, the same issue will include the transcript of an interview between Wilson and Noran Amin, a PhD candidate at Idaho State University. Mark Bould (and his impressive supply of black t-shirts) served as Scholar Guest of Honor. His keynote talk built upon Wilson's, but whereas she encouraged us to recognise the political underpinnings of fantasy literature, Mark suggested that fantasy and science-fiction literature challenge us to rethink the political paradigms of our modern world. As world governments and private businesses afflict our environment and reinforce stagnant, oppressive systems of power, it is our pleasure in fantastic literature to discover better alternatives. "[W]e need to have better stories: not static utopian visions, but pathways to the utopian horizon that will always exceed our vision. We need to stop accepting that truism attributed to Fredric Jameson, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism; we need to raise our game".

Awards

Each ICFA closes with a celebratory banquet where the IAFA presents awards for scholarship, creative works, and service to the association.

> *Jamie Bishop Memorial Award* – a critical essay written in a language other than English.
> Recipient: Carlos Abraham

> *Robert A. Collins Service Award* – presented to an officer, board member, or division head for outstanding service to the organisation.
> Recipients: Judith Collins (daughter of the award's namesake) and Gary K. Wolfe

> *William L. Crawford Award* – recognises an outstanding new writer whose first fantasy book was published during the previous calendar year.
> Recipient: R. F. Kuong for *The Poppy War*

> *Dell Magazines Award* – best unpublished and unsold science-fiction or fantasy short story submitted by a full-time undergraduate college student.
> Recipient: Ana Maria Curtis for "Military Sunset"

> *Distinguished Scholarship* – career award for significant contributions to the field of scholarship of literature of the fantastic.
> Recipient: Mark Bould

> *David G. Hartwell Award* – awarded to a graduate student who submitted the most outstanding paper to the conference.
> Recipient: Sheetala Bhat

Conference Logistics

This year's ICFA also marked an important milestone for the conference. Donald E. Morse, a charter member of the IAFA, has served as Conference Chair for 35 years, and decided that ICFA 40 would be his last in that capacity. Donald has been a beloved figure of the conference and his commentary as master of ceremonies at the opening and closing receptions and luncheons have been ICFA staples. Fortunately we expect to continue seeing and visiting with him at future ICFAs, as the Board has granted him the status of Chair Emeritus and he is welcome to attend any year he should desire. A new conference chair has yet to be appointed.

Additionally, this year Sherryl Vint completed her three-year tenure as IAFA President. Dale Knickerbocker has accepted the post and will oversee the association for the next three years.

Of great importance this year was the conference business meeting. Due to changes in management at the Orlando Airport Marriott Lakeside, the IAFA is debating a change of venue in the near future. Alternate hotels in Orlando are under consideration, as are options in Toronto, Canada. The final decision has yet to be

made, but those interested in attending ICFA in the future should be mindful of these potential changes.

But that as-yet-unknown decision will not hinder us from gathering at the Orlando Airport Marriott Lakeside in March 2020 for ICFA 41. The chosen theme will serve as a continuation of this year's: Climate Change, and the Anthropocene, with Guest Author Jeff VanderMeer and Guest Scholar Stacey Alaimo.

Regardless of where ICFA gathers in the future, or who is in charge of speaking, the conference persists as a gathering place for insightful conversations about the value and reach of the imagination. Every year there are new attendees, guests, and leadership, but the value of coming together to exchange ideas makes us better scholars, while the exchanges of time and self make us stronger as people. As society continues to work through the messiness of the immediate future we will rely on each other for support and guidance. Whether professors trying to meet scholarly obligations, graduate students desperately fighting to write just one more dissertation chapter, or authors earnestly hoping to envision the next important story to tell, we gather at ICFA and leave the better for it.

I look forward to ICFA 41, and this time I plan to book a non-red-eye flight.

Biography: Paul Williams received his M.A. in English from Idaho State University in spring 2018. A former high school English teacher, his interests include narrative theory, alternative history, religion, and any other topic he can fit under the umbrella of fantasy literature. He is now a doctoral candidate at ISU where he also serves as Editorial Assistant for the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.

Book Review:
Patricia A. McKillip and the Art of Fantasy World-Building

Paul Williams

Taylor, Audrey Isabel. *Patricia A. McKillip and the Art of Fantasy World-Building*. McFarland, 2017, www.mcfarlandbooks.com. ISBN 978-1476665160.

Audrey Isabel Taylor's *Patricia A. McKillip and the Art of Fantasy World-Building* is the first book-length examination of McKillip's fantasy works. This is a surprising gap in fantasy scholarship, considering McKillip's accomplishments in the genre; as Taylor says in her preface, "McKillip *ought* to need no introduction" (1, emphasis added). McKillip won the first World Fantasy Award in 1975 for *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*, and she is one of only five authors to win Best Novel twice, not to mention other awards including the Locus and Mythopoeic. Additionally, as Taylor points out, "McKillip unites critics, fellow authors, and fans in respect for her craft" (2), citing praise from noteworthy author Stephen R. Donaldson and critic John Clute. Taylor's book reflects her ambitious goal to inspire greater scholarly attention for McKillip's work, and certainly future studies of McKillip will lean heavily on this volume. If we see an increase in scholarly attention of McKillip's work in the coming years (and we should), then Taylor will have achieved her primary objective.

