If Hemingway Wrote Javascript

Angus Croll
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A creative flight of fancy that should be fun for techies and just as amusing for readers who appreciate literary spoofs.

The premise of this book is aptly stated in its title: What would happen if famous authors had to write various assignments in Javascript? It's a fantasy that borders on the bizarre, but Angus Croll, a technical programmer for Twitter who has a love of literature, brings it into intriguing fruition. The book is organized into five assignment areas. Having fictionally invited authors to respond to the assignments, Croll includes each author's submission. Wrapped around the famous authors' fictitious works is Croll's own astute commentary, both about each author and the submitted assignment. The result is a book that is highly original, cleverly crafted, and droll.

Croll has good fun with a wide range of authors, from Jane Austen to J. D. Salinger, William Shakespeare to Dan Brown, Franz Kafka to J. K. Rowling. Rowling, Croll writes, "is a masterful storyteller, crafting tight, intricate, highly imaginative plotlines and delivering them in simple, no-nonsense prose that is always articulate but never gets in the way." Rowling's Javascript is perfectly suited to her, built on a magical function she names "mumbleMore." In Kafka's case, Croll emphasizes the author's dark side. The author reports that Kafka's Javascript "is the only solution in the book that does not successfully resolve itself. Very Kafkaesque."

Part of the genius of this quirky book is Croll's ability to be literary observer, code critic, and the creator of the Javascript "assignments" themselves, each managing to capture the style of the author with eerie verisimilitude. Croll even takes the book up a notch by including a number of "Poetic Interludes" written about coding, but in the style of particular poets. Poe's "The Raven," for instance, begins, "One upon a midnight dreary, while I struggled with JQuery …"

If Hemingway Wrote Javascript is all in good fun, suspending reality in a spoof that will surely delight programmers and give a few belly laughs to literature lovers. This is an inventive work of fictional humor that takes coding to a whole new literate level.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (Spring 2015)