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Critical Theory And Science Fiction



Synopsis

Carl Freedman traces the fundamental and mostly unexamined relationships between the discourses of science fiction and critical theory, arguing that science fiction is (or ought to be) a privileged genre for critical theory. He asserts that it is no accident that the upsurge of academic interest in science fiction since the 1970s coincides with the heyday of literary theory, and that likewise science fiction is one of the most theoretically informed areas of the literary profession. Extended readings of novels by five of the most important modern science fiction authors illustrate the affinity between science fiction and critical theory, in each case concentrating on one major novel that resonates with concerns proper to critical theory. Freedman's five readings are: *Solaris*: Stanislaw Lem and the Structure of Cognition; *The Dispossessed*: Ursula LeGuin and the Ambiguities of Utopia; *The Two of Them*: Joanna Russ and the Violence of Gender; *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*: Samuel Delany and the Dialectics of Difference; *The Man in the High Castle*: Philip K. Dick and the Construction of Realities.

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Customer Reviews

“An important volume . . . [Freedman] writes intriguingly about affinities between science fiction and historical fiction and makes useful observations about parallels between science fiction and utopian fiction . . . His concluding speculations about the future of both critical theory and science fiction are judicious and restrained. A valuable addition to the slim collection of groundbreaking critical works on science fiction.” —Choice “Full of sharp insights . . . an ambitious book . . . fans

who . . . ponder about sfâ€™s links with wider bodies of thought and conversation will find it extremely useful.â€• "Foundation: International Review of Science Fiction

â€œFreedmanâ€™s intelligent championing of Joanna Russâ€™s *The Two of Them* â€œ surely the finest novel written in English in the present tense â€œ is worth the price of admission. And there are many other things of interest here.â€• (Samuel R. Delany)â€œBoth those who agree with Carl Freedmanâ€™s bold claim that there are significant overlaps between Science Fiction and critical theory or Marxist socialism, and those who do not, would do well to ponder his ingenious argument. For it is buttressed by sympathetic analyses of the masterpieces, from More and Wells right down to a major focus on Lem, Dick, LeGuin, Russ, and Delany.â€• (Darko Suvin, McGill University)

It's amazing that people can judge a book by reading excerpts on the net. Critical Theory and Science Fiction is not an easy read but CT never was or will be. You don't have to agree with the Marxist theories of Bloch and Adorno, Carl Freedman uses to make his various points, to appreciate his insights and the challenges he throws at the reader. That is what academics are supposed to do and not to wallow in old cliché's and easy answers. The "excursuses" (his term) into classic SF novels such as Stanislaw Lem's *SOLARIS*, Ursula Le Guin's *THE DISPOSSESSED*, Joanna Russ' *THE TWO OF THEM*, Samuel Delany's *STARS IN MY POCKET LIKE GRAINS OF SANDS* and the greatest SF writer, Philip K Dick's *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* are lessons every SF reader and writer should make their own. At least Freedman is raising the level of SF discourse beyond Star Trek Conventions or Star Wars hype.

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