

## **ABSTRACTS:**

### **In search of the divine – Octavia E. Butler’s Parables and Lois Lowry’s the Giver quartet**

*Kaisa Kaukiainen*

Dystopian novels are typically gloomy, but most of them also represent a need to get beyond the daily struggle for survival. The characters of the novels try to find a greater purpose for life. This purpose is not necessarily a desire to find God or the meaning of life (or justification for the suffering), but it is a need to have something worth living for.

The surroundings in dystopian novels are often strange, hostile, restricted, or controlled. Due to this discouraging atmosphere each contact with others is easily filled with suspicion and wariness.

In this presentation I try to see if there is any room for of a truly meaningful connection with the unexplained, possibly divine, and most importantly, positive force. Is it even possible in an air of uncertainty, where every new situation is exceptional and ominous? How is it any different from shocking encounters with zombies or other negative counter-intuitive phenomena?

In my opinion the positive experiences are those with a more “internal” manner – the focus is on individual characters of the novels: their inner feelings and thoughts. No deus ex machina should be expected; instead there is a subtle development in the characters’ thinking, and a growing certainty of an existence of something unexplained. Furthermore, the tension in these experiences is mostly a collision between old presumptions and a new way of thinking. Thus any struggle is of an inner kind, and the outcome can be seen as a spiritual awakening or an illumination. But even more often the real effect of the divinity is noticeable in the overall level of the stories, a final realization of how the divine cannot in fact be found from the outside (unlike the evil, which is often described as something that comes from the outside – either by attacking, or by infiltrating) but has to be realized; it is something that is not far away but rather just lies in there, hiding, waiting to be found.

I present examples from dystopian fiction: deistic Earthseed in Octavia E. Butler’s Parables (Parable of the Sower, 1993 and Parable of the Talents, 1998) – the protagonist Lauren’s selffound conviction that she wants to spread to the world, and her attempts to build a community based on

the principles of Earthseed; the village of the good people (very similar to Butler's ideal in the Parables) in Lois Lowry's The Giver quartet (The Giver 1993, Gathering Blue 2000, The Messenger 2004, and The Son 2012). The residents of the village only realise what they had after they have lost it. In Lowry's novels divinity does not relate to God/religion, but to magic, and a pantheistic perception.

### **Biographical information:**

I am a doctoral student in Helsinki University – I examine religiousness in contemporary dystopian novels by such authors as Margaret Atwood, Octavia E. Butler, Emily St. John Mandel, and a popular subgenre of so-called young adult dystopias.

## **On the Boundaries between Genres and Species: The Affective Economy of *Fortitude***

*Aino-Kaisa Koistinen* (presenter) and *Helen Mäntymäki*

Quite recently, both speculative fiction and Nordic crime fiction – specifically its bleak and dark version, *Nordic noir* – have taken the screens of our movie theatres, televisions, computers and other portable devices by storm. Central for both of these genres is the expression of sociocritical concerns that are, nevertheless, dealt with in differing manner. Whereas the core of speculative fiction is to imagine alternative worlds, futures and cultures in order to reflect, comment on and speculate on contemporary societal questions, *Nordic noir* negotiates these questions within a 'realistic' (or mimetic) framework. Some fictions have, however, blurred the boundaries between realist crime fiction and speculative fiction, creating interesting genre hybrids that deal with societal issues such as ecological themes (including climate change and various conceptualisations of 'the Other').

In this presentation (based on Koistinen and Mäntymäki forthcoming), we examine how the ecological theme is discussed through discourses and images related to species boundaries in the British genre hybrid *Fortitude* (2015–2017), a violent television series that combines the features of Nordic noir and speculative fiction – namely science fiction and fantastic/uncanny horror – in its narrative. We claim that by its depiction of violence, *Fortitude* engages us in a societal and ecological critique with a clear cautionary element, making it a relevant narrative in the context of today's environmental crises. Our aim is, firstly, to examine how expressions of graphic violence –

as represented in the encounters between humans and nonhumans – are created through *generic mobility*. Secondly, following feminist scholar Sarah Ahmed (2000; 2004), we investigate the *affective economy* evoked by this violence – the strongly emerging discourses of species boundaries, otherness and human relations to nature.

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### **Biographical information:**

Presenter Aino-Kaisa Koistinen (PhD, contemporary culture studies) is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She is the Chairperson of the FINFAR Society.

