



The Werewolf Principle

Clifford D. Simak

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Andrew Blake is found in a space capsule on a distant planet and is brought back to an unfamiliar Earth, where antigravity devices have replaced the wheel, and houses talk and even fly!

Yet nothing is as strange as Blake's own feelings. Tormented by eerie sensations and loss of memory, he doesn't know who he really is or exactly where he has come from. His destiny only begins to grow frighteningly clear when he meets a weird, tassel-eared creature who darkly hints at the truth about Blake's origins. Slowly Blake becomes aware of the long hushed-up "Werewolf Principle," a scientific theory buried in the past, which holds the key to Blake's own fate-and the future of the human species.--book cover

The Werewolf Principle Details

Date : Published June 22nd 1994 by Carroll & Graf Publ. (first published 1967)

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Author : Clifford D. Simak

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From Reader Review The Werewolf Principle for online ebook

Jonathan says

He has the most engaging style, you could wallow in it like a herd of hippos. Oh yes, what is the book like... Romance between machines on a future earth.

Cécile C. says

The story of an extraterrestrial schizophrenia... The main interest of this book lies in the dialogue between the three distinct entities that share the body of the hero, a former space explorer. The three include one human that has not been back to the Earth for centuries, and two alien beings from very primitive planets, that are suddenly thrown into an entirely mechanised society, in which houses fly and play nanny to their inhabitants. A fun read.

Bert says

My favourite thing about this book was probably the cover. However, i did also enjoy the talking houses and the brownies, who were super cute. It had a lot going for it, some good ideas, but lacked style, and the love story was defo forced, c'mon the guy's part-wolf or whatever and not one item of clothing gets ripped off, shame. I'd still read others by Simak, but i'm an idiot so that's not a glowing recommendation.

Cheryl says

Second (or third?) read. My previous review still stands. This time I want to add that the poetry of the writing surprised me. Lots of beautiful imagery and stylings... not purple prose, and easy to overlook in one's quest to figure out what's going on in the plot and with the characters, but definitely well-crafted.

Bill says

Back in my university days, I took a Science Fiction novel course. One of the books we read was City, a story of the future where all that remains on Earth are dogs and robots. A beautiful, engaging, touching story. For some reason, I've never read another Simak book, until this past week. The Werewolf Principle, written in 1968, was a lovely surprise. In the future, mankind sent ships into space to search the universe for habitable planets. Along with the ships were two unique humans (maybe telling you their uniqueness might take some of the joy of discovering it for yourselves, so I won't elaborate). Suffice it to say, that one of them returns to Earth, discovered in hibernation in a capsule. Andrew Blake arrives, suffering from amnesia. Slowly he discovers himself and how he has changed over this 200 year journey. He is now more than Andrew Blake. Discovering how he has changed is part of the joy of this book; such an imaginative concept. I found myself saying 'Wow' many times. The book is thoughtfully crafted, intelligently written and the story

and characters are all interesting and engaging. It's so nice exploring Science Fiction again, the imagination and the stories. I do like how Simak views the future, some concepts like the living homes are fascinating, and, yet, people still use coins and public phone boxes. I also liked the Brownies, the beings from another world who have settled on Earth and keep an eye on things. Everything about this story was fascinating. I had originally given it 4-stars, but as I write about it and think about it, it deserves more than that. It intrigued me, brought out emotions, both happy and sad, and just totally grabbed me, from beginning to end. It won't take me 40 years to read another Simak story.

Altivo Overo says

Read many years ago, but well worth this second trip through. The writing is superb, both in terms of character development and detailed settings. The plot concept is fascinating and complex, fraught with social and ethical issues. If you don't already know the context, it may take you a while to figure out just what is happening. You'll get it in a while, so stick to it.

As is often the case with science fiction, even though Simak was writing this in the 1960s, he successfully predicts elements that would appear in future times. Amusingly, though, he missed the cell phone or something similar in terms of portable communication. Such devices were already being discussed and predicted as early as 1955, but the author has his characters some 200 to 300 years in our future being forced to hunt down and use public telephones. Granted, the telephones include video and are rather advanced, but they are still large and clunky and tied down to physical locations. This is not a criticism, of course, but an interesting sidelight.

Clifford Simak was a SFWA Grand Master and well worthy of that title. All science fiction fans should experience his works.

Cheryl says

One of the more universally appealing Simak, perhaps. Many of the ideas could have been conceived by other writers. But only Simak's House would have offered not-wallpaper that's a collage of thousands of eyes, when requested to change it from a woodland scene featuring a bunny, and only Simak's Kitchen would have pouted because the resident asked for ham'n'eggs instead of lobster thermidor. And only in a Simak novel would our hero go (trout?) fishing and wind up feeding most of his picnic to a not-Brownie. And even the politics were interesting, how the two Senators from the US had to come to agreement or one would be forced to resign....

Lots of ideas here slowed me down from total immersion, but I reveled in them rather than resented them. If you're anything of a Simak fan, don't miss this. If you happen to be in the mood for some older SF that's a little different, do consider it.

