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Editorial 1/2022

*Laura E. Goodin, Essi Varis, Elizabeth Oakes & Dennis
Wilson Wise*

Welcome to 2022's first issue of *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*. The issue opens with Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay's Prefatory on climate change fiction and cofutures, "Fictioning the Futures of Climate Change."

This issue's four research articles apply Finnish scholarship to a range of texts from a variety of perspectives. Saija Isomaa's "Abandoning the Untrustworthy Risk Society: Salvage and the Critique of Modernity in Laura Gustafsson's Post-Apocalyptic Novel *Korpisoturi*" argues that the novel combines conventions from speculative and mimetic literature. The article demonstrates how salvage and the critique of modernity blend with the depiction of protagonist's psychological development to situate the mimetic portrayal of real-life survivalism within a post-apocalyptic scenario.

Kati Aakkonen's "Kasvien vieraus ja ekofeminismin vaarallisuus – Poison Ivy toiseuttaminen elokuvassa *Batman & Robin*" extends this issue's contributions into Finnish-language scholarship. The article demonstrates how dangerous and threatening aspects of plant agency in plant horror open perspectives into the relationships between plants and humans, with a focus on how the character of Poison Ivy challenges the borders and hierarchies existing between plants and humans.

Minna Siikilä-Laitila's "I'm just being a difficult lotr hardcore fan" delves into fan studies and reception theory. The article explores Tolkien fans' sense of moral duty by describing their reactions to Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* trilogy, the reasons for these reactions, and the actions they induced.

Veera Mäkelä's "Courting Tragedy: *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy" explores how aspects of Scott Lynch's novel present as city comedy, English revenge tragedy, and Senecan revenge tragedy. In melding city comedy and revenge drama, Lynch furthers a political outcome and presents a philosophy of power structures.

In a welcome addition to this issue's articles, we also bring you Elise Kraatila's *Lectio Praecursoria "Speculative Mimesis – Beyond Non-Mimetic Models"*, in which she questions the boundary between mimetic and non-mimetic fiction. She argues that 21st-century speculative fiction stories model our fragmentary reality, demonstrating possibilities for giving meaning to the world around us and changing it for the better.

Longtime Co-Editor-in-Chief Esko Suoranta has blasted off for further adventures on stranger planets, and this issue is the first with Elizabeth Oakes along as a new Editor-in-Chief. In the Hail and Farewell interview, our editors relate their hopes for the journal, discuss its strengths, describe their love for speculative fiction, and tell why you should submit your article at *Fafnir*.

The issue closes with a brace of book reviews: Cait Coker's review of Shawna Kidman's *Comic Books Incorporated: How the Business of Comics Became the Business of Hollywood*; Dominick Grace's review of *Middle-earth, or There and Back Again*, edited by Łukasz Neubauer; Everett Hamner's review of Jim Clarke's *Science Fiction and Catholicism: The Rise and Fall of the Robot Papacy*; Sami Ahmad Khan and Rahul Rana's review of Suparno Banerjee's *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity*; Graham Minenor-Matheson's review of *Fighting for the Future: Essays on Star Trek: Discovery*, edited by Sabrina Mittermeier and Mareike Spychala; C. Palmer-Patel's review of Joseph Rex Young's *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form*; Abhishek Sarkar's review of Sanjay Sircar's translation *Fantasy Fictions from the Bengal Renaissance: Abanindranath Tagore's The Make-Believe Prince and Gaganendranath Tagore's Toddy-cat the Bold*; Amar Singh's review of Susan B. Levin's *Posthuman Bliss? The Failed Promise of Transhumanism*; Jonathan William Thurston-Torres' review of Carys Crossen's *The Nature of the Beast: Transformations of the Werewolf from the 1970s to the Twenty-First Century*; Joseph Rex Young's review of Bobby Derie's *Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E Howard and Others*; and Essi Varis' review of *Fantasia: Lajit, ilmiö ja yhteiskunta*, edited by Jyrki Korpua, Irma Hirsjärvi, Urpo Kovala, and Tanja Väälisalo.

While submissions to our next issue, with a focus on the conference Specific 2021 Time and History and a second area of focus on speculation, 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/>.

We hope the abundant thoughts and analyses of our contributors provide you with enjoyable reading this summer (or winter, as the case may be). As always, all of us at *Fafnir* hope this issue finds you well and inspires your research in the wide, wonderful field of SF.

Essi Varis, Laura E. Goodin, and Elizabeth Oakes, Editors-in-Chief
Dennis Wise, Reviews Editor
Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research



Fictioning the Futures of Climate Change¹

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay

Fictionality, at a basic level, is a heuristic invitation. It achieves its effects using a combination of worldbuilding and speculative potential, the former the design and the latter the openings afforded by the conditions of the design. Within climate change fiction (aka climate fiction, cli-fi, Anthropocene fiction, eco-fiction, and similar modes of fictionality), environmental change and ecological disaster are the design in which such heuristics may be employed, which means that the trials and tribulations of the beings faced by ecological changes in these works act as the trajectories of possible futures, through which we may renegotiate the possibilities, the potentials, the demands, the horrors, and the pleasures of our various presents. The conditions of the world described are the conditions of the world as it could be, even if it does not confuse potential with the definite.

Thus, while it may be easier to imagine the end of the world rather than the end of capitalism, the fictionality of climate change fiction (hereafter, climate fiction) does not lend itself by default to apocalypticism, but to the shadow of warning and hope of the otherwise. The flexibility of reverse psychology, which is a cognate of what Tom Moylan and others have argued can be termed “critical dystopia”, has become the *raison d’être* of such worldbuilding, that is, apocalyptic worldbuilding is necessary precisely because it does not show the future, but affords a way of thinking otherwise. Hence climate change fiction is deemed similar to a haunting, but the haunting is more like the ghosts haunting Ebenezer Scrooge, ripe with tragicomedy and less the deterministic haunting of a Marxist spectre.² What climate fiction does is inhabit a possible future in order to inhibit possible futures, a joke laden with

¹ A version of this essay was first published in Swedish translation in *total*, 4/5, 2021.

² While both Jaques Derrida (*Spectres of Marx*, 1993) and Mark Fisher (*Ghosts of My Life*, 2014), have their specific takes on haunting, my own description here is akin to what Glen Albrecht terms *solastalgia*, which evokes less a sense of the past futures as nostalgia but a sense of the futures to arrive as disquiet, or the future as being already ruptured making the present unbearable. Cf. Albrecht Glen, et al.

the weight of a proverbial canary in a coal mine. Speculative potential lies in exploring the fictional future to transform the world in the present.

Two different yet distinct forms of climate fiction apocalypticism thus become visible in such worldbuilding. The first takes the apocalypse as a matter of course, but challenges its inevitability. The second rejects the apocalypse as an accelerationist wet-dream and undermines its damage (Shaviro). This brief prefatory sets out some basic arguments regarding the two and then explores how the worldbuilding and speculative potential become intertwined in the origin and effects of these works.

Hyperobject-ivity

A significant focus of environmental humanities more broadly, and within studies of climate fiction or studies of the environment in fiction more narrowly, has been Timothy Morton's concept of the hyperobject. Hyperobjects are the twenty-first century, Anthropocene-centric rendering of the idea of the sublime (which is unsurprising given Morton's background in romanticism and the Romantic obsession with the sublime in nature). Hyperobjects such as global warming are, by definition, too big to be grasped, too massively distributed in time and space to be localized or temporally delimited, even as their existence can be glimpsed in the Anthropocene era, for instance, in terms of their impact on the local, or as data. As a concept, the "hyperobject" is an easy sell for climate fiction and related criticism, even if its definitions and metaphysical characteristics are open to criticisms of vagueness. Hence, a lot of climate fiction, in seeking to capture the globality of disaster, spreads it out geographically; the novels invoke in the same breath Asia and Americas, global South and North, and everything in between and beyond. In one of the most significant climate fiction narratives to come out of the Nordics in recent years, Maja Lunde's *Climate Quartet* (of which three parts have been released so far)³ takes us to near and far futures spread across continents and cultures in a sweeping overview of possible human futures across the world. The more hopeful (but no less urgent) vision of *The Ministry for the Future* (2020), the latest novel by Kim Stanley Robinson, arguably the most important climate fiction writer of the last four decades, foregrounds international collaboration in addressing a world overrun with the disastrous effects of climate change. Much climate fiction is also directly critical of capitalism, especially consumer capitalism, which becomes twinned with geopolitics to highlight what are often seen as part of the general causes and effects of climate change, such as widespread resource transference from the global south to the global north, genetic colonialism, biodiversity loss, shifts to hyper urbanism, and unequal distribution of resources. The transnational moves of solidarity become the means of addressing the hyperobject, even if highly localized histories become the lens through which to see the larger world.

Yet the grand narratives within climate fictions of this kind are not only about Earth, but also post-Earth and beyond-Earth futures on other planets. If geoengineering is the narrative of Earthly futures, its correlate, terraforming,

³ Bienes *Historie* (2015; *The History of Bees*), Blå (2017; *The End of the Ocean*), and Perzewalskis Hest (2019; *Przewalski's Horse*).

the transformation of other planets into Earth or Earth-like habitat, has had a history just as long and important (Pak). Theoretically, the ecological bent of terraforming excavates two primary forms of climate change fictionality, those related to the ethics of transforming an alien world to foster human habitat and those pertaining to cost-benefits of geoengineering as a process. The first, especially, is in line with environmental philosophies that de-centre the human, not only to challenge the anthropocentrism of the concept of the Anthropocene, but also to recognize the uniquely detrimental effects of anthropogenic activity on other species that has precipitated the ongoing sixth extinction. Climate fiction of this kind tends to focus on concepts such as hybrid species, post-human species, and parallel evolution.

Futurisms in the Heat-Wave

Perhaps the most exciting wave of new climate fiction is, however, not emerging from the core of what has traditionally been called science fiction, but from what may be termed Cofuturisms. These are stealing the centre of gravity from science fictional imaginaries of the future that are associated with a more singular Anglo-American view of the world and turning towards alternative modes of representing the future that nonetheless retain science-fictional characteristics. These futurisms, for instance, Afro / African, Indigenous, Latinx, Desi, Sino, Gulf and Arab, Xeno, and their other, as yet un-futurism labelled counterparts in the non-Anglophone world, represent futures from very specific, localized imaginaries of climate change futures that nonetheless intersect with the global themes of climate change. Their strength comes from their careful dissociation with the grand narratives of Anglo-American science fiction (which were already somewhat limited in terms of their representation of much of the globe) towards micro-narratives that foreground community experiences of climate change. In many cases, petro- and necro-capitalism become the underlying reality, the explicit aesthetic forms of which are these futurisms. For instance, the explosion of Arabfuturism is often seen to follow the Syrian conflict and the refugee crisis (Tabur), which was in turn precipitated by regional instability due to a prolonged drought (Kelley et al.).

These cofuturisms, which may be termed “futures from the margins”, describe deeply personalized narratives of devastation that impact communities that are either more vulnerable from a systemic perspective or that are lesser-known. Afrofuturisms for instance, foreground the experience of Black communities in the United States (Sunstrum), while African futurisms / Africanfuturisms pushes the narratives towards the African continent, which is already seeing some of the worst effects of climate change. Indigenous futurisms, likewise, seek to foster solidarity between indigenous communities worldwide (Dillon). Writers whose works are often classed in these new futurisms, such as Harold R Johnson (*Corvus*, 2015), Nnedi Okorafor (*Lagoon*, 2014), Cherie Dimaline (*The Marrow Thieves*, 2017), and Tochi Onyebuchi (*War Girls*, 2020), often deal with similar catastrophes as those discussed above, but instead of some form of global – or globalitarian – statements on climate change, prefer to explore or deal with localized effects of disasters that are global. For many of these communities to which these writers belong, the catastrophe has already happened – that is, climate affected violence has

already forced its way through colonial expansionism and its attendant genocide, pandemics, pollution and environmental devastation (“Rethinking the Apocalypse”). The future then comes into shape not through the simplicity of a dystopia or a utopia, but through a continual struggle to remake the everyday in order to spark the possibility of a better future.

Hence, many of these futurisms are also not just oriented towards fiction, but actual community practice that seeks to support and aid struggling communities, protect and preserve their rights (including land rights), and orient visions of the future towards recuperative and restorative practices (Streeby). While the works of climate fiction themselves may not necessarily be allied towards activism, the politics and practices of these futurisms are definitely oriented towards ideas of decolonial and anticolonial activism on the one hand and restorative pleasure activism on the other (Brown). For this reason, it is inadequate to limit any analysis of these futurisms purely to the written word. They form a complex of ideas that are part political activity (for instance, aligning artistic output and manifestos to political ends), part institutional activity (for example, transforming the publishing industry to be open to coloured or non-binary creatives), and part artistic activity (in terms of fiction and art in all different media, including video games and interactive media, film and television, and more traditional visual or sonic arts). It is unsurprising then that some genres have a particular purchase in these futurisms, for instance, solarpunk, which has its dominant roots in South America, the Latinx communities in the USA, and the African continent with numerous adherents in the rest of the Global South and North. Being a distinctly community-oriented philosophy, solarpunk, which involves imagining a post-fossil fuel world, often takes its inspiration from indigenous ideas and shares many methodologies, including its anticolonial and anti-capitalist stance.

Fiction and Climate Change Futures

Climate fiction is everywhere. While fictions featuring environmental themes have been familiar to science fiction and realist literature, recent climate fiction is a buzzword as much as a bibliography. Nearly 800 out of the 860 books on the online ecofiction database maintained at *dragonfly.eco* are post-2000 works. Some of the best bibliographic studies of the phenomenon hail from these last two decades,⁴ as do some of the best critical works on the phenomenon, which also rely on philosophy developed within the time frame. And this does not even take into account studies of climate fiction in other media and arts. The causes for this explosion in climate fiction are more easily mapped than the effects of such literature. Notwithstanding Amitav Ghosh’s somewhat disingenuous dismissal of climate fictions written in the speculative mode, the fact of the matter is that climate fiction aligned to science fiction is the most active and vibrant mode of futurist speculation related to climate change in any artistic media at present. Hence, the question becomes even more

⁴ Cf. Jim Dwyer’s *Where the Wild Books Are* (2010) and Adam Trexler’s *Anthropocene Fictions* (2015)

pressing: what are the effects of these new climate fictions and what are they trying to do?

Perhaps the most direct effect is the one on the surface: inform possible scientific truths about the impending climate apocalypse, but tell it slant. If hyperobjects cannot be theorized, then their outlines may be mapped by possible lived effects of how they are being experienced. Hence, parts of Robinson's *Ministry* often read like boring bureaucratic reports or lazy journalism: possibly immense in its implications, yet banal or routine in its practice. Feeling it perhaps is even more banal due to the shifting nature of its temporality, sometimes highly accelerated as in periods of droughts or wildfires, sometimes muted in times of apparent normalcy. Survival becomes a matter of surviving the everyday, rather than affecting a global change. These climate fictions seek to deal with the root causes of the impending disaster, but as critical dystopias that may yet be effective in evoking an emotional response to a catastrophe that is already visible but not readily perceptible everywhere – and certainly not equally. From history, they draw lessons of resistance for survival, which is why many of these fictions and futurisms turn to the past (Estes), and for the future, they offer the lesson of resistance for hope. By putting reality in a sandbox, that is, using fiction as a testing environment where reality may be parsed and selectively stripped of constituents to focus on specific aspects of our life rather than others, these climate fictions can activate the triggers that most directly speak to their communities and thus be most successful in effecting positive change.

Biography: Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay is an associate professor at the Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo. His work concentrates on contemporary future fictions and science fiction from a science and technology perspective and spans multiple media, including texts, graphic novels, films and tv, video games, and visual arts. He is the Principal Investigator of the European Research Council project "CoFutures" and of the Norwegian Research Council project "Science Fictionality" and he runs the Holodeck (the Games Research Lab), which is the University of Oslo's first lab dedicated to research on video games. Chattopadhyay is also a former editor-in-chief of *Fafnir*.

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Abandoning the Untrustworthy Risk Society: Salvage and the Critique of Modernity in Laura Gustafsson’s Post- Apocalyptic Novel *Korpisoturi*

Saija Isomaa

Abstract: This paper examines Laura Gustafsson’s third novel, *Korpisoturi* (*Wilderness Warrior*, 2016), as a work that combines conventions from both the mimetic and speculative genres. I suggest that the novel begins as a rather conventional psychological novel and a depiction of an “ordinary Finn”, but the realist reading is challenged when a cataclysm occurs in the form of an international trade embargo against Finland, and the conventions of the post-apocalyptic novel and survivalist fiction begin to dominate the narration. My main argument is to claim that *Korpisoturi* makes use of two genre conventions of the contemporary post-apocalyptic novel: salvage and the critique of modernity, even if some of the critique of modernity is communicated through the protagonist’s psychological development and thus the psychological novel. I also argue that despite Ahma, the protagonist, being a literary character, his psychological development resembles that of real-life American survivalists who adopt a self-sufficient lifestyle because they consider postmodern risk society untrustworthy.

Keywords: post-apocalyptic novel, survivalist fiction, self-sufficiency movement, critique of modernity, Finnish dystopian fiction

1. Introduction

Speculative fiction has thrived in Finnish literature since the 1990s: horror, fantasy, and dystopian fiction have boomed, and new genres such as climate

fiction, urban fantasy, alternative history, and Finnish weird have been adopted or created by writers (see Soikkeli; Isomaa and Lahtinen). The blurring of genre boundaries is common, and individual works may combine conventions from several genres. Sometimes elements of speculative fiction are woven into a work that appears at first to be predominantly mimetic, challenging the reader to wonder how to interpret the work.

One such novel is Laura Gustafsson's third novel, *Korpisoturi* (*Wilderness Warrior*, 2016), which at first appears to be a rather traditional psychological novel about an alienated Finnish man named Ahma ("Wolverine" in English). Ahma adopts a survivalist ideology on an Internet forum, moves from the capital city to the northeastern Finnish countryside to lead a self-sufficient life, and starts preparing for an assumed future cataclysm by learning to farm and fight. Depictions of ordinary men who live as farmers or tenant farmers in the Finnish countryside constitute a major part of an old tradition in Finnish literature: the so-called *kansankuvaus* tradition (see, for instance, Laitinen) that has since the first half of the 19th century attempted to portray – or imagine – what ordinary Finnish people are like. Works in the tradition sometimes depict characters that leave their social community behind and seek solitude in an isolated place, and Ahma's relocation evokes the convention.

However, a realist reading of *Korpisoturi* is interrupted when a cataclysm actually takes place in the latter half of the novel in the form of an international trade embargo that is directed against Finland's racist politics. Ahma's survivalist mindset and skills are tested for real in a village community that runs out of food supplies and loses its technological infrastructure, such as electricity and media broadcasts. The villagers are left to survive on their own, creating alliances and fighting for food. The repertoires of the post-apocalyptic novel and survivalist fiction begin to colour the story, yet they never gain full control of it since the portrayed world remains relatively safe and depictions of violence and destruction are few. Nevertheless, the introduction of a trade embargo that has never taken place in historical reality is a speculative "what if" element that calls for a new type of reading in the middle of the story. By bringing together mimetic and non-mimetic elements in this manner, the novel challenges any straightforward reading, and its analysis can help readers to deal also with other such hybrid works.

To further complicate the matter, Juha Raipola has noted that *Korpisoturi* is not a serious post-apocalyptic novel; rather, it rewrites its conventions in a comical or parodic manner: it offers a critical deconstruction of the survivalist mind-set and its representation in postapocalyptic fiction (176). It is easy to agree with Raipola, because Ahma is not portrayed as the hypermasculinist survivalist hero that he imagines himself to be. In contrast, he is portrayed as an insecure man whose survivalist ideology – tinged with misogyny and right-wing emphases – misrepresents the world in which he lives, the friction between the two functioning as a source of comedy. Not even the cataclysm of the novel is a typical one: post-apocalypses usually portray international or global cataclysms that affect the world at large and change it irreparably, but the trade embargo is portrayed as affecting only Finland (see Hicks 6–7).¹ Ahma's post-apocalyptic fight for survival is mild in comparison to

¹ For instance, Heather J. Hicks considers post-apocalyptic fiction as portraying "globalized ruin" and suggests that the works depict catastrophes of at least a "national level and, by nature

the fights in contemporary anglophone classics of the post-apocalypse, such as the *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003–2013) by Margaret Atwood. In her trilogy, most of humanity perishes and the few survivors have a hard time staying alive in the dangerous post-apocalyptic world. Ahma might be in danger of dying of hunger, but it is due to his poor hunting and fishing skills – his future spouse Lynx (a woman from a survivalist internet site) has no trouble in acquiring food in the same environment.

Also, the way in which *Korpisoturi* interrogates modernity differs from some other post-apocalypses in which the desolate post-disaster world and the need to rebuild a human community raise the question of the value of the past civilisation and modernity. In Gustafsson's novel, Ahma abandons the organised late modern society even before the trade embargo and chooses a premodern self-sufficient lifestyle in the countryside – he is not forced to give up the technological world but leaves voluntarily, seeking shelter from the negatively perceived society amidst nature, like some other characters of the Finnish *kansankuvaus* tradition (see Laitinen). At the end of the novel, when he is left alone with Lynx in the wilderness to start a family, he is able to choose again whether to maintain the inherited cultural tradition or start creating something entirely new, and he chooses the latter by burning his papers. This structure of dual choice stems from *Korpisoturi* being not only a post-apocalyptic novel but also a psychological depiction of an ordinary, antisocial person and a survivalist. The first choice is motivated by his psychological experiences and his conversion to survivalism. The second choice is more typical for the postapocalyptic novel, because Ahma makes the choice after the cataclysm, when the world needs to be reconstructed in some manner.

The novel's relationship to survivalist fiction is still complicated. The tradition of survivalist fiction came into being mainly after the Second World War, and it has had a bad reputation as “a nightmare at the bottom of the barrel of sf” (Clute 1188). It has been criticised for being politically extreme and socially prejudiced, sadistic, “sexist, racist, pornographic, gloating and void” (ibid.), and all too often “written by men for men, featuring men shooting other men after civilization's convenient collapse” (Nicholls 581).² James has claimed that survivalist fiction is an extreme exaggeration of certain aspects of post-apocalyptic fiction (53). *Korpisoturi* evokes the tradition mostly in its portrayal of the self-important male survivalists Ahma and Kapu, but the novel's negative stance towards the values they represent is communicated to the audience in the critical way in which the characters are treated. Ahma's psychological development that leads him to adopt “prepper” values in a stable society is not a convention of survivalist fiction but rather Gustafsson's thematic contribution

of our globalized political economy, assume dramatic effects elsewhere as well” (6–7). It is unclear whether the trade embargo in *Korpisoturi* has any dramatic effects outside Finland. In any case, most post-apocalypses portray a more profound disturbance of the social or the ecological order.

² Clute crystallises the genre by remarking that post-1980 survivalist fiction has become “established as a very particular kind of male-action story, set in post-holocaust venues where law-and-order has disappeared, and where there is effectively no restraint upon the behaviour of the hero, who therefore kills before he is killed, demonstrating his fitness to survive through acts of unbridled violence (which very frequently descend into prolonged sessions of rape and sadism)” (2208). Mark Payne notes that post-apocalyptic fiction has internalised the negative conception and post-apocalyptic novels may contain survivalist characters who are portrayed rather critically (128).

to the genre of the psychological novel. From the perspective of genres, the trade embargo is the event that turns a realist literary world into a postapocalyptic one, and different genres dominate the two halves.

In this paper, I focus on examining *Korpioturi* with reference to two prominent genre conventions of the contemporary anglophone post-apocalyptic novel: salvage and the critique of modernity, which were identified by Heather J. Hicks in *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity beyond Salvage* (2016). I argue that despite the comical and parodic tones of *Korpioturi*, the novel still engages in a serious discussion of modernity by offering a detailed psychological portrayal of what makes Ahma adopt the survivalist mindset and values in the first place. I suggest that Ahma's conversion to survivalism can be seen as an emotional response to the risk society in which he lives: his bad experiences lead him to distrust social institutions, and the survivalist worldview with its preference for a self-sufficient lifestyle offers him a way to cope with negative emotions and find meaning in life. I ground this reading on Allison Ford's sociological analysis of the real-life American self-sufficiency movement. She analyses the movement as responding to the emotional burden that the risk society produces in its members. Interestingly, despite Ahma being a fictional character, his psychological development follows the pattern that Ford finds in her research. In this sense, Ahma's story seriously portrays the alienating features of late modernity that lead some people to adopt a survivalist mindset. Yet the novel critically distances itself from the primitive, anticultural idyll that Ahma creates with his spouse at the end of the novel as the new Adam and Eve – abandoning civilisation may be Ahma's choice, but it is not part of the novel's ethos.

Regarding salvage, I suggest that the convention connects *Korpioturi* to the tradition of contemporary post-apocalyptic novels. Hicks has noted that since its beginning in the ancient Near East, apocalyptic fiction has been deeply intertextual in recycling material from earlier texts, and in this way "salvaging" earlier material (3). She claims that the contemporary anglophone post-apocalyptic novel uses the convention but also further develops the idea of salvage by making it a central theme and action: after the cataclysm, the survivors have to decide what to do with the remnants – both material and cultural – of the destroyed modern world, and they may try to rebuild aspects of modernity or reject the past and create something altogether new. *Korpioturi* does not reproduce the convention fully, since the modern infrastructure is not destroyed to a mentionable extent, and the survivors – that is, almost all characters – need not live in a devastated world. However, the novel is deeply intertextual, and it shares some intertexts with other post-apocalyptic novels, most notably Daniel Defoe's survival classic *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which is a standard object of allusion in post-apocalyptic novels (see, for instance, Payne 3–4; Hicks 1). I will refer to some of these intertexts, focusing on those that are, in my opinion, relevant in assessing the novel's treatment of modernity.

2. Intertextual layers in *Korpioturi*

I will begin by showing how *Korpioturi* applies to the convention of salvage to create an intertextually layered text. Salvage (in the sense of deep

intertextuality) is a curious convention of the post-apocalyptic novel: it can be seen as answering a central question of the genre – what is worth salvaging from the past world – on a formal level by alluding to past works, which are thus “rescued” in its form. Naturally, a vague allusion to another literary work cannot replicate that work in any sense, and the salvaging in this sense is metaphorical. Yet even the attempt to rescue the memory of chosen parts of literary heritage by alluding to them, as if literary works formed some kind of metaphorical Noah’s Ark saving knowledge of the past, is an interesting literary function for novels that are focused on the theme of survival.

Laura Gustafsson’s *Korpisoturi* is allusive to the degree that the reader learns very soon to seek a deeper meaning to the story on an intertextual level, whether it can be found or not. To give a few examples of the convention of salvage in *Korpisoturi*, it is worth noting that already the title of the novel refers in the Finnish context³ to a renowned autobiographical war novel, *Korpisotaa* (*Wilderness War*, 1940) by Pentti Haanpää, sedimenting its intertextuality. Haanpää’s novel depicts the experiences of ordinary soldiers in the Winter War (1939–1940) between Finland and the Soviet Union. Ahma’s decision to move specifically to north-eastern Finland near the Russian border can be read as an intertextual reference to the milieu of Haanpää’s novel: at the beginning of Haanpää’s novel, the inexperienced soldiers are taken to the northeast border. *Korpisoturi* also contains delicate references to another classical Finnish war novel, *Tuntematon sotilas* (*The Unknown Soldier*, 1954) by Väinö Linna, which portrays the Continuation War (1941–1944) and is one of the most popular Finnish novels of the 20th century.⁴ These references invite the reader to read the novel as yet another novel about war in Finland, which is a rather unexpected invitation in a novel about a slightly comical “prepper” and the consequences of a trade embargo in a countryside village. In the frame of war fiction, Ahma can be interpreted as having waged a war against the late modern risk society, and also the international trade embargo against Finland begins to look like a form of warfare.

To make visible another literary layering of the novel, the names of Ahma and his love interest Lynx can be read as references to the superheroes named Wolverine and Lynx in Marvel’s *X-Men* franchise, the Finnish noun Ahma translating as “wolverine” (see also Samola, “Botanics” 142). The word “*Wolverine*” – in English, in cursive, and written with a capital letter in a novel

³ The word “wilderness warrior” is used in the US context to refer to explorers and native Americans, etc. In Finnish, the word *korpi* refers to a boreal forest type that has a somewhat wet soil. Finnish soldiers are perceived as wilderness warriors when they fight outside the cities in the forests. The word is used only in spoken language – it is not an official term and has a light or humorous tone.

⁴ For instance, the description of Ahma’s property “Tähän korkeaan havumetsään on joku joskus raivannut puuttoman puolikkaan hehtaarin” (*K* 13) evokes delicately the famous, ironic beginning of Linna’s *The Unknown Soldier*, in which the foreknowing God has burned hectares of forest in Eastern Finland near the town of Joensuu to create a camp site for the war troops of Finland. As in Linna’s novel, the depicted area is situated in northeastern Finland, giving further backing for the elusive allusion. Linna’s novel is also explicitly mentioned with reference to Ahma’s fellow survivalist Kapu, who arrives at his cottage during the trade embargo. Kapu uses a photo of the character of Rokka in the first film version of the novel as his profile picture (*K* 81). Kapu’s behaviour is so negative that, first, Pamsu breaks his leg and then Linnea kills him, which can also be read as a critical attitude towards the tradition of Finnish war novels or the attitudes it has inspired in its audiences.

written in Finnish – is mentioned in the prologue-like opening episode of the novel (*K* 9),⁵ and even the stray pig that wanders around Ahma’s property adopts a superhero-like line by appearing to say “I’ll be back” – in English – to Ahma before leaving (36), as if it were itself a superhero threatening Ahma with a future battle. The superhero references mostly serve a comical function, as their objects are not superior to anything in the fictional reality. They also communicate aspects of Ahma’s hypermasculine survivor-identity: in comparison to the ordinary, unprepared people around him, he perceives himself as a superhero of sorts.

Intertextually, the motif of the pig alludes to the motif of the pigoon in Atwood’s *MadAddam* trilogy. Pigoons are huge and threatening gene-manipulated pigs that have human brain tissue and collaborate to attack the few humans who survived the plague. Ahma reacts to the harmless pig as if it were a pigoon-like creature, which creates a comical tension between his hero-like self-identity and his actual behaviour. The novel seems to be winking to the reader who recognises the allusion. However, also Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is invoked as an intertext in the pig motif, since the pig leaves its footprints on the ground of Ahma’s property, like Friday in Defoe’s novel. In Western culture, the motif of the footprint is strongly associated with Friday and creates a link between the novels, making Ahma appear as a Crusoe-like colonialist who conquers a new territory to create a civilisation of his liking. There are also other resemblances between Ahma and Robinson Crusoe. For instance, both focus on living self-sufficiently, which means the constant observation of nature and spending much time on farming and daily chores that are fundamental for survival. Both men also keep a diary. Yet Ahma’s “Friday” is a pig, and it is also the audience to his soliloquies – including his moral teachings about his private ownership of the turnips.⁶ In contrast to its intertextual counterparts, the pig in *Korpisoturi* is portrayed in a comical light, echoing the general attitude of the novel. In sum, *Korpisoturi* frames its story with other texts, and they offer an interpretative context for it but also evoke the convention of salvage.

3. “Prepping” as a means of regulating negative emotions

I proceed to discuss the way in which Ahma’s choice of survivalism functions as his way of regulating his negative emotions, but also communicates a serious critique of modernity. Juha Raipola has analysed the portrayal of survivalist ideology and reality in *Korpisoturi*. Raipola points out that “prepping” for doomsday is a particularly masculinist culture: modern, femininised society is seen as a crisis of masculinity and producer of white male alienation, and after

⁵ The reference occurs in the prologue-like first section of the novel, which depicts the behaviour of wolverines. All future in-text citations to Laura Gustafsson’s *Korpisoturi* will abbreviate the novel as “*K*”.

⁶ In Defoe’s novel, Crusoe takes Friday as his servant and teaches him Western culture and values, even managing to convert him to Christianity. In *Korpisoturi*, after the first shock of meeting such a threatening animal as a huge pig, Ahma pities it and starts treating it like a companion, talking to it and even missing its presence. As a comical echo of Crusoe’s education of Friday, Ahma preaches morals to the pig on more than one occasion after finding out that it has violated his norms, such as his private ownership of turnips. Despite the sermons and threats of slaughter, the pig does not change its ways, and ultimately disappears without trace. Ahma’s “Friday” might have suffered the destiny that Crusoe’s escaped, being eaten by humans.

its collapse it is believed that strong, warrior-like male leaders will rebuild civilisation (177). According to Raipola, Ahma is a parodic version of the hypermasculine survivalist hero. He has naively adopted the survivalist discourse from online forums and combined it with ideas adopted from the Finnish deep ecologist Pentti Linkola (1932–2020), who is renowned for promoting drastic population decline as a solution to overpopulation. However, the novel repeatedly portrays how Ahma's attempts to perform hegemonic masculinity and to live as a misanthropic and misogynistic hermit fail in one way or another. Gender stereotypes are also questioned and inverted in a humorous yet critical way; for instance, when the ordinary female characters are more skilful in solving practical problems in the post-apocalyptic world than the male survivalists. In short, Ahma's survivalist ideology and his lived experience in the Finnish countryside do not match, which, according to Raipola, produces the "darkly comic" effect of the novel. (See Raipola 177–182, 184.)

Raipola's interpretation is very fitting and manages to make visible many central characteristics of the survivalist ideology in the novel. *Korpisoturi* opposes those values that survivalist fiction has traditionally represented. A sociological reading of Ahma's ideological conversion also reveals that the experiences and choices of the survivalist are portrayed realistically in the novel: Ahma's psychological development resembles that of many American real-life survivalists. Clute has claimed that survivalist fiction has relatively little to do with the concerns of real-life survivalists (1188), but Ahma's portrayal is different: his psychological development is life-like, and the first half of the novel (before the trade embargo) portrays his daily chores, like farming and cooking, in Crusoe-like detail. Due to Ahma's primitive, self-sufficient lifestyle without electricity and other modern amenities, his is a retro version of the premodern lifestyle.

Sociological research into American self-sufficiency movements has shown that attempts to become self-sufficient arise from unpleasant negative emotions that late modern risk society produces in its members. Allison Ford has studied two subcultures of the American self-sufficiency movements – "homesteaders" and "preppers" – and she shows that their daily practices are a strategy to manage the uncomfortable emotions that arise when individuals feel that, when living in late modern society, they are dependent on untrustworthy institutions. Ford emphasises that it is difficult to understand the movement unless emotions are taken into account, because emotions motivate action. Ford also points out that since "preppers" and "homesteaders" have embraced the culture of individualism typical of capitalism, they focus on making changes to their own lifestyle rather than fixing actual collective problems. Ford's observations are made about real-life American survivalism, but they also apply to certain features of *Korpisoturi*.

According to Ford, emotions arising in risk society are a motivation for some American people to become "preppers" (125), a subculture within the self-sufficiency movement that emphasises the need to prepare for different "shit hits the fan" (SHTF) scenarios and that puts an emphasis on personal security in the form of gun culture (131). An analysis shows that Ahma's conversion to prepping also has emotional aspects. Raipola touches upon the psychological motivation behind his choices and notes that his willingness to seclude himself from the world can be interpreted as a "psychological defense mechanism" that

is related to his lonely and fatherless childhood (182). Furthermore, in Raipola's interpretation, Ahma's aversive attitude towards women seems to be connected to his previous experiences with women. Yet Ahma seems also to be suffering from a high awareness of the collectively produced risks typical of late modernity (see Ford 126). The narrator focalises Ahma's thinking, which reveals his distrust of humankind and its destructive agricultural methods:

Still somewhere sings a cuckoo, the great asshole of bird life. But Ahma's life as a parasite is over now. He will be self-sufficient, because there is no choice. Not for long. Alas, mankind is short-sighted. For a brief time, it may manage to force nature to function as it wishes. However, each field that is coated with glyphosate, each rainforest that is scalped, and each desert that is irrigated takes mankind a step closer to destruction. The ongoing destructive cycle is global rather than local as before. (K 17; trans. S. Isomaa)

Vielä jossain kukkuu käki, lintumaailman suuri kusipää. Ahman elämä loisena on ohi nyt. Hänestä tulee omavarainen. Vaihtoehtoa ei nimittäin ole. Ei enää pitkään. Voi vauhtisokeaa ihmiskuntaa! Lyhyitä aikoja kerrallaan sen onnistuu pakottamaan luonto käyttäytymään haluamallaan tavalla. Mutta jokainen glyfosaattisuolalla päällystetty pelto, jokainen pilkottu sademetsä, jokainen keinokasteltu autiomaa vie harppauksen lähemmäs tuhoa. Ja käynnissä oleva sykli on maailmanlaajuinen, ei paikallinen niin kuin ennen. (K 17)

Ahma shows a high awareness of global environmental risks related to the production of goods and food, and he criticizes the responsible institutions for short-sighted policies that are disastrous in the long run. He seems to voice both vulnerability related to dependence on institutions and a distrust of those institutions. Ford has identified both as sources of a wide range of problematic emotions, such as the fear and anxiety that "preppers" and "homesteaders" experience (126). Self-sufficiency offers an individualistic way out of the dependency and also helps to manage the problematic emotions. In the above citation, Ahma has already adopted the survivalist mindset and chosen not to be a parasite, like the cuckoo, which is an often-mentioned, positively portrayed bird in older Finnish literature, including the national epic *Kalevala* (1849). Ahma's critical portrayal of the bird reflects his rebellious rethinking of inherited cultural frames and attitudes.

An exploration of why Ahma adopted the survivalist mindset reveals that in the past, he had concrete experiences that showed him that capitalist institutions might not be worth trusting. Ahma was an anxious child with abandonment issues, and his decision to become a construction worker was fuelled by his childhood dream of owning a house that offers shelter and stability. He worked as a builder after graduating but quit when his superior demanded him to coat the wet concrete wall of a school, both of them knowing that it would produce a severe mould problem over time. The superior justified his demand by reminding Ahma that the business is not responsible for the problems that appear after the building is completed. This experience of the untrustworthiness of the building company was a turning point for Ahma. He became clinically depressed and isolated in his flat, until he found a survivalist online forum after googling the phrase "end of the world". Finding like-minded people gave him purpose and direction, and he started to prepare for the

assumed SHTF scenarios (*K* 77–90, 11). Ford refers to the role of cultural frames in how individuals negotiate environmental risk (128). Cultural frames, including story lines, help to organise perceptions of and responses to risks, and people usually select frames that fit their social worlds and will not endanger their valuable connections to others. Social belonging is thus important in choosing an interpretative cultural frame. The online community – which Ahma later describes as “half-alienated misanthropes” (*K* 229) – offered Ahma a sense of belonging, but also provides frames and story types for understanding the world around him. His choice of buying a remote site for “prepping” shows that he starts living in accordance with the ideology and its storylines.

The theme of untrustworthy structures and institutions is emphasised in that even Ahma’s studio flat in Helsinki proves to be structurally unstable. One day a big crack appears in a concrete wall, and it gradually expands so much that Ahma realises it cannot be fixed easily: the problem lies in the very foundations of the whole apartment building, and the only solution to erasing it might be to tear down the whole structure (*K* 234–37). Again, Ahma meets a structural problem that is beyond his powers. The faulty houses of the city that are built inadequately by building companies and cannot be fixed by an individual function as motifs also for another general theme of the novel: the complicated relationship between the individual and the collective. In an organised community, such as a city where labour is divided and capitalist power structures prevail, the individual has limited power over her surroundings, starting from whether the apartment buildings around are properly built and structurally sound. Social structures make individuals dependent on others, even when the others are untrustworthy. By contrast, the old cottage in northeastern Finland is small in scale, carefully built by the original owners to last for decades, and also fixable by an individual like Ahma, making it emotionally safer than the huge buildings of the city. The cottage enables the independence and control that preppers and homesteaders seek and value (see and cf. Ford 129). Later on, Ahma is able to improve the insulation of his cottage by adding second window frames that he purchased second-hand, the recycling and craftsmanship creating the spectacle of the material solutions found to cope in difficult conditions already showcased in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (Vasset 230). For Ahma, his cottage in the rebellious, austere direction of the east is a small, flourishing Eden (*K* 16). The biblical intertext evokes the idea of a site for earthly paradise and the creation of an ideal humankind, further developed in the ending of the novel. The cottage is a site for a premodern, independent, and self-sufficient lifestyle.

