



Call for Papers for
Academic Track at the 75th World Science Fiction Convention

“100 Years of Estrangement”

9–13 August, 2017

Messukeskus, the Helsinki Expo and Convention Centre, Helsinki, Finland

Estrangement, or defamiliarization (*ostranenie*), has long been a crucial concept in our understanding of speculative fiction. Since its first appearance in Viktor Shklovsky’s essay “Art as Technique” (or “Art as Device”) in 1917, estrangement has made its way into the theories of prose fiction, of theatre, and of film, and it forms the core of some of the foundational works in the theory of science fiction, such as Darko Suvin’s definition of SF as cognitive estrangement.

To celebrate the centenary of Shklovsky’s essay, the Worldcon 75 Academic Track calls for proposals for scholarly presentations from any academic discipline to examine, interrogate, and expand research related to the concept of estrangement, to related terms such as cognitive estrangement, the uncanny, the unnatural, Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* or Derrida’s *différance*, and to their role in the analysis of speculative fiction in any medium. We hope for a broad, interdisciplinary discussion on the many ways in which estrangement or defamiliarization relates to the genres of science fiction, fantasy and horror, and on how those genres form a particularly fertile ground for extending our understanding of how the familiar is made new, or the strange comprehensible.

To examine these phenomena, we invite proposals addressing e.g. the following questions:

- What is the status of Shklovsky’s original *ostranenie* in contemporary theories of speculative fiction (widely understood)?
- How does defamiliarization or estrangement function in different fantastic (sub)genres?
- What are the differences and similarities between the techniques or strategies of defamiliarization in different media (e.g. prose fiction, graphic narratives, theatre, films, games)? How does defamiliarization relate to inter- or transmedial storytelling?
- What is the dynamic between defamiliarization, mental transportation and identification? How do estranging and fantastical effects impact the reader’s perception of the storyworld or sympathy towards the characters?
- How do works of speculative fiction balance estranging or defamiliarizing techniques and the naturalizing effects inherent to its worldbuilding and characterization? How does defamiliarization relate to the realistic illusions created by speculative fiction?
- How does estrangement help us to describe metafiction and formal self-reflection in speculative fiction?
- Are there different scholarly traditions around estrangement in different academic fields (e.g. literary studies, aesthetics, film theory) and in different language areas (e.g. Anglo-American, Russian, German, French)?

- Arising from Russian formalism and the avant-garde, estrangement has strongly political roots that have to do with the freedom of art within society. How does this political aspect of estrangement fare today?
- How is defamiliarization used in fantastic genres to question or critique societal issues and/or social identity categories (e.g. gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, social class)?
- What can the study of defamiliarizing techniques offer to the posthumanist line of interdisciplinary research and its interest in the relations between humans and nonhumans?
- What commercial functions does estrangement have, and how do those interact with its aesthetic and ideological functions in speculative fiction?

In addition to these theoretical questions, we call for analyses of the effects of estrangement in specific works of speculative fiction in any medium. Beyond the specific conference theme of defamiliarization, **proposals on all other topics to do with speculative fiction are also welcome.**

Submission guidelines:

Papers will be allowed a maximum presentation time of 20 minutes, with 10 minutes for discussion. All presentations will be given in English.

- For an **individual paper**, please submit
 - a max. 500-word abstract, outlining your argument and the grounding of your scholarly approach
 - a max. 100-word description of your academic affiliation(s) and publications (i.e. a 'bio note').
- For a **pre-arranged session of three or four presentations** (3x20 minutes or 4x15 minutes), please submit a proposal including
 - a summary paragraph of the central purpose of the session
 - the name of the session chair
 - the individual abstracts of all speakers
 - bio notes of all speakers.

Please note that we will accept only one presentation per scholar, but you can submit both an individual abstract and a full session proposal, if you wish.

All proposals should be sent as e-mail attachments (Word or PDF) to merja.polvinen@worldcon.fi by **October 31st, 2016**.

We hope to announce the selections to the programme by 30th November, 2016. All selected speakers will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation. There is no separate conference fee, but **all speakers in the Academic Track must join Worldcon 75 as attending members**. For more information on purchasing memberships, please see the convention website at <http://www.worldcon.fi/memberships/>.

About the event:

Worldcon, or the World Science Fiction Convention is the annual convention of the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS). The first Worldcon was held in 1939 and, after a hiatus during WWII, has been held continuously since 1946. The convention brings together thousands of science fiction and fantasy aficionados from all around the world, and the programming includes five multi-track days of panel discussions, presentations, workshops and art exhibitions, as well as the annual Hugo Awards ceremony. For more information on Worldcon75 and on the venue in Helsinki, please see <http://www.worldcon.fi/>.

The Academic Track is organised by Worldcon 75 in cooperation with FINFAR, The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research. For more information on submissions, or any other aspect of the Academic Track, please contact merja.polvinen@worldcon.fi.

Looking forward to welcoming you to Helsinki!

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in cooperation with
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