



LUND UNIVERSITY

Evolution, Fiction, and Popular Science

Helsing, Daniel

2016

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version (aka post-print)

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Helsing, D. (2016). *Evolution, Fiction, and Popular Science*. Abstract from Graduate Workshop on Fiction and Philosophy, 2016, Lund, Sweden. <http://www.fil.lu.se/forskning/konferenser/konferenser-2016/abstracts-and-presentations/>

Total number of authors:

1

General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Daniel Helsing: *Evolution, Fiction, and Popular Science*

ABSTRACT: From an evolutionary point of view, the existence of fiction poses an explanatory challenge. Naively, one would expect fiction to be shunned as deliberately conveyed falsehoods or as time-consuming unnecessarys. Yet fiction is ubiquitous in the human species. This challenge has been addressed over the past decades within the field known as literary Darwinism or Darwinian literary studies. In this talk, I review some of the most common accounts of fiction within this field. Furthermore, I discuss whether these accounts may shed light on literary non-fiction as well, in particular popular science dealing with physics and astronomy. Popular science is an interesting genre because modern science, with its non-intuitive scales and non-teleological explanations, challenges the human mind in unique ways, and popularizers need to convey science in a way that is understandable and enticing for humans. I argue that popular science indeed does draw upon some of the same cognitive abilities and has some of the same functions as fiction, and I illustrate this through examples from contemporary popular science.

PRESENTATION: Daniel Helsing is a PhD candidate in comparative literature at Lund University. His dissertation deals with contemporary popular science, and he is particularly interested in ways in which popular science meets the conceptual, emotional, and existential challenges that modern science poses. See also his webpage (<http://www.sol.lu.se/en/person/DanielHelsing/>).