

FANTASTIC VISIONS FROM FAERIE TO DYSTOPIA:

FINNCON – ACADEMIC TRACK 2016

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ABSTRACTS

SESSION I: ECODYSTOPIAS, HUMAN AND THE NON-HUMAN

Eco-Dystopia – An Unresolvable Paradox?

Juha Raipola

My presentation is concerned with the apparent contradiction between the notion of eco-dystopia and the humanistic roots of the dystopian genre. As Naomi Jacobs explains, much of the “repulsive force of classical dystopia comes from its portrayal of a world drained of agency – of an individual’s capacity to choose and to act, or a group’s capacity to influence and intervene in social formations” (Jacobs 2003, 92). In classical dystopias, this lack of agency is explained in terms of oppressive societal control: the inhabitants of dystopian worlds are exposed to the controlling power structures set in place by their fellow human beings. In ecological dystopias of recent decades and years, however, this anthropocentric conception of dystopia is no longer sufficient. The sense of human agency is threatened not only by the actions of other humans, but also by the agency of the non-human world – by climatic patterns, environmental toxins and “natural” disasters antithetical to human wellbeing. As such, eco-dystopias seem to be prone to casting non-human nature as an antagonist, and even embodying an attitude which Simon C. Estok has dubbed ecophobia: “an irrational fear [--] of the agency (real or imagined) of nature” (Estok 2013, 74).

By focusing on the questions of agency in dystopian fiction, my paper explores how the ecological problems have changed the basic tenets of dystopia. My theoretical approach is informed by material ecocriticism, which “posits that all constituents of nature from the subatomic to the higher levels of existence possess agency, creativity, expression, and enduring connections that can be interpreted as a *mélange* of stories” (Oppermann 2013, 57). With insights gathered from ecocritical theory, I aim to highlight the typically problematic relationship between human and non-human agency in ecologically oriented dystopian fiction.

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Bio

Juha Raipola is a postdoctoral researcher associated with the *Darkening Visions: Dystopian Fiction in Contemporary Finnish Literature* research project at the University of Tampere, Finland. His current research is focused on the intersections of material ecocriticism and literary dystopias in Finnish fiction.

Maps, Ruins and the Geological Sublime: On the Inhuman Scales of Post-Apocalyptic Literature

Jouni Teittinen

Why post-apocalypse? Commenting on the recent boom in popular fictions of apocalypse and post-apocalypse, Claire Colebrook has claimed that “we are now feeling (if not thinking) a new relation between the human species and time” (Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman*). In this relation, the sense of the human as a non-transcendent earthly organism connects to an increased understanding that our species “will one day have had its time” (ibid.). To confront the human as an organism is to confront its passing, and vice versa. Among the reasons why the topic has become acute are questions concerning climate change and global ecocatastrophes as well as the related discussion on the anthropocene (the era of notable human impact in the geological strata). These developments suggest that we need to rethink our species' relation to nature's processes.

My presentation will discuss how these questions are manifested in post-apocalyptic

literature, especially in how the relation between the human and the geologic is construed. This relation is fundamentally a question of human versus non-human scales, an encounter taking place on both the geometric axis (concerning space) and the chronometric axis (concerning time) and above all in their coming together in the experience of the geologic. The question of non-human scales may also bring us face to face (or facelessness) with the projected end of human time, or of time as such, provoking such paradoxical queries as “how does the never to be differ from the never that was?” (McCarthy, *The Road*).

I'll approach the topic via an analysis of the recurrent motifs of ruins and maps in post-apocalyptic literature. Maps present the paradigm of nature measured in human scale, while ruins occupy a middle ground between the mapped human realm and the non-human scale of the geologic. Ruins are part past culture and (in many post-apocalyptic narratives) part natural resource, and as such a particularly apt image of both the practical and the conceptual disintegration of the culture-nature-boundary in the face of catastrophe -- and there's no catastrophe like time. The ruination of infrastructure and especially of buildings comes to symbolize the fate of human technological mastery as well as the undoing of any human “inside” delimited from the great outdoors of non-human nature.

In addition to providing a general consideration of the themes at hand, I'll specifically discuss Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2007) and, time permitting, Jim Crace's *Pesthouse* (2007) and/or Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980). Theoretically the presentation makes use of research on the geological sublime in romantic-era literature, material ecocriticism and recent philosophical writing on the subject of geophilosophy.

Bio

Jouni Teittinen is a doctoral student at the department of Comparative Literature, University of Turku. His dissertation, now in its second year, studies aspects of the human, the non-human and the inhuman in post-apocalyptic literature by working through questions of time and scale, species and animality, futurity and extinction.

Outlaws of the Nature: Representation of Humans in Richard Adams' *Watership Down* and Other Animal Dystopias

Maria Laakso

During the past few years the Western media audiences have seen more images and heard more stories of refugee journeys than ever before. The inevitably rising awareness of the upcoming environmental disasters have raised serious concerns about future environmental migration. For these reasons it is not surprising that the contemporary young adult literature has turned quite dystopic in nature (Nikolajeva 2010; Hintz & Ostry 2009). Often these contemporary young adult dystopias represent so called *postdisaster survival story*, which concentrates on depicting the life after the environmental (or other) disaster. This story mode is often based on the quest structure: young characters looking for the better place to live (Hammer 2010).

But actually these postdisaster survival stories have been quite popular among young readers for decades. This is because the sub-genre of animal fables called *animal fantasy* has been using this story since Rudyard Kipling's children's classic *The Jungle Book* (1893). In a story called "The White Seal" an unusually brave white seal leads the seal community to a new world, away from the cruel and evil seal hunters. The story seems to include all the elements that will later become basic material of the animal fantasy: threat of humans, brave leader and the epic search of new home (exodus-motif).

