



Darwinia

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A breathtaking science fiction novel of a very different 20th century--haunted, wonderful, and strange. In 1912, history was changed by the Miracle, when the old world of Europe was replaced by Darwinia, a strange land of nightmarish jungle and antediluvian monsters.

Darwinia Details

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Author : Robert Charles Wilson

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Sandi says

I had certain expectations going into *Darwinia: A Novel of a Very Different Twentieth Century* and it didn't meet those expectations. It turned out that it wasn't about what I thought it was about at all. It had a big twist that completely turned my assumptions of the reality of the novel's world upside down. I didn't like how that twist was revealed so blatantly so early in the story.

I know I'm giving the impression that I disliked *Darwinia*, however I don't mean that at all. The story is very intriguing and Robert Charles Wilson creates a very new and unique world. The characterizations are weak, but the story makes up for that. I do recommend *Darwinia*760961 to science fiction fans.

Claudia says

Are you familiar with the simulation argument? If not, for sure you have seen *The Matrix*. In the last few years, the hypothesis that we are living in a simulated reality is more and more debated. But RCW did this 20 years ago, in this gem of a story.

Year 1912: the sky lights up in the middle of the night on the American continent and worldwide. People think Armageddon has come. But when the lights fade out, everything returns to normal on Earth, except that Europe with all its cities, people, flora, fauna vanished and had been replaced by a wild continent emerged straight from the Paleozoic era.

The rest of the world is in shock. Everybody is speaking of a Miracle, except few open minded. An expedition is gathered to find out what happened. And hell is waiting along with some eyes wide open moments.

There are some references to other classical works, such as Burroughs' Barsoom and Lovecraft's themes and it's the first time when I encounter A.C. Clarke's all three laws applied in a story. Not only it's an ingenious alternate history and a sci-fi of ideas, it touches also philosophical, ethical and theological issues. His characters are no heroes, but flawed human beings, filled with the entire range of emotions.

In the end, it all comes on how you want to live your life. And like all his other works, this one will haunt your thoughts long time after reading it.

In my opinion, RCW is, unfortunately, one of the most underrated writers and this book's average rating shows exactly that.

Ferret says

The same author's *Spin* is a far better book, and there were points when the meta-reference became too much for me (yes, even me), but it's a really interesting premise that quite often delivers on its promise, especially in the first half. The second half, where the book threatens to eat itself, I'm not as big a fan of, but the

storytelling works well. Wilson is a good writer.

Lightreads says

Photographer in alt history 1920's gets recruited into a battle for the memory of the universe taking place at the end of time. Which is a way more interesting summary than this book deserves.

Yeah, I think I need to stop digging through RCW's back catalog in search of a book as brilliant and wonderful as *Spin*. There clearly isn't one back there, and it isn't worth having to slog through stuff like this.

This is supposed to be a skiffy meditation on immortality and memory and living, all wrapped in cool alt history packaging. Unfortunatley, It's actually a thoroughly boring and disjointed bit of cardboard wanking of the "but I just want to live a normal life, why must I do great things?" variety. Complete with fridging of the wife for plot convenience and "character development," of course, this being the most common fictional method of making a dude interesting or driven or whatever.

Blech. RCW,, for serious: you are better than this crap.

Meris Bray says

This came highly recommended, but my overall impression was "blah". It is well-written, I'll grant that, and the first half was just fine, but I spent the second half rolling my eyes so hard it's a surprise I actually managed to finish it. I don't usually have trouble suspending my disbelief, but this was just silly.

Gendou says

Two pages of lame science fiction padded by lengthy carrying on by not-so-compelling characters. The premise, (and this doesn't spoil much) has potential: Europe suddenly vanishes and is replaced by a Europe analog from another world, with a whole new family tree of life to discover. But only a small handful of silly organisms are mentioned, most are unimaginative in their detail, and the rest are only mentioned by name.

I really get angry when I read awful "science fiction" like this that attempts to explain mystical foolishness like ghosts, gods, psychics, and the afterlife in terms of half-baked ideas that sound like science, but are really the worst kind of trash.

Rick says

Reminiscent of such diverse writers as Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. G. Wells, and Philip K. Dick, *Darwinia* by Robert Charles Wilson is an amazing piece of literary alchemy. Imagine, if you will, a reality where in 1912

Europe transforms into a strange land of nightmarish jungles and alien creatures. This so-called Miracle is the centerpiece of this fascinating and truly different alternate history.

