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***Fantasy: How It Works* by Brian Attebery**

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Fantasy: How It Works by Brian Attebery

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FANTASY: HOW IT WORKS. Brian Attebery. NY: Oxford University Press, 2022. 198 p. ISBN 9780192856234. \$29.99.

BRIAN ATTEBERY'S *FANTASY: HOW IT WORKS* was recently awarded the 2023 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies and it's not hard to see why; in this dense but thought-provoking volume Attebery builds on his previous scholarship and sets a critical standard for the field going forward in a series of culminating propositions. Chapter by chapter, Attebery presents new perspectives from which to view various facets of the fantasy genre.

In the Introduction Attebery establishes his dual lines of inquiry: How does fantasy mean, and what does fantasy do? These lines of inquiry are given consideration within the contexts of different aspects of fantasy world-building and storytelling. Attebery discusses Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of chronotope, or time-space. He defines the "story-world" in fantasy fiction as distinct from "setting" in realistic fiction. The first line of inquiry borrows from John Ciardi's study of poetry, while the second relates to the work of critic Jane Tompkins.

In "How Does Fantasy Mean: The Shape of Truth," Attebery discusses fantasy's relationship to and use of metaphor, riddles, and myth. He elaborates on the concept of distributive selfhood. Notable examples include Roderick and Madeline Usher; Orual, Ungit, and Psyche in C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*; Frodo/Sam/Smeagol/Gollum (as noted by Ursula K. Le Guin); and Philip Pullman's daemons. Even spaces in fantasy can take on roles in their respective story-world that in turn imbue the narrative with meaning—Peake's Gormeghast, the aforementioned House of Usher, and instances in the work of George MacDonald.

In "Realism and the Structures of Fantasy: The Family Story," Attebery considers the "family story" trope wherein fantastic elements occur in what is an otherwise conventional, realistic setting. Attebery discusses the works of Elizabeth Enright and Edward Eager in this context and their development of story-worlds in their fiction.

In "Neighbors, Myths, and Fantasy," Attebery discusses some more recent examples of narratives depicting clashing mythic systems that occur in urban, contemporary environments. These narratives feature confrontations with the "other" and as they follow the fantasy genre's need for eucatastrophe as defined by Tolkien they provide a path for resolution and transformation.

In "A Mitochondrial Theory of Literature: Fantasy and Intertextuality," Attebery uses the concept of a "book club" as a metaphor to expound on science fiction, especially science fiction written by women. He notes that book club membership is primarily comprised of women, while the literary/critical establishment has traditionally been dominated by men who have tended to

marginalize women, especially in the science fiction field. He brings Diana Pavlac Glyer's study on the Inklings into the conversation on the web of influence among writers groups more generally, contrasting this with Hemingway's marginalization of Gertrude Stein's influence in *A Moveable Feast*. Just as mitochondrial DNA is inherited from the mother, so has science fiction literature inherited from female contributors in ways that are too significant to overlook. In the same manner that members of book clubs form connections to one another works of literature also connect to others—examples Attebery discusses are Karen Joy Fowler's literal *Jane Austen Book Club*, and Le Guin's literary *Lavinia*. He also incorporates Joanna Russ, James Tiptree Jr., and Mary Shelley to make his point about the widespread influence of women in science fiction.

In the "Young Adult Dystopias and Yin Adult Utopias" Attebery reflects on the prevalence of utopias in young adult fiction and discusses it in the context of utopian fiction more generally. Early utopian fiction, such as Thomas More's *Utopia* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, relied on a "lecture/tour" model of the utopian society it depicted, but more recently authors have developed more nuanced presentations of utopias, or "critical" utopias, which Attebery breaks down into six major types: Ambassador from Utopia, the Misfit in Utopia, the Would-Be Immigrant, the Threat to Utopia, Building Utopia, and the Neverending Revolution. Not surprisingly, given Attebery's specialist expertise in the author, he devotes extended discussion to Ursula K. Le Guin.

In "Gender and Fantasy: Employing Fairy Tales," Attebery considers fairy tale retellings by male writers. He proposes three "alternate masculinities" as lenses through which to explore these retellings: the Little Man, the Monster Bridegroom, and the Erotic Swan. All three patterns challenge hegemonic masculinity.

In "*Timor mortis conturbat me: Fantasy and Fear*," Attebery discusses fantasy and the confrontation of the unknown. Here he delves into the blurred boundary between fantasy and horror. He contrasts Tolkien's eucatastrophe in fairy tales to Poe's theories of literary composition, and he further analyzes the views of Lovecraft, Stephen King, and John Clute in this regard. In fantasy fiction the same terrors which are characteristic of horror fiction are present, but in keeping with Tolkien's proposal, fantasy narratives feature unexpected turns or twists that result in a story arc that deviates from that found in horror. The fears in fantasy fiction often feature death and the Other. Once again, as examples Attebery showcases Ged's confrontation of his Shadow in Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* as well as C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*.

One of the more remarkable characteristics of Attebery's work is the scale of his reading. This slim volume includes discussion of Enid Blyton, Aliette

de Bodard, Lois McMaster Bujold, Octavia Butler, Zen Cho, Suzanne Collins, John Crowley, E.R. Eddison, Edward Fenton, Frances Hardinge, Nalo Hopkinson, Marlon James, N.K. Jemesin, John Kessel, George MacDonald, Patricia McKillip, William Morris, Nnedi Okorafor, Helen Oyeyemi, Kim Stanley Robinson, Nisi Shawl, James Thurber, G. Willow Wilson, Kai Ashante Wilson, Patricia Wrightson—and that is just a sample. The last chapter, “How Fantasy Means and What it Does: Some Propositions,” is a virtual manifesto of fantasy. This is a bravura performance.

—Glenn R. Gray

GLENN R. GRAY received his MLS from the University of Maryland, College Park, and he spent two years in the United Kingdom as a Fulbright scholar. He lives in Maryland where he works as an archivist for the federal government.



TAROT AND OTHER MEDITATION DECKS: HISTORY, THEORY, AESTHETICS, TYPOLOGY. Second Edition. Emily E. Auger. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2023. 368 p. ISBN 9781476686790. \$39.95.

EMILY E. AUGER IS A RETIRED ART HISTORIAN and author of numerous pieces on Tarot and meditation decks, with some of the more recent, aside from this text, being *Alchemy in the Tarot Temperance Card* in the online journal *Coreopsis* and *Cartomancy and Tarot in Film 1940–2010* from the University of Chicago Press. She founded and chaired the “Tarot and Other Divination Methods” area in the Pop Culture Association as well. In this second edition of *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks* Auger has added a fourth chapter discussing the shadow work and the intersection of digital technology with Tarot itself and the media on which it has exerted influence. The first edition was published in 2004, and this second edition has almost two more decades of Tarot to cover. The existing chapters were updated with additional research, although this research does not expand into potential updates since the 2004 publication. Auger brought in details and research she had previously omitted from the first edition, such as Mary Greer’s research. Terminology was changed in the case of major and minor arcana with trumps, courts, and pips and callouts of the *Rider-Waite Tarot* changed to the *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot*. Her Preface to the second edition is thorough in breaking down the differences between this edition and the first, and quite useful in determining if the updates are relevant to particular research needs.