To redress the dearth of scholarship on McKillip, whom Taylor describes as "understudied" (1), Taylor examines one of the most basic components of fantasy fiction: world-building, specifically as executed by McKillip. Taylor's new approach, which she terms "critical world-building", considers components in a fantasy world "beyond landscape … to see what setting combined with other facts and elements can tell us" about the story (11). Her main interest lies in how readers construct the world of the story in their own minds, both with regard to what is expressly presented within the text and what is left out. She emphasizes that every aspect of a story – "constructions, with ideas, plot, narrative, characters and other elements all interacting in varying and engaging ways" (12) – informs how the reader understands and experiences the tale. A medieval castle, an endless desert, or a modern city: each

of these and countless others invoke the reader's expectations about the sort of social structures, characters, and plot conventions they might encounter. An author can either play these straight, subvert them, or engage a mixture of both so long as the story holds together. Furthermore, the types of characters represented, the legends told and believed within the storyworld, locations visited, and more constitute a reader's vision of the world. For Taylor the goal is to present a holistic approach to world-building, one that looks at the intersection of settings, characters, and histories to apprehend the vitality of the story's world.

Discussions of world-building have long played a part in fantasy scholarship, but Taylor expands the matter by demonstrating how world-building can work in the critical discourse. Importantly, she draws distinctions between what she terms writerly world-building, readerly world-building, and critical world-building. The first refers to the way writers create meaning, which has a history of discussion from as far back as George MacDonald up to today's manuals on writing fantasy. Readerly world-building looks at how general readers construct the world of the story within their own minds by responding to narrative indicators deployed as part of writerly world-building. Critical world-building is Taylor's unique thrust, which combines readerly world-building with the analytical tools of the critic to approach a text, such as an awareness of trends in the genre and how authors might respond to their influences. Moreover, as Taylor puts it, a "critic will naturally be more interested in particular details" (21) than a general reader. Taylor does not mean to disparage non-scholarly readers nor to elevate critics, but rather she acknowledges that these different parties approach texts from specific backgrounds and wishes to enhance the academic experience. Elements she examines include trends and tropes apparent in fantasy literature, character types, locations, and so forth.

Pointing to McKillip as a particularly sophisticated world-builder, Taylor astutely includes oft-overlooked categories of world-building. Because critical world-building is holistic, it emphasizes how items that may appear as background still teach us about the world and therefore can inform how a reader approaches the text as a whole. While Taylor's index of world-building items is impressive, I will highlight just two: character ages and the role of myths and legends within the story. Taylor points out that McKillip skillfully manipulates these categories without overtaking the narrative. A wide spectrum of character ages, Taylor points out, allows "older characters a place in the world" and endows "characters with flaws natural to their age" (66). Similarly, a reader typically expects that legends and myths within the storyworld serve as a clue about the structure of the book they're currently reading. In this way, these embedded narratives function more like prophecies which enhance the current novel and less about enhancing the world itself. Taylor also uses McKillip as an example of how legends and myths within a fantasy novel can simply add history, depth, and tactility to a text. Critical world-building suggests an alternative way to evaluate and consider the temporal, social, and cultural spheres that make up a story by evaluating how they interact with each other.

Taylor's writing displays her admiration for McKillip, as it reads cleanly without getting dense in theory. In fact, the majority of theory presented appears in chapter one ("Worlds and World-Building"), and the remainder of the book fleshes out those basic concepts from different angles of application. Readers will not find much that is groundbreaking in the critical world-building approach, but it is a useful reminder about the importance of world-building that refocuses and redistributes our scholarly apparatuses. Those with a basic grasp of current narrative theory will find themselves

the best equipped to understand and apply Taylor's methods, though the book is so accessible that anyone familiar with literary criticism should find it usable.

In addition to the quality of her writing, Taylor's examples are accessible, illustrative, and instructive. For example, she cites the opening scene of McKillip's *Kingfisher* for its subtle displays of magic and notes how characters respond, such as a human knight whose shadow is winged. Protagonist Pierce is not surprised by the appearance of a knight nor that the shadow is supernatural, but he puzzles over the fact that the knight does not levitate. Taylor uses this scene to demonstrate how critical world-building works, extrapolating from the setting, the knight, and Pierce's response to demonstrate how small clues lead to complex constructions in the reader's mind. Taylor's ability to balance summary and analysis in her examples means that even readers less immersed in McKillip's literary corpus should still be able to ascertain the basic principles of critical world-building.

At the same time, unfortunately, Taylor's enthusiasm for McKillip's work seems occasionally to overshadow the main thrust of her theory. At times her efforts to illustrate examples of world-building unique to McKillip seemed to make questionable whether critical world-building could apply to any other author. This bias is seen in comments such as "I devised this style [of critical world-building] specifically to enable a full investigation of McKillip's worlds" (22). The book seems a bit torn between its two express purposes of drawing attention to McKillip and instructing readers in critical world-building.

