



**Contours of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from  
the Eighth International Conference on the  
Fantastic in the Arts (Contributions to the Study of  
Science Fiction and Fantasy)**

*Michele Langford*

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# Contours of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy)

*Michele Langford*

**Contours of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy) Michele Langford**

Addressing the world of the imaginary, the dream, the uncanny, the paranormal, and all forms of speculative fiction, *Contours of the Fantastic* is a collection of twenty-two essays that were originally presented at the Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts at Houston in 1987. The volume gives valuable perspectives on the territory covered by the fantastic, showing the diversity of the field and the variety of approaches used to survey and comprehend it. Each essay brings its own method of investigation--phenomenological, theoretical, historical, sociological, psychological, textual--in an effort to situate the border between reality and fantasy and the passage from one to the other. Authors and works discussed in the volume include Balzac, Dickens, Poe, Aldous Huxley, C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, Muriel Spark, Mary Shelley, Albee's *The Zoo Story*, Pynchon, Coleridge's *Christabel*, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, and Stephen Donaldson's *Thomas Covenant* trilogies. Following the editor's introductory essay, the work is divided into 7 sections: Fantasy and Discontinuity, Theory of National Fantasy--Tradition and Invention, Fantastic Vision in Children's Literature, Science Fiction and Fantasy Films, Fusion, Transfusion, and Transgression in the Fantastic, The Fantastic and Science, and The Fantastic World--Space and Time. Individual essays within these major divisions zero in on specific works of fantasy; offer a psychology of fantasy writers; analyze language; assess fantasy from a national perspective; and investigate Christian horror in fiction. The final two sections delineate the border between fantasy and reality--in science and in relation to space and time.

Among the outstanding contributors are Brian Aldiss, novelist, poet, and critic, author of more than two dozen books-- many of which are considered science fiction classics; Vivian Sobchack, science fiction film critic and writer on semiotics and phenomenology; and Nancy Willard, author of prize-winning novels, collected stories, poetry, and children's books. Generalists in literature and the arts, sociology, the natural sciences, engineering, and aeronautics as well as students and scholars, aestheticians, and critics of the fantasy/science fiction genres in literature, film, and art will find this collection both a useful and fascinating volume.

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