



Treason

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Lanik Mueller's birthright as heir to planet Treason's most powerful rulership will never be realized. He is a "rad" -- radical regenerative. A freak among people who can regenerate injured flesh... and trade extra body parts to the Offworld oppressors for iron. For, on a planet without hard metals -- or the means of escape -- iron is power in the race to build a spacecraft.

Iron is the promise of freedom -- which may never be fulfilled as Lanik uncovers a treacherous conspiracy beyond his imagination.

Now charged with a mission of conquest -- and exile -- Lanik devises a bold and dangerous plan... a quest that may finally break the vicious chain of rivalry and bloodshed that enslaves the people of Treason as the Offworld never could.

Treason Details

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Anthony says

In my first foray into fiction other than "A Song of Ice and Fire" in a long while, I read "Treason" by Orson Scott Card a couple of days ago. A noteworthy event, believe you me.

As his second novel (revised version, like with "Hot Sleep") it is in some ways quite raw. The first third of the book was essentially transsexual erotic fiction. So if that was the bait, consider me hooked. I somehow don't think it was.

The story was told from a first person future perspective. This was probably the novel's biggest fault. This perspective naturally leads you to piece together plot points that the reader has yet to see. Thus, outside of aspects of the universe that you haven't yet been introduced to, there is no way to surprise the reader.

Luckily for Card, his strength lies in the ability to create detailed and interesting worlds to explore. So even though our hero Lanik Mueller never did anything that he hadn't previously hinted that he would do, his wanderings are still rather interesting. In some sense, he has a very Odysseus-eque travel. On this universe-centered story telling, "Treason" is most similar to his other works "Hot Sleep" and "Wyrms" and "Hart's Hope". All four tend to decentralize the importance of the characters and see them more as eventual and necessary arrivals on the stage of the great time-dependent differential equation of their respective worlds. Lanik Mueller isn't important, but someone like him is.

Unfortunately for us Lanik Mueller seems to operate with the our modern day moral structure and not his own. This is a consistency with Card though. The genius of Heinlein is that he creates elaborate places that have their own detailed and intense corresponding ethical structure. And even while doing so, he denies the existence of absolute moral relativism (see "Farnham's Freehold"). The genius of Asimov is that he was able to single-handedly define and expand the morality of robots and AI. The genius of Bradbury is to point out those human universalities that exist regardless of technology level. From all of the Card I have read (which is *a lot*) he never seems to care about these things.

The foreign aspects of his works are in the science/magic alone, and the similarities lie in that his characters act as if they were to pinnacle of modern personality types. Perhaps his books have a broader appeal because there is some cold, familiar comfort in this setup. However, in retrospect, I am tempted to think it is somewhat of a cop out.

Maybe he isn't good at mixing up moral frames of reference so he steers away from it in general. Which is fine. But this gets back to my main criticism that the main characters are more static than my bar of interest would normally allow. Luckily, his early works tended to be short, not giving time for his characters to do much other than explore the world.

So in summary, I liked it. I couldn't put it down. But whether this was because I was fascinated with his uncomfortable writing of transsexual, lesbian, and gay sexuality or whether I liked the world is hard to say.

Jeff says

I got this book because it was on sale through Audible, assuming that it would be quite good—everybody is always going on about what a fantastic author Orson Scott Card is.

If I could sum Treason up in one word, I would say that it's lackluster. This is one of his early books, so we can't expect the same kind of polish that he would be writing with nowadays, but this book wandered around (literally) so much that sometimes I couldn't tell what the story would end up being about. Now that I've finished it, I can see that everything was leading up to a certain point, but not a whole lot about this book was satisfying during the actual read. Or even now.

The story is set on a planet called Treason (which was the original publication title), and follows Lanik Mueller from his point of view. In the Audible version, Card offers us a 15-minute background/advice session in which he tells us where he got this story and the mechanics of writing it, and I found that it was as entertaining as the book itself. One of the main complaints that I have about Treason is the fact that we don't get any serious movement out of Lanik until about 2/3 through the book. Until that time, he just seems like a confused guy in his early 20s that happens to be on a different planet.

All that being said, the ideas in the book are really interesting. With each family/nation having excelled in something adds a lot to the science fiction-ness of the book. However, I feel that since the world is so rich and interesting, the story could have been so much more. I'm not disappointed—I'm glad I read it. I think I was expecting steak, but what I got was McDonald's. Still good, just not what I was hoping for.