That being said, *Patricia A. McKillip and the Art of Fantasy World-Building* emphasizes some of the primary joys of fantasy literature: exploring imagined landscapes, the power of myth and magic to inspire and thrill readers, opportunities to befriend and adore wonderful characters, and the exhilaration of loving our chosen authors. At the same time, Taylor avoids pandering to populist reading by rooting her theory in principles of narratology and structuralism. Experienced scholars can here find simple but effective ways to dig into the world-building which underpins their favorite books, and younger scholars can develop a stronger feel for analyzing fantasy literature on its own terms. While many other reference texts understandably concern themselves with the genre's history or with social and political criticism, Audrey Taylor encourages her readers to engage with fantasy literature *as* fantasy, by which I mean as a construct of our own wishful thinking.

Biography: Paul Williams received his M.A. in English from Idaho State University in spring 2018. A former high school English teacher, his interests include narrative theory, alternative history, religion, and any other topic he can fit under the umbrella of fantasy literature. He is now a doctoral candidate at ISU where he also serves as Editorial Assistant for the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.

Book Review:
Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from Around the World

T. S. Miller

Knickerbocker, Dale, ed. *Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from Around the World.* U of Illinois P, 2018. ISBN 978-0252041754.

In *Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from Around the World*, distinguished scholar of Spanish-language literature Dale Knickerbocker has assembled eleven chapters that introduce and critically assess some of the most notable creators of "global science fiction," a category that the editor himself acknowledges as a necessarily imperfect descriptor for science fiction and fantasy produced beyond the dominant Anglo-American genre traditions. A handful of the authors covered in this volume will likely already be well known – at least by name and reputation – to many English-speaking SF scholars, including the Strugatsky brothers, Liu Cixin, Angélica Gorodischer, and Daína Chaviano. The remaining writers and single filmmaker, however, most readers will likely find much less familiar, and it is one of the primary aims of this essay collection to reduce their collective obscurity, even to the point of working towards constructing a kind of "international sf canon" (x). The editor and the contributors obviously do not intend such a canon to be exhaustive or even exclusive in any sense, and in fact *Lingua Cosmica* is often at its most compelling when contextualizing those authors singled out for "canonization" within the much more expansive SF traditions native to their own countries. This volume's essays map out many diverse directions for further scholarship, and above all offer fascinating and often humbling glimpses into these simultaneously local and international other traditions – not into a *singular* global SF, but many. Indeed, SF scholars who consider themselves knowledgeable about "the field" will have to reconsider the scope and character of this field we have been talking about for so long, and all that we miss if we focus our attention only on works from what Knickerbocker – again, admittedly imperfectly – has dubbed the "Anglophone axis" (viii).

I would therefore highly recommend *Lingua Cosmica* to teachers designing a course on global SF or simply wishing to incorporate more international perspectives into their usual genre courses. The essays included should also provide useful starting points for interested researchers, even if only in providing a general overview of a given author's career; after all, Knickerbocker notes in his introduction that the authors covered "possess one thing in common: there is little or no English scholarship on their work" (xi). This statement is more true of some of the authors than others, and, relatedly, another of the book's most useful elements is simply its incidental assemblage of non-exhaustive but broad bibliographies ranging across the extant English and non-English scholarship on each author. Of course, one of the possibly frustrating contradictions of this generally excellent collection is that the constraints of space and other specifications requested by the editor for the benefit of a more generalist audience mean that most of the essays necessarily take the form of broad overviews of authors and works that clearly deserve much deeper study. The essays do vary in this respect: some of them read more like entries in an encyclopedia or other reference book (for example, Vibeke Rützou Petersen on Gorodischer or Hanna-Riikka Roine and Hanna Samola on "Finnish Weird" author Johanna Sinisalo), whereas others take a form closer to a typical journal article in advancing and supporting a narrower argumentative thesis (such as Amy J. Ransom's brilliant "Laurent McAllister: Rhizomatic Space and the Posthuman" or Alexis Brooks de Vita's contribution on Olatunde Osunsanmi). This is not a criticism of either type of essay but rather a simple observation. Most chapters do straddle this divide in some ways: by design, *Lingua Cosmica* seems to have been intended as midway between an introductory reference work and a more typical essay collection.

Another apparent contradiction of this English-language publication is that many of the authors covered in it have not (yet?) been widely translated into English and/or well served by existing translations. In other words, those SF scholars who can read the languages in which these authors write are probably already familiar with their work, whereas those who cannot will often find themselves unable to access much if any of their work in reliable English translations. For example, Paweł Frelik's essay on "Jacek Dukaj's Science Fiction as Philosophy" is one of the most stimulating in the collection and therefore one of the most frustrating: Frelik tantalizes those of us with no Polish by describing the spottily translated Dukaj as overshadowing even countryman Stanisław Lem — that already-canonized saint of international SF — "in terms of narrative complexity and intellectual density" (23). To read such praise from one of the leading scholars of SF studies, but also to find that only two of the author's many works have been translated into English, leaves me with nothing to do but wait on possible future translations. But, after all, perhaps *Lingua Cosmica* can indirectly spur additional translation by increasing international interest in the authors under consideration. In his essay, Frelik compellingly traces how "Dukaj often uses genre protocols and formulas as tools for thinking through philosophical and political issues, making science fiction a tool rather than an end" (24). As in many of the best pieces in this collection, Frelik manages a fine balance between demonstrating an author's relationship to SF beyond their own language or national borders and situating their work in the specific political (or otherwise local) contexts with which it engages and from which it emerged.

