



FAFNIR

NORDIC JOURNAL OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY RESEARCH

Volume 3, issue 4, 2016

journal.finfar.org



The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research
Suomen science fiction- ja fantasiatutkimuksen seura ry

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Supported by the The Finnish Society for Science Fiction Research and Fantasy (FINFAR)
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ISSN: 2342-2009 (online)

journal.finfar.org

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Editorial 4/2016

Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Katja Kontturi & Jyrki Korpua

Fafnir's issue 4/2016 is all about comics and animations, inspired by *The Arctic Comics Festival* held in Oulu, Finland (November 3–6, 2016). For this issue, we also have a guest editor, Dr. Katja Kontturi – also known as “The Ducktor” – who defended her PhD dissertation on fantasy and postmodernism in Don Rosa’s Disney comics in 2014.

In his book *Science Fiction Comics: The Illustrated History*, Mike Benton makes a bold claim that “science fiction was ultimately responsible for the future and success of the entire comic book industry” (Benton 4). Though he speaks from the perspective of American comic industry, it is hard to deny the authenticity of his claim. It was, indeed, superheroes of the 1930s such as Superman (1938) and Batman (1939) – characters that can surely be considered *science-fictional*, or at least speculative – who started what we now call the “golden era” of comic books that lasted until the late 1950s in the United States. Comics and science fiction, as well as fantasy, have therefore always walked hand in hand. Together they have experimented on the possibilities of human imagination; and not just through narratives but also by their visual imagery. That’s why it is important to examine speculative fiction through the lense of comics and animation studies. This issue therefore presents analyses on intriguing speculative panels, inviting you to wonder what happens during the gutter (i.e. the space between the panels).

This issue includes four research articles, one essay, three conference reports and one book review. In the first article “Speculative Architectures in Comics”, Francesco-Alessio Ursini examines how comics authors employ architecture as a narrative trope. The article investigates how cities are used as complex narrative environments in order to create speculative fictions. It is argued that comics authors exploit the multimodal nature of comics as well as the potential of architecture to construct complex worlds and narrative structures.

In the second article, “Superhuman Cognitions, Fourth Dimension and Speculative Comics Narrative: Panel Repetition in *Watchmen* and *From Hell*” Oskari Rantala discusses how panel repetition is used to represent superhuman cognition and argues that the comics medium is especially suitable for representing extraordinary cognitions and experiences, as the medium utilizes a narrative form operating on fragmentary visual matter.

Sofia Sjö’s article, “Religious Themes and Characters in Nordic Children’s Fantasy Films: Explorations of ‘Acceptable’ Religion” discusses and analyses four Nordic children’s fantasy films which include religious beings or themes. Sjö argues that the films seem to present religious spheres as unthreatening, but often also as related to the ‘Other’.

Last but not least, our guest editor Katja Kontturi’s article “Science fiction parody in Don Rosa’s ‘Attack of the Hideous Space-Varmints’” offers us an analysis on the Don Rosa comic from a parodic perspective. In doing so, the article focuses on how Rosa uses – and ridicules – traditional science fiction tropes. One of the aims of the article is to suggest that the subgenre of Disney

comics should be more comprehensively introduced to the field of comics studies as a serious research topic.

Reijo Valta's overview, "Koipeliinin matka Suomeen – Miten Rodolphe Töpfferin sarjakuva *Monsieur Cryptogame* muuttui tekijättömäksi *Koipeliini*-kuvasarjaksi", written in Finnish, offers us important inklings on the history of comics in Finland. Valta discusses how Rodolphe Töpffer's early 19th century comics, or *proto-comics* (often called *la littérature en estampes*, or "graphic literature"), came to Finland. The overview concentrates on Töpffer's *Monsieur Cryptogame* and how this work was rendered authorless in Finland and published in papers as anonymous "Koipeliini"comics.

We are also proud to present Jari Käckelä's *lectio praecursoria* "The Cowboy Politics of an Enlightened Future: History, Expansionism, and Guardianship in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction". It is based on Käckelä's doctoral dissertation, which he defended on the 9th of September 2016 at the University of Helsinki, Finland. In the *lectio praecursoria*, Käckelä discusses the view of the world that Asimov's work promotes and argues that the idea of building a better future for humanity with the help of science and technology is a key idea in Asimov's fiction.

In addition to the four articles, overview and *lectio praecursoria*, this issue includes a book review and three seminar reports. Minna Siikilä's report offers an overview on the *Uses of Fantasy in Changing Media Landscape* seminar held at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland in October 2016, and Reijo Valta reports on the aforementioned *Arctic Comics Festival*. The review by Essi Varis, however, does not focus merely on one seminar but offers a broader outlook on the year of a comics researcher. Last but not least, Reijo Valta offers a book review on *The Comics of Hergé – When The Lines Are Not So Clear*.

Finally, starting from January 2017 we will have a new editor, Dr. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay from the University of Oslo, Norway. We wish Dr. Chattopadhyay a warm welcome to our editorial team!

Works cited

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Speculative Architectures in Comics

Francesco-Alessio Ursini

Abstract: The present article offers an analysis on how comics authors can employ architecture as a narrative trope, by focusing on the works of Tsutomu Nihei (Blame!, Sidonia no Kishi), and the duo of Francois Schuiten and Benoit Peeters (Le cités obscures). The article investigates how these authors use architectural tropes to create speculative fictions that develop renditions of cities as complex narrative environments, and “places” with a distinctive role and profile in stories. It is argued that these authors exploit the multimodal nature of comics and the potential of architecture to construct complex worlds and narrative structures.

Keywords: architectural tropes, comics, narrative structure, speculative fiction, world-building, multimodality

Biography and contact info: Francesco-Alessio Ursini is currently a lecturer in English linguistics and literature at Jönköping University. His works on comics include a special issue on Grant Morrison for the journal ImageText, and the forthcoming Visions of the Future in Comics (McFarland Press), both co-edited with Frank Bramlett and Adnan Mahmutović.

Speculative fiction and comics have always been tightly connected across different cultural traditions. It has been argued that the “golden era” of *manga* (Japanese comics) in the 70’s and 80’s is based on the preponderance of works using science/speculative fiction settings (e.g. *Akira*, Ohsawa 9–26). Similarly, classic works in the “Latin” comic traditions (i.e. Latin American *historietas*, Italian *fumetti*, and French/Belgian *bande dessinées*) have long represented an ideal nexus between the speculative fiction genre and the Comics medium, one example being *El Eternauta* (Page 46–50). British and American comics can also claim such a tight relation, whether they involve superhero stories with a science fiction slant (e.g. Marvel’s *Fantastic Four*) or dystopian settings situated within a science/speculative fiction approach (e.g. *2000 A.D.’s Judge Dredd*, First Comics’ *Dreadstar*; Benton 21–24). Thus, comics across traditions and cultures bear a cultural debit to the speculative fiction genre, broadly conceived.

One central aspect of this well-established relation is that a great narrative emphasis is placed on *world-building*. This process is usually defined as the construction of fictional worlds in which stories unfold. Authors can spend considerable narrative and conceptual resources in developing the places, geography, history, societies, and cultures that make up these worlds (Wolf 10–49; Jameson 268–269). Furthermore, authors use these resources to establish which fictional rules govern these worlds, and what kinds of stories and forms of speculation they can offer to readers (Wolf 50–64).

World-building has become a central aspect of most speculative fiction works, at times superseding other aspects of storytelling. Very often, speculative fiction comics present “bounded” worlds, which are usually built as complete conceptual systems, often occupying delimited locations (e.g. the Milky Way in the Japanese saga *Ginga Eiyuu Densetsu* “Legend of Galactic heroes”). When this is the case, authors usually develop specific narrative “rules” that underpin these worlds, and the stories that take place in them. In so doing, comics authors often explore concepts that are usually ascribed to speculative literary fiction. Worlds in comics can be built to explore speculative *tropes* that also act as narrative rules for stories. Tropes, in turn, are defined as concepts that are explored in a narrative, often also acting as “rules” to develop its plot (Childers & Hentzi; Miller).

This process of world-building, given the multimodal nature of comics, presents interesting challenges for any formal analysis of comics and their features. Comics offer the visual channel of panels and pages (and their content) as a modality for this process. At the same time, narration and dialogue offer a linguistic, textual modality by which authors can develop world building as part of a narrative, in parallel (or in connection) with the visual modality. Comics *qua* a multimodal medium permit authors to “shape” worlds and the speculative tropes they entertain, using them as narrative devices that shape a comic’s story.

The goal of this paper is to offer an analysis on one specific aspect of world-building: the use of “speculative architectures”, fictional architectures that allow authors to speculate on non-fictional architectural concepts (Clear 277–282). The authors that I discuss are Tsutomu Nihei, and the duo Francois Schuiten and Benoit Peeters. Their works are well known for featuring complex architectural tropes that allow authors to build complex narratives, rich with philosophical undertones. Although many other authors employ architectural tropes in their works (e.g. Jirō Taniguchi; Enki Bilal), Nihei and Schuiten and Peeters also present a “punk” attitude in their works (cyberpunk in Nihei’s, steampunk in Schuiten and Peeters’). That is, these authors explore tropes and worlds featuring complex technologies, but less than ideal life conditions, themes usually found in steampunk and cyberpunk (cf. Foster 422–424; Guffey & Lemay 435–437). In proposing this analysis, I aim to answer the question of how speculative architectures can guide authors in the construction of complex narratives. Before I do so, I introduce the theoretical notions that I employ in my analysis.

I first clarify my use of “speculative fiction” and “science fiction” genre labels. It is acknowledged that while science fiction can be construed as fiction involving scientific speculation as a key element (Latham 1–9; Bould & Vint 9–22), speculative fiction can also focus on other forms of speculation (e.g. social, historical). Taxonomy-wise, science and speculative fiction stand in a “sub-type” relation: science fiction may be considered a sub-type of speculative fiction (Landon 26–30). Hence, I use the “speculative” label to discuss architectural topics in these comics, as it can be applied to the works under discussion without any loss of precision.

Second, although these authors operate in different cultural traditions (Japanese *manga* for Nihei, Franco/Belgian *bande dessinées* for Schuiten and Peeters), they can be conceived as authors working within the same medium. Thus, I use *Comics* (with capital “C”) as a superordinate term, and *comic*, *manga*, *bande dessinées* as subordinate terms for style- and culture-specific media. Our interest, then, lies in how Comics authors from distinct comics traditions implement architectural notions and philosophies in their respective, complex approaches to world-building.

Third, I employ Groensteen’s notion of “comics as a system” (Groensteen *Comics and Narration* 90–100; Groensteen *The System of Comics*, 130–140). Comics can be treated as multimodal semiotic systems involving a visual modality (i.e. illustrations, panels) and a linguistic/textual modality (i.e. language and narration in balloons, sound effects). From a single panel to a page, and to a collection of pages to a story, comics combine different modes into a narrative. The different parts of a comic story are related to the story as a “whole” (Cook 289–291).

Hence, world-building in a comic can be realized via three modes: visual, linguistic, and a combination of these two modes. My specific focus is on how architecture tropes are used in each mode. Specifically, I focus on how the places and cities in which the stories are presented to readers, as key elements of world-building in a narrative (cf. Ursini, “Control, Tropes, Focalization”; Ursini, “Where is the Future?”).

A fourth issue deserving clarification is my analysis of the relations holding between the units making up comics and the stories they present. Groensteen’s works and similar proposals (e.g. Cohn 59–65) suggest that the units making up comics create the rhetorical relations that in turn construct a story. These works, however, do not explore the nature of these rhetorical connections in detail. Luckily, Bateman’s GeM model and its application to comics (Bateman & Wildfeuer) provide the relevant apparatus. In this model, the *page* is conceived as the minimal multimodal unit, the “whole” text from which an analysis of the parts can be performed. Collections of rhetorically connected pages are labelled as *documents*, whether they be books or other formats. Comics can then be analysed as document sub-types, usually forming rhetorically coherent narratives.

Rhetorical relations, in turn, are defined and analysed according to *Rhetorical Structure Theory* (Bateman 107–181; cf. Mann & Thompson 250–256). In this model, Rhetorical Structure Theory is extended from the analysis of language texts to multimodal texts. Rhetorical relations are investigated as the logical, temporal, and narrative relations between a text and its parts that make the text coherent. In the case of comics and other multimodal formats, rhetorical relations can be established between visual and linguistic units and the text they belong to. Thus, each Comics text acts as the *nucleus* or central unit, and its constituting units (e.g. panels, text balloons, pages) as the *satellites*, units presenting information related to the nucleus.

As Bateman (116–124), and Bateman and Wildfeuer (377–380) point out, in comics two relations seem to play a crucial role: the *background* and *elaboration* relations. The *background* relation holds when one information unit (e.g. a panel) increases the ability of a reader to comprehend a larger information unit (e.g. a page or a text). The *elaboration* relation holds when one information unit presents specific instances of a concept that constitutes a larger unit. For instance, a *Captain America* issue can present a fight between Captain America and the arch-nemesis Red Skull taking place in Washington D.C. The pictures in each panel illustrating where this fight occurs stand in a *background* relation with the main story. They help the reader understanding where this story takes place. The dialogue between the Captain and Red Skull can then *elaborate* why, for instance, the two characters are fighting (Bateman & Wildfeuer 388–391). Therefore, background and elaboration relations allow authors to unpack information about a text and its concepts, tropes, and narrative structure, through different but interacting modalities.

The relation between stories and the panels and pages that constitute them add hierarchical levels of complexity, but preserve the use of rhetorical relations. Hence, rhetorical relations can be established between text and illustrations constituting a panel, between panels and pages, and between pages and narrative.¹ For my analysis, the crucial aspect is that tropes may be used to establish these rhetorical relations through visual and textual (i.e. multimodal) channels. This holds for comics, in which world-building tropes usually double as rhetorical “constraints” on a narrative (Orbaugh 114–117; Mikkonen). The remainder of the paper, then, presents my analysis of my target authors and their works.

¹ Note here that intertextuality and intertextual relations can be analysed as rhetorical relations between the panels, pages, or other units from one text and information units from other texts (see Bateman 270–275). Here I leave aside a discussion of intertextuality for obvious reasons of space.

Nihei's Works: Architectures of the post-human

Tsutomu Nihei is a Japanese comic artist (“mangaka”) who became known for his series *Blame!* (1998–2003), *Biomega* (2004–2009) and *Sidonia no Kishi* (“Knights of Sidonia” 2009–2015) (Ohsawa 164). These works have been serialized on the magazines *Afternoon* (Kodansha, *Blame!* and *Sidonia no Kishi*) and *Ultra Jump* (Shueisha, *Biomega*). Nihei’s works fall squarely within the *manga* age-based *seinen* (“young adult”) genre (Bryce & Davis 36–39; Shodt 28–34), mostly because they feature thematically complex plots, violence, and occasional nudity. Nihei was originally an architect who decided to attempt a career as a mangaka, after briefly working for a New York firm (Ohsawa 166). His works involve the use of complex architectural notions (e.g. “megastructure” in *Blame!*, “arcology” in *Sidonia*) as tropes that guide the world-building and narrative processes.

Blame! was published monthly between 1998 and 2003 for 66 issues (called “logs”), which were then collected in 10 volumes (*tankōbon*). Given its setting, it can be considered a blend of cyberpunk and post-apocalyptic genres (Johnson, “Nihei Tsutomu 1” 190). It features the story of Killy, a solitary man with an incredibly powerful gun, who wanders through “the City”, in search of a human with “net terminal genes”. The City is depicted as a gargantuan structure that lacks any rational organization. Sentient robots known as “builders” randomly build and restructure locations. The few scattered human communities are hunted by the “silicon life”, artificial entities bent on killing any humans without net terminal genes (i.e. most humans). Killy seems to spend millennia wandering the City, before apparently completing his quest (Nihei, *Blame!* vl 10).

The City’s size is also an important theme in the story. It is hinted that the City is a Dyson sphere that started on Earth and reached at least Jupiter’s orbit (Nihei, *Blame!* vl 10). Its plans can only be controlled by accessing the “net sphere”, a future version of the internet that also includes the City’s regulatory system. Crucially, the chaotic nature of the City is the result of a man-made disaster occurred millennia before the main story, as revealed in the prequel *NOiSE* (*Blame!* vl 1: 145–150). On an already vastly overpopulated Earth, a terrorist cyber-cult blocked all access to the net sphere. Without human control, the City and the robots controlling its construction began to build randomly. The result is an endless architectural chaos, in which non-Euclidean perspectives reminiscent of M.C. Escher’s paintings abound, and kilometre-deep barriers exist between the distinct layers of the City.

The role of architecture as a speculative trope in *Blame!* is thus rooted in Nihei’s use of the notion of “megastructure” (De Domenico, “Japanese City” 53–57) and in a cyberpunk, post-human aesthetic that is characteristic of Nihei’s artistic vision (Johnson, “Nihei Tsutomu 1” 191–195). Megastructures, in engineering and architecture, are defined as structures of immense size, such as the Great Wall of China or Burj al Khalifa in Dubai (cf. Spiller 45–51). The Japanese design movement known as “Metabolism”, Nihei’s chief theoretical reference, proposed that megastructures integrating artificial and natural elements could be used to develop new, integrated urban spaces (De Domenico, “Japanese City” 58; Johnson, “Nihei Tsutomu 2” 120–122). These architects saw the building and development of metropolises as integrated with their surrounding environment, and following principles of natural growth. Cities could harmoniously grow indefinitely over decades if not millennia, one example being Tokyo, merging with forests, lakes, and other natural formations.

In *Blame!* The City and its (mega)structures represent a deeply distorted view of this philosophy, coupled with the loss of knowledge that the lack of access to a regulatory system would then comport. The City grows at a “natural” pace, but does so in a chaotic manner, not unlike a natural phenomenon. However, it does so by consuming all natural resources in its path, including human beings. Thus, the City also represents an extreme rendition of a typical cyberpunk trope: the urban sprawl as collection of locations, devoid of a coherent underlying rational plan (Johnson,

“Nihei Tsutomu 1” 195–199). As Nihei also acknowledged, *Blame!* tries to explore how the lack of control on the development of urban structures would become completely anarchic, to the extent that it would create a hostile world for life (Ohsawa 155–163). World-building is consequently performed in a cryptic, chaotic manner.

With respect to narrative and rhetorical aspects, *Blame!* is known for its sparse text, whether it be narration or dialogue, and for the complex illustrations that present the City in its chaotic glory. Most of the rhetorical structures that underpin the story are presented via 1- or 2-page “splash pages”, pages introducing a central illustration and possibly a few in-set panels (McCloud 24–28). For instance, Killy’s arrival to “the capital”, one of the few zones in which humans seem to have retained complex social structures, presents a 2-page silent view (Nihei, *Blame!* vl 3). The subsequent pages present several silent illustrations of the capital’s environments (*Blame!* vl 3: 20–24). Near the end of his quest, Killy enters a new “room” of the City, which has a length of 143,000 kilometres (i.e. Jupiter’s diameter: *Blame!* vl 9: 180, fig. 1).



Figure 1: The “Jupiter room”. Note the absence of any text, and Killy’s minuscule figure in the right corner. All of Nihei’s works are in black and white, as it is the case for most manga.

Although these are a few relevant examples, they illustrate how Nihei’s work uses architecture as a central speculative trope. Splash pages, or in general panels of larger size, are amply used to build the world in which this story takes place, and with it the architectural chaos of the City. Each of the logs/issues present readers with panels that generally have a *background* relation with respect to the story. Although the City is organized in a very chaotic manner, it is still necessary to present readers with “portraits” of this chaos via the presentation of new locations. The use of long sequences of silent illustrations for these locations, instead, form repeated, sequential uses of *elaboration* relations. For instance, Killy is often seen walking through zones that may sudden change architectural style, if not direction of gravity (e.g. Nihei, *Blame!* vl 4: 50–56). Crumbling manors can lay beside high-rise buildings, connected via claustrophobia-inducing tunnels (*Blame!* vl 8: 80–85). Overall, the chaos of the City and its all-consuming, unchecked growth as a world-building element are mostly narrated via images, leaving the reader to decode their content.

Nihei’s subsequent work, *Biomega*, can be interpreted as a blend of cyberpunk, horror, and other concepts into a cross-genre fiction (Johnson, “Nihei Tsutomu 1” 196). It features the story of Zoichi Kanoe, a synthetic human trying to stop a deadly Nano-engineered virus turning humans into

“drones” (zombie-like creatures). As Zoichi fails in his mission, the virus extends to all lifeforms on Earth, creating a “grey goo” catastrophe that terraforms the planet, fusing organic and technological matter. While Zoichi escapes on an artificial satellite, the terraformed mass turns into an immense cylindrical structure called “the Restorative”, extending from the Moon’s orbit to Neptune’s (Nihei, *Biomega* vl 5: 3–4, fig. 2).

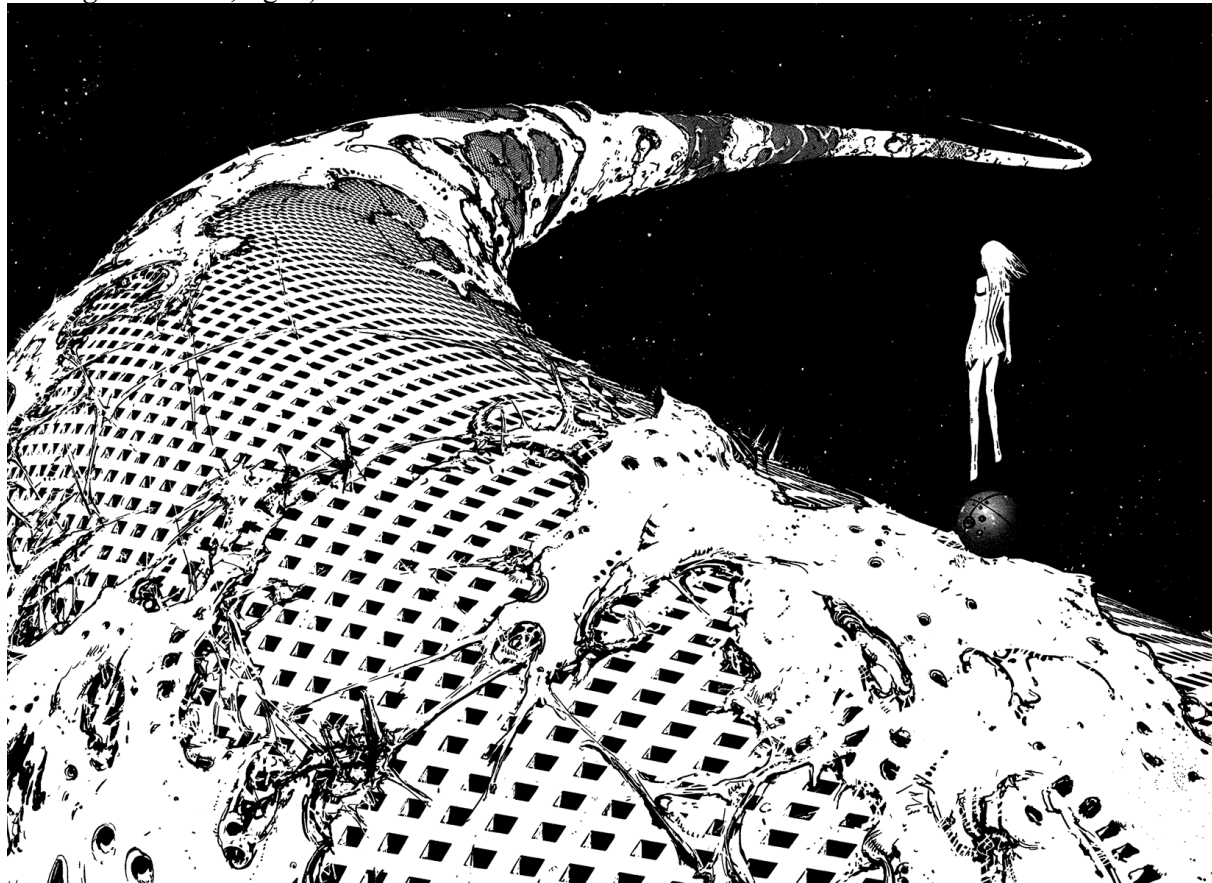


Figure 2: Zoichi’s assistant AI, appearing as a slender woman, silently observes the Restorative stretching through the Solar System.

This structure becomes home to new bio-mechanic lifeforms, who harbour only faint memories of their origins on Earth. On this unique world, Zoichi continues his quest to find the culprit behind this cataclysm, thus preventing her from also destroying the Restorative.

In the case of *Biomega*, anarchic architectures are swapped for complex and dark urban sprawls in the first part (Nihei, *Biomega* vl 1–4), and then for the unique environment of the Restorative (*Biomega* vl 5–6). The Restorative appears like a highly regular structure, akin to a giant fibre cable in space (fig. 2). This novel world is divided into sections, often as big as Earth’s continents, but each with its unique and novel bio-mechanic flora, fauna, and humanoid civilizations (*Biomega* vl 5: 9–13). While the devastated Earth features complex cities in which humans are prisoners/zombies, the Restorative appears as a unique fantasy-like environment, vaguely reminiscent of Miyazaki’s *Nausicaä*.

As in *Blame!*, the use of silent splash pages is employed to introduce key places, hence establishing *background* relations between these pages and the story. For instance, when the “grey goo” catastrophe engulfs Earth, only a few silent panels show this event (Nihei, *Biomega* vl 4: 170). The emergence of the Restorative as a new environment is then presented shortly afterwards, as the

immense cable-like structure propels itself outside the Earth's orbit at immense speed (*Biomega* vl 5: 3–4). The pages and panels following key splash pages also employ *elaboration* relations, showing how the Restorative is structured (e.g. *Biomega* vl 5: 5–8). The only brief explanation of the Restorative's nature is offered when Zoichi manages to land on it, and uses a mini-satellite probe to gather information (*Biomega* vl 5: 8).

Hence, in *Biomega* world-building is realized via a careful construction of a visual identity for the two worlds in which the story takes place.² Earth and its decadent architecture present a world in which humans are prisoners of the forces that guide the expansion of the virus. Once these forces lose control of the virus, the virus remodels Earth and creates the Restorative. The Restorative, in its organic architecture representing Metabolism notions of natural/artificial “hybridity”, is a world that allows new, post-human and “post-organic”, hybrid life forms to survive (Johnson, “Nihei Tsutomu 1” 196–198). As in the case of *Blame!*, much of the world-building process occurs via the use of visual information, although the use of textual information often offers further clarifying information to readers. The apocalyptic, cyberpunk interpretation of Metabolism notions offered in the first part of the series yields to a perhaps more neutral view in its second part, in which new “hybrid” life-forms simply try to survive.

Nihei's latest work, *Sidonia no Kishi* (2009–2015), presents a further conceptual shift. The Sidonia spaceship hosts the last Earth survivors after the “Gauna”, powerful aliens, destroyed Earth. The final war between humans and Gauna takes place in the “Lem” system, a distant solar system that the humans wish to terraform. Sidonia is a gargantuan ship (29 kilometres of length, with a radius of approximately 10 kilometres), defined as an “arcology” (Nihei, *Sidonia* vl 2: 18) by its inhabitants. The label, a blend of “architecture” and “ecology”, designates a complete, closed artificial environment that encompasses enough natural resources to be self-sustaining (Spiller 87–88). Sidonia contains a tower that acts as the main living environment for its inhabitants. The main tower also acts as an engine and, as times of extreme need, a rail-gun. Most of its inhabitants live in apartments built on the external sides of the main tower, modelled after traditional and contemporary Japanese culture.

Sidonia also presents a conceptual evolution, from an architectural perspective. The labyrinthine alleys and tunnels connecting distinct places are still present, as in the case of *Biomega* and *Blame!* However, most areas are presented as clean and lively environments, at times featuring peaceful signs of life (Nihei, *Sidonia* vl 1: 71–72, fig. 3 on next page).

Still, Sidonia's environment can be dangerous to humans: when battle maneuvers are performed at zero gravity, citizens failing to follow safety measures die by the thousands (Nihei, *Sidonia* vl 1: 89–90). Nevertheless, this space arcology acts as a cosmic ark and “foster Earth” to its survivors. The very peculiar architecture of the Sidonia arcology helps humans to continue their fragile lives, unlike the cases of the City and the Restorative.

Furthermore, Sidonia seems to blend the chaotic development of the City with the complex structure of the Restorative. The evolution of indigenous life forms is one example of such dynamicity (Nihei, *Sidonia* vl 4: 5–6). The post-human nature of “Sidonians” provides another example. Most inhabitants are clones of the 500 survivors from a past catastrophe, and are usually into adult age in a few years (e.g. the Ren sisters). Genderless humans, who develop a distinct gendered body only when they choose a partner, are also common. Most Sidonians can also photosynthesize due to genetic manipulation, vastly reducing the needs for organic food production on Sidonia. The addition of a “chimera”, a creature combining human and Gauna genes (*Sidonia* vl 10: 100–102), further broadens the range of new “types” of humans. Thus, the evolution of humans to a post-human phase is nurtured within the Sidonia arcology, given its harmonious blend of

² It is worth noting that volumes 5–6 were not part of the original plan for the work, as Nihei continued the story under pressure by his editors. The sudden change in setting was Nihei's wish for continuing the work (Ohsawa 171).

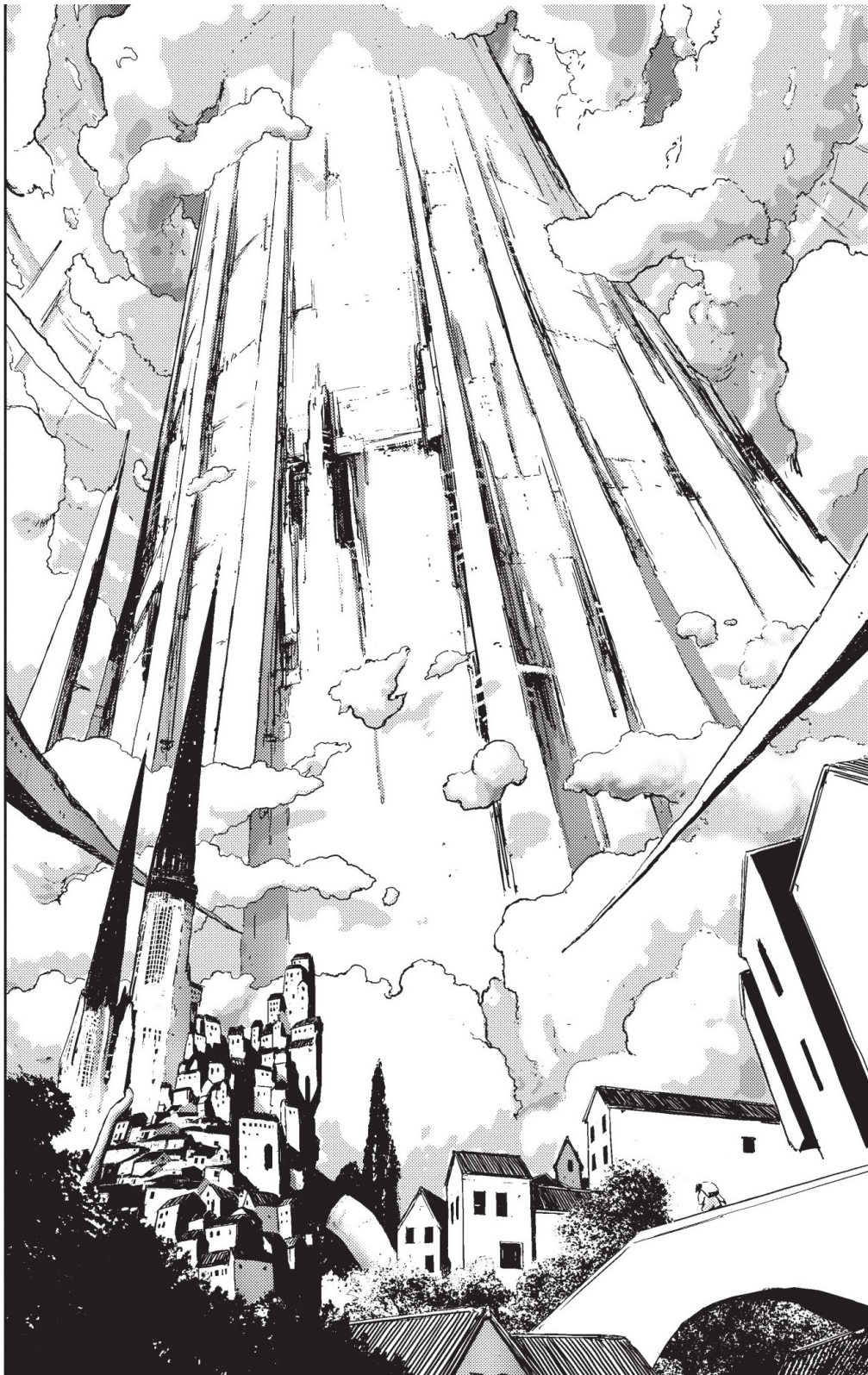


Figure 3: Sidonia's view. Notice that the perspective hints at the size of the ship being large enough that citizens may even forget of its boundaries, and that it can have its own atmosphere and clouds.

natural and artificial life forms, but also in response to the threat of the formless, unfathomable Gauna (Johnson “Nihei Tsutomu 3” 62–64; Ohsawa 169–193).