## **‘A chance-meeting, as we say in Middle-earth.’ Encounters in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Legendarium***

*Jyrki Korpua*

“A chance-meeting, as we say in Middle-earth” (Tolkien 1980: 336). This phrasing by Gandalf in *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*, concerning Gandalf’s and Thórin’s random encounter in Bree before the forthcoming trip to Erebor, raises the often pondered question on Tolkien-studies of free-will, “chance”, and “fate”. In Tolkien’s *Legendarium*, his collection of stories, meetings and encounters are perhaps not random and arbitrary, but the great narrative of occurrences is not beforehand clear to us, or the characters inside the stories. This paper focuses on mythic encounters in Tolkien’s *Legendarium*, concentrating on crucial examples. These encounters in most part actually create the narrative of Tolkien’s fiction, which is build on epic scenes and episodes.

Encounters in Tolkien’s *Legendarium* are adventurous. In fact, the very English word *adventure* comes from the French into Middle English as *auentur(e)/aunter*, which Tolkien’s own *Middle English Vocabulary* translates as “change (notable) occurrence, feat, risk” (Flieger 2014:

71). Adventure in its original form implies “the entry into the Otherworld, encounter with the unexpected, the unexplained, even the supernatural” (Ibid.). In the French romances, the word has sometimes been spelled as *aventure*, linking it to *avant*, “forward”, and connoting “what is coming” (Ibid.). This moving into “Otherworld” or encounter with the supernatural of unexpected could be described by the theoretical concepts of familiar and defamiliar (*heimlich* and *unheimlich*) (Korpua 2015: 185–192; Korpua 2016: 241–250). Familiar figures, characters, elements and milieus in the *Legendarium* create an illusion of plausible secondary creation. Familiar are, for example, the use of English language, the use of Hobbits as protagonists, or the use of familiar *flora* and *fauna*. Defamiliar elements are used in order to create horror, surprise, and sublime sceneries such as dangerous encounters. These also elements include encounters with monstrous beings, such as the Balrog, a Dragon or Giant Spiders. (Korpua 2015: 35–36.)

In Tolkien’s fiction, there are lots of encounters, which could be surprising, but which usually also are crucial to the narrative, the plot and the great cosmological scale as well. Joseph Campbell in his often cited mythic structure of Hero’s Journey describes this paradigm as as “Separation, Initiation, and Return” (Campbell 2008: 23). But, as Verlyn Flieger among others has pointed out, instead of Campbell’s theory’s one decisive encounter with single foe, Tolkien’s narrative follows the trails of medieval romances where heroes have series of random encounters with different foes: e.g. knights, giants, robbers, lions, wild men, serpents and other monsters (Flieger 2014: 72). This is easily the case in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Of course, there are the grand final encounters in both books –although Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit* and Frodo Baggins in *The Lord of the Rings* do not themselves destroy their evil foes dragon-Smaug and The Dark Lord Sauron– but the narrative focuses more or less on encounters with different friends and foes of Middle-earth. This paper focuses on these encounters.

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### **Biographical information:**

PhD Jyrki Korpua is a university lecturer and a researcher of literature and cultural studies at the University of Oulu. During the past fourteen years, he has presented his research in national and international conferences and held dozens of lectures and lecture series on literature and film studies: "The Bible and literature", "Kalevala and fantasy", "Utopias and dystopias", "History of comics", "History of fantasy", "The Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien", among others. Currently Korpua is editing article collections on Dystopian Fiction (with Saija Isomaa and Jouni Teittinen) and on Fantasy fiction and its cultural impact (with Irma Hirsjärvi, Urpo Kovala and Tanja Välisalo), and finalizing a monograph on Christian Platonic Elements in Tolkien's fiction as well as working on the international *Tove Jansson Companion*.

### ***Riddles in the Dark. Encounter as a turning-point in understanding***

*Katariina Kärkelä*

The key question of this presentation is what the role of encounters is when it comes to understanding and shaping the surrounding reality. I'll attempt to offer a few possible answers to the question by exploring one instance of the problem as it is presented in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit* (1937). The analysis is focused on one specific, brief yet significant event in *The Hobbit*, that being the moment when the protagonist Bilbo Baggins crosses paths with the creature Gollum. That being said, my approach to encounters is – at first sight anyway – a very literal one. The sudden meeting of the two characters takes place in the fifth chapter, "Riddles in the Dark", that is my main point of interest in the analysis. Bilbo Baggins gets lost in the mountains and is separated from his company after being ambushed by goblins. Bilbo's lone wanderings under the

