



Strange Relations

Philip José Farmer

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The Lovers: One of the most controversial and groundbreaking novels in science fiction. Sent by the religious tyranny of a future Earth to the planet Ozagen, Hal Yarrow met Jeanette, an apparently human fugitive, hiding in ancient ruins built by a long-vanished race. Unconsecrated contact with any female was forbidden to Yarrow-and love for an alien female was an unspeakable sin. But Yarrow's lifelong conditioning was no match for his strange attraction to Jeanette.

Flesh: The starship captain had made the mistake of landing on a forgotten planet colonized centuries ago by believers in ancient pagan rituals. Unless he could escape, he would be made part of a fertility rite which would conclude with his very unpleasant death.

Strange Relations: Five novelettes of unbounded imagination telling of strange encounters between man and alien.

Previously published as separate books, these three works are published here together for the first time.

Strange Relations Details

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Author : Philip José Farmer

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From Reader Review *Strange Relations* for online ebook

Ghanima says

The first short story in this collection is an excellent example of why I don't read short story's. I loved it. I think it was a brilliant short story. The main character was very fucked up, and thus very interesting, and the aliens were without a doubt very, very alien. I read it in one go, and then spent several days with a massive hangover, wishing that the story had been longer, and I could have known more about Eddy and his life with the molluscs on Baudelaire.

The third short story was not my cup of tea. I think the problem is mainly that I don't believe religion will still exist in the future. The story was without a doubt very outdated, but that never stopped me from reading anything before. I didn't like the way the story was told. I kept having the feeling that the way the characters acted was very unrealistic; they crashed on an unknown planet, but didn't seem to be worried about that fact at all, nor did they bother to work very hard to solve the problem. When they got into a conflict with the native alien, they discussed it amongst themselves, without bothering to investigate the subject very much; in fact, Carmody was the only one who had explored the situation, and then only for a bit.

The last two stories are okay, for short stories, I guess. They were too short for me to care much about the situation or the characters.

The last short story is, again, a bit out dated. It is hard for me to get that an astronaut from the future, who has actually travelled to Mars, can live by such narrow minded ideas. Maybe that's why I didn't understand Lane's violent reaction to Mahrseeya and her baby. Although it was not very clear to me why Mahrseeya reacted to him the way she did.

Spiderorchid says

Not a bad book, just not my cup of tea. Vintage sci-fi with interesting ideas, but sadly I didn't like the writing style.

Rhys says

An excellent omnibus collection of three early Philip Jose Farmer novels. I read the second one, *Flesh*, first, because I owned it when I was younger and never got round to reading it, then I lost it. A fast paced pulp adventure, it is firmly tongue in cheek but has barely a fraction of the shock value it undoubtedly had when it was first published in the 1960s. And yet Farmer's writing is always good.

After *Flesh* I read the short stories that make up the *Strange Relations* collection. Some of these stories are linked, some aren't. The first one, 'Mother', is one of the best SF stories I've ever read. Absolutely perfect in every way: the pacing, the way that every little detail has been engineered to fit together. Marvellous! Then I read *The Lovers*... A classic in every sense.

Sars says

First off, let's tackle the issue of that cover. It makes this book look like second-rate porn. It's not. In fact, it's not remotely erotic or sexy. It is sexual in the sense that it focuses on sexual issues — much like *The Left Hand of Darkness* does (i.e. from a dispassionate observational standpoint).

This book comprises two novellas and a bunch of short stories. The first novella, *The Lovers*, starts out well. It looked like it was going to out-do *The Handmaid's Tale* in terms of a study in repressive society and the effect on individuals. But then it went off in a completely different direction and forgot to make use of what seemed to be the theme of the first 90% of the story.

The second novella started out strangely. Then it got stranger. Usually I like strange, but this was just incomprehensible. I didn't like any of the characters, but I didn't especially hate them either — which makes for a pretty dull read.

I started the first of the short stories at the end, but then decided that I was just punishing myself for no reason.

Jan M says

I got this book to be a little daring. It was a big sensation at the time it came out (1961). Supposedly, this was to explore sex, sensuality and such in SciFi. I read the first novel- *The Lovers*.

Well, it drove me crazy! How things have changed. Point one: the sex is almost non-existent. It's like- He looked at her with those thoughts and then they go into the bedroom and scene fades. Could be watching an old movie.

Point two- I suppose the other part was that a human male decided to have sex with an alien female. OK, fine, I could see how that might freak people out particularly with a Bug Eyed Monster, but this alien was very much like a human except better. What is called the Super Stimulus-exaggerating certain aspects of the sexual organs. In this case they were perfectly shaped large breasts with red nipples and equally red lips on the face. Now I don't see why anyone would think that was strange, especially men, well maybe women would find it unfairly competitive and Mr. Farmer did include that in some of the explanation.