From a narrative perspective, this work also features a transition to a richer use of the textual mode. Within the story, a book known as “100 views of Sidonia” offers an overview of Sidonia’s principal attractions and attractive locations. Illustrations from the books of Sidonia open each chapter in the story, with a few chapters offering extra “views” that characters mention in passing (e.g. Nihei, *Sidonia* vl 10: 30). These illustrations stand in a *background* relation with the main text; they offer more information about Sidonia as an independent world. Differently from the case of the City and the Restorative, these images are accompanied with text, since they are presented as pages from an illustrated guide. In general, new places and architectural wonders are introduced via splash pages, standing in a *background* relation with the narrative enriched with text. Their visual identity and narrative role are elaborated via both modes, as the story unfolds.

Overall, *Sidonia no Kishi* is a work in which Metabolism as a philosophy and speculative architecture trope is explored in a more optimistic perspective, and visual and textual information interact systematically. Therefore, world-building follows a more “traditional” trajectory, as readers are introduced to the world of Sidonia via a wealth of information. More in general, I can conclude that Nihei’s works can be seen to form a narrative trajectory that explores the relation between artificial environments and humans underpinning Metabolism concepts from several different perspectives. At the same time, different rhetorical solutions are explored. While the visual modality plays a key role in *Blame!*, *Sidonia* presents a more integrated combination of text and image, echoing an increased harmony between post-human characters and the worlds they live in.

Schuiten & Peeters’ *Les cités obscures*, and a Comparison

Les cités obscures (“the mysterious cities”, in English) is series of volumes published by Belgian Casterman that started in 1983 and still features new releases. Francois Schuiten is credited with the creation of the stories, the original concept, and the illustrations, while Benoit Peeters, a famous Comics scholar himself, is credited with texts and concepts (Peeters 3–7). Unlike Nihei, Schuiten is not an architect. However, he grew up under the influence of his architect parents and brother, Luc, who was his co-author on *Les Terres Creuses* (1981–1988). Furthermore, Schuiten studied architecture as a university student, developing a lifelong fascination with *Art Nouveau* design. Benoit Peeters, as the co-writer of *Les cités obscures*, contributed with geography and cartography tropes that have become the other key narrative elements of the series. Both authors are also avid fans of early precursors of speculative fiction, one example being Jules Verne. The many “retro-futuristic” vehicles and the appearance of Verne himself as a character (e.g. Schuiten & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 5) are clear examples of this fascination. Thus, this series can be considered as speculative fiction with perhaps “steampunk” undertones (Darius).

The stories take place on a twin Earth that orbits the sun at the opposite orbital point of “our” Earth, an idea echoing the ancient myth of a “Terra Obscura”. This twin Earth features a single, Pangea-like continental mass (Schuiten & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 9: 80; see also fig. 4), in which several cities act as the central hubs for each nation. Outside these cities, most countries are scarcely populated, given the rugged and wild nature of the continent (*Les cités obscures* vl 4: 40–41). Some of these cities closely resemble corresponding cities on Earth: for instance, “Brüsel” is the counterpart of Brussels. Locations that have Earth counterparts also feature “connections” between the two planets (i.e. secret tunnels acting as wormholes). The fictional cities of this twin Earth act as possible architectural counterparts of their “real” referents, hence underlying their speculative nature (De Domenico, “Utopia” 244–245).

This concept is used to create a level of meta-fictional narration in the series. For instance, Jules Verne is claimed to have used technology from this twin Earth as a basis for his novels

(Schuiten & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 6), and to have reported Captain’s Nemo “real” adventures as fiction, when he visited “our” Earth. Similarly, spin-off works have been presented as “cultural artefacts” that travelers could bring back. One example is *le guide de les cités*, a lengthy atlas describing the world of *les cites* and its many aspects (Schuiten & Peeters, *Le guide de les cités* vl 1 :11, Fig.4):

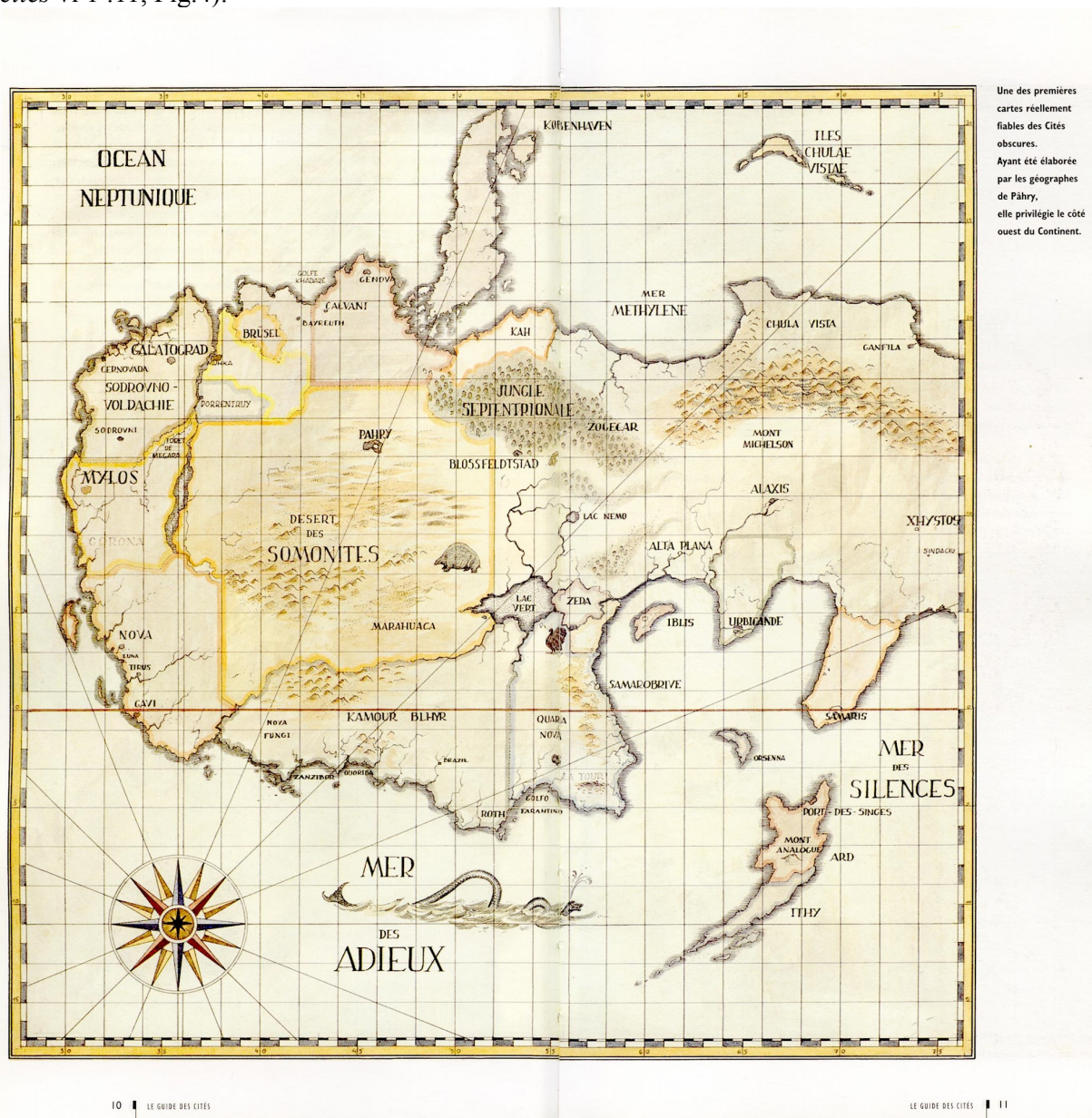


Figure 4: A map of the populated part of *les cités obscures*’ twin Earth. Some key cities can be noticed, one example being *Brüsel* in the North-West corner, near the *Neptunian Ocean*.

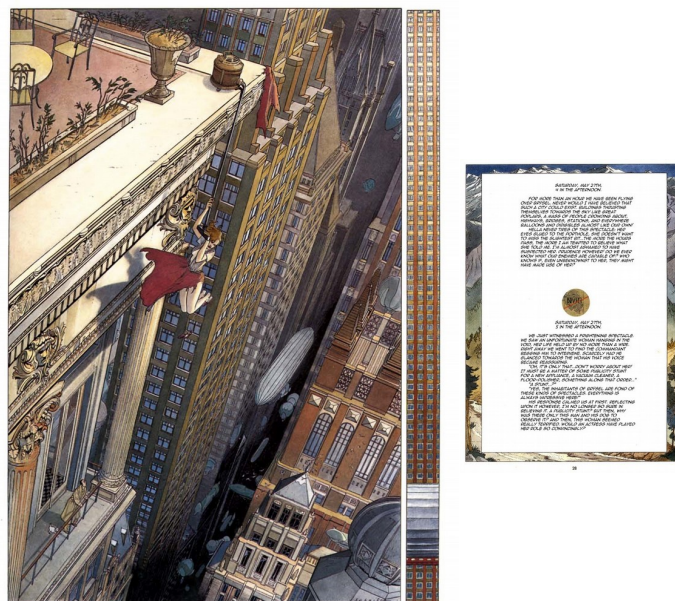
As the authors have stated, these works flesh out the world of *Les cités obscures* beyond its complex investigation of architectural and geographical notions (Peeters 1–8). Maps and other world-building materials are used to build a web of *uchroniae*, or speculative interpretations of “real” places/cities on Earth.

The strongest and more pervasive speculative trope, as the authors have acknowledged, lies in the use of architecture as a trope to explore other philosophical concepts (Stiénon 2). For the most part, the cities of *les cités obscures* are depicted as being built according to the tenets of *art nouveau*, in particular the work of Belgian architect Victor Horta (Darius; Peeters 8–20). However, *art nouveau* is not the only style that features in the series, as other styles can be associated to each city, or may co-exist within the same city. For instance, Brüssel features the co-existence of low-rise apartments reminiscent of 19th century Brussels with remarkably tall skyscrapers, which feature anchoring docks for zeppelins and other flying vehicles (Schuiten & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 3; cf. fig. 2). The city of Samaris, an illusion created via a complex system of *trompe l'oeil* and moving walls, is heavily reminiscent of Venice (*Les cités obscures* vl 1). Mylos, a technologically advanced city in which workers are treated as cogs in industrial structures, features gigantic factories co-existing with *art nouveau* style buildings (*Les cités obscures* vl 2–3).

Crucially, the authors also use this series to investigate how the process of “Brussellization” can affect individuals’ lives (e.g. Peeters 42–50; Stiénon). Brusselization is defined as the construction of high-rise buildings into low-rise, gentrified zones, and is usually seen as a form of haphazard, chaotic urban development (State 4). Since Brusselization focuses on creating new skyscrapers or other high-rise buildings irrespective of the urban context in which they are built, it is considered a dehumanizing, oppressive approach to architectural development. Within the narrative structure of the series, then, this architectural trope is explored to investigate the lives and problems of most their protagonists, and how they are oppressed by a world and cities that are not built for human needs.

From a rhetorical perspective, the use of *art nouveau* and other co-existing styles plays a key role in the process of world-building, as it unravels a precise visual identity for each city, but also for the world they inhabit. Differently from Nihei’s works, panels and pages illustrating each city/place and their architectures are enriched with textual information. For this purpose, panels and pages present a wealth of *background* and *elaboration* relations to the main story and textual information. Each city and key location in a story are usually introduced via 1- or 2-page splash pages (e.g. Urbicande and Samaris in Schuiten & Peeters *Les cités obscures* vl 1: 1, 34). These pages, and the often-ample text they are complemented with, usually introduce the cities’ architectural identity; therefore, they stand in *background* relations with their respective stories. Panels and pages that follow such pages usually offer plentiful views of these places, thus establishing *elaboration* relations with the main narrative.

Several stories feature a first-person narration in which the narrator muses upon the architectural wonders of the cities. For instance, the story *La route d’Armilia* (i.e. Schuiten & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 4) presents the story of a traveller that must deliver a package to the city of Armilia. The volume features dozens of splash pages presenting “postcards” that the narrator describes with a wealth of detail, not unlike the “100 views of Sidonia” in *Sidonia no kishi*. For instance, while one illustration introduces a view of Brüssel’s skyscrapers, its matching narration



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 Figure 5: Brüssel’s skyscrapers. Note the Zeppelin docked at a much lower level, on the right-side page. The use of colour or black and white illustrations varies from volume

elaborates the role of these skyscrapers in the city's context (Schuitem & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 4: 24–25, fig. 5):

Thus, each volume presents a city as a complex place with a distinct visual and architectural identity, thereby acting as a distinctive, even if silent, character in the narration.

The architecture trope constantly intersects with the geography and history tropes, a fact that becomes evident in *The Invisible Frontier*, the eighth and ninth volumes of the series. This is a story that describes the journey of Roland De Cremer, a new cartographer at a remote cartography institute of Sodrovnia. The institute contains a replica of the main continent of this parallel world, and which the cartographers try to update, even if funds are scarce and political interference increases over time. In this case, the construction of a scaled version of the world represents perhaps the opposite tendency displayed in previous volumes of this series. Rather than the architecture of cities dwarfing and oppressing the protagonists, protagonists play with models of *les cites* and reduce them to human-scale tools for complex cartographic representations (Schuitem & Peeters, *Les cités obscures* vl 9: 20, fig. 6 on next page).

In this and the other stories in the series, the main protagonists are usually the narrators as well. Thus, they offer often thorough descriptions of the places and cities they visit and wander through. Hence, text and illustrations tend to interact in a systematic manner, offering information that stands in a *background* relation to each story, while also contributing to the overarching world-building process. More in general, from a rhetorical perspective *les cités obscures* appears to be a perhaps more traditional work, not unlike *Sidonia*, since the interaction of visual and textual information is far more systematic. Overall, the series presents an overarching narrative structure in which readers are guided through architectural speculations underpinning the stories via a wealth of multimodal information.

Overall, a general aspect of *les cités obscures* that emerges from this discussion is that the relation between human protagonists and cities, *qua* “place” protagonists, takes a different shape than in Nihei's work. This is not surprising, for Brusselization amounts to a philosophy in which buildings and architectures form a more oppressive environment for humans. Metabolism, on the other hand, presents a more neutral if not positive approach to the relation between human constructions and human lives. Thus, while Nihei explores this architectural trope from different angles, Schuitem and Peeters remain consistent in their use of Brusselization.

Furthermore, both authors use architectural tropes to explore the “sublime” and the “grotesque” aspects of worlds in which cities growth beyond sizes that are comfortable for humans. These worlds can thus be terrifying, oppressive, mysterious, or even wondrous, but they are never stale or familiar (cf. Csicsery-Ronay 150–212). Thanks to the multimodal nature of comics, this result is achieved by “showing” the grotesque and sublime architectures of each world, often leaving the reader to interpret which label best suits each place, if not both. For instance, although the Restorative and Brüssel may appear as respectively a grotesque alien landscape and a labyrinth of skyscrapers, they can also be conceived as interesting, if not sublimely complex new worlds that readers can explore.

Consequently, the different uses of these tropes affect narrative structures across their respective works. It is fair to say that the almost textless nature of *Blame!* allows Nihei to present the chaotic nature of the City as an alien environment. In *Sidonia no Kishi*, however, Nihei appears to integrate visual and textual information, via an increased use of the *elaboration* relation, as he opts to present a perhaps more orthodox use of metabolism in his stories. Schuitem and Peeters, instead, follow a more standard use of *narration* and *elaboration* relations between visual and textual information, also because they are seemingly concerned with guiding the readers through the wonders and perils of each city. Thus, each world and their cities are presented in thorough detail, allowing the readers to appreciate their wonders and their problems, via the eyes of each protagonist (e.g. Roland).



Figure 6: Roland talking with his colleague Djunov. The replica city on the hills is Mylos, which the despotic forces of Sodrovnia plan to annex.

Yet another consequence of these distinct uses of architectural tropes via different rhetorical relations is reflected in how the world-building process comes about. It is worth noting that *Sidonia no Kishi* and *Les cités obscures* share a similar drive to build a coherent, well-defined world in which the stories are set. Therefore, they feature a clear, integrated use of these relations to achieve this result. This drive is not present in *Biomega* and *Blame!*, works which can be said to focus more on atmosphere-building, rather than world-building. At the same time, these works all share a “punk” essence, as I foreshadowed in the introduction, which can be observed in how their architectures build less than ideal worlds: dystopias such as the City and Sidonia, and uchronias/dystopias such as Brüssel and Mylos, among others. Therefore, they offer a critic, speculative perspective on how cities, worlds and their architectures can shape narratives in Comics.

Conclusions

This paper has analysed how the works of Tsutomu Nihei and Francois Schuiten and Benoit Peeters employ speculative architecture concepts. As my analysis suggests, the authors’ use of architectural tropes plays a crucial role in their world-building efforts, although in different manners. One subtle difference lies in the specific tropes that the authors explore. Nihei seems to explore different interpretations of Metabolism, while Schuiten and Peeters focus on Brusselization and its impact. These architectural ideas double as rhetorical, narrative tools, since they are used to build complex worlds. These authors also share one common feature: they use complex, speculative architectures as visual but also narrative tools to present the stories and their worlds. The *background* and the *elaboration* relations are used with different declinations and methods, to present these ideas and use them as narrative tropes. Nevertheless, the clear identity and world building processes hinge on the crucial role of architecture as a tool for world and story building. The original question, how speculative architectures can guide authors in constructing complex narratives, can thus be answered as follows. Authors can use architectural tropes as rules that determine how fictional worlds are built and presented to readers, across different narrative modes.

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Superhuman Cognitions, Fourth Dimension and Speculative Comics Narrative: Panel Repetition in *Watchmen* and *From Hell*

Oskari Rantala

Abstract: This article investigates the use of repeating panels in relation to speculative fiction storytelling in graphic novels Watchmen and From Hell, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Dave Gibbons and Eddie Campbell, respectively. Presenting the same panel several times over the course of the narrative is an expressive medium-specific narrative technique available only to comics. In the discussed graphic novels, panel repetition is used to represent the superhuman cognitions of the quantum powered superhero Dr. Manhattan, as well as the magical experiences of Sir William Gull, the homicidal madman behind the brutal Jack the Ripper murders in Victorian London. Both characters have abilities and inner life which can be considered speculative, fantastic, or science fictional. Furthermore, their extraordinary cognitions and experiences are exceptionally well-suited to be represented through the comics medium, a narrative form operating on fragmentary visual matter. Comics narrative can employ complex repetitive patterns which Watchmen and From Hell use to simulate four-dimensional simultaneity and detachment of time and space. Moreover, in “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers”, the nonfiction appendix to From Hell that examines the history of ripperology, panel repetition provides narrative evidence, takes part in speculative play, and also works as a device for visualizing the disnarrated.

Keywords: Alan Moore, repetition, panel, comics, graphic novel, graphic narrative, speculative fiction

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Comics, or graphic narrative, has in its employ a number of medium-specific narrative techniques that open up unique possibilities for speculative fiction. One of them is the repetition of complete panels, that is, the presentation of identical images several times over the course of the narrative. British comics writer Alan Moore utilizes the repeating panels in his graphic novels *From Hell*

(1989–1998¹) and *Watchmen* (1986–1987²), drawn by Eddie Campbell and Dave Gibbons, respectively, to transcend the limits of everyday experience and represent speculative, superhuman cognitions and speculative modes of storytelling.

In this article, I will argue that both works feature characters who have abilities and inner life which can be considered speculative, fantastic, or science fictional. Furthermore, their peculiar experiences are exceptionally well-suited to be represented in the comics medium, a narrative form operating on fragmentary visual matter. Complex repetitive patterns of *Watchmen* and *From Hell* simulate simultaneity and the detachment of time and space which can be explored through the concept of the fourth dimension. Finally, I will discuss the nonfiction appendix to *From Hell* titled “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers” which examines the history of ripperology and employs panel repetition in a compelling way, mirroring the four-dimensional experiences of the characters. Moreover, the appendix uses visual repetition to visualize the disnarrated – events that are narrated but do not actually take place in the story.

The article takes a somewhat formalist approach, focusing on instances in which a single narrative technique is employed and discussing its effects. The theoretical background of the article comprises of (classical) narratology and the work of a number of more semiotics-minded comics scholars, most notably Thierry Groensteen who has theorized the concept of braiding. This is a case study, however, and I do not intend to propose an all-encompassing theory, unlike much of the comics theory influenced by semiotics tends to do. Comics is a rather flexible medium, and narrative techniques such as panel repetition can be used in diverse ways in different works.

On panel repetition in the comics medium

In the twelfth chapter of *From Hell*, a historical – or, rather, an alternate historical – graphic novel about the Jack the Ripper murders in Victorian London, psychic Robert Lees is sitting in a coach on his way to Whitechapel Police Station. He has decided to inform the police that the royal physician Sir William Gull is the culprit behind the brutal murders of five prostitutes. In the storyworld of the comic, his suspicion turns out to be correct and Gull indeed is the murderer. However, Lees does not know it. On the contrary, he is motivated by personal revenge, because Gull has earlier insulted him.

This encounter took place on page 12 of chapter 9 (figure 1, left), in a scene where Lees and Gull meet each other outside the suite of Queen Victoria. Lees greets Gull courteously, but Gull accuses Lees – who acts as the queen’s personal psychic and a medium between her and the deceased Prince Consort Albert – of taking advantage on widows’ “delusions born of bereavement” (FH 9:12/4³). In chapter 12 (figure 1, right), Lees reminisces the exchange: the three-panel middle row of the page repeats again and again the panel in which the insult takes place.

¹ First eight installments of *From Hell* were originally published in the short-lived comics anthology series *Taboo* (1989–1992). Afterwards, the early chapters were republished and the story was finished in a 10-issue comic book series published first by Tundra Publishing and later by Kitchen Sink Press (1991–1996). A special nonfiction appendix “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers” was published in 1998 and the complete series was collected in a single volume for the first time in 1999. On the publication history, see Millidge (180).

² *Watchmen* was published as a 12-issue comic book series between September 1986 and October 1987 by DC Comics. The series was published in collected format in 1987.

³ Throughout the article, there will be a high number of references to individual comics panels. For the sake of brevity, I will denote them with a series of three numbers – [chapter]:[page]/[panel] – because the page numbering starts over in the beginning of each individual chapter, even in collected editions. For the graphic novels *From Hell* and *Watchmen*, I will use abbreviations FH and WM.



Figure 1: From *Hell* 9:12/1–6 (left) & 12:4/1–6 (right).

Repeating the same panel several times is an interesting technique available to comics, and it can be used rather obtrusively, as this example demonstrates. Alan Moore makes use of panel repetition in several of his works, having the past intrude into the present narrative in the form of panels that have already been shown. Often, only the image is repeated: the contents of the visual track recur but the textual track is altered. In other cases, such as this, the whole panel is repeated with the textual track intact. One can make the case that there are subtle differences between these uses and that the complete repetition of a panel draws more attention to the panel's materiality, emphasizing its status as a copy of an original. On the other hand, even panels with altered textual tracks – for example, the removal of word balloons and the insertion of captions with “voice-over” narration – are easily recognizable due to the immediate way we view images, as opposed to the way we read text. Whereas text has to be read one word at a time in a linear fashion, we perceive the image in front of us as a whole, to some extent. Different works also establish differing stylistic conventions for repetition.⁴

In simple narratological terms, the repeating panels are related to the concept of frequency. A term coined by Gérard Genette (113), it is concerned with the number of occurrences in the actual story versus in the discourse. The narrative is repetitive if an event that happens once in the story is told n ($n > 1$) times over the course of it. Gull insults Lees to his face only once in the *From Hell* storyline, but in the graphic novel the event is represented a total of five times, first when it actually takes place and later as Lees remembers it in chapter 12, most prominently on page 4 (figure 1).

The narrative is obviously repetitive, but one should note that it is not a simple retelling of an event. The complete panel is repeated exactly as it was shown to the reader the first time, apart from the ragged borders, which are markers of the fact that the represented event belongs to the past. It is doubly repetitive, repeating elements on both the story (the event) and the discourse (the panel that represents it) levels. The narrator⁵ presents the same story unit again through the exact same image, as opposed to using the same image to represent separate events⁶ or narrating the same singular event several times with different panels. Therefore, we can speak of the repetition of both

⁴ For example, Moore and Gibbons's *Watchmen* does not generally reproduce panels with dialogue intact, whereas Moore and Campbell's *From Hell* does. However, it's not reasonable to argue that the narrative of *Watchmen* would depend less on visual repetition solely because of this.

sides of the classical semiotic sign: the signifier and the signified. However, as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan points out, the idea of repeating a complete sign in a narrative is a problematic construct:

But even when the whole sign is repeated, difference is introduced through the very fact of repetition, the accumulation of significance it entails, and the change effected by the different context in which it is placed. We never go into the same river twice, and no pure repetition exists. (Rimmon-Kenan 152–153)

Recurring panels frequently represent memories or flashbacks, which are rather commonplace narrative phenomena. The memories troubling Lees, for example, are insistent but conventional in the sense that they depict normal and easily understandable emotions. However, there are also instances in which the repeating panels represent something else than everyday thought processes.

In the following sections, I will discuss examples of such storytelling in *Watchmen* and *From Hell*. In these graphic novels, Alan Moore and his co-creators use repetitive panels to illustrate the experiences of the near-omnipotent superhuman Dr. Manhattan and the Ripper crimes perpetrator William Gull. In some comics sequences detailing their perceptions, the intrusion of other temporal levels on the page is constant and the recurring panel structures rather intricate. Repeating the same panel or its visual track is a narrative technique that appears deceptively simple on the surface, but it offers the possibility to examine certain interesting qualities of the comics medium.

I will also address the medium-specific features of panel repetition. It is, I argue, a narrative technique unique to comics medium despite the similarities with other forms of visual narrative, such as film. Indeed, the panel is a necessary and fundamental element of comics narrative. The comics medium is most often defined as a narrative sequence of images (see, e.g., Gravett; Groensteen, *Comics and Narration* 9; Harvey 3; Herkman 21–22; Manninen 9–11; McCloud 7–9; Miller 75; Sabin 5). Narration in comics moves forward in panels, and repeating a partial panel, a complete panel, or a sequence of several panels is a highly distinctive narrative technique.

Even though the most immediate meaning-making in comics happens in the framework of successive panels on the level of sequence, comics narrative also operates on the level of network. According to Thierry Groensteen (*System of Comics* 145–147), all panels of a comic are potentially linked to one another: the narrative can generate connections between panels and form non-linear panel series through a mechanism called braiding. Braiding deals with the production of meaning that is generated by correspondences between panels that are not directly following each other in the sequence. The process of braiding can be initiated by repeating shapes, motifs, panel arrangements, or other similarities, and a complete repeating panel is quite an obvious case of connections between two panels: as far as visuals are considered, they are the same panel. Even if we acknowledge that no pure repetition exists, as Rimmon-Kenan suggests, it's obvious that new links and connections are formed each time a panel is repeated – between identical panels as well as between the contexts and scenes in which the similar panels are used.

⁵ I am using the term of comics narrator in the same way as Thierry Groensteen, as “the ultimate instance responsible for the selection and organization of all the types of information that make up the narrative” (*Comics and Narration* 95). Some scholars (see, e.g., Herkman 135) have questioned the need for such a concept.

⁶ See Charles Hatfield's (48–49) discussion of this kind of use in Linda Perkins and Dean Haspiel's graphic story “Waiting” (1996).

Investigating Superhuman Cognitions – *Watchmen* and Dr. Manhattan

A revisionary superhero narrative, *Watchmen* takes a dark satirical look on the tropes of the superhero genre, which has overwhelmingly dominated the mainstream comics industry after the late 1950s. The graphic novel places archetypal superhero characters in a politically realistic world that is profoundly transformed by the existence of the costumed adventurers: they have affected the balance of the cold war arms race and the world stands on the brink of a nuclear war. The heroes themselves are confused individuals, sociopaths, or quickly losing touch with humanity altogether.

The graphic novel includes numerous instances of complex repeating panel structures (see Rantala), but, for the purposes of this article, the most interesting one is the fourth chapter, “Watchmaker”, published as *Watchmen* #4 in December 1986. It centers on Dr. Manhattan who is the only truly superhuman character in *Watchmen*. Formerly a scientist called Jon Osterman, Dr. Manhattan gained his powers in an accident after a scientific experiment goes wrong and Osterman's physical body is disintegrated. Mirroring the superhero lore, he does not die but is transformed into an uncanny being able to control matter down to the molecular level with the power of his mind. Dr. Manhattan can transport himself anywhere in the universe and is near-omnipotent. The most intriguing of his powers, however, is the ability to experience everything that has happened or will happen to him at once, in a simultaneous torrent of moments from history, present, and future.

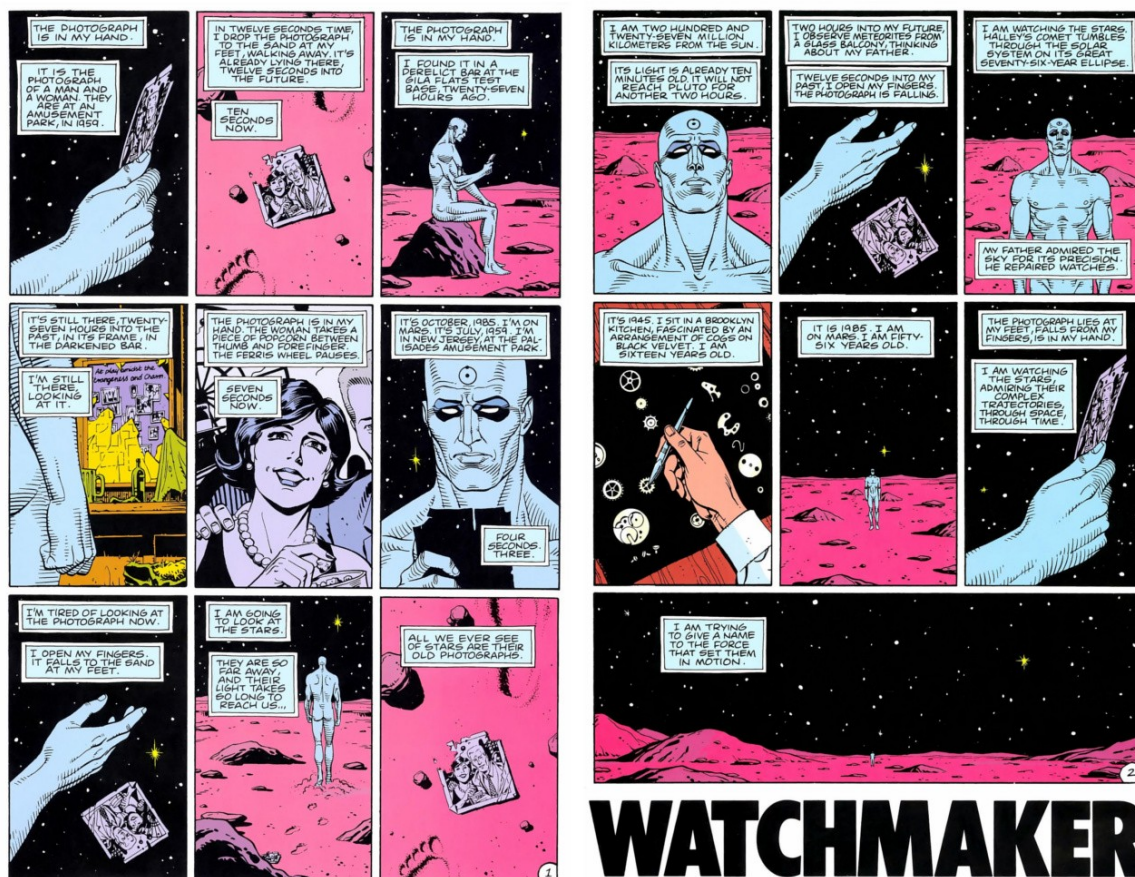


Figure 2: *Watchmen* 4:1–2.