Tom Loock says

Was it just to surprise myself when I chose to re-read *The Werewolf Principle* by Clifford D. Simak? I have pleasant memories of reading a couple of Simaks at the same time in the 70s and picked this one at

random for a revisit.

Though published in the 1960s, it reads more like a 1950s novel when it comes to multiple predictions about the future (*yes, the ever-popular flying cars and space travel, though people still have to walk across the room to answer a phone with optional visuals*) and the then popular small cast of characters, but - that's just at first glance. As with many of Simak's stories, there is more to it.

In essence Simak is a down-to-earth (*sorry, couldn't resist that with a SF-writer*) man from rural Wisconsin born 110 years ago who began publishing in the 30s. He was a humanist through and through, and a religious man though the latter has never caused an atheist like myself any problems.

I hate and will always avoid spoilers, so suffice to say, the unfortunately since misleadingly titled 'Werewolf Principle' is about an astronaut returning to Earth and about harmony between multiple species.

I recommend Simak in general, and count this one among his better books; though it is dated, it has a certain charm.

Kelly McCubbin says

I love Simak. City and Way Station are absolute gems and I think he doesn't get enough attention. His voice is so strong and unique and is funnier than most of his level peers (with the possible exception of Robert Sheckley). That said, this is a minor piece straining to be a bigger one. Philosophical to a fault in a way that, unless your last name is Bradbury, you ought to leave a little less wrought.

Still, it's intriguing and very funny in parts. There is often an almost Looney Tunes-ish mania about his work, with houses arguing about their own wallpapers and diners using mechanical arms and conveyer belts to cook flapjacks.

An easy, fun read that doesn't quite pay off in the way it seems to be heading towards, but still worth a look.

Jim says

I am beginning to like Clifford D. Simak more and more. His **Way Station** was magnificent, and The Werewolf Principle, while not so good, has moments of sheer brilliance -- plus a brilliant ending.

Two hundred years before, man created an android for space exploration. It was not according to plan, but this android became three creatures in one: the human, called Changer, who contained a mind transfer of a brilliant earth scientist; a kind of wolf with arms, called Quester; and a somewhat amorphous almost purely intellectual creature, called Thinker. When the android comes back to earth, he is hunted down.

I won't say here what happens, but it is a great ending, perhaps Simak's best:

Earth wanted to get rid of him, perhaps afraid of him, perhaps merely disgusted by him, a loathsome product of its own ambitions and imagination that must be quickly swept underneath the rug. For there was no place for him on the Earth or in humanity, and yet he was a human product and had been made possible by the nimble brains and the weasel understanding of Earth's scientists.

Of particular interest are a group of extraterrestrials that live on earth, but not among humans. They look like fairy tale weasels with pockets and are called Brownies.

The story takes a while to really get started, but when it does, the book quickly goes from a three-star to a four-star read.

Lindsey Grundyson says

This is my second Simak read and I'm more delighted with him all the time! He's a smart guy exploring interesting questions using various consciousness and the book is just a delight. Four stars for some heavy abstraction, especially at the end, but a really lovely read.

Roddy Williams says

'In the middle-distant future, Andrew Blake, discovered on a distant planet huddled inside a capsule, is brought back to Earth suffering from total amnesia.

Over 200 years old, he thinks and acts like a man but becomes frighteningly aware of two alien beings that lurk within his body – a strange biological computer and a wolf-like animal. With the latter in control he breaks out of hospital to look for his past...'

Blurb from the 1977 Pan paperback edition

Several hundred years hence, Man has colonised the nearer stars. A political debate is in progress in which Senator Chandler Horton is proposing to abandon long-term and expensive plans for terraforming in favour of adapting humans to fit the planets. His rival, Senator Solomon Stone is taking the exact opposite view, suggesting that standard humans would regard such adapted people as abhorrent monsters.

Into this world Andrew Blake awakens, a man with no knowledge of his past, and whose worldview seems to be two hundred years behind everyone else's.

In this somewhat surreal future, men wear kilts and robes, houses fly about to settle in whatever plot takes their resident's fancy and (quite annoyingly, one imagines) the various rooms have different personalities and argue with each other over what is best for their occupants.

Blake soon becomes aware of blackouts, after which he finds himself naked in the countryside. He subsequently meets a Brownie (a small rodent-like alien whose species has taken up residence in Earth's countryside) who asks him how many of him there are.

The question only makes sense to Blake when he is exposed to the realisation that not only does he share his mind with two aliens, but that he is also a shapeshifter and can transform into their alien bodies.

These three distinct personalities are called Changer (Blake himself), Quester (a large wolf-like creature) and Thinker (an amorphous sexless entity which seems no more than an emotionless biological computer).

Unable to control the triggering of his shapeshifting, Blake goes on the run after his Quester form is seen and travels through an unfamiliar America two hundred years ahead of the background knowledge he has in his mind.

