



Book Club Book of the Month January 2021

***The Subjugate*, Amanda Bridgeman (Angry Robot Books)**

Summary

The Subjugate is set in the eerie metropolis of San Francisco and its outskirts, a decade or so after the neuro technology Crash of 2040, the result of a terrorist attack. Surveillance drones buzz throughout the city, powerful technological developments protecting, serving and, since the Crash, unsettling citizens. Off-the-grid, tech-free, unincorporated survivalist, religious and other communities have sprung up outside the city. In one of these, the Christian community of Bountiful (founded 2034; population 3,271), the gruesome murder of a young woman gets tough, tight-lipped city detective Salvi Brentt chasing not only the killer but also the truth about her troubled new senior partner Mitch Grenville and herself. Two more murders turn the screws. Amanda Bridgeman establishes an intriguing network between the city police hub, the devout community of Bountiful and the nearby high-tech Solme Complex – a facility devoted to the manufacture of electricity-producing BioLume and the rehabilitation by dubious means, and delivery to Christianity, of violent sex criminals. The array of tech concepts and gadgetry is entertaining and thought-provoking but ultimately it is humans and their vulnerabilities that lie at the heart of the story.

About the Author

Amanda Bridgeman is an author and screenwriter born in Geraldton, Western Australia – a Tin Duck Award winner and Aurealis and Ditmar awards finalist. She is the creator of nine science fiction novels, including the 'Aurora' series of space operas, the 'Salvation' series (of which *The Subjugate* is the first) and the apocalyptic alien-contact drama *The Time of the Stripes*. She studied film and television/creative writing at Murdoch University, earning a BA in Communication Studies.

Questions for discussion

1. Are Attis Solme's rehabilitated Serenes men or monsters? What about the yet-to-be fully rehabilitated Subjugates? Is redemption genuine when the transformation is effected by external means rather than coming from within?
2. How does Attis Solme's version of 'rehabilitation' differ from that of our contemporary justice system? Do you agree in principle with it? Does it make a difference that inmates are there voluntarily?
3. What was your response to the Serenes? Did you feel empathy for them despite their multiple, and for the most part horrific, past crimes?
4. Towards the end of the novel we see a 'tortured/conflicted monster' trope involving Salvi and one of the inmates. What other 'misunderstood monster' scenes does this remind you of?
5. How convincing are Attis Solme's methods for the rehabilitation of criminals? Why do you think he – and the author – chose to concentrate on the most horrific and repugnant?
6. What do you think of the world (San Francisco and surrounds about three decades from now) that Bridgeman depicts? What aspects of it would you like to see here and now?
7. It isn't until about halfway into the novel that we're shown in detail the city San Francisco has become. Would you have preferred to have it earlier in the novel? What factors might have worked against that?
8. Does grounding the story in the well-known city enhance or distract from what the future has brought about? Why might the author have chosen San Francisco over other locations?
9. Did you find the various futuristic gadgets and concepts (e.g. the detectives' holo badges, the virtual reality sex rooms, the A.I. Riverton) distracting or integral to the story?
10. When Mitch becomes a suspect in the killings, pressure mounts on Salvi, at the potential cost of her career, to find the real Bountiful killer. How did the author build suspicion towards Mitch? Did you find it plausible? How did she maintain our sympathy for him?

11. Salvi and Mitch often don't see eye to eye. What does this enable the author to convey?

What other stories come to mind in which two main characters have sustained conflict?

12. The novel has been optioned for TV by an Oscar and Golden Globe-nominated production company. How well and in what ways do you see it translating to the screen?

If you liked this book you may also like...

The Sensation, Amanda Bridgeman (Angry Robot)

The Aurora Series (7 titles), Amanda Bridgeman (Momentum; Pronoun; Centralis Entertainment)

The Subjects, Sarah Hopkins (Text Publishing)

The City in the Middle of the Night, Charlie Jane Anders (Tor Books)

A Memory Called Empire, Arkady Martine (Tor Books)