In general, the most useful essays in *Lingua Cosmica* succeed in telling a miniature history of SF in the respective countries and/or languages of the author or filmmaker under discussion. For example, although I have suggested that both the

Argentine fabulist Angélica Gorodischer and the Cuban émigré Daína Chaviano are likely known to English-speaking SF scholars because of their many accolades and translated works (stories by both already appear in the 2003 anthology *Cosmos Latinos* edited by Andrea L. Bell and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán), Juan Carlos Toledano Redondo's essay on Chaviano and her distinctive "cosmovision" will provide an important window into the specifically *Cuban* context of her works. This particular reviewer knows much more about Spanish-language literature than French-language literature, and so – when reading Natacha Vas-Deyres on "Jean-Claude Dunyach, Poet of the Flesh" and the history of science fiction in France, or Ransom on the French-Canadian authors Yves Meynard and Jean-Louis Trudel and their "symbionym" Laurent McAllister in the context of "SFQ," the bilingual science fiction of Québec – I was powerfully struck by the panoply of fleeting glimpses afforded by this book into entire SF communities and histories that have yet to be written (in English, anyway). Readers interested in German or Japanese-language SF will be similarly well served by Vibeke Rützou Petersen's chapter on "Andreas Eschbach's Futures and Germany's Past" and Tatsumi Takayuki's contribution on Sakyo Komatsu, the author whose 1964 novel *The Day of Resurrection* became the 1980 film *Virus*. Tatsumi's essay ends with a poignant reflection on a recent allusion to *Virus* by Dominican-American novelist Junot Díaz and the enduring relevance of Komatsu's science fictional imagination in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and the collision of "natural and artificial disasters" it represents (104).

Each of the chapters in *Lingua Cosmica* has something to offer to any SF scholar, but the two pieces that I suspect may hold the widest interest touch on Chinese and African(/American) science fiction, respectively. I would single out Mingwei Song's chapter on Liu Cixin as a particularly strong one and recommend it to any reader of *The Three-Body Problem* interested in learning more about the context and arc of Liu's already remarkable career. Song argues that the political unrest of 1989 marks a shift "when a new paradigm of science-fictional imagination began to complicate the utopianism that had dominated Chinese politics and intellectual culture for more than a century" (109), and teases out the complexity of Liu's various (and variously bleak) visions of a posthuman future both in his earliest writings and his most recent. Song's chapter is broadly informative and deeply insightful, an exemplary execution of the prescribed purpose of the chapters in *Lingua Cosmica*, whereas Alexis Brooks de Vita's essay on the American-born Nigerian film director Olatunde Osunsanmi may be the most unusual in the book. The author, for one, is rightly interested in questions about audience response, and she surveys the (generally negative) reception of Osunsanmi's work by established film critics.

In particular she seeks to reclaim the director's 2009 film *The Fourth Kind* as a major work of African/American SF that has gone underappreciated or entirely unnoticed. Osunsanmi may also seem an odd choice to be the single representative of African SF in this book, yet Brooks de Vita openly acknowledges this fact, and uses it strategically to develop a wide-ranging argument about Africanness, SF, and arguably SF-ness. She rightly pays great attention to Nnedi Okorafor's writing – an author who forcefully rejects the association of her work with the concept of "Afrofuturism," preferring the term "Africanfuturism" – and dramatically recontextualizes *The Fourth Kind*, what may on the surface seem to be a weak or even exploitative American found-footage horror film, within a wider tradition of Nigerian imaginative literature and other creative responses to the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade. All of this makes for an unexpected but invaluable contribution to the collection, and I will definitely

need to rewatch *The Fourth Kind* as soon as possible. I saw the film a decade ago and quickly forgot about it, but Brooks de Vita has convinced me that I – we – watched it without crucial contexts for the understanding and appreciation of its achievement.