mountains eventually lead him to the cave inhabited by Gollum, a sly and deceitful creature who, despite his unpleasant characteristics, shares Bilbo's distant ancestry. I analyse the encounter of the two characters as a turning-point that forces both participants to re-evaluate and scrutinize their worldview and self-understanding. My preliminary assumption and the starting-point of the analysis is that the brief meeting brings both Bilbo and Gollum in touch with things they've either ignored or denied and eventually causes a notable change in the way they perceive the world. Even though the analysis is primarily concerned with the version told in *The Hobbit* I'll also include a third point of view in the presentation, that of Gandalf the wizard who is a significant character both in *The Hobbit* and in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955). In chapter "The Shadow of the Past" Gandalf retrospectively recounts the encounter to Bilbo's relative Frodo Baggins, pointing out details that got lesser attention in *The Hobbit*.

The interpretation I propose is that when entering Gollum's cave and engaging in the dangerous riddle-game, unwillingly gambling for his own life, Bilbo unknowingly brings with him into the cave things Gollum has intentionally and bitterly shunned from for a long time, denying them, even: this is seen most clearly in the riddle about the sun and daisies. One of the most important recurring themes throughout the novel (and Tolkien's works of fiction more broadly) is that of light, especially sunlight, that Gollum has learned to loath and fear. Obvious as it may seem, this encounter in the dark bears remarkable resemblance to Plato's (2009 [380 BC]) famous Allegory of the Cave that is – both ontologically and epistemologically – deeply concerned with the Theory of Forms, the Idea of the Good and generally the flawed perception of reality. However, I'll propose a reading that looks past the obvious similarities of contents and focuses on the problems of knowledge and understanding instead. I claim that the encounter between Bilbo and Gollum forces out in the open hidden aspects of the ways the two characters perceive and understand the world they live in and in doing so calls for reflection on their part. There is a deep connection between knowledge and light in Tolkien's legendarium, and the nearly total absence of light in Gollum's cave draws attention to this bond. The light-motif has been thoroughly analysed by Verlyn Flieger (2002 [1983]) whose interpretations my presentation partly draws from. I also seek support for my analysis from Jyrki Korpua's (2015) dissertation in which the Platonic elements of the legendarium have been explored.

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### **Biographical information (in Finnish):**

Olen ensimmäisen vuoden kirjallisuustieteen jatko-opiskelija Tampereen yliopistosta. Tutkin väitöskirjassani J.R.R. Tolkienin fantasiamaailma Ardaa episteemisenä järjestelmänä tämänhetkiselä otsikolla ”Supernatural knowledge. J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium as an epistemic system”. Analysoin fantasiamaailman ontologista hierarkiaa – osin platonilaisesta ideaopista käsin – suhteessa fiktion episteemisten lainalaisuuksien muodostumiseen. Työn pääpyrkimyksenä on luoda mahdollisimman kattava kuva siitä, millainen episteeminen järjestelmä kohdeteosten maailma on, ja tärkeimmät kysymykset liittyvät sekä tietoa itseään koskeviin lainalaisuuksiin että tiedon saamisen ja ymmärtämisen prosessiin. Kysyn työssäni, millaisia olemassaolon tasoja fantasiamaailmasta voidaan lukea, ja miten niistä saadaan tietoa; mitä havaintotieto todella koskee kohdeteosten maailman ontologisessa hierarkiassa, ja voidaanko sitä pitää luotettavana; miten fiktion maailma tulee jäsennetyksi ja ymmärretyksi siellä elävien hahmojen perspektiivistä. Varsinaisen kirjallisuudentutkimuksen lisäksi työni ulottuu myös filosofian, eritoten epistemologian, alalle. Osa hyödyntämistäni teorioista, etenkin mahdollisten maailmojen teoria, on lähtöisin filosofisista ja loogisista keskusteluista mutta päätynyt sittemmin osaksi kirjallisuudentutkimusta. Tärkeänä osana teoriapohjaani ovat erilaiset kirjallisuuden, tiedon ja filosofian suhdetta pohtivat keskustelut, ja toivon voivani ottaa työlläni kantaa filosofian ja kirjallisuuden suhteeseen laajemminkin, tällä kertaa spekulatiivisen fiktion näkökulmasta.