The fourth issue of *Watchmen* recounts the personal history of Dr. Manhattan as an origin story, a prevalent storytelling trope of the superhero genre. In addition to presenting his past for the reader, the issue also attempts to demonstrate the mind-boggling concept of experiencing everything simultaneously. In the chapter, the narrative constantly jumps forward and backward, and events on different temporal levels blend, forming complex sequences of panels that are made intelligible by the superhuman's internal monologue.

In the beginning of *Watchmen #4*, Dr. Manhattan is alone on Mars. The first panel of the first page shows him sitting on the surface, looking at a photograph (figure 2). "The photograph is in my hand", he narrates. In the next panel, the photograph has fallen to the sand. Dr. Manhattan explains that this panel belongs to the future: "In twelve seconds time, I drop the photograph to the sand at my feet, walking away." He drops the photograph in panel 7, and the image of panel 2 is repeated in panel 9 when he has dropped it and walks away. In fact, this is the "correct" place of the panel in the linear chain of events. The second panel of the next page repeats the panel in which he dropped the photo. "Two hours into my future, I observe meteorites from a glass balcony, thinking about my father," Dr. Manhattan notes and concludes: "Twelve seconds into my past, I open my fingers. The photograph is falling." On panel 6 of page 2 he is again holding the photograph, which is, for him, at the same time falling down and already on the ground: "The photograph lies at my feet, falls from my fingers, is in my hand."

Watchmen #4 is filled with this kind of repetitiveness and movement backward and forward in time. For example, the image of the photograph on the surface of Mars, which is shown twice on page 1, is again repeated on pages 5, 24 and 28. In his internal monologue, Dr. Manhattan addresses the turning points of his life story: his father's decision to make a scientist out of his son, his becoming romantically involved with his colleague Janey Slater, his accident and transformation into Dr. Manhattan, his romance with the costumed vigilante Silk Spectre and their eventual breakup. The constant movement in time – or the constant movement of everything else while he stands still, as he himself puts it (4:17/7) – turns the chapter into a mosaic of repeating panels and temporal levels.

Page 17 offers an interesting example of this (figure 3). The depicted scene retells the story of an unsuccessful meeting of the superheroes in 1966 when they debate establishing a superhero group called Crimebusters. On the page, there are three panels that disrupt the linear chronology of the narrative. The last panel, in which Dr. Manhattan stands on the surface of Mars, obviously takes place in 1985, the present of the main storyline of *Watchmen*. In addition to that, there are two other panels which belong on their own temporal levels. In panel 3, the hands of Dr. Manhattan are caressing Silk Spectre's face when the two are making love in 1985 before Dr. Manhattan teleported himself to Mars. The panel was first shown in the beginning of chapter 3 in a scene which ended in Silk Spectre's angry announcement that she is leaving him (3:4/1).

Panel 5, on the other hand, shows the first kiss of Dr. Manhattan and Silk Spectre in 1966. The narrator of *Watchmen* presents the panel on this page for the first time. Therefore, the reader cannot yet recognize it as a repeating panel, but it does not fit into the logic of the story and it is obviously detached from the chronology of the surrounding scene. It is presented in its actual place on the narrative on the next page (4:18/5) in a scene which details the beginning of their relationship, mirroring (the beginning of) its end alluded to earlier.



Figure 3: *Watchmen* 3:4/1 (left), 4:17 (center), and 4:18/5 (right).

From the point of view of the narrative order, these temporal disjunctions are anachronies, more specifically prolepses (Genette 40), which present something that has not yet taken place – that is, if the scene is considered to belong to the temporal level of the Crimebusters meeting. On the other hand, if we examine the relations of these panels to the time of Dr. Manhattan standing on Mars on panel 8, they are (more recent) flashbacks interrupting another flashback, or, by Genette's terminology, analepses. Dr. Manhattan's total perception of time challenges these straightforward concepts of flashback and foreshadowing.

The fragmented pictoriality of the comics medium opens up interesting possibilities for depicting the inner world of this superhuman character. In a textual or audiovisual narrative, it would not be feasible to adequately present the simultaneity of his experiences, but the tabularity of the comics page and the simultaneous presence of panels grants graphic narrative some unique affordances.⁷ *Watchmen* does not simply tell the story of Dr. Manhattan on Mars, looking back at his personal history and narrating it after the fact. At the same time, the graphic narrative suggests, he *is* in the Crimebusters meeting in 1966, he *is* having sex with Silk Spectre 19 years later, and he *is* kissing her for the first time shortly after the meeting. He experiences all the moments at once, and when he is seeing Silk Spectre for the first time in panel 2, he acknowledges that they're having sex 19 years later. When he is reliving their sexual encounter, which has not happened yet, in panel

⁷ Granted, a film with heavy reliance on split screen effects could replicate some of the narrative strategies but the end result would probably be highly experimental.

3, he is feeling Janie Slater's tug at his arm, and when Slater is telling him not to stare at the girl in panel 4, he is already living through their first kiss in panel 5. The recurring panel is an important tool in describing the experiences of Dr. Manhattan both on this page and in the entirety of *Watchmen* #4: more than every fifth of the panels used in the chapter are repetitive.⁸

Dr. Manhattan's unique way of experiencing time has been studied by various comics scholars and different terms have been assigned to it. Sean Carney (p12) describes it as *simultaneity* and Sara J. Van Ness (96–100) as *the gestalt of time* and *the eternal present*, whereas Mervi Miettinen (68–69) borrows the term *super-present* from Erin McGlothlin (185), who used it to conceptualize the meta-level of narrative in *Maus*. Mark Bernard and James Bucky Carter use the concept of *the fourth dimension* to describe the experiences of both Dr. Manhattan and William Gull of *From Hell*: “a special relationship with space and time wherein the two conflate such that infinite multiple dimensionalities become simultaneously present” (2). On a somewhat similar note, while examining the beginning of *La Foire aux Immortels* (1980) by Enki Bilal, Kai Mikkonen (320) writes about how the proleptic repeating panels create an impression of *translinearity*, the same term Thierry Groensteen (*System of Comics* 147) utilizes in describing the effects of braiding.

Whatever handle the experiences of Dr. Manhattan are given, one can obviously raise the issue of free will and agency. “I can't prevent the future. To me, it's already happening,” he explains in the comic (WM 4:16/2). Later, when Silk Spectre questions his free will, he tells her that even though they are all puppets, he is “a puppet who can see the strings” (WM 9:5/4), a highly speculative mindset challenging our comprehension.

Exploring the Monstrous Architecture of History – *From Hell* and Sir William Gull

As opposed to Dr. Manhattan in *Watchmen*, Sir William Gull in *From Hell* has not gone through a laboratory accident which would have given him superpowers. Instead, he suffers a hallucination-inducing stroke. He later explains to his coach driver and accomplice John Netley: “I saw God . . . and he told me what to do” (FH 4:22/3). Despite the obvious differences between a quantum superhuman and a homicidal madman, the two characters have a great deal in common.

Gull is murdering prostitutes at the order of Queen Victoria, because the Ripper victims have information about an illegitimate child of her grandson, Prince Albert Victor. However, the royal surgeon is not merely interested in protecting the throne. The series of murders he commits is in fact a masonic ritual that is meant to symbolically defend the apollonic supremacy of men and rational thought over matriarchy. Gull fears that the “female irrationality” is resurging in the form of socialism, the suffragette movement, and more modern occult organizations. During their lesson in magical geography, he informs Netley that “[s]ometimes an act of social magic is NECESSARY; man's triumph over woman's INSECURE, the dust of history not yet SETTLED” (FH 4:30/2).

The further into the symbolic realm of his rituals and hallucinations Gull is drawn to, the more he becomes detached from his own linear time. After murdering his fourth victim in Mitre Square in chapter 8, he sees before him a modern skyscraper that is situated in the crime scene a century later (FH 8:40). After killing his final victim, a prostitute known only as Julia⁹ he first sees (or is transformed into) a Babylonian stone carving of the ancient god Marduk killing the goddess Tiamat, connecting the homicide with the symbolic war between the sexes. On the next page, Gull and the mutilated body of Julia are transported into a modern office building where Gull is

⁸ To be exact, 40 out of 189, by my count.

⁹ Gull mistakes her for Marie Kelly, who was the last victim of the Whitechapel murders in the factual history. In the comic, Moore has the real Marie Kelly escape this fate and move secretly to Ireland.

perplexed by bright lights, computers, and, by Victorian standards, indecent clothing of the women passing by. He is probably not seeing the puppet strings the same way Dr. Manhattan is – for Gull, his visions are frightening and unexplainable. However, the four-dimensional detachment from time and the simultaneous experience of different temporalities is the same.

As far as the repeating panels and Gull's visions are concerned, the most noteworthy part of *From Hell* is chapter 14, in which Gull ultimately dies in St. Mary's Asylum in 1896¹⁰. The chapter includes a 20-page section which describes the experiences of Gull at the moment of his death. In it, temporal levels become blended and his memories and precognitive visions combine, forming a mystical totality and bringing together the main themes of the graphic novel. Moore and Campbell rely heavily on repeating panels in this section, as Moore and Gibbons did in *Watchmen* #4.

The first time a repeated panel is connected with Gull's supernatural visions occurs in the beginning of the chapter. On page 2, there are three panels that are drawn from his point of view (FH 14:2/1–3, the top row of panels on the right in figure 4). Two of them have been previously presented in chapter 10 after Gull killed his last victim and had a series of disconcerting hallucinations discussed above. Frightened by his visions, Gull sits on the bed next to the dead body and experiences a temporal shift: unknown men look down on him and call him “Tom” (10:25.3–4, the panel sequence of the left in figure 4) – that is the fake identity which will be used when he is later locked up in the asylum.



Figure 4: *From Hell* 10:25/1–6 (left) & 14:2/1–6 (right).

¹⁰ In public, the murders remain unsolved, but the brotherhood of Freemasons considered Gull's gory rituals unacceptable and locked him up in an asylum for the rest of his life, after staging his funeral (FH 12:23–24).

In chapter 10, Gull does not yet understand what is happening and he protests that his name is William on the sixth panel. In chapter 14, these panels are situated in their correct place in the timeline: the men are asylum orderlies who have come to take care of the body of the dying Gull. While the visual track is leaking from chapter 14 to chapter 10, the textual track seems to be doing the opposite. In Chapter 14, the soon to be dead Gull repeats his own frightened words he said after the homicide-induced visions: "No! No, I don't know you! / I'm not Tom! I'm NOT JACK! / I'm William" (FH 14:2/4). Other than that, he is not able to speak at all anymore.

At the moment of his death, Gull finds himself in a dark tunnel, approaching a light. All nine panels on the page are reproduced from pages 2 and 3 of Chapter 2, from the scene in which the reader first encountered William Gull as a young boy (see figure 5). In Moore's original script (quoted in part in *From Hell Companion* 265–266), he names the panels that he wants reproduced – for example, panel 6 should be a reproduction of panel 2:3/1, panel 7 a reproduction of panel 2:3/3 and panel 8 a reproduction of panel 2:3/5. The art of Eddie Campbell roughly follows the directions laid out by Moore, but upon closer inspection we can see that none of the panels are exact copies. In panel 6 (the last panel of the middle row on the page on the right in figure 5), the silhouette of Gull's head is not so close to the wall on the right, there is smoke coming out of the barge chimney and the tunnel opening is further to the right and lower than in panel 2:3/1 (the first panel on the page in the middle in figure 5). There are similar subtle differences in all panels, but, despite them, the reader is sure to recognize that the whole scene is a reproduction of an earlier one.

In the original scene, Gull is riding a barge in the Limehouse Cut canal tunnel with his father, and the two are having a conversation. In the first panel of the retrospective scene, his father's dialogue from 2:2/1 is repeated in a speech balloon that has lost its tail. The dying Gull himself is aware of the fact that he is seeing something he has seen before. In a caption in panel 2, he asks, "H-Has this happened before? Father? / Father, where am I?" First, he addresses his father: "Father, are you there? / I dreamed I was a grown-up man. I dreamed that I was famous for my use of knives. / I dreamed that I was dying in a madhouse" (FH 14:5/4). Two panels later, he acknowledges what is happening: "That was true, wasn't it?" (FH 14:5/6).

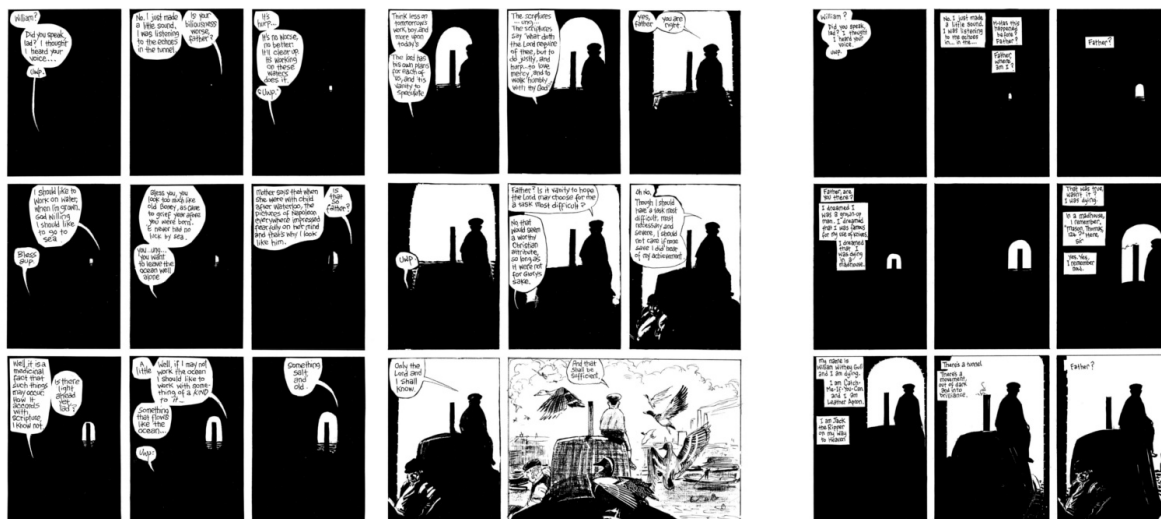


Figure 5: From Hell 2:2–3 (left) & 14:5 (right).

This page sets in motion a sequence of peculiar experiences. Gull's consciousness appears on the scenes of several supposedly paranormal historical events, and *From Hell* suggests that Gull's presence is actually causing them. He is, among others, the naked man whom passersby saw jump down to Thames (FH 14:8/4), the mysterious fog on the courtyard of Tower in 1954 (FH 14:11/2) and the cylinder of blue light appearing before the Tower's keeper and his wife in 1817 (FH 14:11/3)¹¹. Furthermore, Gull is the scaly phantom figure whom William Blake reportedly saw in 1790 (FH 14:9/4–10/5) and 1819 (FH 14:16/1–9), and he also appears to writer Robert Louis Stevenson in a nightmare in 1886 (FH 14:15/3–7). Apparently, he inspires Blake's famous miniature painting *The Ghost of a Flea*, which is itself used as a repeating panel in *From Hell* (in 9:15/7 and 14:17/1), as well as Stevenson's novel *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, featuring "a doctor with the soul of a terrible beast inside him" (FH 14:15/6). He also appears to a number of more contemporary English serial killers (FH 14:17–19) and to John Netley, causing the coach driver's death (FH 14:20–21).

Gull relives the discussion he had with his friend James Hinton, the father of the mathematician and early science fiction writer Charles Howard Hinton, at the beginning of the graphic novel (FH 2:13–15). Hinton describes some of his son's ideas to Gull, suggesting that from a four-dimensional viewpoint the history can be said to have an architecture and, thus, seemingly random events scattered in time form exquisite patterns. At the moment of Gull's death, the speculations of Hinton finally gain a sinister meaning. He suggests that there might be a rising curve of occurrences: something happening in 1788, then one hundred years later in 1888, then 50 years later in 1938, then 25 years later in 1963, and again 12 and a half years later in 1975 or 1976.

All years are notable for their links to violent crimes in Britain. Naturally, 1888 is the year of the Ripper murders depicted in *From Hell*. A century earlier, in 1788, there had been a criminal attacking women with a knife, nicknamed "The London Monster". In 1938, on the other hand, there was the case of "The Halifax Slasher" who eventually turned out to be the product of a peculiar mass hysteria, with a number of supposed victims inflicting wounds on themselves before reporting to the police. In 1963, Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, who were later dubbed "The Moors Murderers", sexually assaulted and murdered the first two of their five child victims. Finally, in 1975 and 1976, "The Yorkshire Ripper" Peter Sutcliffe murdered his first victims in a series of 13 murders and other violent attacks on women.

The comics sequence places the repeating panels of Hinton talking side by side with glimpses of these other killers and repeated panels of the Ripper murders (see figure 6). The most important panel which shows Hinton describing the "invisible curve through history" is not repeated only once but a number of times. In its original appearance (FH 2:15/3), it includes a lengthy bit of dialogue, but, in chapter 14, the panel is fragmented. It is repeated in five parts in 14:12/9, 14:13/4, 14:13/7, 14:14/2, and 14:14/5 (the first three instances are shown in figure 6), each time delivering only part of the original textual track. The section reveals the most speculative concept of *From Hell*: the Ripper murders are actually only a part of the monstrous architecture of history, and their perpetrator was, at least in part, directed by some kind of dark, chthonic energies. Moore and Campbell have included panels in which Gull is in contact with Brady, Hindley and Sutcliffe: Brady and Hindley are shown in a movie theatre watching the 1959 movie *Jack the Ripper*, while Gull is directly speaking to Sutcliffe – who later claimed that the voice of God had told him to kill prostitutes. In a sense, the scene renders the graphic novel as supernatural horror.

The narrative of *From Hell* uses repeating panels to make this important revelation. The individual panel in which Hinton says "An invisible curve, rising through the centuries" and another one which is completely black and includes only the phrase "What is the fourth dimension?" – the

¹¹ Interestingly, these manifestations resemble those of Dr. Manhattan: after the experiment that created him, he appeared to several people as a walking circulatory system and as a partially muscled skeleton (WM 4:9).

title of Charles H. Hinton’s article published in 1880 – are both repeated three times (in FH 14:14/5, 14:17/2, and 14:19/7, and in FH 14:4/9, 14:12/4, and 14:18/5, respectively). The repetition highlights the importance of the statements. The repeated panels are the portal into the fourth dimension for Gull, as they are for Dr. Manhattan. Moreover, the narrative strategy of panel repetition is at the core of the “speculativeness” of both of these fictions. The extraordinary powers of Dr. Manhattan and Sir William Gull are the strongest speculative elements in the graphic novels – otherwise they would simply be tales of disturbed people in masks and a madman killing prostitutes in Victorian London with alternate historical storylines.



Figure 6: From *Hell* 2:15/1–6 (top left), 14:12/4–9 (bottom left), and 14:13 (right).

Towards Speculative Nonfiction – “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers”

While the comics segments illustrating the cognitions of Dr. Manhattan and William Gull are undoubtedly taking advantage of the comics medium's affordances, there is one segment in the collected *From Hell* in which the use of panel repetition can be considered even more medium-conscious, highlighting its form as a comic. That is “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers”, an appendix published in 1998, two years after completion of the narrative proper. It is a 24-page nonfiction comic about the formation of mythology around the Jack the Ripper murders and about ripperology, the history of which is as strange as the unsolved crimes themselves.

A documentary meta-comic, “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers” offers in several instances bits of information about *From Hell* that isn't apparent for the readers of the graphic novel. On page 3, for example, a panel previously shown in *From Hell* chapter 9 appears again, this time revealing the identity of the child who detective Abberline is talking with (figure 7, left): he is Aleister Crowley, who would later become a notorious occultist known for his interest in the Ripper murders. Other characters are given names as well. The appendix discusses the theory of “the first ripperologist” Leonard Matters, who suggested in 1929 that the murders were committed by a surgeon called Dr. Stanley. Stanley was supposedly connected to Dr. Saunders, the doctor who had done the autopsy of one of the Ripper victims. The autopsy was shown in *From Hell* chapter 9, and the panel 9:5/5 is repeated in the appendix (figure 7, right). The image has been altered, however, and a crude text and an arrow have been added to indicate who is the doctor that the text discusses.

In a number of other repeated panels, even the original textual track is left intact but partly covered by captions belonging to the voice-over narration of the appendix. When discussing the theory of Thomas Stowell put forth in 1970 – the first one to connect the murders to the royal family – the comic repeats the panel in which detective Abberline and Robert Lees enter Gull's house in *From Hell* chapter 12 (figure 8, left). The original textual matter is visible but new captions have been placed over it, reminding the reader of two things. First, that the details discussed – the statements of Gull's daughter about police and a psychic visiting the house – are familiar and they have been shown during the course of the narrative. Second, that the panel in question is a *comics* panel and it has been shown during the course of a *comics* narrative.



Figure 7: *From Hell* 9:4/5 and Appendix 2:3/5 (left). *From Hell* 9:5/5 and Appendix 2:5/5 (right).

The same kind of panel repetition technique is used when the appendix explores other sources of similar conspiracy theories. In a journal interview in 1970, Cynthia Legh claimed that Robert Lees told her an account of the murders resembling the one which is depicted in *From Hell*, whereas *Chicago Sunday Times-Herald* had run a similar story already in 1895. When these are discussed on page 12 of the appendix, two panels are repeated (figure 8, right): one showing Robert Lees having a fake seizure (Prologue:4/6) and another one depicting the secret meeting in which the leading Freemasons decided to fake Gull's funeral and shut him in an asylum (FH 12:21.6). In the latter panel, the partially visible speech balloon includes the name Dr. Howard who was named as a source in the *Chicago Sunday Times-Herald* article.



Figure 8: *From Hell* 12:10/1 and Appendix 2:11/5 (left). *From Hell* Appendix 2:12/2–3 (right).

The repeated panels give references and form new connections, linking what is said to what has happened before in the comic and providing new raw material for speculation. Furthermore, the original panels are treated in the appendix like canvas that can be written over, with new captions superimposed over the original textual contents and names scratched over the image. One can argue that the appendix presents a Dr. Manhattan-like consciousness who assembles a coherent narrative out of the matter that has already been shown.

The appendix can also be seen as a culmination point of the material recursiveness: here, the repeating panels repeat – in addition to the signifiers and the signifieds discussed in the beginning of the article – medial markers of repetition. With the partially overwritten panel surfaces indicating that what we are reading is a comics narrative, the appendix plays self-consciously with its own mediality.

Other forms of repetition in the appendix express other speculative possibilities of the comics narrative. While discussing different theories, the narrative includes panels that depict Marie Kelly waking up in her bed as the murderer storms in through his bedroom door. Each time, the murderer is a different individual, giving visual form to different ripperologists' speculations.

Notably, this treatment is reserved for the more outlandish theories. When discussing Stephen Knight, whose nonfiction book *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (1976) Moore largely based *From Hell* on as far as the masonic conspiracy theory is considered, there are no such panels. On the other hand, this kind of panel arrangement is employed when discussing John Morrison, one of the more disturbed ripperologists who speculated on traveling in time to save Marie Kelly from her fate (Appendix 2:18/7, second panel in figure 9). Speculations of, for example, Russian lookalikes (Appendix 2:9/4), the revengeful sister of a dead prostitute (Appendix 2:6/4, first panel of figure 9), a Jewish ritual slaughterman (Appendix 2:10/1) and a large group of perpetrators including police and political leaders (Appendix 2:19/7, third panel in figure 9) are all described with the same panel arrangement, with only the murderer changed to match the theory. In these panels, the speculations are discredited by combining them with other dubious theories, the last two of which suggest alien intervention and even “unusually determined suicide” (Appendix 2:22/9 and 23/9, fourth and fifth panels in figure 9).



Figure 9: *From Hell* Appendix 2: 6/4, 18/7, 19/7, 22/9, and 23/9.

Whereas the repeated panels including Abberline and Lees offer tangible visual evidence of the claims and speculations they are discussing, this series of panels is, interestingly, doing the opposite. In “The Dance of the Gull-Catchers”, therefore, the panel repetition also operates on the level of absence: *From Hell* does not include a panel with the kind of arrangement that is used in the

panel series in figure 9. The series of panels is not founded on the narrative proper and, in addition to text captions which are skeptical of the proposed theories, the narrator uses visual means to express disbelief.

This panel series offers an example of the disnarrated in the comics medium. A term coined by Gerald Prince (1–8), it refers to events that are explicitly narrated but do not actually take place in the story, such as unrealized possibilities, incorrect beliefs and speculations. The series demonstrates the flexible narrative possibilities of the comics narrative. The dual-track nature of comics makes it possible to have the visual channel disnarrate while the textual channel makes explicit that the reader is not meant to take the visualized content seriously, especially later on in the appendix as the solutions to the Ripper crimes offered by panels in the series descend to absurdity. Visual repetition has the ability to interrupt the normal narrative flow and force readers to draw connections and conclusions, re-evaluating previous narrative content.

Conclusions

In this article, I have discussed the ways in which panel repetition is used in *Watchmen* and *From Hell* to represent superhuman cognitions and the experiences related to the concept of the fourth dimension. Both Dr. Manhattan and William Gull are superhumans whose exceptional cognitions the comics medium is very apt to depict. It is hardly a coincidence that Moore, Gibbons and Campbell have chosen such abilities for their characters. In several interviews, Alan Moore has declared his conscious intention to “come up with things that comics can do that could not be achieved in any other medium” (Baker 69). Dr. Manhattan and Gull were specifically designed to be comics characters, and it is worth noticing that in the film adaptations of these two graphic novels all the elements related to the visual recursiveness of their perceptions has been left out: Gull is portrayed as an ordinary psychopath in the Hughes brothers’ *From Hell* (2001) whereas the long introspective segment of Dr. Manhattan on Mars has been replaced with a simplified narrative of his personal history without repetitive imagery in Zack Snyder’s *Watchmen* (2009). However, even if the scenes had employed visual repetition in the films, they would have lacked the aspect of co-presence of the panels that the scenes feature in the graphic narratives. Repeating panels is a medium-specific narrative technique, and both works use it regularly to depict the cognitions of their characters. Therefore, we can probably speak of medium-specific cognitions as well.

As Bernard and Carter suggest, Dr. Manhattan acts as a metaphor for the graphic novel experience: “He is not most like any other character in the book, but most like the reader himself in that he transcends transience, simple being, via not displacement, but *multiplacement*”(p20). His experience of simultaneity is represented as panels from the history and future arranged in different sequences and combined with his voice-over monologue which builds causality, creates connections, offers interpretations, and makes the story comprehensible. In *From Hell*, Gull does the same, even though he is less in control and his visions are strange and frightening even to himself, whereas the serene and unemotional Dr. Manhattan remains uninterested in what will happen to all of humanity. Ironically, Gull is very concerned about the future of his world and is ready to commit brutal crimes in order to steer it into the right direction.

Using repeating images like this is a technique only available in the realm of the comics medium, even though other types of visual narrative, such as film, are obviously able to produce a superficially similar effect through repetition of frames or sequences. Simple flashback or foreshadowing sequences which are shown multiple times are relatively common in film, and, in addition to that, there are also more complex and creative uses of repeating sequences in films like *Groundhog Day* (1993) and *Edge of Tomorrow* (2014) or in the TV series *Westworld* (2016) which

all feature time loops the characters are stuck into. However, as Barbara Postema points out, reading a comics page is different experience than following audiovisual narrative (XVIII). On the page, a number of panels are visible for the reader at once, and the narration is produced by their interplay. Comics storytelling is by design fragmentary, relying on the reader to construct the narrative and deduce what happens in the empty spaces between the panels (McCloud 66–68; Postema 50; Groensteen: *System of Comics* 10). Film narration, even though it consists of still images in a material level, is experienced as a one single moving image – something very unlike the four-dimensionality of comics that Bernard and Carter discuss.

While Dr. Manhattan can be considered as a metaphor for the graphic novel experience due to his cognitions represented through the use of repeating panels, as Bernard and Carter suggest, I feel that the same can be said of the *From Hell* appendix narrator. He/she/it employs panel repetition in more complex and medium-conscious ways to offer textual proof, speculations and narrative play with the disnarrated.

Repeating images or fragments of images is an interesting medium-specific possibility of comics. Repeated panels can be utilized in numerous ways in speculative fiction – either to describe speculative phenomena or to discuss the process of speculation itself. Examining repeated panels draws our attention to the fragmentary and translinear nature of comics storytelling and to the way in which the process of braiding establishes connections and meaning.

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

journal.finfar.org

Religious Themes and Characters in Nordic Children’s Fantasy Films: Explorations of ‘Acceptable’ Religion

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Abstract: This article argues that the character of children’s films make them a useful area of study when exploring attitudes to religion. A recurring idea behind children’s films is that they should include what is good for the child, which means that when religion is included it will be shaped in accordance with ideas of what is seen as ‘acceptable’ religion. Four Nordic children’s fantasy films which include religious beings or themes are analyzed and the attitudes to religion that the films suggest are discussed. The films are argued to present religious spheres as unthreatening, but often also as related to the ‘Other’. The films do not question religious faith as such, but do link it to private choice and children’s fantasies and thereby circumscribe its importance. Simultaneously, the transcendent sphere becomes a sphere of childhood and fantasy and children are, it would seem, bestowed the role of providing adults too an access to something beyond.

Keywords: children’s films, Nordic films, fantasy, religion.

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Today, many scholars agree on the usefulness of exploring popular culture when aiming to comprehend contemporary society. As Andrew Nestingen argues, “[p]opular texts continually mediate socially significant conflicts through narration, music, and image” (9). Elizabeth Higginbotham points in the same direction when she states that “films capture and reflect shifts in ideologies and other thinking about social institutions and social positions” (ix). In the field of religion and popular culture – to which this article belongs – the way that popular cultural forms such as films can help us comprehend society and particularly the role of religion in society is also often highlighted. Christopher Partridge, for example, argues that “[p]opular culture is both an expression of the cultural milieu from which it emerges and formative of that culture, in that it contributes to the formation of worldviews and in doing so, influences what people accept as plausible” (123). Bruce David Forbes in turn writes that “[a]pproaching the study of religion through popular culture can help us learn more about widespread perceptions of religion and the role religion plays in the everyday lives of people” (2). This is not to say that popular culture directly reflects society. As Adam Possamai argues, “the mirror is not always well polished. Images

might sometimes be distorted"; but, he continues, "there will always be an element of truth in them" (22–23).