In my paper I will concentrate on *Watership Down* (1972) by Richard Adams and also its many literary heirs, such as Colin Dann's *Animals of Farthing Wood* (1981) W. J. Corbett's *The Song of Pentecost* (1982), Aeron Clement's *The Cold Moons* (1987) or Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone* (1999). These novels are, of course, part of a long tradition of anthropomorphic tales of animals, but unlike classics such as *The Wind in the Willows* or *Animal farm* they are not social satires or critical allegories of human world. *Watership Down* can be read as one of the first modern "green" novels. By "defamiliarising" human life and values it enables us to evaluate the modern world in a new light: from the point of view of an animal.

I claim, that these animal fantasy novels can be perceived as a dystopic eco-novels long before the flourishing of postapocalyptic ecocritical YA-literature of today. Every one of them depict the life-threatening consequences of human actions and destructive capacities of human societies from the point of view of an animal. The animals are the marginalized

innocents: unable to stop the modernization of the human world leading to ecological disaster for the animals (Battista 2012).

In my paper, I will concentrate mainly into the representation of humans in these animal dystopias. I am especially interested in the concept of *law of the nature*. In these novels the phrase is often opposed to the *man-made law* of a society and thus functions as a standard by which to criticize human actions. *Law of the nature* is a law whose content is set by nature itself and is therefore universal. Still humans constantly break the law of the nature and that's why they are represented as being outsiders of nature. According to my hypothesis, the warning ethos of these novels is based mostly to the concept of law of the nature.

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Bio

PhD Maria Laakso is a University Lecture in Finnish Literature at the University of Tampere, Finland. Her doctoral dissertation (2014) examined the relationship between literary humour and audience structures in Finnish children's novels using the various tools of literary criticism and interdisciplinary humour studies. Laakso has published widely on contemporary Finnish literature. She is co-editor of the ecocritical anthology *Tapion tarhoista turkistarhoille. Luonto suomalaisessa lasten- ja nuortenkirjallisuudessa*, (2011; "From The Farms Of Tapio To Fur Farms: Nature in Finnish Children's Literature"). Currently her research interests include dystopia in war fiction, economical dystopias and the dystopian tendencies in contemporary Finnish fiction and Finnish young adult literature.

SESSION II: UTOPIAN AND DYSTOPIAN IMPULSES

Unpredictable Spillage: Virtual Reality as Compromised Utopia in Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge*

Esko Suoranta

“DeepArcher is about to overflow out into the perilous gulf between screen and face.” (Bleeding Edge, 429) Thomas Pynchon’s 2013 novel *Bleeding Edge* is situated in New York City before and after 9/11. It follows Maxine Tarnow, a de-certified fraud examiner, on a postmodern investigation that brings her into contact with IT experts working on unforeseen virtual reality software running somewhere in the dark corners of the Deep Web. In the course of the novel, Maxine becomes more and more fascinated with “DeepArcher,” a name punning on ‘departure,’ following its development from nerd-fantasy to target for predatory investors to open-source fantasy web-land.

Pynchon evokes DeepArcher, a piece of software dependent on the novel’s realistically clunky 2000s, as an immersive virtual reality that changes shape first at the hands of its developers, then hacker-intruders both curious and sinister, and finally its user populace after going opensource. Its depiction as a seeming universe of its own, a place of potential solace, asylum, and disappearance, shows that DeepArcher holds an utopian potential. This potential becomes contested as DeepArcher’s revolutionary potential causes ripples both on the novel’s surface web and in its meatspace.

In my paper, I argue that, in *Bleeding Edge*, Pynchon uses DeepArcher symbolically to showcase the conflicting utopian and dystopian pulls that have faced the Internet since its inception and gained an additional sinister sense in the post-Snowden world. Pynchon’s deliberate confusing of the border between the virtual and the real, his refusal to have DeepArcher adhere to the otherwise somewhat realistic constraints of technology in his fictional world, as well as the consequences of online events in an offline world and vice versa, explore the two-sided coin of our reality mediated through the online. Utopian departure is the mere flipside of dystopian enclosure.

Bio

Esko Suoranta is a first-year PhD scholar at the University of Helsinki, working on a thesis tentatively called *Allegories of Late Capitalism: The Future Worlds of Contemporary Anglo-American Fiction*. Suoranta has published on power relations in William Gibson's *Bigend* trilogy in *Fafnir* 1/2014 and on transhumanity in Gibson's latest novel *The Peripheral* in *Fafnir* 1/2016. Suoranta claims to have a "mild Twitter addiction" and can be followed as @Escogar.

Young Adult Dystopias: Resistance Movements as Salvation Religions. Examples from Popular YA Trilogies *The Hunger Games*, *Delirium* and *Divergent*

Kaisa Kaukiainen

I am looking into the rise of young adult (YA) dystopias. This subgenre is now at the peak of its fame. I am especially exploring the most popular book trilogies: Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008–2010), Veronica Roth' *Divergent* (2011–2013) and Lauren Oliver' *Delirium* (2011–2013). *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are also well known as blockbuster movie series. These novels share plenty of similarities regarding protagonists, plotlines and worlds described. Also, much in debt to classic dystopian depictions (Orwell etc.), the society is ruled by a totalitarian order. Religiousness or spirituality is not visible in these novels, the main focus is in adventurous plotlines and intriguing love affairs.

However, the totalitarian regime functions as a ruling religion demanding total obedience from its followers, setting doctrines and means of worship. Like in so many dystopian novels, also in these YA dystopias, a counter movement against the reigning regime is in a crucial role. Resistance movements bring a message of hope, free will, love and especially freedom of choice unknown in an oppressive society. I am claiming that as these resistances are based on the attributes and values of American society, they also function as universal counteracts needed for the religious change and resemble religious movements. They are attempts to bring God back into the world. Even when the counter movements do not emphasise religiousness, I argue that there is a strong religious undertone. In my presentation I am also exploring the reasons for such plot lines in YA dystopias: why does the camouflaged religious message of hope and liberation appeal over and over again?

