



# The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time

By Karen Hellekson

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## The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time By Karen Hellekson

What would the world be like if history had taken a different course? Science fiction literature has long contemplated this interesting question. Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* considers how the world would have been shaped had the Axis powers won World War II. Poul Anderson's time patrol stories center around time-traveling police charged with keeping history as it should be so that the future is not altered. Frederick Pohl's *The Coming of the Quantum Cats* features as its protagonists several incarnations of the same person existing in different worlds. *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time* examines alternate history science fiction using the eschatological, genetic, entropic, and teleological historical models. Karen Hellekson's original approach explains much of the appeal of alternate history and distinguishes among the many varieties of the genre. The discussion of historiographical and philosophical concepts raises the question of narrative, the subject position of the writer, temporality, and the nature of time. And in her measured consideration of a range of writers, Hellekson displays a deep and broad knowledge of the major works in this genre; those by famous or neglected writers alike. With its clean style, balanced selection of writers, and careful organization, this book will be of great interest to scholars, students, and teachers of science fiction and alternate histories, as well as to SF fans. This thoughtful study of a most exciting genre advances the understanding of familiar material by inviting consideration from a new perspective, and it will surely redirect the discourse on alternate histories.

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