Building on the notion that popular cultural forms such as film can help us better understand a society and its attitudes to religion, this article explores this notion with a focus on a genre that has so far largely been ignored in studies of religion and film, namely children's films. Children's films here simply means films directed at a young audience. With the exception of very well-known films such as the films based on the *Harry Potter* novels (see e.g. Wagner), children's films are seldom a focus in contemporary explorations of religion and popular culture. However, researching children's films from a religion and film perspective, I argue, offers a great deal of potential insight into how religion is understood in a particular context, especially when one takes the nature of children's films into account. The mediatization of religion theory argues that religion in films is always shaped according to media logics such as genre conventions (Hjarvard). This does not entail that there is just one role for religion in a given genre, but it can lead to certain repeated constructions and ways of representing religion. The nature of children's films have changed over time, but certain understandings of children's films prevail. Malena Janson has illustrated in a study of Swedish children's films how varying discourses regarding children have shaped Swedish children's films, but how the idea of what is best for the child has continued to be the guiding theme. Janson builds on David Buckingham, who argues that culture aimed at children has often had two purposes: to protect children from harm, and to include aspects considered beneficial which can guide children. This pedagogical element in children's film has been highlighted in studies of films from other contexts as well (Wojcik-Andrews) and in studies of other cultural forms too (Nikolajeva, *Power*).

I reason that the pedagogical aspect of children's films in particular makes it worthwhile to analyze how religion and religious themes are presented in children's films. Because of the nature of children's films, representations in these can be argued to illustrate ideas about what is seen as 'acceptable' religion: religion that is considered suitable even for children. Janson argues that in art and literature children have often, because of the naiveté connected to them, been presented as saying how things really are and as an intermediary between gods and humans (73). Thus children in comparison to adults often come across supernatural religious beings and connect to them, but these representations also include a pedagogical message and highlight adult and societal attitudes to religion. However, at the same time the films point to social attitudes to and understandings of children and childhood and can be argued to underline the adult world's need to see children in a certain way and have them fulfil certain functions, functions they cannot themselves fulfill (Janson; Rose). These functions can include the role of intermediary between humans and supernatural beings, a role that adults, for various reasons, cannot realize. Both the way religion is represented in the films and the roles presented for children in relation to religion are thus worthy of exploration when one wants to capture perspectives on religion today.

In this study I focus on Nordic children's fantasy films, films that include either religious supernatural characters – characters that have non-everyday powers and are connected to a religious sphere – or a clear Christmas theme. The films can all largely be characterized as fantasy films and I argue that the specific genre of the films, not just that they are children's films, is important to take into account in the analysis. As has often been pointed out, there is no single accepted definition of fantasy (Clute), nor is there a strict need for one, but it is of importance that researchers clarify their use of the concept and highlight what identifying a film as fantasy brings to the analysis. In this study I understand fantasy in line with Clute's presentation of the genre; that is to say as "a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it" (338). As I will show though, several of the films open up different readings of the non-everyday elements they present. They can be seen as the fantasies of children, but also as "real" fantastical elements, and I argue that this latter reading is the reading that generally wins out. I also agree with Brian Attebery's notion that fantasy can be seen as

a “fuzzy set” with a common center, but no defined boundaries (12), but I have found particularly Farah Mendlesohn’s categories to be useful when analyzing the different films and their fantastic elements and I will return to Mendlesohn in my analysis. By looking at the films discussed in this article as fantasy I bring into my analysis an understanding of how fantasy films and stories work, an understanding that is needed, I argue, for one to comprehend the way both children and religious themes are presented in the films. In line with others in the field (Nikolajeva, *Power*, “The Development”; Butler) I particularly find that the fantasy genre can open up a space for children’s agency, an agency that fantasy characters, be they connected to a religious sphere or not, can help highlight.

The films I analyze next have been chosen because they together indicate some recurring ways of representing religion in contemporary Nordic children’s fantasy films, but also because they individually offer noteworthy depictions of both religious themes and children. With their very direct focus on religious themes the first three films I explore are somewhat unusual, however, they do at the same time capture what I argue are common attitudes to religion in the Nordic countries. I start my analysis with a Swedish film from 2002 directed by Ulf Malmros, *We Can Be Heroes!/Bäst i Sverige!*, a film where the fantastic is represented by none other than Jesus. I then turn to two films where the main protagonist encounters an angel, first a Danish film from 2000 directed by Natasha Arthy, *Miracle/Mirakel*, then a Norwegian film from 2008 directed by Jesper W. Nielsen, *Through a Glass, Darkly/I et speil i engâte*. After these films with obvious religious characters and themes I turn to a Finnish film that deals with Christmas. The film I focus on here has a lot in common with other Christmas films, but can in addition be connected to a current discussion on what is the religious aspect of Christmas. In analyzing *Christmas Story/Joulutarina*, a film from 2007 directed by Juha Wuolijoki, I explore what religious themes are to be found in the film and how the story of Christmas is re-interpreted. In the final section I bring the films together and discuss what attitudes to religion the films can be argued to present. I illustrate how the films can be seen to reflect themes found in research on religion in the Nordic countries, but how they also indicate less notable features.

Meeting Jesus

The story of Jesus is alive and well on film. Generally, in the field of religion and film, Jesus on film is separated into Jesus characters and Christ characters; Jesus characters are to be found in films telling the biblical story and Christ characters are conceived of as allegorical representations of the story of the Christian savior, that is to say characters with Christ like traits, such as suffering and sacrificing oneself for others (Malone). Christ characters can be found in Nordic films too (Sjö, “Påjakt”) and are fairly common in fantasy stories (Sleight), but coming across Jesus in a film is something relatively original for both Nordic films and children’s fantasy films. This makes *We Can Be Heroes!* a worthwhile film to explore, despite its, in many ways, traditional and well-known story.

Simply put, *We Can Be Heroes!* is about a lonely boy desperate to find a friend. The main character is Marcello, a young boy with a rather difficult life, something which is made clear from the first shot of the film. The story starts with three boys, filmed upside down. The reason that they are upside down is because they are shown from Marcello’s point of view. Marcello has been tied upside down in a goal, as punishment for being a bad goal keeper. It is thus demonstrated that Marcello is bullied, but this is just one of his many problems. At home Marcello has to deal with the mixed expectations of his parents. Marcello’s father wants him to become a great football player, but Marcello is really bad at football, something he does not dare tell his father. Marcello’s mother wants him to sing in the boys’ choir in the local Catholic Church, but Marcello cannot sing and he

certainly does not want to become a priest, which he believes is his mother's wish. Marcello's biggest problem is, however, that he does not have a single friend.

From the start Marcello is presented as different. His name, the Italian sounding Marcello, highlights that he is not quite Swedish, despite his mother being Swedish and his Italian father having grown up in Sweden and not being able to, as Marcello puts it, even order a pizza in Italian. By being Catholic, and not Lutheran, like a majority of Swedes, Marcello also comes across as different. However, it is this difference which in a sense opens up for the fantastic to enter the story. When in the local Catholic Church, Marcello kneels down and prays next to what looks like a statue of Jesus, who has just been taken down from the cross – at least, Jesus is lying down and wearing a crown of thorns – Jesus suddenly sits up and starts talking to Marcello.

There are different ways of interpreting the Jesus character in *We Can Be Heroes!* The film is full of fantasy sequences, scenes where what Marcello imagines or dreams are shown. Marcello has a vivid imagination and the Jesus character could be seen as part of this imagination. However, the character seems to enter the story in a more direct way than any of Marcello's other dreams or fantasies. It is therefore possible to interpret *We Can Be Heroes!* as an example of what Farah Mendlesohn calls the "liminal fantasy". In stories of this kind "magic, or the possibility of magic, is part of the consensus reality". Furthermore, Mendlesohn continues, in these stories the fantastic and its "magical origins barely raises an eyebrow" and "the protagonist demonstrates no surprise" (18-19). Marcello is not at all astonished by the fact that Jesus talks to him and later comes to visit him. When Jesus has a real physical effect on Marcello's world – he makes 899 crowns in one crown coins suddenly rain down from Marcello's ceiling – Marcello and his sister, who also sees this happening, are somewhat amazed, but Marcello quickly understands it simply as a miracle, in line with a Christian discourse.

Overall the film presents the religious sphere and its spaces and characters as mostly kind and safe. Marcello does not like to sing in the choir, but he expresses no negative emotions towards the church as such. The priest in the church is a fairly young man who talks kindly to the choir members, encouraging the person who does not sing on key, that is to say Marcello, to not sing so loudly during the Sunday service. Jesus in turn is, in accordance with the Bible story, a man in his thirties. He comes across as quite relaxed, but un-willing to perform any great miracles. His advice to Marcello is usually simply that Marcello should use his brain. The miracle with the coins Jesus explains as being a case of Marcello borrowing money from his future self, something which Marcello seems to have thought of and Jesus has helped realize.

Despite the obvious connection to religious themes in the film, there are not that many obviously religious characters in it – that is to say characters who express their faith, have a position in a religious group or are directly connected to a religious setting. While Marcello's father is the one with the Italian heritage, it is actually Marcello's mother who insists on them being Catholic. Marcello's father shows no interest in religion, but his mother regularly goes to church. Her interest in Catholicism is explained by her having worked as an au pair in Italy when she was younger and having fallen in love with everything Italian. Apart from her, the only religious characters in the film are Marcello, the priest and Jesus. However, one character who needs to be mentioned, mainly because she is in fact not presented as religious, is Fatima, the girl who becomes Marcello's friend over the course of the film. At the start of the film, Fatima moves into a neighboring house with her father and two brothers. Fatima's mother is dead, having been killed by a grenade. Where exactly this happened is unclear. Fatima is first presented as Lebanese, but later calls herself Palestinian. Her story is fairly typical for Nordic films about immigrants, both when it comes to her mother being dead and the way she has to struggle with the expectations of her family and their ideas about how she should behave as a girl (Sjö, "Go with Peace"). However, she and her family do not come across as religious – they are never shown praying or talking about faith and their house includes no direct religious symbols.

Being religious thus sets off Marcello as different, but his faith is at the same time represented as something quite useful that helps him deal with his problems. As a character Jesus fills the role of guide and helper, but a guide and helper that opens up a space for Marcello to act and take control, rather than giving any simple solutions. Interestingly the film does not do away with Marcello's fantasies either, but instead towards the end allows the fantasy to come true. It is Marcello's dream to be able to fly and towards the end of the film he jumps off a multistory building with a hang glider and instead of falling to his death graciously flies around the houses, showing himself off to his family and friends. At the end of the film, Marcello has thus not just found a friend, but also found something he is really good at.

Among Angels and Children

There are both some notable similarities and differences between *We Can Be Heroes!* and the second film I want to discuss here, *Miracle*. The main character in both films is a young boy with lots of problems. Dennis P in *Miracle* has to deal with an overprotective mother who has not been able to move on with her life after the death of Dennis P's father and is constantly worried that something else bad will happen. Furthermore, Dennis P and his best friend Mick are in love with the same girl and the girl, Karen Elise, seems more interested in Mick than in Dennis P. Last but not least, Dennis P is the only boy in his class who does not yet have any pubic hairs, something that upsets Dennis P a great deal. Similarly to Marcello, Dennis P has also got a vivid imagination. The film is full of daydreaming sequences, sequences that are clearly presented as different from everyday reality. When Dennis P starts imagining things his life turns into a musical, with all the characters dancing and singing while dressed in colorful attire. A final similarity between the boys is that they both encounter a religious supernatural being. In Dennis P's case it is an angel who looks very much like his dead father.

The first time Dennis P sees the angel is when he and Mick walk past a church on their way to school. For a moment a man dressed in white and with wings on his back appears in the doorway, but when Dennis P looks back the man is gone. Neither Dennis P nor his mother comes across as religious, but Dennis P is friends with the owner of the local grill, Giorgos, a very religious man. Giorgos is often shown crossing himself and in his restaurant he has a small altar with a statue of the Madonna and an icon. Apart from this he regularly tells the boys old proverbs, proverbs that often have as their main point that if you have problems you should turn to God. When Dennis P's situation finally becomes too difficult for him to handle, he takes Giorgos' advice and goes to church. In the empty church, Dennis P prays for help and help arrives, in the form of the angel on top of a motorcycle. Soon the whole church is full of people dressed in white and singing and Dennis P enthusiastically joins in the musical-like performance. Dennis P is told by the white angel, who calls himself a white messenger, that he will be granted an angel license. This means all his wishes will come true. However, if he curses, his abilities will immediately disappear. Since Dennis P is known to curse quite a lot, this is a challenge and causes Dennis P problems, but at first he is very happy about his abilities.

In line with fantasy stories of this kind, stories in which the main protagonist is given god-like powers, things start off well, but soon spiral out of control. Dennis P does not only wish things into existence, he also changes the personalities of people around him who cause him problems, such as his mother and his teacher. He makes Karen Elise fall in love with him after she has told him she likes him but likes his friend Mick better. Finally, Dennis P changes Mick, whose fashion sense he has already drastically altered, so that instead of loving Karen Elise he hates her. What follows is chaos, and naturally, when things get too much for Dennis P, he curses.

At this point Dennis P meets the angel again and begs him for a last chance to make things right, and he is given one more wish. As can be expected, he wishes that all his wishes will be

undone. This is of course a classic ending to a story of this kind, which often seems to grant children agency just to show them that they do not know what is best for them. As Nikolajeva (*Power*, 139-153) has illustrated, there is often an ideological tone to these stories, with the norms of the grown up world being set up as the best alternative. However, in *Miracle* the classic story has been allowed to develop. Yes, Dennis P's wishes come undone, but at the same time his wishes have had an effect. For one thing, Dennis P's mother has met Dennis P's teacher and they have fallen in love, something that has made both of them happier and nicer. While Mick and Karen Elise are now allowed to become a couple, Dennis P is also finally allowed to find someone to fall in love with when a new girl moves into his house. And most importantly for Dennis P, he has managed to get his own first pubic hair all by himself.

Thus in *Miracle* one finds a rather classic fantasy tale where the fantastic element is connected to the religious sphere. It is a tale that to some extent has a rather traditional message, but also allows the child to have agency. Again religion is thus allowed to, in a sense, work in the child's favor, but at the same time it is not given too much focus or presented as the best choice in the end. *Miracle* is, like *We Can Be Heroes!*, largely an example of liminal fantasy, in the sense that the magic is not questioned and not much time is spent on explanations (Mendlesohn). Coming across angels can, however, cause more of a surprise and represent more of an intrusion, as it does in *Through a Glass, Darkly*.

The title, *Through a Glass, Darkly*, refers to a Bible passage, 1 Cor. 13.12. In *Through a Glass, Darkly* this verse and the preceding one is read: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (*King James Version*, 1. Cor. 13.11-12). As the title and the Bible verses connected to it suggest, the film deals with existential issues, specifically death. This might sound like an unusual subject matter for a children's fantasy film. However, as Bjerkeland has illustrated, death is a rather recurring topic in Nordic children's and youth films. It is furthermore a topic often and interestingly connected with Christmas. In short, the films are often given a Christmas setting, with the joyous holiday working as a contrast to the theme of death, and the topic of death at the same time bringing a darker aspect to Christmas.

Despite its dark theme, *Through a Glass, Darkly* is not a particularly dark film. The film is based on a novel by the Norwegian children's and youth author Jostein Gaarder. According to Bjerkeland, Gaarder's books present "a fearless treatment of major existential questions that does not talk down to its child audience" (233). In *Through a Glass, Darkly* the theme to be treated is death, but also life. This is all done with the help of a religious supernatural being, the angel Ariel. As with the two films discussed earlier, in *Through a Glass, Darkly* too the fantastic elements can be interpreted in different ways. They can be seen as a dying girl's hallucinations or fantasies, but by being directly represented and given center stage it is at least clear that the angel the main character Cecilie meets becomes very real to her. In contrast to both Marcello and Dennis P, Cecilie approaches her heavenly visitors with a great deal of skepticism. In line with the intrusive form of fantasy, as defined by Mendlesohn, the setting is one we know, but the fantastic brings a challenge to this setting and is not directly accepted as it is in liminal fantasy stories. Instead the fantastic represents an intrusion that needs explaining. Cecilie is thus surprised when the angel appears and she is full of questions about who he is and where he comes from. The angel is also interested in the world of humans, and Cecilie and Ariel agree to share experiences: Cecilie will tell Ariel about what it is like to be human and Ariel will tell Cecilie about the place he comes from.

Through her agreement with Ariel Cecilie is allowed to experience many things for a last, and sometimes even for a first time, and she is in a sense prepared for her own death. In the company of the angel Cecilie does not feel sick, and she is even allowed to experience what it feels like to fly. What awaits her on the other side is, however, never really revealed. Ariel, as it turns out,

has no clear answers, or if he does he is not willing to share them. This frustrates Cecilie at times, but in the end, she follows Ariel to whatever comes next.

The Christmas setting is central to *Through a Glass, Darkly*. It becomes clear to everyone that this is Cecilie's last Christmas, which makes what should be a holiday of joy into just as much a time of loss and sadness. The cold winter landscape of Norway in the Christmas season is furthermore notably contrasted with a trip to Spain when Cecilie was well and where she fell in love with a local boy, a trip which she cannot stop thinking about. Cecilie's memories of her trip are, in contrast to the now of her story, filmed in soft colors and a warm yellow light, highlighting this as a very different time and space. In the company of the angel too, however, time and space becomes something different and Cecilie becomes the energetic girl she was in Spain.

Though the Christmas setting and the presence of an angel makes it easy to connect the film to Christianity, this is a film that at a closer reading presents few direct connections to a specific religious tradition. While Marcello and Dennis P both encounter their heavenly guides in churches, Cecilie first sees the angel in a mirror, and he later appears at her home. Cecilie's grandmother, to whom Cecilie is very close, reads the Christmas story from the Bible on Christmas, and also reads the passage from Corinthians quoted above, a passage she says is her favorite. However, like the angel, she has no clear answers to give, and neither Cecilie's grandmother nor Ariel ever talk about god. What comes next is thus an open question in *Through a Glass, Darkly*; instead, similarly to other films about death, the film is really about life, love, and finding joy in the little things.

Re-imagining Christmas

The last film I want to discuss, *Christmas Story*, also focuses on Christmas and at least partly re-works the story of Santa Claus. Finnish film-makers have lately contributed a great deal to the Christmas film genre and sometimes in rather unusual ways. In the animated film *The Flight before Christmas/Niko – lentäjänpoika* from 2008, directed by Michael Hegner and Kari Juusonen, and its follow up *The Magic Reindeer/Niko 2 – lentäjäljekset*, from 2012, directed by Kari Juusonen and Jørgen Lerdam, the focus is on the adventures and troubles of young flying reindeer. In *Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale/Rare Exports* from 2010, directed by Jalmari Helander, the Christmas tale of Santa Claus is re-imagined for an adult audience, but with a child in the leading role. The result is an apocalyptic story with the child as savior (Copier). The subject matter of *Christmas Story* is more peaceful, but just as in *Rare Exports* the true story of Santa Claus is the central theme. Similarly to other Finnish Christmas films, the film does not directly focus on the Christian Christmas story, the birth of Jesus Christ, but it is still interesting to see which religious themes are included in the film.

In short, *Christmas Story* tells the story of how the young orphan boy Nikolas became Santa Claus. Nikolas lives in northern Finland, in the area where Santa Claus is believed to live, the mountain Korvatunturi. The time of the story is an undefined past. Early on Nikolas loses his parents and young sister, but even before this we are told that Nikolas has come up with the idea of giving children presents at Christmas. When his family drowns on the lake, Nikolas is preparing a gift for his sister, a gift he gives her after her death by placing it in the lake.

Since the village where Nikolas lives is very poor, it is decided that each family will take care of Nikolas for one year. In this way Nikolas gets to know the whole village, and each Christmas when he leaves for his new family, he gives all the children in the family and all the children in the families where he has stayed before gifts. Nikolas finally ends up with the mean old carpenter Isak. In the end Isak turns out not to be so mean, but just very lonely. Nikolas stays with Isak, and Isak leaves him his house and enough money to continue making gifts for children his whole life. Now Nikolas truly steps into the role of Santa Claus, even training some reindeer to pull his sled.

When Nikolas becomes old he and his young friend Ada, named after Nikolas's dead sister and one of the few who knows Nikolas's secret identity as Santa, decides that this is the last year that Nikolas will deliver gifts. During the trip he mysteriously disappears. When the next Christmas arrives, Ada finds out that her husband and other parents in the village have decided to continue giving the children gifts, pretending they are from Santa Claus. At first Ada is upset; however, when she and her family deliver the last gift Nikolas has left for his sister to the lake, a bright star suddenly appears in the sky, and out of the star flies Nikolas with his reindeers. Thus through others' continuing of the tradition of giving, Santa would seem to have really come alive.

Are there any religious themes to be found in this story? The community where Nikolas grows up celebrates Christmas, but, with the exception of the Turku cathedral appearing in the background when Isak and Nikolas sell their products at a market in the city, no clear, specific Christian references are to be found in the film. As mentioned, this is often the case in Finnish Christmas films and in Christmas films more generally too (Agajanian). It is also not that surprising, since a Christmas story without a clear link to a religious tradition can no doubt reach a larger audience than an obviously religious film. On the other hand, the film can also be argued to point to a secular view on Christmas. As Christopher Deacy (*Christmas*) among others has highlighted, many today underline how secular Christmas traditions are taking the place of religious ones. As Waits argues, "secular aspects of the [Christmas] celebration, such as gift giving, the Christmas dinner, and the gathering of family members, have dwarfed its religious aspects in resources spent and in concern given" (3). However, Nikolas's gift giving very clearly becomes a central ritual for him and for others. Furthermore, from the beginning this ritual is something that goes beyond the here and now and those in the present, since it starts with Nikolas giving a gift to his dead sister. Laine has convincingly argued for *Christmas Story* being about generosity and hospitality. The film illustrates the complexity of giving and receiving gifts. However, the film can also be related to a current discussion by Deacy ("The 'religion'"; *Christmas*) on what is the religious in Christmas. That traditional religious themes are not the focus of Christmas for many today does not, according to Deacy, mean that Christmas cannot still fill a religious function. Gift giving at Christmas might, argues Deacy, not have a traditional religious purpose, but it is a ritual behavior that, like many other secular activities, provides meaning and a central break with the everyday. It is thus, argues Deacy, "not a 'secular' analogue of Christian 'sacred time'. It is 'sacred time' per se" ("The 'religion'", 199), something clearly illustrated by Nikolas in *Christmas Story*.

Whether one agrees with Deacy's understanding of the religious potential of contemporary Christmas celebrations or not, the way that both the young and the old Nikolas invests himself in gift giving and the celebration of Christmas illustrates the importance of ritual settings such as Christmas and the potential sacred role – in the sense of providing meaning – that a secular celebration of Christmas too can provide. The film also illustrates in an important way, by its focus on the role of the child and Christmas, how it is through children that this alternative sacred sphere is actualized in our contemporary context.

Meaning beyond Tradition

What do the four films discussed above suggest about attitudes to religion today? In this final section I want to bring the films together, without, however, proposing that they all tell an identical story. Placed under the same lens they do, nonetheless, I argue, present certain common outlooks on religion in contemporary Nordic society.

Generally in the films, traditional religious spaces are presented as rather inviting and unthreatening. In many Nordic films churches are the setting of quite traumatic events and difficult emotions (Sjö, "Filmic constructions"), but this is usually not the case in children's films. On the other hand, though traditional religious spaces appear in two of the films, the focus on traditional

religious beliefs is quite limited. None of the films are thus particularly interested in specific belief systems or ideas of correct ways of being religious. As long as one does not curse, it would seem, one can have heavenly forces on one's side. The religious spaces do to some extent become areas where agency is offered the young protagonists, but the lack of any discussion of what faith means and entails is worth noticing. This lack of specific beliefs and principles of correct behavior highlights a certain ideal: as long as religion fills these principles it is okay; if it demands something more it does not seem to have a place in children's films, nor, perhaps, in children's lives – or for that matter the lives of adults.

Though the films do not express any direct aversion towards religion, they do not present religion as something everyday or 'normal' either. In both *We Can Be Heroes!* and *Miracle* a direct and open expression of faith is in fact connected to the character who is in some sense 'Other' or different. Marcello, being Catholic and part Italian, is no average Swedish boy. It is, I would argue, unlikely that a story about an ethnic Swedish boy entering a Lutheran church and meeting Jesus would work as well as *We Can Be Heroes!* In *Miracle* in turn, Giorgos, Dennis P's religious friend who encourages him to go to church, is no regular Danish man. He is of Greek descent, and Greek orthodox. In a Nordic context religion is thus evidently connected to those who are presented as somewhat different from the norm. Consequently, when an angel comes to an ethnic Norwegian girl, as he does in *Through a Glass, Darkly*, he comes across as rather secular and not connected to an obvious religious tradition.

Despite the aversion to tradition and set beliefs and behaviors, the films do express the idea of religion being of use in a crisis, or at least that one tends to turn to religion in a crisis. Both Marcello and Dennis P prays when their problems become too great. Cecilie in turn meets an angel when she is about to die, and Nikolas performs a ritual act of giving when he loses his family. Though faith does not come across as useless in the films I have analyzed above, it can be discussed how useful it is. Instead of giving simple answers, Jesus encourages Marcello to use his head. Instead of directly solving Dennis P's problems, the angel gives him angelic powers that mostly seem to screw things up more. And instead of giving a clear answer and something to believe in regarding a life after death, Cecilie's angel makes her appreciate the life here and now. Religious faith, according to the films discussed here, can thus be of some help, but it does not provide any simple answers.

The way Christmas is represented in *Through a Glass, Darkly* and *Christmas Story* underlines the central role of this holiday in the Nordic context. It is not inconsequential that Cecilie's story takes place around Christmas. The time frame is surely chosen because of what Christmas time means to people in the Nordic countries and the way people's connection to the holiday when contrasted with death can heighten certain emotions (Bjerkeland). However, in neither *Through a Glass, Darkly* nor *Christmas Story* is it the Christian aspect of Christmas that is central. Though, following Deacy, one can argue that Christmas, whether it is celebrated as a religious holiday or not, can still offer religious meaning in the sense of opening up a sacred time and space, the Christmas setting as such cannot simply be interpreted as a sign of the importance of religion.

On a general level, all of this fits quite well with contemporary views on religion in the Nordic contexts. The Nordic countries are usually understood to be fairly secular nations where religion is of marginal importance (Casanova). Religion is often considered to be a private matter that one should be able to decide about oneself, and specific traditions and dogmas are for many not of any great interest (Botvar). A Christian heritage is still noticeable (Bäckström), and Christmas continues to be a central holiday, but a holiday not necessarily connected to questions of faith. One could also argue that the fact that it is in children's films and in fantasy that angels and Jesus appear underlines the limited position of religion in the Nordic countries: religion is placed in the margins. But this is only one way of reading the films and one perspective on religion in the Nordic

countries. An alternative story that the films present, and which research also highlights (Partridge; Sjö, "Bad religion"), is the continuous interest in questions of meaning, faith and transcendence in Western secular contexts. In the films I have analyzed, it is children that are allowed to encounter religious supernatural beings. This can highlight that religion is given restricted importance – it belongs to children and fantasy and is something you grow out of – but it can also point to an understanding of the transcendent as something difficult and hard to reach that is partly thought of as out of bounds for the grown-up world, but which can be glimpsed in the worlds of children. Building on previous research on what representations of children say about society (Rose; Janson; Nikolajeva), the films can be argued to suggest that because of our own restrictions as adults, we need children to fill the role of mediators between us and a transcendent sphere. This does not mean that religion in a traditional sense of groups and dogmas is on its way back and that secularization is not taking place, but it does point to the fact that in a secular society too questions of meaning and reflections on something beyond have a place. Through among other things children's fantasy films a door to something beyond is kept open.

To summarize, the way religion is represented in children's fantasy films underlines certain ideas about religion and 'acceptable' religion. The films discussed above suggest that not all forms of religion are considered suitable in contemporary Nordic society. Religious spaces come across as quite safe, as do religious supernatural beings, but they do not offer a lot of answers. Dogmas are of little interest and being religious is seen as more "normal" for the Other. However, religion and questions of faith and transcendence do still have a role to play, but this role is complex. Placing encounters with the transcendent in the world of children and fantasy can be seen as a way of restricting its importance, but also of highlighting its continuing significance but intricate position. Future studies will hopefully continue to explore what we can learn about religion through popular culture and what children's fantasy films from different contexts can bring to the debate. The four films I have analyzed in this article tell a noteworthy story, but they do of course not tell the whole story.

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

journal.finfar.org

Science fiction parody in Don Rosa's "Attack of the Hideous Space-Varmints"

Katja Kontturi

Abstract: This article concentrates on the comic "Attack of the Hideous Space Varmints" (1997) by Disney artist Don Rosa. The comic deals with Earthlings who invade the territory of one-eyed aliens. The aim is to study Rosa's comic from a parodic perspective: how Rosa uses science fiction tropes characteristic to the 1950s cinema and comics and ridicules them. My methods consist of close reading followed by formalist comic analysis. While doing so, I also utilize the concept of metalepsis. The analysis will be supported by theoretical works on science fiction and the postmodern view of parody. One important source is Kimmo Ahonen's recent doctoral dissertation concerning invasion films that offers background material concerning the societal conditions and the era in the United States that Rosa utilizes in his comic – the 1950s.

The article offers a new perspective on how funny animal comics as a narrative form can discuss the themes of invasion and "the Other", and present them both in a parodic manner. The aim of the article is also to suggest that the whole subgenre of Disney comics should be more comprehensively introduced to the field of comics studies as a serious research topic.

Keywords: Disney comics, Don Rosa, parody, postmodernism, science fantasy, science fiction.

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"Comic books and science fiction have always fed upon each other" (Benton 3). Indeed, Mike Benton has noted how it was comic books that made the most typical visual features of science fiction (SF) known for general public during the pulp era. Between the 1930s and 1940s, science fiction stories of comics and so-called pulp magazines¹ typically featured plots of three kinds: new inventions, explorations or alien invasions. These plots were then transferred onto SF films during

¹ The term "pulp" is based on the bad quality pulp mass paper that were used in the early magazines predating comics. Pulp mass made magazines and early comics cheap and disposable.

the 1950s. Through the early 1950s, the aliens (including Superman from comics) presented themselves as the saviors of mankind. Only later on the same decade, the invaders became scary, bug-eyed monsters whose mission was to conquer or destroy (Benton 3–4; Jancovich & Johnston 71, 72; Mendlesohn 54).

The historical events of the 1950s had a strong impact on SF dealing with space travel. Most of these SF stories can be read as simplified descriptions of the tension caused by the Cold War, where aliens serve as metaphors for the Soviet threat (Jancovich & Johnston 71). According to John Clute, the tense situation after the WWII manifested itself as fear of “the Other” in cinematic alien representations. At the same time, the fascination with unidentified flying objects rose to its peak during the 1950s. *The War of the Worlds*, both novel (H. G. Wells, 1898) and the original film (Haskin, 1953) made aliens more substantial by giving them a motif to leave their planet (Clute, *Science Fiction* 22–23). Filmmakers took advantage of the popularity of the phenomenon: the fear of the ultimate new war was written in SF movie scripts describing aliens taking over the Earth.

This article concentrates on the comic “Attack of the Hideous Space Varmints” (1997) by Disney artist Don Rosa (b. 1951), which was published in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* issues #614, #615 and #616.² As opposed to a classic SF theme of aliens visiting or invading Earth, the comic deals with Earthlings who invade the territory of one-eyed aliens. My aim is to study Rosa's comic from a parodic perspective: how Rosa uses SF tropes characteristic to 1950s cinema and early SF comics, and ridicules them with his narrative methods. I will support my analysis with the theoretical works on science fiction by Brian Attebery and John Clute among others, and the postmodern view of parody presented by literature scholar Linda Hutcheon. The article also discusses the concept of “the Other” in the context of SF based on comments by Farah Mendlesohn and Michelle Reid. Kimmo Ahonen's recent doctoral dissertation concerning invasion films also offers background material on the cultural context of the United States in the 1950s.

I study this comic by employing close reading and formalist comic analysis developed by Scott McCloud in his work *Understanding Comics, The Invisible Art* (1993), with a focus on the concept of metalepsis in comics. I ground my arguments on the works of comic scholars Jan Baetens and Karin Kukkonen and their notions of how comics' narration works in collaboration with the panels and the gutter but how this form can also be broken. I will also establish how Rosa's SF parody refers directly to a pair of famous SF stories thus connecting the world of Ducks intertextually to a broader cultural and historical context.

