The Order and the Other: Young Adult Utopian Literature and Science Fiction, by Joseph W. Campbell

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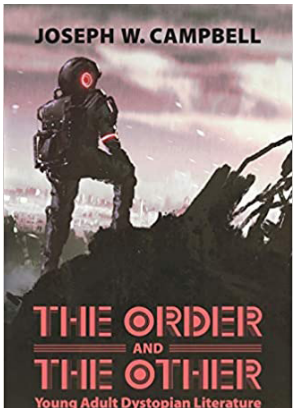

Joseph W. Campbell is a man on a mission. His goals are to differentiate SF from dystopian literature and to demonstrate "how essential it is for adolescents to come into contact with dystopian literature and science fiction and to understand these genres on their own terms" (5). For him, texts in both genres have a "use value" in the classroom, which is to say that texts in each genre invite an understanding of either othering (SF) or social critique (dystopia). *The Order and the Other: Young Adult Utopian Literature and Science Fiction*, consists of an Introduction, five chapters that take us from the theoretical underpinnings of the genres to observations about their future course, thorough notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Chapter One, "Interpellation, Identification, and the Boundary Between Self and the o/Other," establishes ways of looking at subject formation and its relationship to cultural and state power. The sources—Althusser, Žižek, Foucault, Burke, Trites, and others—will be familiar to most critics. Campbell demonstrates that adolescents are themselves othered, that they are under surveillance, and that society wants the literature written for them to reenforce prescribed social constructs. However, SF is built upon the novum (Ernst Bloch) and cognitive estrangement (Darko Suvin). Paraphrasing Carl Freedman, Campbell writes that "the novum is the object or place that creates radical alterity, the 'new thing' that immediately pulls readers out of their assumptions about how the world-within-the-fiction works" (34-35). Furthermore, "what we might think of as normal ideological beliefs and rhetorical positions are estranged" (35). On the other hand, "dystopian fiction is a genre where the author can readily engage contemporary social situations and theoretically project what is to come for an audience that is perhaps not always as theoretically and politically aware as an academic one" (37). Campbell introduces Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA). The former are the means of indoctrination and cultural hegemony; the latter are the violent methods that dystopian societies employ when ISA fail. ISA and RSA recur throughout the text.

The second chapter, "'The Electric Boy Grows Up': Science Fiction for a Young Adult Audience," discusses the use value of YA SF. Unlike YA literature in general, which Roberta Seelinger Trites says is primarily designed to reinforce established discourses and values, YA SF benefits from cognitive estrangement; hence, "science fiction can be used to help adolescents examine the 'us/them' orientation of the discourse that surrounds them" (43). Specifically, YA SF should be eye-opening. Campbell writes that "contemporary science fiction is engaged with the encounter with the other and exploring the nature of othering itself" (49), both of which endeavors result from the destabilizing effect of cognitive estrangement and the new opportunities inherent in the novum. Openings are created for newer discourses. Feminism and other critical perspectives emerged in SF precisely because the form invites them. Campbell gives attention to several texts that help illustrate his contention that the genre is "a literature of critical advocacy" (55).

Chapter Three, "'The Treatment of Stirrings': Dystopian Literature for Adolescents," seeks to define the scope and use value of the form. The chapter's title is an unmistakable nod to Lowry's *The Giver* (1993), a discussion of which concludes the chapter. Lowry's sexless world is devoid of youthful hormones. Furthermore, the adults in the book experience infantilization. Hence, Campbell agrees with Lyman Tower Sargent's observation that dystopias for adults and young people are not all that different. Campbell dismisses the argument that dystopia is about hope or the lack thereof. He points out that YA dystopia offers the opportunity for social critique. But the form also highlights the passage from childhood utopia to adult dystopia. This is precisely what happens to Jonas in *The Giver* when he moves from restricted childhood to the lonely and painful status of Keeper of Memories. There are informative discussions of several other novels including Todd Strasser's *The Wave* (1981), Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (174), and Suzanne Weyn's *The Bar Code Tattoo* (2004).

Having taught both SF (YA and Adult) and utopia/dystopia for over forty years, I enjoyed Campbell's discussion in Chapter Four, "Teaching the Fantastic": Using Science Fiction and Dystopian Texts in the Classroom." His intention is to help give students the tools they need to read the texts with the goal that they will come to their own critical perspectives. One point on which he is adamant: "Studying science fiction and dystopian literatures can create a learning community within the classroom space" (129). I agree wholeheartedly. Teaching these texts requires that teachers allow students to own them. Since both forms employ social criticism, it is important to recognize that in order for students to recognize the ISA which trap them, they must be empowered. To teach top down is to miss the point entirely. While failure is implicit in adult dystopias, dystopia for younger readers must not be entirely hopeless, which does blunt, to some extent, the dire warnings. The remainder of the chapter surveys a number of pedagogical uses of the genre by multiple teachers, including engaging observations based on Campbell's own teaching. Of particular note is the idea that instructors have a responsibility to deal with the impact on students of reading critical texts that might upset preconceived ideas.

Chapter Five, "'Signs of Life': Consideration for the Future of the Genres and Their Critique," is where Campbell shows his passion for his pedagogy, the goal of which is helping teachers to better grasp the immediate use value of two closely aligned genres. The boundaries between the genre are permeable. While the task of YA SF is to defamiliarize, to catch off guard, the job of YA dystopias is to create fictive societies that clearly resemble the world in which the YA audience lives and that offer hope for and pathways to life beyond adolescence. Campbell tells us that dystopias "tend to share one thing in common: a sense of totalitarian fascism" (157-8). Fascism is alive, well, and resurgent, and students need the tools to deconstruct it. This chapter also features strong individual discussions of films and texts.

This a multi-faceted book. It is an erudite and lucid discussion of critical theory as applied to SF and dystopia. It is a source book for instructors who want to learn how better to employ such texts. It is also a call to action. Teachers are urged to think more systematically about the two genres and choose texts that will develop in students an ability to appreciate new ways to look at the self, the other, and the struggles inherent in living in a largely dystopic world.

Thomas Morrissey is Emeritus Distinguished Teaching Professor of English, having retired from SUNY Plattsburgh in August of 2020. He has written numerous articles and book reviews, many SF-oriented. He is coauthor with Richard Wunderlich of *Pinocchio Goes Postmodern: The Perils of a Puppet in the United States* (Routledge). He is also author and composer of several musical comedies, one of which, "Puppet Song," follows the trials and tribulations of Pinocchio's descendants.