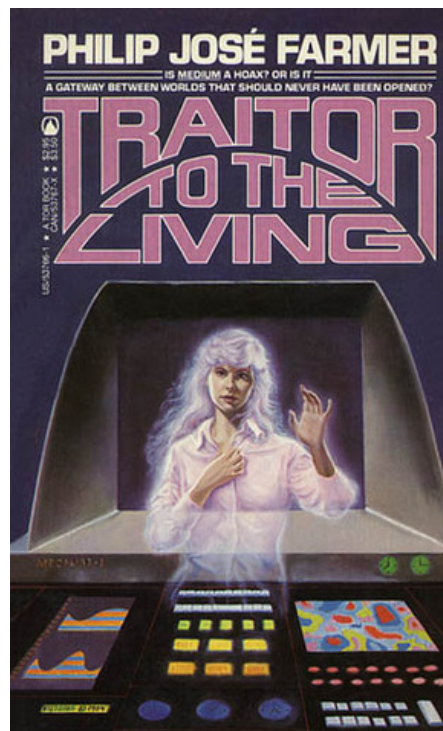




Traitor to the Living

Philip José Farmer

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A machine that enables the living to communicate with the dead threatens to allow angry and vengeful ghosts to reenter the world of the living and enact cruel revenge. Reissue.

Traitor to the Living Details

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Victor Hugo says

Ainda não terminei de ler este livro, mas decidi apressar a sinopse deste pedaço delicioso criado pelo Philip José Farmer. A história criada é bastante interessante e prende o leitor pelos colarinhos! Estou praticamente no início da história e tenho informação necessária para uma apresentação sem comprometer o mistério dela mesma.

Num futuro próximo (década de 80 – tendo em conta que a história foi escrita em 1973) um cientista descobre um método para comunicar com os mortos. Inventa, portanto, uma máquina que permite estabelecer essa ligação, à qual lhe dá o nome de MEDIUM.

Ainda hoje, a relação que temos com a morte é bastante “primitiva”, por assim dizer; ou seja, temos um medo terrível da morte simplesmente por não sabermos o que ela é. São imaginadas, consequentemente, um rol de argumentos, histórias e “novelas” pagãs que afagam o medo através de eufemismos como “céu”, “poder”, “felicidade”, “eternidade”, “milhares de mulheres virgens”, “inferno”, “hades”... Mas ambos, aqui e agora, sabemos que isso são, ou poderão ser, histórias criadas pelo nosso imaginário. Mas, verdade seja dita, penso que não sabemos lidar com essa inevitabilidade que é a morte. Mesmo com a ciência na vanguarda a orientar de um modo discreto as nossas vidas, não temos respostas para o que é invisível, ou melhor, para o que não é possível haver qualquer síntese categórica (kantianamente falando) pela “máquina cognitiva” que somos nós.

Agora, tentem imaginar a habilidade que o autor deste livro teve para aplicar um papel científico neste fenómeno único que é a comunicação com os mortos – ou, como é apresentado no livro por um lado argumentativo (porque há debates de ideias), um morto é antes designado como semb:

“Tal justificava a insistência de Western em classificar os seres humanos já mortos por semb [Sentient-ElectroMagnetic-Being (seres-electromagnéticos-sensitivos)], evitando terminologia emocional e pouco científica, como aparições, fantasmas, espíritos, idos, etc.”

E a pergunta que se coloca agora é: “Então, qual o espaço (termo muito mal aplicado neste contexto) ocupado por esses semb?” O autor tem uma resposta:

“Queira-se ou não, o MEDIUM é um meio de comunicação com o sobrenatural, muito embora eu prefira a minha designação, embu, tirada de ElectroMagnetic-Being-Universe (universo-electromagnético-vivente).”

Muitos mais detalhes poderão encontrar neste livro. Para além desta perspectiva técnica sob a morte e os mortos, poderão imaginar as consequências no mundo normal ao qual estamos habituados – consequências e reacções na sociedade, política, religião e filosofia. Todos estes aspectos estão retratados nesta história, e são fortes argumentos para uma leitura no mínimo interessante.

Há bastante tempo que leio este género de literatura, porque descobri que a ficção-científica é muito rica em conteúdos nas mais diversas áreas.

O tema da morte, do sobrenatural e da psicologia são temas muito frequentes neste género porque consegue tocar as mais diversas áreas. Têm o exemplo dos personagens “pré-cogs” (ou pré-cognitivos) criados pelo Philip K. Dick, e que são importantes na história do “Minority Report”. Mas estes personagens não aparecem apenas nessa história – leiam o livro “Ubik” e ficarão surpreendidos pela excelente qualidade.

