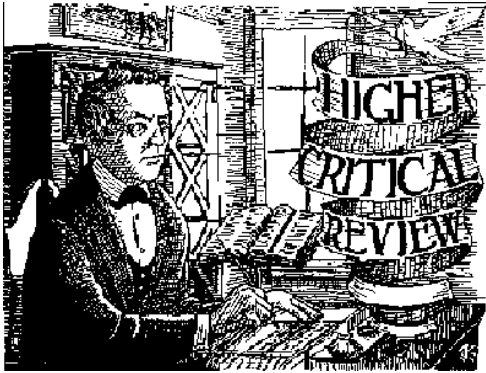


Literatures of the Fantastic Critical Review

engl 200 / sec. D / autumn quarter 2007-08 / chang



This class takes up as its central preoccupation: What exactly *is* fantasy or fantastic literature? And as we will see over the weeks, the definition of what is considered fantasy is not as narrow nor as stereotypical as many believe. Fantasy, to paraphrase Le Guin, bears a kind of truth, a way of seeing and knowing. Some of English's greatest works are in fact fantasy yet the fantastic does not diminish its value, its story, its power to engage and critique the world. Does that mean that all fantastic literature is 'good' literature or equally useful, interesting, critical? Does all fantastic literature imagine and understand and comment on the world in the same way? How do we know what is worthwhile, telling, analytical, and important literature, fantastic or not?

Review of a Text

For this assignment, you must select a text **outside** the course texts, one that we have **not** covered in class. The text could be a short story, a novel, a poem, even a film or video. Select a text that you believe fits the theme and goals of the course, a text that you must argue belongs in a class called "Literatures of the Fantastic." An **outstanding text** will engage the inquiries and grinding edges of the course in multiple ways and will speak to the other texts included in the syllabus. When picking a text, avoid the obvious, the superficial, the fantastic-for-the-fantastic sake; a **creative risk** or **interpretative leap** might be to choose a text that is not obviously 'fantasy' or 'science fiction' but might be read against the grain or in the same vein as typical texts.

You must read or watch the text. Consider the theoretical and interpretative questions we have been asking and trying to answer all quarter. Then write a short **500-750 word** critical review of the text explicating and expressing why the text would make a strong addition to the course syllabus. Use the following questions as guidelines and jumping off points:

- What kind of text do you want to review? What kind of text would fit well within the scope of the course?
- Who is the text by? Is it someone already included in the syllabus? Would your text replace a current text?
- What makes the text fantastic? What features and qualities make it ideal for the class?
- Most importantly, what does the text tell us about the fantastic? About culture? About our world? What are the critical questions the text asks, complicates, and answers?

Your critical review must be more than just a descriptive 'book report.' Plot, characters, setting, themes, and summary will be a necessary portion of your review, but the majority of your writing will be **analyzing** and **articulating** why the text befits the course. You might want to take a look at book reviews in a scholarly journal (for English), in the *New Yorker* magazine, or the *Washington Post* or *The New York Times*. Your critical review should offer specific arguments and concrete details drawn from the text itself.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Format: 500 to 750 words, typed, no title page, single-spaced, block format, proper heading posted to the class blog, use the subject line: "CRITICAL REVIEW: <your title>" include bibliography, useful links if necessary

Due: by the end of the quarter
no later than Monday, December 10