

for the Blue Flower,” engages in analysis of the active efforts to realize the frame of new mythologies that German romantics like Hölderlin, Schlegel and Novalis introduced. The role of consciousness and perception in the world-making activity of mythological imagination that these writers displayed through their poetry is studied in detail by Ware. With a reference to Indian mythological influences on these romantics, Ware decodes how new mythology of the German Romantics were imbued by syncretic infusion of antiquities that surpassed cultural ancestry. The fifth chapter, “The Imageless Truth,” builds on the works of second-generation British Romantics, Keats and Shelley, to trace the nature of their romantic mythmaking projects through their landmark works. Poetry as a conduit of unraveling unseen worlds, and thereby unearthing new, unknown worlds, is a major premise followed by Ware across these poems.

Return of the Gods lives up to its name, literally. The aspect of return is appended by the simultaneous action of movement and newness that the spirit of modernity enmeshed with the Romantic philosophical and literary traditions. In this book, the endnotes are a whole saga of deeper explorations, directions for knowledge and act as the sequential building-blocks that Owen Ware relied on to return to the Romantics and build their worlds for the readers of the future. One of the most interesting features of this book that this reviewer, as a student of both literature and philosophy observed, is that it strikes a very good balance between the argumentation and analytical styles of these two disciplines. There is no overwhelming tilt of making this beautiful project a literary study or a philosophical treatise. Rather, it truly reflects a perfect marriage of sensibilities of a philosopher and a poet that the subject matter of this book demands, and that the age of romanticism had beautifully accomplished.

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CULTURE'S FUTURES: SCIENCE FICTION, FORM AND THE PROBLEM OF CULTURE.
By Eric Aronoff. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025. 291 pp.

To navigate the problem of culture, its scope and dimensions across sets of individuals, spaces, and time periods, has been a core objective of many scholars till date. Culture and its dynamics in the realm of science fiction is the fundamental issue that Eric Aronoff exhaustively explores in his 2025 book, *Culture's Futures: Science Fiction, Form and the Problem of Culture*. The most impressive element about this book is its nuanced way of introducing conceptual linkages of scholarly understandings across disciplines of literature, sociology, anthropology, biology, genetic engineering. As said by Aronoff himself, this study seeks to examine the interdisciplinarity of science fiction as a genre to understand multiple representations of culture, or cultures, and/or differences. The ‘genre-tic engineering,’ that he lauds Octavia Butler for performing in one of the chapters in this book, is a very timely word to describe the steady changes in the image of science fiction. From being typecasted as a pulp-fiction unworthy of academic interest, to gaining pace in the twentieth century as a leading genre of revisionary literature, science fiction’s growth has become undeniably important in academic circles. This is mapped beautifully by Aronoff in the introductory chapter, where he introduces the reader to the social relevance of the science fiction imaginaries as discourses of serious critique regarding various circles and social movements in the societies as time went by. A premise as sound as this is established by Aronoff to further expand upon how anthropology as a discipline interweaved with the imaginary spaces of science fiction to provide alternative solutions, suggestions and create different worlds than the ones known and real. This enabled science fiction writers to navigate debates of power struggles, domination, and systemic othering in the societies.

Aronoff particularly traces the American and Canadian histories of world-building in the context of Indigenous, native Indian voices in science fiction who used the imaginary cultures and spaces to bring out the differences as a mainstream sociology in their phenomenal works. He begins his in-depth analysis of the problematics of culture and combatting the dominant definitions, perceptions of world orders and narratives by exploring *The Martian Chronicles* in his second chapter, "Aliens, Anthropologists, and American Indians: Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, Modernist Anthropology and the Idea of Culture". Ray Bradbury's placement in the timeline of academic debates is studied closely by Aronoff to track how these discourses guided, shaped and influenced the literary genius of Ray Bradbury. The modernist vein of unearthing everything 'standard' till then, be it humanist definitions of culture and civilization, or the rising postcolonial rebuttal of power-centralization and white valuations of cultural imagination, impacted Bradbury. Through the 'aliens' in Bradbury's narrative, Aronoff beautifully highlights the rise of the differential depictions through science fiction narratives, which propelled the genre from transferring across and becoming distinctive from the categorization of 'high,' 'low' and 'middlebrow' cultures.

The third chapter, "Well-Wrought Cultures and Carrier Bags: Forms of Culture in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Always Coming Home*," takes up Le Guin's efforts to bridge the gap between Boasian anthropological efforts to map the 'Others' (with culture understood as a 'meaningful whole') and the New Critical vein of culture as a transitory change. Aronoff's analysis is not just textual, but also *personal*. This is so because he traces the development of Le Guin's creative processes by analyzing the intellectual atmosphere she grew up in. She was particularly influenced by her father, renowned Boasian anthropologist Alfred Kroeber. Her narratology and signification are closely analyzed by Aronoff to understand how she builds culture from two distinctively different methodologies of doing culture, especially in terms of depicting different cultures and battling the "untranslatable phrase."

However, this reviewer strongly believes that the fourth chapter, "Captivity, Conversion, Culture: Octavia E. Butler's Genre-tic Engineering of Ethnography and Science Fiction in the Xenogenesis Trilogy," is a masterpiece of research that empirically shows how Butler translated the problematics of cultures in a Western and Colonial technology of science. She was able to prove that shaping of selves, cultures, power, and knowledge are indeed a matter of *making* through the technology of writing. Aronoff tracks her notes of anthropological and sociological conceptualizations of self and culture, particularly in her efforts to reimagine and remake different others, different cultures. He wonderfully captures Butler as a young thinker, who gradually began to use story-building to build new cultures and characters in her iconic works who become the ethnographer of their own worlds. Through a complex interplay of autoethnography with science fiction imagination, Butler ultimately proves that science fiction is a genre-tic engineering of worlds and selves, in manners that can be utilized judiciously to question hierarchies.

Aronoff continues to track futurisms that are non-white by delving into indigenous writers of science fiction like Craig Strete, Rebecca Roanhorse, Celu Amberstone, Aanikoobijigan and others to understand how 'culture' as a rooted, situated understanding amongst different groups and societies, brings in the undeniable aspect of plurality to limiting the value and direction of the term. The political intentionality and resistance that indigenous science fiction narratives are characterized by has been analyzed in tandem with the theorizations of prominent indigenous anthropologists.

In this interdisciplinary study of writers of 'culture' science fictions, Aronoff has given a very important and crucial compendium of approaching the dispersed and divergent problem of cultural polity and social framing in science fiction narratives. Some copy-edit errors aside, this book is a crucial academic reference point for young scholars taking their first steps into unearthing the reasoning and execution of socio-cultural futurisms.

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