Lingua Cosmica concludes with a chapter on Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, and I admit that I was initially skeptical about the inclusion of a chapter on the Strugatskys in a book of this kind at all: much like Stanisław Lem, these two literary heavyweights should need no introduction to Anglophone SF scholars, having already been firmly canonized and rendered accessible in widely-available English translations and on film. Consider how, say, a chapter on Lem in place of Frelik's chapter on Dukaj would have made *Lingua Cosmica* a poorer and much less urgent critical intervention in the study of global SF: I wondered what newer voice(s) in Russian SF might have been drowned out by including further writing on the Strugatskys. As it turns out, however, Yvonne Howell's essay is so stunning that one can hardly find any grounds to complain: she not only demonstrates how the brothers' writing manages to "record the distinctive tensions in the Soviet cultural Zeitgeist of their times" (202), but she also makes a larger and largely persuasive claim that there was "something essentially 'science fictional' about the Soviet project, which superimposed a hyperrational, materialist, and stridently future-oriented official ideology onto deeply embedded premodern epistemologies" (201). Howell tells a sweeping story about science fiction in Russia and the Soviet Union with a remarkable economy of words, taking care to cover the entire trajectory of the Strugatskys' career, and even ending with a coda on Putinism, speaking to the continued interest and desire to claim their works across evolving political spectra at home and abroad. This is a more than fitting chapter with which to end the collection, affirming as it does the complexity of the relationship between the local and the global in SF and SF studies.

Lingua Cosmica represents an important step forward for the study of international science fiction, perhaps not so much for the individual scholarly achievements of its contributions, which vary a great deal in their chosen emphases, but because of its indisputable success at its major goal of better familiarizing an English-speaking audience with these authors and filmmakers. One can only hope that it will stimulate more scholarly work on the figures covered, even if additional translations may be necessary to fulfill its promise of overcoming the barriers that have impeded our better understanding of SF's wider story in the world.

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:
Animating the Science Fiction Imagination

Samantha Kirby

Although all scholars and researchers endeavor to fill a gap in their field of interest, J.P. Telotte does not just fill a gap – he transforms the prior neglect of pre-World War II science fiction animation into a showcase for why it's an irreplaceable facet of science fiction in its own right. More than that, Telotte's *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination* succeeds in its quest to show how SF animation was a stepping stone for audiences to be familiarized with, and not threatened by, key science (and science fiction) concepts. The book is neatly bookended with an introduction, which orients the reader with foundational knowledge such as literary modernism and SF itself, and a postscript documenting and commenting on the transition of SF to post-war television and film. This introduction does not simply define modernism, memes, pulps, etc., but also introduces how SF animation prepared "us to accept that science-fictional vision" (22). This is restated in the postscript with how pre-war SF animation increased digestibility of new technological concepts and made technological wonder familiar rather than intimidating. As it is impossible to entirely divorce science fiction from 20th-century modernism and 19th-century cultural shifts, *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination* uses modernism as a recurring motif to further the readerly understanding of societal responses to animation and its cultural value.

The median four chapters of this book each examine the main tropes of animated science fiction in the pre-WWII era: extraordinary voyages, robots, aliens, and gadgets and scientists. Chapter 2, "Flights of Fantasy", uses substantial examples to explore journeys that characters take, initially through their dreams but – in an increasingly importantly symbol of the era – through the use of rockets. At the end of the chapter, Telotte reminds the reader, as he does throughout each explored trope, how these animations affected real-world people. By the end of Chapter 2, he muses

that viewers, SF lovers or otherwise, could more easily grasp and be enchanted by the space travel in these films, though these films may also "paradoxically" show viewers that said enchantment is that and nothing more. Chapter 3 focuses on robots – a parallel to common anthropomorphic animals in other genres of animation – illuminating people's tumultuous relationship with technology. This chapter also explores the binaries of robots in SF, including gender (and the seduction of machines), as well as the fear of artificial life replacing laborers. In Chapter 4, "strange" aliens and alien worlds are suggested to be the "promise of more subversive, other-worldly visions yet to come, and of other ways for representing our own alienation"; in other words, reflections of ourselves, as emphasized in Chapter 4's last example of *Scrappy's Trip to Mars* (83). Chapter 5 recognizes the excitement, obsession, madness, absurdity, and naivety surrounding the "gadgets and gadgeteers" – or the inventions and scientists – of SF animation (104). He solidifies the notion that despite the comic elements, which helped viewers understand their evolving world, these animations shared warnings and explored cultural understanding of "mad" scientists and unearthly procedures. Telotte explores *The Great Experiment* (1934), *The Mad Doctor* (1933), and *Stratos Fear* (1933), suggesting that the repeated theme of characters (Scrappy, Mickey, and Willie Whopper respectively) waking up from a bad dream demonstrates the great anxiety viewers had about scientists, experiments, and technological changes.

The majority of this book focuses on the content of pre-WWII SF animation, how it shaped its viewers, and why it needs the attention it deserves. In the postscript, J. P. Telotte contextualizes its position as a foundation for post-WWII SF. He meticulously shows what stayed and what didn't due to the attitudes of the postwar nation and the closure of animation studios. The robot characters focused on in Chapter 3, such as the ones in *The Dancing Doll* (1922), *The Iron Man* (1930), *The Mechanical Cow* (1937), are intellectually overshadowed by the smarter, perhaps more threatening, post-WWII robots in films like *Tobor the Great* (1954), *the Colossus of New York* (1957), and *The Invisible Boy* (1957), shifting with America's fear of artificial intelligence. While there is no reference to contemporary SF animation, it doesn't seem necessary, as there are plenty observations around the very period of SF that gave us the foundation and tropes we use and love today.

