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AUTHOR Lowell.


TITLE The Biglow papers.

Date Due	Borrower's Name	Date Returned
Aug 6 '40	Wanda A. [unclear]	Aug [unclear]
Apr 30 '41	[unclear]	Aug [unclear]
May 10 '41	[unclear]	Aug [unclear]

Redemption, Integrity, and Heroism: The Case for Hopepunk in the Current Dystopia


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Melbourne, Australia

World Science Fiction Convention 2019




What Is Hopepunk? (1)

- “The opposite of grimdark is hopepunk” (Rowland 2017a).
- “Hopepunk is grubby, because that’s what happens when you fight. It’s hard. It’s filthy, sweaty, backbreaking work that never ends. It isn’t pretty, and it isn’t noble, and it isn’t nice” (Rowland 2019).
- “It’s about actively taking action...and standing up against authority and being the person to stand up for people who are being marginalised or oppressed, or hurt by people in authority” (Rowland, quoted in Hopkins 2019).
- “...an alternative to the [post-9/11] mainstream political narrative of fear” (Slack, quoted in Romano 2018).
- “...weaponized optimism” (Romano 2018)




What Is Hopepunk? (2)

- Punk
- Disruption
 - “...an emphasis on negationism (rather than nihilism); a consciousness of class-based politics (with a stress on ‘workingclass credibility’); and a belief in spontaneity and ‘doing it yourself’”(Sabin 2002, p. 3)
 - “...the punk sound connoted first of all a disruption of convention and morality” (Laing 2015).
- A body of works participating in a common set of themes or tropes (steampunk, elfpunk, nowpunk, monkeypunk, etc.)
- Necessarily speculative?



Hopepunk is Political

- “Hopepunk says that kindness and softness doesn’t equal weakness, and that in this world of brutal cynicism and nihilism, being kind is a *political act. An act of rebellion*” (Rowland 2017b).
- Kindness disrupts the quietism of despair on which negative power structures rely for their persistence.



Historical Context

- Global warfare
- Post-colonialism
- Nuclear threat
- Climate change
- Resurgence of racism and far-right politics
- Pervasiveness of social media




Literary Context

- Reaction to grimdark and pessimism (Klein, 1977), “Golden Age” optimism (Hillegas 1961; Klein 1977), and noblebright (although there is an overlap here; see Myers 2016; Reeves-McMillan 2019)
- Disruption of “happily ever after”
- Transmediated and medium-independent (in other words, it includes books, film, television, adaptations, etc.)
- Genre-independent