The article offers a new perspective on how funny animal comics can present visual and textual parody of themes such as invasion and the Other. The fact that Rosa does this in a Disney comic makes it even more noteworthy since Disney comics should not deal with profound, controversial or political matters.³ Rosa invites the reader to identify not only with the Ducks but with the one-eyed aliens as well. He wants us to ask, who is the Other? Or is there an Other in the first place? The aim of my paper is not only to show how Disney comics can cover profound themes, but to remind that the whole subgenre of Disney comics should be given more attention within the academic field of comics studies.

Though comics and popular culture scholars like Martin Barker, David Kunzle, Thomas Andrae and most recently Peter Schilling Jr., have targeted the works of Carl Barks (1901–2000), the most (in)famous study of Disney comics is still Ariel Dorfman's and Armand Mattelart's *How to Read Donald Duck. Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (1971). Even though the analysis

² The American Disney publications such as these albums usually don't have page numbers. I have marked the issues on the Works cited page as “unpaginated” and counted the page numbers from the beginning of the Rosa's comic in each issue separately. The reference system of the comics studies is yet to be fully standardized.

³ In 1950s the noted Disney artist Carl Barks received a list containing the tabooed subjects in Disney comics. The list was called “Hints on writing for Dell Comics” and it included, among other things, the advice to “avoid sophisticated and adult themes”, and not to show anything regarding politics, religion, suicides, death, torture, love, sex, etc., and that the comics should also avoid “international intrigue generally”. For more details, see Andrae 233.

by Dorfman and Mattelart is rather incisive and historically valuable, it cannot be substantially described as a critical academic study, mainly because it functions as a pamphlet targeted against the cultural imperialism practiced by the USA during the 1970s in Chile. Moreover, it lacks a proper reference system and the sources used are only translations, not the original works. Furthermore, Dorfman and Mattelart (21) misleadingly target their criticism – against Walt Disney even though Disney himself never had anything to do with the contents of his company’s comics.

The most recent scholarly work, *Disney Comics: The Whole Story* (2016) by an Italian Disney historian Alberto Becattini, is more of an encyclopedic attempt to catalogue Disney comics than a critical study. In other words, Disney comics haven’t yet been widely discussed in the academic field concerning comics. My own doctoral dissertation in 2014, which is still to be translated in English, concentrated on Don Rosa’s comics as postmodern fantasy. As the popularity of Disney comics is remarkably strong in the Europe, comics studies need to cover this area more broadly than they have so far.

I now proceed to provide an introduction to the artist Don Rosa, his background influences and his works in Disney comics. It’ll be followed by the definition of the SF genre and a description of how Rosa uses the tropes typical for the genre. In the following chapter, I will move to discussing postmodern parody and how Rosa reverses the roles of the invader and the invaded. Here, I will talk about the concept of the Other and how Rosa discusses it in his comic. Lastly, I will shortly comment the intertextual references Rosa makes to SF classics.

Duck artist Don Rosa

Keno Don Hugo Rosa, commonly known as Don Rosa, started his career among Disney comics in 1986. During the 1970s, he had already made a non-Disney related underground-like comic series *The Pertwillaby Papers* for his college paper as a hobby. However, he always imagined these stories as Duck comics.⁴ In fact, Rosa’s first Disney comic, ”Son of the Sun” was based on his original story ”Lost in (an Alternate Section of) the Andes” (1973) of the *Pertwillaby Papers* series. This new Disney comic was nominated for Best Story in the Harvey Awards⁵ and was the beginning of Rosa’s recognized career as a Disney artist.

As described in Rosa’s autobiography, Rosa grew up with various SF and adventure magazines as well as comics such as *Spirit* by Will Eisner, *Prince Valiant* by Hal Foster and *Flash Gordon* by Alex Raymond. He was influenced by artists such as Harvey Kurtzman, Robert Crumb and Will Elder. Although not an actual underground artist, one can detect the typical characteristics of underground comics in Rosa’s drawing style. With his substantial use of background details, meticulous way of drawing Ducks, and strong shading uncharacteristic for traditional Disney comic, Rosa is quite a unique Disney artist. However, his biggest influence was naturally Carl Barks, or ”the Good Artist” (Rosa, ”Elämäkertani, osa 1” 11–12, 17–19).

In several interviews, Rosa has stated that first of all, he is a fan of Carl Barks. He considers himself to be, not a Disney artist, but a Carl Barks artist (Rosa, ”Elämäkertani, osa 1” 11). As discussed in my earlier work, Barks’ satire and storytelling skills have affected Rosa’s laconic sense of humor and his wish to create sequels to Barks’ beloved Duck adventures. The most famous and noted work by Rosa, the twelve-part series *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* (1991–1993), was inspired by the details Barks gave in his stories. The series won the Best Serialized Story

⁴ The first comic by Rosa that included Disney characters was in fact an underground parody called ”Return to Duckburg Place”. It includes Gladstone Gander killing himself in Russian roulette, the nephews destroying Scrooge’s money bin with a bomb, and senile grandma Duck accidentally baking Gus Goose in the oven. It was never published – until Disney gave a rare permission to print it in the first issue of the collection of Rosa’s works published in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Germany in 2011.

⁵ The Harvey Awards (1988–present), named after the founder of *MAD* magazine Harvey Kurtzman, are given for achievements in the field of comic books in several categories.

category in The Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards in 1995.⁶ Don Rosa is yet the only Disney artist ever to receive this honor (Kontturi 33–34).

What makes Rosa's comics exceptional, however, is the fact that his stories have continuity, which I have also elaborated on in my earlier work. Barks' comics, like Disney comics in general, are episodic tales of the lives of the Ducks (or Mice and other animal-like characters in the works of the other artists). What happens in one comic is disregarded in the following. Rosa's Ducks, on the contrary, have history. They remember what has happened previously and also refer to those events. However, although Rosa breaks the episode format of Disney comics, even his stories are frozen in time: their events take place in the 1950s, the time when Barks created most of his comics⁷ (Kontturi 36).

In addition to the continuum of the Ducks, Rosa follows quite an European style of comic artists by mixing fact with fiction in a similar manner as, for instance, Goscinny and Uderzo, the creators of *Asterix*, of which Rosa heard from his history professor during his engineer studies (Rosa, "Elämäkertani, osa 1" 20-21). Like Goscinny and Uderzo, Rosa contextualizes his adventure stories to historical events and correct milieu. He uses reference photos and studies the background information thoroughly, although altering the facts occasionally to adapt them properly to Barks' works. This makes Rosa's comics a postmodern piece of work: historical facts and fantastic fiction are combined into a unique hybrid with intertextual references to specific events in cultural history.

The science fiction of the Ducks

The term "science fiction" was popularized by Hugo Gernsback who connected science to fiction in his magazines in the 1920s (Attebery, "Science Fictional Parabolas" 5). Importantly, according to Mike Benton (3), it was comics that made SF known to the general public. Benton, the author of *Science Fiction Comics: The Illustrated History* (1992), adds: "science fiction comic book is the most natural expression of the literature of the fantastic and fanciful" (3). It follows the so-called "primal dream state" by using exaggeration, caricatures and archetypes, formulated and action driven plots and colorful images from the other worlds. The visual elements and themes of science fiction were "refined, defined and popularized" in comics; thus, they were easier to transform to films and television series later on (Benton 3–5).

Today, SF doesn't have distinct borders that would separate it from the other genres of the speculative fiction spectrum. Science fiction scholar Brian Attebery suggests that genres and subgenres could be described as "fuzzy sets". By that, he means that every author both uses the existing material as well as adds something of their own. The genre is in constant development and its borders shift whenever a new piece of work is published (Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* 126).

It's easy to agree with Attebery, since SF's classical motifs like the rocket ship, space travel and robots are rather rare in the modern SF literature. In this sense, the genre has developed to fit contemporary societal needs, which is also visible in the description provided by George Mann:

SF is a form of fantastic literature that attempts to portray, in rational and realistic terms, future times and environments that are different from our own. It will nevertheless show an awareness of the concerns of the times in which it is written and provide implicit commentary on contemporary society, exploring the effects, material and psychological, that any new technologies may have upon it. (Mann 6)

⁶ In addition, Rosa won his second Eisner Award in a category of Best Writer/Artist: Humor in 1997.

⁷ With the exception of the events of *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck*, which naturally take place before the 1950s.

Thus, the most essential feature of science fiction is not the futuristic topics and subjects such as aliens, space travel or robots, but how the story comments on modern society and its problems, in addition to speculating on the prospects of our future. Even though Rosa's comics take place in the past, he writes them from contemporary context and comments on our past or present culture.

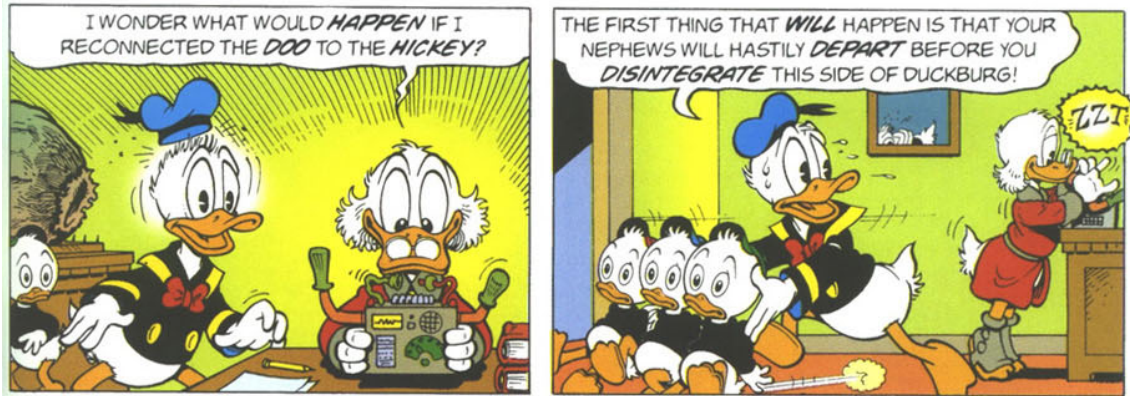


Figure 1: © Disney (Rosa 1997, #614, 3.)

In the comic that this article analyzes, Scrooge McDuck gets an extraterrestrial machine from Antarctica which makes his money bin turn into a flying object with inter-planetary hyper drive. Ducks have to chase the bin into space with an old spaceship, and the hyper drive accidentally takes them further from Earth than they think. Finally, the bin is found from the asteroid field between Mars and Jupiter where the Ducks encounter an alien family.

The technology that enables the Ducks to travel to the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter is extraterrestrial. The nephews notice this when they study the mechanical meteorite sent to Scrooge: “This mechanism is **not of this earth!**” they claim (emphasis in the original) (#614, 2–3). Scrooge wants to know more about the alien technology and accidentally turns on the hyper drive inside the meteorite. The electric “zzt” balloon pops a bit out of the panel (figure 1) which is Rosa’s visual method to indicate that the machine doesn’t belong to the world of the Ducks.

Accordingly, comics scholar Jan Baetens suggests that the world of comics lies inside the panels. Whenever the borders are crossed, the world of comics is left behind (Baetens 374). This is called the metalepsis of comics. According to comics scholar Karin Kukkonen (“Metalepsis in Popular Culture: An Introduction” 1), metalepsis occurs when “the boundaries of a fictional world are glanced, travelled or transported across”. It includes, for example, the cases when fictive characters talk to the reader or the author, and when the author steps inside her fictive world, or has conversations with her characters. Kukkonen follows Baetens:

If the panel images work as windows into the fictional world, then what we see in the images is part of the fictional world: the panel frame acts as the boundary between the fictional world and the real world, and the real world is potentially represented in the spaces between the panels. (Kukkonen “Metalepsis in Comics and Graphic Novels” 215–216)

We see from figure 1, that Rosa highlights the conventions of the comic narration by breaking the borders of the panels. This is quite typical a method of his and its purpose is to show the readers that something special that cannot even fit within the panels is about to happen in the story. This is proved later, when the hyper drive makes Scrooge’s money bin a massive spaceship that is guided to the location of its owner – the alien grandfather living in the asteroid belt. Here, the metalepsis indicates a science fictional event occurring in otherwise reasonably normal Duckburg.

The same metaleptic narrative method is used somewhat meticulously to indicate extraterrestrial activity around the Ducks. The hyper drive envelops the bin into an energy field and lifts it up to the air. As it moves first through Duckburg, it crashes through Scrooge's new twin towers⁸ and moves across the panel border to the gutter, and even behind the following panel (#614, 4). The hyper drive mechanism appears as the main cause of the metalepsis: the massive asteroid that Scrooge's money bin is anchored to by the aliens turns into a "spaceship" when the Ducks flee from the alien authorities. Scrooge pilots the asteroid with the hyper drive and there are two occasions when the asteroid crosses the panel border while the Ducks travel in space (#616, 5–6).

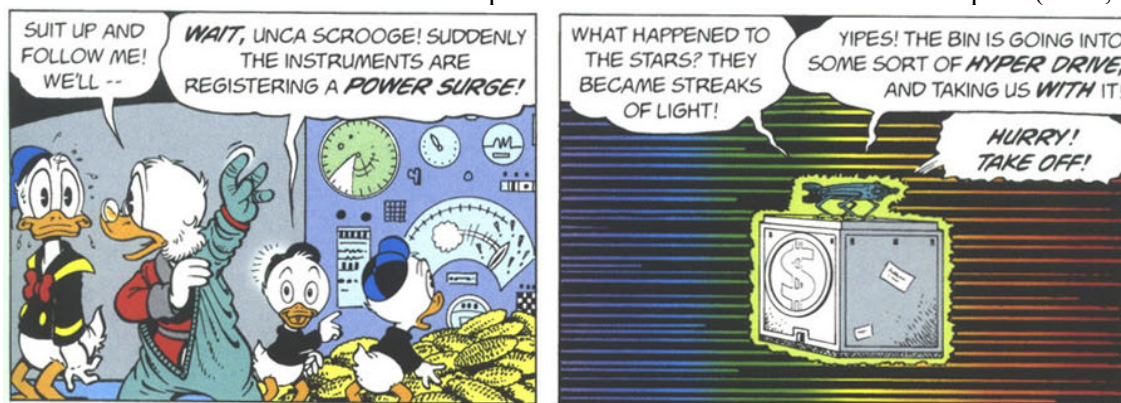


Figure 2: © Disney (Rosa 1997, #614, 7.)

In figure 2, the Ducks mention the term "hyper drive" for the first time. Rosa visualizes the mechanism of the hyper drive with the light of the stars turning into speed lines, highlighted with multiple colors, which is quite typical a method also in several SF movies and TV shows. The money bin is enveloped by a yellow light, making it appear like there was a force field around them, separating the fast-moving bin from space.

The term "hyper drive" originates from Isaac Asimov's short story "Little Last Robot" (1947). By using the term hyper drive, Rosa fulfills the condition Brian Attebery presents about SF discourse. According to him, SF uses science as a base of the literary expressions; telepathy replaces magic, for instance. Even though the term might not be "actual science", the discourse itself will bring the science to the story's background (Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* 107). This was also used in the comics of the 1940s: "To make things sound futuristic, writers smashed words together to create a hyphenated hodgepodge" (Benton 32). When Rosa makes the Ducks use terms and phrases such as "power surge", "inter-planetary", "We've lost our **air pressure!**" and "I'm shifting into **hyper-space!**" (emphasis in the original), he follows the discourse typical for SF.

However, the alien technology is so futuristic in the eyes of the Ducks that it could easily be seen as magic. When the hyper drive takes over the money bin and starts to move it off the Killmotor Hill, the Ducks wonder: "Er... Aren't there various and sundry laws of **physics** being violated here?" (#614, 4, emphasis in the original). For the Ducks, their world is normal and follows the natural laws. The hyper drive breaks these laws and for a while it seems more like magic or fantasy than SF.

Mixing science and fantasy brings us to the concept of science fantasy; "a genre in which devices of fantasy are employed in 'science-fictional' context (related to but distanced from the 'real world' by time, space or dimension)" (Clute, "Science fantasy" 843). SF writer Thomas M. Disch points out that:

⁸ We must remember that this comic was published in 1997, so we should abstain from drawing the parallel with the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre twin towers here.

Once such a voyage [to the moon] began to seem a concrete possibility, science fiction established itself as a separate genre, but the tropism toward fantasy remained in its genes, and now that the moon and Mars and most of our solar system have come to seem red – but barren destinations, SF has reverted to its origins as fantasy. For every SF story that posits interstellar travel and adventures among aliens is a trip to Oz, given what we know of interstellar distances and the constraints of relativity theory. (Disch 77)

These observations pointed out by Disch about the relationship between SF and fantasy are present also in Rosa's comic. The natural laws such as gravity and pressure can be disregarded in a fantastic way, when Ducks lose the windshield of their ship and walk in space with cracked helmets (#616, 4). Notably, whenever they look for an explanation for a scientific mystery, like the loss of inertia, the explanation is based on alien technology: "The hyper drive box must eliminate **inertia!** That's why we didn't feel any acceleration when it shifted to warp drive!" (#616, 6, emphasis in the original) Rosa's comic doesn't aspire to follow exact science; the science is brought to the story by SF lingo whenever the plot requires so.

Lastly, we should note that Attebery sees science fantasy as a parodic genre itself: by mixing the elements of the two genres, science fantasy sees their possible clichés, narrow imagery and rigid narrative patterns and is therefore able to ridicule them. Science fantasy in its hybrid form develops the genres and brings humor to both their language and traditional conventions (Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* 117–118). Rosa's comic follows Attebery's notions and turns science fiction into a parody which I will discuss further in the following section.

Attack of the Earthlings

It should be mentioned here that parody in this article is understood based on the literature theories of postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 26) suggests that parody should be redefined as "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity". Parody both installs and ironizes present representations that are derived from previous ones and notes "what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference" (Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* 93). Though often connoted to ridicule, parody rather uses irony to show its separation from the past. Postmodern parody invites to read history in a new way and paradoxically both strengthens and weakens the representations of the history it refers to (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 94–95, 98).

Disney comics, especially the comics by Italian artists have a long tradition of parody. Italian artists take literature and film classics, and recreate them with Disney characters. These parodic adaptations originated by artist Guido Martina (1906–1991) and his parody of Dante's *Inferno* ("L'inferno di Topolino")⁹ already in 1949. Although Rosa never uses Ducks to represent fictive characters in his stories, he is a descendant of Disney tradition, and has recreated covers of famous comic magazines with suitable Ducks as fan art.¹⁰ However, his Duck stories are rarely adaptations themselves.¹¹

Following Hutcheon, I argue that Rosa makes a critical commentary of both the invasion theme and the alien discourse by reversing these roles in his comic. The threat and possibility of alien encounter were the key themes of 1950s' SF films. According to Kimmo Ahonen, after the World War II, the Cold War evoked fear for communism by defining and recognizing the ideological enemy. Keeping up the image of the enemy not only affected the American identity but

⁹ Publication details of this comic can be found from *InDucks*: <https://coa.inducks.org/story.php?c=I+TL++++7-AP>.

¹⁰ Examples of Rosa's parody covers have been included in *Don Rosan kootut* #4, the collection of Rosa's works (Rosa, "Kansipojanhommia" 246–272).

¹¹ There is an exception though, "The Duck Who Never Was" (1994) is Rosa's Duck version of Frank Capra's movie *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).

was also visible in the cultural products of the time as they supported the American system and slandered the enemy. Popular culture, especially fiction films, was used as a propaganda tool (Ahonen 12). Encountering the Other and defining one's identity and communality against the other group, race and culture, have always been part of the history of the USA. At worst, the political culture was all about demonizing the enemy. Stigmatizing and dehumanization were useful tools to promote one's own agenda (Ahonen 15).

Using aliens as the new enemy overlaps with the concept of the fear of the Other – which is something Entertainment Comics (EC Comics) also did during the 1940s. Because of the more mature readership, EC's SF comics included irony and cynicism. They even commented nuclear weapons and racial prejudices: "Alien races were often used in the EC science fiction comics to make a point about our own racism on Earth" (Benton 38, 42). Rosa uses these same tropes within the funny animal comic genre.

When Scrooge, Donald and the nephews have landed their spaceship on a large meteor, they encounter an alien family that has taken the money bin as their new habitat. At this point, Rosa shifts the view for the reader: we not only see things from the side of the Ducks, but the side of the aliens, who – despite some physical differences like one eye, three-fingered hands, very wide mouth and different molecule structure – are reminiscent of the human characters in Disney comics (figure 3).

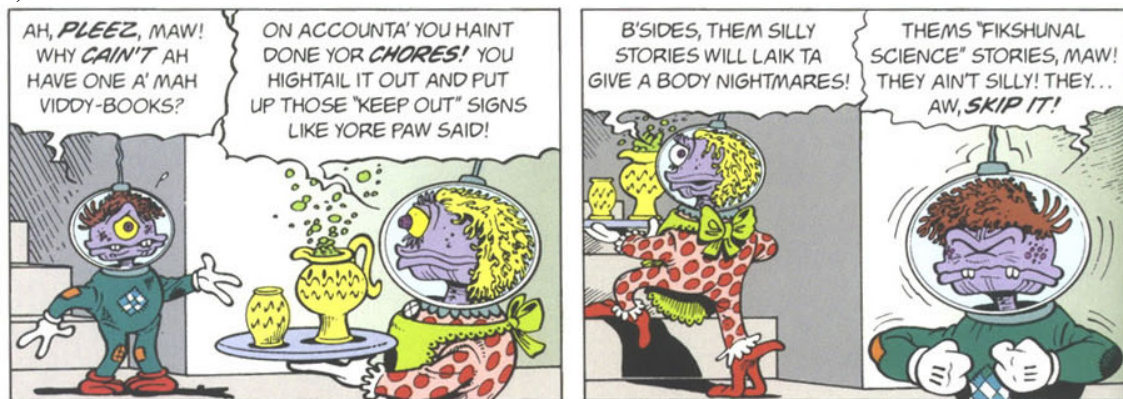


Figure 3: © Disney (Rosa 1997, #615, 2.)

Aliens walk on two feet, speak English (with the so called southern "hillbilly" accent) and have families and the same fears and dreams a human being might have. They even refer themselves as "hoomins" or "hoomin beans" which makes them a metaphor for humans. According to Farah Mendelsohn, in SF's visual narrative, the aliens of the 1950s were described either as beautiful, terribly ugly or as insects which separated them from humans, thus making them the fearful Other. The background reason for the descriptive choices might be the belief of a hierarchy between so called human races around the 1920s to 1940s (Mendelsohn 57). As Ahonen notes, anyone unknown, weird and deviating from one's own image was seen as threatening. Invasion films used a different threat than other SF cinema: the encounter, the invasion of a different life form into "the real" American life was seen as menace (Ahonen 432). Rosa notes this phenomenon in his comic parodically by turning the roles upside down: a young alien child tells the nephews how *he* thought *they* were "brainless monsters on account ay' all is so disgustin'ly **ugly!**" (#615, 3, emphasis in the original).

"Normality" in 1950s context was thus endangered by alien invasion. Peace in the society, the norm of heterosexuality and the nuclear family were all under a threat by physically deviant aliens in the science fiction films (Ahonen 214). Rosa comments on the physical deviance through Donald and the alien grandfather. Donald is worried about the "big green monsters" or "slimy green

monsters” they might counter in space (#614, 2, 8). The alien grandfather, on the other hand, wonders: “How come yore imaginary space critters ain’t never **normal** color – laik **green?**” (#615, 3, emphasis in the original). Similarly, as Rosa challenges the concept of normality, he comments on the way SF movies describe aliens completely and exaggeratingly different from humans. The reason behind this imagery in the 1950s invasion films was that the lack of human features would deny the humanity and civilization of the aliens thus justifying for instance the colonization of their planet (Reid 257).

Concerning the definition of a human being, this comparison is especially interesting since it is made in a Disney comic: Ducks themselves are representations of human beings hidden inside of animal characters. They are slightly altered with four-fingered palms and flippers, but they walk on two feet and talk like us. Now the Ducks represent the human race in opposition to an even more altered versions of us, the aliens.

On the other hand, in Rosa’s comic, it’s the *alien family* that represents the “proper” nuclear family. There is a mother, a father, a son, and the grandfather. The (white) Ducks – who are the actual invaders – are represented as all male characters. In fact, it is *their* family that is deviant from the norm, which puts another layer on Rosa’s parodic storytelling.¹² This time, it is the alien family that is worried about other life forms invading their home and destroying their civilization (#615, 6).

By turning the roles of the invader–invaded inside out, Rosa makes his comic a parodic version of the old 1950s alien invasion movies and comics. Similar to humans, the aliens wonder what is beyond the asteroid belt, the young alien boy reads “fikshunal science’ stories” and the alien authorities deny all the existence of the “aliens” – referring of course to Earthlings (#615, 2–3, #616, 3).

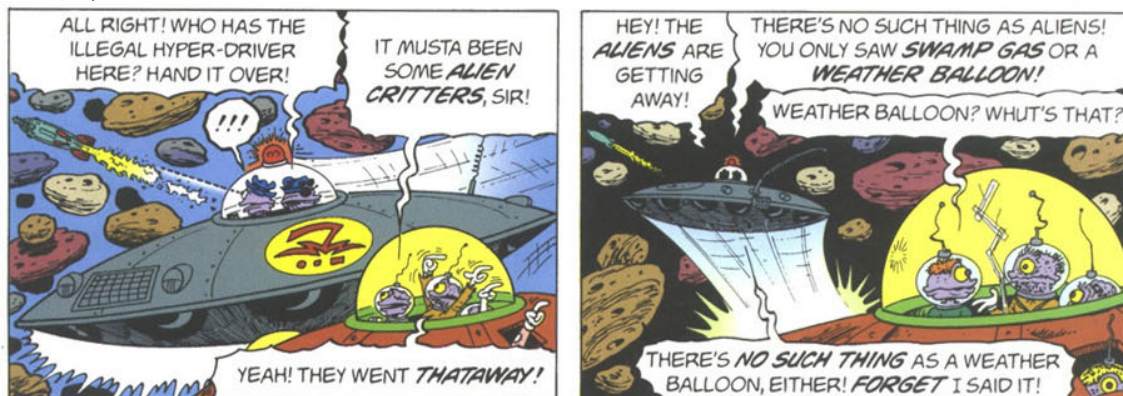


Figure 4: © Disney (Rosa 1997, #616, 3.)

One of the most comical reversed roles is the patrol of the alien authorities. The moment the alien “police force” finds out about the illegal hyper drive (#615, 8), they come to question the aliens. The authorities use excuses like “swamp gas” and “weather balloons” to hide the truth about the possible alien visitors (figure 4). These are classic examples of the same excuses the government of the United States used to calm down the UFO fanatics in the 1950s (Ahonen 59, 61). Correspondingly, Rosa makes a reference to these alleged visitations: the alien authorities are not worried about the contact with the Ducks, because no one would believe it to be true. That’s the reason why they “only contact rural hayseeds when our patrols visit their planet!” (#616, 3) Even their spaceship is shaped like a saucer, which was one of the most common UFO type described by the people who claimed to have seen a “flying saucer”.

¹² Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart have analyzed the family relationships of the Ducks in *How to Read Donald Duck* and see them as malfunctioning since the nuclear family is indeed missing – there are only uncles and nephews.

In addition, Rosa mentions other minor SF clichés like the threat taking an unknown species into the laboratory for examination might pose (#616, 3), or the phrase “We-come-in-peace! Take-us-to-your-leader!” (#615, 4). This falls in line not just with Hutcheon’s conceptualization of parody but also with Attebery’s definition of the science fantasy genre: Rosa makes fun of these clichés and turns his comic into a critical commentary of SF conventions.



Figure 5: © Disney (Rosa 1997, #615, 5.)

In addition to the parodic elements and the use of SF’s genre conventions, Rosa makes intertextual references to specific works that belong to the SF genre. Donald’s line: “Klaatu barada nikto” (#615, 5) in the panel below (figure 5) is from the SF classic *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Wise, 1951). According to Cordell and Cordell, the literal meaning of the phrase was never fully explained in the movie, but it’s kind of a safety clause. The human protagonist is told to say the phrase to the big robot Gort, so he doesn’t destroy the Earth in case of his alien companion Klaatu should be harmed (Cordell & Cordell). Following the movie, Donald tries out the sentence as a safe clause – the try is made obvious by the question mark in his speech balloon – so the angry-looking alien mother won’t hurt him and Scrooge.

The other reference is visual: the famous Vulcan salute from the *Star Trek* series, made known by the half-Vulcan character Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy). This reference to *Star Trek* functions as visual reference Rosa uses to connect his comic as part of SF’s fuzzy set.

Thematically “Attack of the Hideous Space-Varmints” deals with Scrooge’s desire for new adventures and his longing for the past. Scrooge sees the alien grandfather as his double, a prospector whose domain was not Klondike, but the planets, moons and meteors of space. Space is depicted with endless possibilities, a new world for Scrooge to explore, an actual final frontier (#615, 8, figure 6). This is another reference to *Star Trek*, which used the line “Space, the final frontier” in the beginning of every episode aired.

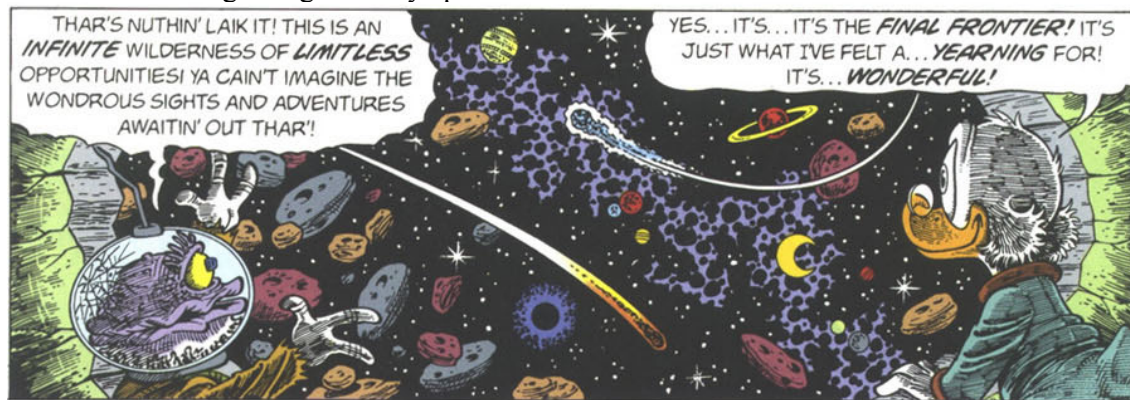


Figure 6: © Disney (Rosa 1997, #615, 8.)

Characteristic to SF, the explorations to uncharted territories of outer space can comment on the colonialist tendencies of human race, by depicting the bug-eyed aliens as Other and thus oppressed (Reid 257). However, Rosa chooses to depict the aliens as a metaphor for humans: they can be seen as equal to (white) Ducks who don’t regard the one-eyed aliens uncivilized or inferior.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the parodic and intertextual elements Disney artist Don Rosa uses in his comic “Attack of the Hideous Space-Varmints”. My aim was to discover how the comic comments the 1950s invasion films and early SF comics ironically, and analyze the visual language of comics.

Rosa’s comic parodies the features typical for 1950s SF films and comics by turning the invasion upside down. Even though SF invasion stories can be read through a colonialist agenda, the Ducks never intend to oppress the aliens they meet. Rosa drew his comic in the 1990s, and through this context colonialist and imperialist features are considered politically incorrect. As a medium, Disney comics are still mainly targeted to child audiences so their content must also be appropriate – demonizing another race or people is not acceptable¹³.

Moreover, Rosa combines SF with fantasy to produce a hybrid science fantasy which takes an ironic approach to SF genre’s conventional features, such as aliens’ appearance. The terms like “hyper drive”, “space station”, and “mothership” create a pseudo-scientific discourse typical for SF. Both the clichés in imagery and the terminology Rosa uses connect his comic to SF genre. Simultaneously, Rosa remarks the motif typical for any (SF) quest story: the longing for new adventures, because the Earth has already been discovered.