Matt says

Not the best Farmer I've read. A number of intriguing ideas come up but never get satisfactorily explored. Setting it in near-future America means the action is mostly generated from private-eye procedural style devices, with a few large-cast action-battle scenes thrown in but not fleshed out. A few supporting characters come out of nowhere and you wish they hadn't, particularly Hiekka the man-hunting "Valkyrie" CIA agent. The two leads are depressingly gender-regressive even by Farmer standards, perhaps a consequence of the non-fantastic setting.

Durval Menezes says

This is an intriguing book: great theme, detailed characters, fast storyline. The only problem is the final: it ends on the cliffhanger of all cliffhangers, begging for a sequel... Which the author never wrote. :-(

David Blecher says

Orphans of the Sky

Erik Graff says

There are many outrageous claims being made nowadays of contact with the dead by means of audio/video recording equipment, claims which have led to the production of a few mediocre movies about the subject. This novel by Farmer works from the premise that such contact may be possible.

John says

1977 grade C-

Ryan says

This story takes an interesting sci-fi/horror conceit and turns the whole thing into a spy drama with mystery elements. So much time was spent with the characters dodging each other and there are many explosions. And so little of the story was spent actually exploring the concept of a machine that allows the living to contact the afterlife in some sort of other dimension. Farmer has written some great stuff, but this one is a miss.

karen says

oh, sci-fi nerds, i am trying to live amongst you.

lord knows i do not want to offend the great unwashed masses of science fiction fans with their squeezing of themselves into bookstore aisles too narrow for their girth to talk loudly and nasally about every single plot point in every single star trek book and their hushing up every time a girl walks by. i am not looking to offend. with their nose-picking and cavalier approach to hygiene and noise pollution. (oh, the guffaws...)i don't mean to make fun of the adolescent simplicity of your sexual fantasies, but - man - i just don't get you.

but i'm keeeeeeding! bird brian sent me this book, just like he sent me *blood music*, because he wants me to suffer! okay, it's not that bad. but i think that overall, science fiction does not please me as much as it pleases other people. i thought he was sending me this because it was SO bad, that i would have a field day with the review.his review was hidden under a spoiler blanket, so i couldn't even read it - i was operating in the dark. but as i was reading the book, i was thinking "oh, this isn't terrible."

HIGH PRAISE INDEED!

but at the end of it all, i thought the opportunity for this kind of literary invention, a machine that can talk to the freaking dead, was wasted on some small-fry stuff. solving a murder and getting to the bottom of that huge problem facing our world: the inconsistencies of etruscan linguistics??

hmmm...

those who fail to remember the past, indeed.

i think the repercussions of his own literary invention scared him off from too close an examination, which is why all the religious elements were kept as background characters and sideplots. and the true historical benefits were - what - too difficult? probably. instead, this becomes a more personal story - the solving of a murrnderr, the getting to the bottom of this wacky machine and what it can do (but small-scale, please - we lack a budget), and the intercourse with our cousin along the way! whaaaat - it's the future! we are all metric now. and in the metric system, it is okay to have sex with your cousin.

i have nothing useful to say about this book. it suffers from a lot of the salacious-undercurrents as other sci-fi i have experienced from this era (this one is 1973)

salacious?? did someone say "salacious??"

(gotta win those nerds back...)

but there is just this "ick" feeling for me. all the women are "full-breasted" and clothing is optional, and the clothing that does exist, for women, anyway, does not include undergarments, making movement problematic. that's not sexy to me - that's an eleven-year-old alone under the covers.

i am not giving up on the genre, though - i am told there are other books i might like.

brian likes dick. he says i should try to get into dick. i told him greg forced dick on me one time and i didn't like it. brian said that dick is something someone has to discover for themselves. he says he was introduced to dick when he was thirteen and it was a magical summer. i might be too old for dick.

but i will keep trying. maybe someday i will find the sci-fi that is right for me.

Mark Hodder says

I've long considered Farmer to be a hit or miss author. When he's good, he's brilliant, but when he's bad, he's dreadful. This novel occupies the middle ground. I didn't find it as dull as many other reviewers seem to think but it certainly doesn't hit the heights achieved by Farmer in novels such as LORD TYGER and TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO. The third in the Harold Childe trilogy, it lacks the explicit and graphic weirdness of its predecessors, THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST and BLOWN, and has in consequence less of an impact. Also, the theme of the dead being contacted via a machine is so intriguing and poses so many questions about how society would respond that it probably deserves a better treatment than this, which amounts to little more than a detective thriller. A missed opportunity, then. Reasonably entertaining but without anything memorable about it.

Kathy says

Horrible, interesting idea but horrible execution and very unsatisfying ending.

Adam Moore says

This is actually the third book feature Harold Childe, "Image of the Beast" and "Blown" being the first two, but isn't done with the same focus on erotica. It's a pretty interesting read and if you read the first two, the story makes a lot of sense. Farmer's writing is always filled with subtle nuances that are easily overlooked. Case in point, his characterization. So often, writer's break rules when developing characters by forcing the character to do something they normally wouldn't. Farmer lets his characters grow and happen organically. The premise to this is pretty straight-forward, unless you've read the first two. Then you realize early on what you've signed up for.