4. The psychology of a “prepper”: Trust or distrust?

In a situation where others can be trusted, dependency is not threatening. However, Ahma’s survivalism is based on the belief that institutions and other people cannot be trusted, and that is why he chooses self-sufficiency. The novel reveals how his attitude developed, but it also puts it to the test repeatedly by letting him meet new people and gain experience of their trustworthiness.

Ahma’s distrust issues have a history in his complicated family relations and childhood experiences. He was raised by a single mother and never knew

his assumedly Polish father. They moved often, and as a child Ahma was already afraid of being abandoned (*K* 78). His relationship with his mother is not close, partly because their values and political views differ. His mother is not worried about the same cataclysms as her son. Instead, she fears the decline of humanity (100), which is ironic, because the values of the hypermasculinist preppers like her son may represent just that type of decline. During the trade embargo, Ahma's mother is doing fine in Helsinki, which reveals that prepping in the countryside is not necessary for survival.

An ideologically and emotionally important relative of Ahma is his grandmother, who suffers from a memory disorder and finally passes away, leaving Ahma a small heritage that enables him to buy the cottage. The grandmother is a belligerent person, a variation of the "sotahullu" or war maniac that is a character type occurring in Finnish literature. She served in the Second World War as a "Lotta", a member of the Finnish voluntary paramilitary organisation for women. She relives her memories of that time, and reacts to the much later world as if it was part of the wartime world; for instance, threatening an Estonian carer with a pistol for racist reasons and preaching her wartime nationalist agenda to Ahma. Ahma's attitude towards the two relatives characterises his world view and values on a larger scale: he dismisses the mindset of his liberal mother and sympathises with the conservative, nationalist, right-wing grandmother who misinterprets the contemporary world through her memories of the war. It is fitting that Ahma inherits the funds to buy the scene for prepping from his grandmother. He also has a Sami knife that he inherited from his grandmother (*K* 13). It does not bother him that he has to lie to her about having successfully completed his national military service, even though he was exempted (33). Lying was already a survival mechanism for Ahma in childhood regarding the whereabouts of his father, and he also lies to Pamsu that he works as a fisherman. His many lies foreground his problematic relationship with others but also lead the reader to wonder whether his survivalist ideology should also be viewed as another lie with which he chooses to soothe himself socially.

The object of Ahma's distrust seems to be the modernity that makes individuals powerless and dependent on others. Ahma abandons the urban lifestyle of his mother and tries to learn the skills and lifestyle of the self-sufficient pre-war generations that appear to him as more grounded and safer. He collects old housewives' guidebooks and other similar guides to learn to live self-sufficiently. In the depiction of the furniture and appliances of his cottage, old Finnish household trademarks, such as Helsingin Teräskaluste and Porin Matti, are mentioned (*K* 14–15), creating a retro atmosphere to the narration. The cottage strikes the reader as a "museum" of the traditional lifestyle, having been built at the beginning of the 20th century and showing few signs of later additions (13). Ahma's choices reveal that he rejects the lifestyles and values of the previous few decades and wishes to return to a much earlier mentality and structures of emotion. He even hangs on the bedroom wall a handcrafted "haustafel" that contains the famous words by Augustin Ehrensvärd, the 18th-century builder of the UNESCO site of Suomenlinna maritime fortress in Helsinki, which recommend that Finns stand on their own two feet and do not rely on foreign offers of help (14). The cottage is thus metaphorically Ahma's "Suomenlinna fortress", which he builds for his defence against other people.

Mark Payne has remarked that survivalists need to distance themselves from other life forms and the human tendency to feel empathy so that they can encounter others as fundamentally different adversaries (129). Ahma's fortress is a sign of this survivalist attitude that does not come naturally to him. Curiously, it is obvious that Ahma would not even exist without his open-minded, liberal mother, who conceived him with a foreigner and decided to raise him as a single mother, but he still chooses the values of his grandmother, nevertheless later also rejecting versions of nationalism that he finds outdated (*K* 54). Ahma's choices are a metaphorical matricide. He wants to "cancel" many things in contemporary society and return to an earlier lifestyle. His attitude and its background function as a critique of modernity. However critically the novel may portray Ahma, it does not deny his experiences or the environmental or social problems that lead him to choose survivalism.

5. Cataclysm as a test of the survivalist ideology

Having discussed Ahma's survivalism from a psychosocial point of view, I proceed to consider the cataclysm as a test of his survivalism. The distrustful Ahma attempts to be independent of untrustworthy institutions, but the theme of dependency is also treated on a more general level, namely in the depiction of international relations between countries. The cataclysm that takes place in the imagined Finland is not a major natural catastrophe, but a trade embargo directed against the racist politics of Finland. As a member of the European Union, Finland is required to take its share of the refugees that are coming to Europe (as in the European migrant crisis in 2015), and after the fictional Finland refuses on the grounds of the crimes that some of the newcomers commit, economic sanctions are applied.⁷ The imagined Finland is not economically self-sufficient, but dependent on the EU and Russia, which shows in the chaos following the trade embargo. The villagers end up being in a state of emergency, like the refugees. Global modernity means interdependency and requires international collaboration, whereas the premodern, self-sufficient lifestyle seems to promise independence but also comes with a price.

Mark Payne notes that the protagonists of post-apocalypses make choices on the axis between adversarial and communitarian human relations in trying to keep themselves alive (129). Despite his misanthropic attitude, Ahma also collaborates somewhat reluctantly with other inhabitants of the area even before the trade embargo, especially with the two women Linnea and Pamsu, whom Kapu considers as "a Madonna and a whore", respectively (*K* 205). Laura Gustafsson used Greek gods and goddesses as characters in her first novel *Huorasatu* (2011), and also the characterisation of sexually active Pamsu and virtuous, all-round Linnea – to whom Kapu also refers as an amazon (*K* 179) –

⁷ The events leading to the trade embargo are not recounted in detail, but in addition to minor crimes committed by some of the refugees, there was also a "denial of service" type cyberattack that successfully shut down Finnish online bank services, incorrectly identified as launched by terrorist masked as refugees but in reality launched by domestic anarchists. Finnish neo-Nazis reacted aggressively, causing the unrest that led to the political consequences (*K* 103–106, 112–114, 121).

play with cultural gender stereotypes.⁸ When the trade embargo begins, Ahma continues to collaborate with Linnea and Pamsu, but also with a fellow survivalist, Kapu, who arrives at Ahma's cottage and tries to start leading the group. The misogynistic and self-centred Kapu uses Ahma and the women opportunistically for his own benefit, making selfish deals with other groups of men to their detriment, and he epitomises the kind of toxic, untrustworthy masculinity that Clute seems to associate with survivalist fiction. However, Gustafsson rewrites the genre conventions by creating strong female characters, especially Linnea, who finally cold-bloodedly shoots Kapu dead after he has – along with many other despicable deeds – threatened the life of Linnea's newborn biracial baby. In the fictional world of *Korpisoturi*, hypermasculine survivalism appears as toxic, and it is tolerated only to a certain degree by Linnea. Kapu considers Linnea as a weak burden due to her having just given birth to a baby, but she is actually the fittest for survival of the four. Samola has suggested that Linnea's name refers to the Swedish botanist Carl von Linné ("Botanics" 143). Epitomising birth, nurture, and closeness to nature, Linnea is morally superior to the egoist survivalist values and their willingness to treat other people solely as means.

The events during the trade embargo make evident that Ahma is not the kind of fierce, hypermasculine survivalist that he wishes to be. In *Korpisoturi*, this is his redeeming feature in the eyes of the women, who see through his hypermasculine discourse and recognise his soft core. Kapu is the only central character who is killed during the trade embargo, which can be considered as communicating the novel's critical stance towards his way of seeing the world. Kapu despises Ahma for being "a friend of girls" (*K* 206), but in *Korpisoturi* it is this specific quality that helps Ahma survive. After all, it is another young woman, Lynx, who comes to save the lonely Ahma from starving.

6. A postcultural, Even Posthuman Eden?

The destruction of the world as we know it can also be perceived as a chance to create something better to replace it, as apparently happens in Noah's story in the Bible. Heather J. Hicks suggests that post-apocalypses discuss modernity, for instance, by describing how characters react to the remnants of lost modernity, both its material detritus and immaterial cultural inheritance (3). *Korpisoturi* also portrays a new beginning by ending in an idyllic vision of Ahma and Lynx starting a life together self-sufficiently on Ahma's property amidst the beauty of the northern spring, Lynx pregnant with Ahma's child. All the other villagers have disappeared somehow, and Ahma and Lynx are alone in their Eden, starting humankind anew. In some of the previous passages, there are references to the biblical images of Eden and the snake, or the Tempter, in the portrayal of Ahma's humble property and his longing for a

⁸ Linnea in particular is almost like a goddess of agriculture and nature: she knows the premodern techniques of farming but also primitive medicine, healing Kapu's infected wound by growing bacteria-eating maggots in the middle of winter. She gives birth to a biracial baby boy during the trade embargo, like Mary giving birth to Jesus in primitive circumstances, but she also does not hesitate to kill Kapu, Ahma's fellow survivalist, who travels to the village during the trade embargo and treats Ahma and others disrespectfully. On Gustafsson's first novel *Huorasatu*, see Samola, *Siniparran bordelli*.

spouse and a family, and the ending can be interpreted as activating the frame of Eden as a site of the creation of a (new) humankind. The motif of new Adam and Eve is a convention of SF (see Clute and Nicholls 4), and the post-apocalyptic novel can easily be used as a platform for imagining the beginning of a new human race.

The character of Lynx is only briefly referred to in the main part of the novel, and she is foregrounded only at the end of the novel, when Ahma is left alone on his property without food supplies. Ahma's reminiscences reveal that he met Lynx online in the survivalist forum and assumed her to be male, agreeing to a meeting. However, Lynx proved to be an independent, exceptionally skilful young woman, and they met irregularly, spending time together at home but also committing acts of vandalism in a luxury department store and elsewhere. Ahma fell in love with Lynx, but somehow lost contact with her, which broke his heart. His choice to move to the wilderness is affected by his previous discussions with her, and Ahma assumedly sends Lynx the address of his cottage in the hope that she will visit him. Lynx finally comes and finds Ahma starving to death in the cottage. Being an exceptionally good hunter, Lynx very quickly manages to hunt and fish for them. She agrees to stay with Ahma, and she soon falls pregnant. Ahma's broken heart is mended, and the idyll seems to be perfect – for the characters. There is nevertheless a darker side to the pastoral, as Ahma finds out that Lynx has come into possession of the wooden spoon he crafted and gave to Linnea. Linnea intended to give it to her newborn son. Lynx refuses to answer how she got it, the silence leaving room for the worst scenario:

Lynx falls silent. Ahma goes through in his mind Lynx's other things, food, everything. A candle casts shadows onto her face, and her eyes gleam, as do her small, sharp teeth. "What have you done?"

... Ahma grabs Lynx's face. It is not good at hunting because it must hunt, but because it takes pleasure in hunting. Not in killing. Gaming. Lynx does not tell that it feels pain even if the pressing must feel bad. It says nothing.

And that is good. (*K* 254; trans. S. Isomaa)

Lynx vaikenee. Ahma käy mieleensä läpi Lynxin muut tavarat, ruuat, kaiken. Kynttilä heittää sen kasvoille varjoja, silmät välkkyvät. Ja terävät pienet hampaat. "Mitä sinä olet tehnyt?"

... Ahma tarttuu Lynxiä kasvoista. Se ei ole hyvä metsästäjä siksi, että täytyy, vaan siksi, että se nauttii siitä. Ei tappamisesta. Pelistä. Lynx ei sano, että sitä sattuu, vaikka puristuksen on pakko tuntua pahalta. Se ei sano yhtään mitään.

Niin on hyvä. (*K* 254.)

The animalistic features of Lynx are emphasised: her gleaming eyes, sharp, little teeth, and obmutescence. The text even uses the pronoun "it" instead of "she". The shadows on her face seem to be a metonym for the darker side of her character, and she refuses to reply to the moral question Ahma poses, either failing to understand the moral point of view or refusing to consider her actions from such a perspective. Ahma's reaction leaves room for the interpretation that Ahma has recognised Linnea's belongings in Lynx's possessions and arrives at the conclusion that she has met Linnea, probably even killed her and

the newborn. The novel does not reveal what happened – maybe Linnea left, or maybe Lynx killed her. The novel cannot fully believe in the new Eden that is in the making, and the spoon episode communicates this hesitation to the reader.

In general, the character of Lynx remains ambivalent: very little is told about her, and the little that is told through Ahma's memories portrays her as somewhat unemotional and anarchistic. Whether she could kill for a spoon and other goods remains open. Read intertextually in the frame of Marvel's *X-Men* universe, Lynx's inability to understand Ahma's feelings for the villagers becomes understandable. In *X-Men*, Lynx is an animal-like female fighter and a mutant who has no social skills or education. Wolverine saves her from a scientist named Reigert Ilves who used her for experiments, and at one point Wolverine and Lynx live together in the wilderness in a cottage before Wolverine finally releases Lynx to live in a feral state in the Canadian wilderness.⁹ In *X-Men*, the animalistic, feral side of Lynx is emphasised, and hints to the similar feralness of Lynx also appear at the end of *Korpisoturi*, Ahma even seeing a footprint of a feline near a moose that Lynx has killed, as if to suggest that Lynx hunted the moose in feline form. Read intertextually, both Ahma and Lynx are superheroes, but without the intertextual frame, their names connect them with animal species, the association being nonhuman rather than superhuman. The woman who reproduces in the new Eden is neither Linnea nor Pamsu – the Western female stereotypes – but the animalistic Lynx, which creates an impression of a post-human Eden.

The novel ends with Ahma collecting his unfinished texts and extra papers and burning them with other “old, broken and unnecessary” things as an effort to banish misfortune from his life (*K* 254). This also remains ambivalent: is Ahma actually replaying his earlier dream of burning the library of Alexandria and getting rid of Western civilisation? (66) What is the new Eden like – is it a “natural state” that has given up inherited human values and norms? References to Rousseau and Hobbes (118–19) suggest that the novel is aware of the philosophical discussion concerning human nature – the question of whether humans are inherently good or evil and how humanity manifests outside organised society. The burning of the texts – book burning being a literary motif typical of dystopian fiction – as well as the animalistic characteristics of Lynx suggest that the new Eden gives up most of Western culture willingly, entirely rebooting civilisation. Their choice is critical of modernity.

7. Conclusion

I have aimed to show that Laura Gustafsson's *Korpisoturi* is a curious combination of mimetic and speculative elements and genres, and recognising the hybridity helps the reader make sense of the novel. I have argued that *Korpisoturi* uses two conventions of the contemporary anglophone postapocalyptic novel: salvage and the critique of modernity. Yet I also suggested that some of the critique of modernity is communicated through Ahma's psychological depiction, meaning that the critique is not restricted to

⁹ See [marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Lynx_\(Earth-616\)](https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Lynx_(Earth-616)) (Accessed 4 May 2022). The word *Ilves* is Finnish and means “bobcat”.

the post-apocalyptic characteristics of the novel, but is developed more broadly. The trade embargo functions as a turning point that breaks the mimetic illusion in its non-historicity and makes room for the speculative genres of the post-apocalyptic novel and survivalist fiction, however critically these are stylised in order to communicate a critical attitude to the reader. A psychological novel that evokes the *kansankuvaus* tradition turns rather easily into a post-apocalyptic novel but weakens the conventions by portraying a small cataclysm that barely qualifies as one and by adding comic and parodic accents to the portrayal. The novel shows that speculative fiction can be combined with mimetic genres in surprising ways. Similar hybrid compositions are likely to become more common in the future.

The motto of the novel, “I do not envy the conscience pure of the blind man in his bliss world”, is taken from the lyrics of “Painting my horror” included in the album *La Masquerade Infernale* (1997) by the Norwegian band Arcturus, and it can be interpreted as communicating both Ahma’s attitude towards the “blindness” of non-survivalist people as well as the narrator’s evaluation of Ahma’s narrow worldview, this ambivalence characterising the novel as a whole. Even if *Korpisoturi* is clearly critical towards the values of the survivalists, it still portrays Ahma in an understanding way, even letting him have the family idyll for which he has been secretly longing. The ending is rather hopeful for both a psychological and a post-apocalyptic novel, but it also shows how the dissimilar genres can come together and reach their summation in a single work.

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Kasvien vieraus ja ekofeminismin vaarallisuus – Poison Ivy:n toiseuttaminen ja torjuminen elokuvassa *Batman & Robin*

Kati Aakkonen

Abstrakti: Fiktiossa kasvit saavat usein toimijuutta vain silloin, kun ne näyttäytyvät vaarallisina ja uhkaavina. Näin ollen kasvikauhun hirviöt avaavat tärkeitä näkökulmia kasvien ja ihmisten välisten suhteiden ymmärtämiseen. Elokuvassa *Batman & Robin* (1997) Poison Ivy:n hahmoon henkilöityy kasvien ja naisten toiseuttaminen, minkä lisäksi elokuvan sankarit torjuvat hänen edustamansa ajatuksen luonnonsuojelun tärkeydestä. Koska ympäristöongelmien vaikutukset ja yhteiskunnan alistavat mekanismit toimivat limittäin, vähän tutkittu Poison Ivy:n hahmo on intersektionaalisuudessaan ajankohtainen. Ekofeministinen analyysi hahmosta paljastaa, miten ja miksi tietyistä olennoista tehdään populaarifiktiossa vieraita ja hirviömäisiä. Kasvin ja ihmisen yhdistelmänä Poison Ivy haastaa olentojen välisiä rajoja ja hierarkioita, samalla kun hänen yhteiskunnalliseen muutokseen tähtäävä toimintansa vaatii ihmisiä ottamaan päätöksissään huomioon myös ei-inhimilliset olennot.

Avainsanat: Poison Ivy, kasvikauhu, hirviö, ekofeminismi, supersankarielokuvat

1. Johdanto

Poison Ivy ilmestyi ensimmäistä kertaa Batmanin vastustajaksi vuonna 1966, *Batman*-lehden numerossa 181, jolloin hahmon luomisesta vastasivat Robert Kanigher ja Sheldon Moldoff. Nykyään 'Myrkkymuratiksi' suomennettu hahmo tunnetaan kuitenkin paremmin versiosta, jolle Neil Gaiman ja Mark

Buckingham laativat uuden syntytarinan vuonna 1986 (*Secret Origins* #36).¹ Carolyn Coccin mukaan toisen aallon feminismi vaikutti DC-sarjakuvien naiseen siten, että heistä tuli 1960-luvun lopulla entistä itsenäisempiä ja pystyvämpiä, vaikka heillä piti edelleen olla “feminiinisiä heikkouksia” (9). Ivy syntyi siis aikana, jolloin naisten kuvaus ja asema herättivät aiempaa enemmän keskustelua sarjakuvamaailmassa. Uudempi syntytarina taas sijoittuu 1980-luvun loppuun, jolloin sarjakuvien haluttiin olevan aiempaa realistisempia. Tämä tarkoitti usein synkempää otetta ja esimerkiksi äärimmäisempää väkivallan kuvausta aikaisempien vuosikymmenien campiin ja fantastisuuteen nojaavaan sarjakuvaan verrattuna (De Dauw 10). Sama trendi näkyy voimakkaasti 1980-luvun lopulta alkaneissa *Batman*-filmatisoinneissa, joista Joel Schumacherin ohjaamat *Batman Forever* (1995) ja *Batman & Robin* (1997) eroavat värikkyydellään ja kepeydellään.

Schumacherin ohjaama ja Akiva Goldsmanin käsikirjoittama *Batman & Robin* onkin yksi sarjan vähiten pidetyistä elokuvista, vaikka sen camp-hengellä ja absurdiudella on myös puolustajansa. Elokuva näyttää happoiselta teemapuistoajelulta: se on värimaailmaltaan räikeän kontrastinen ja täynnä neonhohtoisia valoja, savuja ja liekkejä. Huomio kiinnittyy mahtipontisiin lavasteisiin sekä hahmojen aseisiin ja ajoneuvoihin. Viittaukset tieteis-, kauhu- ja film noir -klassikoihin korostavat tarinamaailman kitsch-estetiikkaa, jonka keskiössä on koherentin kokonaisuuden sijaan yksittäisten, kaikkea muuta kuin hienovaraisten elementtien kokoelma. Elokuvassa Batman/Bruce Wayne (George Clooney) yrittää rakentaa suhdetta uuteen kumppaniinsa, nuoreen Robiniin/Dick Graysoniin (Chris O'Donnell), samalla kun Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger) ja Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman) suunnittelevat maailmanvalloitusta ja ihmiskunnan tuhoa Banen (Michael Reid MacKay & Jeep Swenson) avustuksella.

Poison Ivyn hahmo ei ole saanut paljoakaan akateemista huomiota. Hahmoa on tutkittu hullun tieteilijän stereotyyppiä vasten (Pagliassotti) sekä vertailemalla eri adaptaatioita ekofeministisestä näkökulmasta (Tedeschi). Populaarissa keskustelussa feministit ovat usein kritisoineet *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan tulkintaa Ivystä, vaikka hahmon ekofeministisiä piirteitä on toisaalta kiiteltu (Dawes; Fleenor). Ivyllä on paljon yhteistä monien muiden naishahmojen kanssa, jotka joutuvat miesten väkivallan kohteiksi DC-universumissa: esimerkiksi *Batman Returns* -elokuvan (1992) Kissanainen (Michelle Pfeiffer) ja *Birds of Prey* -elokuvan (2020) Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) kamppailevat Ivyn tapaan trauman ja väkivallan oikeuttamisen kanssa. 2010-luvulta lähtien kirjoittajat ovat kuitenkin alkaneet suhtautua Thurmanin tulkintaan Ivystä suopeammin ja hänestä on alettu kirjoittaa verkkomedioissa ikonisena hahmona (Century; Gramuglia).

Ivyn hahmon kautta voidaan pohtia planeettaamme uhkaavien ongelmien yhteenkietoutuneisuutta. Hänessä yhdistyy tutkijanainen, kasvi, luonnonsuojelija sekä ruumiillisesti ja maantieteellisesti toiseutettu hahmo, joka sortavaa vallankäyttöä kritisoivista päämääristään huolimatta osallistuu myös itse epätasa-arvoisten rakenteiden ylläpitämiseen. Tässä artikkelissa kysyn, miten ja miksi Poison Ivystä tehdään *Batman & Robin* -elokuvassa hirviö ja torjuttava. Lisäksi pohdin, mitä ongelmia siitä seuraa, että hirviö kategorisoidaan kasvikaahun tutkimuksessa vieraaksi, ja mitä hirviöhahmot

¹ DC:n sarjakuvien historiasta sukupuolen tutkimuksen näkökulmasta ks. De Dauw 1–15.

voisivat tarjota tämän päivän ekofeminismille. Ekofeministit ovat kiinnostuneita yhteiskunnan hierarkioista, joilla oikeutetaan luonnon ja naisten alistaminen ja hyödyntäminen. Iyyn hahmossa toiseuttavat ja sukupuolittuneet sorron mekanismit näkyvät selkeästi, mikä tekee ekofeminismistä hedelmällisen näkökulman hahmon analysoimiseen.

Keskityn yksittäisen elokuvan tapaan kuvata Ivy, koska näin voin paneutua syvällisesti siihen, miten hahmon vierautta rakennetaan ja korostetaan. Aloitan esittelemällä Iyyn kasvihirviönä ja *femme fatalena*, jota toiseutetaan esittämällä hänet eri tavoin vieraana ja kaukaisena. Toiseksi paneudun kauhufiktio kuvaamien rajojen ja hierarkioiden häilyvyyteen ja rikkomiseen. Tässä yhteydessä lähestyn Iyvä ekofeminismin ja posthumanismin näkökulmasta. Seuraavaksi siirryn tarkastelemaan kohde-elokuvassa rakentuvien olentojen välisten hierarkioiden käytännön seurauksia ja luonnonsuojelun asemaa Gothamissa. Lopuksi pohdin omaa katsomiskokemustani, omaa näkökulmaani tutkijana ja haasteita, joita Ivy asettaa valitsemalleni näkökulmalle. Päämääränäni on tutkailla kriittisesti elokuvan representaatioita ja valta-asetelmia sekä sitä, miten niitä selitetään ja oikeutetaan vierauden, kaukaisuuden tai luonnollisuuden kaltaisilla kategorisoinneilla.

Tarkastelen Iyvä 2020-luvun ekofeministisen ymmärryksen näkökulmasta, koska olen kiinnostunut siitä, mitä annettavaa hahmolla on nykypäivän keskustelulle ihmisten ja kasvien välisistä suhteista. Jeffrey Brown esittää, että supersankarisarjakuvat tarjoavat tilaisuuksia kulttuurisille ja poliittisille neuvotteluille rodusta, sukupuolesta ja sankaruudesta (13). Kasvikauhussa neuvotteluun tuodaan mukaan myös vegetaaliset olennot. Natania Meeker ja Antonia Szabari painottavatkin, että kasvikauhuteokset eivät kuvasta vain syntyänsä liittyviä pelkoja, vaan auttavat käsittelemään laajempia kysymyksiä ihmisen ja muun luonnon suhteesta (”Plant Horror” 33). Koska Poison Ivy on monella tapaa toiseutettu hahmo, hänen kauttaan voidaan analysoida kulttuurisia käsityksiä kasveista, sukupuolesta, eksotisoiduista paikoista sekä sitä, ketkä saavat olla sankareita ja keistä tehdään hirviöitä. Lisäksi vanhempien teosten analysointi uudemmista teoriakehyksissä auttaa ymmärtämään tuttuja tarinoita näkökulmista, jotka eivät aikaisemmin ole olleet mahdollisia (Scott ja Alaniz). En siis kontekstualisoi elokuvaa 1990-luvulle, vaan analysoin Iyvä hahmona, joka kommentoi entistä ajankohtaisemmiksi muuttuneita kysymyksiä siitä, miksi ympäristöongelmiin ollaan edelleen niin haluttomia tarttumaan.

Ilmastonmuutos, ympäristöongelmat ja niiden epätasa-arvoisesti jakautuvat seuraukset ovat saaneet kulttuurintutkijat kiinnostumaan kasveista uudella tavalla ja kehittämään uusia tapoja lähestyä niitä. Filosofian ja posthumanismin piirissä esimerkiksi Meeker ja Szabari sekä John Charles Ryan ovat korostaneet kasvien uudelleen arvioimisen tärkeyttä, koska kasveja koskevilla käsityksillä on myös materiaalisia vaikutuksia. Osallistumistani tähän keskusteluun ohjaa Stacy Alaimon kehoitus tutkia hirviöistä luontoa. Ihmisen yhteys muuhun luontoon ei aina ole harmonista; inhimillisen ja ei-inhimillisen välisten rajojen rikkomisen voi olla väkivaltaista ja pelottavaa, koska se vaatii antautumista muutokselle (Alaimo, ”Discomforting Creatures” 279). Lisäksi vegetaaliset hirviöt ovat vasta vähän tutkittu osa kauhufiktiota ja kasvikauhun tutkimusvälineet vaativat vielä hiomista. Kasvikauhulla on kuitenkin paljon annettavaa ympäristön muutoksista ja planetaarisesta

epäoikeudenmukaisuudesta kiinnostuneille tutkijoille. Kun kasveista pyritään tekemään pelottavia, niiden uhkaavuus liitetään usein myös muihin toiseutettuihin ryhmiin. Kasvien elämä ei ole erillään ihmisten elämästä, joten niiden pelkääminenkin ei ole irrallaan muista peloista. Meeker ja Szabari huomauttavat väkivaltaisten kasvien olevan myös tärkeä muistutus siitä, että luonto ei tarjoa utooppista helpotusta tai pakopaikkaa ihmisen aiheuttamalta tuholta. Kasvihirviöt korostavatkin ihmisen haavoittuvaisuutta ja riippuvaisuutta muusta luonnosta (Meeker ja Szabari, *Radical Botany 2*). Näin ollen Poison Ivykin ei tarjoa yksinkertaista pakoa ihmiskeskeisyydestä ja sen aiheuttamista ongelmista; kasvihirviönä hän paitsi haastaa vallitsevia rakenteita myös herättää kysymyksiä siitä, kuinka tällaisia rakenteita lopulta voidaan haastaa. Poison Ivyn hahmo herättää siis ristiriitaisia ajatuksia ja reaktioita, joita pyrin seuraavaksi erittelemään.

2. Torjuttavat kasvit ja naiset

Pamela Isley, eli tuleva Poison Ivy, esitellään *Batman & Robin* -elokuvassa vaihtamalla kerronnan näkökulma Gothamista Etelä-Amerikan viidakkoon. Siirtymää havainnollistetaan muutaman sekunnin yleiskuvalla puiden ja köynnösten kehystämistä linnan raunioista. Kamera liikkuu puiden lomitse hieman lähemmäs raunioita samalla, kun salama välähtää synkällä taivaalla. Yleiskuvasta leikataan linnan sisälle, tohtori Isleyn hämärästi valaistuun laboratorioon, joka on täynnä kasveja ja akvaarioissa liikkuvia käärmeitä. Kohtauksen keskiössä olevaa tutkijaa ei vielä esitellä varsinaisena kasvihirviönä, mutta hahmon kehystys on jo kasvikauhulle tyypillisesti synkkä ja eksoottinen. Muissakin genren edustajissa, kuten elokuvissa *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956 ja 1978), *Little Shop of Horrors* (1960 ja 1986) ja *Happening* (2008), luonnon vegetaaliset osat näyttävät pelottavina toimijoina, jotka vaativat teosten hahmoja ja yleisöjä miettimään uudestaan suhdettaan passiivisiksi ja harmittomiksi mieltämiinsä kasveihin.



Kuva 1: Yleiskuvaa viidakosta ennen kuin Poison Ivy esitellään laboratoriossaan (Schumacher ja Goldsman, *Batman & Robin*, 14:35).

Dawn Keetleyn mukaan kasveissa konkretisoituu “absoluuttinen vieraus” ja siksi niistä on helppo tehdä hirviöitä (1–7). Myös Stephanie Lim määrittelee kasvikauhun tyypilliseksi ominaisuudeksi hirviökasvien vierauden ja ulkopuolisuuden, jota usein havainnollistetaan tekemällä uhan alkuperästä mahdollisimman eksoottinen (203): länsimaisesta näkökulmasta katsottuna kasvikauhun pelottavat olennot ovat usein lähtöisin kaukaisesta maasta tai jopa ulkoavaruudesta, kuten elokuvissa *Ruins* (2008) ja *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978). Myös *Batman & Robin* -elokuvassa Pamelan laboratorio on sijoitettu maantieteellisesti ja kulttuurisesti kauas Gothamista. Tämä “kaukaisuus” jää kuitenkin hyödyllisen epämääräiseksi, koska elokuvassa ei tarkenneta, missä laboratorio sijaitsee; Etelä-Amerikkaa kuvataan ainoastaan geneerisenä viidakkona.

Kasvit mielletäänkin elokuvissa tavallisesti taustaksi ja maiseman passiiviseksi osiksi, jotka kuuluvat miljöön kuvaukseen eivätkä yksilöidy henkilöhahmoiksi (Roberts 55). *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan katsomiskokemuksessa nimetön viidakko ja kuvaa kehystävät kasvit voivat helposti jäädä huomaamatta, koska kasvit esitetään aluksi nimenomaan tällaisena “taustaluontona”. Kun Pamela muuttuu Poison Ivyksi, kasvit etualaistuvat uudella tavalla: kauhun aktiiviset kasvit vaativat uhkaavuudellaan huomiota, eikä niitä voi ohittaa ainakaan yhtä helposti kuin passiiviseksi kuvattua maisemaa. Luonnon tekeminen “pelkäksi” maisemaksi on Stacy Alaimon mielestä keino etäännyttää katsoja luonnosta. Toisin kuin hirviöillä, maisemalla ei ole toimijuutta; se pysyy äänettömänä taustalla eikä lähde uhkaamaan ihmistä (Alaimo, “Discomforting Creatures” 283). Kasveja pidetään siis *Batman & Robin* -elokuvassa loitolla kahdella tavalla. Ensinnäkin kasviolennon alkuperä sijoitetaan “kaukaiseen” paikkaan, ja toiseksi kasvit esitetään aluksi passiivisinä ja yksilöitymättöminä osina liikkumatonta luontoa. Ivyssä kasvius yksilöityy ja saa toimijuuden, minkä jälkeen muiden hahmojen ja yleisön on arvioitava uudelleen suhdettaan kasveihin. Ivy ei myöskään jää kaukaiseen, liikkumattomana taustana kuvattuun viidakkoon, vaan matkustaa Gothamiin.

Pamelan esittely elokuvassa edustaa siis kasvikauhun tyypillistä kaavaa, jossa hirviö kuvataan vieraaksi, mutta genreä määritelleet tutkijat eivät ole pohtineet riittävän kriittisesti tähän genrekonventioon sisältyviä ongelmia. Limin mukaan kasvien alkuperän tekeminen vieraaksi on retorinen strategia, jolla tartutaan ihmisen toiseuden pelkoon: yleisö suhtautuu luonnostaan vihamielisesti tuntematonta kohtaan, mikä automaattisesti toiseuttaa kasviolennot ja tekee niistä pelottavia (204). On kuitenkin ongelmallista olettaa tällaisten reaktioiden olevan “luonnollisia” tai “automaattisia”. Myös Keetleyn kasveihin liittämä “absoluuttinen vieraus” (1) herättää kysymyksen, mitä tarkoitusta tällainen ilmaisu palvelee. Eikö olisi hyödyllisempää puhua vieraudesta suhteellisena ja rakennettuna? Vierauden absoluuttisuus ja reaktioiden luonnollisuus tarkoittaisi, ettei näiden kategorioiden kyseenalaistaminen ja uudelleenmäärittely olisi lainkaan mahdollista.

Kasvikauhu epäilemättä käyttää hyväkseen sitä, että ulkopuolisiksi kuvatut asiat mielletään usein vieraiksi, pelottaviksi ja tuhottaviksi. Vierauden pelolla voi olla evolutiivista perustaa, mutta on naiivia olettaa, ettei se ole myös kulttuurisesti rakennettua. Esimerkiksi kolonialistinen diskurssi, jossa Eurooppa ja Pohjois-Amerikka kuvataan koko maailman arvohierarkiassa ylimpinä ja keskeisimpinä, perustuu tiettyyn historiaan, tiettyyn kontekstiin ja

tiettyihin ideologisiin tarpeisiin (Shohat ja Stam 139–140). Prosessin historiallisuutta pyritään peittämään tekemällä asetelmasta “luonnollinen” ja kyseenalaistamaton (Sturgeon 11–13). Samaan syyllistyvät myös Keetley ja Lim, vaikka he pyrkivät nimenomaan kritisoidaan kasvien toiseuttamista. Jos esimerkiksi oletetaan Keetleyn tapaan, että kasvien vieraus on absoluuttista, *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan Etelä-Amerikka ja sen luonto jäävät väistämättä vieraisiksi ja Batmanin ja Gothamien edustama länsimaalainen, ihmiskeskeinen positio normatiiviseksi.

Poison Ivyssä ei henkilöidy vain kasvien vieraus ja pahuus, vaan myös hänen edustamansa sukupuoliroolit näyttäytyvät elokuvassa vieraina ja torjuttavina. Kasvikauhun lisäksi Ivy on saanut vaikutteita *film noirin* tunnusomaiselta hahmolta, *femme fatalelta*, jonka kuvauksessa on hyödynnetty samankaltaista maantieteellisesti toiseuttavaa asetelmaa kuin kasvihirviöiden kuvauksessakin. Yvonne Tasker esittää, että *film noirin* naiset eivät sovi perinteiseen malliin sukupuolittuneista tiloista, kuten jaosta yksityiseen ja julkiseen tilaan. Tämä ilmenee esimerkiksi siten, että klassisten *film noir* -elokuvien naiset liitetään usein Yhdysvaltojen ulkopuolisiin tiloihin ja “etnisiin trooppeihin” (Tasker 362). *Batman & Robin* -elokuvassa kasviolento yhdistyy Etelä-Amerikan lisäksi eksotisoituun “Itään” (Said), kun Ivy valtaa Gothamiin päästyään kasvihuoneeseen entisen turkkilaisen kylpylän. Ivy ei siis pääse eroon vieraudestaan Gothamissaakaan, ja hänen välityksellään myös elokuvan muut hahmot joutuvat tai pääsevät kosketuksiin jonkin kaukaisen ja “eksoottisen” kanssa. Kasvinaisena Ivy liitetään “ulkopuolisiin” ja “etnisesti toisiin” lokaatioihin, vaikka hän valkoisuutensa ansiosta saa luvan tulla myös länsimaisen “keskuksen” tiloihin, samaan tapaan kuin *film noirin* naiset elokuvissa *Out of the Past* (1947) ja *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947).

Vaikka Poison Ivy saa pääsyn näihin hegemonisiin tiloihin, häntä ei varsinaisesti voida integroida niiden osaksi. Alaimo esittää, että hirviöelokuviissa naisen tehtävä on pitää yllä rajaa luonnon ja kulttuurin, hirviön ja ihmisen välillä. Hallitsemalla naisen ruumista, jonka ajatellaan olevan lähempänä luontoa ja hirviöomaisuutta kuin miehen ruumis, voidaan symbolisesti hallita myös inhimillisen ja ei-inhimillisen välistä rajaa (Alaimo, “Discomforting Creatures” 288). Poison Ivy siis hyväksytään Gothamien seurapiireihin, mutta vain vierailijana, jonka toiminnan ja ruumiin ymmärtämisestä ja rajoittamisesta tulee keino pitää järjestystä yllä. Batman ja Robin kilpailevat aluksi Iyvyn suosioista, mutta kun tämän ihmiskeskeistä järjestystä uhkaavat tarkoitusperät selviävät, sankarit alkavat vakuutella toisilleen torjuvaa asennettaan vierasta kasvinaista kohtaan.

Raja asetetaan sanojen lisäksi fyysisesti. Ivy kutsuu Robinin puutarhaksi muuttuneeseen piilopaikkaansa ja yrittää vietellä hänet lopullisesti pauloihinsa. Kohtaus on sävyltään eroottinen: huone on täynnä värikkäästi mutta utuisesti valaistuja köynnöksiä ja lehtiä sekä maahan putoavia terälehtiä, ja Ivy itse on asettunut valtavan orkidean sisälle. Hahmot päätyvät makaamaan vierekkäin ja Ivy ehdottaa suudelmaa. Lähikuvissa vesi heijastaa Iyvyn kasvoille unenomaisia kuvioita ja Robinin takana näkyy hypnoottisesti heiluvaa punaista kuviointia. Erikoislähikuva rajautuu Iyvyn huuliin, joiden on tarkoitus houkutella Robinia, mutta joiden oranssinvaaleanpunainen väri ja pinkit rajaukset muistuttavat myös siitä, että suudelma Iyvyn kanssa olisi kuolettavan myrkyllinen. Hahmot suutelevat ja Ivy on jo varma voitostaan, kun Robin

irrottaakin huulistaan kumiset päällysteet, joilla hän on suojellut itseään Iryn myrkyltä. Irrottamisen ele on miltei hekumallinen, kuin kumin kosketus tai Iryn päihittäminen olisivat nautinnollisempia kuin suuteleminen.



