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Science Fiction

Science Fiction Culture (Feminist Cultural Studies, the Media and Political Culture)
Camille Bacon-Smith
University of Pennsylvania Press
978-0-8122-3223-3
(May 31, 2000)

"Science Fiction." The term conjures up images of Star Trek, Star Wars, campy Flash Gordon movie serials and famous authors such as Robert Heinlein, Ray Bradbury and Ursula K. LeGuin. In its broader meaning, "SF," as it is known to its adherents, can include categories as diverse as fantasy and horror fiction, sword and sorcery role-playing games, fan conventions, computer chat rooms and the new "cyberpunk." In her book, Bacon-Smith examines the nebulous, ever-changing core of what she terms the "science fiction culture" and tries to make some sense of the fascinating interdependence of its various parts.

The author unfortunately does not reveal much of her past in the book, but she appears to have been deeply immersed in this SF culture for many years. Numerous interviews and quotes from die-hard fans at conventions and from publishers, authors and marketing representatives in the SF field permeate the book, which gives the reader the inside scoop on where SF has been and where it might be going.

Writers of SF will want to pay close attention to the author's insightful analysis of the publishing industry, since she has written best selling works of fiction entitled The Face of Time and Eyes of the Empress.

The author not only strings together the many components and sometimes competing interests of the SF culture, she provides deep insights into such topics as sexuality in SF "fandom," gay and lesbian SF sub-cultures and the pervasive prejudice against women throughout the genre.

Complex yet easy-to-read, Science Fiction Culture will appeal to the SF fan who cut his teeth on Azimov's I, Robot to the pre-teen picking up her first copy of a book starring Xena, Warrior Princess (a tie-in to the popular television series). Both such readers will enjoy the author's inside look at the wonderfully strange universe comprising the science fiction culture.

Alan J. Couture