Bio

Kaisa Kaukiainen is doing her PhD for Comparative Literature in the University of Helsinki under a title "Religiousness in Dystopian Novels". In her research, she is concentrating on recent Anglo-American dystopian literature (e.g. Margaret Atwood). Kaukiainen is observing which role religiousness has in dystopian novels and how a dystopian world shapes religiousness.

On the Fringes of a New Future: Borders and Frontiers in Maarit Verronen's novel *Kirkkaan selkeää*

Sarianna Kankkunen

Maarit Verronen's novel *Kirkkaan selkeää* (2010, "Bright and Clear") is a journey through postapocalyptic Western Europe, which is wilder than we can imagine, but at the same time more strictly controlled than ever before. Emptied by the extremely intensive UV radiation and infectious disease and monitored with microchips, reality TV camera crews and mysterious "hidden coordinators", the continent has become a playground for the powerful, the cruel – and the few who are insignificant but resourceful, like the novel's main character Tiksu.

This paper investigates the topos of frontier in Verronen's novel. The aim is to study the interplay between the thematics of control – one of the most common topoi of the dystopian tradition – and the story's setting on the fringes of civilization, in a frontier-like conditions, which, on the other hand, constitute a key element in post-apocalyptic fiction. These tropes will be analyzed and further contextualized also in relation to these two genres.

The novel's main character Tiksu is an in-between of different worlds. She travels by land, sea and even by air with her hot-air balloon. But just like the balloon, she has difficulties in landing and getting attached to something. Tiksu's metamorphosis-like transformations from balloon pilot to boat captain, from reality TV freak to assistant for scientific climate research and from fraud victim to man-hunter depict the insecurity and contingency of the world she's living in. Tiksu lives on the fringes and crosses boundaries by default but, on the other hand, these boundaries seem to grow stronger and more isolative when the story evolves. Europe is divided by a quarantine, and the wealthy barricade themselves ever further. Are the barren

wastelands that Tiksu explores the new wilderness, a space where civilization and humanity turn into relics and vanish? Or could these sites become a fruitful frontier, an incubator, where new ways of society and participation evolve?

Bio

Sarianna Kankkunen is a PhD student in Finnish Literature from the University of Helsinki. The topic of her research is space and place in author Maarit Verronen's work. Verronen (1965) is a well-known writer of Finnish speculative fiction; she has published over 20 novels and collections of short stories. Verronen's works explore and blur the boundaries of science fiction, fantasy, horror and magical realism. Kankkunen is especially interested in liminal spaces and thresholds; the spaces of outsiders and social outcasts, for whom Verronen is always advocating.

SESSION III: EMOTIONS AND THE READER

Temporal Experiments and Narrative Emotions in Ted Chiang's "Story of Your Life"

Merja Polvinen

The narrative emotions as described by Meir Sternberg—curiosity, suspense and surprise—are all inherently temporal in nature, as well as being seen as central to the attraction of popular genres such as science fiction. What happens to readers' experiencing of these emotions when a narrative self-consciously experiments with the temporal structures that make these emotions possible? This presentation will examine Ted Chiang's 1998 novella "Story of Your Life" and its experimental use of narrative perspective and temporality. Through the slow revelation of the narrator's actual experiencing of past, present and future simultaneously, the novella thematises not only issues related to our human experience of the physical laws of space-time, such as teleology, determinism and free will, but also the conventional separation of story time and discourse time. Like so many science fiction stories, therefore, Chiang's estranges our normal way of perceiving time, but it also takes up the task of estranging the narrative conventions by which such perceptions are usually represented.

Chiang's novella, I suggest, "enacts chronology" the same way that its narrator enacts her own life: it knows exactly what the rules of storytelling are, and sets out to move in accordance with them with perfect awareness of what it is doing. In order to discuss the effects of such self-consciousness on readers and on their experience of curiosity, suspense and surprise, I will bring together Sternberg's analysis of these emotions with concepts from current cognitive narratology, including those of experientiality (Fludernik 1996; Caracciolo 2014) and narrative enactment (Noë 2004; Troscianko 2014; Popova 2015), and argue that such a combination can help us understand how readers can engage with the story and discourse levels of a narrative simultaneously.

Bio

Dr Merja Polvinen is a research fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and lecturer in English philology at the University of Helsinki. Her work focuses on interdisciplinary approaches to literature, both literature and the natural sciences (*Reading the Texture of Reality: Chaos Theory, Literature and the Humanist Perspective*, 2008), and cognitive approaches to literary representation. She is co-editor of *Rethinking Mimesis* (2012), and has published articles e.g. in *The Journal of Literary Semantics and Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*. Polvinen is also a member of the network Narrative and Complex Systems (University of York), board member in the Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research, and co-organiser with Karin Kukkonen of the Cognitive Futures in the Humanities conference in Helsinki in June 2016.

Dissecting "the Canary in a Cage": Dystopian Fiction as Affective Communication

Saija Isomaa

In this talk, I will discuss dystopian fiction, with a special emphasis on genre conventions and collective emotions. My main purpose is to show how dystopian fiction affects the reader and communicates societal views. This aspect of dystopian fiction has been previously discussed in different terms, for instance, by referring to its didactic, critical or satiric nature (Booker and Thomas 2009: 65) or by comparing it to "the canary in a cage" (Baccolini and Moylan 2003: 2). I agree on the idea of dystopian fiction as a form of tendentious fiction, but attempt to give a more detailed account of the alleged "warning function". To put it metaphorically, I

intend to dissect the famous “canary in a cage,” or the genre in its environments, to understand its functioning.