Kuvat 2 ja 3: Poison Ivy yrittää vietellä Robinin piilopaikassaan (Schumacher ja Goldsman, *Batman & Robin*, 1:33:51 ja 1:33:59).

Kumiset suojat huulissa vertautuvat ehkäisyyn ja seksitaudeilta suojautumiseen. Koska valtavirtaelokuviissa viitataan ehkäisyyn käyttämiseen seksikohtauksissa hyvin harvoin, suojautuminen ei tässä yhteydessä näyttäydy pelkästään järkevältä turvatoimelta, vaan korostaa Iryn vaarallisuutta jonkinlaisen tartunnan levittäjänä. Seksuaalinen teko ei vain tuo hahmoja kiinni toisiinsa, vaan Irvystä voisi myös tarttua suuteliinaan jotain, mikä on torjuttava. Kuminen, inhimillistä kontrollia ja teknologiaa edustava suoja Iryn ja Robinin huulien välillä kuvastaa tarvetta pitää loitolla Ivy, eli luonto ja hirviö, jonka rajoja rikkova olemus yhdistyy myös turkkilaiseen kylpylään etnisesti toiseutettuna ja seksualisoituna lokaationa. Seuraavaksi pohdin tarkemmin, miten elokuva luo rajoja erilaisten olentojen välille.

3. Rajat ja hierarkiat rikkova muodonmuutos

Tutkija Pamela Isleyn muodonmuutos Myrkkymuratiksi on seurausta epäoikeudenmukaisesta, alistavasta työsuhteesta. Laboratorion johtaja tohtori Woodrue varastaa tohtori Isleyn tutkimusnäytteitä ja pyrkii rikastumaan niillä, minkä lisäksi Woodrue ahdistelee Isleya seksuaalisesti. Torjutuksi tultuaan mies kaataa tohtori Isleyn maahan ja työntää tämän päälle hyllyittäin tutkimusvälineitä ja -aineksia. “Let the poisons and toxins burn a grave deep into the Earth you love so much!”, Woodrue myhäilee (19:48–19:55). Haudan sijaan myrkyistä ja Pamelan rakastamasta maasta tulee kohtu, josta hän syntyy uudelleen, uudenlaisena hybridiolentona. Hahmo muuntautuu homssuisesta ja hikisestä tohtorista hehkuvaksi vampiksi, joka saa kasvit kasvamaan ja joka osaa itsekin tuottaa myrkkyä ja feromonipölyä.

Uudestisyntynyt Ivy pitää mahtipontisessa camp-hengessä monologin, jossa esittelee itsensä ja aikeensa (24:43–25:14): “I am Nature’s arm. Her spirit. Her will. Hell, I am Mother Nature. And the time has come for plants to take back the world so rightfully ours because it’s not nice to fool with Mother Nature.” Kuvakerronta tukee monologia omalta osaltaan. Juuri, kun hahmo puhuu itsestään “Luonnon kätenä”, kuva rajataan hänen omaan käteensä, joka on hajottamassa lasipulloa. Jollain tasolla Pamela Isley pitää siis kiinni identiteetistään muusta luonnosta erillisenä olentona ja mieltää itsensä aseeksi, jota luonto voi käyttää. Tässä ominaisuudessa hän rikkoo tieteelliset välineet ja paikan, jossa tiedettä tehdään. Hahmo myös vahvistaa identiteettinsä muutoksen eksplisiittisesti, kun hän pysähtyy hetkeksi ja toteaa, että hän on Luontoäiti. Pysähdys ja hahmon rajaaminen puolikuvan keskelle tuovat lisäpainoa julistukselle. Viimeiseksi tohtori Isley katkaisee välinsä ihmisiin ja ilmoittaa kuuluvansa kasveihin – ja hänestä tulee Poison Ivy.

Monologin aikana Ivy hylkää ihmisten tieteelliset keinot ja auttaa sen sijaan luontoa hajottamalla laboratorionsa. Näin hän osoittaa lakanneensa välittämästä siitä, kuinka tiede pyrkii kategorisoimaan ja hallitsemaan luontoa. Victoria Tedeschi tulkitsee Ivyn hirviömaisyyden johtuvan luonnonlakien rikkomisesta. Koska “luonnon” lait ovat viime kädessä ihmisen määrittelemiä, niiden rikkominen tekee hahmosta radikaalin toiseuden symbolin (Tedeschi 42). Ivy näyttääkin kokevan oman hybridiytensä luontevana eikä välitä inhimillisen ja ei-inhimillisen välille asetetusta rajasta, jonka tarkoituksena on ollut perustella ihmisten oikeutta käyttää ja tuhota muuta luontoa. Esittelymonologin edetessä tätä rajaa häivytetään koko ajan enemmän, kunnes hahmo lopulta julistaa itsensä muuksi kuin ihmiseksi. Lopulta on vaikea sanoa, miksi hän oikeastaan identifioituu: kasviksi, jumalattareksi, vai luonnoksi kokonaisuutena. Ivy on uudenlainen muoto, jollaiseksi kasvien ja ihmisten suhde voisi kokonaisuudessaankin kasvaa – muoto, jossa korostuvat yhteydet rajanvetojen sijaan. Poison Ivyä voi näin olleen luonnehtia ekofeministiseksi ja posthumanistiseksi hahmoksi.

Posthumanismi on poikkitieteellinen tutkimuskehys, jonka keskeisimpiä tavoitteita on tarkastella ihmisten suhteita muihin olentoihin ja etsiä keinoja järjestää nämä suhteet uudelleen niin, että ne eivät suosisi vain pieniä etuoikeutettujen ihmisten ryhmiä. (Guesse 25; Rojola 267). Ekofeministit taas ovat kiinnostuneita luonnon ja naisten välisistä suhteista sekä kategorisessa että käytännönläheisessä mielessä; suuntauksen juuret ovat feminismissä ja ympäristöaktiivismissa (Mies ja Shiva 13–14; Tedeschi 38). Osa

ekofeministeistä on kiinnittänyt huomiota myös muihin, esimerkiksi etnisen taustan tai seksuaalisen suuntauksen perusteella toiseutettuihin ryhmiin (Mies ja Shiva; Rahman).² Sekä posthumanismin että ekofeminismin edustajat korostavat, että toiseuttavat ja sortavat käsite- ja valtarakenteet suosivat etuoikeutettuja ihmisryhmiä, jolloin muut olennot ja ympäristöt jäävät hierarkiassa alempaan, helposti sivuutettavaan ja hyväksikäytettävään asemaan (Alaimo ja Hekman 4; Karkulehto et al. 3–4; Sturgeon 9). Molempien tutkimuskehysten lähtökohdat ovat materiaalisia, koska tarkoituksena on filosofisen ja kulttuurisen keskustelun lisäksi reagoida käytännön ongelmiin, kuten ympäristön tuhoon (Alaimo ja Hekman 4; Karkulehto et al. 3; Mies ja Shiva 20). Posthumanistit ovat olleet kiinnostuneita enimmäkseen eläimistä, kun taas ekofeminismissä on tutkittu enemmän kasveja ja luonnonympäristöjä.

Ekofeministit ja posthumanistit kritisoivat siis todellisuuden järjestämistä toisensa pois sulkeviin hierarkisiin kategorioihin. Ivyn paikka tässä kategorisoinnissa on kuitenkin epäselvä: kasvien ja naisen yhdistelmänä hän sopii alistettavaan asemaan ja joutuukin hyväksikäytön ja väkivallan kohteeksi, mutta samalla hän rikkoo rajoja ihmisen ja muun luonnon sekä subjektin ja ei-subjektin välillä. Tämä kannustaa hylkäämään dikotomiset asetelmat hahmoa tarkasteltaessa.

Vastakkainasetteluja purkava näkökulma on tärkeä siksikin, että vaikka eri ryhmiin kohdistetut sorron muodot rinnastuvat helposti toisiinsa, alistamisessakin on omat hierarkiansa. Sen sijaan, että *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan tarinaan olisi käsikirjoitettu keskeinen rodullistettu hahmo, kuten eteläamerikkalainen botanisti, Ivy on valkoinen nainen, joka liitetään retorisesti ja visuaalisesti kasveihin ja rodullistettuihin paikkoihin. Vaikka Ivy marginalisoidaan, hän on myös näkyvä ja kuuluva hahmo elokuvassa, toisin kuin muut sorrosta kärsivät ryhmät, jotka ovat joko näkymättömiä, viitteellisiä tai Ivyn itsensä hyväksikäyttämiä. Näkyvin esimerkki tästä on Poison Ivyn kätyrinä toimiva Bane, jolta on viety oma tahto ja puhekyky. Toiseuttavat rakenteet eivät siis ole yhdenmukainen kimppu, vaan joidenkin alistettujen etuoikeutetumpi asema muihin alistettuihin ryhmiin näkyy siinä, että he ylipäättään pääsevät näkyviksi ja kuuluviksi nimihahmoiksi elokuviin.

Kauhututkijat toistelevat, että hirviöhahmot perustuvat usein juuri hierarkioiden olemassaoloon, häilyvyyteen ja tuhoisuuteen, ja ne auttavat siten tekemään nämä rajanvedot näkyviksi. Hirviömäinen luonto on konkreettinen uhka, mutta vaarallinen myös ajatuksen tasolla, koska se haastaa subjektiviteetin rajat (Alaimo, "Discomforting Creatures" 1–2). Alaimo perustaa väitteen 1990-luvun eläimellisiin hirviöhahmoihin, mutta kasvihirviön kohdalla rajojen säilyttäminen ihmisen ja ei-ihmisen välillä on vielä tärkeämpää, koska kasvit on haluttu pitää eläimiä kaukaisempina. T.S. Millerin mukaan kasvit on jäsenetty länsimaisessa ajattelussa ihmisen ja muiden eläinten alapuolelle ja siksi niiden aktiivisuus ja vaarallisuus häiritsee: toiminnalliset kasvit uhkaavat ihmisten käsitystä itsestään kasveja tärkeämpinä ja niistä erillisinä (469). Kasvit ovat yleensä määrittäneet sen

² Ekofeminismin vaikutusta ekokriittiseen ja feministiseen tutkimukseen on vähätelty, koska sen näkökulma on usein mielletty romanttisen yksinkertaiseksi ja naista essentialisoivaksi (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 8; Rahman 13). Nykyään samansuuntaiset ajattelutavat kulkevatkin usein hieman erilaisilla nimityksillä, kuten "materiaalinen feminismi" (Alaimo ja Hekman) tai "postkoloniaalinen ekofeminismi" (Rahman).

kautta, mitä ne voivat tehdä ihmisten hyväksi, joten kasvikaahun objekteista subjekteiksi nousevat kasvit osuvat ihmiskunnan instrumentaalisen kasvien hallinnan juureen (461–462). Keetleynkin mielestä kasvien toimijuus häiritsee hierarkiaa ja osoittaa, että kasvikunta ei ehkä kuulu asemaan, johon se on haluttu asettaa (12). Lim päättyy samanlaiseen tulkintaan ja ehdottaa, että tappajakasvit ovat paitsi häiritseviä myös suosittuja juuri siksi, että ne leikittelevät sosioekologisilla hierarkioilla (205).

Poison Ivyn kasvava haluttomuus asettua rajojen sisään ilmenee paitsi dikotomisen tieteen hylkäämisessä myös hahmon ulkonäössä. Syntyessään Ivy on jo näyttävä, mutta vielä melko pelkistetty; hänen pukeutumisensa, meikkinsä ja kampauksensa muuttuvat kohtaus kohtaukselta värikkäämmiksi ja räikeämmiksi. Kun Ivy esitellään ensimmäistä kertaa gothamilaisille, hänen väri-ilmaisunsa on voimakasta, mutta rajoittuu punaisen ja vihreän yhdistelmään. Myöhemmin mukaan lisätään uusia värejä sekä näyttävämpiä materiaaleja, kuten lateksia. Viimeisessä asussa Ivyn moniväriset hiukset on koottu korkeaan kampaukseen ja meikkiin kuuluu voimakkaiden värien lisäksi kulmien rajaukset, jotka muistuttavat päällekkäisiä kulmakarvoja.

Muodonmuutoksensa jälkeen Ivy jatkaa kasvamistaan olennoksi, jota rajat eivät pitele. Visuaalinen hillittömyys kuvastaa olennon uhmaa kategorioita kohtaan, mutta se toteutuu naisille hyväksytyllä tavalla eli ulkonäön muokkauksilla. Aktiivisten kasvien tapaan aktiiviset naiset on elokuvissa usein kuvattu vaarallisina ja pahoina, koska myös naiset on mieluummin haluttu pitää passiivisina objekteina. Ivyn voimaannuttava muodonmuutos saa siis osittain energiansa *femme fataleksi* muuttumisesta. Myrkyllisen ja hempeän naisen dikotomiaa on käsitelty laajalti *film noir* -elokuvissa, ja siksi myös feministisessä elokuvatutkimuksessa (Grossman; Read; Tasker). Yvonne Tasker kirjoittaa katsauksessaan hahmotyyppin historiaan ja feministisiin tulkintoihin, että *femme fatale* haastaa naisille asetetut odotukset feminiinisydestä ja alistuvuudesta, mikä häiritsee patriarkaalista kulttuuria (355, 359). *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan sukupuolitettua kasvihirviön toimijuutta vahvistetaan hakemalla vaikutteita *femme fatale* -hahmoista, jotka kuvataan samalla tavoin pahoiksi, mutta jotka myös auttavat huomaamaan, että hierarkiat ovat ihmisten luomia ja siksi muutettavissa.

Kokonaisuudessaan Ivyn muodonmuutos ilmentää ekofeminististä ymmärrystä hierarkkisten rakenteiden ongelmallisuudesta ja siitä, ketkä hyötyvät niiden ylläpidosta. Esitän, että tämä emansipatorinen ymmärrys tekee Ivystä ideologisesti vaarallisen, mikä puolestaan on syynä siihen, että hänet kuvataan vieraana ja torjuttavana. Hahmo haastaa gothamilaisten (ja mahdollisesti yleisöjen) käsitykset patriarkaalisesta yhteiskunnasta eli hierarkiasta, jossa ihmiset ja varsinkin miehet ovat asettaneet itsensä muun luonnon yläpuolelle. Ivy tuo esille yhteiskunnan epäkohdat ja haluaa muuttaa niitä, vaikka hänen keinonsa ovatkin niin äärimmäiset, että hän päätyy hyväksikäyttämään muita, myös itseään huonompiaisaisia hahmoja ja olentoja.

Pamela Isley ei ole saavuttanut valtaa ja voimaa kasvitieteilijänä eikä hänen tutkimuksensa auta kasveja. Kasviolentona ja *femme fatalena* Poison Ivy sen sijaan saa päämääriään toteutetuksi, joskaan ei instituution tukemalla ja moraalisesti hyväksyttävällä tavalla. Saatuaan toimijuutta ja hylättyään asemansa patriarkaalisessa, ihmiskeskeisessä hierarkiassa, Ivy ei ota sankarillista tai esimerkillistä roolia, sillä rakenteet joista hän pyristelee

vapaaksi eivät mahdollista sitä. Muutos virallisia kanavia pitkin olisi hidasta eikä kaikilla ole tasa-arvoisesti valtaa vaikuttaa muutokseen, joten terrorismi näyttäytyy Iyville varteenotettavana vaihtoehtona. Hän toteuttaa toimijuuttaan turvautumalla perinteisen juonittelevan ja seksuaalisoidun naisen arkkityyppiin sekä kasvikauhun kostajakasvin perinteeseen. Tämä kuvastaa kasvien ja naisten kapeaa liikkumatilaa kulttuurissamme, mutta osallistuu samalla tuon tilan kapeaksi rajaamiseen. Vaikka Ivyä onkin helppo ymmärtää, hahmo herättää kiusaantuneisuutta, sillä hänen feminiininen toimijuutensa on sidottu hänen ulkonäköönsä ja seksuaalisuuteensa ja hänen vegetaalinen toimijuutensa mahdollistuu vain tuhoisuuden kautta. Ivy on siis haaste hierarkioille ja rajoille, mutta ei onnistu tarjoamaan hyvää esimerkkiä uudelle, ongelmattomammalle järjestykselle. Seuraavaksi pohdin, miten Iyvin hierarkioiden haastaminen otetaan vastaan Gothamissa ja miten hierarkiat asettuvat kasvien pelastamisen tielle käytännössä.

4. Batman suojelee kasveilta – entä ympäristökriisiltä?

Muodonmuutoksensa jälkeen Poison Ivy matkustaa Gothamiin tapaamaan Bruce Waynea, jolla on suuri liikeyritys, valtavasti rahaa ja huomattavasti sosiaalista pääomaa erilaisten toimintatapojen muuttamiseen – toisin sanoen Batmanilla on myös siviilielämässään valtaa. Elokuvan alussa hyväntekeväisyyttä harrastava Bruce lahjoittaa Gothamille uuden kaukoputken ja satelliittijärjestelmän, mutta Ivy, pukeutuneena tohtori Isleyksi, keskeyttää lehdistötilaisuuden ehdottaakseen Wayne Enterpriseselle ympäristöystävällisempiä toimintatapoja. Iyvin suunnitelmat ovat kuitenkin liian äärimmäisiä Brucea eivätkä he ryhdy neuvottelemaan kompromissista. Batmanin väheksyvä suhtautuminen Iyvin esille tuomiin ympäristöhuoliin ja lajienvälisiin riippuvuussuhteisiin toistuu useissa eri versioissa hahmojen kohtaamisesta (Tedeschi 39–40).

Bruce Waynen torjuttua Iyvin radikalismia tämä esittää Gothamille seurapiireille saman uhkauksen, jonka teki jo muodonmuutoksensa jälkeen pitämässään monologissa (35:46–36:01): “Mammals! A day of reckoning is coming. That’s right. The same plants and flowers that saw you crawl from the primordial soup will reclaim this planet and there will be no one to protect you!” Yleisö nauraa, mutta Ivy ei ole yllätynyt, vaan hymyilee keinotekoisena maireasti. Sama nauruton hymy näkyy hänen kasvoillaan, kun Gothamille juorutoimittaja pilkkaa häntä sanomalla (36:04–36:13): “You must be new in town. In Gotham city Batman and Robin protect us. Even from plants and flowers.” Ihmiskeskeinen hierarkia, jossa kasvit ovat ihmisiä ja muita eläimiä alempana, ei saa gothamilaisia ottamaan tosissaan Iyvin asettamaa uhkaa tai ekofeminismin tärkeyttä, eivätkä he edes pysähdy pohtimaan omaa asemaansa hierarkiassa. Batmanilla ja Robinilla ajatellaan olevan vakavampiakin vihollisia.

Kohtauksessa Ivy ja Bruce keskustelevat parvekkeella, jonka alapuolella suurin osa ihmisistä seisoo kuuntelemassa. Yleisö katsoo Brucea ja Ivyä ylöspäin, kun taas Ivy puhuttelee heitä katsomalla alaspäin, mikä korostaa hänen viestinsä uhkaavaa ja alentuvaa sävyä. Kohtauksessa kuvataan asetelmaa, jossa “tavalliset” ihmiset ovat Batmanin ja Myrkkymuratin kaltaisten superolentojen alapuolella. Bruce ei varsinaisesti puhuttele

alatasanteella seisovia ihmisiä, mutta kun hän sanoo “People come first, Dr. Isley” (35:41–35:43), hän ja Ivy näkyvät kuvassa etualalla ja ihmismassa heitä alempana taka-alalla. Näitä ihmisiä Batman suojelee, mutta heillä ei ole yksilöllisyyttä tai omaa ääntä eikä heidän tarvitse tehdä valintoja siitä mikä on oikein. Bruce Wayne päättää yksin, miten suhtautua Ivyn ehdotuksiin, ja gothamilaiset hyväksyvät tämän. Muun muassa Ellen Kirkpatrick onkin kritisoinut Batmania siitä, että hän käyttää hyväkseen etuoikeutettua asemaansa ja yksilökeskeistä kulttuuria, jossa tietyt henkilöt ottavat kantaakseen kaikille kuuluvan oikeuden ja velvollisuuden poliittiseen toimijuuteen.



Kuva 4: Poison Ivy ja Bruce Wayne seisovat parvekkeella gothamilaisen yläpuolella (Schumacher ja Goldsman, *Batman & Robin*, 35:42).

Ihmiskeskeisellä olentohierarkialla on seurauksia eettisesti ja poliittisesti, koska se ei rohkaise ottamaan vakavasti kasvien itseisarvoa tai luonnonsuojelua. Huvittavaksi mielletyn ekofeministin kanssa ei tarvitse käydä keskustelua siitä, millaiset käytännöt voisivat pitää sekä ihmiset että kasvit hengissä. Ivy ei kuitenkaan käy Brucen kimppuun vaan suuntaa huomionsa Batmaniin ja Robiniin, kuten julistaa seuraavassa yksinäisessä monologissaan, joka toistaa aiemman puheen rytmiä. Puhuessaan Ivy kävelee eteenpäin hitaan viettelevästi ja uhkaavasti, mutta viimeisten virkkeiden ajaksi hän pysähtyy, mikä saa kiinnittämään erityistä huomiota puheen lopetukseen (36:38–37:05): “Batman and Robin, militant arm of the warm-blooded oppressors, animal protectors of the status quo. First, I’ll rid myself of the fur and feathered pests. And then Gotham will be mine, for the greening.” Ivy tulkitsee, että sankarit ovat yhteiskunnan välineitä, joiden avulla valtajärjestelmät pidetään muuttumattomina. Batman-tarinat ovatkin usein hegemoniaa ylläpitäviä: ulkopuoliseksi kuvattu uhka on käynyt sekoittamassa asetelmaa, mutta sankari palauttaa tilanteen lopussa ennalleen (DiPaolo 14–12). Ivy on juuri tällainen ulkopuolinen uhka, mutta hänen näkökulmastaan Batman ei pelkäänsä suojele tavallisia gothamilaisia, vaan pyrkii turvaamaan ennen kaikkea sen, että Bruce Waynen kaltaiset kapitalistiset vallanpitäjät voivat jatkaa rahan tekemistä. Monet ekofeministit pitävätkin kapitalistista talousjärjestelmää yhtä tuhoisana toisetueteuille toimijoille kuin patriarkaattia ja kolonialismia (Rahman 12).

Batman ja Robin eivät ole Ivyn näkökulmasta sankareita, koska heidän suojeluyrityksensä eivät koske elollisia tarpeeksi laajassa mielessä. Hän ei myöskään halua tuhota sankareita henkilökohtaisista syistä, vaan näkee kaksikon tietynlaisen sortavan järjestelmän oireina. Hän kysyykin (18:10–19:19): “Why should only Batman and Robin die while the society that created them goes unpunished?” Kaikkiaan Poison Ivy ei ole kiinnostunut yksittäisten ihmisten tuskasta, vaan näkee ongelmat laaja-alaisempina ja rakenteellisina.

Tarinan keskeisimpien hirviöiden, Poison Ivyn ja Mr. Freezeen toisistaan poikkeavat loput kuvaavat hyvin Gothamien ideologista maisemaa. Mr. Freezestä Batman löytää inhimillisyyttä ja mahdollisuuden katumukseen: vaikka entinen tiedemies päätyy vankilaan, hänelle perustetaan sinne laboratorio, jossa hän voi jatkaa keksimänsä lääkkeen kehittämistä. Batman vetoaa tieteilijän inhimillisyyteen sanoen, että kosto ei ole valtaa, koska kuka tahansa voi ottaa elämän; elämän antaminen on paljon arvokkaampaa, ja Mr. Freeze kutsutaan jälleen käyttämään tätä valtaa (1:49:39–1:49:46). Poison Ivystä Batman ei kuitenkaan löydä riittävää inhimillisyyttä parannukseen, eikä Ivy saa rikkaalta mieheltä resursseja jatkaa luonnonsuojeluun tähtäävää tutkimustaan. Kasvin ja ihmisen yhdistelmänä Ivy on vieraampi ja vaarallisempi kuin Mr. Freeze, ja hänen hybridisyytensä on liian pitkälle edennyt. Häntä ei voida enää “parantaa” tai halkaista tavalla, jolla kasvin ja ihmisen saisi erotettua toisistaan, eikä rajaa ihmisen ja muun luonnon välille voida näin ollen palauttaa. Ainoaksi vaihtoehdoksi jää rajoittaa Ivyn kykyä luoda uutta hybridistä elämää sulkemalla häneltä pääsy tieteen ja kapitalismin resursseihin. Koska hänen tutkimuksensa rajoja ja hierarkioita rikkovia tuloksia ei voitaisi hallita totunnaisiin hegemonisiin keinoin, hänet täytyy vangita ja piilottaa.

Ivyn ottaminen tasaveroiseksi kumppaniksi tarkoittaisi myös liian dramaattisia muutoksia Gothamissa, sillä hän haluaisi pelastaa ihmisten uhkaamat kasvit. Mr. Freezellä ja Batmanilla taas on selvä yhteinen tavoite: pelkkien ihmishenkien pelastaminen. On helpompaa teljetä Ivy mielisairaalaan kuin muuttaa käytäntöjä tavalla, joka vaatisi kasvien ja ihmisten välisen suhteen uudelleen määrittelyä. Luonnonsuojelu jää siis marginaaliin eivätkä kasvit saa uutta asemaa Batmanin maailmankuvassa. Ne pysyvät edelleen passiivisina objekteina, joiden hyvinvoinnista ei tarvitse välittää, vaikka ne osaltaan vaikuttavat myös ihmiskunnan selviytymiseen. Ivyn mukana Arkhamin selliin suljetaan ajatus ihmisten ja kasvien välisestä yhteisyydestä ja riippuvuudesta, aivan kuin se olisi hulluutta.

5. Kasvien puolustamisen hirviömäisyys ja sankarillisuus

Jacinda Read kritisoi yksioikoisia tulkintoja elokuvista, joissa kuvataan naisiin kohdistuvaa väkivaltaa. Hänen mukaansa analyyseissa korostetaan liikaa kostajanaisille ja *final girl* -hahmoille tehtävää väkivaltaa ja jätetään usein huomiotta naisten valta kieltäytyä pelossa ja vaarassa elämisestä (Read 33). Kaikki tulkinnat elokuvista ovat seurausta tietyn näkökulman valinnasta: jokaisen katsojan yksilölliset lähtökohdat rajaavat valintojen mahdollisuuksia, eikä kaikilla ole yhtä paljon valtaa tai resursseja haastaa oman positionsa luomia rajoja. Tulkintaprosessit ovat kuitenkin monimutkaisia ja ristiriitaisia, ja niihin jää siksi aina jonkin verran liikkumavaraa, vaikka tämä liikkumavara

ei tekisikään representaatioiden tarkastelusta täysin vapaata ja tasa-arvoista (Dyer 2).

Elokuvat joissa naisille tehdään väkivaltaa ovat osaltaan tuottamassa ja vahvistamassa naisvihamielistä kulttuuria, joten vastaavasti elokuvat joissa kasveille tehdään väkivaltaa ylläpitävät kasveille väkivaltaista kulttuuria. Tämän lisäksi voidaan kuitenkin suunnata katse niihin naisten ja kasvien representaatioihin, jotka vastustavat väkivallan kohteena olemista ja osoittavat, ettei heidän uhrin asemansa ole automaattinen tai luonnollinen. Epäilen, että elokuvien näkeminen yksioikoisen naisvihamielisinä on osittain opittu ja opetettu tapa katsoa niitä ja että tällainen katsontatapa saa naiskatsojat helposti tuntemaan entistä enemmän voimattomuutta ja pelkoa. Yleisöt on totutettu näkemään maailma vaarallisena naisille ja muille toiseutetuille ryhmille, mikä vaikuttaa suoraan siihen, miten suhtaudumme ja suuntaudumme maailmaan ja omaan asemaamme siinä. Pamela Isley/Poison Ivy osoittaa, että ei usko ihmisen tai miehen ylemmyyteen ja tuhoutumattomuuteen, kenties osittain siksi, että hänellä ei ole etuoikeutta suhtautua ihmisiin tai miehiin tällä tavalla.

Schumacherin *Batman & Robin* -ohjauksen kaltaiset, erilaisia katastrofeja kuvaavat elokuvat ovat tarinoita ihmiskuntaa uhkaavista vaaroista, mutta lopussa sankari kuitenkin aina selittää vastustajansa ja palauttaa illusion turvallisuudesta. Jatko-osassa jälleen uusi voima uhkaa ihmisiä, mikä viestii siitä, että vaara päihitetään, mutta ei ikinä lopullisesti. Supersankarisarjakuvat noudattavat samaa tarinakaavaa, mutta usein vielä tiiviimmässä tilassa (Eco ja Chilton 16–17). Yksittäisten vastustajien päihittämiseen keskittyminen mahdollistaa sen, että yhteiskunnan ongelmallisia rakenteita ei tarvitse huomata tai muuttaa. Ivyn kaltaiset vastustajat eivät kuitenkaan uhkaa vain ihmis(mies)henkiä, vaan myös yhteiskunnallista järjestystä: kasvinainen rikkoo rajan ihmisen ja muun luonnon välillä ja osoittaa *status quon* ylläpitämisen olevan kestävä ja vaihtoehto, mikäli muutkin kuin tietynlaiset ihmiset halutaan osaksi hyvinvoinnin ja selviytymisen piiriä. Hänet kuvataan vieraaksi ja torjuttavaksi siksi, että hän vaatii muutosta niiltä, jotka käyttävät valtaansa mieluummin vallitsevan järjestyksen ylläpitämiseen. Vierauden näkeminen absoluuttisena tai sen torjumisen pitäminen luonnollisena ovat kulttuurisia käsityksiä, joihin yleisöjä opetetaan uskomaan, ja kuten olen pyrkinyt osoittamaan, tällaiset ennakkoluulot ja oletukset ovat ongelmallisia tutkimukselle ja kriittiselle keskustelulle. *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan väkivaltaisuutta kasveja ja naisia kohtaan sekä sen toiseuttavia esitystapoja on lopulta vaikea kritisoida syvällisesti, jos vierautta ja ulkopuolisuutta ei mielletä tietyistä konteksteista käsin nimetyiksi kategorioiksi.

Read muistuttaa, että tekstejä analysoidessaan tutkija osallistuu merkitysten eli kulttuurin tuottamiseen (5). Koska elokuvien merkitykset eivät ole annettuja tai staattisia, tulkinnat vaikuttavat siihen, miten teoksia ja niiden kuvaamia ilmiöitä ymmärretään. Anu Koivunen kirjoittaa, että “omaa” katsetta edeltävät aina toisten katseet, jolloin elokuvat on katsottu jossain määrin valmiiksi seuraaville yleisöille (248). Olen pohtinut, mitä katsomisen tapoja minä voisin antaa katsojille, jotka myöhemmin päätyvät kyseisen elokuvan tai kasvikaahun pariin. Miten tarjoaisin sekä analyttisyyttä että avoimuutta? Miten antaisin vaihtoehdon voimattomuudelle väheksymättä kuitenkaan hahmoille tehdyn väkivallan vaikutuksia? A. E. King ehdottaa, että hyvän

ekofeministisen tutkimuksen tavoite ei ole antaa lopullisia vastauksia, vaan auttaa ottamaan huomioon monet eri tavat, joilla naisia ja ympäristöä alistetaan, sekä kannustaa tunnistamaan oman analyysin heikkoudet (70). Lopullisten vastausten tarjoamisen, spektaakkelimaisen terrorismin tai järjestelmän totaalisen rikkomisen sijaan pyrin samaan kuin tohtori Isley: hivuttautumaan askel kerrallaan kohti entistä moniulotteisempaa ja eettisesti kestävämpää tapaa ymmärtää kasveja, ihmisiä ja niiden riippuvaisuussuhdetta. Apua tehtävään tarjoavat sekä aikaisemman tutkimuksen välineet että oma tapani selittää teoksia toiseuttavien kategorioiden näkökulmasta.

(Eko)feministiset tulkinnat eivät täysin heijastele omaa kokemustani *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan Poison Ivyistä. Rakastuin elokuvaan iässä, jossa en vielä ymmärtänyt hahmon ongelmallisia puolia, mutta aikuisena tutkijana pidän edelleen hirviötä ja kiusaannuttavasti käyttäytyviä hahmoja kiinnostavina ja vetoavina. Ne saavat tarkastelemaan kriittisesti odotuksia, joita asetan elokuville ja feminismille, mikä on tärkeää siksi että odotukset ohjaavat osaltaan eri teosten tulkintoja ja arviointeja. Esimerkiksi Lim väittää, että suurimmassa osassa kasvikauteoksia kasvien ja ihmisten suhteita ei kuvata riittävän monimutkaisiksi (206). Väite toisintaa oletusta siitä, että populaarikulttuuri ja kauhu olisivat ideologisesti ja eettisesti yksinkertaisia. Lim myös paljastaa odottavansa, että kasvikauteosten tulisi kuvata kasvien ja ihmisten välisiä suhteita jollain tietyllä tavalla. Suoremmin ilmaistut odotukset auttavat ymmärtämään joidenkin tutkijoiden lähtökohtia: Tedeschin mielestä olisi jo aika tehdä Ivyistä sankari, sillä monet hahmon arvoista ovat yhteneväisiä tutkijan oman maailmankuvan kanssa (43). Vas Stanesco, joka myös ihastui Ivyyn lapsena, toivoo samaa: hän haluaisi tietää, millainen vaikutus sellaisella elokuvalla olisi, jossa Poison Ivy olisi tarinan kiistaton sankari (ix).

Voisiko Ivy todella olla sankari järjestelmässä, joka on hänen arvojensa vastainen? Hän toimii hyvin hirviönä eli hahmona, joka ei sovi osaksi rakenteita ja osoittaa siten niiden toimimattomuuden. Hän ei halua sopeutua eikä antaa vallalla olevien tahojen jatkaa sortotoimiaan niin kuin ennenkin. Hänet on vangittava, koska hän on ideologisesti vaarallinen, hänen tutkimustaan ei voi hallita ja hän vaatii laajentamaan suojeltavan elämän piiriä. Koko Batmanin tarinamaailman olisi muututtava radikaalisti, jotta Ivy voisi olla sen sankari.

Tällaisten radikaalien muutosten tekemisellä on kuitenkin jo kiire. 1990-luvun *Batman & Robin* -elokuvan pahoiksi kirjoitetut hahmot olisivat 2020-luvun ekofeminismin näkökulmasta oiva joukkio tarttumaan tämän päivän globaaleihin ja intersektionaalisiin ongelmiin: Mr. Freeze voisi pelastaa sulavat jäätiköt, Ivy varmistaa luonnon monimuotoisuuden säilymisen ja murtaa patriarkaatin, kun taas Bane voisi tuoda esiin rasismista ja kolonialismista kärsivien tahojen ongelmat.³ Jos heidät edelleen kuvattaisiin tarinan konnina, jotka Batmanin on tuhottava, se kuvastaisi hyvin, kuinka voimakkaasti valtaa pitävät tahot edelleen torjuvat ja marginalisoivat epätasa-arvoa ja ympäristöongelmia aiheuttavia rakenteita koskevan kritiikin.

Biografia: Kati Aakkosella on maisterin tutkinto kirjallisuustieteestä Tampereen yliopistosta ja hän tekee tällä hetkellä tohtorin tutkintoa

³ Myös intersektionaalisesti ja planetaarisesti maailman pelastamiseen suhtautuvia hahmoja löytyy supersankarisarjakuvista ja niiden adaptaatioista: ks. esim. Lioi.

Jyväskylän yliopistossa, nykykulttuurin tutkimuksen oppiaineessa. Hänen väitöskirjansa käsittelee pohjoisen kokemista ja määrittelyä marginalisoitujen ryhmien näkökulmasta suomalaisissa elokuvissa. Hänen tutkimusintresseihinsä kuuluvat muun muassa populaarikulttuuri, kulttuurimaantiede, feminisismi ja luonnon representaatiot.

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“I’m just being a difficult LoTR hardcore fan”: Tolkien Fans’ Actions and Reactions to Peter Jackson’s *The Hobbit* Trilogy

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Abstract: Peter Jackson’s *The Hobbit* trilogy has been debated and discussed widely. Fans of J.R.R. Tolkien have had strong opinions about the films, and I believe that their online conversations about the movies call for a closer look. I am particularly interested in Tolkien fans’ reactions to the films; the reasons for these reactions; and the actions they provoked.

Some fans loved the possibility of revisiting Middle-earth. They drew a clear distinction between the book and the movies, showing understanding towards the changes and additions required by the adaptation process. Pitted against them were the fans who experienced the films negatively. This group did not differentiate between the movies and the novel, and saw the former as a problematic continuation of the latter. This study focuses on the latter group of fans and the disappointments caused by *The Hobbit* movies.

I will focus on the discussions on fan edits. Some Tolkien fans demanded new, more orthodox fan versions of *The Hobbit* movies. This was an attempt by the fans to integrate Jackson’s world with Tolkien’s world as seamlessly as possible. Most importantly, these fan edits appear as a moral statement, signalling the fans’ collectively experienced ownership of Tolkien’s legacy. I will argue that the fans’ experience of a moral duty to create their own edits of *The Hobbit* movies also shows that they do not recognise Jackson as the custodian of Tolkien’s cinematic world.

Keywords: *The Hobbit*; fans; J.R.R. Tolkien; Peter Jackson; reception; fan edits

According to Henry Jenkins, fans are unafraid to give feedback to the creators of media texts, and they tend to function as active consumers (287). They rarely have a say on the content of these texts, but they can stage loud protests if they believe that their favourite media text is not being handled appropriately (118).¹

One recent example of this is the 2019 fan petition "Remake *Game of Thrones* Season 8 with competent writers". The petition has attracted around one million signatures in one week (D.). Sometimes protests like this do bear fruit, as was the case with *Sonic the Movie*, for which the amount of negative feedback received by the trailer led the film's producers to change the look of the titular main character (@fowltown; L. Sullivan). As I will show in this article, fans can also claim authority through fan edits.²

For this study, I analysed two online articles and their public comments to see how Tolkien fans reacted to Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* movies; what prompted their reactions; and what kind of actions the films incited. The studied articles were written by and commented on by Tolkien fans. Both were published in January 2015, about a month and a half after the December 2014 release of the last instalment of *The Hobbit* trilogy, *The Battle of the Five Armies*. The method employed in this study, inductive content analysis, will be described more closely in the section titled "Analysing Internet Conversations: The Method".

This is a case study that focuses on the disappointments caused by and the critical perspectives on *The Hobbit* movies. As such, the findings do not necessarily reflect the movies' overall reception. Both articles were critical towards the movies, which left its mark on the readers' comments. The articles were chosen because of their critical approach to the topic. The aim was to gather comments from a Finnish and an international platform with criticism as the conjunctive factor.

Addressing the sense of disappointment caused by *The Hobbit* movies is an important and still unexplored field, as the results of the international World Hobbit Project have illustrated (Barker and Mathijs 172). With this article, I hope to illuminate the ways fans act and react when they consider their beloved media text to have been mistreated. Additionally, I will consider whether the argument made by Hirsjärvi, Kovala, and Ruotsalainen about the audiences in Finland, Denmark, and Sweden also applies to the audiences outside the Nordic countries, from which a large part of my research data (*Wired* magazine) comes. They argue that "those who have a more affective relationship with the book and/or the Tolkien community are on average a little bit more critical towards the films, unless they conceptualize the films as different or distinct from the book" (264).