Maailmanjäsennyksen ja sekä itseä että ympäröivää todellisuutta koskevan ymmärryksen rakentuminen on yksi tärkeä osa analyysiani. Juuri tähän aihealueeseen esitelmäehdotukseni liittyy. Kohtaamisen merkitys ymmärryksen hermeneuttisessa rakentumisessa on ollut analyysikohteenani pro gradu -työssäni, mutta ottanen sen huomioon myös väitöskirjassa, kunhan pääsen käsittelyssä näihin kysymyksiin asti. Itse väitöskirjassa pääasiallisia kohdeteoksiani ovat *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), *The Hobbit* (1937) ja *The Silmarillion* (1977), mutta käsittelen tarvittaessa myös muun muassa *The History of Middle-earth* -teossarjan osia. Esitelmässä analyysini kuitenkin tarkentuisi kahteen lukuun, jotka ovat *The Hobbit* -teoksen ”Riddles in the Dark” ja *The Lord of the Ringsin* ”The Shadow of the Past”.

## **What Would You Do If... Audiences' reactions to Gogol's *Viy* in 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

*Hanna Määttä and Jenniliisa Salminen*

Do you think it is possible to compare the reactions to the same fictional monster now and 180 years ago? We are setting out to do exactly this by comparing the reception of Gogol's short story *Viy* and the contemporary reception of the film based on Gogol's story.

Nikolai Gogol's *Viy* (1835) is one of the first Russian horror stories and tightly linked to the tradition of both European and Russian romanticism. Gogol tells a story of a student's encounter with a mystic demon-like creature *Viy* leading to the young man's death. The story has been made into a film at least seven times. Most recent version directed by Oleg Stepchenko came out in 2014. It is the first part of a trilogy: the second part has just come to theatres in April 2018.

We are interested in how the audience encounters the mystical monster *Viy* in the original story and in the 2014 film version. *Viy* is not a typical monster in either Russian or international horror. Unlike vampires, werewolves and others that have certain established characteristics known to the reading and film-going public, *Viy* is one of a kind. According to Gogol, the monster was inspired by Ukrainian folk tradition, yet the relationship between Gogol's monster and Ukrainian tradition is very loose: a character called *Viy* does not exist in folklore.

When the story first came out in 1835, the genre of horror story was new to Russia. Therefore, the readers who in 1830s had their first encounter with Gogol's *Viy* had virtually nothing to compare it with. In contrast, the film audiences in 2014 were already familiar with the conventions of horror genre and knew, at least loosely, what to expect. The Russian spectators of 2014 also knew Gogol's story, as it is a classic in the Russian literary tradition. On the other hand, although the readers of 1830s were not used to horror literature as a genre, fantastic elements were – in a sense – considered more normal or acceptable in the literature of romanticism than in later, more realistic literary tradition. Also, tales about mystical creatures belonging to the folk tradition were closer to people's everyday life than now.

To get an idea of the audiences' reactions to the monster, we are going to dig into what was written about *Viy* directly after its publication in the 1830s and – in the case of the film – to get acquainted with spectators' comments on various internet forums. We are not expecting that these two sets of materials are similar or directly comparable: the criticism

from 1830s is mostly written by professional critics whereas commentaries on the film are written by “ordinary people” watching movies. Nevertheless, we aspire to gain insight into how the horizon of expectations affects the encounter with a fictional monster.

### **Biographical information:**

Hanna Määttä, FM, is a PhD student in the Department of Russian Studies in the University of Turku. She is a night-dweller who loves all things dark and mysterious and spends her free time researching 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian horror fiction.

Jenniliisa Salminen, PhD, is a senior lecturer in the Department of Russian Studies in the University of Turku. She is interested in Russian fantasy and fantasy for children and does not mind encountering a few monsters every now and then as long as they are not too scary.

## **Building a society on play and games in Zoku culture**

*Alexi Nikula*

In this paper I examine the themes of playing and games of the Zoku culture from *The Causal Angel* (2014), which is the third book in Hannu Rajaniemi’s *Jean Le Flambeur* trilogy. The Zoku culture is a futuristic posthuman society, which consists of multiple different sized societies called zokus. Each zoku exists to perform a certain task or function that can vary from upkeeping a certain router network to arranging a party. The societies operate on explicitly game-like structures and use gamified methods to encourage cooperation and track individual advancement in the zoku hierarchy through experience points and levels. I shall also comment on the conflict between individuality and communality, freedom and uniformity that exists within the zoku volition.

I am writing this paper to expand on the third chapter of my Master’s thesis *Leikki ja peli Hannu Rajaniemen Jean Le Flambeur -trilogiassa* (2017, Play and game in Hannu Rajaniemi’s *Jean Le Flambeur* -trilogy). My main sources of theory are Johan Huizinga’s extrapolations on play and playfulness in human culture as depicted in *Homo Ludens* (1938) and Roger Caillois’ commentary and expansion in *Man, play and games* (1958). I also use the Jane McGonigal’s, Gary Alan Fine’s, Mia Consalvo’s views on games as social spaces.