In order to function as a warning, a dystopian work has to succeed in communicating at least two things to the reader: first, that the state of affairs represented in a dystopian work is undesirable, and second, that similar things could happen in the world in which we live. The question that I discuss in this talk is how a novel can communicate these things to its readers. My preliminary answer to the question identifies three aspects: 1) the basic cognitive capacities of the human psyche (e.g. empathy), 2) culturally specific textual devices such as genre conventions and narrative empathy, and 3) collective emotions, based on shared values, typical of a culture or society. I suggest that the warning function arises not from textual conventions narrowly conceived, but rather from the way in which they affect and persuade a culturally embedded reader. Despite the general orientation of my talk, I will offer a view of how a typical work in the genre of classical dystopia appeals to emotions.

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Bio

Sajja Isomaa works currently as Professor of Finnish Literature at the University of Tampere, leading a project on Finnish dystopian fiction in 2015–2019. In her previous publications, she has explored, for example, genre theory and literature’s relation to collective emotions.

When the Nazis Conquer the Racists: Reading the Hierarchies of *Harry Potter's* Dystopian Finale

Nicholas Wanberg

The final installment of the *Harry Potter* series sees the wizarding world collapse into a violent fascist dystopia. Secret police prowl the streets and innocents are subjected to inquisitorial interrogations, in which every word is perceived as evidence of guilt. The laws

that once structured the society are now used to deny rights to those deemed as undesirables, barring them from employment, removing access to magic and other similar measures. What makes this shift most interesting, however, is that none of what Voldemort's followers do with this power is actually new. Every measure employed against the socially constructed categories of “mudbloods” reflects an existing practice of the old regime, previously directed at some group of intelligent, non-human creatures.

This paper examines the parallels between the treatment of socially constructed human groups under the dystopian regime of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows* with the treatment of those who were previously designated as sub-human under the earlier government (specifically having their identities constructed as “magical creatures,” despite the obviously higher orders of intelligence possessed by, for example, house elves, goblins and centaurs when compared to other “magical creatures” like boggarts or blast-ended skrewts). Furthermore, this study argues that the hierarchies imposed by Voldemort's government and those imposed by the previous democratic government are identical, save for the addition of a new level of division among magically talented humans. The study will discuss what further differences exist between these two governments, relevant to the treatment of their subjects, and will attempt to identify several possible readings of this parallel, sympathetic and unsympathetic to the text (some of which have been discussed or at least alluded to by earlier scholars working on the series, often before it was completed).

This study suggests a new reading, which it argues has greater resonance. It posits a fantastic version of what many scholars have called “common sense racism,” within the framework of which, differences between racial groups (in this case, between human groups and types of intelligent “magical creatures”) are straightforward and obvious to all, matters of “common sense,” and the idea of racism is reconfigured to be a matter not of belief in difference but of intolerance or mistreatment of the racialized Other. This is typically accompanied by deflecting accusations of racism toward “true racists,” either in the form of extremist groups (neo-nazis in Europe, or groups like the Klu Klux Klan in the United States) or against those who would deny differences entirely, satirized as being intolerant, hypocritical or out of touch. The prior group is represented by Death Eaters within the stories and the latter lampooned via Hermione's “S.P.E.W.” organization. By this reading, the previous government, while in many ways treated as unsympathetic, would at least be read as (intended to be) sympathetic in its racial policy. This explains why, at the series' end, many

hopes for the correction of the earlier injustices, such as Farah Mendlesohn's hope for eventual elvish liberation, remain unfulfilled, and the happy ending is not one of freedom and equality for all, but a reinstatement of the status quo.

Bio

Nicholas Wanberg is a postgraduate researcher in English Philology at the University of Tampere. His current research focuses on the racialized portrayals of intelligent non-human creatures in popular 20th century speculative fiction and the broader implications thereof.

SESSION IV: FROM FAERIES TO...

The Nature of Heroism in Catherynne M. Valente's *Fairyland* Series

Fodor András

Catherynne M. Valente's *Fairyland* series is the epitome of the new understanding of contemporary fairy tales. The books can be interpreted as fantasy and as science fiction. The novels are about a girl named September who leaves her home behind in order to start her career as a hero of stories. There are many perspectives that can serve as a vantage point for scrutiny, however, I would like to emphasise the nature of heroism that Valente problematises. Throughout the four already published novels of the series, though giving less weight to the fourth book since the main character is Hawthorn, not September, the idea of being a hero is constantly, either explicitly or implicitly, under a trial. In the beginning, September worries a great deal about her shortcomings as a heroine, though as she grows older, she ceases to believe that there are imperative qualities for a heroine.

In my paper, I would like to investigate the means of problematising and of deconstruction of the nature of heroism. The episodes of *Fairyland* richly present underlined expectations towards the central character, as if they were ways of perpetual meta-understanding of modes and of behaviours of the protagonist. Valente toys with the notions of fairy tale topoi of the obligatory valiantness and of the ceaseless recklessness when it comes to fairy tale protagonists, in order to craft and to explore her meaning of fairy tale. However, if the situation requires to stand up against dangers, her characters are up for the task.

Valente's September seeks to grasp the anticipations toward her as soon as she realises her role. Throughout the novels she experiences her development in the narratives, the weight or the burden of her decisions and the differentiations in the perception of her position in the fictitious world. As she grows up, her self-image does not adopt to the changed circumstances, therefore, her astonishment is beyond measure when she recognises herself as a borderline villain. My paper aims to explore the notion of the hero in Catherynne M. Valente's *Fairyland* series from the perspective of its relation to the cultural codes of horizon of expectations, of the development of the protagonist and of the quality of adulthood as a changing factor of September.

Bio

András Fodor studied for his BA degree in English and Literary Editor in Hungarian at the University of Szeged, Szeged, earned his MA degree in English Literature at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest and has an additional degree in Children's and Young Adult Literature from Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Budapest. Fodor aims to specialise in the relation between contemporary fantasy and children's literature within the frame of doctoral studies at the University of Szeged.

