



Worldcon 75 Academic Track

Session 1: Uses of Fantasy: The Book, The Film, and Audience Responses – Results of the Finnish Sub-Project of the *World Hobbit Project*

Wednesday 12:00-13:30

Room 209

Chair: **Irma Hirsjärvi**

Abstract 1:

Jyrki Korpua (University of Oulu, Finland):

Audience Responses to Myth and Mythology: Connections between J R R Tolkien's Fiction and Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* Film Series

jyrki.korpua@oulu.fi

This paper focuses on how the expressions of myth and mythology, mythopoeics, and the Tolkien's legend-world is seen on the reception of *The Hobbit* film series in the Finnish audience responses of *The World Hobbit Project* survey. What kind of expressions have myth and mythology in the survey answers, and do the Finnish viewers focus on the mythic aspects of the fantasy world? Also, I discuss whether the Finnish viewers of *The Hobbit* film series consider *The Hobbit* films to be part of Tolkien's legend-world. Are they referring to these elements in the open-ended answers? And lastly, considering the former, what is the role of *The Silmarillion*, a central work of Tolkien's legend-world, in the survey answers?

PhD Jyrki Korpua is a researcher of literature and cultural studies. Since 2005, Korpua has acted as lecturer and researcher of literature in the University of Oulu, as well as a part-time lecturer in the University of Turku (2014-2015). In 2014-2015 Korpua acted as Chair of the Board in The Finnish Society for Cultural Studies and since 2014 as a Chair of Board in The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research. He is also one of three editors-in-chief for *Fafnir - Nordic Journal for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*. During the past years, Korpua has presented his research in national and international conferences and held dozens of lectures and lecture series on literature and film studies: "The Bible and literature", "Utopias and dystopias", "History of comics", "History of fantasy", "The Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien", among others.

Abstract 2:

Tanja Välisalo (University of Jyväskylä, Finland):

Cool Elves and Hot Dwarves: Fantasy Characters in the Audience Reception of Films

tanja.valisalo@jyu.fi

In this presentation, I will examine the audience reception of *The Hobbit* film characters, and discuss what it can tell us about the reception, meanings and uses of fictional fantasy characters. I will do this through a study of the responses to the online survey of *The World Hobbit Project*. Preliminary analysis of the survey responses has revealed different contexts of audience reception of characters. The same character can be experienced differently according to, for example, the respondent's familiarity with Tolkien's world, their knowledge of the previous works of the actors or the director of the films, or their relationship with

fantasy fiction in general. What kind of transmedial and intertextual reception strategies can be found amongst The Hobbit audiences in relation to these different contexts? In my presentation, I will identify different *character trajectories* that audiences follow and aim to use these trajectories to gain insight into reception strategies of fantasy audiences.

MA Tanja Välisalo is a doctoral student in contemporary culture at the University of Jyväskylä. She is writing her dissertation on virtual characters in media fandom. Her research interests include identity and materiality in fandom, transmedia audiences and ludification of culture. Välisalo is a member of the board of *The Finnish Game Studies Association*.

Abstract 3:

Minna Siikilä (University of Jyväskylä, Finland):

“I’m just being a difficult lotr hardcore fan”: Fandom and Anti-fandom in Online Conversations Concerning Peter Jackson’s *The Hobbit* trilogy

minna.siikila@gmail.com

In this paper I will discuss my findings in two different online conversation threads (Wired/Giltsdorf 2014, Kontu 2015) totaling 986 independent messages. Both conversations occurred in touch with an article discussing the Hobbit-movies. The themes of these online conversations about Peter Jackson’s The Hobbit –trilogy dealt with questions about the creative powers and artistic preferences of Peter Jackson and J. R. R. Tolkien, and about the concern whether it is right to make an adaptation about this canonical book at all. Tolkien’s fans were very protective at times, and all in all it was very clear, that the original text was seen more valuable than the movies. Many fans thought that Jackson had manhandled Tolkien’s original text too badly, and some Tolkien-fans even declared that they are boycotting Jackson’s The Hobbit –trilogy altogether. In some cases being a fan of Tolkien meant also to be an anti-fan of Jackson, and so there was a binary opposition, that invited anti-fandom. There were also conversations about making a pure fan-edition from the Hobbit –movies. This kind of activity was in line. As Henry Jenkins has said, fans are keen on producing their own aesthetic works ”that speak to the special interests of the fan community”. On the other hand, there were also Jackson-fans, who defended him, and Tolkien-fans, who took Jackson’s movies in stride, or enjoyed them.

MA Minna Siikilä is a doctoral student in contemporary culture at the University of Jyväskylä. Her upcoming doctoral thesis deals with online conversations about fantasy with a focus on intertextuality and fandom. As a researcher Siikilä is especially interested in fantasy, intertextuality and internet as a social network. J. R. R. Tolkien and his readers has been Siikilä’s main study interest for many years.

Abstract 4:

Irma Hirsjärvi (University of Jyväskylä, Finland):

They Are All Alike Them Fans: Some Nordic Results of The Global Hobbit Project

hirsjarvi@gmail.com

The Nordic fans are all alike. Or are they? This paper opens the striking difference between the Finnish Swedish and Danish respondents of The Global Hobbit Project, revealing that the idea of the Nordic fandom is somewhat more complex than could be expected. Well now we know something: there are differences, but can we find where they flourish? Is the Finnish sample contaminated by opinion leader fandom people and make strict difference between fantasy and fairy tale? Do Danes simply just love the film wide and see fantasy more wide

than the others? Can Swedes truly be so positive and supporting in the time of total ‘Jackson’ failure? This paper is about all this, with additional results about The Game of Thrones research project.

PhD Irma Hirsjärvi has been involved to several international research projects and is a responsible researcher of the Finnish team “Uses of fantasy” (funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation) of The Global Hobbit Project. She has published articles about sf, fantasy, fandom and its organization practises, and co-edited books about fantasy and creative writing. She is a member of the editorial board of the Publications of a Research Centre for Contemporary Culture and *Fafnir - Nordic Journal for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, member of Finnish fandom and co-founder of the The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research.