
where one not only becomes familiar with theory, but also sees the theory specifically applied to a text. Thus, the majority of the essays are as illuminating as they are pedagogically useful.

Fittingly, the collection concludes with an essay by Girard from 1998, in which he discusses the inextricable nature of his theory and his faith: “Great literature led me to Christianity” (281). He expertly critiques the fashionable “post” patois that has dominated literature departments for the past few decades, and convincingly answers why we are still dissatisfied after we get what we want: “[w]e are totally disenchanted and cannot find any new model. This is the worst kind of frustration, the one that experts call post-modern and post-Christian, perhaps even post-mimetic desire” (282). Thus, the organization of the collection is manageable, as the reader can enjoy the text as one unit, or choose to selectively use the book as a reference guide.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the book, it does come with flaws. Some of the essays that apply Girardian theory spend too much time summarizing the plot of novels, consequently pushing Girard to the periphery. Moreover, additional Girardian themes, such as scapegoating and sacrifice (which are illuminated in Part I) should have been developed more fully in Part II. However, due to its content, organization, and readability, *Mimesis, Desire, and the Novel* is a solid resource for research as well as instruction, and serves as a valuable guide for understanding an important literary theorist.

Brian Attebery and Veronica Hollinger, eds. *Parabolas of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2013. 312pp.

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Parabolas of Science Fiction is an ambitious collection that sets out to do nothing less than re-define the terms in which scholars, critics, and fans speak about science fiction. The editors, Brian Attebery and Veronica Hollinger, are well qualified for the task. Attebery is the editor of the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* and the author of two books on science fiction and fantasy, while Hollinger is coeditor of *Science Fiction Studies*, as well as multiple anthologies on science fiction. The eponymous term around which Attebery and Hollinger seek to redefine science-fiction studies is *parabola*. Though Attebery asserts that the term “is not just a fancier alternative to *story arc*” (3, author’s italics) he does propose that there “is something about this shape that fits the way we imagine adventures” (3). Attebery opens up the incredibly evocative potential of the term *parabola* when he observes that “with its echoes of orbits and equations, [it] not only matches the generic décor but also more suggestively describes the way certain shared narrative patterns integrate narrative needs, scientific information, and metacommentary on the genre itself” (3). Attebery posits this image of an open-ended arc as a genre-defining alternative to the traditional concepts of trope or formula.

This is where the volume’s premise runs into trouble. In order to make this case, Attebery and Hollinger claim that sf (literary science fiction) is unique among genres insofar as it “never developed a single fictional formula or reading protocol of the sort identified in Westerns and detective stories” (vii). The claim that sf is immune to generic formulas runs contrary to

literary history, in light of the genre's longstanding use of tropes such as space travel, alien encounters, and ambivalent relationships with technology. The editors immediately qualify their claim, suggesting that there "are many formulaic subtypes but no one recognized and controlling structure for sf" (vii). The editors go on to undercut their own position when they claim that "the parabola as discussed in this volume pinpoints something important *and unique* about the science fiction genre" (xi, my italics) only to follow that up with the concession that "all genres are collaborative, and thus all may have their own forms of the parabola" (xi). My critique of this premise is more rhetorical than substantive in nature: I find the concept of the parabola to be an intriguing new way to think about tropes and generic formulas and the ways these get reimagined and redeployed; however, claiming that the parabola is fundamentally unlike a trope or formula is questionable. Terry Dowling's essay in this volume, "Dancing with Scheherazade," is helpful in regards to my criticism. In reflecting on his own fiction, Dowling defines the "parabolic method" as "working according to well-established themes and tropes that allow the writer to springboard into something richer, fuller, and of its time" (25). Dowling provides a more realistic definition of the term *parabola* as the adaptation of existing generic formulas. My criticism aside, the concept of the parabola is evocative for two reasons. First, according to Attebery and Hollinger, it offers a fresh way to consider "how genres undergo transformation through time, responsive as they are both to conventional formulations and to changing historical conditions" (xv). Second, as Attebery explains, it plays on "the root word of *parable*" (15, author's italics). In this sense, the parabola suggests that a sf story is "a vehicle for significance" insofar as it "invites the reader to look for implications outside the world of the story" (15). With this dual application of the parabola in place, the volume proceeds to demonstrate how sf engages questions about power, identity, the future, and the conditions of the genre itself.

