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Foreword Review SCIENCE FICTION

Claiming T-Mo

Eugen Bacon
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Eugen Bacon's novel *Claiming T-Mo* is a family saga of love and magic cast in an interplanetary setting.

Told across a grand, multi-generational timescale, the story begins with Novic, a priest who disobeys the accepted tradition of his matriarchal society by giving his son a name, Odysseus. The baby's mother gives him another name, T-Mo, and this dual naming creates a split personality.

T-Mo is warm and gentle; Odysseus is cold, calculating, and violent. Possessing magical powers, T-Mo/Odysseus appears and disappears throughout the book. The story is told through the experiences of his mother, human wife, daughter, and extended family, with a climactic reunion in the book's final chapters.

Claiming T-Mo treads in established genres, including science fiction, magical realism, fantasy, and romance. The combination of these elements results in a unique, often bizarre style of the novel's own, with humor mixed in from time to time. A sentient plant, Red, sings its thoughts and gets jealous when a new pet is introduced to its household, resolving the situation in a memorable way, while children create a private language or bond against their classmates. The book's fundamental themes of hope and love shine through.

Intrigue and tension come through characters' interpersonal relationships. Other notable plot developments, like an excursion among prisoners at a slave camp, seem like minor notes in a much larger composition. Throughout, various subjects are touched upon or addressed, including sexuality, bias and bullying against those who appear different, the fair and unfair impositions of justice, the limits of women's tolerance and responsibility when challenged with absentee fathers, and men's egos (which are at the root of the story).

Claiming T-Mo is literate, imaginative, and provocative—a strong, even unforgettable, science fiction debut.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2019)

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