With these parodic elements, Rosa turns the reader’s gaze from the Ducks that serve as representations of humans to aliens of outer space. While doing so, Rosa uses the tropes of the early half of the 20th century science fiction ironically and contests the reader’s competence to see the ideological problems of the early imagery concerning aliens.

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¹³ This became highly relevant and topical during this year, when the Finnish publication company Sanoma Magazines started applying warning labels to those old Disney comics with politically incorrect descriptions of race, violence and such. The label reminds the (child) reader about the different era and context of the comic’s original publication date.

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Koipeliinin matka Suomeen – Miten Rodolphe Töpfferin sarjakuva *Monsieur Cryptogame* muuttui tekijättömäksi *Koipeliini*-kuvasarjaksi

Reijo Valta

Biografia ja yhteystiedot: Reijo Valta, FM, YTM. Jatko-opiskelija Jyväskylän yliopistossa. Työskentelee Oulun Sarjakuvakeskuksessa.

Kun Minerva Kustannus julkaisi vuonna 2007 Rodolphe Töpfferin *Herra Koipeliinin*, tekijöitä kiiteltiin ensimmäisen Suomessa julkaistun sarjakuvan alkuperäisen asun paljastamisesta (Pesonen; Ronkainen 7). Näin annettiin ymmärtää myös teoksen jälkisanoissa (Kivitie 71). Aivan ensimmäinen julkaistu laitos *Monsieur Cryptogamesta* ei kuitenkaan ollut suomennoksen pohjana.

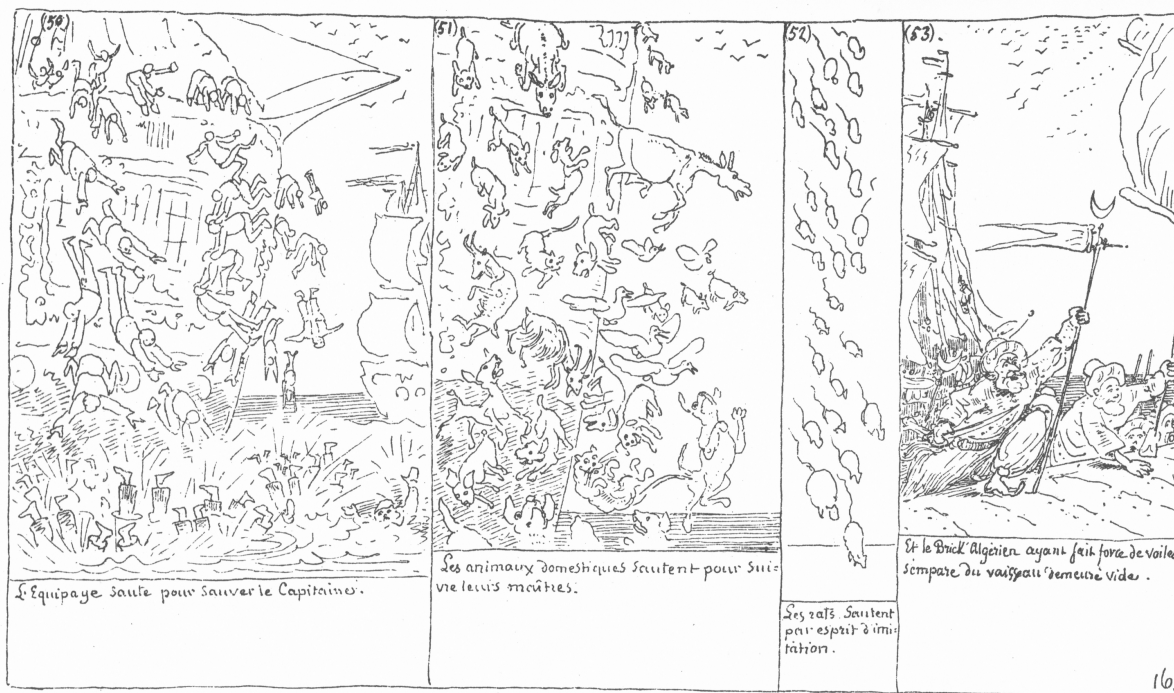
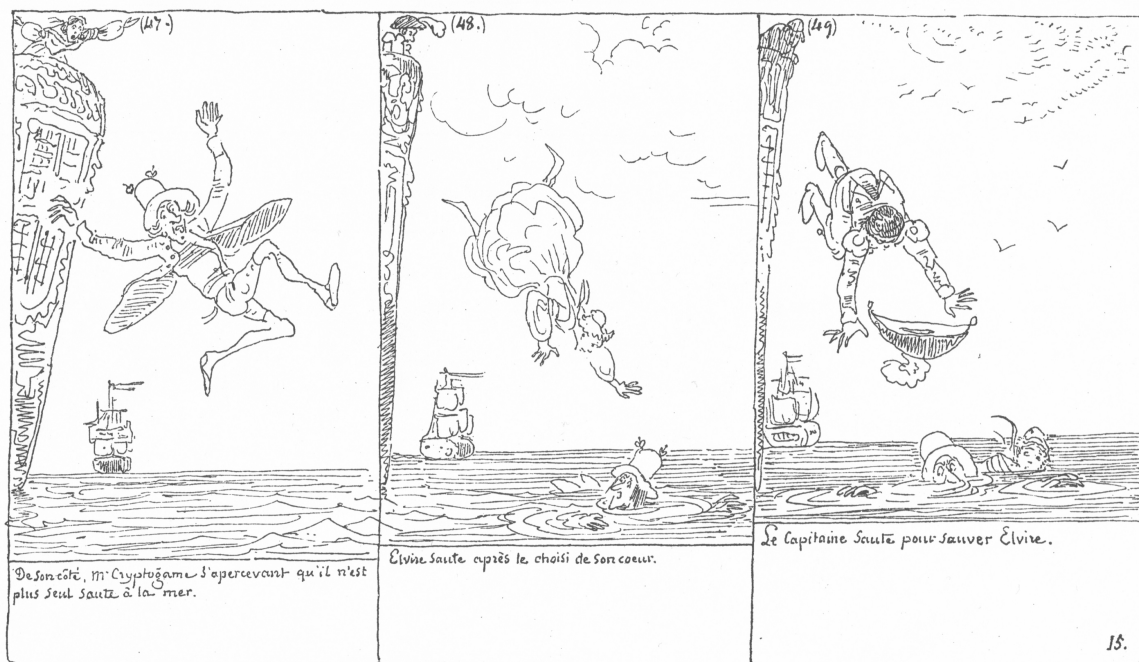
Edellinen laitos teoksesta ilmestyi vuonna 1972, kun Gummerus julkaisi teoksen *Herra Koipeliinin merkilliset matkat ja eriskummaiset kohtalot maalla ja merellä*. Alaotsikko täsmäsi kirjan herra Koipeliinin tarinan olevan ”hänen jälkeenjättämiensä paperien mukaan kerrotut ja 144 kauniilla kuvalla valaistut”. Kustannusyhtiö oli 1900-luvun mittaan ottanut teoksesta kaksi painosta, vuosina 1923 ja 1934. Gummeruksen julkaisukatalogiin kirja oli päätynyt turkulaisen kustantaja G. W. Wilénin (1835–1919) myötä. Wilén oli kustantanut teoksen vuonna 1871. Tarina oli Gummeruksen kustannuspäälliköiden mielestä säilyttänyt viehättävyytensä siinä määrin, että uusintapainoksen ottaminen kannatti siitä huolimatta, ettei julkaisusta tiedetty enää juuri mitään. Kustantaja ei tuntenut teoksen tekijää, kuvittajaa, ilmestymisvuotta, maata tai edes kielialuetta. Samana vuonna ilmestynyt Heikki Kaukorannan ja Jukka Kemppisen (toinen painos 1982) *Sarjakuvat* sentään osasi kertoa tekijän. Mainio kuvittaja oli sveitsiläinen, ranskaa äidinkielenään puhuva geneveläinen professori Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846). Kaukoranta ja Kemppinen (169) tiesivät myös kertoa, että Koipeliinia oli julkaistu vuonna 1857 *Sanomia Turusta* -sanomalehdessä ja neljänä niteenä *Lukemisia kansalle* -kirjasarjassa vuosina 1859 ja 1862 (molempina kaksi nidettä).

Kansallis- ja yliopistokirjastojen laajojen kirjojen ja sanomalehtien digitointihankkeiden myötä menneiden vuosisatojen käyttökuvakulttuuri on avautunut tutkijoille aivan uudella tavalla. Jo 1990-luvun alussa Rodolphe Töpfferin merkitystä sarjakuvan historiassa ryhdyttiin tulkitsemaan uudella tavalla (esim. McCloud; Groensteen & Peeters). Kaukoranta ja Kemppinen (29–31) kertoivat, että ennen 1990-lukua vallitsi yleinen käsitys siitä, että ”sarjakuva syntyi vuonna 1896.” Sitä aikaisempia, Töpfferiä, Gustave Doréa (1833–1883), Wilhelm Buschia (1832–1908) ja Caran d’Achea (1858–1909) he kutsuivat sarjakuvan esi-isiksi. Ensimmäiseksi oikeaksi sarjakuvaksi nimettiin Richard F. Outcaultin (1863–1928) *Yellow Kid* (suom. Keltainen kakara). Kaukoranta ja Kemppinen (31) puhuvat tajuntateollisuuden syntyvuodesta. Sarjakuvan lisäksi 1896 alkunsa sai elokuva, kaupallinen äänilevy, langaton lennätin ja jazz-musiikki. Sarjakuva visuaalisena taiteena

sopi hyvin tähän samaan niputettavaksi. Tuore suomalainen kommentti sarjakuvan ”syntyyn” oli varsin kyyninen. *Uuden Suomettaren* lisälehteen, *Juttu-Tupaan*, kirjoittanut Henry F. Urban (1898) arvioi, että Outcault ”amerikkalaiseen tapaan oli vaihteen vuoksi varastanut joltakulta muulta”. Tuoreimmat yhdysvaltalaisetkin sarjakuvan historian yleisesitykset (ks. esim. Petersen) sijoittavat taidelajin synnyn varsin kauas menneisyyteen. Töpfferin Koipeliinin julkaisuhistorian seuraaminen saattaa valaista sarjakuvan historiankirjoituksen historiassa tehtyjä tulkintoja. Se on tämän katsauksen tarkoitus.

Suomen ja Sveitsin varhaisista kirjallisista suhteista kirjoittanut Gérard Krebs on käsitellyt Töpfferiä ja Koipeliinia teoksessaan *Schweizerisch-finnische Literaturbeziehungen* (27–39) otsikolla *Monsieur Cryptogames langer Weg nach Finnland*. Samaa teemaa Krebs on käsitellyt myös artikkelissa *Kultala und Koipeliini*. Suomeksi Koipeliinista ja hänen aikalaisistaan on kirjoittanut Timo Ronkainen (7–16). Itse olen sivunnut Koipeliinin julkaisuhistoriaa Minervan *Herra Koipeliini* -albumin kirja-arvostelussa *Koipeliini ei linnusta enää – sarjakuvan matka Suomeen* (Valta).

Tuorein elämäkerta Rodolphe Töpfferistä on David Kunzlen tekemä. *Father of the Comic Strip – Rodolphe Töpffer* (2007) keskittyy erityisesti kohdehenkilön sarjakuvatuotantoon. Kunzle on julkaissut myös Töpfferin kootut sarjakuvateokset, *The Complete Comic Strips* (2007). Se sisältää kahdeksan pitkää sarjakuvaa, käsikirjoitusten katkelmia ja keskeneräiseksi jääneitä tarinan alkuja. Töpfferin kirjallinen tuotanto oli laaja-alainen; se sisälsi myös tieteellisiä kirjoituksia ja kuvitettuja matkakertomuksia. Kunzle on kuitenkin valikoinut teokseen vain selkeän sarjakuvatuotannon. Oleellista kootuissa sarjakuvissa on se, että ne on julkaistu uudelleen samassa asussa kuin Genevessä Töpfferin elinaikana. Myöhemmät julkaisut poikkeavat painoasultaan ja teksteiltään Töpfferin itse tekemistä, toiset vähemmän, toiset enemmän. Kaikkien myöhempien laitosten kuvitukset olivat muiden kuin Töpfferin tekemiä. Niin myös alussa mainitun ”alkuperäisen” Herra Koipeliinin.



Kuva 1: Genevessä 1845 julkaistun Mr. Cryptogame -autografian sivut 15–16 (Kunzle, The Complete Comic Strips 464–465).

Rodolphe Töpffer tekee sarjakuvia

Baijerista Sveitsin Geneveen muuttaneen räätälin pojanpoika Rodolphe Töpffer syntyi 31. tammikuuta 1799 (tässä kappaleessa Töpfferin elämävaiheet Kunzle, ”Preface” xiii–xv mukaan). Lukuunottamatta yhdeksän kuukauden opiskelua Pariisissa Töpffer vietti koko elämänsä synnyinkaupungissaan, mikäli lukuisia vuorikiipeilyretkiä Alpeille ei lasketa mukaan. Töpfferille kuvataiteet tulivat tutuiksi jo varhain, sillä isä Wolfgang-Adam Töpffer (1766–1847) oli tunnustettu taidemaalari. Sveitsin tultua osaksi Napoleonin valtakuntia Wolfgang-Adam Töpffer huomioitiin Pariisissa kutsumalla hänet keisarinna Josephinen opettajaksi. Pojalla oli lahjoja taidemaalariksi, mutta heikko näkökyky sai hänet hylkäämään taiteilijan uran parikymppisenä. Vuonna 1822 Töpffer aloitti opettajana. David Kunzle (*Father of the Comic Strip* 10) arvelee, että Töpffer omaksui poliittiset näkemyksensä isältään, erityisesti ääri liikkeiden vastaisuuden. Ranskan vallankumouksesta lähtien Eurooppa oli poliittisessa ja sotilaallisessa myllerryksessä. Töpfferista tapahtumat tekivät konservatiivin.

Isä tutustutti nuoren Töpfferin silloisiin sarjakuviin. Englannin matkaltaan Wolfgang-Adam Töpffer toi pojalleen William Hogarthin (1697–1764) painokuvia. Niiden vaikutus Töpfferin sarjakuviin oli suuri. Kun hän alkoi saada mainetta sarjakuvantekijänä, Töpfferiä alettiin nimittää ”Geneven Hogarthiksi” (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 57). Opettajana ollessaan Töpffer alkoi tehdä myös muille kuvia ja tekstejä yhdistäviä piirroksia. Vuonna 1823 Töpffer nai kellosepän tyttären Anne-Françoise Moulinién. Apen avustuksella hän saattoi perustaa seuraavana vuonna oman, Jean-Jacques Rousseauin kasvatusfilosofiaan perustuvan yksityisen koulukodin. Paikallisten poikien lisäksi sisäoppilaitoksessa oli oppilaita muualta Euroopasta ja Yhdysvalloista. Pitkät ekskursion Alpeille kuuluivat säännöllisenä osana koulun opetukseen. Niiden aikana Töpffer aloitti kuvitettujen matkakertomusten tekemisen, luultavimmin oppilaidensa iloksi. Aluksi ne levisivät tekijän lähipiiriin ja myöhemmin julkaisemisen jälkeen niistä tuli suosittuja erityisesti Ranskassa. Yksi tarina päätyi Suomeenkin: *Kirjallinen Kuukauslehti* julkaisi Töpfferin *Col d’Anternen* numerossaan 5/1876.

Vuonna 1827 Töpffer teki oppilaidensa viihdytykseksi uudenlaisen, mielikuvituksen tarinan. Silloin syntyi hänen ensimmäinen sarjakuvansa, *Les Amours de Mr. Vieux Bois* (”Herra Puupään rakkaudet”). Muutaman vuoden sisällä vastaavia syntyi useita ja yksi niistä oli *Mr. Cryptogame* (”Herra Salanainut”). Vuosia ne kulkivat yksittäisinä kappaleina ajan tieteellisten artikkeleiden tapaan lukijalta toiselle. Alkuvuodesta 1831 Töpffer sai kirjeen, jossa kerrottiin ”M. de Goethen havainneen luonnonystäväsi hyvin viihdyttäväksi” (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 52). Tuon ajan maailmassa ei käsikirjoitukselle olisi voinut saada parempaa suosittelijaa kuin Johann Wolfgang von Goethen (1749–1832). Tämä kiitteli tekijää ”kekseliääksi yhdistelijäksi”, joka ”muutamilla piirroksilla käsitteli lukuisia aiheita”. Myöhemmin on usein toistettu, että Goethe luki sarjakuvaa vain kymmenen sivua päivässä, ettei tarinoiden idearikkaus tuottaisi hänelle ruoansulatushäiriöitä. Goethelta saatu positiivinen palaute sai Töpfferin tekemään kaksi uutta kirjaa: kuvitetun matkakertomuksen ja *Mr. Jabot*-sarjakuvan (”Herra Röyhelö”). Uutena vuotena 1832 Goethe luki ne ja Töpfferille raportoitiin yleisneron pitäneen *Mr. Jabotista* enemmän. Seuraavana vuonna siitä tuli Töpfferin ensimmäinen julkaistu sarjakuva. Goethen ensimmäisenä lukeman *Mr. Cryptogamen* julkaiseminen venyi aina vuoteen 1845 saakka. Pääosa Töpfferin sarjakuvista syntyi vuosina 1827–1830 oppilaiden iloksi. Tuon luovan jakson tuotteita hän julkaisi 1833–1843. Ainoastaan poliittinen satiiri *Histoire d’Albert* syntyi luovan jakson jälkeen, 1840-luvulla. Albertin tarina julkaistiin Genevessä 1845 nimimerkillä Simon de Nantua. Töpffer joutui heikentyneen terveyden vuoksi luopumaan koulustaan samana vuonna. Hän kuoli kesäkuussa 1846.



Kuva 2: Chamin muokkaaman, Pariisissa 1846 julkaistun Mr. Cryptogame -albumin sivut 13–14 ([Cham]).

Mr. Cryptogame (tai vanhahtavasti Criptogame) on luonnontieteistä innostunut 35-vuotias mies, joka on kihloissa 36-vuotiaan Elviren kanssa. Morsian toivoo mahdollisimman pikaisia häitä, mutta Cryptogame epäroi edelleen, olisiko Elvire se oikea. Eksoottisten perhosten tutkiminen kiinnostaa häntä naimisiinmenoa enemmän. Vaikka Elviren painostamana Cryptogame sopii häät torstaiksi, niin hän päättää paeta Marseilleen monarkkeja metsästämään. Elvire tulee kuitenkin perässä ja tästä seuraa toinen toistaan huimempia seikkailuja. Cryptogame pakenee laivalla, joutuu valaan vatsaan ja eksoottiseen Algeriaan. Valaan vatsassa Cryptogame tulee naiseksi provencelaisen kaunottaren,

mistä Elvire ei ilahdu. Tarinan lopussa Cryptogame elelee vaimonsa kotitilalla tämän aiemmasta liitosta syntyneiden kahdeksan lapsen kanssa.

Sarjakuvien julkaisemiseen ei 1800-luvun laajasti käytössä olleilla kirjapainotekniikoilla ollut mahdollisuuksia. Kuvitetut matkakertomukset saattoi julkaista ladottuna tekstinä, jonka ohkeen liitettiin kuvasivuja. Töpfferin sarjakuvat olivat kuitenkin niin sanottuja autografisia teoksia, joiden ominaisia piirteitä ei voinut siirtää toiseen muotoon ilman, että teoksen identiteetti muuttuu. Töpfferin ja sarjakuvan onneksi Sveitsissä ja Genevessä oli omaksuttu muusta maailmasta poikkeava kirjapainomenetelmä. Geneveläiset kirjanpainajat tarjosivat autografiapainatusta, litografista menetelmää, jossa erikoispaperin avulla käsin kirjoitettu ja piirretty voitiin monistaa. Töpfferin aikaan Genevessä kirjapainot eivät käyttäneet lainkaan puuhun kaiverrettuja kuvalaattoja (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 95). Geneveläinen J. Freydidig painoi autografioina Töpfferin sarjakuvista *Histoire de Mr. Jabotin* (1833) ja kuvitetuista matkakertomuksista ainakin *Voyage à Milanin* ("Matka Milanoon", 1833) sekä *Excursion dans l'Oberlandin* ("Kierros Bernin ylämaille", 1835).

Muutamista näiden jälkeen ilmestyneistä autografioista puuttuu painopaikka. Seuraavat teokset painoi Berniin muuttaneen ja Töpfferin kanssa riitaantuneen Freydidigin (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 58) sijaan Frutiger tai Schmidt. Genevessä autografioina julkaistiin 1830-luvulla lisäksi sarjakuvat *Mr. Vieux Bois* (? , 1837), *Mr. Crepin* (Frutiger, 1837), *Le Docteur Festus* (Schmidt, [1840]) ja *Monsieur Pencil* (Schmidt, 1840). Kaksi viimeksimainittua A. Cherbuliez julkaisi myös Pariisissa samana vuonna. Ranskan kansalliskirjaston digitoiduista aineistoista käy ilmi, että ainakin Festuksen A. Cherbuliez julkaisi perinteisen kirjan muotoon muokattuna.

1830-luvun mittaan Rodolphe Töpfferistä tuli kuuluisa kotikaupungissaan. Enää hän ei ollut Wolfgang-Adam Töpfferin poika, vaan taidemaalari määriteltiin Rodolphe Töpfferin isäksi. Postikin osasi perille jo pelkällä nimellä ja kotikaupungilla (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 3). Matkakertomukset Alpeilta ja sarjakuvat olivat tehneet Töpfferistä paikallisen, Pariisissakin huomioidun nimekkään miehen.

IV. Wie Herr Steckelbein ins Wasser springt und was darauf erfolgt.



Ursel kommt in Saus und Braus —
Steckelbein reißt furchtjam aus,
Stredet aus die langen Bein',
Springt gerad' ins Wasser 'nein:
Plump! Da liegt er tief im Meer!
Ursel schreiet hinterher.



In der Fern' ein Schiff er sieht,
Dahin er voll Schreden flieht.
Ursula ruft Weh' und Ach,
Springet ihm verzweifelt nach:
Plump! Man sieht den Capitän
Mit dem Fernrohr oben stehn.



Capitän erblickt's mit Graus,
Will die Ursel ziehn heraus,
Stürzt mit Degen und mit Hut
Wild sich in die salz'ge Flut:
Plump! Da sah der Steuermann
Von dem Schiff den Spaß mit an.

IV. Wie Herr Steckelbein ins Wasser springt und was darauf erfolgt.



Springt gleich auch ins Meer hinein,
All' Matrosen hinterdrein,
Weil sie ihren Capitän
In das Wasser springen sehn
Plump, plump, plump! — Es strecken sich
Beine luftwärts graufiglich.



Auch die Thiere auf dem Schiff
Springen in das Wasser tief.
Plump! Da liegen Hund und Kat',
Bock und Pferd und Vogelmaß,
Mäus' und Ratten zaudern nicht —
Alles in dem Wasser liegt.

Kuva 3: Leipzigissä 1847 julkaistun, Julius Kellin riimittelemän version sivut 12–13 (Kell).

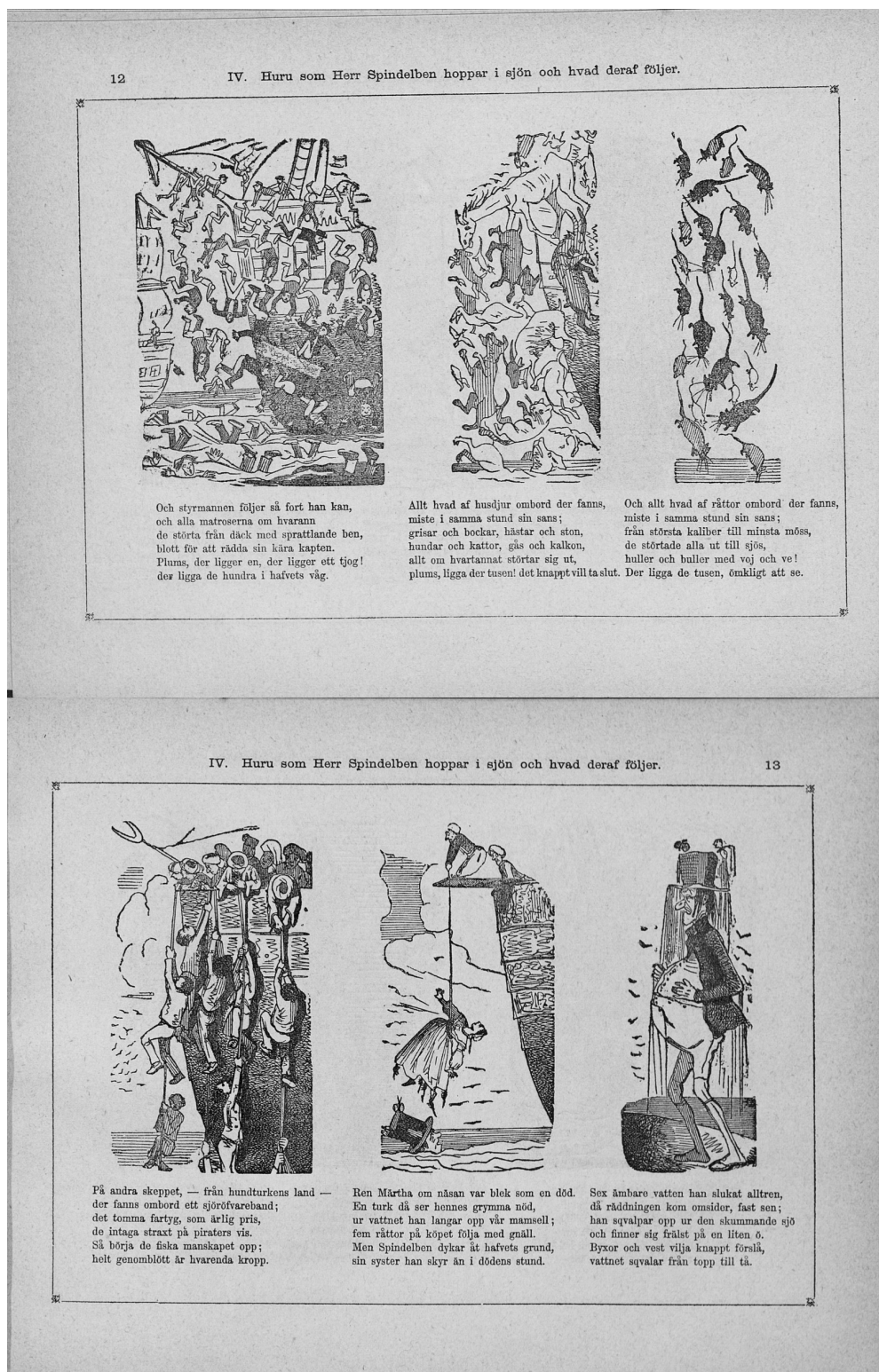
Sarjakuvat leviävät maailmalle

1800-luvun kustannusmaailmassa kustantajan, kirjapainon omistajan ja kirjakauppiiaan roolit eivät olleet eriytyneet toisistaan. Myös kirjailijan ja kustantajan väliset suhteet rakentuivat henkilökohtaisin sopimuksin. Töpffer riitautui kirjanpainaja J. Freydingin kanssa teosten laatuun ja levittämiseen liittyvien kysymysten vuoksi. Töpffer katsoi, että Freyding oli rikkonut sopimuksen päästämällä kirjan levitykseen ennen kirjailijan lopullista hyväksyntää (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 58). Nämä ongelmat olivat pieniä verrattuna niihin, mitä maineen kasvaminen toi mukanaan. Vuonna 1839 pariisilainen Aubert & Co julkaisi laitoksen *Mr. Vieux Boisista* kysymättä lainkaan lupaa tekijältä, eikä tuo ollut ensimmäinen tai viimeinen kerta. Sveitsin kansalliskirjaston digitoima kappale paljastaa, ettei teos ole lähtenyt Töpfferin kynästä. Erityisesti kaunokirjoitus paljastaa piirtäjän olleen joku muu. Samana vuonna Genevessä Töpfferin valvonnassa julkaistussa laitoksessa kuvitus on runsaampi ja elävämpi. Piraattiversio huomioitiin siis tekemällä uusi Töpfferin versio, ”Seconde Edition”, toinen painos. Ranskassa digitoitu Aubert & Co:n piraattipainos paljastaa, että litografiapainossa yritettiin matkia autografista painotapaa. Paperin samalle puolelle painettiin kaksi kuvaa ja ne taitettiin ja liimattiin yhdeksi kirjan lehdeksi (Töpffer *Histoire de Mr Crépin*).

Koulumestarin tehtävien ja vuodesta 1832 hoitamansa yliopiston professuurin vuoksi Töpffer palasi sarjakuviinsa seuraavan kerran vasta vuonna 1842. Välissä *Mr. Vieux Bois* oli ylittänyt Atlantin; New Yorkissa Timothy Crayon muuttanut Töpfferin hahmon *Mr. Obadiah Oldbuck*iksi. Valmiista sarjakuvista oli julkaisematta enää Goethen kehuma, joskin kepeänä pitämä *Mr. Cryptogame*. Goethen arvio oli julkaistu vuonna 1832 yleisneron kuoleman jälkeen. Töpffer aloitti neuvottelut julkaisemisesta serkkunsa, pariisilaista kustantamoa pyörittävän Jacques-Julien Dubochetin kanssa, joka suunnitteli perustavansa uuden kuvalehden nimeltä *L'Illustration*. Pariisissa sarjakuvaa ei kuitenkaan voitu painaa lehteen autografiana ja Töpffer itse ei heikon näkönsä vuoksi voinut painon vaatimia puukaiverruksien pohjatöitä tehdä. Uudelleenpiirtäjäksi valittiin ranskalainen pilapiirtäjä Cham (Amédée de Noé, 1818–1879), joka oli jo osoittanut taitonsa Töpfferin imitoijana. Töpffer yritti kirjeitse ohjeistaa Chamia ja puukaiverrusten tekijöitä mahdollisimman tarkasti (Kunzle, *Father of the Comic Strip* 95-99). Silti Töpfferin letkeä, elävä viiva jäykistyi ja rytmitys muuttui kuvien kääntyessä peilikuviksi. Työ oli välttämätön, jotta teos saatiin mukaan lehteen. Laajalevikkisen lehden painaminen kahdella eri tekniikalla ei tullut kyseeseen. Sarjakuva ilmestyi *L'Illustrationissa* 25.1.–19.4.1843. Se oli välitön menestys ja sai paljon jäljittelijöitä. Dubochet julkaisi tarinan kirjana vuonna 1846. Genevessä Schmidt julkaisi *Mr. Cryptogamen* autografiana vuonna 1845.

Chamin *Mr. Cryptogame* levisi laajemmalle kuin Töpfferin aikaisemmat sarjakuvat. Leviämiseen vaikutti tutumpi kirjapainotekniikka, jonka tuotosta oli helpompi kopioida ja muunnella omiin tarpeisiin. Tekijänoikeudet olivat useissa maissa tunnettu asia, mutta ennen Bernin sopimusta (1883) niillä ei ollut vaikutusta maiden rajojen yli. Vuonna 1837 saksankieliset valtiot pyrkivät yhteiseen tekijänoikeuskäytäntöön, mutta hanke kaatui (ks. esim. Höffner). Vuonna 1839 Töpfferillä ei ollut aseita esimerkiksi Aubert & Co:ta vastaan. Nykyisen Saksan alueella 1800-luvulla julkaistut Töpfferin sarjakuvateokset ovat kadonneet bibliografioihin ja niiden kartoitus onkin vielä kesken. Joidenkin tunnettujen kopioiden metatietoihin on kuitenkin kirjattu alkuperäinen tekijä. Osa kustantajista itse kertoi teoksissa avoimesti alkuperäisen tekijän saksankielisen laitoksen tekijän rinnalla. Näin toimi esimerkiksi Leipzigissa toiminut Brockhaus & Avenarius vuonna 1847. Myöhemmin pelkäksi F. A. Brockhausiksi muuttunut kustantaja otti Julius Kellin (1813–1849) *Herrn Steckelbein*iksi nimeämästä *Mr. Cryptogamesta* lukuisia uusintapainoksia; vuonna 1919 tehty on kirjattu jo 11. painokseksi. Vuoden 1865 painoksen Münchenin digitointikeskus on muuttanut sähköiseen muotoon. Sen perusteella Kell on ottanut teoksen suhteen suuria vapauksia.

