



Soft Apocalypses

Lucy A. Snyder

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Lucy A. Snyder proves once again that she is fearless in mapping every corner of the literary landscape. Not content to be confined to any single region, she guides readers through dark realms of fantasy into the churning industry of steampunk, from the dizzying heights of science fiction down to the most desolate depths of horror.

The strength of the tales that make up this quiet cataclysm—for example “Magdala Amygdala,” winner of the 2013 Stoker Award for Superior Achievement in Short Fiction—do not compete. Instead they overlap to create a vista of ethical armageddons at once thorny and hopeful. Snyder’s irresistible prose and stunning eye for detail bind together a collection that defies expectation but delivers deep satisfaction.

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Soft Apocalypses Details

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From Reader Review Soft Apocalypses for online ebook

Lena says

Magdala Amygdala ★★★★

“I and the other archivists will preserve the memories of the best and brightest as we devour them.”

Damn, did you just reinvent the zombie tale? This is more than a new spin on a popular genre, this a genuine fresh idea.

Ok it did remind me of the Star Trek TNG episode Transfigurations, only monstrous and apocalyptic.

I Fuck Your Sunshine ★★★★½

A vampire and a succubus have been hiding from civilization for decades. A moment of self actualization finds them remembering who is predator and who is prey.

The Leviathan of Trincomalee ★★★★?

“I say give the monster the sea, and we can take the sky.”

A wise choice. I enjoyed this inspiring feminist cthulhu steampunk, it was practical and spare. All girls should have such fathers.

Diamante and Strass ★★★★?

That was a heck of a lot of fun. Give me bounty hunting steampunk girls any day!

Repent, Jessie Shimmer! ★★★★?

Zombie battle interlude in an interesting urban fiction world. I would read another Jessie & Pal adventure.

Miz Ruthie Pays Her Respects ★★★★?

A woman comes home to pay her respects and maybe save the next generation from the worst of small town hypocrisy.

I've pictured myself doing something as bad to the grave of Harold Brown. As bad but less personal.

Carnal Harvest ★★★½?

“You've got his eyes”

Don't you just love it when bad things happen to bad people?

However... by Gary A. Braunbeck and Lucy A. Snyder ★★★??

That was hard to read. Sexually abused children chained in a basement call upon the Cenobites for aid. They are initially refused, however...

The Cold Gallery ★★★??

Scum bag dead beat dad is suddenly all checks and care. If you trust in that you deserve what you get. But his daughters are not the fools he thinks.

Abandonment Option ★★★??

A greedy blessed man cannot let go of good fortune; he must have more, he must have longer. Be careful what you wish for...

The Cold Blackness Between ★★★??

Well, that was nearly a nice story about a witch who falls in love and decides to leave her husband.

Antumbra ★★★??

In a post apocalyptic water world a doctor will brook no interference in creating a new species.

Tiger Girls vs. the Zombies ★★★??

Women fight zombies with zombies in order to rejoin with other human scientists and fight the plague. This should have been more entertaining than it was.

The Good Girl ★★★???

Well, that was another tale of the worst of smalls towns; of rape, incest, and murder. But also some revenge, but weak revenge. Not a good story.

Spare the Rod ★????

That was a pedo incest rape story. One more those and you've earned yourself a DNF.

Lucy Snyder hit as hard as she missed: 3.333 average.

Sierra says

FYI: I know the author. :) I read this for her as a proofreader. BUT. IT WAS AWESOME. I'm not much of a horror person. It scares me. lol But these stories weren't the predictable horror of "oh, no, don't go in the attic..." UGH stuff. This was just realistic enough for you to be drawn into her worlds and accept that magic is real.

Fiona says

Lucy Snyder is never going to be accused of a shortage in imagination - and her creativity and originality are on full display in this collection of short stories.

Just to get it out of the way, there were two stories I absolutely couldn't stand - Antumbra and Spare the Rod.

I really just don't like dark for the sake of dark! And while I can handle a lot, these were just too grim.

However! There are some absolute stunners in this book, enough for me to end up rounding the rating up to four stars - Magdala Amygdala, as mentioned by other reviewers, is a fantastic and completely new take on zombies and vampires that just blew me away. I Fuck Your Sunshine brought spectacularly swaggery Russian vampires that I really want to get to know more - Diamante and Strass was incredibly visual in its storytelling and felt like Tank Girl dialled even further into the weird, fun and madness and a kickass team of heroines - and The Leviathan of Trincomalee was a historical, Cthulhu-esque, tale of an extremely brave young girl.

From the woman who taught us how to best installing OS updates on our roadkill, this collection is a clear sign that inventive, original, flat out weird fiction is still out here absolutely killing it.

Alex says

“Magdala Amygdala” is intensely powerful and does the best in the collection of blending the erotic with body horror. This story is worth the price of admission alone. Go check it out on PseudoPod with an amazing reading by the late Eugie Foster. “Carnal Harvest” is a close second and is heartbreakingly emotional. This collection is a lot of fun, although that leaves many of the stories without a significant amount of depth.