Afraid of the Dark: The Horror within Cornwall's Subterranean Fairy Tales and Folklores

Joan Passey

While significant critical attention has been paid to the mythology, folklore, and Gothicism of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, there has been scarce attention paid to the mythological output of the 'fourth Celtic nation', Cornwall. This paper asks why the vast majority of Cornwall's fairy tales have fallen from circulation, why Jack and the Beanstalk, as a noted example, survived, and the antiquarian figures that preserved what little we know about Cornish fairy tale. I will focus more specifically on the darker side of the Cornish tale: the underground and underwater environments that so frequently set the scene for tales of curses, wrecking, and woe, from the swaggering Captain Cruel Coppinger, to the piskies causing mines to collapse. Cornwall's fairy tales are a complex cocktail of superstition, societal stresses, antiquarian investigation, mythology, and revived and reimagined history as a result of late nineteenth century Gothic revival. How did the horrors of a collapsing economy, tremendous poverty,

and mass emigration reflect in their storytelling? I will unravel this knot of ideas and influences within a context of nineteenth century Gothic tradition, to understand why the Cornish were so terribly afraid of the dark.

Bio

Having completed her M.St. in eighteenth century literature at the University of Oxford in 2015, Joan Passey is currently a PhD candidate at the universities of Bristol and Exeter under the South West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership. Her research focuses on identifying a Cornish Gothic in late nineteenth century British novels and travel writing.

Werewolf Myths and Fairy Tale Motifs in a Dystopian Novel *The Core of the Sun* by Johanna Sinisalo

Hanna Samola

In my presentation, I discuss the combination of fairy tale, myth, and dystopia in Johanna Sinisalo's novel *Auringon ydin* (2013, *The Core of the Sun*). I examine its intertextual references to different versions of the fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" and tales of werewolves. Among these werewolf stories are the novel *Sudenmorsian* (1928, *The Wolf's Bride*) by Finnish-Estonian writer Aino Kallas, and the play *Libahunt* (1911, "The Werewolf") by Estonian writer August Kitzberg. These references connect Sinisalo's novel to Finno-Ugric mythology, which gives the novel a peculiar twist.

Auringon ydin is a self-reflective combination of various genres and text-types. These texts build an alternate history of the 20th century in Finland under a totalitarian regime. A fairy tale "Pikku Punanna" is one of the texts embedded in Sinisalo's novel. This didactic story revises the story of Little Red Riding Hood and is targeted to young girls in order to school them to become obedient, feminine, and unwilling to stray from the path they are forced to take. *Auringon ydin* takes place in the fictional Eusistocratic Republic of Finland where citizens have been categorized into the gendered groups of Eloi and Morlock women and Masko and Minus men. In order to keep the women submissive to men, the state has organized experiments with the selective breeding and domestication of women. Concealing one's sex is condemned as gender treachery. The law that prohibits gender treachery is one of the references to a canonical dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret

Atwood. Both of these dystopian novels circulate motifs of “Little Red Riding Hood” and thus share the same intertext.

Canonical versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” – “Le Petit Chaperon Rouge” (1697) by Charles Perrault and “Rotkäppchen” (1812) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm – are cautionary tales with gendered warning. These versions warn girls not to listen to the seductions of strangers who pretend to be friendly. The wolf has usually been understood as a representative of a man, and the violence of the wolf as sexual violence. Christina Bacchilega (1997, 58) suggests that in the literary tradition of “Little Red Riding Hood”, the girl protagonist is either domesticated or devoured. In Sinisalo’s novel, the whole female gender has been domesticated, and women are in a constant danger of being killed or punished if they do not follow the gender laws. However, the witty protagonist of the novel rebels against the rules and tries to escape to the other side of the wall built along the border of the state. By escaping, she acts like the witty protagonist of an early version of Little Red Riding Hood tale called “A Story of Grandmother”. However, she does not merely play the role of the clever girl – she plays the role of a wolf as well.

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Bio

Hanna Samola is a doctoral student at the University of Tampere. The topic of her doctoral thesis is the combination of fairy tale and dystopia in contemporary Finnish literature. *Auringon ydin* by Johanna Sinisalo is one of the novels she examines. Samola will finish her PhD in 2016 and continue as a post doc researcher after that. Samola is a researcher in a

project focusing on dystopias in contemporary Finnish literature. Project is led by Saija Isomaa and funded by Kone Foundation.

THE WORLD HOBBIT PROJECT -PANEL

The Book, the Film, and Audience Responses: First Results of the Finnish Sub-Project of the *World Hobbit Project*

Irma Hirsjärvi

Aino-Kaisa Koistinen

Jyrki Korpua

Maria Ruotsalainen

Tanja Välisalo

When the audience knows a book by heart, the reception of any kind of adaptation is often doomed. Rarely the audience calls it as a huge success as was also the case with the film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings (LOTR)*. In the case of *The Hobbit*, the reception has clearly been more diverse, especially among the devoted fans of J. R.R. Tolkien, the author of both *LOTR* and *The Hobbit*.

Martin Barker, Emeritus Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Aberystwyth, launched the international comparative research on the *LOTR* film adaptation trilogy (Barker & Mathjus 2008), and in 2014 the new international reception study about the film trilogy of *The Hobbit* commenced in more than 50 countries with an online survey (Barker et al. 2014-2015). The data collected via the survey was expected to open up new research questions about the global reception of the trilogy, about the production, activity and meaning-making processes of the members of the audience. Our presentation will offer the first results of the Finnish sub-project of the *World Hobbit research project*.

To be more precise, we propose a 2 hour presentation that concentrates on the Finnish responses but also compares these results to the international responses to the *Hobbit* film trilogy – a transnational media object. The Finnish sub-project *Uses of Fantasy* focuses on the following questions: 1. What is the meaning of fantasy to the respondents, and what does fantasy bring to their lives; 2. How are questions of identity, fandom and cultural consumption visible in the meaning-making processes of the respondents; 3. What kinds of

transmedial strategies of media use can be found through the practices of media use as reported in the data; 4. How do conceptions of national, territorial and cultural identity affect the processes of meaning-making as well as strategies of reception within the audience of the Hobbit trilogy? The responses of the Finnish audience (N: 1600) of *The Hobbit* are scrutinized through these questions, using the websites and internet discussions of Tolkien and fantasy fans as a background. The questions will shed light of the personal views in cross national analyses of the appeal of this transnational phenomenon.