Tunnettu saksilainen pedagogi Julius Kell muokkasi Chamin *Mr. Cryptogamen* lastenkirjaksi. Hän sijoitti kaiverretut kuvat uudelleen ja kirjoitti niiden alle loppusointuihin riimitellyt runot. Jos koulumestari Töpfferin ajatuksena oli opastaa opettamiaan poikia astumaan aikuiselämään reippain askelin vastakkaisella esimerkillä, niin Kellin ajatus oli toinen. Jo alkuasetelma on kokonaan erilainen: pitkään kihloissa olleen parin sijasta pääosassa ovat Steckelbein (”tikkujalka”) ja hänen siskonsa Ursula. Yhteistä Steckelbeinille ja Cryptogamelle oli intohimoinen perhosten keräily. Steckelbein saa siskonsa vihat päälleen päättäessään muuttaa Amerikkaan. Ursula pakottaa veljensä lupaamaan, ettei hän lähde, mutta tämä karkaa salaa ja saa siskon peräänsä. Kellin versiossa Steckelbein saa Barbaran vaimokseen . Petetty aviolupaus on siis jätetty tarinasta pois.



Kuva 4: Ruotsissa julkaistun Spindelbenin sivut 12–13 ([Töpffer, Rodolphe], Herr Spindelbens märkvärdiga irrfärder och sällsamma äfventyr till lands och vatten).

Koipeliini omillaan

Nykyisin Suomen kansallisbibliografiaa selaavan ei tarvitse ihmetellä mistä *Herra Koipeliinin* kaltainen kirja on Suomeen päätynyt. Täydennetyt bibliografiset tiedot kertovat ensimmäisen painoksen olevan julkaistu *Lukemisia Kansalle*-sarjassa vuosina 1859–1862. Alkuteokseksi mainitaan Göteborgissa vuonna 1847 julkaistu *Herr Spindelbens märkvärdiga irrfärder och sällsamma äfventyr till lands och vatten*. Jo päähenkilön nimestä voi päätellä alkuteoksen olevan Julius Kellin riimittämä *Steckelbein* (Spindelben ~ Risujalka). Ruotsin kuninkaallinen kirjasto on digitoinut *Spindelbenin* ensimmäisen painoksen vuodelta 1847. Kirjastossa on tarkennettu nimiösivujen tietoja lyijykynällä. Kuvakertojaksi merkitty Jockum Trädsnidare on selvennetty R. Töpfferiksi ja teoksen tehdyn ”efter Tyskan af C. J. Kell” eli Leipzigin *Steckelbenin* mukaan. Ruotsin kuninkaallisen kirjaston bibliografisten tietojen mukaan *Spindelben* olisi painettu Kööpenhaminassa, jossa samaan aikaan julkaistiin myös tanskankielinen, Tanskan ja Norjan markkinoille tarkoitettu painos. *Herr Stankelbeens mærkværdige Reiser og selsomme Eventyr til Lands og Vands* on nimiösivun mukaan Jochum Træsniderin kuvittama. Ruotsintaja Orvar Odd (Oskar Patrick Sturzen-Becker, 1811–1869) ja tanskantaja Lars Riimsmed (Vincens Strøm, 1818–1899) ovat ehkä tehneet yhteistyötä, sillä kuvittajan nimi on molemmissa laitoksissa sama. Toki on mahdollista, että jossakin Pohjois-Saksan alueella on tehty piraattipainos Kellin *Steckelbenistä*, jonka kuvittajaksi on laitettu Joachim Holzschnitzer. Molempien teksti kulkee samaan tapaan kuin Kellin riimittelyt.

Töpfferin autografia, Chamin *Mr. Cryptogame*, Kellin *Steckelbein* ja Oddin *Spindelben* olivat ulkoasultaan vaaka-albumeja. Sen sijaan tanskalais-norjalainen *Stankelbeen* on tyypillisempi kirja, sivun korkeus on leveyttä suurempi. Kullakin sivulla on vain yksi tai kaksi kuvaa ja niiden alla riimittely. Suomalainen J. W. Lilljan kustantama *Koipeliinin linnustus* muistuttaa ulkoasultaan enemmän *Stankelbeen*ia kuin ruotsalaista laitosta. Ulkoasuratkaisut ovat kuitenkin saattaneet syntyä toisistaan riippumatta. J. W. Lilljan *Sanomia Turusta* julkaisi *Koipeliinin* palstojen sisään taitettuna, ja tarina jäi lehdessä kesken. Ainoastaan yksi jakso oli kahdessa palstassa, koska valittu kuva oli palstaa leveämpi. Sarjakuvamaisuus katosi lähes kokonaan tällaisessa taitossa. Lilljan kirjapainossa ei tehty lehteen sivua tai paikkaa sarjakuville kuten esimerkiksi *L'Illustrationissa*. Suomalainen lehdistö ylipäätään oli visuaalisesti kovin köyhää. Ensimmäinen toimitukselliseen aineistoon kuuluva kuva julkaistiin suomalaisessa lehdistössä 11. tammikuuta 1837. *Suomettaressa* kolmen vuoden aikana 1850–1852 julkaistiin yhteensä kaksitoista kuvaa (Mervola 70–73). Koska *Lukemisia kansalle* -sarjan tarkoituksena oli tuottaa tavallisille ihmisille edullista luettavaa, *Koipeliinin linnustuksen* ulkoasuun ei panostettu. Se tehtiin samoilla sapluunoilla kuin kirjasarjan muutkin teokset.

Lilljan julkaisemissa suomennoksissa Koipeliini ei enää harrastanut perhosten keräilyä tai tutkimista. Hän oli ehta kaupunkilainen, jolla ei ollut hajuakaan luonnosta tai maaseudun asioista. Koipeliini luulee perhosta metsäkanalinnuksi ja ryntää siksi haavin kanssa sen perään haaveillen suurista tuloista. Sisko Hurja raivostuu veljensä tyhmyydestä ja koettaa estää tämän laajemmat linnustusretket. Valaskalan vatsassa Koipeliini nai Liisan, mutta vaimon aikaisemmista lapsista suomalaiset lukijat saivat tietää vasta vuonna 1871 Lilljan oppilaan G. W. Wilénin jo ollessa kirjapainon johdossa.

Koipeliinin linnustuksen suomentaja oli Hämeenlinnan lyseon historian opettaja G. E. Eurén (1818–1872) (Kuivasmäki 147). Hän on luonut saamiinsa kuviin omaperäisen aloituksen eikä seurannut alkuteoksen tekstiä. Suomentaja on myös hylännyt loppusointuisen riimittelyn ja luottanut suorasanaiseen kerrontaan. *Koipeliinin linnustuksen* hän aloitti näin: ”Herra Koipeliini ei ollut vielä koskaan kaupungin tullista uloskäynyt, mutta torilla hän oli nähnyt talonpoikain lintuja kaupitsevan ja itsekin maistanut niiden lihaa.”

Julius Kellin Steckelbeinin pohjalta syntyi käännös Pohjoismaiden lisäksi ainakin Alankomaissa. Groningenissa julkaistiin 1858 teos *De avonturen van mijnheer Prikkebeen*. Tähän teokseen liittyy paradoksi, jollaiseen käännöskirjallisuudessa ilman riittäviä tietoja saatetaan joutua. J. J. A. Goeverneurin (1809–1889) riimittämä *Prikkebeen* käännettiin ranskaksi vuonna 1970 nimellä *Voyages et aventures de Monsieur Maigrichon* (Krebs, *Schweizerisch-finnische Literaturbeziehungen* 32). Näin herra Salanaineesta tuli käännöskierroksen myötä herra Luiseva. Teoksen suomalaista laitosta ei tietävästi ole käännetty muille kielille.

Suomalaiset lukijat pääsivät tutustumaan Töpfferin alkuperäiseen ajatuksenjuoksuun alussa mainitun Chamin *Herra Koipeliinin* myötä. Kaikkien muiden muutosten mukana paljastui yksi suomalaisille ominainen lokalisointi: teen sijaan vanha suomalainen Koipeliini joi kahvia. Vanhan laitoksen suomentaja Eurén laati teokseen suoranaisen kahvin ylistyksen (Töpffer *Koipeliinin linnustus* 13):

Sen höyry, sen lemu, sen maku lannistaa röyhkeyden, lievittää murheen, poistaa pelon ja vapistuksen. Se panee kaikki voimat uuteen toimintaan ja elämään. ”Eläköön kahvi iankaikkisesti!” huudahti Koipeliini rohkaistuneena. (Töpffer *Koipeliinin linnustus* 13)

Kanteleen ikipäiviksi kadottanut, makasi sairaana eikä kukaan taitanut arvata kuinka kovaasi taudin kohtaus taitaisi olla. Muukalaiset väittivät keskenänsä kiivaasti. Vitempi heistä ei saattanut muuta kuin soimata toverinsa tyhmyyttä kanteleen rikkomiseensa.

”Minä tahdon,” sanoi tämä, ”selittää aikomukseni ja lopussa kiitos seisoo. Minä havaitsin kohta että tuo armas neito merkittävästi oli sidottu kanteleen ja sen kautta ylkävainaanansa, jonka hän kirkkoisuuksensa luuli häntä puhuttelevan kanteleen kielellä. Tämä yhteys kuoleen ystävän ja hänen välillä oli ratkaistava, muutoin ei hän ajatustensa olisi taitanut siitä erota koko elinkautensa. Nyt on hänen eroaminen, vaikka se kyllä sydämen kipua tekee. Mutta parantaja ei saa katsoa nykyistä ja hetken aikaisista kypua, jos hän tahtoo hengen pelastaa. Niin olen minä tehnyt. Minä olen kovanla kädellä ratkaissut siten hänen ja vainaan välillä; itsensä on nyt parannus tuleva. Ja jos en ole määrin huomannut, näen minä ettei tämä pappi ole varsin kyllä häntä kohtaan. Parempi on että neito sitoo itsensä elävään ihmiseen kuin kuolleen. Segin tulee varsin itsensä.” Kääntäin itsensä apulaisen puoleen lisäsi hän: ”minä olen vakuutettu että te taidatte tehdä hänen niin onnelliseksi kuin hän ansaitsee.”

Loittua ja puhuttua lähti kansa vähitellen kotiinsa ja muukalaiset matkaansa.

10.

Soka oli kanteleen rikki lyönyt, hänellä oli oikeus. Pari viikkoa makasi Selma vuoteen omana, mutta toipui sitte täydellisesti ja rupesi elämään raittiin ihmisen tavalla. Seuraava kirje selittää mitä lusia ehkä vielä tahvoiksi tietää:

”Rakas welseni! Monet ovat ihmisen vaihetukset tällä lyhyen elämän reffellä; mutta toivon herra ne kaikki parhaaksi kääntää. Sen olen minä runsaasti saanut tuta ja tuntea. Tiedäthän minun aikomukseni Amerikkaan lähtä saadakseni vapaasti waijuttaa. Se kääntyi niin että minä pian sain oman kappalaisen wiran ja waijutusilaa kyllä; päivä päivältä havaitsen että minä tarvitsin kymmenen kertaa enemmän woiimia kuin minulla on. Minä olisin jo nääntynyt, jos ei minun rakas puolisoni, minun Selmani, olisi sekä työllä että rukouksilla apunani. Ihmeelliset ovat Herran tiet, sanomme usein yhdessä muistellesamme Hänen ihmeitensä meitä kohtaan. Pikku Waino, meidän eskoisemme, rupee jo puhumaan; ah kuinka fuloista eikä ole kuin saan hänelle jutella kaikesta siitä hyvydestä ja niistä ihmeistä, joita Jumala on hänen wanhemmilensa tehnyt. Toivon sen kautta herättäväni hänen ajatustensa hänen oman elämänsä puoleen ja siinä havaitsemaan ijanlakkisen wiisauden ja woiiman waijuttuksia eikä niitä kaukaa hakemaan. Se on tekevä hänen mielensä tujaksi ettei hän kohta kaadu kuin ensipuuksa puhaltua.”

Koipeliinin linnustus.

Herra Koipeliini ei ollut koskaan vielä ulkona kaupungin tullista käynyt; torilla oli hän nähnyt talonpoikain lintuja kaupitsevan ja itekin maistanut niiden lihaa.

Sentähden teki hän jalon ja mokoman päätöksen. »Minä teetan lipon ja lähden maalle,» sanoi hän; »lipolla otan minä kaikki linnut, metsot, teeret, pyyt, harakat, huh-



kajat ja jänekset. Vai onko jänes lintu? No olkoon kuinka hyvänsä; kaikki minä otan. Mitä tyhmit talonpojat linnuilla tekevät? Kaupunkiin he niitä kumminki tuovat.»

Koipeliini tuli ulos tullista ja näki perhosen; »kah tuo, tuo, on ensimmäinen,» huusi hän ja rupesi täyttä vauhtia sitä takaa ajamaan, että sääret salamoitsivat ja koivet koukkuun kävivät.



Kuva 5: Ensimmäinen jakso Koipeliinin linnustusta, sivu 2 ([Töpffer, Rodolphe], ”Koipeliinin linnustus”).

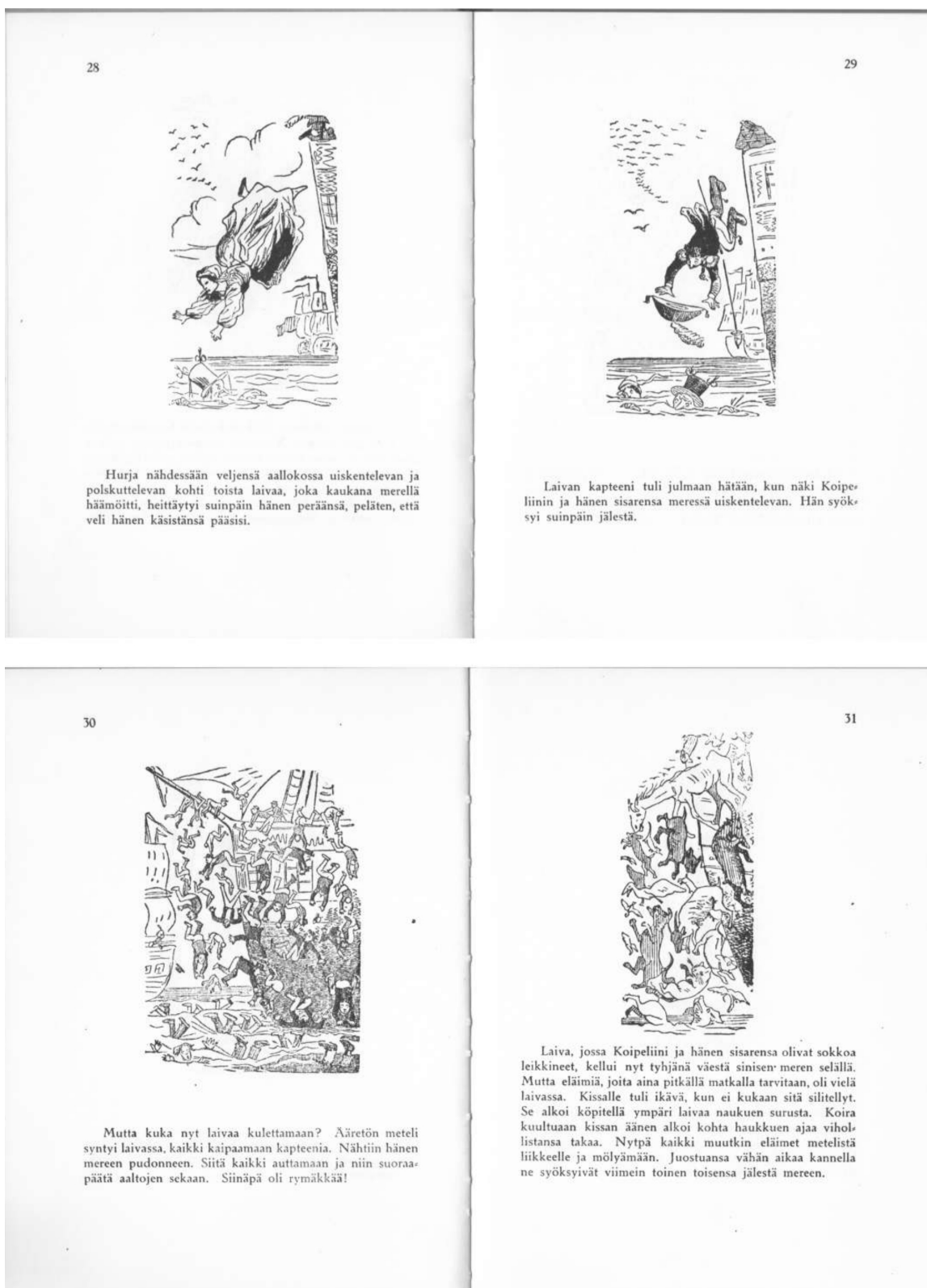
Pitkän matkan vaikutukset

Suomessa julkaistu *Herra Koipeliini* oli monien vaiheiden tulosta. Kuvat muuttuivat puupiirroksiksi pariisilaisen kustantajan vaatimuksesta. Sveitsin ulkopuolella autografiaa käytettiin kirjapainomenetelmänä vain satunnaisesti ja kukin kustantaja käytti niitä laitteita, joihin se oli itse investoinut. Yhden tai muutaman julkaisun vuoksi ei vaihtoehtoisia laitteistoja hankittu. Sarjakuvalla taidemuotona tämä yritystalouden realiteetti oli tuhoisa. Vasta 1890-luvulla käyttöönotetut kirjapainotekniikan uudistukset mahdollistivat sarjakuvan levittämisen runsaspainoksisissa laajan yleisön medioissa. Siltä osin sarjakuvan on perusteltua sanoa olevan osa laajempaa Kemppisen ja Kaukorannan (31) määrittelemän ”tajuntateollisuuden” syntyä.

Uudenlaisen, perinteisemmän kasvatusteorian periaatteiden mukaan laaditun tekstin *Herra Koipeliini* sai Leipzigin. Moraalikysymykset otettiin huomioon ja arveluttava käytös malli muutettiin hyväksyttävämmäksi. Kasvatuksellisten kysymysten lisäksi muutoksiin saattoi vaikuttaa Euroopassa laajasti käytössä olleen ennakkosensuurin huomioiminen. Kustantaja ja kirjoittaja eivät halunneet antaa sensorille aiheita huomautuksiin. Korjaaminen olisi teettänyt lisätyötä. Teksti sai samalla loppusointuisen riittelyn.

Kustantajat Göteborgissa ja Kööpenhaminassa katsoivat, että *Herra Koipeliinin* kaltaiseen humoristiseen kirjaan sopisivat hauskat tekijänimimerkit. Niin Rodolphe Töpffer muuttui Jockum Trädsnidareksi. Suomen Turussa puolestaan katsottiin, ettei kuvittaja- tai suomentajatietoja tarvita ollenkaan. Suomen sanomalehdistössä 1800-luvulla oli yleisenä tapana julkaista jutut nimettöminä. Suomen piirit olivat pienet ja kirjoittajat tunnistettiin pääsääntöisesti muutenkin. Niinpä Jockum Trädsnidare ei muuttunut Jaakkima Puunveistäjäksi. Pohjoismaisten kustantajien ratkaisuun on saattanut vaikuttaa myös se, että ”Rudolf” Töpffer tunnettiin jo matkakirjailijana. Heinrich Zschokken (1771–1848) saksaksi kääntämät Töpfferin matkakirjat olivat päätyneet ruotsinkielisinä versioina Itämeren pohjoisemmille rannoille (Krebs, *Schweizerisch-finnische Literaturbeziehungen* 28).

Suomentaja lehtori Eurén otti tekstin alkuasetelman suhteen vielä suurempia vapauksia kuin välikäännösten tekijät. Intohimoisesta perhoskeräilijästä tuli tyhmä kaupunkilainen, joka ei edes tunne kyseistä hyönteistä. Moni Töpfferin käsikirjoittama asia paljastui suomalaisille lukijoillekin vasta vuonna 2007. Tekijän oma kynänjälki, alkuperäinen viiva, on suomalaisilta vielä näkemättä. Tuoreimman käännöksen kuvitus on Chamin tekemä. On siis olemassa vielä ”alkuperäisempi” *Koipeliini*-julkaisu, vuonna 1845 Genevessä julkaistu autografia. Ehkä joku päivä näemme senkin suomeksi.



Kuva 6: Gummeruksen vuonna 1972 julkaiseman Herra Koipeliinin sivut 28–31 ([Töpffer, Rodolphe], Herra Koipeliinin merkittävät matkat ja erikummaiset kohtalot maalla ja merellä: hänen jälkeenhjättämiensä paperien mukaan kerrotut ja 144 kauniilla kuvalla valaistut, valaistut).

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Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

journal.finfar.org

Lectio praecursoria:

The Cowboy Politics of an Enlightened Future: History, Expansionism, and Guardianship in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction

Jari Käkälä

Jari Käkälä (PhD) defended his dissertation The Cowboy Politics of an Enlightened Future: History, Expansionism, and Guardianship in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction at the University of Helsinki, Finland on the 9th of September, 2016. This essay is a slightly edited version of the lectio praecursoria given by Käkälä before the defense. Käkälä's dissertation can be read at the e-thesis service: <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/166004>

Keywords: Golden Age science fiction, frontier, guardianship, history, Isaac Asimov, John W. Campbell, Jr.

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Isaac Asimov once said in an interview:

Every SF story describes a certain, particular change and decides whether it's for the better or the worse. . . . SF teaches that there are numerous changes and that mankind by its actions can pick and choose among them. We should choose one which is for the better. (Ingersoll 76)

In Asimov's own view, he was trying to not only write engaging fiction with imaginative visions of future but to help the humankind itself toward a better future. This reliance on the power of science fiction, which for Asimov rises from a reliance on science, becomes the key to understanding his work.

Isaac Asimov came to be one of the central writers of the 1940s to 1950s formative period of American science fiction. One of the key characteristics of his work is the emphasis on the genre's societal and political importance. Although his science fiction is nearly always set in the distant future, Asimov imagines the same kind of power games and technocratic approaches to society that both American and global politics saw in the aftermath of the Second World War, and at the beginning of the Cold War. What is more, Asimov's work consistently draws on an understanding of history to explain where these developments emerge from.

In terms of research, Asimov is so much an acknowledged classic of the genre that science fiction scholarship has for long taken his work as something of a self-evident part of the genre's history, something that is always mentioned but rarely discussed. On its own part, my study seeks to bring attention back to Asimov's work by examining the themes of history, frontier expansionism, and guardianship in his key works, the *Robot* and the *Foundation* series. By doing this, I also analyze Asimov's influence on the genre of science fiction at a time when it began to distance itself from the poor reputation of pulp fiction and refine its key tropes and themes. So while my study is about the development of Isaac Asimov's science fiction, it is also about the development of the genre itself – and the political climate of United States before and during the Cold War.

When Asimov started writing in the 1940s, pulp magazines were the main American medium of the genre, publishing fiction where science rarely provided more than a topical backdrop for the rather formulaic action-adventure plots. The so-called Golden Age of American science fiction (commonly thought to extend from 1938 to the 1950s) came to refine this, developing into an era of great activity where the motifs of science fiction began taking their modern shape. A key figure in this development, and a crucial influence for Asimov, was the editor of *Astounding Science-Fiction* magazine, John W. Campbell, Jr. Publishing also most of Asimov's central works, under Campbell's editorship *Astounding* became the most prestigious outlet of the genre and sought to publish stories that were more firmly based on actual science and considerations of how scientific advance might affect the society.

While also the literary quality of magazine science fiction improved under Campbell's reign, it is important to note that the respectability of science fiction that Asimov and Campbell were striving for was not about artistic merit, but about the scientific relevance, the content, of their speculations. Campbell emphasized the thought-experiment nature of science fiction and saw it as the literature for the "Technological Era" which understands that

change is the natural order of things, that there are goals ahead larger than those we know.
That the motto of the technical civilization is true: There must be a better way of doing this.
(Campbell xiii)

Together with a strong sense of science fiction as literature of ideas, this desire to find a better way becomes a key point in Asimov's work. Following these notions, I examine the view of the world that they promote.

My research began with Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, nowadays considered a canonic work of science fiction. Set some 20,000 years in the future, Asimov's series narrates the fall of an Old Galactic Empire and the establishment of another empire in its place. This movement of rebuilding and cultural revival takes place through the Foundation, a scientific community which is exiled to the outskirts of the Empire at the beginning of the story. It is an episodic story, originally published as a serial in eleven issues of *Astounding* over the time of nine years, from 1942 to 1950. Almost every story employs different characters and takes place at a different time period of Asimov's fictional galaxy, creating a sense observing the large movements of the flow of history, but also turning the stories into dramatized thought-experiments, each building on or challenging the previous one (see also Delany 223–227).

Also Asimov's *Robot* series, the other major part of my material in this study, is episodic by its nature. The robot stories begin as problem-solving where engineers have to disentangle practical issues with the robots while using them as tools for space exploration. By this narrative formula, also these stories become repeated thought-experiments, examining the logic consequences of the programming and safeguards built into the robots. Gradually, however, also the robot stories and novels develop into a narrative of social engineering and human expansion into space. Asimov's 1980s novels, then, combine the *Robot* and *Foundation* series into one fictional world, seeking to create a unified narrative of the future history of humanity.

Thus, the fact that Asimov's series seemed to be pervaded by a sense of history provided the first major theme for my examination. To address this question, I studied how Asimov roots his series in history by deliberately giving it the appearance of historical fiction, but more importantly also by its content which transmits an urgent need to understand history in order to construct a future. I found this to be visible even on the level of his characters who are often acutely aware of their historical moment and able to use this awareness to assume control of society and steer it in the desired direction. Although Asimov (1920–1992) saw himself as writing “social science fiction,” which portrays the effects of changes on the level of entire societies, his stories frequently depict powerful individuals engaged in constant battles of intellect and problem-solving, progressing from one crisis to another. This leads to stories ruled by meritocracy and social Darwinism, reinforcing the view that history is made by back-room deals and manipulations that bypass democratic processes at moments of crisis.

A key societal crisis in Asimov's series is the stagnation of humankind, and his characters' understanding of history also presents them with a very American method of frontier expansion to solve this crisis. Indeed, my second finding in this study was that much of Asimov's work seems to draw on the history of American expansionism and the ideology of Manifest Destiny – and that the frontier notion is present also on the level of Asimov's characters who are often fusions of historically aware leaders and cowboy heroes of popular westerns. To be sure, transferring the imagery of American frontier expansion to space adventures was an established convention already by the 1940s when Asimov began his series. Even as Golden Age science fiction entailed a better understanding of the metaphorical potential of the frontier, it was still rooted in the popular conception of the frontier – which is evident in Asimov's work. Despite his Enlightenment ideals and explicit use of historical models, Asimov's works exhibit the popular glorification of frontier character types – alongside with power politics of the 1940s and 1950s. This is also where my study gets the cowboy politics of enlightenment in its title. However, what Asimov and other Golden Age science fiction authors did with these frontier notions was more than a mere transposition from the Arizona desert to imaginary Mars colonies. As I argue, these authors developed the common frontier action-adventure story tropes by shifting the focus from physical to intellectual action, and as a result the hero of Golden Age science fiction became a metaphorical version of the lone gunman: a scientist, or a politician, a problem-solving engineer who takes justice into his own hands. As a hero of intellectual action, he uses words, knowledge, and his quick mind instead of fast guns, and bypasses conventional democratic procedure in order to defend the crowd.

However, such heroics also bring up concerns of authoritarianism. On their part, Asimov's metaphorical cowboy heroes prove how uncomfortably similar the archetypal American hero may be to a tyrant when he becomes an administrator instead of just saving the villagers and riding off into the sunset.

The paternalist tones, and the way Asimov's characters use their knowledge of history to steer humankind into new frontier expansion, lead also to guardianship, the third and final theme of my study. In this context, I take *guardianship* to mean the constant management of the course of humankind by enlightened heroes or other entities in society as they take power over masses, and I find it to form a bridge from Asimov's 1940s and 1950s works to his 1980s work. Indeed, as most of Asimov's science fiction searches for the “better way of doing this,” in the course of his series he tries out numerous ways of ensuring the survival of humankind – and relies on the power of science, and Enlightenment-inspired ideals of applying new knowledge to better steer the world. At the same time, the vision of an enlightened guardianship becomes intertwined with paternalist views, and the solutions tested by Asimov's series reflect the pragmatic ethos of Campbell's Golden Age science fiction. Recurrently, the attempts to achieve the greatest good for all humanity in Asimov's series result in utilitarian management of humankind and an approach where a good end result justifies even rather questionable means. Asimov's stories frequently find that managing the society causes

constant tension and resentment because of limiting individual freedom, but instead of calls for democracy they frequently end at the notion that the guardianship must remain secret and outside the society itself. What is more, the power elites that Asimov depicts are often revealed to be controlled by even more concealed power elites, creating worlds that consist of layers of hidden control, elitism, and meritocracy.

Still, even as Asimov's work exhibits cynicism about human societies and their dynamics – it seems to be cynicism only about the existing world, not what it could be. In the end, in all its optimistic reliance on science and a very American sense of pragmatic problem-solving, Asimov's work hangs on the ultimately idealistic hope that someday humankind might possess enough knowledge and understanding – some of it perhaps gathered also through science fiction – to be able to avoid old mistakes and choose a future “which is for the better.” Thus, the goal in much of Asimov's fiction seems to be the utopia of a stable but self-rejuvenating society, a move from a history of conflict towards a sustainable peace. And it is this belief in constant progress, together with the fundamental optimism about the ability of science to engineer a better future that is present in much of Golden Age science fiction. As also my study demonstrates, this is not always unproblematic and sometimes the Golden Age engineer's intellectual enjoyment at finding a solution to the task at hand seems to overshadow all ethical considerations. This can be seen also in Asimov's work. While the enormous scale of Asimov's fictional galaxy full of people makes it a good abstract thought-experiment, that experiment is in danger of losing sight of its most important component: the humans that are being steered. As a result, the drive to build the best possible society that provides greatest good for as many as possible frequently clashes in Asimov's fiction with the notion of individualism, thus also highlighting the tensions in the American technocratic and authoritarian impulses.

In terms of the development of the genre, Golden Age science fiction became a proponent of a science-based worldview and began to consider the genre as a way to participate in societal discussion. At the same time, its response to the Second World War and Cold War situations was also part of an era of narratives that favored meritocratic elitism and technocratic rationalism. In this context, Asimov created a fictional world where, one crisis and one partial solution at a time, various agents take control of society to gradually steer it toward a utopia they know they will never reach, but must constantly strive towards.

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A Conference Report from Uses of Fantasy in Changing Media Landscapes Seminar

Minna Siikilä

“In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” (Tolkien 11).

From this opening line of *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* it all began 79 years ago in United Kingdom. From this epic quest that J. R. R. Tolkien wrote for his children sprung also *The Hobbit* film trilogy (2012–2014) directed by Peter Jackson. This wildly popular although also vastly critiqued trilogy caught the attention of academic researchers. And so The World Hobbit Project was born. Led by Professor Emeritus Martin Barker from Aberystwyth University, UK, The World Hobbit Project also landed in Finland, University of Jyväskylä, where the Research Centre for Contemporary Culture took it under its wings. Here in Finland this international research project carries the name Uses of Fantasy, and it was evident, that sooner or later there will be a conference named alike. As an affiliate member of Uses of Fantasy – The World Hobbit Project in Finland I now have a great pleasure to give a conference report on this inspirational event, Uses of Fantasy in Changing Media Landscape, that took place 20–21 October 2016 at the University of Jyväskylä.