Antonio Ippolito says

Farmer è un genio dodicenne: il mondo femminile nei suoi romanzi è ancora più schematico che in R.E.Howard, e ho sempre immaginato le sue avventure illustrate da Richard Corben. Questa volta però il racconto non mi evoca immagini.

Un futuro (l'83?) In una Los Angeles sovrappopolata e inquinata, dove i politici promettono un ritorno alle condizioni ambientali del '73 (quando la città, insieme a Tokio, era già simbolo mondiale dello smog, ai tempi la prima preoccupazione ambientale), dove si aggirano "tassi a vapore" ma è disponibile una metropolitana ultraveloce.

Divertenti particolari di costume, come i vestiti inevitabilmente succinti e che in un modo o nell'altro

finiscono per lasciar sempre scoperti i seni femminili; soprattutto, le "tartarughe" robotiche che portano ovunque i bagagli o anche il cibo negli alberghi, con vassoi e posate che sono a loro volta commestibili.. Il cuore del romanzo è naturalmente nella grandiosa idea centrale: un macchinario che riesce a rintracciare in una dimensione tangente alla nostra quelle che sembrano inequivocabilmente le anime dei defunti. L'idea si prestava a sviluppi grandiosi, stile Mondo del Fiume; ma PJF non li sfrutta. Per una parte del romanzo, PJF sembra invece preferire angosce dickiane: sono davvero i trapassati o entità aliene che si fingono tali? L'antagonista Western è uno spregiudicato genio scientifico o un puttaniere che ha assassinato lo zio per rubargli l'invenzione? La bella Patricia è una figlia in cerca di vendetta con l'aiuto del disponibile cugino Carfax o un'agente dello stesso ambiguo cugino Western? Lo zio Rufton, intervistato nell'aldilà, scagiona il nipote (sempre Western: sono tutti cugini, come a Paperopoli) sinceramente? o starà negando di essere stato assassinato, per motivi da capire, forse ricatto? E quanta satira delle religioni si potrebbe fare con questo spunto? Purtroppo PJF preferisce non approfondire gli spunti dickiani e ignorare la satira religiosa (abbiamo solo un vescovo infartuato e un Gesù offeso che i suoi insegnamenti siano stati estesi ai Gentili). Nessun aspetto trasgressivo se non che il protagonista va a letto con la cugina più giovane di 15 anni: ma la preoccupazione del protagonista è che, si sposassero, nel giro di vent'anni lui potrebbe non riuscire più ad essere all'altezza delle aspettative di lei.. mah! Forse PJF, lato trasgressione, era ormai stato superato dai tempi? Al risveglio dopo la prima notte d'amore, il protagonista riesce a far presente alla bella che farebbe bene a rifarsi il trucco.. neanche negli anni '70 era normale tanto maschilismo! La storia diventa alla fine una complicata trama di spionaggio e controspionaggio, condita da attentati micidiali cui l'indomito protagonista e la bella cugina di contorno sfuggono con pochi danni (almeno lui; di lei nulla viene detto, sembra invulnerabile). Ma Segretissimo non è mai stato il mio genere.. Chissà, forse Farmer si riservava di fare di questo breve romanzo l'inizio di un ciclo. In conclusione, una lettura piacevole, dove Farmer riesce ogni tanto a ricordare la sua genialità, per esempio nel sorprendente colpo di scena finale, o nel ripescare incredibili personaggi minori della storia americana come quel James Fisk che ci verrà illustrato alla fine; interessante però soprattutto per i suoi fan.

Travis says

It pains me to give a Farmer book only two stars, but he really dropped the ball on this one. It's a very noir feeling story dealing with a machine that can talk to the dead and the various people scrambling to control and explain it.

Unfortunately, the noir conspiracy stuff takes over and drags on, so all the interesting ideas about being able to talk to the dead, are these really 'ghosts/souls etc' or something more sinister and sci-fi, and the impact this would have on the world all seems to happen on the sidelines or get rushed through so the hero can sneak around, playing detective and trying to get laid.

Then at the 3/4 mark the story takes a cool/creepy turn and Farmer wastes it, then at the 99% mark the story dives into brutal, tasteless and stupid and then rushes to an unsatisfying ending.

So many good ideas wasted and the cast, which is sympathetic, yet flawed, get little screen time and end up becoming 'types' rather than characters.

Snake_telegraph says

If you like a lot of missed potential (which I don't want to get into cause it's spoilers) and love cousin incest (which is not a spoiler and happens almost immediately), this is a book for you! Otherwise don't be fooled by the great cover.
