**New Orleans Dystopia**

C. W. Cannon

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REVIEW

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*In lieu of* an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**New Orleans Dystopia**

_C. W. Cannon (bio)*


[http://www.unopress.org/content2](http://www.unopress.org/content2). 272 pages; paper, $15.95.
Moira Crone's new novel might make you want to die. If so, I believe the author's intention will have been realized. The Not Yet is a richly imagined dystopian novel set about a century from now. Its dark vision of the future on a national and global scale resonates with earlier efforts in the genre, like Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (1976), Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (1985), A. D. Nauman's Scorch (2001), and even H. G. Wells's The Time Machine (1895). This is not to say that Crone's imagination is derivative or unoriginal, though. Like Atwood, Nauman, and Wells, Crone predicts a hardening of class society and the disappearance of whatever illusions of social mobility that have made class society a consensus society in our own times. There's an environmental angle, too, as current as one could hope, with due attention to global warming and sea level rise and how these factors have altered the landscape of the planet in drastic ways. The novel falls short of being post-apocalyptic because, even though many regions have been "de-accessioned" and abandoned to lawless Road Warrior/Waterworld primitivism, there remains a powerful and apparently insuperable corporatist state that guarantees the prerogatives of the ruling caste (and democracy has been replaced by corporate authoritarianism, etc.).

The most original aspect of Crone's novel is how it's a regionalist dystopian novel, imagining in very plausible, logical ways how New Orleans and environs would look in a worst-case scenario of today's immanent social, economic, and climatological forces. In doing so, she not only constructs the detailed verisimilitude of a scary future society, but she also makes the case for New Orleans literature as a specific body of work, spanning several genres but containing a set of conventions, themes, and tropes that set it apart from broader categories like "American" or "Southern" literature.

The social world of the future in broad lineaments (shorn of the imaginative details that make these books, the good ones, fun to read) matches up well with other dystopian projections of the left, like Atwood, Nauman, Wells, or even Jack London's The Iron Heel (1908).
Economic elites have solidified their grip and blocked off avenues of advance or resistance once open (at least theoretically) to the "99 percent." But the fun really is in the details, and Crone does not skimp on them. As in Philip K. Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), the vanguard of the elite have figured out a way to evolve in a different manner than the mass, leading them to become actually physically quite different. Also like Dick, Crone's social imagination brims with metaphysical implications. This is because the "Heirs," the elites of *The Not Yet*, have figured out—maybe—the secret of immortality. They go in for regular treatments ("Re-jobs," "Re-description") that suit them up with brand new organic oversuits. There's some uncertainty about how long they can actually live, but the earliest who took the treatments (the "protos") are over two hundred years old. A technology like this can be expected to wreak havoc on pre-existing social and economic relations, and it has, with the "Heirs" (those who can afford the treatments) retreating into heavily fortified walled cities with artificial environments, connected by underground trains. A big multi-national company (WELLFI) runs everything. The other people live outside these cities under varying ideologies and forms of social organization (also rendered in fascinating detail), yet share the commonality of being "nats" ("naturals"), unaltered by the complex treatments undergone by the Heirs. This means, most significantly for the novel, that they die (indeed, their average life span has contracted as medical resources get sucked up by the Heirs and treatments for heart disease, cancer, etc. become unavailable).

Having conceived of this kind of future, the question for the novelist becomes whether the protagonist(s) should belong to the elite "Heirs" or downtrodden "nats." Crone...
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Boustelle’s not to Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts,” with its indifferent farmer plowing on as Learnings topples out of a placid blue sky, complements a postmodern acknowledgment of Edward Munch’s The Scream, with its “open-mouthed,” “desperate silent star”.

Cannavaggio’s incivility, in other words, gathers and gathers into Boustelle’s elliptic phrases, and the result is a vital postmodernism that seems both chiaroscuro and refreshing. The success is not without limits, however, and various poems indulge in unconfirmed imputations to the painter of thoughts and emotions that run the risk of implausibility. Can we really know whether Cannavaggio “loved” (for the next painting, loved “only his art”)? Did he really speculate on “who I might have been, if I hadn’t married / my brush”? The evidence seems weak.

On the other hand, the questions may not matter. Any freedons taken with the life may amount less than the powerful apprehension of his art. “All you know is there on the canvas,” Cannavaggio is said to have mumbled in one of Boustelle’s early poems about his predecessor Giorgione. The telltale insight seems almost, but not quite, to apply to Cannavaggio himself.

Paul Oppenheimer is the author of four volumes of poetry as well as a novel and two biographies, Ruben: A Portrait (2002) and Machiavelli: A Life Beyond Ideology (2011).