As the name of the conference predicted, there were many presentations about the different ways that fantasy plays a role in our everyday lives. The first keynote speaker, professor Emerita Liisa Rantalaiho (University of Tampere, Finland) addressed some common fallacies about fantasy’s alleged uselessness in her aptly named talk “Using Fantasy”. She argued that fantasy actually has many natural and beneficial functions to human beings, like the Harry Potter Alliance, that aims to empower transgender people and make their lives better. Also another keynote speaker, Associate Professor Susana Tosca (IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark) discussed the functional, sometimes very empowering significance of fantasy to its fans in her talk called “Fantasy Transmediations: The Art of Making it Real”. For example, Tosca talked about a little girl, who was bullied at school, but who found strength when wearing a *Frozen* costume, because Elsa was different too, like her. To our great pleasure also the leader of the global World Hobbit Project, Martin Barker, had agreed to attend the seminar as a keynote speaker. His talk “On Being Disappointed with *The Hobbit*: Indications of the Changing Significance of Fantasy” addressed the fact that for real fans Jackson’s *The Hobbit* trilogy was more disappointing than for those moviegoers who didn’t have such a personal relationship to Tolkien’s works.

In addition to the keynotes, there were also smaller panel presentations. In comparison to Barker’s talk, a presentation titled “Between Mourning and Ridicule: Memes Reacting to the Death of the *Game of Thrones* Character Hodor” offered a lighter tone on the uses of fantasy. This visually rich and timely presentation held by Susanne Ylönen and Heidi Kosonen observed the many side-effects and by-products that the death of a fictional fantasy character can bring. For example, IKEA started to manufacture door stoppers named after the beloved character, and for some *Game of Thrones* fans this seemed like trolling. On the other hand, this phenomena could also be seen as a

homage. Game of Thrones was also the subject of Anna-Leena Harinen's presentation "What Kind of Adaptation is Game of Thrones?" where she problematized the traditional views about adaptation. Harinen pointed out that fighting between different mediums is unnecessary, although a vast majority of people still endorse loyalty to the original text.

The Finnish segment of The World Hobbit Project was, of course, a central theme of this Uses of Fantasy seminar. Professor Raine Koskimaa introduced some basic data from the research done in Finland so far. He told the audience that in this research qualitative and quantitative methods are combined to find out, for example, "what is the meaning of fantasy to the respondents and what does fantasy bring to their lives". Also transmedial strategies of media use and national, territorial and cultural effects to meaning-making are being studied. In Finnish survey there were 1614 respondents, so the study material is vast.

Also some members of the Hobbit research team presented their findings. Jyrki Korpua and Maria Ruotsalainen talked about *The Hobbit* in relation to the concept of sacredness. They asked for example: "In which way is the *Hobbit* book sacred amongst the respondents, if at all?" In another presentation Tanja Välisalo discussed two main protagonists of *The Hobbit* films: Bilbo Baggins and the dragon Smaug. Välisalo stated that "reception of the character can be positive even if the movie is disappointing". All in all Uses of Fantasy seminar had many interesting themes. For example comics and science fiction were vastly represented, and even Pablo Escobar's magic world "La Hacienda Napoles" was discussed.

The closure of the two-day seminar was a panel where the keynotes Tosca and Barker accompanied by University of Jyväskylä's Urpo Kovala, Raine Koskimaa and Irma Hirsjärvi discussed the future alignments of fantasy research. Koskimaa stated that there is a big cultural change happening. One can for example live on playing video games, like YouTube sensation PewDiePie is doing. Barker added that a dramatic shift is really going on, and rich fantasy has become a positive thing, and it's "becoming a part of everyday life". Hirsjärvi made a note about this particular shift in Finland, where attitudes towards fantasy became more appreciating after Johanna Sinisalo won the highly valued Finlandia literary award with her sci-fi/fantasy novel *Ennen päivänlaskua ei voi* (*Not before sundown*, 2000). Koskimaa and Kovala also made a point that sacredness, spirituality and neo-religiousness have begun to rise in today's culture at a general level. As a curiosity Tosca added to this that some people are now turning from common religions to old pagan religions. They can believe for example in Thor. So it can be said that old myths are coming back to life in some very interesting ways. New research topics on fantasy could be, for example, the functions of fantasy – such as escape and empowerment – and the ways that audiences relate to characters. In addition to this Urpo Kovala demanded more research on transmediality, and Hirsjärvi stated that the field of drama as a whole is worth a closer study. Barker also wished some research about bookstores' relationship to fantasy and sci-fi. Right now bookstores don't know how to label all the new sub-genres, because the field of fantasy and sci-fi is expanding and changing all the time in a very dynamic way.

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Sarjakuvan raameja – Arktinen sarjakuvaseminaari 4.11.2016

Reijo Valta

Oulun Sarjakuvakeskus on järjestänyt Oulun Sarjakuvafestivaalin yhteydessä Arktisia sarjakuvaseminaareja vuodesta 2014. Tänä vuonna järjestetty kolmas seminaari sai akateemisen muodon, aikaisemmat ovat olleet pohjoismaisten sarjakuvantekijöiden ammatillisia kohtaamisia. Tilaisuus pidettiin Oulun kaupunginkirjaston yhteyteen edellisenä iltana avatussa sarjakuvakirjastossa, Sarjastossa.

Seminaarin aloittivat Aino-Kaisa Koistinen ja Essi Varis esittelemällä yhdessä Tanja Väლისalon kanssa tekemäänsä tutkimusta “Adapting Alias? Transmedial Characterization of Jessica Jones”. Tutkijoiden kiinnostuksen kohteena on henkilöhahmojen siirtäminen mediasta toiseen. Jessica Jones oli alkujaan Marvelin toimintasarjakuvasanankari, josta tehtiin hiljan myös Netflix-televisiosarja.

Koistisen ja Variksen mukaan Jessica Jonesin henkilöhahmo uudistaa hieman supersankaritarinoiden tapaa esittää naissukupuolta muun muassa esittämällä naishahmon, jota ei vahvasti erotisoida. Tutkija totesivat myös, että Jonesin sarjakuvasta televisioon siirtymisen tutkimiseen eivät aikaisemmat transmediaalisten adaptaatioiden teorit soveltuneet, koska ne eivät juurikaan huomioi henkilöhahmoja. Onko siis Jessica Jones transmediaalinen, eri medioiden rajoilla tasapainotteleva hahmo vai enemmän adaptaatio sarjakuvista televisioon? Jessican tapauksessa kiinnostavaa on se, että jo sarjakuvissa oli useampia Jessica Jones -hahmoja ja televisiota varten oli luotu vielä oma Jessicansa. Oikeastaan median vaihtuminen muutti myös tarinan lajityyppiä fantastisesta lähemmäs rikosgenreä. Koistinen ja Varis pohtivat, että henkilöhahmon identiteettiä määrittelee muun muassa media ja sen oletetun yleisön odotuksiin vastaaminen. Sananlaskuviisautta lainaten, raamit tekivät taulun.

Timo Konttinen puhui otsikolla “On How to Grow Comics in Academical studies”. Kuvataiteilija Konttinen on opiskellut Pietarsaareissa Novia-ammattikorkeakoulussa ja tehnyt opinnäytteensä osittain sarjakuvamuodossa. Hän pohti sarjakuvan mahdollisuuksia ilmaisukeinona myös akateemisilla sarjoilla. Niin ikään tiedemaailmassa sarjakuvalla pystyisi ilmaisemaan sellaisia asioita joihin tekstillä ei pysty. Konttisen alustuksesta käytiin vilkasta keskustelua, jossa mietittiin muun muassa kielen objektiivisuutta. Koska kirjoitukseen ei ole objektiivista, niin sillä perusteella kuvia ei voi sulkea akateemisen ilmaisun ulkopuolelle niiden oletetun objektiivisuuden puutteen vuoksi.

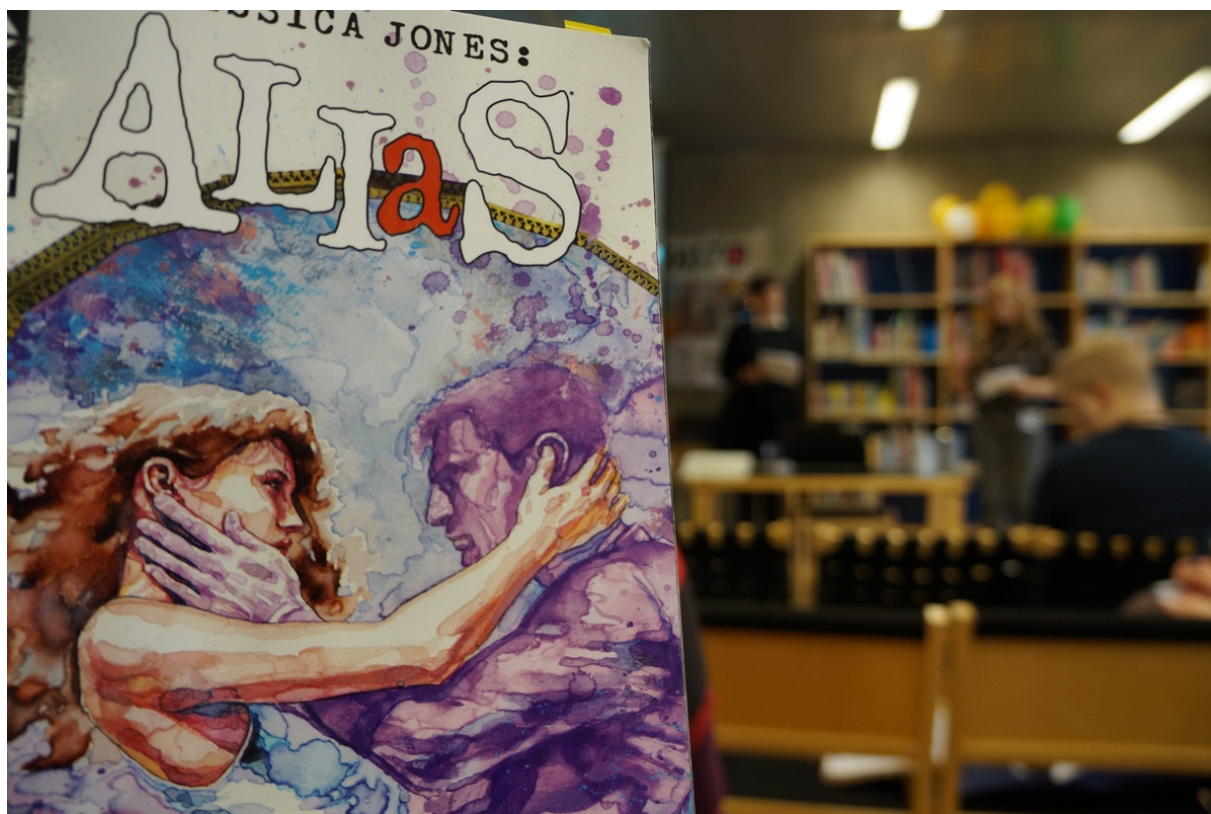


Figure 1: Seminaarissa puhuttiin muun muassa Jessica Jones -sarjakuvista.

Yksi Konttisen mainitsemista esimerkeistä sarjakuvamuotoisista tiedeteoksista oli Scott McCloudin *Understanding Comics*. Hänen jälkeensä puhunut Harri Filppa kyseenalaisti McCloudin kuvakerronnan määritelmiä esitelmässään “Panel-to-panel Transitions in Sequential Visualizations”. McCloud on eritelty ruudusta ruutuun siirtymiä ansiokkaasti, mutta onko erittely oikeastaan tarpeellista? Sehän tapahtuu joka tapauksessa, vaikka ruutujen sisältö olisi aivan sama. Työkiireiden vuoksi estyneen Kristian Hellesundin sijasta seminaarissa puhunut norjalainen Øyvind Lauvdahl kritisoi sarjakuvatutkimusta McCloudin määritelmien hyväksymisestä annettuina. Lauvdahlin mukaan McCloudin sarjakuvan määritelmä on samantapainen teoria kuin marxilainen tai feministinen lukeminen. McCloudin sarjakuvan historia on määritelmän sovittamista taidehistorian teoksiin, ei sarjakuvataiteen omaehtoista kehittymistä ajasta toiseen (Lauvdahl myöhemmin kirjasi puhumaansa facebook-muistiinpanoksi. Lauvdahl). Lisäksi Lauvdahl puhui sarjakuvan tilasta Norjassa. Hänen mukaansa julkinen rahoitus on alkanut liikaa dominoida sarjakuvakenttää ja sen seurauksena julkaistut teokset eivät juurikaan kommentoi nyky-Norjaa. ”Norjassa avantgarde on kuollut”, Lauvdahl tehosti sanomaansa (ks. tarkemmin Valta).

Jyrki Korpuan aiheena oli “Mythopoeitics of Neil Gaiman’s The Sandman -series” ja esitelmä pääsisältönä oli tutkimussuunnitelman esittely. Korpuan suunnitelma vaikutti harkitulta ja hyvin jäsennellyltä. Gaimanin *Sandmanissa* riittää mytologisia aineksia ruodittavaksi alkaen hahmosta itsestään. Jonkinlainen nukkumattia vastaava hahmo löytyy lähes jokaisesta kulttuurista. Korpuan hahmottelema viittausten kentän (field of reference) nelijaottelu (maailma, sarjakuvien maailma, myyttien maailma, muut (kirjallisuus, tv, jne.)) on luultavasti sovitettavissa muidenkin sarjakuvien tutkimukseen.

Seminaarin varsinaisena pääpuhujana oli Katja Kontturi. Hän puhui otsikolla “How to Study Donald Duck? Fantasy and postmodernism in the Disney Comic”. 1970-luvulla suomeksikin

julkaistu Ariel Dorfmanin ja Armand Mattelartin *Kuinka Aku Ankkaa luetaan* oli huono lähtökohta sarjakuvatutkimukselle. Teos ei kerro lähteitään ja siksi väitteiden tarkistettavuus on huono ja kommentointi vaikeaa. Kehnosta alusta huolimatta sarjakuvatutkimus on päässyt hyvin alkuun. Keskeiseksi Aku Ankka -tutkimukseksi Kontturi nimesi Thomas Andraen teoksen *Carl Barks and the Disney Comic – Book Unmasking the Myth of Modernity*.

Kontturin post-doc -suunnitelmissa on tutkia italialaista Disney-tuotantoa. Erityisesti häntä kiinnosti italialaisten tekijöiden runsas metasarjakuvallisten keinojen käyttäminen. Sarjakuvahahmohan on aina ruutujen välissä vaarassa joutua pois sarjakuvasta. Apuna Kontturilla näissä pohdinnoissa on metalepsiksen käsite. Toiseksi kiinnostuksen kohteekseen Kontturi mainitsi ikuisuuskyseksen: Miksi Aku Ankka on Suomessa niin suosittu?

Useammassa puheenvuorossa sarjakuvatutkimuksen, tai oikeastaan sen raportoinnin, ongelmaksi koettiin viittaaminen. Tiedekirjoittamisen perinteessä kuviin viittaaminen on ylimalkaista. Esimerkiksi Kontturi toivoi sarjakuvaan viittamisen uudelleenmäärittelyä. Ratkaisun hakeminen ei kuitenkaan ollut tämän seminaarin tehtävä. Täsmällinen viittaustapa olisi kuitenkin tarpeen, siitä oltiin yhtä mieltä.

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A Year in the Life of a Finnish Comics Researcher:
A Combined Conference Report

Essi Varis

Let us dispel a certain misconception that might be embarrassingly easy to form: researching comics is *not* the easiest job in the world. While it does involve a delightful amount of reading and raving about graphic novels, and the conference culture tends to be more brotherly and relaxed than in the older, more established fields, resources – such as experts, events and libraries dedicated to sequential art – are few and far between. Remarkably, 2016 did finally see the birth of an international Comics Studies Society, but finding suitable academic forums for specialized comics research still requires extra effort, particularly if one is based in a small, peripheral country like Finland, where there resides only about a dozen graduate or post-doctoral level comics scholars, scattered in different universities and disciplines. However, if one is prepared to go that extra mile from the subtropical spring of New Orleans to the freshly frozen Arctic Circle, one can, in fact, pack a very full year. In addition to attending the two small regular events my comics-researching colleagues organized in Finland, I toured comics panels in literary and cultural studies conferences as well as widened my horizons in seminars about transmedia and geek culture.

Academic Underbellies of Finnish Comic Festivals

Since the biannual gatherings of the NNCORE, the Nordic Network for Comics Research, were on hiatus this year, there was no missing the two Finnish comics festivals that include modest professional sections: *Tampere kuplii* festival goes academic every spring, and Oulu comics festival always calls together an *Arctic Comics* seminar in late autumn. Both usually attract a small but mixed crowd of researchers, artists and hobbyists, which makes them ideal venues for casual but invested discussions on the latest comics and research findings.

Tampere Kuplii Goes Academic seminar, which has opened the annual Tampere comics festival weekend since 2007, took place routinely in Tampere University Library on March 18. The special highlight of the seminar has always been the Comics Finlandia award ceremony: a celebrity judge – someone accomplished in another field of art – declares his or her favorite from a small hall of fame, which a jury of experts has distilled from the mass of comics published in Finland during the previous year. This time, actress Heli Sutela handed the prize to Kati Närhi, for her equally quirky and murky *Seitsemäs vieras* (“The Seventh Guest”). It is the final part of a sympathetic trilogy that follows the formative years of a curious girl called Agnes and echoes Edward Gorey’s legacy to the comics scene.

The academic talks that followed tracked the ever more complex political and transmedial trajectories of comic book characters; most speakers demonstrated how various genres of graphic narration use characters to embody, parody or comment on current affairs. Reeta Kangas (University of Turku) discussed the animal iconography of Russian political cartoons, Laura Antola

(University of Turku) the surprisingly liberal values of contemporary superhero comics, and Jonne Lehto (University of Tampere) the anarchistic, critical quality that Charlie Christensen's Arne Anka gains from its overt contrast to Disney's Donald Duck. Tanja Välsälö (University of Jyväskylä), on the other hand, drew the discussion towards identity politics with her presentation about the virtual avatars people create for themselves in several fandoms. It was concluded that characters can serve as powerful mouthpieces and negotiation tools for personal and shared ideologies alike, and therefore, the boundaries between caricatures, characters and avatars should be considered quite flexible.

Arctic Comics seminar, staged in the brand new comics section of the beautiful city library of Oulu on November 4, facilitated another topical discussion under the theme "Comics and Science". The art director of the festival, Harri Filppa (University of Lapland) has roused polarized opinions with his Master's thesis, which was written and published completely in sequential art format in 2007. While comics' potential for expressing abstract and even academic ideas have been debated ever since Scott McCloud's seminal *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), Nick Sousanis' widely publicized doctoral dissertation, *The Unflattening* (2015), has heated the topic again. Thus, much of the seminar's general discussion focused on comics' role in academia: even though they have been readily accepted as a means of popularization, could thinking and explicating scientific matters through combinations of texts and images ever be considered a valid method of research? Filppa and Timo Konttinen (Novia University of Applied Sciences and Arts), who have both included comics in their MA theses, agreed that the multimodality of the format clearly allows a wider range of concepts and expressions than written word alone. Yet, the cultural prejudices remain strong: the image content is immediately dismissed as too subjective and inaccurate by most academics – as if the same flaws were not inherent in language.

The keynote presentation was given by Finland's official "Ducktor" Katja Kontturi (University of Jyväskylä), whose PhD dissertation (2013) on Don Rosa's *Donald Duck* comics also stretched the boundaries of viable research topics in Finnish academia. As many times before, she indicated the popularity as well as the political and aesthetic depth of comics – even those regarded as disposable or aimed at children – thus proving them well worth academic consideration. She also introduced her tentative model for teaching and analyzing comics systematically. A few other presentations, on the other hand, applied other existing theories and models to other selected works: Jyrki Korpua (University of Oulu) gave the audience an efficient tour to the mythopoetics of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* (1989–1996), while Aino-Kaisa Koistinen (University of Jyväskylä) and myself employed transmedia theories in order to examine the continuous yet dissimilar protagonists of Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Gaydos' *Alias* (2001–2004) and the new *Jessica Jones* Netflix series (2015–).

Unlike *Tampere kuplii Goes Academic*, *Arctic Comics* has declared English as its primary working language, in hopes of promoting comics-related collaboration across Northern Europe. This year, the roster included only one foreign guest, Øyvind Lauvdahl, who speculated that Norwegian comics are currently characterized by a "temporal disjoint". As opposed to the Swedish scene that seems to foster highly topical, political comics at the moment, Norwegian comics reach towards the past and the future.

In the Gutters of Wider Cultural Landscapes

Even though the two one-day seminars remained the only comics-centered events I could attend this year, I managed to find panels dedicated to graphic narratives in the folds of two much bigger conferences. Leena Romu (University of Tampere) and Ralf Kauranen (University of Turku) had decided to reserve more space for comics studies in the annual conference of the Finnish Literary Research Society by calling for presentations about the ethics and politics of – or in – graphic

storytelling. The theme complied with the conference's overall headline, "Ethics, Aesthetics and Politics", which brought a grand total of 50 presenters to the former capital of Finland, where Åbo Akademi and the University of Turku co-hosted the event on May 19–20.

The Literary Research Society has welcomed presentations about comics to its conferences in previous years as well, but they have rarely piqued much interest. Therefore, centralizing all the comics scholars explicitly in the same sessions was a practical solution: we still could not fill a very large room but those who were present were especially eager to discuss the topics at hand. Two local undergraduate students, Anna Vuorinne and Aura Nikkilä, contemplated the ethical implications of documentary comics and comics journalism, while the thematic strand of aesthetics was picked up by Oskari Rantala (University of Jyväskylä) and myself – although in strong correlation with ethics and politics. Rantala demonstrated that adapting comics into films involves not only artistic but also ideological decisions, and I argued that the layers of metalepses in Mike Carey and Peter Gross's *The Unwritten* (2010–2015) destabilize the ontology of its fictional characters to the point where their aesthetics become indistinguishable from their ethics. In other words, editing fiction becomes an act of violence. Since comics rarely hide their "made", artificial quality, different acts and methods of making them were considered from various angles throughout the double panel: when are lines of a comic fluid or delineating, subjective or objective, individuating or typifying? Finally, Katja Kontturi and Joel Kuortti (University of Turku) explored how comics are used to construct Finnish and Indian national identities, respectively.

Traveling to New Orleans on April 28–30, for the annual conference of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies, had, however, already allowed me to zoom out from the Finnish comics research scene for a little bit. Incidentally, *SASS 2016* had included a very similar, modestly attended but lively doublepanel on "Nordic Comics". There, the tentative conclusion had been that many of the qualities that resurfaced in the Finnish Literary Research Society's conference might be especially prominent in Northern European comics. Although the few attending scholars – representing various Swedish, Finnish, Canadian and American universities – might have been biased on the matter, we identified strong autobiographic, feminist and medially inventive movements in the Nordic graphic novel scenes. That is to say, Nordic comics appear to be exceptionally aware of their ethics, aesthetics and politics. Jens Mondrad (University of British Columbia) went so far as to call autobiographical graphic novel "the quintessential Nordicom". Andreas Hedberg (Uppsala University) and Margareta Wallin-Victorin (University of Göteborg) added that Swedish comics are currently dominated by satirical leftist and autobiographical female voices. My and Clarence Sheffield's (Rochester Institute of Technology) presentations, for their part, highlighted the inventive methods of narration, characterization and expression in various Finnish comics and Steffen Kverneland's widely acclaimed graphic novel *Munch* (2013).

Granted, the honest, topical and unglamorous tones of our target texts did feel out of place in the country of haunted Creole houses, plantations surrounded by ancient oaks, and palm trees dripping with glittering Mardi Gras beads.

Branching out to Other Media

Of course, one does not always need to wait for an invitation. If the aim is to grow comics studies as a discipline, it might be better to go where no comics scholar has gone before. What is more, preying on the fringes of neighboring or intersecting fields often proves especially educational and inspiring.

Transmediations! Communication across Media Borders seminar, held in Linnaeus University of Växjö on October 12–15, was certainly a case in point. The final version of the programme included only one presentation that addressed comics directly: Björn Hochschild (Free University of Berlin) indicated intriguing analogies between current superhero universes and

baroque aesthetics. According to him, the labyrinthine structures, the dissolved medial frames and the knowledgeable elites of the 17th century are echoed in the nonlinear network structures, in the impossibilities of retcons, and in the active fan cultures that dominate the storyworlds of Western comics today. Indeed, as companies like Marvel and DC expand their character franchises across more and more media platforms, and as well-known comics artists continue to remix literary classics, few comics researchers can afford to be just comics researchers.

For better or for worse, transmedial storyworlds seem to be gaining popularity both among fans and in academic discussion. Furthermore, it can often be linked with another growing popular-cultural phenomenon: mainstream's interest in the so-called "geek culture". As it happens, University of Jyväskylä put itself on the nerd world map with two conferences this year. The sixth national fandom research conference, organized on March 3–4 under the title *Nörttikulttuurin nousu* ("Rise of the Geek Culture"), was already reported thoroughly in the previous issue. However, many of its topics were resurrected again six months later, when *Uses of Fantasy in Changing Media Landscape* conference lured a host of reception and storyworld experts to Jyväskylä. One of the presenters, Oskari Rantala, was quick to remind the audience that "comics is the most fantastical medium", and many of the points made by the international keynote speakers Martin Barker (Aberystwyth University) and Susana Tosca (IT University of Copenhagen) would indeed apply to comics as well. All in all, many of the transmedial storyworlds currently in vogue are speculative in nature and employ some forms of graphic storytelling, which means that comics and fantasy continue to intertwine in ever new fascinating ways.

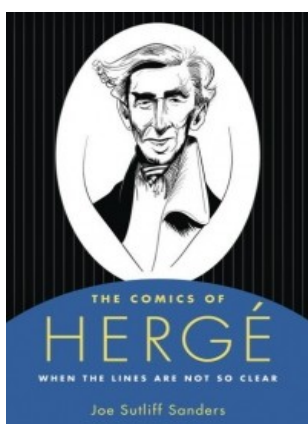
For the same reasons, the 75th Worldcon – which will take place in Helsinki on August 9–13, 2017 – is sure to have much to offer to comics researchers, even if the world's largest science fiction convention is known to lean rather heavily towards literary culture. The academic track will be honoring the centennial of Viktor Shklovsky's influential coinage with the theme "100 Years of Estrangement". NNCORE's upcoming seminar, on the other hand, is likely to put a very different spin on sequential speculation with its theme "Comics and Memory". It is set to take place at the apex on Belgian summer, on April 20–21, in the University of Ghent. Unfortunately, the CFP's for both events have already reached their deadlines, but that should not stop anyone from putting an eye and an ear out.

To be sure, specializing in a small field in a small country has always required a special brand of agility. At the same time, however, the ongoing changes in medial environments seem to encourage ever more radical movement between theoretical and artistic contexts. If the aforementioned seminars serve as reasonably reliable trend barometers, the ties between comics and speculative fiction are strengthening rather than weakening. What is more, the various political media discussions and the formation of transmedia theory are creating a clear demand for comics expertise.



A Book Review:
The Comics of Hergé – When The Lines Are Not So Clear

Reijo Valta



The Comics of Hergé – When The Lines Are Not So Clear, edited by Joe Sutliff Sanders, University Press of Mississippi, 2016. ISBN 9781496807267

University Press of Mississippi is a publisher that has released a substantial body of literature and research on comics, such as Donald Ault's and Thomas Andrae's books on Carl Barks as well as David Kunzle's works on Rodolphe Töpffer. A collection of articles edited by Joe Sutliff Sanders on Hergé (born Georges Remi, 1907–1983) is the second publication in the new series, *Critical Approaches to Comics Artists*.

The subtitle, *When The Lines Are Not So Clear*, refers to recent discussions on Hergé, someone who has distributed racial stereotypes of the 1930s and was aligned with Nazism in the Second World War. Thus, the life of the master of “the clear line” (*ligne claire* in French, *klaiere lijn* in Dutch)¹ appears more “smudged” than his art.

Rather than providing a mere general overview, the Sutliff Sanders' collection draws on various approaches to Hergé research. The prologue grounds the collection within the European approach. For example, Benoit Peeters, Professor in Graphic Fiction and Comic Art at Lancaster University, as well Michael Farr and Tom McCarthy are mentioned.

The book is divided into three thematic sections. The first, “Absence and Presence”, begins with Jim Casey analysing the album *Tintin in Tibet*. Andrei Molotiu uncovers the musical forms of *The Castafiore Emerald*, and Vanessa Meikle Schulman traces the somewhat far-fetched connection between the wax museums of B-movies and the bizarre idea of moulding Tintin in plastic as was the case in the unfinished *Alph-Art*. Finally, Benjamin Picado and Jônathas Miranda de Araújo look at the connection between suspense and humour in *The Adventures of Tintin*. All

¹ *Ligne claire*, or the clear line, is a drawing style pioneered by Hergé. The style uses clear strong lines of same width and does not use hatching (Editors' comment).

three albums have been studied before and the articles of the first section are largely based on previous research. The albums that deviate from the Tintin norm reveal new aspects of the author and his method. Precision in timing, a feature in Hergé's work all along, is most evident in humour.

Section Two is titled "Changes In and After Hergé". Here Sanders himself takes on the changes in the author. He revises Hergé's life during the Second World War and looks into Hergé's works in *Le Soir*, a Nazi newspaper. Sanders contends that, working with the Nazis, Hergé made a deal with the devil but nevertheless developed as a cartoon artist. The works published during the occupation (*The Secret of the Unicorn – Red Rackham's Treasure*) are by no means political and therefore the deal was void. Hergé was granted less and less space in the magazine, and in 1943 he realised that continuing his work there would have consequences. After the war Hergé was interrogated twice – first as Hergé, then as Georges Remi; the authorities failed to realise they were the same person.

Hergé was known to be a perfectionist. Pictures and models were used in his studios as reference material for detail. His comics are therefore an apt way to study how 20th century perceptions have changed. Guillaume de Syon writes about aviation and the impact of the increased speed. In Hergé's time air travel was a novelty.

Matthew Screech, Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey look into Hergé's legacy. Screech traces the development of the clear line after Hergé. Baetens and Frey write about the meaning of Tintin today. A character that has passed away can only live in reinterpretations and re-readings. This article refers mainly to North American cartoon culture.

The third section, containing three articles, is entitled "Talking Back to Hergé", and it is the one that brings out new research in comparing Hergé's legacy to comics of the 21st century. Gwen Athene Tarbox writes that in *American Born Chinese*, Gene Luen Yang brings back the "clear line" to comment on world politics. There was a time when this art of drawing was seen as intended for children. Annick Pellegrin takes up Spirou, a rival of Tintin in the comics scene, who continues his adventures. With Spirou's history rewritten after the year 2000, it has become more evident how the two characters converge.

In the last article Kenan Koçak's discusses the pirate Tintin's of Turkey. This Tintin, who has now been granted legal status, has been around since 1949. The adventures of Tintin, a co-creation of Hergé and local artists, has become part of local culture. Hergé himself marveled at *Tintin in Istanbul* which had been made in 1960s by cutting and pasting his works into new compilations. "That guy took out pieces from 19 albums and then arranged them according to the script he wrote and created a totally new book", says Hergé (Koçak 189).

The two first sections of *The Comics of Hergé – When The Lines Are Not So Clear* summarises the essentials of existing Hergé studies whilst referring to new research. Something is missing, however. I would have liked to see Nancy Rose Hunt's observations on how Congolese people read *Tintin in Congo*². The third section breaks new ground. The Turkish Tintin comics have been known for a long time, but it is Koçak who takes a closer look at them as a researcher. All in all, Sutliff Sanders' book offers the first comprehensive English language analysis of Tintin and Hergé research and what could be feasible future perspectives.

Works Cited

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