I shall also analyse how Huizinga’s magic circle is used in *The Causal Angel* both implicitly and explicitly. The Zoku create physical magic circles and virtual worlds called zoku realms, where

they can freely alter the rules and environment to fit their liking and the task at hand. The members of a zoku can freely change their form from realm to realm, for example at one point the protagonist must take part in “a game in which we bargain like civilised gentlemen in a nineteenth-century club room” (*The Causal Angel*, 51) to get his ship from the zoku elder Barbicane who superficially resembles a steampunk cyborg. It is claimed in *The Causal Angel* that the zoku define their individual personalities by the zoku groups and realms they are part of rather than their appearance or physical form.

I will prove in the paper that play and games, as defined by Caillois and Huizinga, are an essential and intentional part of the Zoku society. They are an actualisation on Huizinga’s claim that play thoroughly permeates human culture. Rajaniemi directly references my sources in zoku names and concepts such as the magic circle. Play is also the main motivating force of the zoku characters: while the rest of the cast are trying to win or prevent the war, Barbicane is mainly interested in keeping the war interesting.

*Keywords:* play, game, gamification, Huizinga

### **Biographical information** (in Finnish):

Olen vastavalmistunut kirjallisuuden maisteri Oulusta, ja puntaroin väitöskirjan aiheen kanssa. Olen tutkinut tieteeskirjailija Hannu Rajaniemeä kandidaatintyössäni ja gradussani, ja seminaarityöni perustuukin yhteen graduni luvuista. Olen aiemmin julkaissut artikkelin Rajaniemen Kvanttivarasteoksen utooppisesta yhteiskunnasta Fafnirin numerossa 1/2015.

## **Real and Dream – Encounters in the Novels of the Reaalifantasia Group**

*Minttu Eeva Anniina Ollikainen*

“The Reaalifantasia group” consists of such Finnish contemporary authors as Pasi Ilmari Jääskeläinen, Anne Leinonen, Juha-Pekka Koskinen and J. Pekka Mäkelä. In the novels of these writers, characters come across speculative events in otherwise realistic storyworlds. Like highlighted in the manifesto of the group, “Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia” -blog text (Jääskeläinen 2006), the group sees these kind of encounters, to some extent, typical for all fiction. The members of the group call their texts neither realism nor fantasy, but “reaalifantasia”.

The novels of the Reaalifantasia group are full of speculative elements, but the most interesting of them are strange dreams encountering and invading the worlds, minds, times and stories around them. In *Alshain* (2006) and *Alas* (2013; “Down”) by J. Pekka Mäkelä (2006), the human-immigrants come in to contact with alien minds in dreamlike stage in a planet called Alshain. In Anne Leinonen’s *Metsän äiti* (2017; ”The Mother of the Forest”), the reunion of the main character and the surrounding forest of her childhood home causes her to have dreamlike visions. In *Paholaisen Vasara* (2011; “The Hammer of the Devil”) by J.-P. Koskinen, the present and past intervene, when the memories of the main character and the historical basis for Count Dracula confront in Matias’ dreams. In Jääskeläinen’s *Sielut kulkevat Sateessa* (2014; ”Souls wandering in the Rain”) a godlike writer and the main character face, when Judit needs to climb up from her world to meet her maker, only to remember this encounter as a mere dream.

The time structures of the novels of the Reaalifantasia group fall apart, memories do not stay within one head or mind, storyworlds have spaces that are incompatible with each other and narrative levels break down. The odd dreams causing this disruption can be analysed as unnatural elements like defined by Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Brian Richardson in their article “What Really is Unnatural Narratology” (2013) – as something that does not match with our everyday knowledge structures. In my presentation, I try to make unnatural narratology and literary theories of speculative fiction to encounter, while I analyse the fictive dreams in the texts of the Reaalifantasia writers. The way I see it, unnatural narratology has neglected some aspects elementary to fantasy and science fiction literature, such as the crucial role of estrangement in these genres (Ollikainen 2017).

The themes of the novels of the Reaalifantasia Group are often about the connections between different minds, the relationship between human nature and its environments, the crossings of separate times and eras and the border between life and death. This all comes to the encounters of what is dream and what is real in literature; the confrontation between speculative and realistic and unnatural and natural.