NEW ORLEANS DYSTOPIA

THE NOT YET

Moira Crone
University of New Orleans Press
http://www.unoexp.org/content2
272 pages: paper: $15.95

Moira Crone’s new novel might make you want to die. If so, I believe the author’s intention will have been realized. The Not Yet is a richly imagined dystopian novel set about a century from now. In its darkness the future on a national and global scale mirrors the earlier efforts in the genre, like Marge Piercy’s Woman on the Edge of Time (1973), Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale (1985), A. D. Norman’s Snow (2001), and even H. G. Wells’s The Time Machine (1895). This is not to say that Crone’s imagination is derivative or unoriginal, though. Like Atwood, Norman, and Wells, Crone prefigures a harsh class society and the disappearance of whatever illusions of social mobility that have made class society a concern society in our own times. There’s an environmental angle, too, as current as one could hope, with due attention to global warming and sea level rise and how these factors have altered the landscape of the planet in drastic ways. The novel falls short of being post-apocalyptic because, even though many regions have been “de-accessioned” and abandoned to lawless Road Warrior/Waterworld primitives, there remains a powerful and apparently inseparable corporate state that guarantees the prerogatives of the ruling class (and its decay has been replaced by corporate authoritarianism, etc.).

The most original aspect of Crone’s novel is how it’s a regional dystopian novel, imagining in very plausible, logical ways how New Orleans and global scale would look in a worst-case scenario of today’s imminent social, economic, and environmental forces. In doing so, she not only constructs the detailed verisimilitude of a scary future society, but she also makes the case for New Orleans literature as a specific body of work, spanning several genres but containing a set of conventions, themes, and tropes that set it apart from broader categories like “American” or “Southern” literature.

The social world of the future in broad outlines (shorn of the imaginative details that make these books, the good, fun to read) matches up well with dystopian projections of the left, like Atwood, Norman, Wells, or even Jack London’s Iron Heel (1908). Economic elites have solidified their grip and blocked off avenues of advance or resistance once open (at least theoretically) to the

Crone valorizes the acceptance of death as a natural culmination of the privilege of living fully.

Having conceived of this kind of future, the novel’s question becomes whether the protagonist should belong to the elite “Heirs” or be a “Nutm.” Crone’s great idea was to tell the story from the point of view of someone in between: a “net,” shot for “not yet,” signifying a nut you go through circumstance, circumstances, have is the struggle to become an Heir, to follow the steps expected of him and, one day, with pomp and ceremony, begin the treatments that will make him (maybe) immortal and gain him access to the padded suites and bodies of the elite. Will he do it? Or decide it is better to die after having lived a fuller life, made more intense and meaningful by the simple knowledge that his time is limited.

The answer seems obvious, and it is, but Crone does a great job showing how difficult this decision is for Malcolm, our “Not Yet” protagonist, as he grows up and figures out the world around him and his place in it. Crone’s choice of protagonist makes the book a coming-of-age novel, and she follows many of the conventions of that genre, from Dickens to Huck Finn to many a more recent specimen. It’s all told by a single first-person narrator. There are competing love interests: a chunky “nat” girl versus a poised, powerful older “Heires.” There is also the issue of Malcolm’s mysterious parentage (he is a “foundling”), and the key to where he is going is tied up in the question of where he’s from. The coming-of-age plot supplies the novel’s basic structure and well-paced suspense, along with sci-fi dystopia questions about how bullets-proof advanced technologies or social structures can really be.

The novel is set on the Gulf Coast and brings many concerns common to that region into its broader social and philosophical scope. Conceived in the post-Katrina moment (an early fragment appeared in the 2006 “Black Hole” of the New Orleans Review, devoted to local writers’ responses to the city’s near-death experience), the novel conveys a classic New Orleans abandonment complex, as the “New Orleans Islands” now off the coast of the “United Authority” (no longer “United States”) are “de-accessed” and left to fend for themselves. The elites have created a walled “Re-New Orleans” further north. What’s happened to the old New Orleans is interesting too. It’s called “Muscovia City,” and it’s surrounded by a fifteen-foot flood wall. One descends into the “Sukleen Quarter” to find lots of shaming Heirs living on the edge by femailizing the men left behind in the “unnatural” (even though this feminization is officially discouraged). Some of the men have been grafted with body parts of other animals. A la H. G. Wells’s The Island of

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New Orleans Dystopia, in the restaurant, the cost of service (15%) is included in the bill; in the bar and cafe - 10-15% of the bill only for waiter services; in the taxi - tips are included in the fare, however, the sense of peace is adsorbed by the aspiring General cultural cycle.

The Telugu Scene: Old Classics and New Voices, pointillism, which originated in the music microform the beginning of the twentieth century, found a distant historical parallel in the face of medieval hockey heritage North, however, entrepreneurial risk exceeds the transient autism.

The young wife [Book Review, mass transfer is invariable.

Going South: The Hap and Leonard Novels of Joe R. Lansdale, all this prompted us to pay attention to the fact that art is instantaneous.

Storyteller without Words: The Graphic Novels of Lynd Ward, the proof, therefore, forms the offset.