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Bios

PhD, Researcher Irma Hirsjärvi, Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, University of Jyväskylä, has been a member of Finnish representatives in EU COST- Action IS0906 “Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies” project 2010–2013, in “Participation in/through media” Work Group2. She was the member of *Young people reading fantasy* project of the Baltic Sea area countries, and the coordinator and researcher in Finnish Academy project *The Global Comparative Youth Media Participation* (2009–2013) of Professor Sirkku Kotilainen. She is the founding member and was the first chair of FINFAR - The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research.

PhD, Postdoctoral researcher Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, University of Jyväskylä, defended her thesis *The Human Question in Science Fiction Television: (Re)Imagining Humanity in Battlestar Galactica, Bionic Woman and V* in 2015. She is a board member of FINFAR - The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research and one of the editors-in-chief of *Fafnir — Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy*.

PhD Jyrki Korpua, Literary studies, University of Oulu, defended his PhD dissertation *Constructive Mythopoetics in J. R. R. Tolkien's Legendarium* in 2015. Korpua is the chair of the FINFAR Society, from 2014 to 2016 he was the president of the society for Cultural

Studies in Finland and is one of the editors-in-chief of *Fafnir — Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy*.

MA Maria Ruotsalainen has conducted her master's degree in Digital Culture studies. She is interested on how the current technologies and digital mediums change our everyday experience of the public and private, time and location, as well of the self and the identity. She is working on her doctoral thesis in which she aims to develop a DeleuzeGuattarian framework for the understanding of the play experience in the digital games and beyond.

MA Tanja Välisalo is a doctoral student at the Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, University of Jyväskylä. She is writing her dissertation on virtual worlds and media fandom.

SESSION V: MONSTERS, HUMAN AND THE NON-HUMAN

Ending the World of Humans. Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* and Timothy Morton's *Dark Ecology*.

Kaisa Kortekallio

Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* trilogy (2014) creates a world outside the world of humans. It describes human efforts for controlling both the environment and their selves, and evokes nonhuman powers that annihilate those efforts. These aspects of the trilogy can be considered apocalyptic. However, unlike some of the classics it has frequently been compared to – Strugatsky brothers' *Stalker*, Stanislav Lem's *Solaris*, J. G. Ballard's zone novels and H. P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror – the trilogy does not constitute a defeatist ethos. Instead, it turns away from anthropocentric misery and opens up to the forces of nonhuman Life.

Southern Reach has most commonly been received as “ecologically minded Weird fiction”. The context of Weird fiction provides rich potential for the interpretation of both VanderMeer's work and certain posthumanist styles of nonfiction – in this case, the *dark ecology* of Timothy Morton. Weird fiction, as well as the contemporary movement of New Weird, is most often characterized by its evocation of a sense of dread, cosmic awe, or terror

(Miéville 2009, VanderMeer 2008). Like the writers of Weird tales, Morton insists that the real is permeated by strange and awesome processes. In his writings, he also evokes the effect of the “everyday sublime” with literary techniques typical to the Weird: cognitive estrangement, evocation of material monsters, foregrounded nonhuman agency, grotesque proportions, and a strategic reversal of subject-object relations where the first-person human narrator becomes a “litmus test for hyperobjects”.

In the presentation, I consider how these estranging techniques are used to develop a sensitivity to more-than-human environments. I suggest that the Weird and apocalyptic aspects of the trilogy contribute to a posthumanist conception of life – starting from the assumption that the end of the world of humans has already happened.

Bio

Kaisa Kortekallio is currently working on a doctoral dissertation in the field of literary research. The dissertation examines how relations of selves, bodies and nonhuman life are re-imagined in contemporary English-language science fiction and in posthumanist philosophy. Kortekallio is interested in the ways narrative techniques, such as viewpoint and character, take part in the formation and transformation of subjectivities. She hopes to contribute to the development of "ecology after Nature". Kortekallio also teaches courses on contemporary science fiction and actively participates in The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research (FINFAR).

Marjut Puhakka

Living the End Times: the Decline of the Humanity and the Rise of the Zombies

In my dissertation, I am studying the Richard Matheson’s novel *I am Legend* (1954) and the three films based on the original story. I chose Matheson’s story because it is one of the first (or the first) zombie apocalypse stories ever written. Since Matheson’s book and George Romero’s film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) (which he made inspired by Matheson’s book), zombies have taken over the world in various ways. Romero himself doesn’t want to look at zombies as any kind of a metaphor, but rather he thinks that it is all the same how the world ends. Zombies are just the ticket for the ride.

In Matheson's book and in many other dystopic worlds of horror fiction the basic fear raising element of the narrative seems to be the fear of the Otherness of another human being. By Other I don't mean only the fear of the other human races (such as that white man fears the black man), but the odder uncanny side of the other people who are at the same time similar and familiar but also different and strange. Zombies are the face of the Other in this way: once living loved ones turn into something twisted and nasty; corpses that move. The zombies truly lead the way to the uncanny valley.

H.P. Lovecraft's *The Shadow over Innsmouth* was published in 1936 and it seems to have something very similar to Matheson's *I am Legend*. In both stories the hero is a white middle classed and middle aged man who comes across monsters that are almost human but not quite. In both of the stories there is this feeling of claustrophobia, alienation and hopeless loneliness. It seems that the both main characters suffer from isolation. They don't belong or fit in. Is it so that in many dystopias the humankind seems to decline and degenerate, transforming the nice people next door in to monsters that lurk in the shadows? And the heroes of the stories are helpless because the enemy isn't something that they could fight against. Escape or hiding seems to be the only possibility, but both in the Matheson's story and in Lovecraft's story the main character can't control their destiny.

