

## ***Irradiating the Object & SFF Now* Conference Report**

The event was comprised of two conferences: *Irradiating the Object: A Conference on the Work of M John Harrison*, (August 21<sup>st</sup> 2014) and *SFF Now* (August 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2014). The first was dedicated wholly to the work of M John Harrison, a prominent but understudied author who has been at the leading edge of genre writing since his career began in the 1960's. A day of academic papers interspersed with keynotes, the conference was organised as part of a series of such conferences sponsored by the publisher Gylphi, on critically understudied authors. Harrison himself attended the whole event, giving a reading of a new story, a closing Q&A, and generally weighing in on the debate during the day! A book is to be developed from the papers given, published by Gylphi, over the course of the next year, edited by Mark Bould and Rhys Williams, and an interview by Rhys Williams with the author was podcast just after the event.

The second conference, *SFF Now*, was an international affair, organised around both traditional panels of academic papers, interspersed by an innovative workshop format. The workshops, 8 in total, were focussed around exploring contemporary interdisciplinary issues through the lens of fantastic fiction—from Animal Studies, Environmental Studies, Energy Studies and Science Studies to the political potential of the genre. Each workshop was led by two specialists in the subject area, and was structured in such a way as to encourage maximum participation from the audience. The format, and the funding received, allowed the quality of the conference to be particularly high, as in essence we had 16 keynotes over the course of the two days, and when these international experts were not leading a workshop, they were participating in one as an audience member. This allowed the graduate, post-graduate and early career researchers attending the unique opportunity to interact and discuss with the leaders of their field on an equal and informal footing for the duration of the conference. The proceedings—primarily drawn from workshop presentations but also including a few invited papers from the traditional panels, as well as extra interviews with authors including Pulitzer-prize winning author Junot Díaz—will be published December 2014 as a special issue of the journal *Paradoxa*, also edited by Mark Bould and Rhys Williams.

Both conferences were an enormous success. All of it was recorded, and the audio is available through the IAS conference website.