



## EVOLUTION & SCIENCE FICTION

*The Edge of Evolution.* By Ronald Edwards. 2016. Oxford University Press. (ISBN 9780190212094). 274 pp. Hardcover. \$29.95.

*The Edge of Evolution* is about scientific philosophy, biology, evolution, and the interpretation of these concepts as applied through works of science fiction. The book begins with a review of the materialistic view of biology as put forth by William

Lawrence. The author carefully examines Lawrence's Hunter Lectures and the influence they had on scientific thought during the early 1800s. What follows is an analysis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through lens of Lawrence's philosophy. Edwards gives an example of a writing assignment he has given his college students to help them apply their knowledge. "Few students consider literature and science class compatible, and even the science fiction and fantasy fans aren't accustomed to radical social science fiction: informed, confrontational, with no nostalgic looking back, and no idealistic looking forward."

Following his discussion about materialism and biology, Edwards launches into the philosophical discussion regarding the study of humans compared to animals, or the study of humans as animals. The book uses classical lectures and publications by notable scientists such as Huxley and Darwin to look at the historical context by which evolution and natural history are discussed. The remaining chapters of *The Edge of Evolution* uses H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* to look at the current nature of biology and biotechnology. Edwards discusses examples of the different movie versions of the book, as well as how each version is a reflection of society's reaction to bioengineering and the treatment of humans as animals. Edwards' viewpoint is summed up as follows: "I'm here to talk about what it's like to see not categorical difference between humans and nonhumans at all, using the term 'animal' to mean both, and significantly, seeing absolutely no implications concerning ethical or social capabilities by using that word."

This book is extremely detailed and an excellent review of scientific philosophy, and the historical context in which science is viewed. It is useful to the educator to help frame the historical context in which society has viewed science and "hot topics" such as evolutionism, materialism, and humanism. I enjoyed the review of philosophy, and the attention given to classic historical debates on topics such as animal rights and the influence of religion on science and society.



Kristin Hudlow, Biology Instructor  
Centennial High School  
8601 Hageman Road  
Bakersfield, CA 93312  
Khudlow@kernhigh.org

AMANDA L. GLAZE is Assistant Professor of Middle Grades & Secondary Science Education at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. In addition to science teacher education, she has taught biological science courses for grades 7–12 and undergraduate students for the last ten years. Her interests include evolutionary biology, science and religion, and the intersections of science and society—specifically where scientific understandings are deemed controversial by the public. Glaze holds degrees in science education from The University of Alabama and Jacksonville State University. Her address is Department of Teaching & Learning, Georgia Southern University, PO BOX 8134, Statesboro, GA 30458; e-mail: aglaze@georgiasouthern.edu.