Parabolas of Science Fiction is a substantial volume totaling fourteen essays divided into four parts, with each section containing three to four essays. The first section defines the terminology mentioned above, frames the scope of the collection, and describes the methodology behind the editors' approach to studying science fiction. Section two explores both the overtly and covertly political qualities of the genre. Part three is an eclectic section organized around the dual concept of boundaries and boundary crossing. The acts of boundary crossing this section examines range from film adaptations of literary sources to experiments in human-animal hybrids. The final section is, in my mind, the least well-constructed in this volume. The editors articulate this section's theme sufficiently: its task is to examine how "projected futures interact with real and imagined versions of the past" (xiv). However, the first two essays, by Pawel Frelik and Gary K. Wolfe, strike off in directions that undercut the theoretical definitions guiding the collection as a whole. The exception here is Hollinger's own thought-provoking essay, titled "Science Fiction as Archive Fever," on the way the modernist logic of the archive gets transformed and reimagined in a postmodern, digital world (242-60).

In light of the sheer number of essays in *Parabolas of Science Fiction*, it is impractical to comment on each one in this review. As a result, I will take a more selective approach by considering particular essays that are representative of the larger concerns of the collection. These topics include cultural identities, gender, and adaptation. Rachel Haywood Ferreira and Amy J. Ransom examine the political properties of Latin American sf and Canadian sf, respectively. Ferreira destabilizes the sf trope of first contact with an alien civilization by examining the postcolonial implications of invasion: "For those writing in a postcolo-

nial reality, the consequences of contact/conquest/colonization are especially immediate, woven into the fabric of both everyday reality and cultural identity” (70). Ransom similarly pulls sf studies away from its traditional preoccupation with “the Anglo-American texts that dominate the genre” (89) and relocates it within the debate over Canadian national-ethnic identity (90-93). Jane Donawerth and Lisa Yaszek examine “the relationship of gender to the [sf] genre” (53). Specifically, Donawerth focuses on sf stories that express women’s anxieties about bodies and reproduction (55); more broadly, she is interested in sf by and about women, fiction in which a “woman, not a man, is the scientist-hero” (59). Yaszek similarly finds in sf the potential for feminist challenges to patriarchy. She argues that women’s sf of the 1960s and ‘70s was politically engaged in reimagining what social equality might look like both domestically and publically for women (114). In *Parabolas of Science Fiction*, adaptation encompasses many forms. L. Timmel Duchamp examines sf narratives about the artificial construction of humanoid creatures and the experimental combination of human and animal species. Duchamp points out that sf “often explore[s] what it means to be human” (128), and he argues that “narratives of hybridity trouble the neat categories into which humans like to slot those who differ from themselves” (128). John Rieder and Nicholas Ruddick both draw on film adaptations of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in order to reflect on the theoretical implications of adaptation as a mode of transformation. Ruddick in particular suggests that adaptation can be thought of as “a remediation” (180-81, author’s italics), that is, as a remedy to a problem that either is inherent to the source material or is caused by a previous adaptation of that source (181).

The majority of the essays in *Parabolas of Science Fiction* are relatively well researched and theoretically informed. Authors routinely draw on a range of heavy-hitting theorists such as Giorgio Agamben, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Linda Hutcheon, Fredric Jameson, and Slavoj Žižek. Unfortunately, the robustness of the endnotes varies dramatically, with certain essays boasting as many as twenty or more and some registering a mere two or three. Speaking of the endnotes, opting for endnotes over footnotes is a frustrating stylistic choice for a volume of this size. Hunting through fourteen different sets of notes while reading a particular essay is inconvenient at best and, frankly, discourages the practice of pursuing the potentially fruitful associations the authors make. More mystifying is the choice to lump the bibliographies for all of the essays into a single Works Cited. This makes it difficult to assess the scholarly depth of individual pieces and to develop a sense of how they marshal their respective scholarly sources.

Touching on both the literature and cinema of science fiction and reflecting on the generic, political, cultural, archival, and feminist ramifications of the genre, *Parabolas of Science Fiction* advances the study of this rich and diverse field. Despite the few criticisms I have articulated here, I expect sf scholars to find this volume extremely useful. The essays are scholarly yet accessible enough that the collection would make a fine resource for graduate or upper-level undergraduate sf courses. In addition, scholars specializing in fields ranging from Feminism to Postmodernism to narrative theory to comparative literature will be able to harvest relevant items from this collection. While I do not think *Parabolas of Science Fiction* radically changes the sf discourse in the way its editors hoped, it succeeds in furthering that discourse by giving scholars a new and fruitful way to articulate a set of ideas that have long defined one of the most widespread and influential genres in the Western world.