### **Biographical information:**

Minttu Ollikainen is a PhD student, who studies the poetics of the Finnish Reaalifantasia Group at the University of Jyväskylä. The working title of her dissertation is *Unten rajoilla – suomalaisen reaalifantasian paikka ja poetiikka* (“On the Edge of Dreams – the Place and Poetics of the Finnish Reaalifantasia Group”). Her article about dreams in the fiction of the

Reaalifantasia Group, “Dreams and Themes in the texts of the ‘Reaalifantasia’ Group” has been published in *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research* (2/2017).

## Meeting the human 2.0

Marjut Puhakka

As it comes to evolution, we tend to think it in the eyes of the species that survived to live to this day. The ancestors of the human are seen as part of the continuum, not as separated species which they in fact were. When once neanderthal and sapiens lived together, sapiens was the luckier one to continue to the future as neanderthals disappeared. In past years we have seen multiple presentations of the apocalypse as seen mostly as a story of the lost of the humankind. But what happens after humans? In many superhero stories (for example superhero comics) the human 2.0 is seen as better, faster, stronger – it holds the qualities we appreciate. It is easy to see the future of humankind in a form of better version of us, but what if human 2.0 would be something more monstrous, like a zombie?

In my paper I will be viewing three stories about encountering the post-apocalyptic human 2.0: Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954), Dmitri Gluhovski's *Metro 2033* (2005), and M. R. Carey's *The girl with all the gifts* (2014).. It is common to these days that the stories are not only in one form, so I will be talking not only about the literal version but also about the movies and games made of the original version.

Apocalypse is not the same thing than the end of everything. If time is seen not as a straight line that starts and ends from a certain point but rather as in a spiral form, then apocalypse is the beginning of a new age, literally meaning 'lifting of a veil'. When the time of the human (homo sapiens) comes to an end, what if it is not the end of everything but the beginning of a whole new human race? In Matheson's *I am Legend* the people are dying to disease. But the disease is not only killing the humans but they come back as something more monstrous, living dead creatures. At first Neville sees the diseased as mindless creatures that he can kill with no regrets, but it turns out that the creatures are evolving and as Neville is the last man on earth, the diseased and changed humans are the base of the new humankind.

M. R. Carey's *The girls with all the gifts* is a similar story of zombie children that evolve and turn out to be a better and more enduring version of humans. The human 2.0 in Carey's story is in some ways easier to accept as the second stage of human evolution than *I am Legend*

because the zombie children seem to have their higher morals than the vicious vampires in Matheson's story.

In *Metro 2033* the encounter with the second stage of the evolution of the human kind is more mysterious as the main character has to tune in with "blacks" to understand what they really are. In *Metro 2033* the human 2.0 is so alien that the humans can not communicate with them.

In these three stories the encountering does not happen easily and there has to be some kind of violent showdown. They all are similar at the ending with the fact that it is time to the human race to come to an end as the aggressivity of humans is also the doom of the human.

### **Biographical Information:**

Marjut Puhakka is a doctoral student at the faculty of literature, Oulu University. I'm mostly interested about horror genre in literature, movies and games. I did my master's thesis on H.P.Lovecraft's short story *The Shadow Out of Time*. Currently I'm writing my dissertation about the philosophical aspect of the zombie apocalypse.

## **Internet as a Fantasy Reader's Rendezvous**

*Minna Siikilä-Laitila*

Changes in media and especially internet have broken the local character- and language barriers of different cultural phenomenons." (Hirsjärvi 2009b: 103).

In this presentation I will cover one part of my forthcoming doctoral thesis "'There is not a single original thought in Eragon' – Internet's intertextual fantasy book conversations as a battlefield of romanticism ja postmodernism". In this doctoral thesis I study fantasy readers conversations regarding intertextuality from a cultural point of view. My cross-disciplinary study combines media studies and literature studies. The focus is on internet conversations and they are observed from the perspectives of intertextuality, fandom and interpretive communities. Fantasy writers in discussion are J. K. Rowling (Harry Potter series), Christopher Paolini (*Inheritance Cycle*) and their focal paragon, J. R. R. Tolkien. These

disputes about how one should view writers who take influences from other writers have lasted for many centuries, so it is somewhat classical.

In this presentation I will discuss how Tolkien's, Paolini's and Rowling's readers encounter each other online while discussing fantasy. Based on my observations so far these encounters can be viewed through themes like fandom and interpretive communities.

