

Imagining the Impossible: International Journal for the Fantastic in Contemporary Media

CFP for Volume 4, Issue 1 (2025)

Theme: Old

To be published Fall 2025

This international, peer-reviewed journal is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of the fantastic in today's entertainment media, including film, literature, television, games, comic books, animated films, theme parks, and online forums. The journal is double blind peer-reviewed and has 1-2 issues per year.

Volume 4, Issue 1: Old (Fall 2025)

In her essay "The Space Crone," Ursula K. Le Guin ponders who should be sent to make First Contact with an alien species and concludes that the ideal candidate would be a post-menopausal woman, who has "experienced, accepted, and acted the entire human condition - the essential quality of which is Change." Yet in sci-fi and fantasy narratives, older people and older women in particular tend to play marginal roles. The fountain of youth is a prized treasure, with fantastic worlds often imagining ways to slow down, stop, or even reverse the aging process. From vampires with supernaturally long life to the transhumanist rejuvenation treatments imagined by contemporary sci-fi, it seems our greatest fear is not to die but to age.

Yet old age is also associated with wisdom and the figure of the sage or the seer. Religion and myth frequently connect old age with the control of fate and future, as with the *moirae* in Greek mythology. In ancient Rome, Cicero said, "the crowning glory of old age is respect" and in Christian iconography, God is usually depicted as an old man. Such images are often repeated in fantastic fiction, with older figures such as Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*, Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*, or Mother Abigail in Stephen King's *The Stand* offering guidance to younger protagonists. Even here, though, the old are helpers rather than agents; they can assist the hero but not be the hero, unless they can regain the physical capacities and appearance of youth.

Old may also be considered in relation to civilizations and the supernatural. In horror fiction, age and antiquity are often sources of malevolent power, as in H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos, in which the Elder Gods or 'Great Old Ones' constantly threaten to destroy humanity's fragile civilization. Gothic literature is full of crumbling ruins and ancient rites that still retain an inexplicable power over modern characters. Sci-fi and fantasy worlds are replete with ancient civilizations that either have or are fading from view. These civilizations can be decadent and corrupt, as with the Galactic Empire of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series, or noble and wise, as in the passing Elven kingdoms of Middle Earth.

In this issue, we welcome original articles on the concept of OLD in contemporary fantastic narratives. Topics may relate to the imagination, philosophy, and mythology of old; old in relation to gender, race, sexuality, or other differences; production design of old objects or worlds; or the representation of time, such as the deep past and its influence on the present.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Philosophical, religious, or mythic concepts of old
- Old as plot device (escaping, stopping, defying old)
- Old and morality
- Old and estrangement
- Figures related to old, e.g. witch, wise woman, old wizard
- Tropes, places, things or beings, e.g. the fountain of youth, the phoenix
- Old worlds, old civilizations
- Old nature, e.g. old trees such as Yggdrasill in Norse mythology
- Visual design/depictions of old
- Old and (sci-fi) technology
- Old and distance (space-time)
- Analysis of fantastic works/texts where old is a theme

Length

5000–8000 words, Chicago style (in text), please keep notes to a minimum. Illustrations are welcome, 300 dpi at print size, .jpg. Authors are responsible for all illustration copyrights.

Deadline for Volume 4, Issue 1: Theme: Old

A 500–800 word abstract on December 1, 2024. Response on abstract by December 15. A first draft article May 1, 2025. Published Fall 2025. The finished article should include 125–150 word abstract and 5 – 7 keywords. Articles will be double blind peer-reviewed, edited and published online as they are submitted to the journal.

Please send proposals and questions to the editorial team.

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