Clarion Review

Science Fiction

Gort
Gary W. Roberto
Xlibris
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Space invasions in science fiction are as common as love affairs in romance novels. Gary W. Roberto's novel, Gort, takes this convention and refines it so that it speaks to modern-day concerns. The story begins when nine-year-old Robert Benson and his mother encounter a robot called Gort. Though the encounter is covered up and denied by the government, this meeting forever changes Benson. He grows up to be an astrophysicist and is on hand when the robot returns, this time with rage and destruction in mind. No one believes Benson when the attacks begin. But when the attacks are finished, he becomes Earth's only hope. This novel is packed full of information about the politics of the US, the politics of space, and the realities of war.

Gort is as much a book about politics as it is science fiction. This novel not only explains the attacks, it also explains the reasons behind them. It doesn't excuse the violence, but instead asks the reader to consider the ramifications of the government's actions. For example, Roberto mentions that different countries have released nuclear weapons into space for quite some time. This small mention shows the reader that these extraterrestrials are more than villains: They are responding to human acts, defending their very existence.

The action in this book is top notch. The first chapter opens with the appearance of an unidentified flying object. As the object becomes violent and forges attack, the action picks up. This quickly paced scene sets the stage for what's to come. However, despite the well-paced action, there are times when there is too much background information. It's almost as if Benson wants to arm readers so they can understand this world's government, military, and culture. Such information could have been spaced out, allowing the action of this attack to be highlighted.

The sections are never too long, and the pacing is steady. Gort's epilogue is effective because it pushes the plot forward and provides a better resolution than the ending action of the

final chapter. If anything, the final chapter could highlight not love and adventure but the results of the book's conflict.

Roberto takes the science fiction novel and updates it for the twenty-first century. The problem it deals with—human violence—is an unfortunate constant. Gort is a book that asks the reader to consider the ramifications of mankind's decisions and to think about their possible consequences. With fine writing and a likeable protagonist, this novel is both entertaining and educational. After reading Gort, one may never look at a flash in the sky quite the same way.

Lisa Bower