

Burning Leaves

It's about books. Lots and lots of books.

Fiction February 18, 2009

Review

Ara 13's delightfully absurdist *Fiction* is what results when *Alice in Wonderland* and *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* leave a train station in Peoria at 7:00 PM going 301 mph headed towards *Heart of Darkness* while, at the same time, *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* leave a train station in Cleveland at 8:00 PM going 498 mph headed towards *Breakfast of Champions* and they somehow manage to collide along the way. It's as chaotic as the preceding ridiculous sentence implies, but also just as deliriously enjoyable.

Following the misadventures of Father Daniel and his idealistic pursuit of a fictitious, cannibalistic tribe to convert, *Fiction* inverts the traditional, outdated archetypes of the "noble savage" and "heroic missionary." Unable to find the Oquanato he seeks, he accidentally happens upon a society of highly articulate, intellectual natives. With hilarious irony, the tribe assumes a perspective of their supposed savior more commonly reserved for colonists and missionaries, placing Father Daniel in an entirely opposite role than the one he expects. In doing so, Ara 13 raises insightful questions regarding the subjectivity of religion and colonialism with garrote-sharp wit and appropriately cheeky metafictional constructs. It's a work of contemporary postmodernism revealing his potential to perhaps one day stand amongst the greats of the genre.

Metafiction and postmodernism tend to be subservient to crackling prose clipping along at a steady pace, most especially when humor is employed as one of the most visible literary devices. Any lags compromise the energy and overall effectiveness of the story. *Fiction* begins on the slow side, and the sudden shifts in narrator sometimes spark confusion. But once the story and characters both hit their stride, the novel shoots forward with befittingly breakneck intensity. The introduction of MillardFillmore and Quan - two joyous, bumbling natives highly reminiscent of Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern - marked the beginning of *Fiction's* feverish hilarity for me. Their circular, absurd, and thoroughly enjoyable exchanges commenting on the book's internal logic are sterling examples of metafictional self-awareness done right.

Fiction will be available for purchase in March of 2009. More information on the book's release can be found at Ara13.com.

Bibliographic Information

Ara 13. [Fiction](#). Galveston, Texas: Covington Moore, 2009.

Further Reading

Almost all of the books mentioned in the introduction either paved the way for the postmodernist and metafiction movements or perfected and

Recent Incinerations

The Color Purple
Fiction
Watermark: Vietnamese American
Poetry & Prose
Blue Dixie: Awakening the South's
Democratic Majority
Catwoman: When in Rome

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About

defined them. Father Daniel's exploits share parallels with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as well as Tom Stoppard's epic Shakespearean fanfiction *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Ara 13's revolving cast of increasingly absurd yet provocative characters recalls the works of Thomas Pynchon, most especially *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*, but does so in a considerably less laborious, more accessible manner. And his occasional humorous asides and playful manipulation of the English language bring Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* and Douglas Adams's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series to mind.

~Riot

Posted in Contemporary Fiction, Fiction Reviews, Reviews |

Tags: absurdism, ara 13, colonialism, irony, metafiction, missionaries, postmodernism, Religion

4 Responses to "Fiction"

1. *Dave at Read Street* Says:



February 18, 2009 at 2:26 am

Sounds like a great book. Seems to echo the comic stories of P.G. Wodehouse, in which Jeeves the butler rescues his bumbling aristocratic master from all sorts of predicaments. (And the master is too dense to realize it.)

2. *Riot* Says:



February 18, 2009 at 9:33 am

Wodehouse has been on my TBR list for far too long. Thanks for reminding me! Dave, you'd probably enjoy "Fiction" quite a bit given that "A Confederacy of Dunces" is your favorite book. I didn't see much of Toole's influence in this novel, but it's still a great read for anyone who intelligent, loopy humor at a lightning pace. Like you!

3. *Jennysbooks* Says:



February 19, 2009 at 8:01 am

Hm, I wonder if I'd enjoy this. I often find these metafictionary books end up too much in love with their own wit and humor to bother much about plot, and I am completely a plot girl. But it does sound delightful!

4. *Riot* Says:



February 19, 2009 at 10:08 am

"Fiction" actually DOES have a coherent, mostly linear plot, but whether or not it's enough for your tastes I can't say. I really enjoyed it quite a bit, though, and I'm going to try and read and review his other book.

Friends

A Movie Script Ending
 Adjoobidja Web Comics
 Comfortably Culinary
 Dacak World
 Gary's World
 Houston Food Finds Examiner
 Japan in Houston
 The Story So Far
 Words Over Numbers

Of Local Literary Interest

Domy Books
 Houston Great Books Council
 Houston Public Library
 Houston Read Commission
 Inprint!
 Literacy Advance of Houston
 Montgomery County Literary Arts Council
 Montgomery County Memorial Library System
 Writer's League of Texas

Other Literature Blogs

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 Chris's Invincible Super-Blog
 Color Online
 Diversity Rocks!
 Here Be (Book) Reviews
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 The A.V. Club
 Tripping Toward Lucidity: Estella's Revenge
 Wonderful With Words
 Worducopia

Legalese

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