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Editorial 2/2022

Essi Varis, Hanna-Riikka Roine, Michael Godhe, Elizabeth Oakes & Dennis Wilson Wise

Esteemed readers and colleagues,

Welcome to this double-thick, extra-diverse edition of *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*! Although we must apologise for releasing this second issue of 2022 on the wrong side of New Year, we hope you will find it the most colourful reading package our Nordic dragon has carried to the halls of Academia to date.

The long and varied table of contents has partly resulted from the upheaval taking place backstage. In the past twelve months, the majority of our current editorial staff has either been going out the door or settling in. We badly needed more hands on deck, so we borrowed some from *Fafnir*'s international circle of friends. With their expert help, we have put together not just one, but two exciting theme sections: "The Speculation Tool Kit", co-edited with *Fafnir*'s former editor-in-chief Hanna-Riikka Roine from Tampere University, and "Specfic 2021: Time and History", produced in collaboration with Michael Godhe from Linköping University.

"The Speculation Tool Kit" opens with author-researcher Malka Older's thought-provoking prefatory "Predictive Fictions and Speculative Futures". It is based on the keynote speech she gave last summer, as the academic Guest of Honour in Finncon, one of the largest science fiction conventions in Europe. Older discusses science-fictional narratives from the perspective of future and uncertainty, suggesting that while uncertainty can be frightening, it also fosters hope. Finncon 2022's other Guests of Honour, authors Magdalena Hai and Marko Hautala, take the floor in the Finnish interview feature written by Essi Varis. As the title suggests, "Kuinka kirjailija spekuloi?" ("How an author speculates?") collates Hai's, Hautala's, as well as Anne Leinonen's and Emmi Itäranta's reflections on the professional imagining they conduct as authors of speculative fiction. Itäranta's latest novel is also the focus of Elise Kraatila's

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article "World-Building as Grand-Scale Speculation: Planetary, Cosmic and Conceptual Thought Experiments in Emmi Itäranta's *Moonday Letters*". Kraatila argues that novels modelling imaginary worlds can function as vehicles for grand-scale thought experiments, ranging from explorations of global ethics to conceptual reflections on speculative world-building itself.

It is only fitting to close the tool kit with an even more novel approach to speculation: in the very first research comic ever published by *Fafnir*, Essi Varis muses on the metaphorical guises of speculation and imagination. The accompanying metatext, "The Skeleton is Already Inside You: A Metaphoric Comic on Speculation", explains why mindful use of drawn images, metaphors, and speculation could open new prospects for creative, innovative research.

The second theme section, "Specfic 2021: Time and History", collects expanded versions of some of the best papers delivered in the conference of the same name, which was organised by The Swedish Network for Speculative Fiction in Karlstad, on December 1–3, 2021. The purpose of the conference was to explore the role of temporalisation and history in a range of speculative narratives, and Michael Godhe's prefatory acts as an introduction to the theme. Godhe links the speculative temporalities of SFF particularly to the genre's utopian and dystopian tendencies – topics that are also reflected in the featured articles.

Anna Bark Persson explores the queer temporalities and power dynamics of gritty fantasy, or grimdark, in her article "Notes Towards Gritty Fantasy Medievalism, Temporality, and Worldbuilding". By analysing Joe Abercrombie's First Law novels (2006–2021) and Seth Dickinson's *The Masquerade* (2016–) in particular, Persson demonstrates that seemingly medievalist fantasy can also connect to contemporary and future discussions on social issues. Similarly, the Chinese SF stories discussed by Erik Mo Welin may be looking to the past – but in a way that widens the reader's perspective on present and future. His article "Time travel, Alternate History, and Chronopolitics in the 'The New Wave' of Chinese Science Fiction" demonstrates how time travel stories "Watching the Boat at the South Lake Together" by Baoshu (2011) and "Shanghai 1938 – a Memory" by Han Song (2017) challenge the teleological temporality imposed by the official discourses of the Chinese government.