Some of the points made in Telotte's book about pre-war SF animation, without him ever explicitly saying so, can be easily carried over to all forms of SF. SF animation, as Telotte describes in his introduction, did not have the luxury of time that pulp magazine studios did for getting the hard science "right" (14). Therefore, the focus for this medium was time, accessibility, and cartoon production. Much of this animation, Telotte argues, critiqued the evolving technological world while being superficially comic. I would argue that all SF, or at least any content showing interaction between technology and characters, surely heeds some sort of commentary, critique, or warning, which perhaps Telotte agrees with – for example, he uses *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) to demonstrate the alignment between the function of SF cinema and SF animation. That being said, there is a long-standing comfort with cartoons – an ease in watching a distanced two-dimensional fiction – that surely makes SF animation the right tool to make scary technological changes palatable.

J.P. Telotte seamlessly braids together examples of animation through summary and images, shares influence of SF animation on media consumers and culture in the 1910–1940s, and reflects as a writer a century after these science fiction animations were created, offering a multifaceted perspective to each core science

fiction trope. He also demonstrates his thoughtfulness by answering potential reader questions, for example by resituating time, reminding the audience how "this period [was] prior to Isaac Asimov's famed 'Three Laws of Robotics'" (58). Not only does Telotte balance rich content with concision, but his writing style contributes to reader engagement. Some of this is with simpler moves like the direct inclusion of the audience, for example "…as *we* earlier noted" [emphasis mine] (26). Other times, the natural flow of his writing, which includes an occasionally relaxed structure and several exploratory transitions, promotes the refreshing feeling that one is participating in well-researched science fiction musings rather than reading a strictly didactic text. Content-wise, one great strength of *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination* is its self-awareness. There are appreciated moments of self-critique, such as confessing that the science fiction examined in this text is an "admittedly limited study" (20). But there are moments of grander claims that bring in modern ideology, as when Telotte criticizes the lack of gender and racial awareness in pre-World War II science fiction animation, calling out the "convenient blind spot" (125).

While Telotte heavily substantiates every claim and suggestion with multiple examples, some of his claims sometimes feel too safe. The aforementioned Chapter 2, for example, does not actually reference real viewer reactions at the time; instead, it ends with the position that animation may have made viewers feel one way (that space travel is indeed accessible), or perhaps the other way (that space travel is just imagination). It is in this way that this text often reads as observational rather than argumentative. Additionally, this reader found herself skimming through some summaries of discussed animation, the function of too many back-to-back plot recaps in *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination*. These points stated, the questions posited in this text, as well as the evidence that supports their being asked, outweighs any points taken off for redundancy.

Telotte is explanatory enough that a curious science fiction novice could read this book with ease, but dense and specific enough that self-proclaimed experts could certainly benefit from its reading. In a final applause for Telotte, he commits care to his examples, so much so that Scrappy, KoKo, Oswald, and Mickey almost become developed characters through this academic text. If J. P. Telotte's one hope was to convince readers that pre-WWII animation deserves a recognized spot in the SF hall of fame, he succeeds. J.P. Telotte's *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination* is an invaluable read for any science fiction media enthusiast.

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Book Review:
Economic Science Fictions

Laura E. Goodin

Darko Suvin has famously defined science fiction as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (20). Authors have based such alternative frameworks on imagined and reimagined technologies, biologies, genders, languages, legal systems, histories, and psychologies, among many others. The use of economic ideas and systems as a means of introducing estrangement is not unknown (Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* being a notable example), but *Economic Science Fictions* brings a new and critical attention to science fiction's potential role as a catalyst for broad-scale economic change.

  The works in this book (not all are essays as such) seek to introduce – or at least suggest the possibility of – disrupting the assumed inevitability of capitalism as *the* economic system that, so to speak, "makes sense". (Le Guin's speech at the 2014 National Book Awards, in which she commented, "We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings", is mentioned more than once.) The book's editor, William Davies, asserts in its introduction that capitalist economies "are constituted by a patchwork of institutions and mechanisms, which are amenable to reimagining and recombining" (12) and that "'the economy' is *already* partly fictional in its constitution" (22, emphasis original). In other words, like most of the institutions human beings devise as means of collaboration and power allocation, economies are as much an agreement about how the story should go as a reflection of some sort of objective, positivistic reality – and, as such, they are amenable to narrative manipulations. The contributors to this volume offer a many-faceted examination of how science-fictional stories can be used not only to put a

mirror to capitalism, but to actively change it. Their analyses and proposals are, not unexpectedly, sanguine in their conviction that capitalism can, and should, be supplanted, but ultimately their arguments are unsatisfying: can capitalism truly be jettisoned *holus bolus* without any consideration for those of its aspects that have indisputably contributed to the reduction of poverty? Have the potential drawbacks of the solutions proposed herein been fully identified and addressed? Can it really be this straightforward? When the book moves into presenting fictional and creative-nonfictional visualisations of alternative economic futures, can these stories plausibly engender genuine economic change? Have any stories ever done so? Ultimately, the book offers no answers to these questions. Nevertheless, it provides an intriguing look at the intersection between social sciences and literary theory and practice; after all, every work of fiction sits within, and provides a lens to examine, its societal and historical context.