Clint says

I'd give it a star and a half. The story was cool, but right in the middle of the book, the plot ended and a new one started. It should have been 2 books, the first and a sequel. Also, it was really uninentionally funny, the extra arms and tits everywhere, and the way the main character would look at his breasts and feel maternal, hilarious. The writing was terrible, cheesy, the characters flat, the special powers were played out like a geek who gets picked on at school wishing he could do THIS and THIS to his enemies. I read Ender's Game a few years ago, and thought it was much better. I have to give the writer the benefit of a doubt, you know, it was his second book I think.

Olethros says

-Revisión innecesaria de una obra escrita por el autor cuando estaba comenzando a darse a conocer.-

Género. Ciencia-Ficción.

Lo que nos cuenta. Lanik Mueller debe heredar en un futuro los dominios de su reino/familia, cuyo don es la regeneración de su organismo, pero al ser diagnosticado como regenerador radical su posición social y familiar cambia totalmente. Su padre, combinando destierro, política interna y espionaje internacional, le manda a investigar cómo otra familia/reino, los Nkumai, están haciendo crecer sus dominios por la fuerza y a una velocidad alarmante. Y es que estas familias, junto a muchas otras, descienden de los hombres que la República desterró hacia ya muchos siglos al planeta Traición como castigo por conspirar contra su dominio. Novela que es una revisión y reedición de una obra del propio autor escrita nueve años antes con el nombre de "Un planeta llamado Traición".

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<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

Jim says

It's been years since I last read this, but I remember it very fondly. While it has some flaws, it is a really fun adventure story of a young man discovering himself & his world. And what a world! It's a very cool concept that Card has come up with. Part of the fun of the book is discovering this, so I won't say more in my review, except that it is a really interesting look at fanaticism & the evolution of societies.

There is a lot of adventure & it is almost a fantasy, yet always shelved as SF.

Also reviewed as an audio book here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Card says he writes his books to be read out loud & it works. As much as I liked this book in print, it was even better in that format.

Foxthyme says

Card's second published book, the one I read redone slightly in later years. I kept puzzling over the fact that it seemed familiar, then I realized, yes, I'd read it before. One scene had really stuck in my head, but the rest had dissolved away. Even so, it is a good fast read with some interesting 'families.' Glad I read it again.

apple says

Just to give you a rough idea of how charmingly fudged up this book is; the protagonist Lanik Mueller is a teenage boy who can regenerate any body parts (yes, *any*) and he has two lovely-cutesy horses named Hitler and Himmler. This nice charming young man should be going on an adventure and marry a fairy princess at the end of the rainbow or something but as the plot would have it, Lanik is exiled from his kingdom and set on the path to uncover the conspiracy that enslave planet Treason. Treason is a prison planet without hard metals so all the rival clans are plotting schemes to get iron from the offworlders in order to be the first to build escape spaceship.

I really did try but I'm going to sit this one out. The idea of the book is very original and the story pretty intriguing right up to the point where Lanik goes through a phase where he has to find his true self, accept destiny, make peace with family, save the world...all while having one mother of a Messiah complex. The story goes round and round and ends up nowhere. Also Lanik's journey took so long I eventually zoned out. I know I'm just a sci-fi novice here but dammit! my attention span has been forged by the weirding way of the Bene Gesserit and fortified by Heinlein's lectures. You still managed to bore me to oblivion, Lanik Mueller!

I'd better make a fresh start with Ender series

Emma says

This book is fabulous. It is tweaky in only the best kind of way that Orson Scott Card is awesome at. I got this book from the library freshman year and all my friends borrowed it and somehow it got lost and I had to pay the library \$60 for a \$5 book. They look down on "lost books" I guess. BUT even that could not sully my memory of this crown masterpiece of a book!

Teresa TL Bruce says

I was intrigued by the book jacket description, and I've enjoyed almost every book I've read by this author, but found myself disappointed in several issues and descriptions. It reminded me of a sci-fi version of a cross between the Odyssey and Gulliver's Travels (neither of which are personal favorites).

Angie says

Odd book. I give it points for creativity and general readability. The characters are not terribly strong. It meanders a fair bit. The love story is half baked. Couple of plot holes. And this book literally begins with the major conflict being a young man growing breasts. I'm not sure whether that is a positive or a negative, but it's certainly original. Dan hypothesized that Orson Scott Card just wanted an excuse to talk about breasts. I don't know, but were I a man, I don't think I'd find the whole thing titillating. In fairness, the breasts are only a symptom of much more, but still. . . Moving on, another complaint I have is that the main character simply becomes too powerful. I think his story would have been more human if he hadn't become Superman. Overall though, a fun enough read.

