

Short Story 195*: Dumpster World

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 22 Apr 2015

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Marc Aramini — 22 Apr 2015, 15:04

DUMPSTER WORLD

“Dumpster World” first appeared in the mock section of Steven Silver’s
Argentus 5 in 2005.

Silver introduces the mock section by stating, “This issue features, for the most part, reviews of books written by authors in a style which is not their normal style. For instance, I pitched the idea with the concept of a Gene Wolfe written space opera movie novelization. As it happens, I was lucky enough to have several authors review their “own” works.

SUMMARY:

Wolfe uses the name Frances Angelique Keebler-Egge to review “Dumpster World / by Gene Wolf / Unfinanced Press, New York IA, 2004, \$28.95 (signed and limited, \$22.50)?

The review relies on puns, poking fun at an increasingly inept writing style (and reviewers, one would imagine). It begins, “Never a master of plot, Wolff here escapes the Vise Squad [or whomever deals with plots editor, please fix] by producing an unauthorized novelization of the recent film-noir film. Unfortunately for his readers, he confuses plot with turbidity. What has been produced is a turbine without bearings. That is to say, an unbearable book (e.g. Earth of the New Son).”

Wolfe’s name is spelled differently every time, and the novelization is based on a Martin Sheen movie in which Sheen’s character attempts “to prevent the human race and some nice animals from being compacted. This led to a cataclysmic struggled between special effects — In this book, the thunderous booms and bangs, the snarls and terrifying growls of monsters flapping through outer space, are replaced by talk. And so is everything else.”

Brad Pitt “lubricously” portrayed a robot named B6 in the movie, but the reviewer takes umbrage at his conversion from a vitamin to a long-winded conversationalist dropping ridiculous figures of speech. “At the fifth reiteration of the broken metaphor likening clover-leaf intersections to discarded cotton briefs, your tepid reviewer came to grasp as never before the quite horrific damage accorded belles lettres by publisher’s one cent per word rates. [Editor?Please do not take this personally. I certainly didn’t mean you.]?

Deborah Voigt and Mariah Carey play rabbits in the movie, which “simply take the place of the camels or whatever they were in the author’s earlier Soldier of the Missed. For their duet the introduction promises a musical score. When the moment arrives (page 197) it is revealed as seven to six in the tenth. Your tepid reviewer admits to an “tre dans la panda weakness for musical jests, and even she (I) felt a tendacious wave of mal de moz?rt at that one.”

The movies theme, described as “arduous social commentary”, is that “we would all be crushed

by the weight of our Kismet (the Buddhist name for Fate) if it were not for the merely fortuitous interference of well-meaning aliens.” The novel’s theme “is the same as that of all Wolff’s others: viz, that the author needs money. [Editor?So do I. Are you absolutely certain my check for Dave Gorman’s *The Walls in the Wolves* has been mailed”]?

The reviewer concludes that at least the elderly space captain played by Mickey Rooney doesn’t ask the characters to perform a show in the book.

Keebler-Egge ends her review with the following note to her Editor:

[?-Is this enough? I can easily fill more column inches with juicy (but not actionable) details of Wolfe’s personal life. Half-cent-per-word as always. He is an algolagniphobe, for example.]

[After reading his book, I would enjoy doing this.]

DISCUSSION:

This is perhaps Wolfe’s least serious work since “From the Desk of Gilmer C. Merton.” There is very little commentary that can be made save in exploring the nature of the criticisms of the publishing world, the entertainment industry, and in the obvious use of double entendres and puns. Perhaps the text speaks for itself, though I had to think about the “musical score” joke for a second — the score that is given is that of a baseball score finishing in overtime in the tenth inning, seven to six (I’m not much of a team sports fan). Brad Pitt’s “lubricous” portrayal of a robot is of course one combining overly sexualized lubriciousness and the lubricant of a mechanical man; the tepid/trepid/intrepid or tenacious/tendentious confusion of the reviewer and the criticism of 1 cent rates when she is writing at a half a cent rate shows the incompetent hypocrisy of reviewers and the underlying monetary impulse of all writing endeavors, for which there must be some truth. A “film-noir film” highlights the redundant tendencies of many descriptions employed by poor writers. An algolagniphobe is someone who receives sexual gratification from inflicting or enduring pain, and it is quite clear that, though Wolfe fears it, our Keebler-Egge want to inflict it on him after having to read his material. My favorite small detail is that of the signed limited edition costing less than the normal one.

Dave Gorman is an English author and stand-up comedian, but Wolfe has chosen him for the similar syllabic sound to Neil Gaiman, who published **The Wolves in the Walls** in 2003. Though it may have no bearing on the review, Frances means “free one” and, of course, Angelique means “angelic”. The idea of Wolfe writing a novelization of a movie would only be robbed of its bizarre nature with the right kind of director and motion picture; one fears **Dumpster World** contains too much detritus to represent a felicitous style match. The criticism that all of the explosions have been replaced with talk might very well ring true in Wolfe’s attempt at a novelization.

CONNECTION TO OTHER WORKS

Puns lurk in the background of even Wolfe’s serious work, but of course he gives them full freedom here. The closest works are the previously mentioned “From the Desk of Gilmer C. Merton” and the slightly more elaborate “Planetarium in Orbit”. Wolfe’s absurdity usually tends to follow a different vein; here it is of course meant to produce the subdued slapstick effect.