Ha-Joon Chang posits in his opening essay "Economics, Science Fiction, History and Comparative Studies" that while science-fiction writers can make their work more plausible by incorporating insights from formal approaches to economic behaviour, economists will benefit far more from the incorporation of science-fictional approaches, as this compels a rethinking of assumptions about institutions and individuals (35). As an example, he points to the *Mad Max* movies as the logical (if perhaps extreme) extension of the unrestrained market of neoclassical economics, as they depict "the destruction of modern institutions [that] has made people closer to the self-seeking rationalists that are idealised in neoclassical economics" (36). His assertion may be simplistic, as it's both unlikely that economists will be willing to consider their field of study as something amenable to ideas of estrangement and narrative manipulation and that the political means exist to implement any insights from such approaches; this wistfulness characterises the book as a whole.

The next four pieces provide examples of the application of speculative-fiction techniques to economic thought, situating them more within the field of economics than those of literary criticism or creative practice. Laura Horn in her essay "Future Incorporated?" writes that contesting corporate power is "not to be achieved through individual heroism or subversive hacktivism; it is only through collective thinking and critical engagement with [other possible ways of organising] that these futures might come about" (58). Sherryl Vint writes in "Currencies of Social Organisation: The Future of Money" that neoliberal capitalism is designed to obscure, that "its very functioning is a creation of human choice" (65). Brian Willems in "Automating Economic Revolution: Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*" and Carina Brand in "Feeding Like a Parasite" follow Horn's suggestion of examining specific economic topics through the lens of speculative fiction, looking at the ambiguous benefits of decentralised, automated economic exchange and the positive and negative aspects of extraction (specifically, of resources and labour), respectively.

Intriguingly, the book then moves on from analyses that *use* the idea of speculative fiction to works of speculative fiction themselves, demonstrating in practice how science fiction can serve to disrupt economic assumptions. "Pain Camp Economics", written by the members of the AUDINT research group, is a thought experiment that uses the idea of pain as a currency, making literal and immediate the idea that capitalism only persists by continually increasing the suffering of the poor and disenfranchised. Khairani Barokka, in "AT392-Red", proposes the trading of "accessibility credits" in the same way, and with the same moral difficulties, as trading carbon credits; for example, if a private apartment building in Hong Kong installs

elevators, a local government seat in Indonesia can consequently undercut funding for its disabled citizens' needs (142). Both works serve more as critiques or satires of neoclassical economics (and capitalism more broadly) than as serious predictions or proposals; this dilutes editor Davies's initial assertion that science fiction can be an agent of change, rather than solely of criticism.

Nora O Murchú's "The New Black" presents an impressionistic "day in the life" of an information worker in an IT-based dystopia. Next, in what this reviewer found the most thought-provoking of the creative works in the book in its definition of wealth as "resistance to shock", Dan Gavshon Brady and James Pockson's "Fatberg and the Sinkholes: A Report on the Findings of a Journey into the United Regions of England by PostRational" imagines an England that has ejected London from the nation and now operates on a "system of social organisation in which all members (at individual, community and regional level) are able to withstand shock through the quality of relationships they form with each other" (177). This system, reminiscent of the utopia that emerges at the culmination of Doris Lessing's *Shikasta*, is "less concerned with what you have, and more with how you do it" (177).

The next section examines various applications of design principles to economic problems. The first case study is Owen Hatherley's "Prefabricating Communism: Mass Production and the Soviet City", which examines the efforts of the Soviet government in the 1960s and 1970s to use the design of high-density housing ostensibly as a way to foster a better, more collectively oriented society. Hatherly acknowledges that these efforts were less successful than originally proposed, attributing this to flaws in the Soviet Union's implementation of communism: "Whether mass housing could achieve greater things in more propitious circumstances, and in a very different kind of society, with less dominance of patriarchy, bureaucracy and Fordist labour, is another question entirely" (235). This case study, in particular, highlights the tendency of the works overall toward a certain naive idealism. Hatherley's examination of Soviet mass dwellings does admit that they fell? short of the hype that surrounded them (I've seen numerous examples myself, and they can charitably be described as dreary and dehumanising), and he blames this – probably correctly, at least in part – on "patriarchy, bureaucracy, and Fordist labour" (235); however, he neglects to consider whether fault may also lie with corrupt, self-serving, and hypocritical Communist Party leaders and functionaries. Nor does Hatherley examine the possibility that the idealistic depiction of the utopian benefits of government-designed mass housing at the time was more propaganda than genuine objective.