Davelowusa says

Between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, I read 22 of O.S. Card's sci-fi and fantasy novels (including the five that mirror The Book of Mormon without knowing it). While Card's plotlines do vary, unlike, say Clive Cussler (my favorite author during middle school), I grew to be aware of his deficiencies as a writer. He has certain phraseologies that he returns to far too frequently and his prose lacks sophistication. In fact, it's fairly juvenile. Also, as I got further into Card's oeuvre, I saw that as he got older, his stories became less and less exciting and his writing grew weaker. Fewer moments of action, more talking and moralizing. Sermonizing even. And it wasn't very convincing at that.

So. This novel, Treason, written early in Card's career, is his best. It's exciting, imaginative, and, for Card, deep. If you're going to read Card, which I don't highly recommend, read this and not that Ender/Alvin Maker/Homecoming crud.

Xabi1990 says

Hace nada (20 añicos no son nada) le cayó un 9/10. creo que era la época de mi amor desinteresado por Card.

Jesse Whitehead says

When I was a teenager I tried really hard to like Orson Scott Card's books. I read Ender's Game and loved it. I read Speaker for the Dead and was bored out of my mind. Then I read eight or ten of his other books and had a similar experience.

I finally gave up. I've moved on, mostly. He does have some intriguing ideas that make me think about reading his books every once in awhile. (This happens when I read about Terry Brooks as well – though usually the desire to read his books is more of a “Hmm I wonder how that turned out?” which almost invariably has the answer “Huh? What? I wasn't asleep.”)

Treason was loaned to me by somebody who frequently asked me if I was reading it yet or I probably never would have. This is a pre-Ender book – as in written before Ender's Game.

The writing is sparse and fast – a trademark of early Card – and it feels unpolished in places. His prose is never showy or fancy but merely adequate to get the job done. The story, on the other hand, is surprisingly layered in so many ways that it felt more like Timothy Zahn than Orson Scott Card. Events from early in the book are layered back in later and then folded in again when you think you are done with them. It really did keep me guessing all the way through.

I enjoyed this book. It was sort of a return to the early Card that I enjoyed so much when I read Ender's Game. It feels kind of like Ender's Game and the Alvin Maker series mashed together in one book. It's chock full of ideas and mostly feels more like a fantasy than science fiction. If you've been looking for something by Card to read then I would recommend this book over most of his others.

John says

Card has made his mark on the speculative fiction world primarily through the moral complexity of the stories he tells. His characters face difficult ethical questions, and the result tends to be an interesting exploration of the issues raised, wrapped up in excellent storytelling.

Treason is a revisit of Card's second novel, A Planet Called Treason. By his own count, he has re-written about 10% of the novel, maintaining the plot and simply refining the storytelling. It does seem very evidently to be one of his earlier works, but I believe that works to the story's advantage. He says in his author's note at the beginning that

This revision is not an attempt to tell the story of Lanik Mueller as if I were writing it for the first time in 1988--that novel would be half again as long as this, with much more time spent on developing other characters and relationships. Instead, this edition retains the

simplicity of the original, the story of one young man's discovery and transformation of his world and of himself.

It is, I think, this very simplicity which makes Treason work better than some of his more mature works. In some of his later work, I sometimes feel Card is working hard to show us how brilliant he is (and he is), how well he understands the human condition. Though I love a good deal of his work, at times it comes across as heavy-handed. Treason feels much more intuitive and far more subtle, and this is what makes it work, I think.

Written in the soft science fiction tradition that feels almost more like magic than science, Card tells the tale of Lanik Mueller, the dispossessed heir of the powerful Mueller family, whose genetic legacy is the ability to heal from almost any wound. Lanik's exile sets him on a path to learning more about the planet Treason on which he lives, a resource-poor planet which serves as prison to the descendants of a cabal that committed unspeakable, despotic treason millennia ago. The descendants of each of the original exiles have developed particular talents--such as the Muellers' regenerative abilities--that allow them to survive on this planet or even to trade something valuable to the Offworlders in exchange for the iron which is scarce on Treason but which gives a distinct advantage to the families who possess it as they struggle for power against the other families. Lanik is forced to come to a greater understanding of his world--its peoples, its powers, its history--and a greater understanding of himself.

In many ways, the story is the prototypical fantasy story of a young hero, wandering alone through the world, discovering great power within himself; it is the prototypical fantasy story of a young prince who must reclaim his birthright. It might be rather stale in other hands, yet it manages to be something more, because as Lanik grows and changes, his goals--not just his means of achieving them--grow and change as well.

Theron Prosper says

Wow. This may have been the most original fantasy/sci-fi story I have ever read! It was a remarkable story about what could eventually happen when the scientific elites of an intergalactic government are exiled to a planet with limited resources away from the rest of humanity. However, the crux of this tale is not driven by such political theater, but by the main protagonist, Lanik, and his coming of age through puberty. This is a must read for any fantasy or sci-fi fan. It really was a one of a kind Hero's Journey. Ender's Game is one of my favorite books of all time, and Orson Scott Card does not disappoint with Treason.

