

# Literary Fantasy and Its Discontents

November 23–24, 2018, Taipei Tech

Abstract Deadlines: **June 4** (early consideration) or **August 31**

<https://literaryfantasytaipei2018.wordpress.com/>

## Call for Papers

In her still influential *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (1984), Kathryn Hume defines the literary fantastic as any departure from consensus reality, believing that it holds an equally significant position in literary history as mimesis. Rather than being a recent and sometimes academically marginalized genre, fantasy, for Hume, is integral to almost all literature.

The dialectics between literary fantasies and consensus reality have recently become more relevant than ever: current events remind us of how elusive consensus reality can be. This conference takes this concern over (un)reality as a jumping-off point for our theme: **Literary Fantasy and Its Discontents**. We hope to have a broad cross-section of papers that consider fantasy in its many forms: both as a (frequently politicized) literary genre or mode and in the word *fantasy*'s broader meanings of delusion, unconscious wish, or falsehood. How do fantasies assist in the formation of national identities? How do they impact the narratives—be they harmful or beneficial—that nations and people groups tell themselves about their origins, their capabilities, and their future? How do reader responses to the fantastic in literature differ from responses to texts that are predominantly mimetic, and how do these differences condition reception history? How has the fantastic been used in reform movements and the rhetoric of reaction? What are the ethics of literary fantasies (or the fantastic mode), and how have they been applied?

We welcome papers on any topic related to our theme. We hope to have several panels on texts from the medieval, early modern, eighteenth-century, Romantic, Victorian, and twentieth- and twenty-first century periods. While most papers given at this conference will address Anglophone literatures, we also welcome papers (in English) that address non-English or non-literary texts from other regions. As our conference is in Taipei, we also hope to organize several panels that address how literary fantasies have been celebrated, used, criticized, or abused in Asia. We are also interested in explorations of the reception history of Western fantasies in the East and Eastern fantasies in the West.

Paper topics include but are not limited to the following:

### **Fantasy in theory**

- Utopias and/or dystopias
- Fantasy and the cultural industry
- Fantasy and Orientalism
- Fantasy and Radical technologies
- German philology, folklore, and myth
- Racial theories and fantastic literature (Matthew Arnold, Ernest Renan, Robert Knox, etc.)
- Fantasy and environmentalism or climate change
- Marxism and fantasies, including Chinese communist theories regarding the fantastic
- Escapism
- Mythopoeia

### **Fantasy, history, story-telling, and identity**

- Oral histories and/or folktales and cultural identity
- Classical Chinese novels and their uses of the fantastic
- Nineteenth-century Fairy Tale Collectors such as the Brothers Grimm, Andrew Lang, and the members of the Folk-Lore Society, and their collections
- Medievalism (in art, literature, TV and film, gaming, etc.)

- Fantasy and revolutions (including Romanticism and the French Revolution)
- The impact of Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, or Western fantasies on Taiwanese identities

#### **Fantasy and nationalism:**

- National Epics (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *Ossian*, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, the *Kalevala*, *Icelandic Sagas* and the *Poetic and Prose Eddas*, etc.)
- Nationalism and pseudo-history (e.g. portrayals of Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, etc.)
- Magical realism and national identities
- Taiwanese or Chinese nationalisms
- Travelers' tales and nationalism
- Politics and nationalism in children's literary fantasies
- Repressive governments such as ISIS and North Korea, and their national fantasies
- Fantasy or folklore and twentieth-century Nazism
- Fantasy and national or ethnic identities
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- Fantasy and nationalism in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Catalonia, etc.
- Colonial and post-colonial nationalisms and literary fantasies

#### **Fantasy and politics:**

- The politics of or within best-selling literary fantasies such as *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Gormenghast trilogy*, *The Master and Margarita*, *The Books of Earthsea*, *Harry Potter*, *His Dark Materials*, *Game of Thrones* and others
- Political satires written in the fantastic genre or politicized fantasies
- Sexual politics and fantasy / sexual fantasy and politics ("The Wife of Bath's Tale," the *Arabian Nights*, *Game of Thrones*, etc.)
- Fantasy, politics, and nationalism in early modern literature (Shakespeare, Marlowe, Spenser, Milton, Sidney, etc.)
- Victorian fantasists, politics, and/or reform: William Morris, Charles Kingsley, George MacDonald, Lewis Carroll, Christina Rossetti, Dinah Mulock, Margaret Oliphant, Tennyson, the Brontës, Dickens, Thackeray, etc.
- Politics, literature, and "alternative facts"

#### **Medium and Reception Histories**

- Mediums and fantasy: oral traditions, books, periodicals, comics, film, etc.
- Literary fantasy and its publishers
- The international diffusion and reception history of national fantasies across borders
- Western fantasies in the East / Eastern fantasies in the West
- Politicized reception histories of fantasy
- Rediscovered or repurposed fantastic texts

Papers will be limited to 20 minutes.

Please **submit a 250–300 word abstract and the [requested presenter information](mailto:LFAIDTaipei@gmail.com)** in one Word or PDF file to the conference e-mail address, [LFAIDTaipei@gmail.com](mailto:LFAIDTaipei@gmail.com), by **Friday, August 31, 2018**. We also have an early-consideration deadline, **Monday, June 4, 2018**. Anyone may apply by either deadline, and we will respond within two weeks of each due date.

#### **Conference Publication**

We are partnering with National Taiwan University's journal *Ex-position* (formerly *NTU Studies in Language and Literature*) to publish selected revised and double-blind peer reviewed essays related to our theme. *Ex-position* is open access, printed in both hard copy and electronically, and indexed in *MLA International Bibliography*. The journal issue will be published in December of 2019.

**Keynote speakers** (listed alphabetically):

**Ackbar Abbas** (University of California, Irvine) has published many essays on art, architecture and urbanism, film, and critical theory. His books include *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (U of Minnesota P, 1997). He is working on a book on “Posthumous Socialism” about China and Hong Kong, a collaborative volume on “Volatility” in contemporary culture and finance, and a co-edited book on “Poor Theory.”

**Marysa Demoer** has published widely on Victorian and modernist culture and has authored or edited nearly twenty books, including *Their Fair Share: Women, Power and Criticism in the Athenaeum* (Ashgate, 2000) and *Marketing the Author: Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves and Self-fashioning* (Palgrave, 2004). With Laurel Brake, she co-edited the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism* (Academia Press and British Library 2009) and the *Lure of Illustration in the Nineteenth Century: Picture and Press* (Palgrave 2009). Identity, nationhood and *histoire croisée* are at the center of several of her more recent publications.

*This version of the CFP was updated on May 1, 2018 in order to categorize the suggested topics, to include information on our publication collaboration with Ex-position, and to include keynote speaker biographies.*