### Interpretive communities

Livingstone and Das (2014: 13) have stated that in these times of interpretive networks, communities of interpretation are a valuable concept. Based on this one can say that Stanley Fish was ahead of his time, as he has been studying interpretive communities already in the 1980's. Respectively Benedict Anderson has written about imagined communities and Elizabeth Long social infrastructure of reading (Steiner 2010: 476).

In my research material interpretive communities can be classified based on writers (for example). Tolkien-fans constitute their own interpretive community, and so on. And arguments can't be avoided when these interpretive communities collide, just like Fish (1980) prefigured:

It also explains why there are disagreements and why they can be debated in a principled way: not because of a stability in texts, but because of a stability in the makeup of interpretive communities and therefore in the opposing positions they make possible. (Fish 1980: 15).

### Fandom

One can say that fandoms (networks formed by fans) are cultures, which break geographical boundaries and bring together different generations (Jenkins 1992: 1). As a phenomenon fandom is multifaceted, and it contains many different activities. However, in the core one can find many tangible activities and meaning making. (Jenkins 1992: 2.) The roots of fandom are in social changes like fragmentation of culture, the rise of feminism and development of technology. This kind of culture is difficult to observe as a whole, and case-specific approach is much more efficient. (Jenkins 1992: 3.) Though macro levels are also possible to study (Kovala 2003: 188). Fan studies help us to understand how meanings adhere to cultural objects (Kovala 2003: 190-191). Fandom can, for example, be observed through sex, class, resistance and media use. Usually the subject of fandom is some musical, dramatic

or literary form of expression. (Hirsjärvi 2009: 16.) Chin (2013) has densified fandom as follows:

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 2013: 3).

## Media convergence

In this presentation I will apply this theoretical framework to my research material, which consists of ten online conversation threads. Five of them are focused mainly on Rowling, and five on Paolini. Tolkien is also very focal theme in all of them.

These online conversations are a part of now ongoing media convergence, which means that new mediums (online conversations, social media) and old mediums (books) encounter. Due to this convergence the reading audience gets to speak it's mind better than before. (Jenkins 2006: 2.) On a more general level in media studies there has been a great shift from the concept of passive audience to more interactive and active concept of media users (Livingstone & Das 2014: 12). Internet has a big role in this shift, as it activates it's users in many ways (Livingstone 2004: 11, Livingstone 2014: 3-4).

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## **Lovecraft's Poison Tree in Elizabeth Bear's "Shoggoths in Bloom"**

*Esko Suoranta*

In my paper for Finncon 2018 Academic Track: Encounters, I argue that in her novelette "Shoggoths in Bloom" (2008), Elizabeth Bear demonstrates in practice how speculative literature can overcome its problematic origins as well as the imperialist aspects of some of its discourses. I employ István Csicsery-Ronay Jr's ideas of SFF as literature of technoscientific empire to shed light on the ways in which Bear's story subverts H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos and his controversial legacy. Through my analysis, Bear's shoggoths emerge as posthuman figures and Bear is shown to be an early practitioner of the progressive remaking of the Cthulhu mythos that authors like Victor LaValle and Matt Ruff have continued in the late 2010s.

In *The History of Science Fiction*, Adam Roberts connects the beginnings of modern science fiction and fantasy to the rise and popularity of fascism in the first half of the twentieth century. While there were plenty of authors without an openly fascist agenda, there is, according to Roberts, "something Hitlerian in the manifold power-fantasies of a great deal

of 20th-century SF” (Roberts, 250). For H.P. Lovecraft, his virulent racism informs much of his fiction as critics like Michel Houellebecq have observed. While his novella *At the Mountains of Madness* does not contain as overt racism as some of his other stories, some of its undercurrents are still problematic. Its characters, Antarctic explorers from Miskatonic University, learn of an ancient alien race who have created the shoggoths, the first terrestrial lifeforms. They begin to see the aliens as fellow scientists, while they describe the shoggoths as mindless horrors, rebelling against their creators.

“Shoggoths in Bloom” is in many ways a traditional Lovecraftian weird tale. Set in a coastal New England town in the 1930s, it features an academic protagonist among hostile locals encountering a shoggoth. Bear’s protagonist Dr Harding is a black academic while the shoggoths are portrayed as nonhuman others rather than subhuman monsters. Through Harding’s encounter with the shoggoth, the ethics of slavery as well as issues of technoculture and non-human life are interrogated. As such, I argue that Bear’s head-on approach to and subversion of Lovecraft’s notorious legacy establishes her as a precursor to current discourses around the ethical aspects of speculative fiction.