Young Guilford Law joins an expedition to explore this Darwinia. What they uncover shatters conception of reality and man's destiny in the universe. This book is at the essence of what makes SF wonderful!

Nuno Magalhães says

Este livro deixou-me perplexo. Aliás, mais do que isso - estupefacto!

Sendo a Ficção Científica o meu género literário favorito, e sendo ainda raras as boas traduções de grande obras de FC para a Língua Portuguesa, foi com alguma expectativa que abordei a leitura deste Darwinia de Robert Charles Wilson (RCW), tanto mais que se trata de um livro da coleção Bang da SdE, que nos habituou já a traduções muito precisas e bem conseguidas, acompanhadas por boas edições sem gralhas. Infelizmente, este livro desiludiu-me a todos os níveis.

De uma forma geral, este livro é muito, mas mesmo muito, aborrecido. Mais do que isso, é maçador. Para cada ideia, o autor utiliza um número tão excessivo de adjetivos que quando acabamos de ler uma frase já não nos lembramos como é que ela começou, e muito menos a que é que se referia, seja pessoa, lugar ou objeto. Após as 80 páginas iniciais, ficou claro para mim que o autor privilegiou nesta obra a verborreia literária em lugar de brindar o leitor com frases mais simples, cativantes ou entusiasmantes. Há formas mais diretas e não menos literárias de escrever prosa que não entediam tanto o leitor e cativam mais o interesse por prosseguir a leitura.

Em segundo lugar, a ideia principal é tão original que o autor necessita de introduzir um interlúdio perfeitamente disparatado e desenquadrado a meio do livro para tentar dar alguma explicação a um leitor que se encontra literalmente perdido no meio de descrições pseudoliterárias e cenas de ação tão confusas que é preciso ler mais do que uma vez para tentar compreender, da segunda vez ignorando os desnecessários, coloridos, abundantes, recheados, enegrecidos e (Ainda se lembra a que é que eu me estava a referir no início desta frase? Precisamente! Agora imagine que o livro é todo assim... mas para pior!)

Tendo já lido outra obra deste mesmo autor, "Spin", vencedor do Hugo Award de 2006, encontrei uma enorme semelhança na forma como ambas as obras se iniciam. De facto, em qualquer dos casos, RCW recorreu a um evento anormal/enigmático/catastrófico que foi utilizado para introduzir a ideia principal em torno da qual se constrói a estrutura do livro. Em ambos os casos, ocorreu um evento que modificou o nosso planeta, foi presenciado por um adolescente que mais tarde irá ter um papel preponderante na resolução do enigma inicial. No final, fica-se com a ideia que a preocupação do autor não é respeitar o interesse do leitor, e eu não gosto deste tipo de histórias.

Finalmente, apesar de a capa indicar "Vencedor do prestigiado Philip K. Dick Award", refere-se ao prémio que RCW venceu em 1994 com a obra "Mysterium" e não com este livro especificamente. Para além disso, este livro, "Darwinia", apenas esteve na lista de nomeações para o Hugo Award de 1999, que foi atribuído, nesse ano, a Connie Willis.

Resumindo, a minha opinião é que pegar neste livro é uma grande perda de tempo. Para mim foi. Não aconselho a ninguém, e tão cedo não irei dedicar a minha preciosa atenção a livros escritos por este autor.

bsc says

Gah. I loved the first half of this but it got too weird and convoluted and I sort of lost interest near the end. It was missing the great characters that Wilson does so well in his later novels, too. This won't stop me from jumping right into Blind Lake though.

Brittany says

This was OK. I remember seeing this book on the shelf when it came out way back when I was in high school (and in the middle of my longest-running SF phases) and being lured by the cover. I finally got around to reading it due to a dearth of reading options. (Hurricanes will do that to you.) I still think it has a lovely cover, and the blurb seemed to promise a book about ecology, evolution, and the 20-th century scientific spirit. I was excited about all of it.

Unfortunately, the book and the writing fell flat. Another reviewer here has described it as a Doctor Who episode without the Doctor, and that's a very apt way to sum it up. There were enough somewhat interesting ideas here for a short story, but not enough to carry a novel. The ideas weren't arresting or original enough to merit the mental space Wilson spends on them. In cases like these, sometimes the characters and the writing can carry the day, but not so here. The characters are two-dimensional and plain. While I feel that the writing style may have been a deliberate attempt to capture the tone of the Victorian age, it came up uninspired and bland.