Rob Boley says

If you're looking for some delightfully vicious short fiction, then look no further. Soft Apocalypses has some of the best-written dark fiction I've read since Joe Hill's 20th Century Ghosts. The stories are wonderfully diverse: you'll be immersed in apocalyptic futures, dreary swamps, tropical islands, gritty cities, and more. Just as Snyder can deftly teleport you from one world to another, she can also channel a multitude of voices. Each story features its own distinct personality and language. Loved it. I'm excited to read more of her work!

Kira Barnes says

Wonderful collection of short stories - some horror, some science fiction - that deal with the concept of the end of civilization / end of the world in various creative and subtle ways. I'd like to give the book 4 1/2 stars, as I loved most of the stories - a couple were just a little too punny-humorous for me. Maybe I just wasn't in the right mood, or maybe I'm just tired of zombies. To me, the first few stories in the book are worth the price of the book alone.

Rena Mason says

Wow! This collection is pure entertainment that offers a great variety - something for every reader that likes their fiction a bit on the "dark" side. All the stories are written well and very enjoyable. I was not disappointed with any of it. There's even a Steampunk story, which I thought was great. Besides being a

fantastic title, SOFT APOCALYPSSES captures the exact essence of this collection.

Bill Mc says

What a delightful read. My introduction to Ms. Snyder's work and I couldn't help but be consistently surprised. A great blend of stories.

Dominic says

The best stories are the ones that lean more horror than fantasy, but they are all well written and striking. I appreciated Snyder's bold feminist disruption of male dominated genres. There is both assertive female protagonists and highly flawed hegemonic masculinity all throughout these tales. Her takes on the zombie genre are inspired! I ended up likening most of the stories to the nightmares of Flannery O'Connor—a bit of southern gothic with an all out not-for-the-squeamish horror flare. Truly exceptional and one of a kind.

Daniel says

Reviewed for The Skiffy and Fanty Show Blog (<http://skiffyandfanty.com/>)

Soft is a particularly ironic description for this collection of short fiction by Lucy A. Snyder.

Brutal. Grisly. Unflinching.

These are all words that are easier to associate with the dark nature of her stories. Indeed, a cover blurb by Seanan McGuire states that Snyder's work "attacks the page with the raw, manic intensity of an early Sam Raimi."

This comparison immediately resonated with my reaction to the only fiction I'd read by Snyder prior to picking up this collection — "Magdala Amygdala". I came across this 2013 Stoker Award-winning story — which originally appeared in DARK FAITH: INVOCATIONS edited by Maurice Broaddus — with its reprinting in April's issue of Nightmare Magazine. Leading off this collection published by Raw Dog Screaming Press, the story evoked a similar response in me to the first time I read it. It represents a brilliant, fresh approach to the conventional creature tale of the zombie or vampire. Savage and filled with bodily fluids and ick, the story combines classically familiar motifs of the horror genre and combines and blends them with a biological/medical realism into something new. While this approach isn't novel, Snyder's writing is earnest and vivid, and the directions the story takes is unexpected. The visceral gore of the story bordered on being too much for me, much as some particularly gruesome scenes in The Evil Dead tend towards going over the top and heavy-handed.

What's interesting about Snyder, however, is that despite the frank depictions of suffering, horror, and flesh and blood, there is also a subtle aspect to her stories beneath it all. Something soft. With the strong lead-off story, "Magdala Amygdala," it is the nuanced approach to creating a seemingly fully human and relatable diseased character and yet making her into a familiar monster of nightmares. The combination of taking something familiar and giving it new focus also comes into play with the Hellraiser similarities of

“However...”

This sets the tone for the remainder of the stories in the collection: harsh, yet all having a gradual sense of tables being somehow turned on expectations or a character’s condition. Frequently, this takes the form of a revelation of revenge, where the seemingly powerless find a horror within that ends up empowering them, allowing them to surpass and overcome oppressive horror from without. Children and women abused, abandoned, or betrayed, vampires at the mercy of the Sun, the opening stories all share this common theme of the relatively powerless being exploited or harmed in terrible ways, either in the present or the past, and how events lead to turn that situation around in Apocalyptic might.

The first portion of the collection consists of stories that are best described as horror and dark fantasy. “Spare the Rod” is unique in not being fantastic, but captures the same feel as the surrounding tales in a few brief pages. This story highlights one aspect I particularly liked about the stories in Snyder’s collection. Her writing is economical. Her stories are to-the-point, yet still descriptive enough to richly establish atmospheric detail. The dark fantasy stories run a spectrum of archetypes, from ghost stories to mysteries to monsters to simple human-bred cruelty (at times with a supernatural twist).