Hirsjärvi, Kovala, and Ruotsalainen's paper was published as part of The World Hobbit Project. I will be using The World Hobbit Project's research

¹ The term "fan" itself, delivered from the "Latin *fanaticus*, meaning an attendant of the temple (*fanus*)" (Cusack, Morehead, and Robertson 3). Defining "fan" is not an easy task (Hills ix). The one thing researchers can agree on is that fans are a widely studied group of media consumers (i). In this article, I employ the term "fan" the way Matt Hills does in *Fan Cultures*. Being a fan or belonging to a fandom has two key aspects to it: performativity and a strong knowledge and attachment to the subject of fandom (xi). In other words, a fan is someone who invests time and feelings in a thing, such as a text or a celebrity, and knows a great deal about it.

² "Fan edits are essentially unauthorized alternative versions of films made by fans" (Wille, *Beyond the Phantom Edit* iii).

results as a point of reference when talking about the reception of *The Hobbit* movies.

I chose to focus on online conversations as they allow people to turn from being passive recipients to active consumers of media products, and usually also to express themselves more freely, especially if they are allowed to remain anonymous. In addition, the internet makes it easy for people with shared interests to find each other. Together, the internet, powerful home computers, and the digitalisation of the media industry have given fans the opportunity to produce and distribute their own versions of media texts, like *The Hobbit* movies, more effectively than ever before (see J. Sullivan 223).

1. Fandom, anti-fandom, and fan edits

Fan studies have given us insights into the world of fandom, informing us about the texts that fans love, what fans do with those texts and characters, and how fans interact with one another within the context of fandom (Chin 3).

It is not easy to define what it means to be a fan or to belong in a fandom, but media consumerism is a key part of the phenomenon (Hills i). Fandom is also performative, and having a strong knowledge of and attachment to the subject are its main elements (Hills xi). As a phenomenon, fandom is multifaceted and involves different activities and manifestations. Key aspects of fandom include active meaning-making and practical exercises (Jenkins 2). According to Jenkins, it is typical for fans to discuss their common interests intensively (53) and to construct meanings publicly, in a group (75). It is rewarding to study fans because they know their chosen media texts so well (Gray, “New Audiences” 67). It is therefore unsurprising that as media consumers fans have received a lot of attention from journalists and researchers (Gray, “New Audiences” 64; Hills i). Fandom is also a culture that breaks geographical boundaries and connects different generations (Jenkins 1).

The Hobbit movies caused some Tolkien fans to become anti-fans of Jackson. Anti-fandom could be understood as the opposite of fandom (Click 1). While anti-fans have a different attitude towards a particular media text than do fans, their behaviour and strategies often resemble those of fans (Sheffield and Merlo 209). However, Sheffield and Merlo note:

Rather than engaging the text directly, though, anti-fans often respond to a “text” they construct from paratextual fragments such as news coverage or word-of-mouth, reading, watching and learning all they can about a show, book, or person in order to better understand and criticize the text (and, very often, its fans). (209)

The avoidance of the source text was also present in the research material, with some Tolkien fans refusing even to watch *The Hobbit* movies. Yet they were eager to take part in online discussions on the topic. However, some anti-fans also receive satisfaction from close-reading media texts they hate because this activity gives them a chance to demonstrate their own know-how” (Harman and Jones 963).³

³ A good example are comments published under a heading such as: “I read this so you don’t have to”.

Barker has also discussed the demonstration of ability as anti-fandom practice. In his article on *The Hobbit* movies, "An investigation of the role of affiliations to 'authors' in audience responses to *The Hobbit* films", Barker writes about "negative Tolkien affiliators" (218). These people admire Tolkien and dislike Jackson. Barker describes their way of acting and thinking as follows:

But a matching affiliation with "Tolkien" in the hands of someone disappointed in films becomes a resource of confident criticism. "He" has been shabbily treated by "them"; Hollywood, the money-men, those who destroy literature by popularising it. "*Tolkien*" energises this critique, and at the same time helps to guarantee the position and status of its presenter (Barker 219, emphasis added).

Anti-fans are energised by demonstrating their level of knowledge, as this gives them a feeling of superiority. Also present is a keen sense of moralism. Anti-fans do not necessarily have anything against fandom as such; they simply dislike a certain media text or genre. They may perceive the object of their dislike as inane, stupid, morally corrupt, or just simply bad (Gray, "New Audiences" 70).

The second fandom-related phenomenon discussed in this article is the fan edit, which as a still under-researched topic. Joshua Wille's doctoral thesis, *Beyond the Phantom Edit: A Critical History and Practical Analysis of Fan Edits*, is a rare example of research on the subject. He defines fan edits as follows:

Fan edits are essentially unauthorized alternative versions of films made by fans, whom I define as people with intense interest in films and related media.... [F]an editing is a form of recombinant filmmaking that reactivates existing arrangements of audiovisual material. (iii)

As Nancy K. Baum has noted, fan edits are the product of media convergence and fans operating online:

As media converge more and more, and as more and more audience members go online, the absolute control of producers over their products might erode further. And if it does not, then the fans might well develop alternative products that gain greater audiences. Scholarship so far has barely scratched the surface of the interplays between media producers and online fans. (Baum 216)

Another key text on Tolkien-related fan edits is Maria Alberto's article "The effort to translate': Fan Film Culture and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien". One of Alberto's examples is TolkienEditor's 2015 edit of *The Hobbit*, which condenses the trilogy into a single film. This version stems from the fan-producer's "opposition to Jackson's work" (19).

Tolkien fan edits have also been discussed by Jackson himself. Wille ("Reforging the Rings" 32) reports that in the DVD audio commentary track to the extended edition of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Jackson has said that fans could always re-edit the movie to restore chronological order. This shows that fan edits "have changed the way some producers think about the creative role of their audience" in addition to facilitating a way of

communication between audiences and producers (Wille, *Beyond the Phantom Edit* 93).

2. Peter Jackson as an interpreter of the Tolkien universe

Tolkien's legacy reached vast new audiences when Peter Jackson's immensely successful trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* adaptations was released in 2001-2003. Tom Shippey writes, "These are arguably the most successful films ever made" (365). This is not an overstatement. For example, the last part of the trilogy, *The Return of the King* (2003), received eleven *Academy Awards*, and he continued the popular – if not critical – success of those films with his *Hobbit* trilogy: *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012), *The Desolation of Smaug* (2013), and *The Battle of the Five Armies* (2014).

Despite the films' enormous success, Jackson's work has also been heavily criticised. This is only natural, considering the status of Tolkien as one of the most important fantasy writers of all time, if not the most important. For example, Dickerson and O'Hara consider Tolkien and C. S. Lewis to be the most important fantasy writers of the 20th century (17). Jyrki Korpua has described Tolkien's position in the genre as "monolithic" (11), and Brian Attebery has gone even further, defining "fantasy" as texts that resemble Tolkien's texts (306).

The Lord of the Rings trilogy (1954–1955) and *The Hobbit* (1937) had an ardent fan base long before Jackson made his films. In this kind of situation, the task of the director is anything but easy. It is impossible to avoid comparisons between the movies and the books. For example, Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn have paid attention to the demands of Tolkien fans (29). In their reading, Tolkien fans relate to the books the way audiences often relate to classics:

One of the central beliefs of film adaptation theory is that audiences are more demanding of fidelity when dealing with classics, such as the work of Dickens or Austen. But a whole new set of cult popular classics, especially the work of Tolkien, Philip Pullman, and J. K. Rowling, are now being made visible and audible on stage, in the movie theatre, on the video and computer screens, and in multiple gaming formats, and their readers are proving to be just as demanding (29).

The audiences of *The Lord of the Rings* movies were particularly critical towards the elements that were added for entertainment value. With *The Hobbit* trilogy, Jackson moved the story even further from the original text than he had *The Lord of the Rings* movies. *The Hobbit* trilogy is generally considered to be the weaker:

Even the most ardent defenders of Peter Jackson's three-film adaptation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* acknowledge that none of them come close to matching the highs of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Something about them just feels off from frame one, like something important is missing. Whatever spark made the first trilogy such a magical experience is missing here (Hall).

While this is just the opinion of one journalist, similar views have been expressed by others, including researchers and audiences.⁴

3. Analysing internet conversations: The method and research ethics

The method employed in this study is inductive content analysis, also called material-based analysis. In this type of analysis, the amount of material is first narrowed down, then grouped into clusters, and finally used as the basis for abstraction (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 111–114). The aim of the process is to give the research material a clear and concise form while retaining its informational content. Each stage is a part of the research process (110).

In this research, the three stages were realised in the following way: first, I reduced the data and placed it in tabular form. These two stages occurred in tandem. I started by identifying opinions and themes repeated in the conversations; their frequency revealed the biggest themes and most popular opinions. In some cases, I grouped related categories together under a more general concept. After this, I took the results to the abstract level, or, in other words, drew conclusions from the findings.

In the analysis, each opinion of a single commenter was counted only once to avoid statistical distortion caused by repetition. This was an issue especially with the *Wired* article that invited several debaters to return to the conversation and reiterate the same opinion or statement. I anonymised the commenters (see below) by replacing their names and pseudonyms with numbers. I then listed these numbers and linked the opinions to numbers. All the opinions (such as “*The Hobbit* movies were badly made”) and themes (such as comparing the movies to the original book) were also numbered and listed. While the research was not quantitative as such, I used tabulation as a practical aid to identify the prevalent opinions and themes.

When doing internet research, the ethical considerations that must be taken into account vary from study to study (Östman and Turtiainen 71). This provides a challenge because the field of internet research is young and multidisciplinary. At the moment, there are no customary practices or regulations formed by long research traditions (Östman 71). Currently the best one can do is to consider ethical issues on a case-by-case basis.

In this research I used as an aid the “Board of Ethics for Online Researcher” developed by Sari Östman and Riikka Turtiainen, who state for example that one must know the context and backgrounds of the research subject, and that one must consider how intimate or public the informants consider their online texts to be (69).

My own research materials are public and, most importantly, I believe that the participants also consider the spaces of these discussions as public. When the data was collected, *Wired*'s article and comments were visible to anyone without any logins or passwords, but they have since been removed from the website. The other research material, an article in *Helsingin Sanomat*

⁴ See, for example, “*The Hobbit 2* Is Bad Fan Fiction” by Christopher Orr (2013); “Peter Jackson’s *The Hobbit*: A Beautiful Disaster” by Marek Oziewicz (2016); and “Introduction: The World Hobbit Project” by Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs (2016).

and comments on the Finnish Tolkien Society's (Suomen Tolkien-seura Kontury) public Facebook page about the article were also public.

I have anonymised my data (see above) because some people appeared to have used their real names.⁵ All quotes from the Finnish Tolkien Society's data set are also either paraphrases or translations from the original Finnish.

Sveningsson, Bergquist, and Lövheim have also said that the experience of publicity or privacy and the sensitivity or non-sensitivity of the research material are the main ethical issues (186). My research materials are non-sensitive (there is no sensitive information such as data on anyone's health or family relations) and, as noted above, the commenters knew their writings were public. For these reasons, I consider that there were no ethical issues in researching these data sets.

I have anonymised the data sets carefully so that they do not form a personal data registry and hence do not fall under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation. I also want to emphasise that these data sets serve the public interest by enabling scientific research.

4. Analysing the *Wired* article and the conversation it generated

Ethan Gilsdorf's article was published on the *Wired* magazine website under the title, "Peter Jackson Must Be Stopped".⁶ This long and critical article drew significant attention. On September 1, 2015, just a couple of days after the article was published, it had 935 comments and it had been shared 12,500 times on Facebook, 281 on Google+, and 761 on Twitter. It is unsurprising that a *Hobbit*-themed article gathered this much attention, considering that *Wired* is a magazine with a focus on topics such as computers, video games, comics, and fantasy. An examination of the article and the comments soon made it clear that Tolkien fans were widely represented. Some of the fans appeared to be much more devoted than the ones writing on the page of the Finnish Tolkien Society, the other main source of data.

The article and the comments showed that most of the debaters reacted negatively to *The Hobbit* trilogy (Table 1). From the 256 commenters, 106 (41.4%) criticised the movies in all or some of the following ways: the movies are badly made; there are some unwanted additions; the movies are unconvincing; the CGI is bad; and the movies resemble bad fan fiction.⁷ These negative comments were clearly the most frequently shared among the debaters. The second most common theme in the conversation (underlining one's own know-how and exchanging information with other debaters) was present in 85 (33.2%) comments. Only 55 (21.5%) debaters defended Jackson and his choices as a director, and 32 (12.5%) debaters considered *The Hobbit* trilogy good.

⁵ The journalists Ethan Gilsdorf and Jussi Ahlroth are still named.

⁶ I have used the *Wired* article with the comments as data in another article, published in 2019 as "Experiencing the Sacred – *The Hobbit* as a Holy Text" (Korpua et al. 102–118).

⁷ This number of participants represents those whose comments were relevant to the theme of this research. Overall, there were 283 different commenters.

Table 1: Analysis of Ethan Gilsdorf's article "Peter Jackson Must Be Stopped" and its comments:

Prevalence	Opinion	Subtotal	Percentage of (relevant) commenters
1.	The movies are badly made; Jackson's own additions are not liked; the movies are unconvincing; the special effects are bad; "it's bad fan fiction"; predicting future defilements by Jackson	106	41.4%
2.	Emphasising the level of one's own knowledge; ego-tripping; exchanging information	85	33.2%
3.	Bringing up the original novel in different ways; comparing Tolkien and Jackson; discussing how many people have read the original novel; references to the original novel	64	25.0%
4.	Criticising Jackson as director for including too many action sequences and inappropriate jokes; calling him the new George Lucas; accusing him of robbing New Zealand financially and treating actors unjustly	63	24.6%
5.	Bringing up <i>The Lord of the Ring</i> movies; also references to <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> books; <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> considered better than <i>The Hobbit</i> , also as a book; discussing the homoerotic nuances in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	59	23.0%
6.	Emotional enunciations; fighting; criticising other debaters; calling other debaters "trolls"	57	22.3%
7.	Defending the movies and/or Jackson's choices as a director; "movies are a different discourse compared to books"; seeing imitation as a compliment; understanding the problems Jackson faced; noting that Jackson did not want to direct the movies	55	21.5%
8.	Discussing fans and fandom; enthusing about Tolkien; pseudonyms that signal user's fandom	41	16.0%
9.	Respect for Tolkien; bringing up Tolkien's opinions; discussing "faithful adaptations"; "Jackson's movies harm the original novel's reputation"	37	14.5%
10.	The movies are good	32	12.5%

11.	“Tolkien is too respected”; “Tolkien-religion”; criticising the book	22	8.6%
12.	Announcing a boycott of the movies	13	5.1%
13.	Hoping for a fan edit; announcement of a fan edit; discussion about fan edits	12	4.7%
14.	Tolkien’s original book is still available; “a book does not get damaged by movies”; “movies bring more readers for the books”	9	3.5%

As was expected, many debaters brought up Jackson’s well-received *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. In total, 59 (23%) debaters mentioned *The Lord of the Rings*, and most of them preferred it to *The Hobbit*. These words by commenter #259 summarise the opinion of many debaters: “In LOTR Jackson took a fantasy world and made it real. In the Hobbit he took Middle Earth and made it hyper-real. Porn. Yes, less would have been so much more” (*Wired*). The word “porn” can be found several times in the research material. For example, this comment was made in the conversation on Kontu by commenter #30: “The last Hobbit was shameless combat porn...” (Kontu). In this context, the term “porn” stands as a metaphor for artificiality and profanity.

The preference for *The Lord of the Rings* movies over *the Hobbit* trilogy was also prominent in The World Hobbit Project’s research results.⁸ As Barker and Mathijs conclude:

We would argue ... that Jackson’s *Rings* films became, for very many people, a kind of template for judging Tolkien’s storyworld as a whole, and also a measure of quality of experience – to which then the Hobbit trilogy simply didn’t quite live up. (169)

One of the most interesting findings in the *Wired* material was the discussion on the relationship between the original book and the movie trilogy. To be exact, 37 (14.5%) debaters did some or all of the following: expressed their respect for Tolkien; brought up Tolkien’s own opinions; wanted to see faithful adaptations; and said that Jackson’s trilogy damages the original book. Meanwhile, only nine (3.5%) debaters made some or all of the following statements: Tolkien’s original book is still available; the value of the original book is not diminished by the movies; and the movies bring more readers to the original book. To be fair, there was also another related category that included opinions such as: Tolkien is overrated; the Tolkien cult has become a religion; and *The Hobbit* was not that good as a book. Overall, 22 (8.6%) debaters made comments that would fall into this category. However, it is important to note that the debaters make a strong link between *The Hobbit* films and the original book, which was bound to be reflected in the reception of the movie.

These negative emotions also brought out two more radical types of actions. First, 57 (22.3%) commenters behaved aggressively, picking fights with each other. They called each other trolls or criticised others in some other way. In addition to this, some took rough measures against the movies: thirteen

⁸ The World Hobbit Project attracted 36,109 responses. Answers were received from a total of 143 different countries. (Barker and Mathijs 162, 164.)

(5.1%) debaters said that they are boycotting Jackson's movies, while twelve (4.7%) discussed the possibility of more-faithful fan edits of *The Hobbit*. Some of them had already made their own edits. I will discuss fan edits towards the end of this article, as they reveal interesting things about Tolkien fans' perspective on the ownership of the legendarium; despite this, they have not been discussed much in academic studies.

Overall, the data collected from *Wired* was very extensive and diverse, which makes it an interesting subject for research. Furthermore, it showed that also outside the Nordic countries, "those who have a more affective relationship with the book and/or the Tolkien community are on average a little bit more critical towards the films, unless they conceptualize the films as different or distinct from the book" as is the case in Finland, Denmark, and Sweden (Hirsjärvi, Kovala, and Ruotsalainen 264). I would also like to suggest that when canonical books like Tolkien's *The Hobbit* are discussed, viewers are unlikely to view the adaptations and the source material as separate entities, even when there are essential differences between the two media. This is also supported by the research results of The World Hobbit Project. That study concluded that the most common reason for people to want to see *The Hobbit* films was their love for Tolkien's works (Barker and Mathijs 166).

5. Analysing the *Helsingin Sanomat* article and the conversation it generated

Jussi Ahlroth's column "Näistä syistä Peter Jacksonin Hobitti-elokuvat epäonnistuivat" ("These are the reasons why Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* movies failed") was published in *Helsingin Sanomat* on December 27, 2014. The online version was shared on the Finnish Tolkien Society's public Facebook page the same day. It received 44 comments (of which 39 were relevant to this study), 203 likes, and 36 shares (as of January 9, 2015, when the data was collected). All quotes are either paraphrases or translations from the original Finnish.

As an object of research, the Kontu page is remarkably interesting and apposite, as it is a homogenous Tolkien fan community. The writer of the critical column, Jussi Ahlroth, also mentions having watched *The Lord of the Rings* making-of documentaries at least ten times. Thus, it is safe to say that he is committed to the topic and knows a great deal about it.

The column and the comment thread on the Kontu page included 39 different debaters (including Ahlroth). Of these, 36 made comments that were relevant to this study. As there were 44 comments in total and 39 of these were relevant, it was common for participants to only comment once, in marked contrast to *Wired*.

Similar themes can be found in both threads. And, as in the thread on the *Wired* website, the most popular opinion at Kontu was that *The Hobbit* movies were bad: sixteen debaters (44.5%), expressed disappointment (Table 2).

Table 2: Analysis on Jussi Ahlroth’s article, “Näistä syistä Peter Jacksonin Hobitti-elokuvat epäonnistuivat”, and the comments on it on the Kontu Facebook page:

Prevalence	Opinion	Subtotal	Percentage of (relevant) commenters:
1.	The movies are badly made; they are not loyal to the book; they are too stretched; they are not memorable; there are too many special effects	16	44.5%
2.	Bringing up <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> movies; comparing <i>The Hobbit</i> movies to the <i>LOTR</i> movies; “Lord of the Rings movies were better”	15	41.7%
3.	The movies were good; “I liked them”	14	38.9%
4.	Comparing the movies to the original novel; mentioning Tolkien; respect towards Tolkien	13	36.1%
5.	Discussions about being a fan; bringing up one’s own fan activity	12	33.3%
6.	Emotional enunciations; fighting; criticising other debaters	11	30.6%
7.	Contemplating why the movies failed; “understanding Jackson”	8	22.2%
8.	Emphasising one’s own knowledge level; ego-tripping	7	19.4%
9.	Criticising Jackson as a director; Jackson anti-fandom	6	16.7%
10.	Jackson does not respect Tolkien enough	2	5.6%
10.	Jackson is a good director	2	5.6%
10.	Books and cinema are different media	2	5.6%

Fifteen (41.7%) debaters compared *The Hobbit* movies to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy; only one of them thought that *The Hobbit* was better (due to their antipathy towards the actor Elijah Wood). In addition, 13 (36.1%) debaters compared *The Hobbit* movies to the original book, and many of them expressed respect towards Tolkien. There is a clear correlation in these opinions: *The Hobbit* movies are not usually considered as stand-alone works. Instead, they are mostly seen in relation to Tolkien’s original book and Jackson’s earlier Tolkien films, which were more widely liked, even adored. Ahlroth summarises this in the beginning of his column: “The New Zealander directed three wonderful *Lord of the Rings* movies. Now he has made three bad *Hobbit* movies. What happened?” Later in the column, Ahlroth states that one of the reasons for the failure was that Peter Jackson lost the respect for Tolkien that was apparent in *The Lord of the Rings* movies.

Many commenters shared Ahlroth's view, as the numbers above show. For example, commenter #9 wondered whether as fans they should have been more critical towards *The Lord of the Rings* movies just to prevent Jackson from building up hubris. This comment shows that at least some of the fans consider themselves to be active rather than passive consumers.

Another commenter (#25) wrote that "*The Hobbit* movies were a disappointment, although I'm a relatively fanatical *The Lord of the Rings* fan. Or maybe the fandom is the very reason these movies were so disappointing". It is interesting that only two debaters pointed out that movies and books are two different media. An explanation for this is the debaters' strong attachment to Tolkien's legendarium, which a generic viewer might not share.

However, *The Hobbit* movies also had admirers in the Kontu thread, with fourteen (38.9%) commenters saying that the movies were good. It is worth noting that one fan of *The Hobbit* movies admitted to not having read the original book. Many of the debaters who thought the movies were good also pointed out problems in them. The movies were considered to be good "in spite of" the problems. Issues mentioned more than once include additions to the story and the length of the trilogy.

Unlike those commenting on the *Wired* article, the Kontu debaters showed only few signs of Jackson anti-fandom. They were simply disappointed that *The Hobbit* movies were not as good as Tolkien's original book and Jackson's earlier *The Lord of the Rings* movies. The most extreme, polarising opinions were rarely present. One probable reason for this is that the conversation took place on a platform that is not anonymous, unlike the comments section on the *Wired* website. It has been argued that anonymity in online conversations may lead to increased polarisation, while the obligation to register with an account tends to make the debaters act more objectively (Hardaker 60; Salmela 60).

6. General analysis of both sets of research material

Now that both sets of data have been discussed on their own, it is time to bring them together for cumulative analysis. First, I am going to discuss the viewers who saw *The Hobbit* movies positively. Thirty-two of the 256 debaters (12.5%) on the *Wired* thread expressed a liking for the movies, while in the Kontu thread, fourteen of the 36 debaters (38.9%) liked them. Here is a comment by a pleased viewer: "I stepped into the last Hobbit movie and was given hours of pure fantasy, pure thrills and pure excitement by some of the greatest artists working today" (commenter #207, Gilsdorf).

Some debaters loved both versions of the story: Tolkien's book and Jackson's films. Their Tolkien fandom included no Jackson anti-fandom, although many of them concluded that Jackson did better work with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Only a small minority of commenters said that *The Hobbit* trilogy was better than *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. These comments were usually based on the hatred of Elijah Wood and/or Frodo's and Sam's "too-close relationship" in *The Lord of the Rings* movies.

A key idea for this group was the notion that movies and books are two different media, and that movies must have market value and draw in big audiences. This requires action and drama. Profundity does not sell, as

commenter #31 said: “do not expect that anyone can bring Tolkien’s original stories in their original themes without pleasing the masses with degrading action and drama. It sells better than deep thoughts about things like disappearing beauty” (Kontu). On the *Wired* thread, 55 debaters (21.5%) either noted that a movie and a book are different discourses or sought to understand and defend Jackson in another way. On the Kontu thread, only two (5.6%) debaters mentioned this.

The differences between books and movies were brought up explicitly in this statement by commenter #207 on the *Wired* thread:

Your naivete’ [sic] is stunning. What you have just done is give a literary criticism of a visual work of art [sic]. A movie is DIFFERENT from a book!

Think about that complicated concept for a good long time. Jackson made thousands or tens of thousands of CINEMATIC decisions in mounting this productions [sic]. Here are a few you concentrate on that having [sic] NOTHING to do with the book.

seamless CGI

Good to great acting

state of the art sound design

expert staging of action scenes by one of the best ever.

And so on. Now, put down your literary hat and go out and purchase a cinematic hat. Put it on when you go to see a MOVIE. Its [sic] called a movie because things are MOVING. (commenter #207, Gilsdorf)

This group of debaters regarded Tolkien more highly than Jackson, but nevertheless considered watching the movies to have been either a neutral or a positive experience. They saw no rivalry between Tolkien and Jackson, or if they did, it had no negative impact on the experience.

This was not the case for the following group of viewers: those who disliked *The Hobbit* movies. On *Wired*’s thread, 106 viewers (41.4%) said that *The Hobbit* movies were of inadequate quality; 63 (24.6%) disliked Jackson as a director; and 37 (14.5%) believed that the movies would ruin the reputation of the book. On the Kontu thread, six debaters (16.7%) criticised Jackson as a director and sixteen (44.4%) disliked the movies. Feelings of betrayal and even occasional impressions of blasphemy are present for example in this comment, made by commenter #215: “The hobbit [sic] film is like fowling [sic] on Tolkien’s grave, they totally ruined it!” (Gilsdorf).

Vivi Theodoropoulou asserts that anti-fandom can be sparked by fandom, and describes a “particular category of anti-fans: those whose status as such is defined by the fact that they are fans. [This chapter] looks at the anti-fan within the fan” (316). This description, which Theodoropoulou subsequently places with the specific context of football fandoms, can also be applied to the anti-fans of *The Hobbit* movie, as their hatred is usually rooted in their Tolkien fandom. In the *Wired* thread, commenter #161 said that it is impossible for a real Tolkien fan to like Jackson’s adaptations. They thought that Tolkien overruled Jackson: “No one is [a] ‘die hard’ Tolkien fan who is not furiously hostile to there being any alternative version to Tolkien’s stories.

Christopher forever, PJ never ever!!" (Gilsdorf).⁹ Similar comments were also found on the Kontu thread. For example, commenter #4 identified as Jackson's anti-fan.

Anti-fandom can take strong forms. One dedicated Tolkien fan ended up walking out from the screening and starting a Jackson boycott. As was mentioned before, on the *Wired* thread thirteen debaters (5.1%) said that they were boycotting Jackson's movies. On the Kontu thread, boycotts were not discussed. Here are two examples of the boycott discussion from *Wired*:

I love the books, I was brought up by them, my father being a major fan of them. I saw some of the Peter Jackson movies and didn't like them. I walked out for a big chunk of one of them, and left during the show of another to get something to eat while my friends carried on watching. I simply did not recognise [sic] the stories I knew with what I saw on-screen, haven't bothered with the Hobbit at all. (commenter #121, Gilsdorf)

The boycott was total in some cases:

I haven't seen any of the Hobbit movies, and I don't intend to. -- I read the book, the Hobbit, which was my foyee [sic] into the Lord of the Rings, and I love it. I get the impression here that he just padded out the stories to make more money. I'm not interested in having my memories of the Hobbit tainted by greed. (commenter #35, Gilsdorf)

Comments like this reveal that inside a Jackson anti-fan is a Tolkien fan who wants to protect their beloved writer. Annoyance caused by perceived offenses towards Tolkien sometimes inspires very colourful forms of expression, as in the case of commenter #276: "He took my favourite book from childhood and pooped on it" (Gilsdorf). The core theme of all these conversations is respect. And members of the group "Negative viewing experiences and boycotts", whom Barker calls "Negative 'Tolkien' affiliators", see Tolkien's original book as culturally superior to Jackson's adaptations (218).

Theodoropoulou's research on football fans cannot be applied to other types of fandoms without certain significant changes. The dichotomy between fans and anti-fans is much sharper in the world of football: "These are cases where two fan objects are clear-cut or traditional rivals, thus inviting fans to become anti-fans of the 'rival' object of admiration" (316). In my research material, some debaters positioned Tolkien and Jackson against each other in this manner.

A large number of debaters did not oppose the filming of *The Hobbit* book as such; they simply did not like the way Jackson had executed the movies:

⁹ Here "Christopher" refers to J.R.R. Tolkien's son, Christopher Tolkien (1924-2020). He has edited his father's posthumously published works – for example, *The Silmarillion* (1977) – and worked as a chair of the Tolkien Estate, which controls J.R.R. Tolkien's literary legacy.

Yeah, Jacksonites always try to spin criticism as purism, that people who criticise PJ's changes are anti-any change, whereas most fans of the books are OK with changes as long as they are good. However, changes here are horrible, no way around it. For example, there are 13 interchangeable dwarves without personality (expect 2-3) in the book. fans [sic] of the book were hoping that 2-3 movies would give those underdeveloped dwarves attention and flesh them out. That didn't happen. Instead, we got awful dwarf/Elf [sic] romance, Alfrid, Radagast and his bird poop. Legolas [sic] endless ninja antics and Bard's useless children. Screen time that could have fleshed out characters people wanted to see more of ended up wasted on characters nobody asked for. (commenter #102, Gilsdorf)

Comments like this were quite common; it is only natural that fans would feel the need to protect what they love (Theodoropoulou 318). This kind of juxtaposition is bound to create anti-fandom.

7. Branching out further: Fan edits and their significance

To conclude my analysis, I will discuss fan edits further, as I consider them to be one of the most interesting phenomena in the research data. Some Tolkien fans on the *Wired* thread felt a strong need to correct Jackson's "mistakes". As was mentioned before, twelve (14.7%) debaters discussed both potential and existing fan edits of *The Hobbit* movies. In the Kontu thread, no such activity was found. In the *Wired* thread, the author of the original article, Ethan Gilsdorf, wished for a fan edit:

But meanwhile, he's surely preparing his extra-extended dance mix version of Five Armies for DVD, adding even more gore and hero moves. Before he does, let's hope some generous fan makes a cut of this entire Hobbit trilogy that restores it to sanity. And believability. (Gilsdorf)

Some of the debaters accepted the challenge, saying that they were willing to fix Jackson's mistakes. For instance, they wanted to remove Legolas and Tauriel from the films. Commenter #21 wrote: "... there really need [sic] to be a fan edit, and the process of fan edits and a way to find good fan edits should be more mainstream" (Gilsdorf). The conversation paid off. Commenter #13 wrote that he had already made a version of the first two *Hobbit* movies: "I agree WIRED! And you're welcome -- I'm working on an edit. already [sic] the first two movies and will work on the third as soon as it is released to [sic] blu-ray. Is there any legal way to show it to people?" (commenter #13, Gilsdorf).

This shows that dissatisfaction can work as a prime mover. Jonathan Gray, who established the concept of anti-fandom, is aware of this:

Hate or dislike of a text can be just as powerful as can a strong and admiring, affective relationship with a text, and they can produce just as much activity, identification, meaning, and "effects" or serve just as powerfully to unite and sustain a community or subculture. ("Antifandom" 841)

In this case, the moving force was the anti-fandom of a media text combined with the fandom of the source text, the original book. This can also be seen as an attempt to merge Jackson's world seamlessly into Tolkien's world – on

Tolkien's terms. In this way, it may manifest a need to remove the tensions and contradictions between the two creators' stories. The attempt also gives rise to interesting reflections on Tolkien fans' *conceptions of authority and the ownership of Tolkien's legendarium*. Some Tolkien fans do not want to recognise Jackson's position as the custodian of Tolkien's cinematic world, and, on a more general level, Tolkien fans do not respect Jackson's authority as much as some other fandoms might. This is also reflected in the comment that Jackson's *The Hobbit* movies were "bad fan fiction".¹⁰

To further illuminate my point, I would like to contrast my findings to a study on another influential fantasy fandom, that of *Game of Thrones*, and how it differs from Tolkien fans in regards of authorship and fan fiction. In my view, the fan edits of *The Hobbit* movies should be regarded as a sub-genre of fan fiction.

In their article "Defining Authorship in User-Generated Content: Copyright Struggles in *The Game of Thrones*", Sarikakis, Krug, and Rodriguez-Amat examine fans' understanding of authorship within their cooperative space. The authors analyse a fan board called "A Forum of Ice and Fire", which forms a part of the Westeros.org website, "the most important fan-coordinated network discussing GRRM's work and the TV-show and other Westeros-related content" (545).¹¹ There are both striking similarities and obvious differences between their research findings and mine. This highlights the differences between these two fandoms, especially the relationship between the fandom and the authors and other content providers such as movie directors.

In both cases, the community-building process was an important part of the conversation. In my own study, this can be seen from the tables above. What is interesting, however, are the vastly diverse ways that *Game of Thrones* fans and Tolkien fans position themselves as content creators. Sarikakis, Krug, and Rodriguez-Amat write: "Fans, the analysis has shown, do not portray themselves as creators, but they still produce elaborated interpretations" (554). Martin's fans do not see themselves as "interlocutors in the creative process" or as making "contributions to the storyline" (554). On the contrary, fan fiction and unlicensed fan art are forbidden on Westeros.org (553). This is in sharp contrast to my *The Hobbit* research material that includes discussions on fan edits. The creation of such material was encouraged even by the author of the *Wired* article, Ethan Gilsdorf.

The essential question is: Why? Why is *Game of Thrones* fan fiction frowned upon but *The Hobbit* fan fiction (or to be more exact, fan edits) wished for? The answer lies in the relationships Tolkien and Martin have to the texts in question. Martin's connection is much closer than the relationship Tolkien set up between his work and himself before he died. At least when Sarikakis, Krug, and Rodriguez-Amat published their article in 2013, the *Game of Thrones* author George R. R. Martin was not only alive, he also actively participated in the making of the series (545). Martin has "the ultimate authority", an idea connected to Romanticism and its idealised notion of the author (551). Fan fiction is considered objectionable since fans do not want to step on Martin's toes.

¹⁰ See Table 1.

¹¹ GRRM refers to George R. R. Martin.

Tolkien and Martin enjoy the same ultimate respect among their fans. However, and this is the crucial difference, Tolkien's relationship to *The Hobbit* movies is much more distant and debatable. Tolkien sold the movie rights of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* in 1969 to United Artists for "just over £104,000", motivated by his recent bad experiences with pirates, namely the pirated U.S. paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. Selling the movie rights released Tolkien from having to worry about copyright issues. He also needed the money (Oziewicz 256–57). The distance between Tolkien and *The Hobbit* movies gives his fans more space to work and make their own fan edits. In some cases, Tolkien fans see Jackson as a peer, creating his own fan fiction. In instances like this, the Tolkien fans do not want to recognise Jackson's position as the main creator and custodian of Tolkien's cinematic world. On the one hand, making fan edits responds to the need to defend Tolkien's inheritance; on the other, the fans do not feel that they could betray or offend Tolkien by re-creating *The Hobbit* movies. Most importantly, these fan edits are Tolkien fans' moral statement that signals the collectively experienced ownership of the Tolkien legacy.

8. Conclusion

This paper has discussed Tolkien fans' reactions to and actions spurred by Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* movies. I wanted to know what kind of reactions Tolkien fans had to Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* movies; why these reactions occurred; and what kind of actions they induced.

Tolkien can be considered one of the most noteworthy fantasy authors of all time, even the most noteworthy. It was therefore likely that Peter Jackson's movie versions of Tolkien's books (*The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*) would be widely commented on by Tolkien fans. The comments would include recognition, criticism, boycotts, and fan edits. Jackson would also gain some fans and anti-fans in the process.

In the research material, it was clear that Tolkien's original novel was appreciated much more than Jackson's movie adaptations. However, some fans loved the possibility of revisiting Middle-earth with Jackson. These debaters made a clear distinction between Tolkien's book and Jackson's film adaptations, emphasising that Jackson can make changes and additions because literature and cinema are two different media.

On the opposing side were the viewers who had negative viewing experiences. These disappointed debaters saw Tolkien's and Jackson's works as a problematic continuum, and they could not differentiate the movies from the original novel. This is in line with an earlier study by Hirsjärvi, Kovala, and Ruotsalainen (264).

Overall, Jackson's *the Hobbit* movies were considered a disappointment in comparison to the earlier *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The World Hobbit Project's research results (based on an exceptionally large amount of research data) drew similar conclusions (Barker and Mathijs 169).

The debaters who did not like Jackson's *The Hobbit* films said that Tolkien's valuable original novel was being violated, and that it was unrealistic to try to watch Jackson's movies without linking them to the original novel and

feeling betrayed. This feeling of betrayal even gave rise to some Jackson anti-fandom among Tolkien fans. Jackson was seen as being connected to Tolkien.

These negative feelings resulted in practical actions as well. Some Tolkien fans boycotted Jackson's movies altogether or rooted for some "pure" fan editions of the movies. In this way Tolkien fans try to integrate Jackson's world seamlessly into Tolkien's world and remove the uncomfortable juxtaposition between the two versions. In addition, these fan edits could be a way to challenge Jackson's position as the main custodian of Tolkien's cinematic world. So, in a way, these fan edits could be a moral statement by Tolkien fans, signalling their collectively experienced ownership of Tolkien's highly respected legacy.

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Courting Tragedy: *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, City Comedy, and Revenge Tragedy

Veera Mäkelä

Abstract: Brian Attebery writes in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) about reading fantasy as a mode rather than a genre. Following his lead, I look at Scott Lynch's *The Lies of Locke Lamora* (2006) as a revenge tragedy in the fantastic mode. I prove that the novel is a revenge tragedy by genre through tracing the elements commonly associated with Renaissance plays, as outlined in Wendy Griswold's *Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre 1576–1980* (1986). *The Lies of Locke Lamora* moves from city comedy to two different kinds of revenge tragedy, the English and the Senecan, of which the latter ends in disillusionment in terms of power hierarchies. Linda Woodbridge's *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (2010) provides support for my argument that reading Lynch's debut as a revenge tragedy reveals its political themes and places it in the context of the history of literature.

Keywords: Brian Attebery, Wendy Griswold, Linda Woodbridge, Scott Lynch, revenge tragedy, fantasy

Brian Attebery writes in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) that fantasy readers “may find a continuity in literature that is denied to those who must draw lines and enforce standards” (ix). In other words, all previous literature affects the literature of today, whether intentionally or not. Often a novel may be approached through different aspects of its intertextual make-up, and the choice of whether to read it through its, say, mode or formula may make a difference in the reader's interpretation.

This is the case with Scott Lynch's debut novel *The Lies of Locke Lamora* (2006), a story of a master thief and his friends whose lives are upended by the political turmoil in their home city. While the book is marketed as fantasy and adheres to that mode, it rewards examination through the formula from which it draws: reading *The Lies of Locke Lamora* as following the conventions of revenge tragedy shows that the novel reflects on politics in the same way the plays of Classical origin and their successors have done through literary history. Therefore, I will in this paper follow Attebery and read Lynch's novel as fantastic only in mode. It is my hope that this will exemplify the usefulness of examining novels categorised as fantasy through longer-established forms and thus blur the line between what is considered "genre" literature and so-called mainstream fiction. Moreover, my aim is, to quote Linda Woodbridge in her remarkable *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (2010), "not genre definition but the cultural work that literary revenge performs" (5); I will therefore refer to conventions, modes, and elements, rather than attempt to define genres.