Nathan Harrison says

"Darwinia" has a four-star first half, and a one-star conclusion. An interesting premise that at first seems unlikely to be fully explained (in the good, mysterious way) is later unraveled in one of the most unbelievable and ridiculous revelations I've encountered in a long time. I'm a fan of pulp and wild-eyed, fevered imaginations, but the explanation for the the "Miracle" that converted old-world Europe into a wasteland of alien flora & fauna is beyond any hint of the suspension of disbelief. This is made all the worse by the quality of the first half -- what starts as a "Lost World"-style adventure into the wild with protagonist Guilford Law (I was reminded here of Greg Bear's "Dinosaur Summer") quickly moves into "At The Mountains of Madness" & "House of Leaves" territory when the expedition finds an abandoned, labyrinthine ruin of a city in the heart of transformed Europe. At this point I was excited -- not original territory, but *fun* territory. But then we started to spend more time with the cringing, tedious caricature of a woman that is Law's erstwhile wife, Caroline; more time on the ever-weirder sideplot about Elias Vale and his possession by god-bug; and finally, way, WAY too much time on the insanity of a plot revelation that is The Archive. In total honesty, I first picked this book up after being intrigued by the title and sublime artwork, and continuing to be intrigued by the fragments of plot I gathered from the summary. Even though judging a book by its cover often turns out swimmingly for me, in this case I have to consider that the old saw might be right. But my God -- that cover is still a beautiful thing.

Yaprak says

Yaz?n?n asl? ve tamam? --> <https://yaprakonur.wordpress.com/2017...>

K?saca Darwinya, mükemmellikten bir ad?m uzak da olsa ilginç kurgusu ve fikirleriyle okunmaya de?er bir kitapt?. Bu fikirleri görmek için çok yüksek olmayan bir beklentiyle okunmas?n? tavsiye ederim.

David Katzman says

Hmmhh. I felt nonplussed by *Darwinia*. Unmoved and untouched. It was an odd book but not I felt in a good way. It wasn't a *bad* book...it just didn't hold together enough for me to have much impact.

It's also hard to tell you much about it without spoilers. But I will say that it felt somewhat disjointed. The initial premise changes radically toward the middle as we learn why the premise exists. There were many unwieldy ideas shoved into the basic story. Imagine *Out of Africa* with extreme sci-fi concepts welded into it. I'd also describe this as feeling roughly like a poor man's *Southern Reach* (by Jeff VanderMeer) crossed with *The Matrix*. And beyond the mashup of styles, I also just didn't care about the characters. It's not that Wilson wrote poorly, it's just his characters were rather uninteresting and didn't affect me emotionally. The whole book felt rather cold and distant.

Not much to love nor dislike. Just meh.

Chris says

The first half of this, the half that details an exploration of *Darwinia*, is really good as several other reviewers have pointed out. The last half isn't quite up to level of the first half. It works and fits, but it doesn't quite fit. It's an interesting idea, one that made me poke things, but it felt, in a way, like a huge let down.

Truth be told, I think I would've preferred either another explanation for the transformation of Europe or not to have been told why it happened at all.

I think I am going to have use spoilers. Sorry.

The thing is the reason that Wilson gives opens a number of questions for me. For one, why are the Old Men all men? (And don't give me that bit about the name). I understand that the OM were men who were died in the Great War. But, didn't women die as the result of the war as well? Wasn't there a ship, *Lustiana*, that was torpedoed? Women were on that ship. They died. Then what about the women who would've died in WW II, but couldn't? So the OM group threw me. I'm not saying that Wilson needed to have another female heroine. I'm just saying that some mention of it would've been nice, or even just a hint that there were women as well, or a logical reason why women were excluded.

While answers in books aren't always needed, if you're going to give them, think them though. If Europe ceased to exist prior to WWI, then everything in our history ceases. That's a great many people. What else happens or doesn't happen? You end up wanting more than the book gives you. This makes the first half of the book good, the ending not so much.

Which brings me to the women in the book. All are pretty one dimensional, with the possible exception of Caroline. It's true they are not vital to the story, and Lily is a strong character. But with the exception of Caroline, they could be men. The women seem to be walk on roles that are there to so women readers, like me, can't complain. I hate token female characters. I much rather have no female characters to be honest. For instance, the latest *Sherlock Holmes* movie would've been better if neither women was there. (And, I don't think the women did a bad job, though I think Adler was miscast).

Looking at the paragraphs makes me wonder if I being a bit of a hypocrite. Maybe, but I'm human, get over it.

