



Critical Theory and Science Fiction

By Carl Freedman

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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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Editorial Review

Review

“[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 sf’s links with wider bodies of thought and conversation will find it extremely useful.”—*Foundation: International Review of Science Fiction*

Review

“Freedman’s intelligent championing of Joanna Russ’s *The Two of Them* – surely the finest novel written in English in the present tense – is worth the price of admission. And there are many other things of interest here.” (Samuel R. Delany)

“Both those who agree with Carl Freedman’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.” (Darko Suvin, McGill University)

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