

Conjunctions #39: The New Wave Fabulists

Bradford Morrow (Editor) , Jonathan Carroll (Guest Editor) , Kelly Link (Contributor) , Peter Straub (Guest Editor)

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For perhaps two decades, a small group of writers rooted in the genres of science fiction, fantasy and horror have been simultaneously exploring and erasing the boundaries of those genres by creating fiction of remarkable depth and power. Their connections to the genres they have been radically redefining have, for many of these writers, limited the appreciation of their accomplishments to a specialized readership. For example, though John Crowley and Jonathan Carroll have massive underground reputations, and Peter Straub has written two books with Stephen King and other bestselling novels such as "Ghost Story, Koko, " and "The Throat," many if not most readers of "Conjunctions" will be unfamiliar with their work. In this haunting and beautiful collection of tales, Crowley, Carroll and Straub join Elizabeth Hand, China Mieville, M. John Harrison, Neil Gaiman and Kelly Link to demonstrate precisely how science fiction, fantasy and horror have been unobtrusively colonizing serious literature during the past 20 years. As an added bonus, science fiction and fantasy experts Gary K. Wolfe and John Clute offer a critical perspective and explain everything in sight. With original cover art by master cartoonist Gahan Wilson.

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Periwinkle says

A very, very good collection of modern fantasy and 'slip-stream' horror writers.

Danielle McNamara says

Neil Gaiman has a story in this and I had a friend at Bard College (who's annual book this is) and he sent me a copy because he knew how much I loved Neil. I have yet to read anything other than Neil's story.

matthew says

some really brilliant stuff in here.

Paul Crittenden says

Some great stories here. Now is not the time and this is not the place to get into a whole essay on "New Wave Fabulists" vs. "Slipstream" vs. "New Weird" vs. whatever. Suffice to say that the style of writing represented by the stories in Conjunctions 39 is my favorite style currently. These stories are subtle and smart, with feet firmly planted in both the genre stream as well as in the "main"stream. If you're looking for something different, something new, something that will wake you up, this may be what you're looking for. This is postmodern literature for folks who hate postmodernism. It's genre fiction for people who hate elves and ray guns. There is something in this collection for everybody. My personal favorites are Paul Park's spooky-as-hell "Abduction," Andy Duncan's fun yet cautionary "Big Rock Candy Mountain," and Kelly Link's devilish "Lull."

mayfly wake says

Here are the stories I've read so far:

The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines, by John Crowley: Going into this collection I expected immediate super-strangeness, but this was so subtle you might not even notice the weird if you weren't on the lookout for it. It moved a little slowly for my taste but I like the idea of planting a seed of doubt in realistic fiction, the way something kind of "off" in your day-to-day life might haunt you for years. Definitely some great character development, but all in all not really my speed.

Lull, by Kelly Link: This was more my style...the kind of nested, complex, mindfuck of a story that you have to read multiple times to even figure out the mechanics of the crazy universe you're in. Just enough of an

emotional component to drive home how bizarre things are in this reality. Some of the plot was really reminiscent of a certain Red Dwarf episode, but there was definitely enough beyond that to make it one of the most creative things I've read lately. It really made the most of the short story format. Awesome on a scale of one to awesome.

Entertaining Angels Unawares, by M. John Harrison: Set in England, so it immediately hit a soft spot in my heart. A couple characters I felt like I knew personally by the end and certain vivid details that I had to reread just for the mental images and shivers up my spine. Like the first story, no outright surreal or fantastic elements, but it fit right in in a setting that was already eerie enough, characters flirting with madness....Some stories make me uncomfortable because they hit too close to home. Good.

Little Red's Tango, by Peter Straub: I LOVED THIS STORY. I haven't really read anything that uses deification and scripture about a "normal guy" from our time period but it's an idea I've thought about before. Catholicism at an early age tinges everything forever, and this really hit the spot. I won't give too much away, but the "Beatitudes" nearly brought me to tears. Hey! Jazz! Miracles! Squalor! This is my fave so far.

The Wisdom of the Skin by James Morrow:

Sex, the progression of art and academia, "cyberneurology", and a clone paradox all tenderly woven into a strange love story. Good stuff.

Brandy says

I've been plugging away at this one for a while now, because the stories in here are just plain *long*. I really like Poe's definition of the short story--something you can read in one sitting--and a lot of what's here just doesn't qualify. That said, most of what's here is very good (the contributors list is a veritable Who's Who of my bookcases), so on balance, worth a read. But don't expect it to fly by.

Jon says

The best of these are wonderful. The least of them? Well, as Mr. Gaiman says near the end of his:

"It was a story," said December. "I'll say that for it."

Ken Ficara says

Conjunctions: 39, The New Wave Fabulists by Peter Straub (2002)