In accordance with the features it shares with drama, *The Lies of Locke Lamora* can be divided into three parts: the city comedy; the English revenge tragedy, which ends in restoration of order; and the Senecan tragedy, which ends in chaos and disillusionment. Of these, the English revenge tragedy is long-established as a conscious choice on the author's part: Lynch has been explicit about the influence that English Renaissance revenge tragedies such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582–1592), Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), and Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1613) have had on his debut (personal correspondence). Comparing the events and occurrences of *The Lies of Locke Lamora* to those listed by Wendy Griswold in *Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre 1576–1980* (1986) confirms Lynch's firm familiarity with the conventions and tropes of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The prologue anticipates the revenge drama to come, but the first few chapters set the scene through city-comedy conventions. While hints of the tragedy to come are peppered throughout, it is in the next two sections of the book, analysed below, that tragedy overwhelms the comedy.

Revenge drama is political, as discussed by Linda Woodbridge in *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (2010). Tanya Pollard agrees in "Tragedy and Revenge" (2010) that revenge "redresses injustice caused by abuses of power" (59). I will therefore posit that *The Lies of Locke Lamora* is, first and foremost, a political novel. The first three sections of this paper will consider the novel in terms of how it conforms to the elements of city comedy, English revenge tragedy, and Senecan revenge tragedy, as outlined by Griswold. This will show that, in concert with Woodbridge's claim that revenge can also be comic (45), and Lynch's careful scattering of revenge elements in the deceptively comic city-comedy section, the reader is in fact never quite out of the realm of revenge drama. In the conclusion, I will discuss the political outcome of Lynch's debut and its philosophy of power structures.

“The Don Salvara Game”; or, The City and the Pursuit of Fortune, Status, and Love

What I term the city-comedy section of Lynch’s novel encompasses everything from the first chapter, “The Don Salvara Game” through to the end of the interlude “The Last Mistake”. This section introduces the reader to the landmarks, peculiarities, and inhabitants of the city of Camorr, presents a motivation for action, and depicts the morality – or lack thereof – of the main cast of characters. Lynch also establishes the political status quo that will soon be upended.

In the same way that London is the setting of Renaissance city comedies (Griswold 16–17), Camorr is the setting of *The Lies of Locke Lamora*. The first chapter has two timelines, one describing the first steps of a con game and the other the morning leading up to it. Both serve a function: the game timeline introduces characters, and the morning timeline the city’s landmarks. It is already noteworthy that the morning timeline is alive with amusing banter and the delight of competent tricksters (Griswold 38–47) and, in its frolicking humour and verbal flamboyance, guides attention away from certain details in the con-game timeline, to be discussed below. The hierarchies of Camorr are given concisely in this brief exchange between Locke and the young apprentice Bug:

“Gods, I love this place,” Locke said, drumming his fingers against his thighs. “Sometimes I think the whole city was put here simply because the gods must adore crime. Pickpockets rob the common folk, merchants rob anyone they can dupe, Capa Barsavi robs the robbers *and* the common folk, the lesser nobles rob nearly everyone, and Duke Nicovante occasionally runs off with his army and robs the shit out of Tal Verrar or Jerem, *not to mention* what he does to his own nobles and his common folk.”

“So that makes us robbers of robbers,” said Bug, “who pretend to be robbers working for a robber of other robbers.” (*TLoLL* 40)

From this description we learn that the Gentlemen Bastards, as Locke and his gang are called, are underdogs in a corrupt system. And revenge is, after all, “the resort of the underdog” (Woodbridge 265). Their being “robbers of other robbers” can be interpreted as a social revenge on those who have more than they ought, in a way reminiscent of Robin Hood. Like Robin Hood, as Griswold observes, tricksters as a character type defy power structures (40). The Gentleman Bastards are both trickster characters and Robin Hood-like in stealing from the rich, thus combining the socio-political goal (humbling those in economic power) with the method of outsmarting those they wish to punish. As the underdogs of society, they compromise the power structures of Camorr through intelligence and thievery.

Once the reader is familiarised with the hierarchy and the landmarks of the city, such as the on-water Shifting Market and the Five Towers (*TLoLL* 38–40), it is time to meet the characters for the city-comedy section. In line with Griswold, they are socially heterogenous (17–18). Even just among the Gentlemen Bastards there are numerous social strata: Locke’s origins are unknown, the Sanza twins are from a poor neighbourhood, Jean was born to merchant parents, and the apprentice Bug comes from a district so foul he will

not speak of it. They happily mingle with the more upstanding citizens introduced in the first chapter. The Don and Doña Salvara are minor nobility and have a family retainer, Conté. In addition to these active characters, Camorr features constables, merchants, and visitors from other cities and city states, akin to Lukas Fehrwight, whom Locke impersonates.

The impersonations Locke and his gang perform are a sign of the social mobility Griswold marks as one of the elements of city comedy (21–22), although not a simple one. While the characters that belong to the city comedy, like the Salvaras, are clearly of a social-climbing type, the Gentlemen Bastards are more of a conundrum. They are socially mobile to the extreme, being able to move both up and down the ladder of society more or less at will, but they do not aspire to a permanent high status. They have the training to pass in any kind of company and, judging by the word of their mentor, Father Chains, it seems to be for the sake of trickery itself – another important element, as Griswold (18–20) notes. When Locke first comes to the Gentlemen Bastards, he and Chains have the following conversation that springs from Locke’s incomprehension as to why anyone would want a knife just for spreading butter:

“This is a lot of trouble to go to just to eat.”

“Well, in Shades’ Hill you may be able to eat cold bacon and dirt pies off one another’s arses for all your old master cares. But now you’re a Gentleman Bastard, emphasis on the Gentleman. You’re going to learn how to eat like this, and how to serve people who eat like this.”

“Why?”

“Because, Locke Lamora, one day you’re going to dine with barons and counts and dukes. You’re going to dine with merchants and admirals and generals and ladies of every sort! And when you do ... When you do, those poor idiots won’t have any idea that they’re really dining with a thief.” (*TLoLL* 100)

Father Chains is training his acolytes to play at any social occasion, at any echelon. Lynch reveals no particular reason why the Gentlemen Bastards would wish to mingle with the upper classes. Within the scope of *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, the sole reason for tricking people seems to be to get money out of them, and enjoying the superiority of intellect. At the city-comedy stage, the reader is invited only to enjoy the gang’s cleverness, not to question their motivations for staging elaborate crimes. The natural leap of thought is to assume that the trickery is employed in order to gain money, which is the main motivator of action in city comedy (Griswold 20–21).

Tricking people into giving one money is, of course, morally suspect, which falls in with the element of moral ambiguity (Griswold 23–25). Lynch brings the mockery of socially acceptable morals to the foreground through a recurring joke among the gang of thieves: whenever they have their apprentice perform a tedious task, such as poling the barge or doing the dishes, they declare it good for his “moral education” (*TLoLL* 34, 115). It is not only the Gentlemen Bastards, either, who engage in actions that are of questionable morality. In Camorr, underhanded dealings are commonplace, as evidenced by Don Salvara’s willingness to sweet talk the supposed Fehrwight – Locke in disguise – into making a deal with him rather than with his rival, Don Jacobo (54). In this case, money drives the action, just as expected, and the “trickster

capitalizes on the vanity of others” (Griswold 40). Locke and his crew want money out of Don Salvara and use his feud with Don Jacobo to their advantage to strike a lucrative deal.

Greed also functions as a sign of the cynicism rife in city comedy (Griswold 22–23). Don Salvara believes Locke/Fehrwight because he wants to believe in easy money, and all Locke has to do is make sure Salvara, an upstanding merchant with scruples and connections, sees what he wants to see. In a masterful piece of trickery, Locke, in the guise of a member of the city’s secret agency, tells Salvara just that: “And if a man, a very clever man, wished you to think him a merchant ... well, what would he dress up and present himself as? ... I mean, m’lord Salvara, that your own expectations have been used against you” (111). Don Salvara’s own hopes and expectations are ruthlessly played against him. This is an example of the “recoil” effect of revenge. Salvara’s own greed leads to his loss of money, which is, in Woodbridge’s words, an “automatic, self-inflicted revenge, recoil in vengeance with no avenger” (196). Locke is not a de facto avenger in this situation; rather, he is taking advantage of Salvara’s own weaknesses, which only so happen to lead to socio-economic revenge.¹

Thus Lynch has set the scene: a bustling, amoral city where corruption is rife and only the clever can flourish. From here, the movement is towards the murky courts of revenge tragedy. The final chapter of the section, an interlude called “The Last Mistake”, is the last chapter in which *The Lies of Locke Lamora* should be taken for a comedy. The place to which the title refers is an inn, a decidedly city-comedy location, favoured by the thieves and assorted other extralegal elements of Camorri society. It is where young Locke swears fealty to the kingpin of the underworld, Capa Barsavi, a sort of Godfather figure, and his daughter, Nazca. As one of Barsavi’s *garristas*, the word for gang leader, he holds a modest amount of power, but remains liminal and powerless in the revenge drama about to take place.

“At the Court of Capa Barsavi”; or, English Revenge Drama and Besting the Tyrant

The first revenge-drama arc, which follows the lines of the English variety in particular, starts when the reader enters the court of Capa Barsavi and ends with Barsavi’s death in “At the Court of Capa Raza”. I call this section “The Grey King Action” after its active revenger. In it, Lynch uses revenge-drama elements with skill and precision, proving his familiarity with the plays of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Curiously, however, while Locke remains the main character, he and his friends are in fact liminal to the revenge arc that takes place. They are neither the revengers nor the objects of revenge, but merely instruments in the grudge the Grey King holds against Capa Barsavi. This positioning of the main character allows for the development from order to

¹ Woodbridge connects the idea of recoil to the Christian discussion of whether humans are forbidden from taking revenge altogether or whether they are God’s instruments in his vengeance. Locke is in subsequent books tied to religion in his capacity of priest. Through his foil, the Falconer, he is also depicted as an instrument of revenge, and therefore not responsible for it.

chaos later on in the second revenge arc, discussed below. Additionally, as Pollard notes, “foreign settings, extravagant onstage violence, the use of comedy, and metatheatricity, were distinctly Renaissance innovations” (64). As discussed below, this section of the novel contains all of these, although they are made away with in time for the last section.

The English revenge drama most typically takes place in Italian courts (Griswold 58). Camorr, with its canals, sunny weather, and olive-skinned people, is quite obviously based on Venice. The courts are a closed setting, both physically and in terms of the characters, and it is in just such a situation Lynch places his readers in “At the Court of Capa Barsavi”. Barsavi’s court is, moreover, at the heart of an old war barge called *The Floating Grave*, which lends it an even more menacing air. The element of violence is also an important factor in the transition between modes. It comes up early on and fits Griswold to a tee: “Bloodletting abounds in revenge tragedies, often in bizarre forms” (61). When Locke arrives at the Floating Grave to pay his tithes, he walks into an interrogation scene where the Capa’s main torturer works to extract information from the members of another gang in a most gruesome and graphic manner. From this point on, blood flows liberally in *The Lies of Locke Lamora*.

At this point it is useful to note that the lines between the transitions in mode are not clear-cut in this book. Griswold notes that, like bloodletting, sexual “sensationalism is similarly omnipresent” in revenge tragedy, and that “sex and death are linked explicitly and repeatedly” (61). There is little to no sex in *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, and I would argue that this is partly because it has, in this case, merged with the amatory motivation of city comedy (Griswold 19, 21). Barsavi allows the surprised and unwilling Locke permission to court his daughter Nazca, and Locke and Nazca agree to pretend at a romantic connection until the threat of the Grey King is removed. The situation is, naturally, resolved by Nazca’s death soon after. Thus Lynch removes the potential of amatory motivations for action. There is no room for romantic love or sex.²

The murder of Nazca Barsavi is the Grey King’s way to initiate the final steps of his revenge on Capa Barsavi. The trickery that was present in city comedy is also a feature of revenge tragedy, albeit in a more menacing form (Griswold 62). The Grey King forces Locke to play him in an encounter with Barsavi, and thus fakes his own death, meaning to conveniently dispose of Locke at the same time. He also uses his bondsmage – a mercenary wizard – to play tricks that would look good on stage, such as appearing out of thin air, cultivating a reputation for killing men with a touch (*TLoLL* 167–168), and being immune to blades (168). While the Gentlemen Bastards’ trickery seems to stem from the delight of being clever and the desire to acquire money³, the Grey King’s is motivated by revenge, which Griswold notes as the “essential feature of revenge tragedy” (59). Since the Grey King is not the main character of the novel, but is, nonetheless, the active revenger (in other words, the main

² The lack of female characters is a common criticism of *The Lies of Locke Lamora*. I would suggest that it serves a purpose, although likely not by conscious choice: for the revenge drama to be foregrounded, the potential for romantic love must be removed. Claiming there are no interesting, active women in the novel also disregards the last third of the novel, where Doña Sofia Salvara and Doña Vorchenza become key agents in saving the city’s nobility.

³ Their actual reason is not revealed in this book, but appears in the sequel, *Red Seas Under Red Skies* (2007).

character of the revenge drama playing out), the liminality of the novel's de facto main character Locke becomes intriguing. While the Grey King is motivated by revenge, his revenge aspirations are what force Locke to act despite otherwise having no skin in the game. This, shown below, changes in the last section of the novel.

The English revenge tragedy often ends at a banquet and restoration of order after turmoil (Griswold 65), and so does this section of *The Lies of Locke Lamora*: Barsavi meets his end at a revel he throws at the Floating Grave to celebrate his assumed victory over his daughter's murderer. Griswold describes the ending of this kind of drama in three words: success, death, and restoration (64). Two of these take place in "At the Court of Capa Raza". The Grey King succeeds in his revenge by killing Barsavi, and restores power immediately, as "the ruler must die so the Rule [can] live" (99). "It is not my intention merely to remove Barsavi, but to *replace* him," he declares to his new subjects (*TLoLL* 364, emphasis added). Even further, Griswold notes that "what is celebrated is the return of order following the period of disorder represented by all those dead bodies lying about" (65), and so the former Grey King takes "each pledge at the heart of a circle of corpses" (*TLoLL* 367). The gruesomeness remains, but order is restored. What is perceived to be good of Barsavi's reign is kept intact, but a corrupt ruler is replaced with a new one – one no less tyrannical, and even more maleficent.

"At the Court of Capa Raza"; or, The Disillusionment of Senecan Revenge Tragedy

In the concluding chapters of the novel, a new revenge arc begins, with a new avenger and a revenge of a different tradition. If the previous section was "The Grey King Action", the next one is "The Locke Action", again named after its active revenger. Before avenging himself on Barsavi, the Grey King has made the mistake of murdering Locke's friends to gain access to their considerable wealth. The loss of his found family motivates Locke's revenge, making him the active avenger in the last section of the book, which spans from "At the Court of Capa Raza" to the end of the novel. Like the previous section, this one slightly blurs the lines of the transition, as the different kinds of revenge tragedy overlap in this chapter. While the Grey King can be seen as an "aggrieved David [retaliating] against a tyrannical Goliath" (Woodbridge 26) in terms of the status difference between him and Barsavi, exaggerated in scope to encompass more than just Barsavi's family, Locke's revenge is a vendetta, an unexaggerated payment in kind but prone to never-ending cycles.⁴ This last section restarts the revenge tragedy arc, but to a bleaker ending, and removes the last vestiges of city comedy to a point where even the city-comedy characters like the Salvaras become elements of the politics of revenge by embodying the larger society and justice system.

The section starts at the court of the new Capa, signalling the start of a new revenge arc. It is made explicit in the chapter titles: while the previous section started with "At the Court of Capa Barsavi", the narrative is now "At the

⁴ The cycle of vengeance continues through the subsequent novels published at the time of writing, *Red Seas Under Red Skies* and *The Republic of Thieves* (2013).

Court of Capa Raza”. This time the injury requiring vengeance is personal to the main character, removing him from his liminal status. Locke is out to avenge the deaths of Calo, Galdo and Bug, and Nazca, whose death killed all chance of an amatory plot within the scope of the novel. The deaths of the Sanzas, the jokers of the gang, in “Teeth Lessons” removed the comic element, leaving nothing of the comedy that appears throughout the rest of the book. Even the chapter “Orchids and Assassins”, in which Locke masterfully tricks his way into new clothes after the loss of the Gentleman Bastards’ fortune, is framed with money as a secondary motivation. Prior to the scam, Locke tells his friend, “Jean, we need resources to hit out at Raza” (*TLoLL* 397) and, after acquiring a new outfit, comments that they can touch the Salvaras for “money in our pockets. And then revenge” (451). Even though money is the object of the scam, it serves the purposes of revenge.

Death and blood become more prominent in this section, as does Jean’s role, a setup for the novels to come. Jean is indelibly bound to death in the interlude “The Lady of the Long Silence”, in which he is sent on an apprenticeship to the order of the death goddess, and it is left open whether he could really be a chosen one of Aza Guilla – he is trained in arms and takes his own revenge for his friends by killing the twin sisters who killed the Sanza twins. The difference between avengers is to be noted here: the Grey King plans to eradicate everyone who even theoretically allowed the murder of his family, whereas Locke is contented with condign revenge. The Grey King’s revenge is excessive, not satisfied with the end of the Barsavi family. Locke is looking to balance the books, as it were. Further violence ensues: Locke and Jean torture information out of the bondsmage in a shudder-inducing manner, and maim and burn alive the man who put a bolt through Bug’s neck. All culminates in the final chapter proper in the novel, “Justice Is Red”, a phrase used twice within that chapter to communicate that only blood of the perpetrator will bring justice.

It may bring justice, but not satisfaction. Revenge is declared to be “a shit business” (519) and winning “can go fuck itself” (529). This bleakness typifies the main difference between English revenge tragedy and Senecan tragedy: the direction of movement between order and chaos. The English revenge tragedy has a relatively optimistic ending, as it moves from chaos to order, to stability. Senecan tragedies, on the other hand, move from order to chaos and disillusionment (Griswold 91–92), just as *The Lies of Locke Lamora* moves from status quo to new order and finally disorder. The Senecan tragedy has no comic elements, unlike its Renaissance counterpart; this is signalled in this novel by the death of the Sanzas (91). While the avengers of English revenge tragedies die in the end, as the Grey King does, Senecan protagonists generally live (91). To further emphasise the Senecan ending, Locke contrives the sinking of the Grey King’s false plague ship *Satisfaction*, one of the portents of doom – according to Griswold, “ghosts or supernatural portents often urge the revenger on” (63) – thus underlining the futility of seeking peace through further violence. It cannot bring satisfaction.

Never Enough

The analysis above has shown that the *Lies of Locke Lamora* is, very strongly, a revenge tragedy in its conventions and ending. Despite the comic beginning and the optimistic ending of the Grey King Action, all eventually ends in misery. Of a gang of five, only Locke and Jean remain, and even they leave behind the city that has been their home. Ultimately, the novel questions what kind of leadership, as depicted in each of the sections as outlined in this article, works. As it turns out, none of them really does. The comedy rule of the Duke of Camorr means very little at any point, apart from being the legal jurisdiction of Camorr. Barsavi is a cowardly leader, in the end too self-interested and scared to lose the power he has gained to make a potentially risky stand against an outside threat. The Grey King, as Capa Raza, is even more tyrannical than Barsavi. Don Salvara aligns himself with the state of Camorr and its justice system by saying, “It is unlikely that I can give you justice. For that, Camorr again apologises” (52). As Locke learns at the end of the novel, Camorr and its hierarchic power cannot be trusted to provide justice for the individual.

As the powers that be cannot provide justice, it becomes a focus for action and for calls to question power structures in the novel’s world. It is revealed in the next book in the series, *Red Seas Under Red Skies* (2007), that stealing from the rich is done for social levelling. The gang’s mentor, Father Chains, has taught them to live by two mandates: “thieves prosper” and “rich remember”, that is, stealing from the rich reminds them they are not invulnerable or invincible. A tell-tale sign of these mandates already appears in *Lies*, when Locke tells the Grey King he “would have given it [the fortune of the Gentlemen Bastards] all to keep Calo and Galdo and Bug alive” and that the “stealing was more the point for us than the keeping” (512). Looking back, an even earlier indication occurs in the chapter “At the Court of Capa Barsavi”: “Other than financing further theft, the Gentlemen Bastards really had no idea what they were eventually going” to do with their vast amount of stolen money (153). When money – or romantic love, for Nazca and Locke were never the beginning of a comedy of errors – does not matter, comedy is no longer an option. In terms of drama, this leaves us with tragedy.

If the individual cannot gain justice through official and legal channels, they resort to taking matters in their own hands, according to revenge-tragedy tradition. Thus revenge becomes an act of revolt against a system that does not care for the individual’s grievance. In the case of *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, the problem presents itself in multiple ways. The Duke and his magistrates have a deal with Capa Barsavi, described as favourable (190, 445), called the Secret Peace. Under this deal, the thieves are allowed to rob the people of Camorr, as long as they abstain from violence and murder and keep away from the nobility. Capa Barsavi’s justice is based on feelings rather than objective facts, as seen with the creative torture scene with Sage Kindness in “At the Court of Capa Barsavi”, during which he is convinced that the members of his most trusted gang are lying despite there being no evidence that they are and with not even extremely violent torture drawing confessions out of them (169–173). Finally, the Grey King’s justice is only for himself. There is nowhere Locke can turn to balance the books, to borrow Woodbridge’s illuminating simile, but to extralegal justice, the kind Francis Bacon described as “wild” (10). *The Lies of*

Locke Lamora goes from the protagonists revolting against the state to revolting against corrupt rulers.

The fantastic mode merely adds a removing effect to *Lies*, keeping the gritty violence of Camorr a step back from the reader's real life – however violent it may actually be – rather than being its *raison d'être*. As Attebery has it, nearly “all modern fantasy has made ... raids on the recorded inventory of traditional narratives ... some accounts are overdrawn, such as Arthurian legend and romance” (8). Revenge tragedy cannot be called an untapped tradition in books marketed as fantasy, but is certainly less common than Attebery's examples. In an interview for GamesRadar in 2007, Lynch was asked whether there were any conventions he, as a fan of fantasy literature, set out to break in his own series. He answered:

I wanted to write a series in which none of the protagonists had supernaturally-granted powers, or Destinies Foreordained From On High, because it's just too easy to make the lazy mechanism of prophecy/destiny the force that drives (or excuses) your plot in place of human schemes and desires. The unexamined 'chosen one' plot is one of those few old chestnuts that bores me to such an extreme that I'll bring it up in public. I also wanted to write a series that didn't skimp on the unfortunate realities of life in a world without things like antibiotics, refrigeration, and writs of habeas corpus.... Locke's world is, to my mind, quite beautiful and striking, but it's not a land of pastoral innocence and cleanliness. (“Interview with SFX”)

While the fantastic in *The Lies of Locke Lamora* allows the reader some remove from the events of the novel, it is the revenge tragedy that brings the real-life questions of justice to the fore, while also mimicking the way “human schemes and desires” affect those questions. As with tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the round table, it is reasonable to assume that readers at least in the Western world would have at minimum a passing familiarity with revenge drama through Shakespeare. The historical and cultural milieu has changed since the publication of *The Lies of Locke Lamora* in 2006, of course, but unfortunately stories of tyrants and corrupt rules remain relevant. The fantastic keeps the story entertaining and relevant through historical change; revenge tragedy reminds us that these stories are cyclical and that history tends to repeat itself. With its different depictions of power, rulers, and victories, *The Lies of Locke Lamora* asks: how can rule be just?

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Lectio Praecursoria
Speculative Mimesis – Beyond Non-
Mimetic Models

Elise Kraatila

Mimesis is perhaps not a term one would expect to see as the centerpiece of a study that focuses on fantasy storytelling. I certainly did not expect that this classic concept of literary studies would eventually end up in the title of my doctoral dissertation, which at its core is all about literary imagination and speculation. The novel concept that my study introduces, *speculative mimesis* – or the view of literary speculation as a form of mimesis – may indeed seem like a rather odd and unorthodox, even oxymoronic, fit.

That is, of course, because mimesis is commonly understood, as per dictionary definition, to refer to “imitative representation of reality in art” (OED), and is strongly associated with realism as a genre (e. g. Auerbach; see Halliwell 13; Isomaa et al.). Consequently, it is a nearly universally accepted refrain amongst scholarship that fantasy is a *non-mimetic* or even anti-mimetic form of fiction (e. g. Hume; Trebicki 2–4; Richardson 386; Oziewicz; Kortekallio 14). What is meant by this is that fantasy is more concerned with altering what might be called the “consensus reality” (see Hume 20–21) – or our habitual collective perception of what constitutes such reality (cf. Hutcheon 7) – than it is with imitating or representing it.

More broadly speaking, *speculation* or speculativeness – in fantasy and SF alike – is usually understood as a rhetorical impulse or an ontological quality that is directly opposed to the mimetic impulses or qualities of storytelling (e.g. Hume; Oziewicz). Speculative fiction renounces the attempt, often deemed central to the whole project of Western literature, to “represent the world as it is” (see Oziewicz). Instead, it adds and subtracts, it deals in possibilities and impossibilities, it builds scenarios and thought experiments (e.g. Scholes; McHale, “Science Fiction”; Gill 71–72; Roine, *Imaginative* 14). It remakes the world into its own playground, or creates entirely new ones.

Such overtly imaginative qualities are the basis on which fantasy as a popular genre is typically set apart from so-called literary or mainstream fiction. Some have done this derisively, deeming its pursuits escapist (e. g. Jackson 9; Eco 65; Ryan 66; see Hassler-Forest 16). Fantasy authors, scholars, and fans have, of course, been more liable to laud fantasy for those exactly same pursuits: they celebrate its power to operate beyond the everyday mundanity to which more realist kinds of fiction remain shackled (e. g. Scholes; Hume; Attebery, *Stories*; Oziewicz), as well as its resistance to an oppressive, post-Enlightenment “mimetic bias” that is allegedly integral to canonical Western literature at large (e. g. Hume 3; Oziewicz; Kortekallio 13–14; cf. Alber et al. 114).

But does this binary opposition between mimetic and non-mimetic kinds of fiction really hold water? Or rather, is it a theoretical construct that actually helps us understand relations between fiction and reality in a usefully nuanced way – in either fantasy or non-fantasy works? Or does it instead blinker our view of the full complexity of those relations?

How can such a dichotomy account, for example, for the way many actual viewers of HBO’s *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) interpreted the famous, eminently memetic “Winter is coming” slogan as a dire warning of looming climate change (see DiPaolo 12; Barker et al. 88–116)? How does it serve to explain the readerly yearning for more diverse representation of different people and bodies in fantasy fiction that has been prominently discussed across media in recent years – most recently in the case of Amazon’s new *Wheel of Time* television series (2021)? And how can such a dichotomy help us make sense of the experiences of us 90s kids who, having grown up with Harry Potter, felt on some deeply painful level that J. K. Rowling’s open commitment to transphobic ideology in the summer of 2020 tarnished a very real and important corner of our shared world – a corner we had hitherto considered a safe space?

Some people indeed reckon that since it is fantasy we are talking about, none of such a search for meaning, representation, or safe community should get in the way of nice, immersive adventures and escapist fun. Those people – prominently represented, for example, by the Sad Puppies campaign that sought to disrupt the Hugo Award nominations in the years 2013–2015 (see Oleszczuk; Wilson) – are also frequently and deservedly called out these days for considering such fun a more important function for fantasy stories than the needs of other, often marginalised people to be seen and respected, or to find in fiction some meaningful ways to make sense of the complex and often anxiety-inducing world we share. It does seem that readers these days generally expect fantasy stories to make some kind of contribution to the reality we face in our daily lives, rather than merely offering escapes from or alternatives for it (e. g. Hassler-Forest; DiPaolo; Barker et al.).

Indeed, in the current world situation, where that everyday reality for many looks increasingly more complicated, polarised, unstable, and precarious, pursuing a more nuanced understanding of the manner in which fantasy stories respond to such a reality looks to me like an important line of inquiry. This kind of storytelling is, after all, both more popular and more central to ongoing cultural debates than it has ever been during its modern history. Fantasy can therefore probably be assumed to hold some special significance for 21st-century audiences – and we might speculate, as it were, that this significance

has something to do with fantasy being able to negotiate its own relations with reality in a way that resonates with those audiences.

Those relations, then, are probably not best understood just in terms of fantasy offering its readers “immersive” adventures in imaginary worlds, as much of fantasy scholarship has habitually thought (e.g. Attebery, *Strategies* 42; Wolf 49; cf. Ryan 5; see Roine, *Imaginative*; for critique, see Polvinen, “Enactive Perception”). Neither does the notion of estrangement, building on Darko Suvin’s classic work in SF studies, quite capture the kind of contribution 21st-century fantasy stories can be seen to make towards a better understanding of our reality. Such contribution is, after all, not just about making things seem strange, unsettling audiences, or prompting readers to consider alternatives to how things are (cf. McHale, “Science Fiction”; Suvin 17–18). It is, I find, also about attributing some greater significance to things *as they are*, and of making models by which a strange and fragmentary reality can be made more comprehensible, more familiar. It is about modeling possible ways of giving meaning to the world around us, and possibly helping us change it for the better.

The fantasy author N. K. Jemisin has expressed a similar sentiment rather eloquently, stating, “I look to science fiction and fantasy as the aspirational drive of the Zeitgeist: we creators are the engineers of possibility” (qtd. in Cunningham). In her breakthrough fantasy trilogy *The Broken Earth* (2015–2017), she explores this sort of idea with a protagonist whose driving desire in her life is to “make the world better” (Jemisin 381) – to connect with the planet on which she lives in a meaningful, productive way, with sincere compassion for that planet that goes beyond her own need to survive. In so doing, Jemisin also imagines – or indeed, engineers – possibilities for fantasy fiction to respond to parts of our own reality that are difficult or impossible to represent in art as such (cf. Hume 94; Chu 10–11). Her trilogy turns human relationship with the non-human natural environment into a matter of easily relatable empathy, or rather, overexploitation of natural resources into a critical failure thereof. Jemisin’s work thus evokes hope that a better way might be found – and that fantasy can help us find it.

This power of speculative storytelling to render otherwise irrepresentable or abstract things available for tangible artistic exploration is well-recognised (e.g. Stockwell 196–97; Chu; Rayment 83; McHale, “Speculative Fiction” 318; Polvinen, “Sense-making” 67–68). Fantasy, in particular, addresses the features of our reality that are beyond the mundane and the everyday, that are nebulous or numinous, divine or demonic, or not likely to actualise in any literal sense in the real world. That is, again, precisely why it is so often considered a non- or anti-mimetic form of fiction. It is crucial to note, however, that these features of our reality are indeed just that – nonexistent and intangible, yet still no less real a part of the world as we human beings navigate it (cf. Hume 43; Attebery, *Strategies* 27–28).

The author Terry Pratchett was fond of saying – I am paraphrasing here – that fantasy marks the place in the human nature where the falling angel meets the rising ape. For him, fantasy was a fundamental expression of human spirit, something that drives us to see the world – or rather worlds, plural – around us as much bigger, more complicated, more weird and wondrous and changeable than the immediate, visible, and measurable everyday reality available to our senses or our sciences. This, of course, does not mean that

fantasy needs to be taken literally as a means for glimpsing some divine truth “beyond the walls of the world”, as J.R.R. Tolkien famously has it (153). Rather, what it means is that fantasy – like any good fiction, I would think – goes far beyond representing reality “as it is.” In his own fiction, Pratchett made a point of making a distinction between things that exist and things that are real – they are not one and the same, and a thing does not need to be the former to qualify as the latter. Just because there is not an ounce of justice, duty, or mercy to be found anywhere in the universe does not mean those things are not real.

Fiction in general, I think, concerns itself with such intangible matters – things like experiences, impressions, interpretations, projections, and perspectives. It mediates our reality not as it is but as it seems, as it might be, as it could mean something, or as a perpetually unfinished work in progress – it aspires towards better models for imagining a reality, rather than depictions of a pre-existing one.

Looked at in this way, drawing a mimesis-versus-anti-mimesis dichotomy between fantasy and other, “non-speculative” kinds of fiction does not make much sense. When it comes to fantasy storytelling, I find that its blatantly imaginative qualities actually make it just a particularly effective form of fiction at directing readerly attention towards that world of impressions and interpretations in which fiction generally operates. It highlights that huge, tangled, endlessly variable, and expanding web of different versions of the world that make up the human experience of reality – and means of fiction to respond to that experience. By making its worlds obviously artificial, fantasy puts the spotlight on the creative artifice of any mimetic operations of fiction. It “lays bare”, to borrow Victor Shklovsky’s classic expression (27), how every work of fiction relates to reality as something much more complicated than a mere thing to represent or imitate (cf. McHale, “Science Fiction” and “Speculative Fiction”).

Consider, for example, Kazuo Ishiguro’s first fantasy novel, *The Buried Giant* (2015). It is set in a fantasy version of early medieval Britain where ogres, dragons, and pixies roam the countryside, aging knights of the Round Table are still around, and a mysterious curse of amnesia plagues the land. It is, in essence, a vision of Dark-Ages Britain as it is constructed in Arthurian legends and other forms of popular storytelling, rather than in historical records. As such an obviously artificial model of a time and place, it serves as a literary environment where Ishiguro can explore themes of historical memory and trauma on a collective and conceptual level, without getting tangled up with questions of real-world historical accuracy or political biases. Building a fantasy world, therefore, provides a means for going beyond questions of representation, and towards different, more constructive and complex ways in which fiction can relate to our reality.

It seems to me, on the whole, that the relations, interactions, and intertwinements between what we call fantasy worlds and what we call reality are much more multifaceted and open to interpretation than the idea of fantasy as a non-mimetic form of fiction can capture. Conversely, this interpretive ambiguity would also be just as central a feature to more “realist” forms of artistic mimesis as well. I therefore find that pitting fantasy, or speculative fiction in general, against some alleged “mimetic” norm in Western literature paints rather one-dimensional pictures of both this form of fiction and the literary landscape in which it exists on the whole. The differences between so-

called mimetic and speculative or fantastic sorts of fiction are not a matter of kind, but merely scale and focus.

In conclusion, I do find that the ubiquitous dichotomy constructed between mimesis and anti-mimesis gets in the way of examining relations between fantasy and reality in a nuanced way. Moreover, it also perpetuates a notion of the modern fantasy genre as something that contrasts with the mimetic aspirations of other forms of fiction in its historical context – which leads to a misleading impression that studying fantasy cannot provide us with knowledge about developments in fiction at large.

For example, this dichotomy obscures the fact that the emergence in the latter half of the 20th century of fantasy as the modern genre known today does not in fact coincide with the cultural heyday of realism, but with that of *postmodernism*. This is a period when, it is widely acknowledged, the notion of art being able to represent reality objectively – or indeed, a singular reality being there for art to reflect – was undergoing a major rethink (e.g. Lyotard; McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*; Hutcheon; Jameson). Seen from this perspective, the blatant imaginativeness of fantasy appears to be not a divergence from some alleged “mimetic” norm, but another response to a broader-scale *crisis of representation* in Western literature and culture.

And that crisis is far from over. If the numerous academic and popular articles, op-eds, and hot takes that have been written in the last five or 10 years are to be believed, we 21st-century human beings are “storytelling animals” (e.g. Meretoja 124; Dawson 407) living in a “post-truth” era (e.g. Fuller; Browse et al.; McIntyre). We have, it seems, been trapped into an information-era dystopia of our own making, where a compelling story trumps accurate information every time and everyone lives in their own private universe, reinforced by polarised media outlets and information bubbles that constrain the online side of our lives. And we cannot put this fragmented reality of ours back together, since it is apparently in our very nature to remake the world we share, over and over, with the language we use and the stories we tell (see Meretoja and Davis).

These radical ideas of postmodernist thinkers have now become popularised and normalised, a matter of common lore (also Kraatila). The situation is perhaps further exacerbated by the conspicuously global scale of the collective problems we face in our daily lives – climate change and the ongoing pandemic being the two most obvious examples. The only thing that can be accurately represented about such things in narrative fiction is the impossibility of capturing them in writing (see Walsh; Raipola; Caracciolo).

How, then, can fiction – speculative or otherwise – respond or contribute to such a world in a meaningful way? Where could its cultural importance lie, and how could it help us navigate this reality?

These are questions to which, I think, rethinking the speculative quality of fantasy fiction as a form of mimesis can provide some tentative answers. In its speculatively mimetic response to reality, as I conceptualise it, fantasy builds *theories* about the world – theories that are explicitly offered up as means for modeling a coherent and meaningful reality, to be judged not by their representational accuracy, but by their explanatory power (cf. McHale, *Constructing* 6).

Using this conceptualisation, I find that fantasy storytelling invites us to imagine worlds, and to ask how those worlds work as systems – and in so doing,

it can encourage us to try for a bigger-picture interpretation of the reality around us as well. It can also help us reconcile mindfulness of the idea that our shared reality is a matter of changeable interpretations with the notion that it is still real enough – and even entertain a plurality of different versions of reality as valid. And where our interpretations of reality fail, or are contested by other ones, fantasy can create space where lack of definite answers turns from an anxiety-inducing threat to the integrity of our world into an opportunity for enjoyable imaginative play. As such, it can also bring us face to face with our own interpretive agency in a productive and hopeful way.

I approach the speculative position fantasy storytelling assumes to reality as a response to the impossibility of representing the contemporary world in art, and as a means for confronting the challenges which that impossibility poses for contemporary fiction and its audiences. From this vantage, I find that 21st-century fantasy storytelling can be a powerful instrument for helping us feel at home in this uncertain world. This is not a matter of escapist consolation, but of giving us tools for navigating complexities of the contemporary sense of reality in a skilful and hopeful manner. And that, I believe, may be the most fundamental effect of the mimetic interplay between fiction and reality that today's audiences are looking for.

Biography: Elise Kraatila, PhD, defended her doctoral dissertation, titled *The Crisis of Representation and Speculative Mimesis: Rethinking Relations between Fiction and Reality with 21st-century Fantasy Storytelling*, at Tampere University on 3 December 2021. This essay is a slightly edited version of the lectio praecursoria she gave before the defense. The dissertation has been published in the Tampere University Dissertations series: <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-2160-4>.

Kraatila is currently working on a post-doctoral project (funded by the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation) concerning global-scale poetics in 21st-century speculative fiction. Her work concerns the ethos and cultural uses of contemporary SF, especially in relation to so-called metamodernism and other recent attempts to periodise the 21st century. She has previously published peer-reviewed articles on literary speculation as a means for confronting the current post-truth discourse (2019) and for reaching beyond postmodernist suspicion of master narratives (2021).

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Hail and Farewell: An Interview with *Fafnir*'s Departing and Arriving Editors-In-Chief

Laura E. Goodin

While we're always wistful when *Fafnir* editors-in-chief move on to new opportunities, that also means we get the exciting privilege of welcoming new editors-in-chief, who contribute their unique skills and insights to the journal. We talked with Esko Suoranta, who has wrapped up his time with us, and Elizabeth Oakes, who has just joined us, about *Fafnir*, and about speculative fiction in general.

LEG: Esko, what have you been most excited about contributing to *Fafnir*?

ES: Gosh, it has been such a rush in many ways! I think it originally had a lot to do with the opportunity to call myself an editor-in-chief of an academic journal – to be doing that as a very junior scholar, long before finishing my dissertation (ed. note: still unfinished at the time of publication). Editors are such essential personnel in making the academic world go round that counting myself among them is really a point of pride for me.

With that vote of confidence from Finfar, I've then been able to do so many exciting things in the role. I've solicited articles from interesting scholars, promoted *Fafnir* in conferences and online, and reached out to prominent voices in the field to pen prefatory essays. And on top of that the rewards of seeing our authors polish their articles into the gems we then get to publish. It's a heady rush, an academic journal!