In "Science Fiction Computer Games", Mark R. Johnson proposes that "games are a particularly rich medium for examining science fiction economies and the physical structures they produce" (238), and he asserts that game designers and players "inevitably hypothesise about what economic forms could possibly underpin these titanic structures, whether slavery and technological control, techno-scientific state and military investment or post-scarcity matter manipulation" (256). In "Economic Design Fictions", Bastien Kerspern writes that "more and more designers are orienting their practice to engage the political" (258). He offers the "Design Fiction" approach as a case study in that it focuses on the question of whether designers are "solving the right problems" (259) and uses "what if?" as the starting point of discussions with stakeholders (260). In "Valuing Utopia in Speculative/Critical Design", Tobias Revell, Justin Pickard, and Georgina Voss assert that the rejection of utopias as either impossible or as disguised dystopias cuts the

designer off from valuable material for critical thought: "Whereas a dystopia would assume a failed state position from the outset, the critical utopia instead highlights the cracks in the utopian vision to expose its failings. It is here that we find the playground of speculative and critical design" (282).

Another section of fiction and creative non-fiction follows, the works therein encouraging a more intuitive reflection on the act of speculation itself. Tim Jackson's piece "Shooting the Bridge" uses a day spent on the water as a trigger for reflection on risk, tension, resolution, the constraints of finite resources, and the idea of the liminal as they inform speculation on how the present becomes the future. In "Speculative Hyperstition at a Northern Further Education College", Judy Thorne combines fiction and real-life interviews to present a slightly disorienting, yet poignant, treatment of the human yearning for acceptance and safety, and the effects of this yearning on individual and collective economic decisions. In "The Future Encyclopedia of Luddism", Miriam A. Cherry proposes an alternative history in which the Luddite movement acts as a pivotal moment: in our history, it failed, with ramifications of that failure resulting in the current worldwide spread of distress and climatic peril; in Cherry's alternative, it succeeds, and leads to a global economic approach called "Sustainomics", which brings humanity instead to a rational, compassionate future. While these works may seem out of place in a scholarly volume, they offer examples of using speculative fiction more subtly, as a trigger for reflection – a skill that is receiving increasing attention within academia (see, for example, Coulson and Harvey; Walkerden).

The final chapter, Jo Lindsay Walton's "Public Money and Democracy", combines a creative work – an impressionistic, ambiguous, and arch story that looks at the oppressive potential of "big data" algorithms – with its exegesis. The two parts of the chapter put the thesis of the book as a whole into practice: speculative fiction has value as a tool to explore and postulate potential economic futures and their ramifications.

Considered together, the chapters take an unapologetic position significantly to the left of capitalism; it seems entirely plausible to argue that capitalism has served some less well than others, and each work in the book regards this as a given. While the essays and creative works offer a thought-provoking diversity of topics and approaches – from traditional scholarship and reflection to numerous forms of fiction and creative non-fiction – this uniform lean to the left leaves some questions unanswered. For example, many of the chapters emphasise the importance of collective action and mutual responsibility as the only way to disrupt corporate power, but is this really the only way? Individuals' actions have more than occasionally had a discernable effect on how history unfolds (Mohandas K. Gandhi is an obvious example). And surely the collapse of Soviet-style communism shows that powerful institutions can sometimes fall under their own weight, even in the absence of overt collective resistance. Similarly, the assumption that capitalism is, by its nature, dystopic negates any possibility of extracting any components that might in themselves have benefits for an emergent collective society, such as the contributions of small and medium-sized privately owned enterprises (which themselves rely heavily on personal relationships to thrive; see, for example, Erdem and Atsam) to economic vitality (as the OECD asserts in "Enhancing the Contributions of SMEs in a Global and Digitalised Economy.") Moreover, it's been convincingly argued that capitalism does not, in isolation, either cause or reduce poverty; rather, economies are shaped by "the endogenous evolution of technology and the institutions and the political equilibrium

that influence not only technology but also how markets function and how the gains from various different economic arrangements are distributed" (Acemoglu and Robinson 1).

Despite these concerns, *Economic Science Fictions* is an innovative and highly relevant book, the methodology of which can be expanded to imagine not just new economies, but new polities, diplomacies, artistries, sociologies, legal systems, geographies, philosophies, and psychologies. The combination of theoretical approaches and their application in actual works of fiction gives particular power to encourage both explicit debate and intuitive, implicit understanding of crucially important social issues.

> *Biography*: Laura E. Goodin is an independent researcher based in Melbourne, Australia. She holds a PhD in creative writing from the University of Western Australia. Her novels are published by Odyssey Books; her short stories have appeared in numerous print and online publications; and her libretti, plays, and poetry have been performed internationally.

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research invites authors to submit papers for 1/2020.

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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/

In addition to research articles, *Fafnir* welcomes text proposals for essays, interviews, overviews, conference reports, and book reviews on any subject suitable for the journal.

Please send your electronic submission (saved as RTF or DOC/DOCX) to the following address: submissions@finfar.org. You should get a reply indicating that we have received your submission in a few days. If not, please resubmit or contact the editors. For further information, please contact submissions@finfar.org. More detailed information about our journal is available at our webpage: journal.finfar.org.

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The deadline for article submissions is 31 December 2019, and for other submissions (essays, overviews) contact the editors. For book reviews, contact the reviews editor.

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