The common theme discussed above that all of these stories share has the unfortunate effect of making their plots become somewhat predictable. The pureness of the theme — in all its celebratory vulgarity of the oppressed overcoming their tortured pain — reaches its height with the joyous “I Fuck Your Sunshine”, but then is followed with “Carnal Harvest”, a relatively straight-forward revenge story that is written quite fine, but becomes weakened by the reader’s familiarity with Snyder’s underlying theme. Despite the strengths of leading off with “Magdala Amygdala”, I would have ordered the stories differently, perhaps ending with the award-winning dark story instead.

The final five stories of the collection share the theme of ‘turning something on its head’, or even of the exploited getting revenge (“Diamante and Strass”), but without the degree of horror seen previously. They illustrate Snyder’s range as she extends into other types of fantasy that also could be considered science fiction, such as the Steampunk genre or stories of a post-apocalyptic future.

Of these I found “Antumbra” and “Tiger Girls vs the Zombies” to be most effectively enjoyable. Doubtless this in part comes from my own preference for an apocalyptic SF tale over Steampunk. “Antumbra” is the closest to horror of this latter group of stories, resembling “Magdala Amygdala” in its building close human empathy in the reader for characters that prove startlingly monstrous. “Tiger Girls vs the Zombies” is just a lot of fun, and something that should be done in The Walking Dead comics if it hasn’t already.

The concluding story, “The Leviathan of Trincomalee,” bears resemblance to both Steampunk and to something out of Lovecraft. With one of the most endearing young characters of the collection — finally, a strong young girl who is NOT physically or emotionally abused! — the story ends up leaving you wanting to learn more about her — and the world’s story. I also appreciated the attempt to provide explanation for airships in the universe of the story, an emblematic fascination of Steampunk I’ve never quite understood.

Though not perfect, SOFT APOCALYPSES offers a great, short introduction to Lucy A. Snyder’s writings. For those who really appreciate dark fantasy or have enjoyed her most well-known work, this is something you’ll want to check out. It will give you a hint to the variety of genre tale she can spin with some simple themes.

David Bridges says

This book has been sitting on my TBR shelf for a while (years) now and I just got around to reading it. I have mixed feelings of disappointment and happiness. Disappointed that I did not read the book sooner but happy that I have discovered another talented genre fluid author. Overall I would consider this a collection of dark fantasy stories but there are elements of horror, gothic, and science fiction circulating through the almost flawlessly executed 15 tales.

The opening story immediately sucked me in. Magdala Amygdala is a creative spin on the zombie trope that definitely deserves the awards it has appeared to have won. After reading it I was all in for the next 14 stories. The majority of the stories are approximately 10 pages long, which for me can sometimes be offputting. Snyder packs a lot into those 10 pages though and every story just pulled me back in over and over again until the next thing I knew the book was over. Snyder's characters and attention to detail are satisfying, as is the range of horrors be it ghosts, occult, witches, human transgressions, leviathans etc...

Definitely not going to wait so long to read more work by Snyder. I have another of her collections I am putting on deck. I recommend this to fans of dark, brutal, and fantastical literature.

Craig says

Soft Apocalypses is a collection of fifteen very good short stories; some are indeed apocalyptic, but there are very few soft spots. Included are "Magdala Amygdala," a very powerful and intelligent zombie tale which won the Stoker Award, a good collaboration with Gary A. Braunbeck called "However...", and a very cool Lovecraftian steampunk story called "The Leviathan of Ttrincomalee." I believe my favorites from the book are "Antumbra," a very good story which is true science fiction, and "Repent, Jessie Shimmer!" The latter is, obviously, a part of the Jessie Shimmer series; there's a famous quote that says something to the effect that nothing of any worth has ever been written with an exclamation point in the title, but this one proves there's an exception to the rule. (You just can't go wrong with a zombie 'gator named Rufus.) The other ten stories are good, too, tales of science and magic, monsters and mysteries, by turns horrific and harsh and always entertaining... though rarely soft.

Cyrano says

I like short stories. I like that the author has to get in, make the hit, and get out in a limited space. Often that seems difficult with horror stories (many of the stories in this collection are or could be considered such) because you don't have a lot of time to build atmosphere. But trust me when I say that there are a few horrific moments in these economic stories. The alien is made familiar, even comfortable. Victims become victors. Sort of. I tore through this book in an afternoon, and it's a good thing I didn't have anything else to do.

Hunter Johnson says

A diverse collection, some of which are very tough on the emotions. Not every story would have gotten five stars from me, and I appreciate that in an anthology: lowest-common-denominator collections aren't as

worthwhile.

Debra says

I normally don't like horror and I am very picky about my science fiction but I absolutely loved this collection of short stories. Ms. Snyder makes fantasy so realistic that I actually gagged at few points while reading the award winning "Magdala Amygdala." This is a quick read -- Something you can take on a plane and completely escape with! I would caution the faint of heart that some of the gore is gruesome. However, the author has the ability to make the reader empathize with the most monstrous characters. You will be pulled in, tumbled about and spit out with something to think about. Highly recommended.