LEG: What have you gained from your time as a *Fafnir* co-editor-in-chief?

ES: There's so much, to be honest, I must count the experience as central for my development as a scholar. I've learned what goes into editing and publishing a journal, keeping it running issue to issue without losing sight of possibilities for development.

I've especially found the value in the role of the editor as a partner to scholars in getting their best work out there. There have been so many opportunities to work with amazing people in the field around the world, looking for the best possible articulation of their insight through peer-review and feedback.

Being an editor has also made me a better colleague, I believe. It is a position I can take when reading someone else's work in seminars I go to, being able to think about how another editor somewhere might view a piece of research.

And, let's be real, I did also get to become the first Finn in history to receive a World Fantasy Award. It still weirds me out!

LEG: What do you see are some important contributions that *Fafnir* can make to the field of speculative-fiction research?

ES: *Fafnir* still has untapped potential, even when it is already doing so much. I think promoting early-career scholars from various backgrounds is a definite forte for the journal. It has already been building an interdisciplinary understanding of the study of speculative fiction in accepting various approaches to its subjects. *Fafnir* also draws authors from non-Anglophone countries and is committed to publishing in the Nordic languages – which is something I wish more authors took up! Let's get that research in Norwegian, Danish, and more out there!

LEG: What would you say to people who are thinking of submitting an article to *Fafnir*?

ES: "Do it."

Seriously, do it. *Fafnir* was the first place where I ever published research, as a wee Bachelor of Arts no less, and those experiences taught me so much about the realities of scholarship. *Fafnir* editors are excellent at navigating the submission process and peer-review, and the journal really does its best to guarantee swift publication without compromising on academic rigor. And when you fashion your submission in accordance with the journal's guidelines, the mileage you end up receiving from the editors is significant.

Also if anyone out there is worried about how their work might fit *Fafnir*'s scope, never hesitate to reach out to the editors. Or me, for that matter!

LEG: Why do you love speculative fiction?

ES: For so many reasons, really, and in many ways that's just the cultural air I breathe. The contemporary fiction I work with I love for the way it's ahead of so many curves unfolding in our time, anticipating what so-called mainstream fiction picks up five to ten years later. It can be so attuned to nuance and complexity when it turns its eye on the contemporary moment and thinks how that should be shown in a new light, to spark new thinking.

Then there's the stuff I've loved since I was a kid, of course. Think of the incomparable rush of the original *Star Wars* trilogy or the sweet escapism of Krynn. Without forgetting the sandbox of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* I still get to play in!

And finally, the stuff that really pushes the envelope, making my brain go boink, being so weird that they break the mould of fiction, or being so perfectly executed in their generic niches. Read Nick Harkaway's *Gnomon* or Adam Roberts's *The Thing Itself* for SF that runs with scissors at you. Or play *Disco Elysium* for an experience like no other computer RPG captures. Watch "The Expanse" for a masterclass in solar-system-scale SF that feels alive, limitless, and visceral.

LEG: And Elizabeth, what parts of your background and experience are you most excited about bringing to *Fafnir*?

EO: My experience centres on computational, stylistic, and otherwise linguistic approaches to literature. Speculative fiction, especially science fiction, has been classically accused of lacking style or characterised as a genre in which language is subordinated to ideas. There is a little truth in it, but by and large, I find the characterisation unjust, especially considering contemporary trends in speculative fiction. In recent years, speculative fiction has been studied from the viewpoint of language and style more frequently. I really hope to see some of that work come *Fafnir*'s way, to have the chance to use my expertise to promote this area of research.

I am also excited for what I will learn. It's an opportunity to read cutting-edge research in many subfields and develop broad general knowledge of speculative-fiction studies, as well as a chance to learn from the expertise of my co-editors-in-chief.

LEG: What do you see are some important contributions that *Fafnir* can make to the field of speculative fiction research?

EO: Because *Fafnir* accepts research in such a range of sub-fields and from a variety of theoretical perspectives, the journal has the potential to forge connections between different dialogues within the general area of speculative-fiction research. It also has the advantage of being Nordic-focused while having international range. It's a great platform for connecting Nordic scholarship to global conversations.

LEG: What would you say to people who are thinking of submitting an article to *Fafnir*?

EO: Please do. Go for it! From the perspective of an author, I published an article in *Fafnir* back in 2018, and the process from submission to publication was smooth and facilitated by open communication, and proved an excellent resource for developing and improving the article along the way. From the perspective of an editor, I look forward to the chance to consider any well-researched article in any area of speculative fiction.

LEG: Why do you love speculative fiction?

EO: Like many, my love for speculative fiction started in childhood. When I was a kid in a very small, rural American town in the 80s and 90s, science fiction and fantasy books often undermined, subverted, or completely shattered a lot of gender and other societal norms prevalent in other media and in that society generally. Speculative fiction provided a rare avenue for articulating other ways of being, and that felt both liberating and instructive. So, it is a genre filled with a lot of good memories.

It's also a genre that has grown with me, or maybe I have grown into it. These days there is a lot of philosophically complex, stylistically nuanced speculative fiction available, and I feel lucky to be developing an academic career at a time when the scholarly study of speculative fiction seems to be in full bloom.

Also, it's got the best cover art.



BOOK REVIEW:

*Comic Books Incorporated: How the
Business of Comics Became the Business of
Hollywood*

Cait Coker

Kidman, Shawna. *Comic Books Incorporated: How the Business of Comics Became the Business of Hollywood*. U of California P, 2019. ISBN 978-0520297562.

In recent years I've heard an excess of arguments decrying the popularity of superhero films. Various friends, enemies, and cultural critics who would otherwise not be caught dead with one another in the same room agree that such films are allegedly "ruining cinema", and their existence stems solely from the greed and cynicism of craven corporate despots. *Comic Books Incorporated*, however, goes a long way towards dispelling several elements of those arguments by focusing on the *longue durée* of comics transmedia. It is an entirely refreshing work of publishing history, focusing neither on Great Men™, specific writers, characters, titles, nor companies, but rather on providing an eagle's eye overview of the technological improvements and industrial shifts that have made those figures and texts both possible and profitable. Working heavily on revising our received notions of comic-book history, Kidman argues that comics aren't scrappy cultural underdogs that overcame the challenges of conventional mainstream culture; rather, they reflect that same mainstream. "Comic books were never without power," Kidman writes in conclusion, "the culture around them emanated from a place of economic, political, and social strength" (231). Kidman draws on infrastructure studies, a discipline that describes the production of commodities and business services, to discuss four case studies illustrating the turning points in

comic production history. By doing so, she shows that mass-media production has always been intimately interwoven with the history of comics.

Kidman begins her analyses with “A Brief Transmedia History of the U.S. Comic Book Industry”, an account that acknowledges the vast quantities of film serials, cartoons, television series, and animated and live-action films that have been produced since the 1940s. None of these titles are unfamiliar, as I and likely many other readers can easily reach into our memories of Saturday morning or afternoon television watching to remember *Super Friends* (1973–1986) or *X-Men* (1992–1997), but Kidman recontextualises their individual histories within the broader framework of transmedia. Kidman also provides two extensive, chronological appendices that detail at great length the sheer quantity of these productions: 128 films and television adaptations aired between 1940 and 2010, and 94 theatrical film adaptations released (mostly; there is the one legendary 1994 production of *The Fantastic Four* that was suppressed) from 1956 to 2010 (although, curiously, the listing actually begins with 1972’s *Fritz the Cat*). Comics have *always* been transmedial properties, Kidman argues, and effectively drops the mic with quantitative spreadsheets.

That first chapter creates a singular narrative spanning the 1930s through the 2010s. Kidman then follows with four chapters that discuss industry and change chronologically, starting with the 1950s, in more minute detail. The first case study explores the well-trodden ground of censorship and regulation in the 1950s, including the Senate hearings on juvenile delinquency that ultimately ushered in the Comics Code in 1954. These events kept the public focus on comic-book content, and the regulations legitimised existing business models and discouraged further government oversight. They arguably, if unintentionally, also served to constrain the medium for decades by making it more difficult for independent publishers and creators to enter the industry, reinforcing the notion of a medium primarily created by and for straight white men only. Kidman further argues that these interactions undercut any possibility that comics culture has a truly subversive tradition, given that throughout these shifts the industry operated in collaboration with the US government, and that those points of resistance that did exist instead lay with financially invested distributors who were already faced with a number of market problems. The familiar story of cultural witch-hunting, laid at the feet of Frederic Wertham (the psychologist who argued in his 1954 study *Seduction of the Innocent* that comics were directly at fault for juvenile-delinquency rates), is effectively revised to a more nuanced exploration of media distribution and consolidation.

Kidman’s next case study takes an in-depth look into how authorship and copyright law shaped the landscape of American comic production. Kidman undercuts the tale of Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster by arguing that the story acts as a structuring myth for the creative community – the two creators of Superman who early on sold their rights to the character for a paltry sum, only to watch as large conglomerates made massive fortunes. A series of lawsuits and the changing tide of public opinion eventually restored them some fortune and fame, creating a heartwarming story of two underdog artists who made good and fought the good fight. (Recent news stories of other comics writers and artists who were “robbed” by filmmaking studios touch on this as well.) This narrative underscored our cultural emphasis on creators and auteurs as indispensable to cultural production, the singular “great men” stories we

recognise repeatedly from our history books, in contrast to the vast teams of laborers who produce work for large-scale companies. Increasing attention is being paid to creative teams rather than singular authors in terms of television and film studies, but this view is still being filtered down to histories of textual production.

Kidman next looks at the histories of comics fans and their demographics in the 1970s and 1980s. This period oversaw the key transition of comics from popular “low” art to prestige media adaptations, culminating in high-budget cinematic adaptations of *Superman* (1978) and *Batman* (1989) as well as HBO’s popular *Tales from the Crypt* (1989–1996) series and its many offshoots. Prestige productions require a significant audience of socio-economic affluence, though, and its attendant purchasing power. From here arose the familiar constructions of comics fans as white males with enough money and influence to build collector’s markets. At the same time, actual comics readerships were declining; there was more money to be made in media than in books. Kidman does particularly good work here in teasing out the very real “freezing out” of women and other voices from creative production teams and as readers and buyers of comics. Exclusive fan communities make for hostile spaces. Although Kidman never names Gamergate directly, it’s impossible to read these sections without thinking about its pervasive influence on geek culture and the attendant phrase “fake geek girls”.

The final case study looks at the rise of the superhero film in the 1990s and 2000s. In particular Kidman focuses on the business dealings of film companies and how the rights to intellectual properties can be purchased, bought back, or even put in indefinite limbo. Particular attention is given to Disney’s purchase of Marvel in 2009, but the study concludes well before the shake-ups involving Sony Entertainment and others. Unfortunately, Kidman completes her formal study with 2010; moreover, while references are made to the cinematic universes that would soon take over, there is no extended analysis. This, while understandable – this book was published in 2019, and also cultural studies have to stop *somewhere* – is also unfortunate because we lose the extended analysis that could have come from analyses of *Wonder Woman* (2017) and *Black Panther* (2018), to say nothing of the tour de force of *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). Nonetheless, this book is a must-read for how it contextualises so much comics history as a function of business practices rather than as solely creative works. Kidman’s work effectively displaces a great deal of recent criticism on comics and comics media culture, and by doing so will vastly improve the work of future scholars.

Reading this book during an ongoing pandemic also reinforced many of its points. COVID-19 laid bare the weaknesses of supply and demand chains across the world, including the comics market. As lockdowns multiplied across the US, news stories described in detail the economic travails of businesses large and small; comics sellers, among the last holdouts of brick-and-mortar retailers, and lacking the infrastructures needed for a digital pivot, were hit particularly hard. Publishing companies came to a virtual standstill as they were unable to receive printing supplies, and creators faced difficulties in delivering content and receiving timely payments. Film studios postponed releases again and again as theaters remained closed or with only a handful of visitors, and when some features were finally released via online streaming

platforms, a host of lawsuits followed. Kidman's arguments were thus proved in real time: "Culture is built on top of and through infrastructure" (233).

Biography: Cait Coker is Associate Professor and Curator of Rare Books at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research is focused on the intersections of genre, gender, and publishing history. Her articles have appeared in *Mythlore*, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, *The Seventeenth Century*, and the *Journal of Fandom Studies*, among others. Most recently she is the editor of *The Global Vampire: Essays on the Undead in Popular Culture Around the World* (McFarland, 2020).



BOOK REVIEW:

Middle-earth, or There and Back Again

Dominick Grace

Neubauer, Łukasz. *Middle-earth, or There and Back Again*. Walking Tree, 2020. ISBN 978-3905703443.

Middle-earth, or There and Back Again, edited by Łukasz Neubauer, is another addition to the ongoing boom in Tolkien studies. It is volume 44 in the Cormarë series on Tolkien, its numerous volumes having appeared regularly since 1997. This slim book (iii + 137 pages, including index) contains six chapters, each focusing to a greater or lesser extent on Tolkien's sources and influences. Part of what makes this volume valuable is that, despite its brevity, it does not limit its focus to Middle-earth as the title might suggest. Two of the six essays – Bartłomiej Błaszkiwicz's essay on Tolkien's *The Fall of Arthur* and medieval romance, and Andrzej Szyjewski's on Tolkien's version of *The Story of Kullervo* – both focus on texts that are lesser-known (and indeed not widely available until recently), while the other four revisit familiar subjects. It is no surprise, for instance, that the myth of Atlantis informed Tolkien's account of the fall of Númenor, as explored by Michał Leśniewski, or that Tolkien was intimately familiar with the medieval allegorical poem *Pearl*, which Barbara Kowalik argues influenced Tolkien's creation of the One Ring. Nor is it surprising that religion influenced Tolkien, as Łukasz Neubauer argues in his chapter on Gandalf as a Christian-inflected corrective to Germanic heroic ideals as reflected in *The Battle of Malden*, and as Andrej Wicher explores in his chapter relating Galadriel to Pauline doctrine (among other subjects). The through-line is that all of these chapters make a case for Tolkien's work being influenced by earlier texts and traditions.

As Neubauer notes in his Foreword, with a “bit of semantic stretching, one could ... argue that much of medieval (and ... even post-medieval) fiction is a truly eclectic hodgepodge in which certain major elements ... are constantly

being reinvented” (ii). This volume presents essays interested in exploring how Tolkien’s own canon can be seen in similar terms: the essays focus on how Tolkien uses source materials in a “highly creative” way, sometimes so much so that they are “hardly recognisable”, and that he also “would not infrequently combine what, at first glance, may appear to be unrelated ... or even irreconcilable” source texts, so that his work involves a “constant mediation of the world of the past ... and the world in which he lived” (ii). The challenge with source studies is to demonstrate influence, rather than congruence or coincidence, and this is rendered more challenging when dealing with subjects that have already been considered by earlier scholars. While some of the attempts here are more persuasive than others, and while the authors are at times cautious about affirming influence, speculating rather than proving, these essays succeed more frequently than they fail in illuminating Tolkien’s debts. Readers interested in Tolkien’s influences and in how he reworks and transforms earlier texts and traditions will find this a valuable book.

Leśniewski’s essay on the Myth of Atlantis opens the book. In it, he revisits the topic of the “direct references to both Plato and his myth of Atlantis” that appear frequently in Tolkien’s work (2), as is widely known. Leśniewski argues that Tolkien could not avoid familiarity with the myth of Atlantis, given the attention it was receiving during his lifetime, although he also suggests that the myth resonated with Tolkien personally, given his recurrent dreams of flooding. Though Leśniewski engages in some speculation that is not convincing – e. g. that “inherited memory” (7) may have been a factor in Tolkien’s recurring flood dream, or about whether Tolkien believed that Plato’s account dealt with a real historical event – Leśniewski’s weaving of the literary and the personal provides insight into how Tolkien makes use of the myth of the flood as a demarcation point between myth and history: “the ultimate destruction of Númenor constitutes the moment which separates the mythological and the historical timelines of his legendarium” (13). The chapter also argues for a parallel between the moral implications of Plato’s and Tolkien’s accounts as arising from human transgression. Plato’s importance to Christian thought generally, Leśniewski argues, also informs the implicit Christian elements of Tolkien’s version of the myth.

Editor Łukasz Neubauer then compares and contrasts Gandalf with Byrhtnoth, the hero of the Old English *Battle of Maldon*. Neubauer’s main argument, carefully built and compelling, is that

Gandalf’s loyalty to the other members of the Fellowship and his self-sacrificial dedication to the higher cause appear to be a clearly distinguishable reinvention – in a Christian idiom – of the essentially heroic, albeit eventually failed attempt of the hastily-assembled English forces to hold off the troops of ravaging Vikings. (26)

Neubauer contrasts the convention of the hero sacrificing himself for fame with Gandalf’s fundamentally similar action from a fundamentally different motivation: the sacrifice of self in service of others. The close parallels between the actions are answered by the profound differences in the characterisation of Gandalf and Byrhtnoth, as Tolkien translates the heroic into the Christian (at least implicitly).

The third chapter, Barbara Kowalik's "Tolkien's Use of the Motif of Goldsmith-craft and the Middle English *Pearl*: Ring or Hand?", asserts that the "analogies between Tolkien's and the *Pearl* poet's use of jewels are so close, profound, and numerous as to put it beyond doubt that the twentieth-century writer was, consciously or unconsciously, inspired by his medieval predecessor" (55), though the boldness of this claim is mitigated by her reluctance to assert actual influence. Nevertheless, Kowalik draws attention to numerous (possible) echoes. One of the most interesting of these, which I wish Kowalik had pursued further, is her speculation that the numerological underpinnings of *Pearl* inform the references to numbers in *The Lord of the Rings*. This would buttress allegorical readings of the latter by linking it with the allegory of the former; for instance, numerological implications could support the reading of Frodo as prefiguring Christ (42). More central to her argument, though, is how Tolkien uses the symbolic associations of jewellery and the crafting of jewellery in *Pearl*. Kowalik plausibly links in both works the ambivalence of jewellery and its association with light. Though there has been some consideration of the connections between *Pearl* and *The Lord of the Rings* before (not all of which Kowalik cites, actually), her chapter adds to the discussion, especially through her careful enumeration of multiple points of similarity, especially in her connections between the One Ring and the Silmarils as "imbued with ambivalence" (49), though some connections are more tenuous than others. For instance, she points out that the Silmarils are "locked in 'the deep chambers' of Fëanor's treasury and worn by him only at great feasts Similarly, the medieval poem refers to the Pearl being kept in a secure coffer or chest" (49). However, the locking away of precious gems is too unremarkable a reality to carry much weight as an example of influence.

Continuing with Tolkien's reworking of medieval materials, Bartłomiej Błaszkiwicz's essay on Tolkien's incomplete alliterative poem *The Fall of Arthur* tackles Tolkien's reworking of medieval romance conventions. Błaszkiwicz offers a close reading, noting Tolkien's changes to key figures such as Mordred (making him a more complex villain than he tends to be in medieval texts) and Guinevere, who acquires more agency at Tolkien's hands than medieval accounts typically grant her. A general strength here is Błaszkiwicz's detailed enumeration of the changes Tolkien makes to his source materials. Nevertheless, Błaszkiwicz overstates the potential significance of what was after all abandoned by Tolkien. In his conclusion, he likens Tolkien to Milton by arguing that Tolkien's fragmentary poem may "hint at the continued power of the Arthurian tradition to contribute to the emergence of new literary universes marked by scope, uniqueness and richness, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" (81).

Also examining early work by Tolkien, Andrzej Szyjewski makes the case that Tolkien's *Story of Kullervo* constitutes the "first attempt of the then twenty-two- or twenty-three-year-old student of philology to bring under control the mythological matter, and thus transform the 'living' tradition into a written text" (84). As does Błaszkiwicz, Szyjewski makes a close study of how Tolkien adapted and modified his source materials to create a more coherent narrative and more developed characters. While at times speculative – referring to what "seems" to have interested Tolkien, or what "might have" been elements Tolkien liked (89) – Szyjewski's close reading nevertheless provides valuable insight into Tolkien's emerging strategies for building mythworlds. That this

text received comparably little critical attention prior to the publication of Verlyn Flieger's edition, praised by Szyjewski as a "highly significant moment for Tolkien Scholarship" (83), makes this essay especially useful.

Rounding out the book, Andrej Wicher returns to Middle-earth and to theology in his study of "The Wisdom of Galadriel". One might pair this chapter with Neubauer's on Gandalf, as both address how their focal figures can be linked to a Christian frame of reference. Wicher weaves into his reading the Pauline tradition, the cult of Mary, and 19th-century idealised conceptions of women as articulated by John Ruskin. Again, the claims for influence are speculative and perhaps not as compelling as those in the other chapters. For instance, while Wicher does find Ruskin-esque traits in Galadriel, he avoids commenting on aspects of her depiction that fail to correspond to the Ruskin ideal until late in the essay, and even then without bothering to reconcile them with his argument, merely noting that her characterisation is "full of paradoxes" (128). While this does not negate the possibility of influence, it does weaken Wicher's case. Nevertheless, Wicher's analysis suggests paths for further scholarship – for instance, in his brief comments on Galadriel also being called Nerwen, or "manly maiden" (123), a point Wicher leaves underdeveloped but that might provide fruitful basis for a queer reading. Indeed, one might argue that Wicher's own reading would gain nuance if it applied a theoretical rather than a descriptive framework to Galadriel's "paradoxes" and complexities. However, theoretical interventions are not the aim of the book, so perhaps one should not expect to find them.

In conclusion, this short volume opens up valuable ways of thinking about Tolkien in relation to his (possible) sources and influences. While not all the chapters are equally compelling in their analysis, and while the book is rooted in close textual analysis and source study rather than theoretical elucidation of the complexities of Tolkien's use of sources, they all provide insights that most Tolkien scholars will find worth considering.

Biography: Dominick Grace is Professor of English at Brescia University College. He is the author of *The Science Fiction of Phyllis Gotlieb: A Critical Reading*; he is coeditor with Amy Ransom of *Canadian Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror: Bridging the Solitudes*; and he co-edited *The Canadian Alternative: Cartoonists, Comics, and Graphic Novels* with Eric Hoffman, as well as five comics-related volumes in the University Press of Mississippi's Conversations series. In addition to numerous other publications, he has co-edited two collections on the TV show *Supernatural* with Lisa Macklem: *Supernatural out of the Box* and *A Supernatural Politics*.



BOOK REVIEW:

*Science Fiction and Catholicism: The Rise
and Fall of the Robot Papacy*

Everett Hamner

Clarke, Jim. *Science Fiction and Catholicism: The Rise and Fall of the Robot Papacy*. Gylphi, 2019. ISBN: 978-1780240862.

Eight decades after the publication of Isaac Asimov’s 1941 short story “Reason”, my SF survey students are still bemused by the cheeky resistance of robot QT-1, or “Cutie”, to the “secularism” of its human custodians. To its android mind, the two fleshly occupants of their shared space station are delusional: QT-1 rejects the absurd notion that this obviously inferior species could be responsible for its manufacture. For their part, Powell and Donovan move from proselytising outrage to pragmatic resignation, realising that if the aim is for Cutie and its metallic comrades to perform with minimal supervision, the robots’ devotion to their “Master” (i.e., the station’s Energy Converter) may prove more benefit than hindrance.

Jim Clarke’s consistently insightful monograph pauses over this eventual entry in Asimov’s famous compilation, *I, Robot* (1950), because “Reason” epitomises the genre’s fascination with questions of religious authority and epistemology. *Science Fiction and Catholicism*’s foundational premise is that a faux Catholicism has long functioned as SF’s imaginary foe. Clarke does not pretend the genre is alone in this regard: “literature in Britain and America has tended to fetishize, misrepresent and confront Catholicism as a radical Other” (22). However, in both building on and sometimes contesting work by literary critic Adam Roberts, Clarke shows how this straw-man version of the institution plays a unique role in a genre so interested in science’s significance. Indeed, the genre’s riffs on Catholicism sometimes bear little resemblance to the actual religion, the pontiffs of which offered encyclical

support for evolutionary biologists in 1950 and climate scientists in 2015. Even when concocted science-fictional faiths utilise tropes more redolent of other world religions – as when, in “Reason”, Cutie recalls Muhammad rather than a Catholic pontiff by intoning, “There is no Master but the Master, and QT One is his prophet” – Clarke’s argument remains intriguing. SF has repeatedly positioned itself against a modified Rome that opposes itself to science and reason, and major authors in the genre have relied on such parodies both fondly and ferociously. The result is ironic, Clarke concludes: “Catholicism, perhaps of all of the world’s faiths, has demonstrated the most interest in topics close to sf interests, most specifically the possibility of alien life. In return it has been rewarded with a significant though largely malign presence within the corpus of sf works” (251).

With a brief introduction and conclusion sandwiching four chapters, *Science Fiction and Catholicism* begins with the birth of Western science not just from the religious springs of the Enlightenment, but also from those of the Reformation. Clarke relies effectively here on the work of Robert Markley and Diarmuid McCulloch to dispatch with a secularist caricature of perpetual warfare between science and Christianity. His more nuanced picture of early scientists drawing upon theological inspiration, but also questioning assumed authority, lays what is effectively a postsecular foundation for Chapter Two’s expansion on the technological sublime via robot protagonists. As Clarke explains there, SF featuring posthuman supplicants and pontiffs has long served to “test the limitations of Roman Catholic notions of universality” (62), whether with the good humour my students find in Asimov’s story or with the harsher tone found in Anthony Boucher’s response, “The Quest for St Aquin” (1951). In Chapter Three, Clarke reveals how journeys to other worlds – other Creations – have provided occasion to ponder doctrines like sin and salvation outside traditional constraints. This chapter’s readings of exotheological novels like Mary Doria Russell’s *The Sparrow* (1996) and its sequel *Children of God* (1998), Patricia Anthony’s *God’s Fires* (1997), and Michael Flynn’s *Eifelheim* (2006) provide more recent testimony to the impoverishment that comes with simplistic bifurcations of faith and knowledge. Finally, in Chapter Four, Clarke uses SF uchronias or “alternate histories” to illustrate how one may gain a greater sense of historical balance, paradoxically, via counterfactual narratives. The close look here at Gregg Keizer’s “Angel of the Sixth Circle” (1982) is especially convincing since – as Clarke notes of the Sad Puppies’s attempted Hugo Awards sabotage – the “conflict is not so much between Protestantism and Catholicism as with the idea of modernity itself” (239). There is a misdirection here, a sly substitution, and what Chapter Four says of uchronic SF applies throughout the volume: the genre habitually treats Catholicism as a “proxy for magical thinking, anti-rationalism, retarded sociocultural development, and superstition” (207).

One element of Clarke’s writing that I appreciate is his self-aware, nuanced, and historicised approach to material that has more often inspired ideological diatribe. He immediately acknowledges how divisions in academic discourse have too often hindered readings of SF with religious components. On one hand, there are “critics approaching the intersection from a theological or overtly religious perspective [who] have sought to utilize the presence of religious elements and transcendence within SF as either a legitimation of revelation or an outright opportunity to proselytize”. On the other hand, those

critics “approaching the intersection from a literary critical background have largely tended to be, if not overtly Marxist or utopian, then certainly still inclined to look upon religious elements within SF as at best misplaced” (7). Long operating in parallel universes, both conversations would be strengthened by more regular convergences. Yet this phenomenon also points to an area where I am unconvinced: possibly thinking of books like Gabriel McKee’s *The Gospel According to Science Fiction* (2007) or James McGrath’s *Religion and Science Fiction* (2011) and *Theology and Science Fiction* (2016), Clarke regards the “existing methodology shared by both strains of criticism, pursuing holistic attempts to engage with sf and religion *in toto*, [as] too expansive”. In its place, he would prescribe a

body of critical exegesis that examines how sf depicts and responds to individual religions and creeds, and issues of importance raised in sf that are of interest to or derived from those individual religions and belief systems. (10–11)

I am all for the specificity and efficiency that comes with tightening one’s lens, and I am particularly eager to see scholars of the genre consider its intersections with traditions beyond Christianity. However, I am unsure that individual treatments of specific creeds need be the principal means. In fact, what I find most evocative about *Science Fiction and Catholicism* is its successful connections of one religious tradition to others. Had I been helping to title Clarke’s book, I might even have suggested zooming a bit further out, e.g. “Science Fiction’s Anti-Rational Faux: Catholicism, Religion, Modernity”. This is not to deny that the volume is particularly useful for those interested in Catholicism, nor that its strengths might be replicated in a book focusing on, say, Taoism, but only to resist downplaying more hybrid approaches. It seems to me that much of the genre – whether we focus on Golden Age texts like “Reason”, Robert Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), and Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965), or more recent ones like Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable* novels (1993, 1998), N. K. Jemisin’s *Broken Earth* trilogy (2015–17), and the stories of Ted Chiang – are fascinating precisely because they refuse categorisation according to a single religious influence.

Ultimately, fellow scholars and many nonacademic readers are likely to appreciate Clarke’s book for its recognition of the epistemological hesitation, the theological and ideological self-consciousness, that has often shaped science-fictional treatments of the ultimate. This book highlights the whipping boy that a misshapen form of Catholicism has often provided, but it consistently demonstrates how the real target in the crosshairs has usually been any form of mysticism or superstition that would explicitly array itself against reason or science. Where religions have contorted themselves into dogmatic purveyors of Absolute Truth, Clarke shows how quickly SF has arrived, ready with the equivalent of a nun’s stern ruler. Read his book, then, for its insightful treatments of the works mentioned above and many more, including C. S. Lewis’s *That Hideous Strength* (1945), James Blish’s *A Case of Conscience* (1958), Keith Roberts’s *Pavane* (1968), Robert Silverberg’s “Good News from the Vatican” (1971), Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1980), Dan Simmons’s *Hyperion* (1989), and Robert Charles Wilson’s *Julian Comstock* (2009). Enjoy its ability to reference Chaucer and Shelley right alongside *Star*

Wars and *Star Trek*. Most of all, ponder the concluding, perhaps counterintuitive suggestion at work in the entire monograph: “Neither Catholicism nor sf have suffered through their lengthy interaction, even though they may often have misunderstood one another. Indeed, it is arguable that they may even have benefited each other greatly” (252). Similarly, gaining from Clarke’s argument does not require blinding oneself to the horrors committed by representatives of any particular monotheism or polytheism (or for that matter, atheism). It demands only a readiness to reach beyond the easy binaries with which we frequently frame religious versus secular cultures. Asimov’s robot characters may not always welcome such challenges, but we should.

Biography: Everett Hamner is Professor of English at Western Illinois University in Moline, Illinois. His scholarship focuses on the intersections of genetics and climate with literature, film, and popular culture. Recent work of potential interest includes *Editing the Soul: Science and Fiction in the Genome Age* (Penn State, 2017), a 2018 special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television* on the television series *Orphan Black*, and a chapter in *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and Science* (2020) on the climate novels of Kim Stanley Robinson.



BOOK REVIEW:

*Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History
and Hybridity*

Sami Ahmad Khan and Rahul Rana

Banerjee, Suparno. *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity*.
U of Wales P, 2020. ISBN 978-1786836663.

Not a long time ago in a galaxy not-so-far away, Shashi Tharoor noted that the “singular thing about India is that you can only speak of it in the plural. What makes us, then, a nation?” (Tharoor). Unlike many other nations united by a shared language, religion, culture, or ethnicity, India has a heterogeneous, polyphonic diversity that inevitably percolates down to its cultural production. This mind-bogglingly multi-religious and multi-ethnic composition is further amplified by linguistic factors: India has 22 recognised languages per the Eighth Schedule to its constitution. Each language boasts of distinct literary movements, styles, genres, and innovations that continuously challenge form, content, and the market. What, therefore, constitutes the being of “Indian” writings?

Now, SF is a fair component of such literary experimentation and cultural evolution – and it has generated quite a few academic commentaries in its global wake. The past few years have witnessed a spectacular rise in studies directed at SF in different national and language-specific traditions: work by scholars such as Brian Attebery on Australian aboriginal SF (2005), Eliza Ginway on Brazilian SF (2005), and Anindita Banerjee on Russian SF (2013). We can even include scholars who have previously discussed India’s own genre traditions – for instance, Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay and Anwesha Maity on Bangla SF, not to mention Hans Harder on Marathi SF. Moreover, the last two years have witnessed a dramatic rise in new monographs on Indian SF: Pablo Mukherjee’s *Final Frontiers* (2020), Sami Ahmad Khan’s *Star Warriors of the*

Modern Raj (2021), and Urvashi Kuhad's *Science Fiction and Indian Women Writers* (2021).

Suparno Banerjee adds to this eclectic mix in *Indian Science Fiction* by connecting the patterns and hybridity of an otherwise dispersed Indian SF tradition within a “national tradition” of genre literature that can be seen alongside a larger Western tradition. Banerjee's critical intervention demonstrates how SF is inching towards a critical mass for a nation caught between a technoscientific transformation and a geopolitical mutation. For our part, we are aware that while language-specific and time-specific studies are vital to the growth of SF criticism, they cannot identify the macro-patterns and “cultural cross-pollination” that exist *across* SF. Arguably, many language-specific studies lack a more comprehensive “national” scope, something that creates the need for connecting tissues spread across cultures and languages. Banerjee's *Indian Science Fiction* accordingly becomes an archive of the evolution of Indian SF *and* a bridge that connects indigenous and external SF traditions alike.

Now, we acknowledge that the word “milestone” is thrown around quite a bit these days – and often becomes a millstone around the neck of readers, writers, and reviewers alike. However, Banerjee's trailblazing and eminently readable book, courtesy of how it chooses a relatively unexplored area of study and its eclectic theoretical vantage point, can be called – without hyperbole – a true milestone. *Indian Science Fiction* offers an impressively synoptic view of India and its SF. Citing texts from Bangla, English, Hindi, and Marathi, Banerjee seeks to designate the “Indian” SF text within what he calls a “reasonably specific” idea of India, despite India's dispersed cultural imaginations (12). Banerjee, furthermore, connects broader epistemes of Indian SF with Western academic discourses and indigenous language-specific epistemes, showing how Indian SF is dependent on “this relationship between Indian and western culture, making the genre a cultural hybrid par excellence” (7).

A cornerstone of Banerjee's panoramic lens borrows from arguments made by Rabin Bal and Satyajit Ray about Bangla SF – specifically, that we can describe SF writers as falling into two camps: a camp devoted to Jules Verne, which includes writers “who prefer a stronger allegiance to science and logic”, and a camp devoted to H. G. Wells, who “use science only as a device to break through contemporary reality to imagine alterities” (Banerjee 5). India's SF often swings between these two camps, but this enables it to convey “fascinating vistas of alternative possibilities of existence” that, overall, challenge “western perceptions about imagining India and the world ... complete with dominant ideologies, exoticism and representational politics” (197). As a mode and a genre, Indian SF therefore becomes a battleground where clashing ideologies meet as well as a broadcast signal that colours the popular imagination. This dual character and function of India's SF creates a shape-shifting chimera that comprises multiple – often conflicting – vantage points, political agendas, market practices, literary styles, and historical realities. The goal of Banerjee's book is to isolate, identify, and foreground all these factors.

Chapter One, “Genealogies: A Brief History of Indian SF”, showcases Banerjee as a genre historian, and it maps a trajectory of SF imaginations in Indian literary productions by historicising the emergence of distinct SF elements. It loosely divides the evolution of Indian SF into four historical periods:

1. 1835–1905 (“primarily revolutionary future histories in the utopian mode etc.”);
2. 1905–1947 (“a slow consolidation of SF as a genre in popular culture”);
3. 1947–1995 (the rise of a “nationalistic element”); and
4. 1995–2019 (marked by dystopias and postcolonial identity politics). (14)

Building from Kylas Chunder Dutt’s “A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945” (1835), Banerjee establishes how SF made inroads due to the advent of colonial education into the literary traditions of India, primarily within Hindi, Bangla, and Marathi. The SF of India sprang up courtesy of Western technoscientific influences on an imaginative space long bubbling with mythological and speculative traditions. This dialectic engagement between India and the “West” gave rise to early 19th-century Indian SF in the form of temporal fictions: revolutionary future histories, exotic adventures, utopias, parody SF, alien encounters, etc. In this trajectory formation, Banerjee globalises the growth of early Indian SF (1835–1947) with influences from H. Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, Edgar Allan Poe, Jonathan Swift, Edward Bellamy, and William Morris; generic developments such as detective fiction, adventure fiction, and comics; international events such as the Bolshevik Revolution; and media cultures such as that of the magazine. The later trajectory of post-Independence SF, which begins what Banerjee calls the “Golden Age” of Indian SF in indigenous languages (1947–1995), saw a growth of indigenous-language magazine cultures and films along with a sudden rise in SF production and readership “indicating a larger and perhaps scientifically educated reading public” (39). These narratives raise complicated issues of traditional knowledge(s), colonial hegemony, feminism, cultural hybridity, and identity. Banerjee then finds a marked increase in Anglophonic SF and a globalisation of India’s SF from 1995 onwards.

Banerjee’s second chapter, “Cognitions and Estrangements: Epistemes and World Building in Indian SF”, engages popular Indian interpretations of the “scientific” imagination and how they constantly negotiate between (Western) science and technology with (Indian) tradition and mythology, not merely as a postcolonial rejection of Western hegemony but also as an assertion of an “eternal” Indian nationalistic identity. The manifestations and interactions of Western techno-science, Vedic “science”, and regional subaltern knowledge within Indian SF hybridise frameworks but also seek to carve spaces for particular modes of thought. While various Indian SF imaginations consistently lay claim to “Knowledge”, one that historically precedes and qualitatively trumps other systems of knowledge, especially in its Enlightenment-scientific-western variant, the contours of Indian SF also follow the operating mechanics of identity, politics, and nationalism. Thus, cultural literary production became a cauldron where “Indian epistemic traditions compete” with those of “colonial science” (65). Banerjee historicises this collision (and coalition) of opposing traditions through the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing especially on the ideologies of resurgent Hindu nationalism. For Banerjee, nationalistic Indian SF arose as a quest for seeking – or reclaiming – an imaginary identity, one that was distinct from and superior to the competing

Western episteme(s). This type of SF depended upon an ethno-national identity regarded as original or ancient, or as accurately prophesying future phenomena. Often labelled as the “golden past” narrative, this strand of Indian SF emerged as a way to reclaim a romanticised ethno-national identity in the present, and it vehemently separates Vedic from Western science and blurs the temporal distinction between past and present. In addition, “localised subaltern knowledge” constitutes another tradition running tangential to nationalistic fervor. This subaltern knowledge, as Banerjee explains, appropriates aspects of speculative fiction such as magic, ghosts, and premonitions, rooting the supernatural as a precursor to scientific discourse and establishing an oriental hierarchy over its occidental counterpart (78). As Banerjee argues, this subaltern historicisation of the past subverts hierarchies and recreates a “past to repair the violence done to Indian culture through colonial domination, but without resorting to cultural essentialism” (102).

The following three chapters of *Indian Science Fiction* are best read concurrently. The third chapter, “Other Times: Alternative Histories, Imagining the Future and Non-linear Temporalities”, interrogates how Indian SF generates and deploys multiple visions of time. The first section explores the “glorious ancient past” and its specific deployments vis-à-vis Hindu Nationalism, the subversion of colonial authority, and the reassertion of postcolonial identity. The next section handles how the imagined futures in Indian SF negotiate a “multiplicity of oppressions” amidst “technoscientific advances” and “geopolitical sovereignty” via utopian hope and dystopian anxiety. The third section in Chapter Three views how despite being set in the author’s world, Indian SF creates alternative realities *a la* a “Borgesian forking path that develops possibilities already existing within real historical moments” (122). Chapter Four, “Other Spaces: Utopian Discourses and Non-expansionist Journeys”, observes the spatial interactions between Indian and foreign forces and exposes their “correlation to western ideological formations of Indian and global spaces, either through resistance or self-reflection” (131), and the fifth chapter, “The Others: Aliens, Robots, Cyborgs and Other Others”, handles the metaphorical dimensions of these eponymous agents of the narrative. Banerjee aptly categorises the aliens/Others under two headings: the Other as the self (i.e. how Indian SF often speaks through the voices of such Others), and the Others as others (i.e. as intruders, external aggressors, or disruptions from without) – a categorisation that grants him ample space to comment on divergent constructions of alterity.