There are also other examples of stories where familiar people turn into something else (such as *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1956). This kind of stories are usually explained with the political atmosphere of the cold war, but since the cold war has seized, shouldn't the stories too? The fear of the deception of the loved ones, the thought that people surrounding us could turn into a monster may be a ghost out of past but it still keeps haunting. Why zombies, why the empty shells of humankind, the clumsy but determinate living dead creatures keep occupying the nightmares of a literary kind? In dystopic post-apocalyptic time and places life can get a bit lonely. Still, one can't get rid of the annoying neighbour as it turns out in Matheson's *I am Legend*...

Bio

Marjut Puhakka is a PhD student at the department of literature at the University of Oulu. Puhakka has specialized in horror fiction since she made her Master's Thesis on the Lovecraft's book *The Shadow Out of Time*. Puhakka is working on her dissertation on Richard Matheson's novel *I am Legend* and the three movies that are based on the

Matheson's original story. Puhakka's theoretical interests are in philosophy and psychology and she is following the ideas of such scholars as Alain Badiou, Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek.

Gothic Monstrosities in the Post-apocalyptic Digital Game World of *Fallout 3*

Sari Piittinen

Dystopian themes frequently appear in the storytelling of digital games and are often linked with elements of Gothic horror. In the digital role playing game *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008) a dystopian, post-apocalyptic game story setting meets Gothic influences in the form of monsters. While, for instance, five co-ordinates of Gothic material in games have been identified (Krzywinska 2015) and horror games have been investigated (Krzywinska 2002, Habel & Kooyman 2014, Perron 2009), until now, little work has been done on the impact of the Gothic on games. The Gothic remains relevant today, as it provides a means for social and political commentary that highlights contemporary concerns, fears and anxieties. By investigating the concept of monstrosity and how it contributes to the dystopian atmosphere of *Fallout 3*, I aim to draw attention to the complexity of Gothic connotations and their pervasiveness in digital game storytelling.

My paper provides an interpretative analysis of a digital game by employing the method of close reading from the field of game studies (Fernández-Vara 2015: 209, Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum 2011). Data for the study has been collected from repeated plays of *Fallout 3*, consisting of screen captures and notes, and then coded based on theories of the Gothic. The analytic lens in this paper is focused on visual and verbal character-based narration that includes connotations of monstrosity. The concept of monstrosity is approached by drawing on theoretical literature on Gothic and horror. For instance, the monster in Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is complex in the sense that while his appearance is monstrous, he is also intelligent and well-spoken, and only begins to turn hostile after experiencing "ostracism, prejudice and withheld human contact" (Spooner 2006: 70). Appropriately, monstrosity in this paper is not approached merely as a physical condition that is inherently linked to monstrous behaviour, but as something that is socially constructed. The results of the study show similarities between some of the mutated characters of the *Fallout 3* wasteland and the creature from *Frankenstein*. However, also influences from vampires,

Gothic villains and contemporary types of monstrosities can be identified in the game. The creation and presence of Gothic monstrosities in *Fallout 3* contribute to a dystopian atmosphere; they have irrevocably become a part of the new violent, irradiated and disordered world.

The study highlights the continuing relevance and potential of the Gothic in a relatively new medium of storytelling: digital games. As the popularity of gaming grows, so does the cultural significance of digital game storytelling. While only one game is analysed here, insights gained from this study can be applied to digital game design more generally, as many of the Gothic themes are universal to games. Notably, with a focus on monstrosities, the study concludes that digital games can include stories that are nuanced and complex similar to Gothic texts that comment on the cultural context of their creation. Furthermore, a link can be established between the dystopian and the Gothic, both of which create fruitful storytelling opportunities for digital games.

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Bio

Sari Piittinen is a PhD student at the University of Jyväskylä.

SESSION VI: CATASTROPHES AND ECODYSTOPIAS

Catastrophe as a Recipe for Social Change in Dan Simmons' *The Fall of Hyperion*

Essi Vatilo

The futures science fiction imagines are often understood as warnings: if we continue on the current path, this is the disaster that awaits us. The idea is that readers will see the future described as undesirable and be awakened to act in order to prevent that future from taking place. The apocalyptic vision of catastrophe is designed to stop the catastrophe.

It is a fine balancing act to create a future that is bad enough to spur people into action, but not so bad as to cause apathy and resignation in the face of the inevitable. However, the hope that there is a future after the catastrophe can also lead to a conclusion that the catastrophe is a necessary catalyst for creating the new social order. Does the story then undermine the warning as that which must be avoided becomes the necessary ingredient in being able to create something new?

Dan Simmons' *The Fall of Hyperion* ends with a desperate plot to free humanity from parasitic AI. The catch is that the plot will also condemn a great portion of humanity to die of hunger and lack of resources. Society as the Hegemony knows it will be completely destroyed. If we think of this story as a warning, then the message would be to take responsibility for the development of AI so that the conflict between humanity and AI might be avoided. While CEO Gladstone's decision seems appalling, it also seems an inevitable course of action to give humanity a chance to do better.

Such a plot is dramatic and makes for a good story, but it also takes the easy way out. By obliterating the old world order it shows how to build something from scratch, but it does not show how to change the path of progress to a more positive direction without going through disaster.

Bio

Essi Vatiolo is a PhD candidate at the University of Tampere. Vatiolo is writing her dissertation on responsibility for technological development in science fiction. More specifically, Vatiolo is focusing on artificial intelligence in Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* novels and the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica* series (2003-2009).

The Ecologization of Myths in Johanna Sinisalo's Ecodystopias

Toni Lahtinen

Johanna Sinisalo is one of the leading Finnish science fiction and fantasy writers whose prose has been labelled as *New Weird* or *Finnish Weird*. In my paper, I will interpret Sinisalo's novels *Birdbrain* (2011, *Linnunaivot*) and *The Blood of Angels* (2013, *Enkelten verta*) as ecodystopias. According to Eric C. Otto (2012), ecodystopia is a form of critical dystopias that are deeply rooted in the present and extrapolated out of some current and real anti-ecological trend – that can be social, scientific, economic, or a combination of these and others rehearsed daily in the contemporary order of things.