Characters

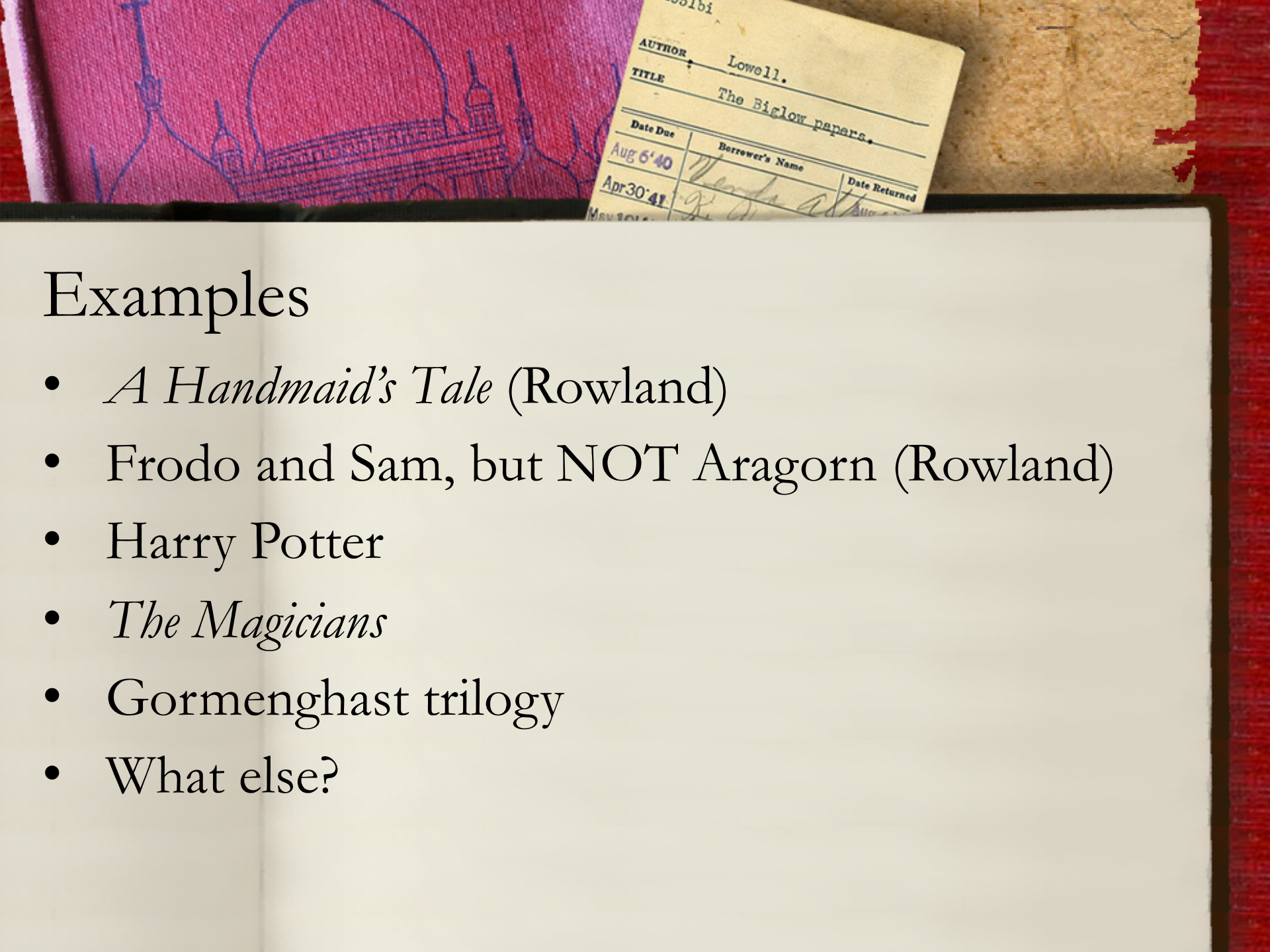
- conflicted
- flawed
- prone to failure
- capable of redemption
- scarred
- their agency matters



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Themes and Tropes

- Struggle (against self and situation as much as against an adversary)
- Ambiguity (purpose, right and wrong, chances of success)
- Collective action (no “lonely heroes”)
- Lasting consequences
- Inconclusivity



The image shows a book cover with a purple and blue pattern, a library card, and an open book with a white page. The library card is partially visible, showing the author 'Lowell.' and the title 'The Biglow papers.' The open book has a white page with the word 'Examples' and a list of items.

Examples

- *A Handmaid's Tale* (Rowland)
- Frodo and Sam, but NOT Aragorn (Rowland)
- Harry Potter
- *The Magicians*
- Gormenghast trilogy
- What else?



Why Hoopunk? (1)


- Provides an alternative to despair
- Disrupts oppressive power structures
- The process – the enactment – of kindness is the goal (as opposed to “success” or the completion of the quest)
- Stories give permission to imagination, and thus to imaginative and disruptive actions



Why Hopepunk? (2)

“We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art. Very often in our art, the art of words.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin, National Book Awards, 2014




“Hopepunk isn’t about moral perfection. It’s not about being as pure and innocent as the new-fallen snow. You get grubby when you fight. You make mistakes. You’re sometimes a little bit of an asshole. Maybe you’re as much as 50% an asshole. But the glass is half full, not half empty. You get up, and you keep fighting, and caring, and trying to make the world a little better for the people around you. You get to make mistakes. It’s a process. You get to ask for and earn forgiveness. And you love, and love, and love” (Rowland 2017b).

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Questions?

Thank you!
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