Clarion Review

Science Fiction

Majesty's Offspring: Book 1 (Age of Majesty)
A.J. Vega
CreateSpace
978-1-4611-8142-2
Four Stars (out of Five)

Majesty's Offspring is a rollicking hoot of a space opera. With all the elements of a fun adventure, A.J. Vega's convoluted yet entertaining yarn of lusty space pirates, nasty underworld drug kingpins, greedy corporate types, and laid-back computer hackers is enlivened by space battles, which appear every fifty pages or so.

The premise—an artificial intelligence grows too big for its britches, nearly destroying humanity in a pique of perfectionism—is common fare in science fiction. The *Berserker*, *Bolo*, *Matrix*, and *Terminator* franchises, among others, have strip-mined this territory, yet Vega has found a mechanism to breathe some life into this rusting robot. Borrowing a bit from *Andromeda* and *Star Trek* and adding a few bells and whistles of his own devising, the author brings to life the dueling electronic children of the late, great artificial intelligence named Majesty. The offspring, after having fought humanity in one war, now embark on a new one against one another.

From the Jolly Roger emblems festooning the hull of the pirate cruiser *Sea Wolf* to the black-clad, whip-snapping, drug dealer villain Dagiri, Vega shows little self-control when it comes to illustrating his story with clichés—and good for him. In science fiction, not only do clichés work, they are expected. Readers of the genre will not be disappointed; they will both sigh and chortle when characters deliver lines like those spat out by Dagiri to a minion, denigrating underlings as being "nothing but furniture" and "of inferior construction [and] cheaply made."

Fans of military science fiction will find just enough combat in *Majesty's Offspring* to whet their appetites. And while their hunger for war in space may not be sated, they will at least have had enough of a snack to hold them until they find more meaty victuals. Science-fiction readers leaning more toward Gibsonian *Neuromancer* fare will similarly find themselves faced

with a plate of appetizers rather than a sideboard groaning with chafing dishes, yet they, too, will find plenty here on which to nosh.

A backstory about Majesty's war (the artificial intelligence that ran amok a century before the current tale takes place) helps to explain why what is left of humanity is so driven to possess or destroy her computer offspring. While chapters about the backstory tend to pop up without much warning, leading to some initial confusion as to whether they are flashbacks or part of the current story, Vega does eventually help the reader separate the story lines.

The 560-page novel is billed as parts one and two of the *Age of Majesty* saga, although there is no clear break to indicate where one ends and two begins. Part three is slated for publication in the summer of 2013.

Mark G. McLaughlin