The tension between collective and individual temporal experiences is also the focus of Sarah Lohmann's article, "'Wheels turning in opposite directions': the Utopian Dynamics of Individual and Collective Temporality in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country*". As the title summarises, Lohmann compares Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) to the quasi-utopian, post-apocalyptic feminist novel, *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), and concludes that utopian scenarios are only sustainable if they are based on ongoing, self-correcting change and an inclusive perspective that takes into account the rights and needs of the entire more-than-human sphere.

Finally, in the article titled "Human–Other Entanglements in Speculative Future Arctics", Maria Lindgren Leavenworth and Van Leavenworth discuss three novels that speculate on the effects climate change may have on the Arctic: *The Ice* by Laline Paull (2017), *Blackfish City* by Sam J. Miller (2018), and *Always North* by Vicki Jarrett (2019). The analysis demonstrates how the settings and temporal structures of speculative climate fiction, as well as the ever-popular figure of the polar bear, affect our understanding of the thaw threatening the Far North.

Although not an offshoot of the Karlstad conference, Martijn J. Loos's article "The Story of Intrusion: Time, Life/Death, and Representation in Ted Chiang's 'Story of Your Life' and Jean-Luc Nancy's *L'Intrus*" is also invested in speculative time. Loos argues that the simultaneous alien temporality depicted in Chiang's SF story brings a more life-affirming tone to Nancy's observations about intrusion and death. Thus, this cross-reading of speculative fiction and speculative philosophy also acts as an unexpected post scriptum to "The Speculation Tool Kit". Lisa Fletcher and Caylee Tierney, likewise, engage in a transtemporal comparative analysis in their article, "The Ancient Roots of Children's Fantasy Fiction: From *The Odyssey* to Artemis Fowl and The Laws of Magic". It lists the many parallels between the coming-of-age journeys of criminal mastermind Artemis Fowl, the magically talented Aubrey Fitzwilliam, and Odysseus, the original trickster hero.

For those who cannot spare the time to read a full-length article, the tail end of the issue offers tasty, topical tidbits. John Kendall Hawkins interviews Professor Emeritus Robert Crossley, who has published extensively on SF over his 40-year career. Markus Laukkanen reports on Finncon 2022's Academic Track, and Amy Bouwer on The London Science Fiction Research Community's annual conference. Lastly, this massive *Fafnir* tapers off with ten timely book reviews reflecting the diverse, rebellious, and posthumanist slants of contemporary speculative fiction. Brent Ryan Bellamy, Reba K. Dickinson, and Steven Mollmann contribute to the first theme by reviewing the new monographs by Joy Sanchez-Taylor, Isiah Lavender III, and Sami Ahmad Khan, which discuss SF authors of colour, Afrofuturism, and Indian SF respectively. Joel Evans and John MacLoughlin dig into the rebellious sides of SF by reviewing Annika Gonnermann's monograph on 21st-century dystopian fiction and Mike Ashley's study on SF magazines. The more-than-human potentials of SF are explored, in turn, by the anthology *Images of the Anthropocene in Speculative Fiction: Narrating the Future* (edited by Dědinová et al.) as well as by Tom Idema's book on SF, biology, and environmental posthumanism, reviewed for us by Paul Williams and Shelby Brewster. In addition, C. W. Sullivan III reviews Kathryn Hume's latest book, *The Metamorphoses of Myth in Fiction since 1960,* Daniel A. Rabuzzi joins Peter Grybauskas on his exploration of the "Edges of Tolkien's Literary Canvas", and Adam McLain discusses Brent Ryan Bellamy's diagnoses of post-apocalyptic depictions of the USA. A few of our Swedish friends also make a reappearance in Michael Godhe's review of *Annorstädes*, a Swedish essay collection on SFF research edited by Anna Bark Persson.

If speculative fiction research is, indeed, gaining more ground in Sweden, as Godhe hopes, perhaps we can look forward to collaborating with more of our Scandinavian colleagues in the future. That gives us another hopeful scenario to speculate on, as we enter into the New Year. Yet, as ever, *Fafnir* is happy to open its wings and its pages to all SFF enthusiasts across the planet. We wish you many happy returns for 2023, and encourage prospective contributors to get in touch before Midsummer, when our current Call for Papers closes!

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