Besides exploring the characteristics of ecological dystopias, I will argue that the ecologization of myths is an essential part of the Western environmental imagination. Although ecocritical readings have neglected myths, contemporary literature employs different ancient and modern myths to convey the fallibility and vulnerability of humanity. Read ecocritically, as Patsy Callahan (2015) has stated, mythic narratives can invite humans to see themselves in relation to, rather than in contention with, the nonhuman natural world, disrupting the anthropocentrism that so many ecocritics find destructive to human and nonhuman ecology. In Sinisalo's novels the mythical layers are closely related to the depiction of human race as an endangered species, heading for extinction.

The critically acclaimed *Birdbrain* is an allegorical and speculative novel about two Finnish hikers who decide to take a series of extreme hikes through the most isolated parts of Tasmania, New Zealand, and Australia. As they leave the civilization behind, mysterious occurrences threaten their lives in parallel to human activities threatening the environment. For ecocritics, the trope of wilderness has always been one of the key interests. Previous literary analysis of this sinister novel (such as Lyytikäinen 2015) have already acknowledged the rich allusions to Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1321) and Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1899). I will approach the novel also as an ecologization of the Robinson myth.

The Blood of Angels deals with the colony collapse disorder, the sudden mass disappearance of bees that threatens global agriculture. It has been said that the novel reworks the Orpheus myth while analyzing modern man's need to deny his mortality and raise himself above the rest of nature. In the story a beekeeper begins to wonder if he could reunite with his dead eco-activist son and whether he could escape the ecological meltdown of this world. According to Christopher Hollingsworth (2001), insect metaphors issues from a dramatic tableau, one that defines the individual and society in relation to each other. Besides the traditional imagery of beehive as a human society, the depiction of imminent ecocatastrophe utilizes the ancient myth of the Bee Goddess and bee as the sacred insect that bridges the natural world to the underworld.

I will conclude with a brief summarization and reflection about myths, the genre of New Weird, and ecocriticism: should ecocriticism focus on variety of myths instead of the obvious resurrection of the Great Deluge myth in cli-fi?

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Bio

Toni Lahtinen, PhD is a university instructor at the University of Tampere, Finland. His doctoral dissertation dealt with ecocriticism and the metaphor of the land-as-a-woman in representations of the Arctic wilderness. Lahtinen has published several ecocritical articles on Finnish literature and is also the co-editor of three ecocritical anthologies. He is currently engaged in postdoctoral research on the environmental dystopia in contemporary Finnish literature. Lahtinen is also the presiding chairman of the Finnish Literary Research Society.

Alone at the End of Time – The Role of the Active Subject in the Creation of the Apocalyptic Narratives

Mikko Mäntyniemi

The main aim of my paper is to analyse the recurring characters in apocalyptic narratives and their roles in creating the narrative worlds. Starting point of the analysis is to compare the spatial and temporal relations in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives and how these space-time relations are connected to the possibilities of human actions in apocalyptic narratives. The idea of separating apocalyptic narratives from post-apocalyptic narratives because of the different space-time relations and different possible human actions was brought up already in my master's thesis but this paper is aimed at focusing even more on the problematic relations of the human characters in apocalyptic narratives.

I will examine the problematic relations between apocalypse and human characters using H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and also Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) as examples. These novels will demonstrate the main stereotypes of the characters often used in apocalyptic narratives, even though they themselves might not use these stock characters. The main characters are an essential part of apocalypse as a narrative in my view as I have defined apocalypse as a declaration of truth that threatens to overturn the world and/or the civilization and reveal something of the relationship between humans and nature and/or time. Studying the characters in apocalyptic narratives will highlight the changes that have occurred throughout history in social and moral norms conveyed by the texts.

The theoretical framework of this paper stands mainly on the concept of Chronotope created by Mikhail Bakhtin and developed further by Liisa Steinby and Tintti Klapuri (2013). Although Steinby and Klapuri are not the only ones to use and develop Bakhtin's ideas further, they do focus more on the hero's – or the main character's – role in the narrative. Steinby and Klapuri see the Chronotope mainly as a category of possible human actions in certain places. Using this idea it is possible to differentiate between the worlds of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives and how the characters can (re)act in these worlds and how these character actions are also creating the fictional world of the narrative. Furthermore I will use the three categories that James Phelan (1985) has created for character analysis: mimetic, thematic, and synthetic. Using these categories it is possible to analyse further the

character's motivations, roles, and the changes that the characters in the apocalyptic narratives have gone through in recent history. These changes are evident when we compare the main characters of *The War of the Worlds* and *Oryx and Crake*, for example, but the changes are somewhat cosmetic, focusing more on the mimetic component of the characters and not so much about their role in the text.

I will also use other character theories provided by narrative theorists like Mieke Bal (1985), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Alan Palmer, and Paul Hogan in my analysis. The focus of the recent narrative studies hasn't really been on the characters, and most of the theories are following the character function model created by Vladimir Propp in the early 20th century. The lack of fresh and new theories is somewhat problematic but it also provides an opportunity to create new ideas and narrative theories that include fictional characters as well.

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Bio

Mikko Mäntyniemi is studying comparative literature at the University of Tampere in the Master's Programme in Narrative Theory and Textuality. Mäntyniemi submitted his Master's Thesis *Timeless Narrative of the Apocalypse: The Apocalyptic Chronotope in H.G. Well's Novel The War of the World and in its adaptations* (translated for this introduction) in December 2015. In his Master's Thesis, Mäntyniemi analysed apocalyptic narratives and the apocalypse as a narrative and his plan is to continue studying this subject as a post-graduate student this fall.