In these three chapters, Banerjee poses colonial occupation as India’s authentic experience of the alien-other, and these experiences appear in later imaginations through assimilation, subversion, or utter rejection. The thematic pattern that Banerjee seeks to unveil in Indian SF thus becomes largely a postcolonial matrix. Not only does he critique texts of different languages, he finds similarities between them, and this process justifies his stance about an “Indian” tendency. In terms of temporality, the extrapolations of Indian SF revolve around neocolonial, postcolonial, or anti-colonial ideologies that create alternative histories through subaltern discourses, golden past narratives, and even disparate non-monolithic antiquities that challenge – and sometimes reject – orientalist tendencies. Also, according to Banerjee, present non-linear temporalities “actually project a desire for a different future” (127). As revealed by Banerjee’s final chapter, which focuses on viewing Others as selves and

Others-as-others, there appears a marked but unfortunate tendency of “oriental” subjects to orientalise also *amongst* themselves – for example, an ascendant majoritarianism. Banerjee locates protean structures of India-as-a-whole (as per Hindu Nationalism) interacting with India-as-a-fractured-self (as per subaltern knowledges, multiple languages, and cultures) *and* the Western traditions, especially Anglophonic or Francophonic ones, as generating infinite permutations and combinations of textual mechanics, which are then re-inforced or railed against through specific narratives.

This pathbreaking study by Banerjee nonetheless suffers from some drawbacks. Considering the geographical, political, social, and linguistic diversity of India, the tag of “Indian” SF is only justifiable as a synecdoche – although, to be fair, Banerjee’s enterprise is burdened by the inherent flux and polyphony manifested in India’s literary and cultural traditions, and he seems well aware of this. In fact, this study of SF in four diverging languages across time is what makes *Indian Science Fiction* stand apart from its peers. At the same time, Banerjee often invokes the colonial-other to identify the Indian-self within the tradition of SF. This construction of an Indian unity *only* through a postcolonial perspective – and not, say, as an united Indian identity as a thing-in-itself – is problematic, although even here Banerjee continues to demonstrate a keen awareness of the historical and ideological forces at work within Indian genre fiction.

To conclude, Banerjee’s pioneering study of India’s SF, charting as he does the select SF traditions within a multilinguistic and heterogeneous country, emerges as entertaining and informative in equal measure. While being essentially “postcolonial”, it spans over a hundred years of texts across various languages and cultural traditions; it reflects a cohesive, comprehensive, and higher-dimensional understanding of the SF imaginations from – and within – India; and it advances multiple well-argued formulations that will be extremely beneficial for SF researchers, writers, students, and teachers alike. We thus highly recommend *Indian Science Fiction*. Even without a blue police box or a speeding DeLorean, Banerjee takes us through time and relative dimensions in India’s science-fictional space(s).

Biography: Sami Ahmad Khan is a writer, academic, and documentary producer. Sami holds a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi, and is the recipient of a Fulbright grant (University of Iowa) and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Postdoctoral Fellowship (University of Oslo). His future-war debut *Red Jihad* won two awards, and his second novel – *Aliens in Delhi* – garnered rave reviews. Sami’s critical essays have appeared in leading journals and magazines; his overview of Indian SF has been translated into Czech, and his fiction has been the subject of formal academic research. Sami has taught at IIT Delhi, Jindal Global University, JNU, and GGS Indraprastha University, Delhi. His latest book is *Star Warriors of the Modern Raj: Materiality, Mythology and Technology of Indian Science Fiction* (2021).

Biography: Rahul Rana is a PhD scholar at GGS Indraprastha University, Delhi. He currently works on Enlightenment epistemology and realism in SF. His previous research explored ideas of spirituality within 21st-century SF.

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BOOK REVIEW:

*Fighting for the Future: Essays on Star
Trek: Discovery*

Graham Minenor-Matheson

Mittermeier, Sabrina, and Mareike Spsychala, editors. *Fighting for the Future: Essays on Star Trek: Discovery*. Liverpool UP, 2019. ISBN 978-1789621761.

The latest offering in Liverpool University Press's Science Fiction Texts and Studies series is *Fighting for the Future: Essays on Star Trek: Discovery*, edited by Sabrina Mittermeier and Mareike Spsychala. With J.J. Abrams's spectacularly dire reboot trilogy polluting the cultural public sphere for new audiences in a new millennium, *Star Trek: Discovery (DSC)* (2017–ongoing) has been a welcome return to the cerebral (thoughtful) action sorely missing from Abrams's offerings. Scholarship on *Star Trek* is bountiful but, as of the writing of this review, *Fighting for the Future* is the first book-length analysis of this series in the popular franchise. Released at a time of rising international political tensions, culture-war hysteria and the commercial space tourism fantasies of billionaire libertarians, *DSC* – like its predecessors – puts Star-Trekkian politics front and centre. This wide and intriguing collection of essays on politics and identity help to ground what the show has to say to 21st-century audiences.

Given the limited space permitted for a review, I can't highlight everything that makes this collection valuable, but hopefully what follows provides some insight into what I think this book's core theme is: a critique of liberalism. The Mirror Universe, a "dystopian alternative to the idealized future" that was first featured as a parallel universe in a 1967 episode of *The Original Series* (6), is a prominent feature of *DSC* that helps the series explore both sides of liberalism: traditional liberalism as well as the liberalism of identity politics.

Most contemporary scholarship separates the two, usually through only discussing one or the other, and in this regard *Fighting for the Future* is no different, focusing the second half of the book on identity politics. Whilst the book dedicates most of the second half to identity politics, while only affording traditional liberalism one essay in the first half. Thus, although *Fighting for the Future* comes close to offering a significant critique of liberalism in several places, it never quite manages to articulate how the rhetorical utopianism of liberalism is, arguably, undergirded by violence as a core element within its values in practice if not in rhetoric.

Mittermeier and Spychala divide their collection into four themed sections: franchises, modes of storytelling, otherness, and identity. The first section offers four chapters that place *DSC* within the canon of *Star Trek* by showing the series as a continuation or contemporary iteration, a point the editors feel the need to stress because of online fan hostility to promotional material that foregrounded the show's diversity (gender and race particularly). The second section deals with modes of storytelling, highlighting *DSC*'s unique approach – unique at least to *Star Trek*, if not other television series – of approaching narrative through seriality rather than the traditionally episodic nature of most *Star Trek* series. In Sections Three and Four, 10 chapters analyse the representations of gender, race, and sexuality in *DSC* (and other series) by using intersectionality and queer theory.

As the theme and politics of liberalism have always been an important part of *Star Trek*'s appeal, this collection picks up the baton with some essays that analyse the wider socio-cultural context under which *DSC* has been released. Some of the fiercest critiques of *Star Trek*'s liberalism come from the themed sections on identity politics. The chapter by Torsten Kathke, "A *Star Trek* About Being *Star Trek*", challenges the franchise's representation of an American liberalism rooted in opposition "against fascism and communism" (45), which feels somewhat like a rebuke to the Trump presidency – a dark time for liberalism's true believers. *DSC* uses the Mirror Universe to explore this dark side of our contemporary moment. However, while *Star Trek* promotes liberal values of tolerance, equality, freedom, and diplomacy, Kathke shows that we can view *DSC*'s narrative focus on war in the first season through a liberal-values lens, as liberal America actively sought Nazi engineers and scientists following WWII as a way to bolster its own technological and space-exploration ambitions, with Wernher Von Braun being actively courted by the US to "make his dreams of conquering space feasible" (49). A Mirror Universe is thus a wonderful narrative trick to highlight rising authoritarianism and fascism. Many of these essays deftly argue this, but its use, I suggest, steers the critical eye away from the inherently darker elements of supposedly "enlightened" ideologies like liberalism. Whilst Trump offended many establishment liberals, his politics as President was a common thread linking past administrations. The "revenge mission" that was the War on Terror was enthusiastically voted for by establishment democratic liberals during the conservative Bush's tenure; not only was torture condoned, but the definition of torture was subverted under constitutional law by the liberal Obama administration which, also, more covertly used secret operatives to achieve American military goals around the world.

The Mirror Universe can perhaps be read as an attempt by *Star Trek*'s writers to reckon with the dark side of liberalism, but this may accord credit

where it may not be due. For instance, the dichotomy between “liberal, kind, tolerant, diplomatic” *Star Trek* and the sadistic purveyors of violence in the Mirror Universe is too stark to see the Federation’s liberalism as being anything other than “saviourism”. The volume’s essay that comes closest to identifying liberalism’s inherent attraction to violence is Judith Rauscher’s “Into A Mirror Darkly”, which discusses Admiral Cornwell’s adopting Mirror Universe Georgiou despite knowing about Georgiou’s fascist and brutal nature. Cornwell uses both a fascist and militaristic figure for the purposes of war and also “emotionally charged language” like “foe without reason” and “destroying everything we hold dear” reminiscent of post-9/11 Bush administration rhetoric (254). Temporary alliances with fascist or totalitarian leaders are part and parcel of US foreign policy regardless of the ideological flavour of the ruling party, and this is a facet well argued by Rathke in her critique of Admiral Cornwell’s easy co-option of Mirror Georgiou. The glee with which Mirror Spock orders an underling be tortured in the “agonizer booth” (108) also reflects the media construction of torture in the War on Terror.

Returning to a discussion of diplomacy, Schillinger and Sönnichsen’s “The American Hello” argues that diplomacy is at the “core of the politics of *Star Trek*” (221), and they employ Ivor B. Neumann’s classic analysis of binary representations of old and new forms of US diplomacy – namely, diplomacy as an instrument of state versus diplomacy through universal rights and rationality – in *Star Trek*. They ultimately argue that *DSC* presents a more complex diplomacy through reproducing “major US representations of diplomacy only in a very general sense” (236). For them, *Star Trek* is dedicated to exploring the political issue of the management of “relations of separation” in diplomacy (222). Neumann’s study posited that *Star Trek* reproduced US foreign policy consensus, but Schillinger and Sönnichsen contend that *DSC* only serves to reinforce liberal values.

For those interested in the politics of identity, there is plenty to dive into as well, as the collection’s second half focuses on gender, Afrofuturism, and queerness. In typical SF style, *Star Trek* has always picked up on societal rupture to promote diversity – for instance, *Star Trek: The Original Series* broke ground with the first interracial kiss on television – and this collection tackles how *DSC* advances that same theme today. The first two chapters of Section Three look at female black representation within *Star Trek* and SF through an interview with scholar Diane Mafe; likewise, a chapter by Whit Frazier Peterson called “The Cotton-Gin Effect” analyses the character of Burnham from the lens of Afrofuturism, which is intriguing for adopting this methodological tool for a “critical analysis” rather than just as a “philosophy or aesthetic” (201). This chapter more than pays its way for its insight that the series’s liberal-humanism “creates something of a cotton-gin effect, where the world we live in as viewers is just the idealized view we have of ourselves” but reveals that, ultimately, our real world is just a “Mirror Universe masquerading as a Prime Universe” (203). This effect, argues Peterson, shows how Lorca’s (white Captain) relationship with Burnham (black prisoner) is rooted in the master/slave relationship, suggesting something of the classical liberal conception of property.

In the chapter “Never Hide Who You Are”, Mittermeier and Spychala challenge the common view of *Star Trek* as progressive when it comes to LGBTQ+ representation; after all, a host of other television programs have

featured a variety of gay characters before *DSC*. For the authors, the show's behind-the-scenes politics reveal the inherent conservatism of television production, and Mittermeier and Spsychala describe fan groups pressuring the show's creators to introduce LGBTQ+ characters like the ones long part of *Star Trek* fan fiction. In some respects, then, *DSC* is late to the progressive party, even in the still important medium of television. Despite the ubiquity of new media and the internet, television (as both a technological medium and a style or mode of creative production) remains a dominant force. But whilst they note that *DSC* is behind some other shows, the mere fact that a *Star Trek* series finally has LGBTQ+ representation front and centre, dealing with a "gay couple that is part of the main cast" and representing a "normalization of LGBTQ characters and relationships" (341), marks *DSC* as special.

What's missing? As strong as this collection is, I suspect it would have been strengthened even more by "spectacle" as an analytical tool. For instance, the American media theorist Douglas Kellner in *Media Spectacle* (2003) has argued that contemporary spectacle is focused on the struggles and controversies of individuals, where everyday life is overly dramatised and the media more dazzling – and television, of course, is the most powerful purveyor of such spectacle. This kind of analysis would have improved *Fighting for the Future* because *Star Trek* presents itself as being more philosophical and thoughtful than the general run of television programs. Although a considerable portion of the collection analyses the Mirror Universe, it nonetheless keeps the dark, brutal, fascistic Mirror Universe separate from the liberal Prime Universe. The show stops (just) short of critiquing liberal values as containing the possibility of violence, despite its apparent critique of liberalism. What insight would a Kellnerian perspective using spectacle theory garner from reading the same material?

Whilst *Fighting for the Future* is about a television series, it is also predominantly about *content* rather than about exploring television as a *physical medium*. Some scholars may find this unusual, considering that some of the authors hail from media studies, although content studies is still a thriving element of the discipline. If, as McLuhan famously argued, the "medium is the message", then it would have been interesting to see a media-studies critique focused on the medium itself, given how television has changed since *Star Trek: The Original Series* aired in the 1960s. The chapter by Ina Batzke, "From Series to Seriality. *Star Trek's* Mirror Universe in the Post-Network Era", briefly touches on such a possible critique through its focus on seriality, but a chapter from the point of view of the physical medium's changes and what effects these may have had on production and reception would have been interesting to read alongside a critique of *Star Trek* in the streaming era (possibly from the perspective of a political economy of communications). Still, its absence here does not tarnish *Fighting for the Future*. Despite one's yearning for a *little more* from the book, there are already nearly 400 pages of detailed analysis of a show that, at the time of writing, had only had two seasons released. Yes, there's some overlap between chapters but, importantly, there is no repetition.

This varied and wonderfully interesting collection of essays, overall, is a very good work of academic analysis with one significant achievement: each methodological and disciplinary lens used to analyse *DSC* testifies to the depth and complexity of the series as a work of art. No single field is adequate to peel

back the layers of meaning within this iteration of the *Star Trek* universe. Mittermeier and Spsychala have gathered together a collection of brilliant, contemporary essays that show *DSC* continuing the *Star Trek* tradition. *Fighting for the Future: Essays on Star Trek: Discovery* is full of interesting, engaging, well-argued, and well-written chapters, and it should be considered an effective work of scholarship from which the fields of media, English, and American studies should get considerable worth.

Biography: Graham Minenor-Matheson holds a degree in International Relations from Birkbeck College and a Master's in Global Media Studies from Stockholm University. He is currently pursuing a Master's in Media, Communication, and Cultural Analysis from Södertörn University. He cites his main research interests as being the work of Ursula K. Le Guin and Philip K. Dick, and in the field of media studies his primary interests lie in the intersection between media and politics, particularly scandal theory.

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BOOK REVIEW:

George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form

C. Palmer-Patel

Young, Joseph Rex. *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form*. Routledge, 2019. ISBN 978-1138502161.

Everyone, it seems, has their own two cents to offer on *A Game of Thrones* (*GoT*), whether the books or the television adaptation. This is the sentiment that launches Joseph Rex Young's monograph, *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form*, which anyone who studies fantasy fiction certainly knows well. Worse, from Young's point of view (and I highly concur), is when scholars and readers make general claims about fantasy fiction as a whole *solely* based on the *GoT* television adaptation. In his book, Young sets out to challenge and overturn some of these knee-jerk notions. In particular, he argues that Martin, rather than "abandoning or subverting the conventions of his genre, is actually using them particularly well" (5), but where Martin sets himself apart is by presenting an epic fantasy world with the tones and trappings of low fantasy. With this thesis in mind, Young delivers an incredibly nuanced and highly accessible analysis of *A Song of Ice and Fire* (*ASOIAF*) that, at the same time, resonates deeply for how scholars should understand the contemporary fantasy genre overall. Indeed, Young has a talent for taking fantasy scholarship that is decades old and, rather than dismissing it as outdated, shows how *ASOIAF* instead responds to those old ideas, thereby pushing the genre forward. In a way, it is regrettable that Young frames his book so entirely around Martin's text. Although a valuable single-author study in its own right, this monograph – by emphasising Martin rather than the fantasy form – risks missing fantasy scholars uninterested in Martin when, in fact, I suspect that most fantasy scholars will benefit from this book. Thus, let me begin my review with an appeal: if you are a scholar of fantasy, I highly recommend you read this text regardless of your remit.

In Young's short introduction, he rightly exposes how frequently people come to conclusions about Martin's text based on either the HBO television adaptation or various non-literary approaches to the book series – for example, the potential historical inspirations for *ASOIAF*. This leads to Chapter 1, "The American Pratchett? – Muck and Modality", where Young tackles the general consensus that *ASOIAF* is wholly original and therefore entirely different from other work in the genre, especially J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*). For Young, any evaluation that celebrates *ASOIAF* for moving beyond *LOTR*'s allegedly black-and-white moral rigidity fails to properly appreciate the nuances of either text. In Martin's case, *ASOIAF* begins with a prologue that presents the embodiment of an evil Other in the form of White Walkers. This establishes from the first page a supernatural presence – a point particularly important since "magic" is a common reproof against fantasy, and one against which Martin is often held as a counterexample. As explained by Young, however, it's not that Martin's work is "more realistic" but that Martin deliberately and repeatedly makes authorial choices that direct the reader to take note of "filth" and other low mimetic markers. Using Northrop Frye's theory of modes, Young identifies *ASOIAF* as set within an ironic mode, similar to the works of Terry Pratchett and even the *Monty Python* series, where nobility and other "high figures" are satirised and brought low. Thus, Martin and other ironic-mode fantasists "deploy characters who at least episodically see through those conceits in order to emphasise the follies of those who do not" (32). In this way, they reveal the hypocrisy and baseness of aristocratic rulers such as Cersei Lannister, but plenty of high mimetic characters, such as those found in Tolkien, still appear in *ASOIAF* – for example, Martin spares Syrio Forel a farcical death because he embodies genuine nobility (36).

Given Young's generally insightful focus on authorial choices, however, one of his few missteps in *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form* involves his over-reliance on Martin's own defense (in interviews) of racism and rape culture as "historically accurate". This problem becomes particularly noticeable in Chapter 2, "Enough about Whores' – Sex and Characterisation". Although Young briefly mentions the Othering of the Eastern cultures, and even goes so far as to identify "Dothraki rape culture" (56), he otherwise pays little attention to the problematic racial aspects of the text. Instead, Young focuses on Khal Drogo as a redeemable character. A page later, Young identifies Daenerys's feminism as "anachronistic", the precedent for which can be found in the Gothic tradition (57). Unfortunately, this reading of fantasy fiction as a pseudo-historical text whose "good" politics are anachronistic retro-insertions risks legitimising racism and sexism. In this case, Young would have done well to take note of another scholar of similar surname, namely Helen Young, whose *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature* (2016) firmly critiques the depiction of race and racism in *ASOIAF*. Yet, oddly enough, Joseph Rex Young seems to deliberately avoid Helen Young's work. Although *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature* appears in his bibliography, Young's index only lists one reference to Helen's book – a superficial one, no less, as he casually mentions her term "gritty fantasy" while ignoring her more substantive arguments. Instead of choosing to discuss the relevant social issues, Joseph Rex suggests that the sexual violence pervading Martin's books, rather than illicit titillation, is simply a deeper form of characterisation. Treating one's partner well in the "game of beds", as he says, grants that character greater sympathy from the reader (45).

Still, despite divorcing individual ethics and morality from their larger social context, an intellectually suspect move, Young's individualistic approach nonetheless remains an oddly effectively one. After all, *ASOIAF* is a highly popular text; *something* must account for it. What Young manages to do, then, is uncover the tools used by Martin to deliver a commercially successful (yet still emotionally powerful) narrative.

In Chapter 3, "Look with Your Eyes' – Immersion and Thinning", Young turns to how readers have engaged with the rhetorics of the narrative. As the term "rhetorics" implies, Young heavily engages with the work of Farah Mendlesohn, but first he demonstrates how *ASOIAF* employs John Clute's "thinned" world concept, where magic has leaked out of the land. At the beginning of the series, the dragons are all dead, and, despite the briefly seen White Walkers from the prologue, most supernatural forces throughout Westeros are merely considered meaningless fairy tales. Because of this thinning, Young thus classifies *ASOIAF*, for the most part, as an *immersive fantasy* (74), a rhetorical structure through which readers understand the fantastical world as focalised by characters already familiar with it. The occasional instances of *intrusive fantasy* (that is, where an unknown or supernatural element intrudes on the focalising characters) are still buffered – their effect deadened – by a layer of immersive fantasy. Rather than identifying Martin's use of contradictory Mendlesohnian rhetorics as a failure in consistency, though, Young proposes that these devices combined offer a "resonant, penetrating critique of the unpredictability of human morality" (125). In Chapter 4, "Dead Men Come Hunting' – Intrusion and Recovery", Young extends the discussion from immersive fantasy to intrusive fantasy. Here, Young turns abruptly to 19th-century Romanticism. As he stated earlier, modern "fantasy is essentially a latter-day continuation of the Romantic tradition, being centrally concerned with mysteries posited at the centre of humanity's relationship with the world" (88) – in this case, fantasy and the supernatural seem to go together. This brief introduction to Romanticism allows Young, in Chapter 4, to combine Mendlesohn's and Clute's theories with Thomas Weiskel's three-stage structure of Romantic transcendence, or stages in which the protagonist encounters the sublime. He then offers close readings of several key characters, demonstrating how each moves away from Thinning to Recovery by contact with the supernatural.

The way that Young continually combines different theoretical devices throughout his monograph, though, is a primary reason why I recommend the book so highly to students and scholars of fantasy fiction. It would be easy, for example, to overuse Clute's and Mendlesohn's contribution to fantasy studies. As with any theoretical foundation, one must be careful in relying too much on a single theory, as this may not offer anything new or significant to our understanding of the field. Since fantasy scholarship has traditionally focused so much on genre definition, over-reliance has been a frequent issue. As a result, some scholars might simply accept Mendlesohn's categories in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* as if they were the final say on the subject, and then move on. In contrast, Young applies his theoretical tools in a way that expands our understanding of both Martin and the theories themselves. As often as I myself have closely read (and reread) Frye, Mendlesohn, Clute, and the other big-name fantasy theorists, I repeatedly found myself being surprised and delighted by how Young chooses to apply their scholarship. Thus, *George R. R. Martin and*

the Fantasy Form not only successfully analyses *ASOIAF* but also effectively furthers the field of fantasy itself by subjecting its most common methodologies to rigorous, unique applications.

For instance, Tzvetan Todorov's theory of hesitation is not much used nowadays, especially by fantasy scholars, but Young surprisingly finds a good application of the hesitation principle to *ASOIAF* in Chapter 5, "Remember That You Were Brothers' – Superstition and Cohesion". In Todorov's theory, the fantastic arises when readers (technically, *implied* readers) hesitate between two equally plausible explanations of events – a realistic one, and a supernatural one. As a result, Todorov's theory excludes most genre fantasy; as the supernatural is confirmed early in fantasy narratives, authors do not create any significant readerly hesitation. According to Young, however, Martin harnesses the "rhetorical structure of the Todorovian fantastic" by maintaining hesitation – for several thousand pages, in some cases – only to move back and forth between hesitation and confirmation of information and events, especially with regards to the supernatural (137). For example, several characters inform Jon Snow that Mance Rayder has been searching for the Horn of Joramun. The information they provide results in

layers of conflicting information ... [but] Jon Snow, the protagonist of a Mendlesohnian intrusion fantasy, is hotwired to believe Ygritte when she tells him Mance was looking for the horn. He thus believes Mance when he presents the warhorn. (133)

As can be seen in this example, Young combines Todorov's and Mendlesohn's theories to demonstrate how a readerly hesitation is maintained. In Chapter 6, "But Here You Are' – Magic and Healing", Young then turns to David Sandner and a focus on moments of Todorovian resolution. Here and throughout the book, Young employs this different theoretical model to develop his thesis that Martin is not breaking fantasy expectations so much as manipulating them in order to direct his readers to challenge expectations of heroism and aristocracy. Finally, in Young's conclusion, he offers some final thoughts on the lasting influence and pervasiveness of fantasy fiction. The Introduction and Conclusion thus work together to bracket the importance of Young's analysis of *ASOIAF*, framing his monograph not just as an investigation in Martin's world but as an integral foray into authorial choices which, rather than breaking away from the fantasy tradition, instead pushes the genre forward.

Overall, I found Young's assessment of genre fantasy highly compelling. Rather than seeing fantasy as a dry repetition of the same formula, he deftly demonstrates how incredibly rich and nuanced the genre can be. As well, while structuralist approaches such as Todorov's hesitation principle or even Mendlesohn's "taxonomy" of fantasy rhetorics may seem dated to literary scholars, Young confirms their continued importance in understanding and assessing formulaic literatures. By doing so, Young proves that the works of Frye, Mendlesohn, Clute, Weiskel, Todorov, and Sandner continue to play an important role in contemporary fantasy today. *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form* is a must-read for any scholar of fantasy, especially those who seek to better understand the unceasing conversation between authors and critics in the field.

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BOOK REVIEW:

*Fantasy Fictions from the Bengal Renaissance:
Abanindranath Tagore's The Make-Believe
Prince and Gaganendranath Tagore's Toddy-cat
the Bold*

Abhishek Sarkar

Sircar, Sanjay, translator. *Fantasy Fictions from the Bengal Renaissance: Abanindranath Tagore's The Make-Believe Prince and Gaganendranath Tagore's Toddy-cat the Bold*. Oxford UP India, 2018. ISBN: 978-0199486755.

This volume presents deft translations of two Bangla children's stories with a scholarly apparatus of admirable amplitude and depth. In its dual capacity, this volume is an unprecedented contribution to scholarship published in English on children's literature and/or fantasy fiction from South Asia. It includes translations of two Bangla literary texts, *Kheerer Putul* or "The Make-Believe Prince" (1896), which is the more widely known of the two among the native speakers of the language, and *Bhondar Bahadur* or "Toddy-cat the Bold" (1926). The authors of these two fantasy stories are the brothers Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951) and Gaganendranath Tagore (1867–1938) respectively, who were famous painters and nephews of the Indian cultural icon Rabin-dranath Tagore (1861–1941). This is the first time that *Bhondar Bahadur*, the only literary work by the elder Tagore brother, has been translated into English.

Kheerer Putul has as its central character an anthropomorphised monkey, the pet of the neglected, childless Elder Queen. He tricks the king into believing that she has produced an heir and later acquires a ready-made 10-year old son for her by blackmailing the Venerable Shasthi, Hindu goddess of procreation and protectress of children. As Sircar points out in his introduction

to *Kheerer Putul*, this fantasy novella is located somewhere between an “old, anonymous, orally transmitted folk tale now written down” – a Buchmaerchen – and a “fully original, newly written Kunstmaerchen” (29). Sircar convincingly demonstrates that *Kheerer Putul* is a variation on AT Tale Type 459, which deals with “The Make-Believe Son (Daughter)” (17). He also relates this novella with *bratakatha*, or Bengali Hindu women’s ritual tales, providing a 15-item table comparing the Bangla (comic) Kunstmaerchen with the (hortatory, reverential) *bratakatha* (39–41). Altogether, rather than just a knee-jerk mode of template-matching, Sircar’s volume initiates a dialogue between Western-style theories of folklore studies and a painstaking survey of Bengali culture and Bangla literature. It sets a salubrious example for future researchers in the field.

Bhondar Bahadur, in contrast, reworks in a creative way the Carrollian model of the there-and-back-again dream quest, infusing it generously with elements of folktale, literary fairy tale, mock-heroic romance, and SF. Taking a delicious bit of liberty, Sircar names the narrator the “Old Boy”. This character travels with “Elder Brother” Bhondar to rescue the latter’s son, Nichua, who has been kidnapped by the Two-Faced Rakshasa-demon of the Chutupalu Jungle. They are accompanied by Buddhimanta (a wise hare) and subsequently joined by Parrot Saheb (a railway official). After receiving cheerful tidings about Nichua and Parrot Saheb’s son from the “Top-Knotted Old Mother” (this is how Sircar translates *Jate-buri-ma* from the original), the questers dine and go to sleep. When the Old Boy wakes up, he realises that he has dreamed the entire adventure. As Sircar astutely points out, Lewis Carroll’s monsters and card/chess characters possess an individuality that is denied to the more decorative equivalents in *Bhondar Bahadur* (186–88), but Gaganendranath Tagore’s story reflects the ethnically and culturally variegated society of contemporary Bengal as a lived experience that was beyond the ken of the Alice books (191).

Sircar’s translation is immensely readable, imitating the rhythms and registers of the original Bangla prose while also reaching after cultural equivalence. On the whole, the translation exemplifies what Lawrence Venuti would call “domestication” (rather than “foreignisation”). One strategy adopted by Sircar is to transliterate a Bangla word or give a literal translation for it, or supply a descriptive tag, followed immediately by the corresponding or approximate English term. For example, “my Tal-Betal-siddha Lathi” in *Bhondar Bahadur* is followed by the appositional phrase “my Ghoulie-Ghostie Magic-Mastery Staff” (269), which gestures towards its significance among the native speakers despite the different cultural fields of the two terms. This device is seen more clearly in the following paragraph from the same story describing the Top-Knotted Old Mother in a glamorous avatar:

Her garb was a sari of needle-flower jasmine [English name for *jūi*], on which was set a border of “moon-bright jasmynes” [literal translation of the Bangla name *chandramallika*], *chrysanthemums* [conventional English name for the same flower]. On her neck were seven coils of *night jasmine flowers* [English name for *shiuli*]. On her head was a wonderful crown of fresh blades of *bent grass* [English name for *durba*], on which lay drops of dew that shimmered like diamonds. In her two ears were ear hoops of the flowers of “*eternal married good fortune and its caresses*”

[literal translation of the Bangla name *sadasohagini*], *the cayenne jasmine* [English name for the flower] – and on her forehead effulgently glowed an *auspicious dot* [descriptive tag for *tip*] of the “*evening star*” [literal translation of the name *sandhyatara*], *the rock jasmine flower* [English name for the flower]. (293; italics added)

The translated paragraph has 89 words as opposed to the 39 of the original Bangla text, but it still makes for unimpeded and enjoyable reading – a remarkable accomplishment indeed.

Sircar’s footnotes do more than just elucidate culture-specific expressions: they also point out his decisions about transliteration, translation, and the introduction of paragraph breaks. In addition, Sircar provides fully annotated translations for all the Bangla nursery rhymes to which the two stories allude, performing a challenging task with ease and finesse. Peter Hunt in his foreword places the volume in the category of “children’s texts, along with folklore and fairy tales” that are “increasingly being published in annotated editions for a dual (although primarily adult) audience” (x). Given the fluency and accessibility of Sircar’s translation, these stories can also appeal to child readers – that is, if they are not scared away by the massive scholarly apparatus.

To give a measure of the daunting amount of scholarship inserted into *Fantasy Fictions from the Bengal Renaissance*, the two translated texts (including Sircar’s copious footnotes) form less than one-fourth of the book’s total length. Apart from a long preface that identifies the time-place coordinates and the intended audience for the original texts, as well as for Sircar’s translation, the volume features an introduction to *Kheerer Putul* (with 10 sub-sections) accompanied by an annotated bibliography, plus an introduction to *Bhondar Bahadur* (with 16 sub-sections) and nine accompanying appendices (several of them having their own substantive and bibliographic notes). In the appendices, Sircar meticulously discusses – among other things – why the *Bhondar* should be recognised as a toddy-cat, an animal similar to the civet cat, and not as an otter; throws light upon plants, musical instruments, and physical measures mentioned in the story; discusses Gaganendranath Tagore’s career as a painter and the affinity of his paintings with the story; and records the variations between *Bhondar Bahadur* and its earlier unpublished version, “Dadabhay-er Deyala” (“Grandfather’s Infant Dreaming Smiling Movements”). One might complain that the commentaries reek of the midnight oil and involve much Xanaduist hair-splitting. But what shines through is a personal attachment to the texts over a lifetime. Sircar clearly does not labour under the numerical tyranny of the “publish or perish” regime, or he would have fashioned two separate books and about 20 peer-reviewed articles out of this material.

One problem with the volume, though, is the difficulty of navigating it. The table of contents shows the chapter breaks (which are not in the source texts, but have been added by the translator) in the two already quite brief stories. However, the table of contents does not mark out the divisions in the introduction and appendices, although they are often quite fulsome and densely packed with information. An index would have been immensely helpful. This volume would work better as an eBook with hypertexts, even though that would take away much of its laidback, old-world charm. Furthermore, Sircar transliterates Bangla names inconsistently. For example, he uses diacritical

marks selectively, ignoring the standard protocols for transliteration already in use. He does not provide a chart for the pronunciation of Bangla phonemes or try to indicate the sound of Bangla words in the glosses, although it would not be uncalled for in a volume of such erudition. Although Sircar explains why he renders the name of the *danava*-demon in *Bhondar Bahadur* as “Maiy” and labels this transliteration as a compromise (234), this decision is still far from cogent. “Moy”, an option he considered and discarded, would appear much less egregious to the native Bangla speaker. Elsewhere, the Bangla word *hattamala* (translated by Sircar as “Hurley-Burley”) becomes “Hatta-mals” in a footnote (143). There are also a few, albeit rare, slips in information. For example, Vijaya Dashmi Day is not on a full moon (217), as Sircar himself indicates on his previous page. Further, the worship of the goddess Durga in Bengal is a five-day affair, not a 10-day festival as Sircar seems to suggest (234; also 268). Apart from this, the preface has fewer endnotes than necessary. Sircar does not cite any authority for the periodisation he offers for the highly contentious cultural phenomenon called the “Bengal Renaissance”. On a different note, Sircar explains later why the volume features no illustration for *Bhondar Bahadur* (as opposed to nine for *Kheerer Putul*), but one still longs for some glimpse of Gaganendranath’s enigmatic and tantalising visual expressions between the covers of the volume.

However, the merits of the volume far outweigh its errors and omissions. It inaugurates a model for translators and researchers to emulate. Sircar should be thanked, too, for acknowledging that Abanindranath Tagore derived the plot kernel for *Kheerer Putul* from a folktale written down by Mrinalini Devi (1874–1902), Rabindranath Tagore’s wife, in an exercise book (3). He also discusses two folk-based plays (49; also 288) written by Jnanadanandini Devi (1850–1941), Rabindranath’s feisty sister-in-law, who is remembered by Bengalis today chiefly for defying gendered seclusion and travelling to England without any male guardian. This gives the Tagore women the literary recognition they deserve but are so often denied. Could one perhaps expect Sircar to produce a similar volume on Jnanadanandini Devi’s writings for children?

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BOOK REVIEW:

*Posthuman Bliss? The Failed Promise of
Transhumanism*

Amar Singh

Levin, Susan B. *Posthuman Bliss? The Failed Promise of Transhumanism*.
Oxford UP, 2021. ISBN 978-0190051495.

From at least as early as classical and ancient myth, the idea of transcending the limits of the human body has been an innate desire since seemingly forever, and is now often epitomised by the discourses of transhumanism. The proponents of transhumanism, by building upon the grandiloquent task of becoming a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, have crafted a moral and social contract to better themselves by going beyond the confines of the “merely” human. This idea of transcending human limitations as matching the will of gods, though, comes with certain weaknesses. With an eye-catching title containing a question mark, Susan B. Levin joins an interdisciplinary debate on the project of radical human enhancement. In *Posthuman Bliss? The Failed Promise of Transhumanism*, Levin not only put the “bliss” of enhancement in question but vigorously argues against radical bioenhancement. She attends to the paradox inherent in the transhumanists’ philosophical positions, which she proposes are based upon “questionable and outdated claims” (3) while judging their scientific rationale as nothing but “seductive fantasy” (2).

Her primary targets include some of the more prominent theories of transhumanism – Libertarian Transhumanism, Democratic Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism – all sharing a common goal of initiating human enhancement through science and technology. The Utilitarian transhumanist David Pearce, for instance, proposes in *The Hedonistic Imperative* (1995) that human suffering can be eradicated through genetic engineering. Along the same lines as Pearce come transhumanists like Max

More and Anders Sandberg, who recommend “morphological freedom” and advocate for radical alterations in the human body through technological means like surgery, biotechnology, or uploading. Against such radical endorsement of bioenhancement, Levin extracts ideas from moral philosophy, taking an Aristotelian concern for human flourishing as centred on virtue ethics, and using that philosophical position to complicate current transhumanist scholarship. In addition, any SF scholars interested in literary or film studies should find Levin’s book immensely useful. For example, SF films and novels often deal with transhumanist themes, and they often venture into virtue ethics by constantly posing the question, “Who we are as people, and what should the role of science and technology be?” Such questions are indeed the crux of Levin’s book, even if she approaches the subject primarily from the standpoint of moral philosophy rather than literary or film criticism.

In the first two chapters, “Assessing Transhumanist Advocacy of Cognitive Bioenhancement” and “Why We Should Reject Transhumanists’ Entire Lens on Mind and Brain”, Levin presents the philosophical estimations made by transhumanists to support their causes, and in the process she lays bare the weaknesses she sees within those ideas. Chapter 1 commences with the two different modules of essentialist claims of transhumanism. One claim wishes to minimise alteration in order to preserve the fabric of what it considers essential about human nature; the other essentialist claim ranks reason above everything else, so that enhancing reason becomes the core transhumanist task. Levin begins by meticulously dealing with the arguments of scholars who invoke the “fundamental” nature of humans to be preserved. Such propositions are often besought in the form of “Factor X” or the “giftedness” that human nature is, disturbing that which threatens human “dignity”. The reliance on preserving human nature while altering it – moderately or not – becomes insupportable in her view. Furthermore, she argues that transhumanists fail to provide adequate reasons for what elements of being human we should save. Since human nature has always been about evolution, the problem in choosing which aspects of human nature to save leaves only the second kind of essentialism – rationalist essentialism – on the table.

These rational essentialists, according to Levin, aspire to “unbound self-creation, whose origin is reason” (17). Rationality becomes the crux against fending off the negative traits of the “affects” to be drained out of human nature. Emotions such as anger are considered such a negative trait; humans should be freed of anger to reach their highest potential, which transhumanists claim is achievable by reason alone. As Levin says, not only “does the impetus to self-creation originate in reason, but reason is what gives it content and direction throughout” (19). To counteract such rational fanaticism, Levin raises the example of children with ADHD symptomology who display huge potentials of creativity, and by highlighting this example the cause of human development. For Levin, the human mind works in mysterious ways, and linking human development to rationality alone falls back to humanism simply.

Levin extends the philosophical debate in Chapter 2, which elucidates how transhumanists often mistake rationality with cognition as if their goal is to turn humans into mere data-feeding machines. Theories such as “Basic Emotion” or “Dual Process” compartmentalise emotions from cognition and suggest that we can develop a non-emotive and “pure” rationality. Instead Levin, borrowing ideas from Klaus Shere and Aristotle, proposes that emotions

are actually key to human rationality. The critical difference between human and non-human actors is in the former's ability to check involuntary emotions as well as to turn the so-called negative emotions into positives for social causes, such as turning anger into a way to promote justice. Humans thus turn their potential into actuality through the mean or psychic balance of cognition and emotions.

