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While many of the examples in the book are pulled from various adaptations of *The Witcher*, Larsen also uses examples from a wide range of fantasy and science fiction media. She has previously written extensively on astronomy and physics in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, and some material from her prior articles reappears throughout this text, particularly in the introduction and chapter 3. The variety of fictional worlds Larsen draws from, as well as her detailed explanations of each example, makes the book very approachable even for audiences with a less than encyclopedic knowledge of the source material. Her analysis of knowledge transmission and scientific issues through the lens of fantasy literature is a worthwhile read for any author interested in the confluence of medieval knowledge systems, the history of science, and popular culture. (It may be worth mentioning that very little of Larsen’s analysis pulls from the video game adaptations of *The Witcher* [CD Projekt Red, 2007-15], focusing primarily on the recent Netflix series [2019-] and the novels and short stories—in fact, there are several cases in the book where Larsen draws from pop cultural sources such as the *Resident Evil* movies [Sony Pictures, 2002-21] despite there being more relevant examples in the original video game material). The majority of this analysis focuses on books, short stories, and TV shows and movies.

Larsen’s first chapter deals primarily with establishing (or not) the differences between science and magic in the *Witcher* setting. As part of this delineation, she explores the recurring dichotomy of order and chaos in the Witcherverse and the different ways that Sapkowski explores and sub-
verts the very dichotomy he presents; for example, a dragon associated with the concept of magic or “chaos” is a particularly protective and in many ways noble character. Magic on the Continent is described simultaneously as “science, art, and chaos,” with each of these definitions serving as a different knowledge framework for the characters to interact with the world (p. 27).

Chapter 2 sets out Larsen’s theories about the portrayal of knowledge transmission in the Witcherverse, and it is a particularly fascinating chapter for readers interested in portrayals of cultural knowledge. Larsen deals particularly with the transmission of information through folk tradition and stories, and with the pursuit of truth in the series both through stories and through empirical research. It is particularly useful to Larsen’s discussion that the characters who appear most frequently in the series are all associated with different forms of knowledge transmission; the bard Jaskier deals largely in myth and storytelling, while Geralt’s sorceress companions practice the more empirical “science” of magic. As a witcher, Geralt himself lies somewhere in between, trained in empirical investigation but unable to discount folk stories that might help him in his pursuits. Chapters 3 and 4 provide more specific case studies of the portrayal of science and magic on the Continent, while chapter 3 is about navigation in time and space, including astronomy and cartography, and chapter 4 deals with how pop cultural portrayals of mad scientists overlap with the depictions of sorcerers in this setting.

The next several chapters delve increasingly deeper into the overlap between science and politics in the Witcherverse, supported with examples from across a wide range of fantasy and science fiction media. Throughout both the novels and other adaptations, racism and discrimination on the Continent provide a major source of conflict. Larsen spends a considerable amount of time studying the in-world pseudoscience that exacerbates this conflict, and the ways that political maneuvering and the maneuvering of sorcerers and scholars overlap. She also deals with the environmental and conservation aspects of the series, concluding that an environmentalist message is inherent to a series focusing largely around the hunting or investigation of rare and dangerous animals.

Chapter 8 continues the discussion of politics and science, exploring a wide variety of media sources including X-men (Marvel Comics, 1963- ) and Frankenstein (Mary Shelley, 1818) as works of “genetic fiction.” Genetic experimentation is prevalent in the Witcherverse, including selective breeding of sapientverse, including selective breeding of sapient beings, mutation-inducing experiments on humans and animals, and the magical creation of strange beasts. Larsen proposes that The Witcher series is genetic fiction in several distinct ways: in dealing with “otherness” and discrimination through the lens of a genetically modified creature, in dealing with semi-realistic modification of organisms and societal concern about eugenics and genetic mutation, and as a piece of fiction that explores questions of ethics and humanity through genetic engineering and human testing.

Chapter 9 deals with technology, particularly technologies of war. Larsen uses real-world examples of technology and weapons of mass destruction juxtaposed with situations from The Witcher and from a variety of other pop culture sources to explore the relationship between real-world concerns and their portrayals in fiction. In chapter 10, Larsen circles back to the ecological ideas discussed earlier in the book, proposing that The Witcher (in the books and short stories, particularly) is a work of “cli-fi,” or climate fiction, and exploring how the Continent is slowly becoming uninhabitable for many of the species living there. She discusses the impending in-universe ice age, and explores how the slowly dying setting was likely influenced by real-world instances of pollution and intense climate change in Sapkowski's native Poland.
Larsen ultimately concludes that *The Witcher* provides a powerful example of symbiosis between science, magic, and folklore, and that the ethical concerns she discusses throughout the book are clear examples of pressing ethical concerns in the current day. Each individual chapter is a fairly self-contained piece with its own concept and arguments, which results in the overall conclusion of the book being relatively short and abstract compared to the arguments provided in the chapters. Regardless, Larsen does an admirable job of synthesizing her literary analysis with analysis of the real-world history of science, and particularly in discussing how the use of differing knowledge and political systems is exemplified in *The Witcher*.

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