Danielle says

This was the most bizarre book I have ever read... not bad, just strange.

Andrew says

It's been a while since I last read an Orson Scott Card book, and I had forgotten how thoroughly his stories draw me in. This was no exception, and I found myself unable to put the book down, neglecting other things

I needed to do to read “just a few more pages”. Card has created a fascinating new world, one that is both alien and yet still strangely plausible and compelling. The planet Treason is a prison, its inhabitants the descendants of those who rebelled against a vaguely defined “Republic” off-world and condemned to this planet that is devoid of accessible hard metal. Now, after thousands of years, the nations of Treason struggle to find a commodity that they can sell off-world for precious iron. In a world where these metals is exceptionally rare, the nation that controls the supply holds the keys to power.

As always, Card demonstrates his skill as a storyteller, providing us with rich characters and a story layered with meanings and lessons. Ultimately, this story explores the meaning of freedom, the questions of war and peace, and the circumstances that might justify the use of violence. This is an entirely entertaining and satisfying story that also provides ample food for thought.

Keith says

You need to be able to turn off your reality and feasibility filters for this one. Once you do that you can enjoy the imaginative and creative world the author has created. This book was fun, interesting, philosophical, and I enjoyed it. I don't think it would be for everyone. Some may consider it silly. If as a kid you had a powerful imagination you might like it. Remember back when you believed anything was possible. That is the place in my mind this story took me. Cool book!

Jim says

I gave the book 4 stars, so why does this get 5? The reader was pretty good, but not enough to give it another star. No, it's just a very good book & I rounded up this time because I found out a couple of things about Card over the years.

This is his second novel, which makes this quite a feat. He published 2 others the year this came out (1979?) too. That's a fantastic accomplishment. He does a great foreword in this edition, too. He's pretty religious now from what I've heard & this book seems to be a search for morality in the face of materialism, complete with Original Sin. Thankfully, there wasn't anything for his or any other religion which would have been a huge turn off.

The book wasn't without its problems, but it was a huge undertaking & is exactly what SF should be about. So, I didn't let a little bit of broken logic get in the way of my enjoyment. He laid out an unlikely scenario that made his points perfectly.

He made some great points about the evils of rulers - once the fighting is done, does the common man really care? Of course not. We just want to be left alone to live our lives. The humble pastoral setting of Humping was over the top, though. They were kind because they were poor? Please. There's nothing noble about scratching a living from the dirt & living in poverty, but the Peace Corps was an in thing back then & it was a counterpoint.

Other problems & praise: (view spoiler)

All told, it was a very interesting exploration of humanity. Not perfect, but certainly thought provoking, just what the best SF is all about.

Also reviewed as a paperback here: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Luke Paulsen says

If you've read any Orson Scott Card books besides Ender's Game, you know to expect crazy things to happen. But Treason-- a reworking of the second novel Card ever wrote-- takes things to a whole new level of crazy. How crazy? Well, the hero is a mutant Highlander hermaphrodite Nazi prince, and that's before he learns earth-bending from Peter Pan. Also, the whole Nazi thing is basically only brought up in the first chapter, and is never mentioned again or otherwise resolved. Not to mention that the hero and every other character in the story are the descendants of elitist rebels marooned on a planet and forced to fight medieval wars over the scarcest resource-- iron. And the ending, which I won't spoil, gets even crazier. You can't make this stuff up... except apparently if you're Orson Scott Card.

Now, there is definitely a point to the story. But-- and here genre fans will gasp in horror-- the point is not in the science fiction. Card is (I can only assume deliberately) playing extremely fast and loose with the consistency of the story, and with all of the realistic and scientific aspects. The point is character, and specifically (because this is a Card novel) one character, the hero, Lanik Mueller. As much as it has the trappings of science fiction, Treason really uses its setting more like fantasy or even magical realism, to explore Lanik's character and identity as he asks the questions, "who am I?" and "what kind of life should I live?".

Card pretty much nails this bizarre Jungian twist on sci-fi, crafting scenes and settings as fascinating as they are disturbing. There were just two glaring weaknesses that I saw. The first is that Card doesn't take the trouble to make his literary / philosophical drift clear-- he just drops the reader in the middle of the action. The second is that the conclusion isn't particularly surprising or satisfying. In fact it's kind of painful, and not in the good, cathartic way. Maybe this was an important part of Card's point... but if so, I couldn't tell, because of the first weakness. I still found Treason interesting and even enjoyable-- Card's a great writer-- but there was something missing. It's certainly a bold and informative experiment in science fiction, but in the end it's also a failed one.
