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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ SCIENCE FICTION

Echoes of the Past: A History of the Future Novel

Matt Moriarty
CreateSpace
Unknown $0.00 (pp)
978-1-4537-7634-6

"SF [Science Fiction] is the literature of the theoretically possible, and F [Fantasy] is the literature of the impossible."- Piers Anthony

Piers Anthony, author of the above quote and well known for his *Xanth* fantasy series, also wrote a hybrid Science Fiction/Fantasy series called *Double Exposure* which contains magic and hard science fiction. A master writer, Anthony created amazing characters that populate his phantasmagorical worlds that seem distant and unreachable to readers except in the imagination. Matt Moriarty hits closer to home with the first novel in his *A History of the Future Series*, *Echoes of the Past*. Set two thousand years after a world-wide nuclear devastation, the U.S. government has collapsed. Wars are fought with swords, battle axes, catapults, morning stars, and other medieval armaments by men in armor that are a cross between cowboys, knights, and Roman Centurions. Denver is a nation-state that controls most of the west and Shoren McCarter is one of its young commanders. Moriarty writes, "Shoren…never really cared for the luxuries and niceties of noble life…When Shoren was eighteen his mother arranged for him to go to the Salt Lake Academy…Shoren left the school in just two years and promptly joined the army, where he quickly rose through the ranks, partly because of his natural ability and fine education…." The political intrigue is more convoluted than Shoren comprehends as battle lines aren't clearly defined, and it's difficult to distinguish between allies and enemies. Plagued by dreams from his culture's past, (the novel periodically flashes back to 2051) Shoren dreams of his ancestor John McCarter—a marine who fought to secure the future of humanity and maintain some kind of law and justice in Denver. During an intense battle, Shoren loses his way and is captured by warriors of a new Sioux Nation. They learn that he can telepathically form links with certain horses like the best "Horsemen" of the Sioux clan, a power that no one outside of the Sioux should possess. Moriarty writes, "It [The Stallion Fire in the Wind] looked him right in the eyes and Shoren was arrested by the complex intelligence he saw. He felt a prickling, more like an itch in the back of his mind…'*You are a Horseman, and there is nothing you can do about it.*'"

The novel does contain some continuity and grammar errors. For example, in one scene a character is eating goat and then the word lamb is substituted in the next sentence. He is eating goat again the sentence after that. Errors like these could be resolved by a copy editor.

Echoes of the Past contains Arthurian tropes and similarities to Robert Adam's *Horseclans* series in that they both deal with medieval warfare in a post-nuclear war-torn North America, and both discuss mental telepathy between horse and rider. The reader can get much enjoyment from *Echoes of the Past's* exciting and vivid descriptions of sword fights, battles, war strategies, and armaments. Due to Moriarty's love of Science Fiction and Fantasy, the gravitational force of his writing, his eclectic and copious knowledge of history and the philosophical and political implications of war, and his ability to tell a great story, one looks forward to the next installment in the series.
LEE GOODEN (June 27, 2011)

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