

★ The Freeze-Frame Revolution

Peter Watts

Tachyon Publications (Jun 12, 2018)

Softcover \$14.95 (192pp)

978-1-61696-252-4

Hard science fiction that reads like a first-person parable, Peter Watts's *The Freeze-Frame Revolution* is thoughtful, suspenseful, and unforgettable.

Freedom and near-immortality are the stakes in a multimillion-year mutiny that unfolds across relatively short snatches of consciousness. Sunday Ahzmundin, like the other 30,000 humans onboard her ship, is awakened from hibernation on an “as-needed” basis by Chimp, the ship’s artificial intelligence.

Sunday genuinely likes Chimp, but other members of the crew have begun to bristle at the mechanical dictatorship. Soon Sunday is recruited into a secret rebellion that must take place in short periods during the crew’s brief awakenings, their activities communicated across the centuries through coded messages to keep Chimp from discovering their betrayal.

The idea of AI that exceeds its programming is a common one in science fiction; *The Freeze-Frame Revolution* avoids the familiar tropes, with Chimp simply doing as he’s been programmed, while the human crew evolves past its intended function.

Watts, a former marine biologist, deftly weaves hard science, both actual and theoretical, into the book. Those familiar with cutting-edge ideas like Boltzmann Bodies or the Stefan-Boltzmann law and the Alcubierre warp drive will come away satisfied, but the science is so fully ingrained into the narrative that it doesn’t draw attention to itself—a high compliment indeed.

Sophisticated enough for hard science-fiction purists, the book is nevertheless intimately written in a conversational style, as Sunday relates the happenings aboard ship and her interactions with Chimp and the others. There are many examples of Watts’s inventive writing, perhaps most noticeably the use of the gender-neutral pronouns “se” and “hir” throughout the book.

The story’s massive time span invites intriguing questions, as when Sunday asks a crewmate, “How do you tell the difference between going extinct and just, you know, changing into something *else*?”

The result of all this is an epic of epochs; entertaining and provocative, brilliant and ambitious, *The Freeze-Frame Revolution* is compelling science fiction with heart.

PETER DABBENE (May/June 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.