### **Biographical information:**

Esko Suoranta is a PhD candidate at the University of Helsinki. In his dissertation project he examines technocritical speculative novels and the way in which they interrogate late capitalism. Previously he has published on William Gibson’s contemporary novels. He has toyed with the idea of studying Cthulhu for years. He tweets as @Escogar.

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**“Encountering Fantasy ‘Races’: When an Elf is (and isn’t) just an Elf.”**

*Nicholas Wanberg*

Near the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, the narrator cites Harry's sense of alienation from his peers, describing him as being "as distant from them as though he belonged to a different race" (754). The assumptions of this metaphor, that there exists an unbridgeable difference between members of different "races," would be undeniably problematic, were it to refer to supposed human variations. In context, however, the metaphor is more likely to refer to "fantasy races," distinct groups of intelligent, non-human creatures found throughout the work. Although some scholars have suggested that *all* such fantastic others (at least in science fiction) are necessarily *racial* others, current scholarly approaches can make it difficult to determine whether, and to exactly what degree, such claims are truly problematic.

This paper sets out to close that methodological gap. The normal approach for addressing questions of racism and intelligent non-human creatures in speculative fiction has been to compare the speculative portrayals to real world stereotypes, treating the portrayals as problematic only when a reasonable correlation can be found. Given the variety and instability of such stereotypes, the results of these comparisons are often inconclusive or unconvincing to many readers.

The paper gives examples of such debates surrounding creature types from *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Star Wars* film series. In these cases, such an approach, despite generating considerable debate, has been less productive of meaningful analysis. As an alternative approach, this paper recommends comparing the *frameworks* of belief associated with different racisms, rather than the specific beliefs themselves. Thus in a racism that concerns itself with innate abilities, culture and temperaments, for example, the intelligent non-humans should primarily be analyzed to see if such traits among them were innate, immutable and group-specific, not whether their particular manifestations of those traits correspond to those assumed of any given real-world group. This may be extended to such things as the gendering of groups, different taxonomical approaches, links between race and language and so forth. In this way, fictional divisions can be deemed "racial" or "nonracial" within the parameters of a particular racism without needing to be identifiable proxies. They can thus be assessed for whether or not they support or are built within the frameworks of racial ideologies, independent of how they correspond to an isolated prejudice.

This will be supported by a brief case study, analyzing the house elves of the *Harry Potter* series, in order to demonstrate this approach, as well as to show some of the nuances of its application.

**Biographical information:**

Nicholas Wanberg is a doctoral candidate from the Faculty of Communication Sciences (COMS) at the University of Tampere. His current research focuses on the interplay of racist and anti-racist discourses in the presentation of intelligent, non-human creatures in popular Anglo-American speculative fiction.

**Encounters by Domestic Tables - Encounters, Furniture, and Gene Technology in Ian McDonald's *River of Gods* and Ken MacLeod's *Intrusion***

*Jani Ylönen*

While furniture and domestic settings do not usually play a significant part in traditional stereotypes of science fiction, even in the far reaching space operas captains of interstellar ships often find themselves by a table when the future of humankind is negotiated.

Perhaps it is no surprise then that in the not so far future novels still set in the domestic landscape of Earth, furniture play often more seminal roles in the discussions concerning the future. In both Ian McDonald's *River of Gods* (2004) and Ken MacLeod's *Intrusion* (2012) important encounters are played out by domestic tables.

In *River of Gods* a husband returns home from a day of work only to be ambushed by his wife and mother-in-law by the dinner table. In *Intrusion* a social worker visits a mother expecting a child by a kitchen table. In both cases the tables act as surroundings for a discussion on reproductive gene technology. In the first, the wife, Parvati, wishes to have a genetically engineered child to which her husband Mr. Nandha objects and, in the second, the social worker, Fiona, brings Hope a message from a government that wishes to coerce her into taking the Fix, a pill that will change her child's and hers genetic makeup.

In my presentation, I wish to explore how in these two encounters discussions on gene technology and setting are intertwined. I claim that the scenes quite purposefully join discourses of public/private connected to questions of gender as well as reproductive gene technology in these two scenes. I wish to examine how SF negotiates difficult ethical questions by doing what philosophers rarely are able to do, by bringing them to domestic settings and everyday encounters.

**Biographical information:**

Jani Ylönen, MA, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Jyväskylä. He is working on his dissertation that discusses feminist posthumanism, gene technology and ethics in contemporary science fiction.