

Kronos: A Book

Reviewed by  
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If the talented yet scarcely remembered Irish radio comedian Jim Joyce had conceived and written a sweeping stream-of-consciousness novel based on a Greek epic involving his most famous clowns, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, the result could hardly have been more strange than the brilliant and frustrating Kronos: A Book. Jerome Seinfeld's second novel.

Nearly ten years have passed since the appearance of Seinfeld's Roman a jeune (which will receive it's first mass-market edition this year in conjunction with the newer work); both books are part of the summer list from Barnes & Noble's new publishing imprint: Amazon BN Original Classics.

According to the preface in the Rhino Press edition, Roman a jeune was actually completed nearly a decade ago, and that would seem to confirm a long standing rumor in underground publishing circles that the expatriate Seinfeld has labored for the past nine years on a large work of historical and mythic magnitude, a kind of heroic epic of contemporary humanity.

If Kronos is that book it falls woefully short of its goal.

For the milieu postulated here is not one of our heroic race embracing this new millennium, but that of an ineffectual and navel-gazing culture in an epoch of decline. In a publishing year that alone offers nearly three hundred and twenty-two thousand new Dragonlance novels--not to mention the long awaited new work by Tony Robbins and Dale Carnegie's Friends & Influence: The Corrected Text--a cynical, urban work like Kronos will have some difficulty finding an audience.

Admittedly literate, often arresting, and occasionally hilarious, Kronos follows the meanderings of four New Yorkers at the fin de siecle through one whole day of their lives. As in Roman a jeune, Seinfeld once again uses himself as a character; however this "Seinfeld" is no longer the protagonist, but merely an observer of life, standing at the sideline, arrogant, bemused, and cruelly mocking of the others that enter his orbit.

And, at nearly six thousand pages, there is a lot of orbit to enter and be mocked. Every nuance in the banal lives of the characters is examined in excruciating detail.

While no single quote can truly capture the flavor of the book, and space does not permit more than one, the following may perhaps prepare the reader for what he will face if he decides to tackle Kronos.

Here, the ubiquitous neighbor, Kramer, is standing in the hallway outside "Seinfeld's" apartment in upper west-side Manhattan:

no more than a moment and he will willfully grasp the glory that is the golden knob, (the gateway to glory) and seize upon the treasure trove beyond. Jerry's stuff!!!! Jerry's cereal to eat. Jerry's Special K for fiber (ah fabulous fiber, keeping me regular) Cap'n Crunch will rip the roof of his mouth, he'll have some Wheaties from the box with Lenny Dykstra, and (magically delicious!) Lucky Charms--they're always after me Lucky Charms!,(Jerry thinks!)--Corn Flakes plain, pure like amber waves of grain are boring, who cares? but frost those same golden flakes with sugar and Tiger Tony--they're Grrrrreat!

Will someone explain this to me? Certainly, the author cannot be bothered to. And Seinfeld writes as if it were an insult to the reader to explain jokes: as if didacticism had no place in literature: in short, as if he had no sympathy for the reader's intellectual limitations at all!

A simple spell check would have revealed to him that there is only one "r" in "Great." This is writing that asks the reader to do half the work. The fair-minded and justice-seeking reader

of Kronos should not be blamed if he were to sue the publisher and demand half his \$39.95 back.

The purpose of a book review is to provide a plot synopsis so that the magazine buyer does not have to plunk down his own cash, or invest his own time in a big thick book that weighs four pounds, but unfortunately, this reviewer cannot synopsise Kronos.

I can tell you that I learned from the front flap that the main character is George, a hateful, lying, self-involved, and cowardly little man, whom no one in the world can ever identify with.

Attempts are underway to translate Seinfeld's novel in French and German; reportedly both enterprises are failing miserably--to which I can only add comment: if the French are such great intellectuals and they don't get it, how am I to?

Ending my review on a positive note: as explained in life-saving jacked-copy by a writer formerly celebrated for ghosting the work of beautiful former supermodel Brooke Shields (who has herself read over a hundred books), the theme of Kronos, albeit misguided, is moving and powerful.

According to Shields' ghostwriter, Kronos is the god of time, and time is what Kronos is about. Every day of the lives of the characters is encapsulated in a single day and its banal events that repeat themselves in the mind of the reader over and

over again long after the book is returned for store credit and forgotten.

The little, small insignificant details that Seinfeld chooses to write about: cereal, fighting over parking spaces, lying to your friends about stuff nobody cares about, losing your keys, forgetting who you loaned your keys to, forgetting where your dry cleaner is, forgetting where your glasses are, forgetting where your keys are, forgetting where you parked, forgetting what you did yesterday, forgetting that what you did yesterday was the same thing you did today and the day before yesterday--these are the things we do while forgetting time isn't passing: it's circling, rebirthing (well, that's what it says in the foreword anyway).

In Jerome Seinfeld's world, his personal chronicle would go on looping itself forever, like those episodes of Ted Koppel or Peter Jennings on every night in every city, ad nauseum, a polis eternal, in repeats.