Overall, the conclusion of the book is a bit of a disappointment, with one notable expectation.

The last chapter. It's beautiful. Heartbreakingly human.

Veeral says

Regrettably, this book had so much potential which was never fully exploited (in my opinion, at the least). The alternative Europe setting promised much excitement and suspense. But that world was never fully realized. I really wanted to know more about "Darwinia" but in retrospect it seems that Robert Charles Wilson never really considered that to be the driving point of his book.

The characters were 2-dimensional and too many were killed-off nonchalantly to keep me interested in the plot.

Robert Charles Wilson could have written this book even without any major alternate historical settings which, happily, would have stopped me from getting lured into reading this mediocre "science-thriller".

A disappointing experience.

2.40 stars

Do?an says

1912 y?l?nda Avrupa k?tas?n?n b?y?k bir k?sm?nda mucizevi bir ?ey oluyor; Eski Avrupa yok oluyor ve yeni yeni bitkiler, yeni t?r hayvanlar meydana c?k?yor. ?lkeler ve bu ?lkelerde ya?ayan b?t?n canl?lar da bu yok olu?a dahil oluyorlar, kimse onlara ne oldu?unu bilmiyor. K?sacas? koskoca Avrupa gidiyor yerine koskocaman Amazonvari bir habitat ortaya c?k?yor. Dini kesim bu de?i?imi Tanr?'n?n dokunu?una ve varl???na yoruyor. Hatta medya bile do?a-bilimcilerle dalga ge?mek i?in bu yenilenmi? k?taya Darwinya ad?n? veriyorlar. San?r?m hani evrim vard? yarat?l?? yoktu demek istiyorlar.

Biz ise Mucize'den 8 y?l sonra E?i ve k?çük k?z?yla Amerika'dan Yeni ?ngiltere'ye giden Guilford Law isimli gen? bir foto?raf?n?n ya?ad?klar?na tan?k oluyoruz. Kendisi bir foto?raf? ve e?ini ve k?z?n? Yeni Londra'da b?rak?p ke?if ekibiyle Darwinya'n?n Avrupa k?sm?n? inceleye gidecek.

Di?er yandan ise Mucize'den sonra Tanr?larla konu?tu?unu iddia edip; insanlar?n ge?mi?ini gelece?ini g?ren, kay?p e?yalar? bulan, hastal?klar?n?n iyile?ip iyile?medi?ini s?yleyen ve bu sayede yolunu bulan Elias Vale'in ya?ad?klar?na tan?k oluyoruz.

Ba?ka karakterlerin g?z?nden de kitab?m?z? okusak da olaylar?n ?o?unlu?u bu iki karakterimiz ve onlar?n ?evrisinde ge?iyor.

Kitab? okumaya ba?lamadan ?nce akl?ma hemen Jules Verne'in D?nya'n?n Merkezine seyahat kitab? gelmi?ti. D.M.S. kitab?ndaki gibi bu kitapta da ?evremizi ke?fe ??kaca??z ve de?i?ik maceralar ya?ayaca??z sanm??t?m. Ancak durum ?ok farkl? yerlere uzan?yor. Darwinya'da macera ya?am?yor muyuz? Tabi ki ya??yoruz ama i?ler orada bitmiyor.

Darwinya, baz? okuyuculara a??r gelebilir. Nedeni ise hem kitab?n a??r ilerlemesi hem de baz? b?l?mlerin ?ok?a Kutsal Kitap g?ndermeleri, kozmoloji ve do?a-bilim terimleri / g?ndermeleri i?ermesi. Ben baz? bilgileri biliyordum baz?lar?n? ise Google'lad?m. Okurken pek s?k?nt? ?ekmedim.

Kitap kesinlikle zaman kayb? de?ildi. Benim tek eksik buldu?um k?s?m Darwinya'daki canl?lar? daha ?ok tan?mamak oldu, 3-5 yarat?kla falan kar??la??yoruz ancak fazlas?n? g?remiyoruz. Tasvirler ise ?ok yetersiz kalm???. Yazar bu k?s?mlarda cimri davranm?? veya hayal g?c? yetmemi? olabilir. Bu y?zden kitaptan yar?m puan k?rd?m. Bir yar?m puan ise baz? karakterlerin gereksiz yere ?lmesi ve baz? k?s?mlar?n okuyucuya aktar?lamamas? y?z?nden k?rd?m.

Beklentiye y?ksek tutmazsan?z keyif alabilirsiniz.