It's interesting that Simak has chosen these archetypal personalities which seem to relate to classic views of the consciousness divided into Id, Ego and Superego, the wolf element being the subconscious, Blake being the conscious and Thinker being the level at which rational logic and calculation process facts. Quester also

has the ability to 'sense' life on other worlds but lacks the intellect to analyse what he finds.

This is late Simak and for the time it was written, seems somewhat dated, having a flavour and style more suited to the Fifties. It is not short of ideas, however. Simak engages in the debate over terraforming versus humanforming and we are introduced to the Mind Bank, a repository of worthy human minds, which have been uploaded into a storage device and exist as both individuals and a gestalt consciousness.

Indeed, the central theme is one of identity and (in the Dickian sense) what it means to be human.

Blake ultimately discovers himself to be just a copy of a human mind, long dead. Quester and Thinker also deduce that their original bodies were destroyed since Blake is an android designed to scan and mimic alien species for Research purposes, one of only two constructed and sent out to alien worlds two hundred years ago.

Later, he finds that another copy of his consciousness exists in the Mind Bank. There is a strange anachronistic scene near the end where his disembodied self rings Blake up on the telephone. The denouement is satisfying although one suspects that Simak is trying to explore an idea which should have been introduced earlier.

The three personalities begin the process of assimilation in order that Blake can exist as one consciousness. Blake returns to space to search for something that Thinker discovered from Quester's 'sensing' of space while they were (tellingly) in a country church; a thing Blake describes as 'a universal mind'.

One cannot see that Simak is using this final chapter as some kind of Christian metaphor, although it could be read as such. Blake collapses into his Thinker form (behind a natural force field) in a church, and remains as good as dead until Elaine Horton (the senator's daughter) comes to speak to him, generating a resurrection.

After a few days he ascends (in a ship) in search of God.

Despite its flaws it remains a book full of colour, atmosphere and wonder.

Paul Weiss says

40 years old and more current than ever!

Upon turning the final page of this powerful novel, 21st century readers of **The Werewolf Principle** will likely set the book down slack-jawed with amazement at Simak's thoughtful, prescient exploration of genetic engineering, a scientific field of endeavour that, unheard of a scant 40 years ago, now reaches front page headlines on a regular basis.

Space travel as technology is now several hundred years old. But, currently debate is raging in the Senate over a proposal for a program of bio-engineering as a basis for the colonization of other solar systems. Is it better to force the planet to fit the man through terra-forming or to bio-engineer the man and mold his abilities to withstand hostile alien environments? There are those that feel the results of such a modification would somehow be less than human or may even be perceived as a monster.

But neither side to this debate is aware of Andrew Blake. Two hundred years earlier, this problem had already been faced and resolved at that time by producing a synthetic human - an android with the imprint of a fully human mind that would be capable of absorbing the form and mind of any alien culture it might encounter. The mission that carried Blake to the stars had been lost and the Space Administration reached the decision to formally bury any reference to the project as a regrettable failure! Luck and happenstance have now returned Blake to earth into the middle of the current debate and the world is shocked to learn of the flaw in their 200 year old experiment - the "data" from the absorption of an alien mind could not be erased. Blake is now an amalgam of three wildly different alien personalities able to interact and communicate with

each other but within a single body.

Under the circumstances, Blake, of course, becomes the lightning rod "poster child" for BOTH sides of the debate. Even Blake himself is puzzled and questions both his humanity and his place on earth.

The Werewolf Principle is a trademark Simak blend of soft and hard sci-fi, crafted in his low-key softly stated pastoral Midwest style that cannot fail to amaze any thinking reader. The ending of the novel not only contains a blind-side twist worthy of the finest thriller but is also warmly romantic and intelligently optimistic without being trite or gushy. With standards like this to live up to, it is a miracle that contemporary writers of science fiction can actually make a living!

Paul Weiss

Deborah Ideiosepius says

This was actually a much more enjoyable book on this re-read than it was on the first reading. A lot of that is a mood thing, I know, but *The Werewolf Principle* is an odd sort of book in a lot of ways.

This classic sci-fi novel has an elegant old-school writing style that is philosophical and in a way insular; it is very much a first person point of view and that person is a synthetic man. The goals of the book seem more philosophical and exploratory than thrilling, so the title ends up feeling a bit misleading if you do not start out knowing what it is about. The narrative meanders through self analysis, self doubt and the boundaries of humanity, what we are, what we could be. There is no screaming and rending under the full moon.

Our main character, Andrew Blake, was discovered in cryogenic sleep in outer space, no one is sure who he was or how he got there, lest of all himself. Slowly Blake's fascinating story emerges along with the information that he is not all alone in his mind.

While the story is inclined to waffle on a bit, at times, and the philosophy of Thinker can be a bit dated, on the whole it is a very satisfying story with a surprisingly decent ending.
(view spoiler)

Frank says

Simak pens good sci-fi adventure stories. This one was much more cerebral, and there was a lot to digest and think about when reading this one. The end could have used more expansion. It feels like he ended it too quickly. Still, I am a Simak fan and this was worth my time.