What really got me though is the female alien was killed and she was killed in a way that suggests she was supposed to die. I am referring to how authors have treated lesbians and I suppose female heroines especially if they try to emulate a man too much. If the story had ended where the man had found out "in time" and managed to "save her" because he had gotten over the "OMG she's not human" part and "found the answer" I would have liked it better. It would have proven that, in the end, we can rise above instinct and "do the right thing". Well, in this story the alien Did the Right Thing, and the human caught up to slow and is "very sad" about it all.

The second novel-*Flesh*-was just as bad. It starts out with a spaceship returning to Earth after many centuries and finding a world that has gone back into the "dark ages" with a female priestess and weird rituals involving sex and fertility, etc. The captain of the ship is taken captive and made the male centerpiece of a ceremony, giving him drugs until the point where all he's interested in is nailing the priestess. I gave up. It may have been interesting at the time to see a society successfully held by females but they all were so stupid-no one saw the problems except for some of the spaceship crew that were quickly being assimilated. It was bad!

Calvn Wheatley says

I am half way through. There are three short stories and I really enjoyed the first story. so far liking story 2...

Gevera Bert says

Part of the problem with this collection is that the stories are really old and highly reflect the time they were written in. The first two stories were ok/not great, although too long; the last one was just a series of unrelated vignettes, most of which weren't very interesting. It really should be rated a 2 but I'm giving it an extra star because it's old and has to be judged accordingly.

Earl Grey Tea says

Strange Relations is not your typical soft science fiction that looks at how technology or alien species would impact society. Instead, it focuses on an individual human and their intimate relationship with an extremely exotic alien life form or sentient robot.

Farmer's greatest strength in this book is he creativity of these bizarre yet fascinating worlds and creatures that he has dreamed up. The first two stories were extremely strong since they featured living organisms that were not humanoid in the least bit and lived in a manner much different to mankind's way of life. In addition to that, I appreciated how these two tales were about different generations of the extraterrestrial species that interacted with the human being and how he impacted their society.

I was a bit confused with this book as I moved onto the third story and did not realize that the remaining tales had nothing to do with first part of the book. While the latter part of the book was of interest, it was not as strong as the beginning. One thing that irked me was the introduction of humanoid aliens. When put into the perspective of the entire galaxy, there is noting mandating that intelligent life forms have to take on human like forms. The only reason for this is the familiarity of this body type for us Earth bound readers. While these stories do have their own positive aspects, the lack of truly unprecedented life forms in the third and fifth stories left me feeling a bit let down.

Despite my criticisms, Philip José Farmer is still an author that expands my horizons in the world of science fiction and is enjoyable to read.

Tymothy says

This one is a short story anthology, so I'm reading stories in-between other reading. 1) The first story, 'The Lovers' was a pretty good one. It had an interesting far-future world and world-view, with some engaging characters.

Finally finished this one. I liked some stories better than others, but gave it 3 stars over-all. If you're not too squeamish about sexually explicit stories, it might be something you'd like, too.

Elizabeth says

I just finished reading this book, the last story was about several human astronauts crash-landed on Mars, and the main character is welcomed by a very hospitable alien, whose notions of polite, appropriate behavior are quite different than those of Humankind. It's really interesting as it is told in first-person and he oscillates between trusting and not trusting her.

Dustin says

Very psychological in focus, these stories clearly pushed the genre in the mid-50s and helped make SF what it is today. The molluscoids of Baudelaire probably remain one of the most "alien" aliens in SF.

Lauren Munoz says

This book has three stories in it and I only read "The Lovers". However, as I do not plan to read the other stories, I figured I should go ahead and write a review. This book may have been controversial or new or interesting when it was written, but it is none of those things now. It has a couple of neat ideas that are poorly described and soon forgotten. The real problem with the book is that the "love" story is ghastly - the male is hateful and controlling (he found that alcohol made it possible for him not to gag while he watched her naked mouth eat) and the female is a fan boy's wet dream (you find out she was evolutionarily designed to be everything a man desires - how fortunate for him). At no point in the book did I care about either of them at all (though I'm sure that is partly attributable to the atrocious writing). At the end, when she is discovered to be a parasitic insect who dies during child "birth" (whereby her children eat her as their first sustenance - one of the more hilarious ideas actually), I felt no twinge of emotion. And when the male's friend comforts him by saying that he will find pleasure in sleeping with his beloved's sisters, I had no trouble imagining him doing just that. I understand that there are plot explanations for many of my complaints (he was raised in a religious/nazi society that forbade sex! her evolutionary design helps her stay alive for thousands of years!), but knowing that didn't increase my enjoyment of the story. The only person I would recommend this book to is someone doing literary/historical research on the development of the sci-fi genre - I can assure those people it is a goldmine of gender, religious and social paper topics.

Fishface says

Every story is about a completely different kind of interspecies romance. One of Farmer's better efforts. Don't miss this one.

Paul says

Three novels in one. The only one worth bothering with is the last one, 'Strange Relations' itself. I picked it up because this is the book Dan O'Bannon read as he was writing the screenplay for Alien. Skip the three pages from the end to see where the Alien's mouth-within-a-mouth idea comes from...

Anna says

<http://community.livejournal.com/genr...>