Son olarak bir al?nt?yla bitirelim:

"Bilim bakmak demektir... ?zel bir tarzda bakmak. ?zellikle de anlamad???m?z ?eylere dikkatle bakmak. S?z gelimi y?ld?zlara bakmak ve onlardan korkmamak, onlara tapmamak, sadece sorular sormak, bir sonraki ve onun ard?ndaki sorulara a?lacak kap?lar?n anahtarlar?n? bulmak."

Peregrine says

This book is a kinetic tumble of genres: alternate history, science fiction, geographical survey, action thriller, horror, mythology. The story is idea-driven much more than character-driven; it's the detached logic of situations that makes many sections heartwrenching. The complete strangeness of Darwinia juxtaposes the absence of Europe, direct ancestor of my literary development. Indeed, in this scenario, I would not have been born at all, as my paternal grandfather would have disappeared in 1912 at age ten. There's no rest for the reader, no place of comfort, as there is none for most of the characters. I'm glad I read (and finished) this book. It made me think; it took familiar world-pieces, tossed a number of them out, and placed the rest in very unfamiliar combinations. It charged my imagination; parts of it creeped me out. Not a comfortable read, but a worthwhile one.

Andrew says

There comes a time when you read a book (especially science fiction, but that is a discussion for a whole new entry) when a concept is totally new a fascinating, and this is one of them. I guess every genre suffers from the adage - there are no new stories, just ways of re-telling old ones - or something like that.

Anyway this book I will admit had one such idea - I cannot really explain it since practically the WHOLE book hinges around it, what I can say is that I didnt see it coming and in a strange way it all makes sense. I will admit that this was the first book I had read of Robert Charles Wilson but it so impressed me I will be looking for others of his to see if they too are as intriguing and interesting to read.

What I will also guilty put my hand up to is that the cover is a brilliant piece of artwork sadly not given real justice to considering the small picture that is available here - it amongst other things influenced me to pick this book up and give it a try.

Michael Fierce says

At firt glimpse I was immediately taken in by the cover stating Darwinia was a Hugo Award Finalist.

An important fact in my book.

The quotes I read here and there said it was a variation on The Lost World by Arthur Conan Doyle, in the tradition of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne, and H.G. Wells, comparable to Philip K. Dick or A.E. van Vogt, and since then, armchair critics have said that it has a sprinkling of the Elder Gods mythos by H.P. Lovecraft, and that the creature portion was reminiscent of Stephen King, and several made reference to The Matrix.

Incredibly, all of this is true.

Not so incredibly, it never reached the heights of anything it was referenced to.

Not for me, anyway.

I found a brand new mint copy of it with the title on the book cover in rose gold embossed lettering, with an eye-catching cover that was right up my alley.

I was SO stoked!:

It started off great and the first half really pulled me in. I thought the characters, plot, world, and sequences were all really fascinating. The second half, however, unraveled to the extremes and, shockingly, fell flat, in my opinion.

Knowing that Robert Charles Wilson had previously won the Philip K. Dick Award for his previous novel, Mysterium, published before this one in 1994, I wasn't surprised that his writing, characters, and world were all very engaging, at first. Once it reached it's zenith and beyond, the culmination of his grandiose plot and his handling of the character development just never measured up to the level of intent this novel needed

them to be. At least not for me, it didn't.

After seeing all the authors it was referenced to, Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne, and H.G. Wells, I was expecting it to be a lot of fun.

Everything popular those authors wrote was fun.

This is a bleak read and not fun at all.

Maybe I should've paid more attention, when reading about Darwinia, to how many times I heard the name, Philip K. Dick. It was never the intent of Robert Charles Wilson to make this fun in the first place. *BTW, before anybody says anything, I want to go on record and say that I've read and liked many stories by Philip K. Dick but, most of them are bleak and he's a real big hit or miss for me, mattering on what I'm reading by him.

I will defend this book somewhat and say that there are some clever ideas, interesting concepts, and it's very unique.

I so wanted to really like this book!

I give it an unfortunate 3 stars.

Recommended for readers who like their adventures more bleak than I do, and for those who might be able to look past it's many faults, and enjoy some of it's separate parts, rather than for it's sum.

**I want to mention again, what a cool cover by sci-fi painter, Jim Burns!

Asl? Da?l? says

Son zamanlarda okudu?um en kaliteli, en özenli, en fantastikli bilimkurgulardan biriydi. Ayr?nt?l? yorumum için instagram: dagli_asli
