



PALGRAVE SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY: A NEW CANON

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Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*

A Critical Companion

Paul Kincaid

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Palgrave Science Fiction and Fantasy: A New Canon

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Palgrave Science Fiction and Fantasy: A New Canon provides short introductions to key works of science fiction and fantasy (SFF) speaking to why a text, trilogy, or series matters to SFF as a genre as well as to readers, scholars, and fans. These books aim to serve as a go-to resource for thinking on specific texts and series and for prompting further inquiry. Each book will be less than 30,000 words and structured similarly to facilitate classroom use. Focusing specifically on literature, the books will also address film and TV adaptations of the texts as relevant. Beginning with background and context on the text's place in the field, the author and how this text fits in their oeuvre, and the socio-historical reception of the text, the books will provide an understanding of how students, readers, and scholars can think dynamically about a given text. Each book will describe the major approaches to the text and how the critical engagements with the text have shaped SFF. Engaging with classic works as well as recent books that have been taken up by SFF fans and scholars, the goal of the series is not to be the arbiters of canonical importance, but to show how sustained critical analysis of these texts might bring about a new canon. In addition to their suitability for undergraduate courses, the books will appeal to fans of SFF.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Robert Holdstock.

SERIES PREFACE

The infinite worlds of science fiction and fantasy (SFF) dance along the borders between the possible and the impossible, the familiar and the strange, the immediate and the ever-approaching horizon. Speculative fiction in all its forms has been considered a genre, a medium, a mode, a practice, a compilation of themes or a web of assertions. With this in mind, *Palgrave Science Fiction and Fantasy: A New Canon* offers an expansive and dynamic approach to thinking SFF, destabilizing notions of *the* canon, so long associated with privilege, power, class, and hegemony. We take canon not as a singular and unchallenged authority but as shifting and thoughtful consensus among an always-growing collective of readers, scholars, and writers.

The cultural practice and production of speculation has encompassed novels, stories, plays, games, music, comics, and other media, with a lineage dating back at least to the nineteenth-century precursors through to the most recent publications. Existing scholarship has considered some of these media extensively, often with particular focus on film and TV. It is for this reason that *Palgrave Science Fiction and Fantasy* will forgo the cinematic and televisual, aspiring to direct critical attention at the other nodes of SFF expression.

Each volume in the series introduces, contextualizes, and analyzes a single work of SFF that ranges from the acknowledged “classic” to the should-be-classic, and asks two basic, but provocative questions: *Why does this text matter to SFF?* and *Why does (or should) this text matter to SFF readers, scholars, and fans?* Thus, the series joins into conversation both with scholars and students of the field to examine the parameters of SFF

studies and the changing valences of fundamental categories like genre, medium, and canon. By emphasizing the critical approaches and major questions each text inspires, the series aims to offer “go-to” books for thinking about, writing on, and teaching major works of SFF.

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