The third chapter, "Evaluating the Debate Thus Far Over Moral Bioenhancement", explores ongoing scientific inquiries that, in turn, affect sociological patterns. According to Levin, transhumanists consider bioenhancement an urgent necessity given planetary degradation in the anthropogenic era. Such bioenhancement therefore becomes a moral responsibility for humans to rise above their selfish needs and think of collective goodness. Altruism and a sense of justice should thus become a guiding force for the implementation and regulation of bioenhancement. And, certainly, there are examples of certain drugs that influence human behavior for the better. Transhumanists often enjoy bringing up oxytocin and serotonin as examples. A similar kind of behavioral screening can be done by genetic testing, and this can help assess the behavioral patterns a person might adopt. However, Levin maintains that such measures ignore the unpredictability of human nature itself. Oxytocin and serotonin also have negative side effects, and the success of genetic testing is highly questionable. Such for-or-against opinions on moral bioenhancement raise the classic theme of *akrasia* debated by scholars for ages, where people must not only act in a morally right way, but also be morally motivated as well. This argument extends into debates about "internalism and externalism", where the right motivation is always considered to be encouraged internally in a person (122). Yet the moment such right motivation is externally induced, it can remove a person from the psychic struggle inherent to internalisation.

Levin raises the utilitarian-versus-deontological debate in two chapters, "Utilitarian Commitments of Transhumanists and Their Sociopolitical Implications" and "Creating a Higher Breed: Transhumanism and the Prophecy of Anglo-American Eugenics". She contrasts the rights of an individual – something at the core of any liberal democracy – against the transhumanist proposal of binding the same individual by doing away with individual rights for the greater good. Given the current pandemic, such debates have a great deal of currency today. To avert future crises like the pandemic, however, transhumanists assert over that we replace Darwinian evolution with pure rationality so that all and sundry could be aligned in unison for the betterment of society. Yet with such eugenic proposals, says Levin, transhumanists are playing more with metaphors *about* science than with the actual science they wish to privilege.

The sixth chapter, "Transhumanists' Informational View of Being and Knowledge", argues explicitly that transhumanists tend to confuse metaphors with reality itself. Science has always used metaphors to explain its core ideas to lay people, but Levin argues that transhumanists grant precedence to the metaphors about human progression over the actual science. Levin then provides an array of historical surveys leading to the development of biotechnology, assessing the causes that compare the human brain with machinery, a comparison that prioritises information over intelligence. Transhumanists imagine the future into alternate versions, where choosing the

best option could lead to utopia. Even if the future remains only in possibilities, though, Levin suggests that transhumanists overlook the unpredictability of human-made decisions. In the concluding chapter, “Living Virtuously as a Regulative Model”, Levin provides what she believes could be the best-case model for human development. It is not by any external imposition that humans can progress, but rather – as the title of the chapter suggests – by inculcating virtue as the root of human flourishing. Rather than seeking radical enhancement, development should come organically; we should expose children to virtue ethics, a practice whereby the teleological ends are what matter most to human life.

The book’s conclusion makes substantial arguments about boosting human nature to develop itself without any coerced or external measure. Ironically, however, Levin herself seems to drift into similar zones of metaphor, which had been one of her main complaints against the transhumanists. Levin proposes to improve the human situation “not least because there is no viable alternative” (232). To answer the same, she turns towards Greek philosophical ethics, which seek to identify “what living well for human beings involves”, and suggests *eudaimonia* or flourishing as the final end for humans (234). Here, she descends into similar viewpoints to those of the first kind of transhumanist essentialists against whom she argued in Chapter One. To instill virtue ethics, early education must “help motivate children toward civic concern” (251). Unfortunately, the encouragement of virtue ethics may be locally restricted to specific regions where debates, discussions, and disagreements will foster flourishing, and this often entails the freedom of speech prized by liberal democracies. Even though Levin firmly believes in her proposition of inculcating virtues from early education, her solution – if successful – will yield results generations ahead, and that too when the best-case scenario prevails (i.e. liberal democracy, according to Levin) in cultivating virtuous values. My objection comes from two facts: (1) Levin’s solution is confined to liberal democratic cultures, and (2) Levin overlooks the reality that (Western) cultural values may legitimately differ from those found in regions such as Asia, Africa, or the Arabian world, and that imposing a generalised notion of virtue ethics onto the other cultures shall expose humans to socio-political exercises that may engender friction.

Unfortunately, Levin does not explain how such scenarios could be prevented. Despite her adroitly crafted (yet preachy) conclusion, however, she raises compelling issues against the seductions of radical bioenhancement, although on a practical level reading *Posthuman Bliss?* requires an almost “posthuman” effort from the reader, as every second line is replete with quotes and citations that hinder the pace of the arguments. Still, once one gets past the many quotes and difficult syntax, Levin’s book should benefit academic scholars in philosophy and literary criticism in SF alike.

Biography: Amar Singh is currently pursuing postdoctoral research at Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany. He also holds a permanent position as Assistant Professor in English at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. His most recent publication is a co-edited collection, *The Hero and Hero-Making Across Genres* (Routledge 2021).



BOOK REVIEW:

*The Nature of the Beast: Transformations
of the Werewolf from the 1970s to the
Twenty-First Century*

Jonathan William Thurston-Torres

Crossen, Carys. *The Nature of the Beast: Transformations of the Werewolf from the 1970s to the Twenty-First Century*. U of Wales P, 2019. ISBN: 978-1786834560.

It is not often that werewolf scholars look to the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Scholars like Brian J. Frost in *The Essential Guide to Werewolf Literature* (2003) or editors Robert McKay and John Miller with their book *Werewolves, Wolves and the Gothic* (2017) tend to prioritise the Victorian tradition of werewolves, especially in literature. They like Clemence Housman's *The Were-wolf* (1896), and they see Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) as the ending point for much of werewolf lore. Hannah Priest, in her edited collection *She-Wolf* (2015), compiles essays that break the standard scholarly boundary-markers by looking at horror films and even tabletop role-playing games; and, just as importantly, her volume looks at female werewolves across a multi-national corpus of werewolf literature. Carys Crossen starts here, acknowledging that werewolf scholarship both has a predilection for the far-off past and is becoming increasingly political. As a result, *The Nature of the Beast* seeks to prove a wholly modern concern for the werewolf, that it has become the object of sympathy and a greater reflection of humanity than beastliness.

Crossen begins the book with a problem: until the 21st century, the werewolf was a neglected object of critical study, and scholars examining werewolf discourse used a very limiting lens. As Crossen states in her introduction, however, the werewolf is more than the “reductive definition of

the beast within” (1). Crossen attributes this lack of critical popularity for the werewolf, especially when compared with the vampire studies or the recent surge in zombie studies, to a kind of classism: “If the vampire is the adored, sophisticated aristocrat of the horror genre, the werewolf appears to be the poor peasant relation whom it embarrasses people to acknowledge” (3). As such, Crossen is dealing with a fairly large gap in horror discourse, which might make a survey type of goal natural for her book. Instead, she takes the more interesting route: she argues that there is a definite turn in the significance of the modern werewolf, and that modern trends in the werewolf figure “all stem from the werewolf’s acquisition of subjectivity” (10). That precise goal is what makes the book unique. She eschews the “increasingly outdated Freudian concept of the beast within” in favor of the “concept of subjectivity using the theories of Deleuze and Guattari” (10). The book thus takes a novel, yet productive, approach to the literary werewolf. Its core argument, while ostensibly simple in premise, is valuable to werewolf discourse as a whole.

The organisation for this book sets up the initial theory needed, then provides a number of case studies, before reaching a conclusion. Because of the case-study approach, the body chapters could have been placed in any order without much consequence to the book as a whole. Given that “there is no one clear definition of lycanthropic subjectivity” (224), the organisation for the book works as a strength. The introduction begins with an exploration of “subjectivity in relation to the werewolf” (12). The following three body chapters define, exemplify, and analyse what Crossen calls “developments of subjectivity”: the werewolf pack, the werewolf lawgiver, and the urban werewolf. These three aspects form the core of what Crossen sees as modern werewolf subjectivity. These tropes challenge the older Victorian werewolf, which often presents a “beast within” trope, the idea that the werewolf stands in as a physical representation of humanity’s potential to devolve to a more primitive state, or at least the capacity for evil within everyone. Instead, Crossen showcases a werewolf with modern sensibilities, one that engages in social dynamics, participates in the law, and lives in the city. The last body chapter focuses on representations of werewolves in young-adult literature, and the conclusion summarises the main themes of the book while advancing the claim that werewolf subjectivity is still “only just becoming apparent” (224).

The first chapter, “Some Wolves Are Hairy on the Inside’: The Werewolf’s Journey Towards Subjectivity”, presents Crossen’s main concept of werewolf subjectivity. Here, Crossen starts with the “classic werewolf”, the archetype whose theoretical nature relies on a Freudian “beast within” motif, before moving to the “new werewolf” who has the ability to think, feel, and express while in wolf form. This chapter surprised me. Crossen was able not only to link theory to her argument but make that theory approachable and digestible.

Perhaps the oddest aspect of this chapter is essentially one of the core arguments of the book: there is subjectivity in the modern werewolf. To those new to werewolf discourse, as Crossen says, the dominant werewolf scholarship focuses on the Victorian past. So, there really is not much in place currently to theorise the modern werewolf. If you wanted, say, to write about the biracial werewolf in Stephen Graham Jones’ *Mongrels* (2016), you would find yourself probably assessing much “beast within” discourse in your own analysis. But you would also know by being a consumer of literature in the 21st century that there

are sympathetic, subjective werewolves, such as those from *Twilight* or *The Originals*. So, you would know a decent amount about werewolf subjectivity without necessarily having the theory to back it up. I find that Crossen's core argument is not too "profound" – it is something I am sure many high-school students have written about at this point in less high terminology – but, as Crossen indicates throughout her introduction, scholars just are not talking about the new werewolf enough, and the groundwork has not yet been set in this field. Crossen is forging a starting vocabulary for academics to talk about these modern werewolves, even if the argument seems obvious to a general consumer of werewolf media. This chapter, even by itself, is a gem. I absolutely intend to assign this chapter in my horror classes, especially for its use of theory.

The second chapter works much more with close reading. "Do You Enjoy the Company of Wolves?: The Lycanthrope, the Werewolf Pack and Human Society" addresses a trope that emerged from the evolutions to werewolf subjectivity mentioned in the previous chapter: the social werewolf. Crossen includes many examples of wolf society in this chapter, such as the lone wolf and the pack animal. She leans on Priest's work with werewolf gender and sexuality to highlight the cultural shift from the isolated "lone wolf" to the pack animal seen in *Being Human* (2008–13), *Wolfblood* (2012–17), or *Bitten* (2014–16). While the chapter prioritises gender and family dynamics, the animal-studies scholar in me would have loved to see more work in animal studies here. Lori Gruen gets a brief nod (62), but generally the chapter fails to ask a number of important questions. For example, Crossen does note that real-life wolf packs are often led by female wolves, as evidenced by nature writer Barry Lopez, but she does not go on to question the Western myths of the "alpha male" and the cultural significance of the "lone wolf" that seem integral to the conversations around the patriarchal pack and exceptional films that form the cornerstone of the chapter. While I would not necessarily say that writers like Lopez need to have been quoted here, it seems like a missed opportunity for animal studies to be so absent from this analysis of the werewolf, when our evolving knowledge of actual wolves informs our interpretations of werewolves in modern literature.

Next, Crossen tackles werewolves and law in "Before the Law Therefore, There Cannot Be Monsters...". This chapter falls flat, unfortunately, as the definition of "law" seems to shift throughout the chapter. Crossen starts by comparing lycanthrope law to Kipling's "the Law of the Jungle" (95). Next, she references Susan Chaplin in trying to define what she means by "law", but her definition – "a contaminated, limited and even perverse space" (98) – is hardly concrete enough to provide a productive working definition. A representative example of equivocation happens when analysing *The Wolf-Man* (2010), a film where Crossen starts by calling it an example of the "inadequacy of human law in relation to the lycanthrope" but moves on to say the "laws of science are clearly suspended" (100). The next mention of "law" happens a few lines down: "it is safe to assume the law he [Talbot the werewolf] embodies will prove a poor defense against his burgeoning lycanthropy" (100). In a section devoted to the film's lawlessness, it is unclear what law precisely Talbot embodies, and Crossen does not offer an explanation. The term "law" continues being thrown around recklessly, with Crossen making slight claims about lycanthropes and natural law, human law, and even lawgiving (in the case of a werewolf cop). But

Crossen never stays with an argument long enough to be cogent. It would have been more pertinent, perhaps, to focus on one type of law and analyse that alongside the werewolf as opposed to encompassing every possible meaning of the word “law”.

The penultimate chapter, “The Werewolf in the Concrete Jungle”, is much stronger, focusing on the werewolf as a figure in multiple urban spaces. Crossen implements space theory, examining the liminal suburbs and the “urban jungle”. The close readings of works like *Ginger Snaps* makes this a valuable chapter. For example, the reading of the American suburbs as “suitable environments for liminal monsters” makes for compelling readings of subjective werewolves alongside these hybridised social spaces (145). Hybridity becomes realised in a biopolitical way here. Moreover, the various urban werewolf tropes are clearly laid out, fleshed out, exemplified, and analysed. I could easily use this chapter to teach the film alongside modern werewolf films, as well as using the chapter as a case study of strong academic writing.

Crossen analyses YA werewolf literature in the final chapter, “Growing Pains”. The intersectional analyses of race, class, and gender in the close readings here are productive for a classroom setting, showing the richness of werewolf subjectivity in YA literature. She claims early on, despite some exceptions, that werewolf YA lit often “errs” by showing teenage werewolves as “losing the ability to shape-shift as they enter adulthood”, ultimately encouraging conformity in order to come of age (180). Concepts like “fitting in” become integral to this aspect of the subjective werewolf. More than many of the other chapters, though, this one felt too rushed. There are so many short sections here, like one on werewolf orphans, race and class, and sexuality that get glossed over in three or four pages each, making many of these categories feel more like an inclusivity afterthought than an integral aspect of the genre or Crossen’s theory.

Overall, *The Nature of the Beast* should be on the shelf of any horror-theory scholar or werewolf reader. It sets up a number of basic academic arguments that can serve as a point of departure for future werewolf studies. While the work contained here does not *feel* particularly ground-breaking insofar as the claims made seem “easy”, the fact is that this work hasn’t been done yet. Crossen is thus creating a foundation for future werewolf scholars, granting us a term that should become part of our regular discourse around werewolves: werewolf subjectivity. The modern werewolf is such a novel and unpopular figure for academic inquiry that it is important that scholars begin making these inquiries. The theory here is accessible, and Crossen’s writing, especially at the book’s start, models a strong blending of theory with reading popular literature. I know that future werewolf scholars will quote the opening chapters of this book often.

Biography: Jonathan W. Thurston-Torres is a PhD candidate in English and Animal Studies at Michigan State University. They are also an HIV-rights activist in the Lansing community. Their book *Blood Criminals: Living with HIV in the 21st Century* was nominated as POZ Magazine Book of the Year, and their edited collection *Animals and Race* is forthcoming from Michigan State University Press.



BOOK REVIEW:

*Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E Howard
and Others*

Joseph Rex Young

Derie, Bobby. *Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E Howard and Others*. Hippocampus Press, 2019. ISBN 978-1614982586.

In *The Secret Life of Puppets* Victoria Nelson describes pulp magazines like *Weird Tales* as the “Ur-source of modern American popular literature and film” (103). If this slightly bold statement may be accepted, it is odd that *Weird Tales* is so often discussed (as in Nelson’s book) within the context of scholarship on H. P. Lovecraft, whose wordy evocations of abstract existential peril were atypical of the magazine’s content. Although Bobby Derie’s book is a collection of essays of literary biography rather than of literary or cultural criticism, it arguably corrects this oddity by the simple virtue of the fact that Derie has chosen to place Robert E. Howard at the centre of his discussion of the contributors to the “unique magazine”.

The sections of the book in which Derie ventures into literary criticism are some of the best. In “The Shadow Out of Spain”, for example, he goes into detail on Howard’s discussions with Lovecraft about race, interestingly withholding his own judgement and letting the less sensible aspects of this discourse speak for themselves via extensive block quotations. Derie then examines the downstream effect of these racial ideas on Howard’s writing in regard to his depiction of Mexico and Mexicans in his Western stories such as “Pilgrims of the Pecos” (1936) and “The Horror from the Mound” (1932). Derie therefore demonstrates these two writers never “re-examined their fundamental prejudices”, not by clutching his pearls, but by examining the impact of their unenlightened attitudes on their (and centrally Howard’s) work. This approach successfully covers an inflammatory issue in a measured,

undramatic way, showing that Howard's racism manifested itself primarily in stories focalised by "casually racist" characters such as Steve Brill. This is a constructive way of approaching an unpleasant elephant in the room, and *Weird Talers* might have benefitted from more material in this vein. That the other essays in the book follow other approaches, however, should not be taken as a fault. This is not a work of literary criticism per se but an effort to place Howard in the role Lovecraft so often fills – the centre of an epistolary network of *Weird Tales* contributors – and to examine how this coterie functioned through their professional and personal relationships.

In this pursuit Derie records some of the nuts and bolts of life as a professional author in the second quarter of the 20th century. In his essay "Conan and the OAK: Robert E. Howard and Otis Adelbert Kline", he examines Howard's working relationship with the author-turned-agent who helped him crack markets such as *Action Stories* and *Strange Detective Stories*. This relationship was "so-so" (165), with Kline earning his commission handily in some instances but not at all in others. The essay reveals how a hardened professional like Howard went about his business. This combines to good effect with other essays showing that, while Howard may have abjured Lovecraft's mannered intellectualism, he was a shrewd autodidact who carefully researched the matters about which he presumed to write. The opening essay of Derie's collection, for example, retells the famous story of how Howard and Lovecraft became acquainted after the former author caught the latter out on an obscure point of linguistics. Derie ably evokes the dynamic between Howard's care about doing a quality job and the necessity to get that job done at a rate of "one to two stories a month" (164). It is to Derie's considerable credit that he portrays this matter as a dynamic rather than a tension. Unlike S. T. Joshi lambasting the "aesthetic ruination" (424) of Robert W. Chambers's mimetic fiction, Derie never judges Howard for exploring genres other than the fantasy on which his reputation chiefly rests. This agnosticism of genre provides a fuller, and perhaps more accurate, portrait than would have been possible if Derie had simply set out to study the creator of Conan. The aforementioned discussion of "The Shadow Out of Spain" is one case in point. Meanwhile, Derie's essays "That Fool Olsen" and "Conan and the Dweller: Robert E. Howard and William Lumley" are sprightly, entertaining demonstrations that speculative fiction writers have been pestered by lifestyle fantasists since the early days of the tradition.

Unfortunately, *Weird Talers* also has some significant flaws. The essays have been only lightly re-edited into their collected forms, and there is a fair amount of repetition of material. Some block quotes reappear in multiple chapters over the course of the book. A little extra work might have streamlined things, perhaps imparting some shape or overall thesis to the content, which could have then sharpened the impact of individual pieces. Derie's discussion of Howard's interactions with Clark Ashton Smith concludes with a "Conjectural Timeline of Correspondence" that aids the reader in thinking through the essay. No such guide helps the reader through the other essays. This is a sometimes frustrating omission, as in the case of the essay "The Two Bobs", in which Derie tackles the relationship between Howard and Robert H. Barlow, a figure whose importance in the development of American fantasy has yet to be fully elucidated. The absence of any appendix on exactly who was who within this circle is also regrettable. A non-specialist in the field, looking to this

book for an introduction to the Weird Talers, could be forgiven for needing explicit explanations for who Barlow, Frank Belknap Long, or Seabury Quinn were. Although Derie does provide *in situ* introductions to some of these people (the one on Quinn is praiseworthy), some sort of explicit list of dramatis personae or body of author notes, such as that found in Douglas Anderson's *Tales Before Tolkien* (2003), would have been useful. The absence of expository addenda pushes the focus of the book back towards Howard, who assumes a much clearer shape than the overall *Weird Tales* circle Derie takes as his titular subject matter.

The ratio of reproduced correspondence to Derie's discussion thereof is another issue. Derie presents a series of essays, but there are times in which it seems he would have preferred to annotate a collection of letters. There is a three-page section of *Weird Tales* in which he offers only eight lines of commentary on three enormous block quotes. Annotations to the letters of literary figures are – depending on the subject – noble things. The *Weird Tales*, writers acquainted with each other predominantly by mail, would be appropriate subjects for such treatment. One could easily imagine multiple volumes of annotated letters, perhaps one each focussing on a major member of the circle, in the manner of Hippocampus Press's existing collections of the essays of Lovecraft. Hippocampus would be the obvious publisher to handle such a project, and Derie the obvious writer to produce it for them. This would possibly have been a more rewarding project for author and reader alike. Although there is plenty of creditable material in Derie's current book, the curation of the individual parts into a collected whole seems lacking.

This being the case, *Weird Tales* is nevertheless an interesting look at a group of imaginations who stand – per Victoria Nelson – as forerunners to contemporary speculative fiction stars like George R. R. Martin and Suzanne Collins. Derie's book provides a serious, non-judgemental look at an easily trivialised or overlooked episode of cultural history. Although Howard perhaps unduly dominates the discussion, the shift of focus away from Lovecraft and towards the other *Weird Tales* offers a fresh and potentially highly valuable perspective on the topic. Derie also offers some insights into the professional life of one of modern fantasy's more kinetic imaginations, demonstrating how Howard worked and how his work brought him into contact with other writers. Although sometimes frustrating, the book is a worthwhile addition to fantasy studies that merits consideration by those researching both Howard and the American fantasy tradition in general.

Biography: Dr. Joseph Rex Young lives and works in Dunedin, New Zealand, where he pursues research interests in the intellectual history and formalistic structure of the modern fantasy narrative. He has produced various publications in this field, most notably the book *George R. R. Martin and the Fantasy Form* (Routledge, 2019).

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KIRJA-ARVOSTELU:

Fantasia: Lajit, ilmiö ja yhteiskunta

Essi Varis

Korpua, Jyrki, Irma Hirsjärvi, Urpo Kovala ja Tanja Välisalo (toim.). *Fantasia: Lajit, ilmiö ja yhteiskunta*. Jyväskylä: Nykyluktuuri, 2021. ISBN 978-9513986988.

Opetetaanko fantasiakirjallisuutta korkeakouluissa? Esitettiin kysymys sitten toiveikkaana, ihmetellen tai paheksuen, sitä ennen pitäisi oikeastaan esittää toinen, paljon käytännöllisempi kysymys: *kuinka* fantasiakirjallisuutta voisi opettaa korkeakouluissa? Opetusmateriaalia on nimittäin ollut tarjolla niukalti, varsinkin suomen kielellä. Tähän mennessä laajimmin käytettyjä lähteitä ovat kenties olleet Vesa Sisätön toimittamat hakuteokset, jotka esittelevät otsikoidensa mukaisesti *Ulkomaisia fantasiakirjailijoita* (2003) ja *Kotimaisia tieteis- ja fantasiakirjailijoita* (2006). Tutkimuksellisempi ote näistä teoksista ja niiden jatko-osista kuitenkin puuttuu: ne eivät tartu laajoihin kulttuurisiin ja yhteiskunnallisiin konteksteihin tai tekstien tarkkoihin rakenteisiin ja merkityksiin. Samalta ajalta, 2000-luvun alkuvuosilta ovat peräisin myös Kristian Blombergin, Irma Hirsjärven ja Urpo Kovalan toimittamat *Fantasian monet maailmat* (2004) ja *Totutun tuolla puolen* (2005), jotka eivät kiinnostavista näkökulmistaan huolimatta tarjoa mitenkään kattavaa tai systemaattista kuvaa genren ilmiöistä, historiasta ja tutkimuksesta.

Tämä aukko tietokirjahyllyssä ei ole jäänyt huomaamatta Suomen science fiction- ja fantasiatutkimuksen seuran aktiiveilta eikä Jyväskylän yliopiston nykykulttuurin tutkijoilta, joiden johdolla huikeat 17 tutkijaa ovat nyt kokoontuneet kirjoittamaan fantasiasta, kukin omista tutkimusintresseistään käsin. Mukana ovat luonnollisesti myös alan konkarit Hirsjärvi ja Kovala. Itseään ”ensimmäiseksi laajaksi suomenkieliseksi” fantasian ”oppi- ja tietokirjaksi” tituleeraava, yli 500-sivuinen antologia on siis ennennäkemättömän kattava ja kaivattu lisä kotimaiseen genrefiktion

opetukseen; ei ole liioittelua puhua uudesta virstanpylväästä. Mutta kuinka teos kantaa näin raskaan viitan?

Things that were, things that are

Fantasia-antologia alkaa teoksen toimittajien laatimalla, hieman keskeneräisen oloisella johdantoluvulla, joka kertoo länsimaisen fantasian klassikkoteoreetikot Samuel Taylor Coleridgesta ja Tzvetan Todorovista Kathryn Humeen, Maria Nikolajevaan ja Farah Mendlesohniin. Lisäksi johdanto toteaa, että kokoelman sisällä 'fantasia' on ymmärretty ennen kaikkea transmediaalisena, löyhärajaisena ilmiönä, jonka ääriviivat voivat paikoin laajentua hyvinkin lähelle sen kattogenren, spekulatiivisen fiktion ääriviivoja. Laajasti eri alagenrejä ja esitystapoja syleilevä rajaus näkyykin selvästi loppuissa 21 artikkelissa, jotka on jaettu neljään osastoon. Yhdessä ne muodostavat yleistajuisista katsauksista kohti tutkimuksellisempia, hieman teoreettisempia näkökulmia etenevän kokonaisuuden. Ote on kuitenkin kauttaaltaan pikemminkin kuvaileva kuin argumentoiva. Fantasian ja sen tutkimuksen kaanonია siis ennemminkin kaiutetaan ja pönkitetään kuin haastetaan tai uudistetaan.

Kokoelman oppikirjaidentiteetti näkyy erityisen selvästi sen ensimmäisessä, genrehistoriaa esittelevässä osiossa. Myyttiperinteen, gotiikan, lastenkirjallisuuden, kotimaisen kirjallisuuden ja digitaalisen kulttuurin fantastisia piirteitä ja klassikoita listaavat luvut ovat varsin yllätyksetöntä luettavaa lajia jo tuntevalle tutkijalle. Ne on pikemminkin kirjoitettu palvelemaan opiskelijaa tai satunnaista lukijaa, joka on vasta tutustumassa fantasian maailmoihin: kieli on kauttaaltaan helppolukuista, eikä lukijalta edellytetä ennakkotietoja edes *Odyseian* tai *Frankensteinin* kaltaisista superklassikoista. Erityisesti Maria Ihosen brittiläistä lastenkirjallisuutta esittelevää tekstiä voisi hyvin lukea myös kirjavinkkilistana.

Osion raikkaimman näkökulman tarjoilee Juha Raipolan luku, joka hahmottelee fantasialle paikkaa mordernismin lomaan. Raipola muistuttaa esimerkiksi Henry Jamesin, Franz Kafkan, Virginia Woolfin ja Bruno Schulzin kaltaisten modernistien käyttäneen teoksissaan runsaasti surrealistisia ja fantastisia elementtejä, kun taas erityisesti *Weird Tales* -lehden sivuilla syntynyttä "kumman" kirjallisuuden genreä voisi innovatiivisuudessaan kutsua eräänlaiseksi "varjomodernismiksi". Tärkeimmät erot näiden virtausten välillä liittyvät Raipolan mielestä lähinnä julkaisumuotoon ja yhteiskunnalliseen arvostukseen. Lisäksi hän toteaa kumma-kirjailijoiden keskittyvän tyyli- ja muotokokeilujen sijaan enemmän tarinallisuuteen, kun taas modernistien prioriteetit ovat tavanneet olla päinvastaiset.

Seuraava, fantasiafiktion alalajeja käsittelevä osio ilahduttaa monipuolisuudellaan. Monet edellisestä osiosta tutut kirjoittajat tarttuvat tässä osiossa niihin nykyaikaisiin alalajeihin, joihin heidän edellä käsittelemänsä perinteet ja virtaukset ovat ikään kuin johtaneet tai huipentuneet. Länsimaisen fantasian traditiota esitelletyt Jyrki Korpua luo tiiviin katsauksen miekka ja magia -genreen ja muuhun "kioskifantasiaan". Tomi Sirviö laajentaa näkökulmansa luontevasti gotiikasta kauhufantasiaan ja urbaaniin fantasiaan. Raipola puolestaan jatkaa genrefiktion ja "korkeakirjallisemmän" fiktion välistä rajankäyntiä uuskummaa ja suomikummaa käsittelevässä luvussaan.

Kenties syvimmälle lajin ytimeen pääsee Hanna-Riikka Roine, joka pohtii lyhyesti mutta kiinnostavasti fantasian ja tieteisfiktion välisiä eroja, jännitteitä ja hybridejä. Tieteiskirjallisuudelle tyypillisiä ajatuskokeita ja fantasialle tyypillistä ihmeen tuntua sekoittava tieteisfantasia näyttäytyy Roinen käsittelyssä eräänlaisena metagenrenä, joka tutkii, kuinka fiktio ylipäätään voisi esittää ja käsitellä kuvitteellista, spekulatiivista tai mahdotonta.

Saman osion loppupuoli on omistettu eri medioihin tuotetulle fantasiafiktioille: elokuville ja televisiolle, sarjakuville sekä transmediaalisille eli viestinten välisille tarinamaailmoille. Kirjallisuuden ulkopuolelle tähyäminen on nykypäivän tarinankerronnasta, erityisesti fantasiasta puhuttaessa erinomaisen perusteltua; kuten Korpuja ja Aino-Kaisa Koistinen av-mediaa käsittelevässä yhteisartikkelissaan toteavat, fantasia on monellakin eri mittarilla ”maailman suosituin elokuvagenre” (s. 232). Harmillisesti osion artikkelit jäävät kuitenkin melko luettelomaisiksi historiikkeiksi suosituimmista – ja jostain syystä yksinomaan länsimaisista – tuotannoista. Poikkeuksen muodostaa Katja Kontturin fantastisiin sarjakuviin johdettava artikkeli, joka käsittelee lyhyesti myös japanilaista mangaa ja tarjoaa useita havainnollisia kuvaesimerkkejä siitä, kuinka juuri sarjakuva leikittelee fantasiamaailmojen ja todellisuuden välisillä rajoilla. Samankaltaista viestintävälineiden erityispiirteitä korostavaa otetta olisi kaivattu lisää myös ympäröiviin artikkeleihin. Vielä valitettavampaa on, että lukuisat englanninkielisen kulttuuripiirin ulkopuoliset ilmiöt sivuutetaan täysin: esimerkiksi animaatioista mainitaan ainoastaan Disney-elokuvat, vaikka ympäri maailmaan tuotettava animaatiotaide, kuten japanilainen animaatiotuotanto ja entisen Neuvostoliiton alueella suosittu nukkeanimaatio, on tyypillisesti taipunut nimenomaan fantastiseen suuntaan.

Teoksen kolmas, ”yleisöjä ja yhteiskuntaa” koskeva osasto alkaa artikkelilla, joka olisi ollut enemmän kotonaan edellisen osaston keskivaiheilla. Sisko Ylimartimon fantastisia kirjakuvituksia käsittelevä teksti antaa nimittäin hyviä eväitä myös muiden kuvallisten kerrontamuotojen ymmärtämiselle; se nostaa esiin paitsi kiinnostavia tapausesimerkkejä myös paljon hyödyllistä terminologiaa. Osion loput kolme artikkelia taas muodostavat selkeän ja yhtenäisen fantasian vastaanottoa käsittelevän paketin: Tanja Väლისalon ja Irma Hirsjäven fantasiafaniutta käsittelevä artikkeli, Minna Siikilä-Laitilan katsaus antifaniuden syövereihin ja Jenniliisa Salmisen fantasian poliittisuutta pohtiva teksti ovat kaikki napakoita, helposti lähestyttäviä johdatuksia lupaamiinsa aihepiireihin. Kaikki kolme tekstiä keskittyvät erityisesti viime vuosikymmenten puhutuimpiin fantasiailmiöihin, kuten *Game of Thrones* -sarjaan sekä *Twilight*- ja *Harry Potter* -kirjoihin ja -elokuvaan. Lisäksi Salminen avaa ilahduttavan ikkunan länsimaisen näkökulman ulkopuolelle sivuamalla fantasian roolia Neuvostoliitossa.

Fantasia-kokoelman neljäs ja viimeinen osasto tarjoaa pienen otannan erilaisista tutkimuksellisista kehyksistä, joiden kautta fantasiafiktiota voidaan lähestyä. Teoksen viimeiset neljä artikkelia on siis suunnattu ensisijaisesti genrestä kiinnostuneille tutkijoille ja graduntekijöille. Muiden fantasiafaniiden näkökulmasta aiheet lienevät vähemmän kiinnostavia – mutta kielensä puolesta useimmat tämänkin osion teksteistä ovat kyllä erinomaisen yleistajuisia. Pirjo Lyytikäinen havainnollistaa hyvin, kuinka fantastinen vaikutelma kumpuaa kielestä ja kirjallisesta tyylistä, ja Sanna Tapionkaski esittelee selkeästi feministisen ja queer-tutkimuksen suuntauksia. Lopuksi

Irma Hirsjärven, Urpo Kovalan ja Maria Ruotsalaisen yhteisartikkeli raportoi, millaisia laajoja kyselytutkimuksia fantasian vastaanotosta on tähän mennessä tehty. Pekka Kuusiston strukturalistista fantasiakäsitystä ruotiva artikkeli sen sijaan poikkeaa koko muun teoksen linjasta sikäli, että sen ymmärtäminen edellyttää lukijalta suhteellisen laajaa humanistisen tutkimusperinteen tuntemusta. Jopa tekstin tärkein avainkäsite, strukturalismi, selitetään niin ohimennen, että lukija jolle suuntaus ei ole entuudestaan tuttu tuskin saa siitä otetta. Kuusiston sinänsä kiinnostavan artikkelin sovittaminen kokoelman pyrkimyksiin toimia perustason oppikirjana olisi siis vaatinut teoksen toimittajilta enemmän huomiota.

...and some things that have not yet come to pass

Kaikkiaan *Fantasia*-antologia hakee hieman paikkaansa. Se on ilmestynyt Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisusarjassa, johon on tähän saakka kuulunut lähinnä akateemisia tutkielmia ja artikkelikokoelmia. Kuitenkin teos olisi varmasti eniten kotonaan yliopistojen seminaarihuoneissa, graduntekijöiden pöydillä, kenties jopa lukion äidinkielenopettajien hyllyissä. Koska kokoelma ei näytä aivan perinteiseltä oppikirjalta, riskinä kuitenkin on, että se ei löydä aiottua yleisöään vaan päättyy lähinnä kokeneempien tutkijoiden käsiin, joille teoksen esittelevä, jokseenkin kritiikitön sävy voi puolestaan olla pettymys. Kirjan alkuun liitetty ”fantasian aikajana” on tervetullut askel oppikirjamaiseen suuntaan, mutta teoksen identiteettiä olisi entisestään voinut vahvistaa vaikkapa liittämällä kunkin artikkelin tai osion loppuun oppimiskysymyksiä tai -tehtäviä.

Kuten kokoelmaan koottujen artikkelien laaja kirjo osoittaa, fantasia on massiivinen ja tärkeä ilmiö. Se ei ole pelkkää nörttien alakulttuuria, kuten edelleen joskus luullaan, vaan laaja kulttuurinen juonne – ajattelun ja ilmaisun tapa, joka on levittäytynyt tavalla tai toisella kaikkiin taidemuotoihin halki historian. Niinpä, vaikka juuri näkökulmien moneus onkin kokoelman suurin vahvuus, sillä on väistämättä myös sokeat pisteensä.

Näistä keskeisintä olen jo sivunnutkin. Kokoelmassa on kyllä mukavasti viitteitä suomalaiseen fantasiaan – jopa Jyrki Korpuan laatima kokonainen artikkeli – mutta muuten teoksen näkökulma on, mainittuja poikkeuksia lukuunottamatta, häkellyttävän angloentrinen. Joidenkin aiheiden kohdalla tämä on toki perusteltuakin: tietyt tutkimussuuntaukset paikantuvat vahvasti Eurooppaan ja/tai Pohjois-Amerikkaan, eikä J.R.R. Tolkienin, Mary Shelleyin, Edgar Allan Poen ja H.P. Lovecraftin kaltaisten kirjailijoiden vaikutusta genren kehitykseen voida kiistää. Paljon jää kuitenkin katveeseen: muut Pohjoismaat ja maaginen realismi, aasialaisesta, afrikkalaisesta ja muusta afrokulttuurisesta fantasiatuotannosta puhumattakaan. Ulossulkeva keskittyminen länsimaiseen kulttuuripiiriin on totta kai mittava ongelma englanninkielisessä ja eurooppalaisessa kirjallisuuden- ja kulttuurintutkimuksessa muutenkin. Silti tuntuu oudolta, että monet kirjan artikkeleista viittaavat kriittisesti tähän ongelmaan (esim. s. 29, 222, 449), samaan aikaan kun kokoelma kokonaisuutena toisintaa sitä.

Aiheita kuvitteellisille lisäluville olisi helppo keksiä muiltakin suunnilta. Vaikka digitaalisia pelejä sivutaan jonkin verran, fantasiafaniudelle keskeisten roolipelien käsittely jää parin *Dungeons & Dragons* -maininnan

tasolle. Tutkimuksellisista trendeistä puolestaan uupuvat kognitiivinen spekulatiivisen fiktion tutkimus, jota harjoitetaan jonkin verran Suomessakin, sekä vuosi vuodelta suosittummat ekokriittiset ja posthumanistiset teemat. Kumpikaan näistä virtauksista ei juurikaan ole läsnä edes loppu- tai lähdeviitteiden tasolla. On toki ymmärrettävää, ettei koko fantasian kenttää mitenkään voi käsitellä kattavasti yksissä kansissa, joten en kirjaa näitä ideoita ylös niinkään kritiikkinä kuin ehdotuksina mahdollista jatko-osaa varten.

Hetkellisistä identiteettikriiseistään, erikokoisista aukoistaan ja pienistä asiavirheistään huolimatta *Fantasia*-antologia on suuri palvelus kotimaiselle fantasiaskenelle. Vähintäänkin se kokoaa paljon genrehistoriaa koskevaa tietoa suomenkieliseen, helposti löydettävään muotoon. Parhaassa tapauksessa se johdattaa monia aloittelevia tutkijoita uusien aiheiden äärelle. Ehkä se rohkaisee jokusta opettajaa jopa suunnittelemaan kurssin fantasiafiktiosta. Mikäpä maailma koskaan olisi kuviteltu täysin valmiiksi?

Biografia: Essi Varis, FT, on yksi *Fafnirin* päätoimittajista ja työskentelee parhaillaan oman, mielikuvitusta ja spekulatiivista fiktiota käsittelevän tutkimushankkeensa parissa Helsingin ja Oslon yliopistoissa. Hän tohtoroitui Jyväskylän yliopistosta vuonna 2019 väitöskirjalla, jossa ehdotti uutta kognitiivista teoriaa monimediaisten henkilöhahmojen ymmärtämiseksi.



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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 subjected to a double-blind peer-review. 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 ensure your submission conforms to our journal's submission guidelines, which are available at: <http://journal.finfar.org/for-authors/submission-guidelines/>

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The deadline for article submissions is 30 December 2022. For other submissions, contact the editors. For book reviews, contact the reviews editor.

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