

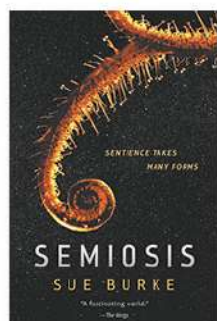
Fly me to the moon

Books that invite atypical travel



By **SAMMY BALDWIN**,
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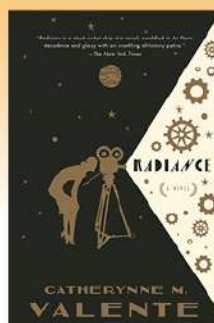
If you'll allow me to break the fourth wall for a moment, my assignment for this issue was to review travel-related books. I am sure Lisa Prejean, editor of *At Home Places*, expected me to review some cozy mysteries or travel guides, especially because I host the Literary Road Trip Book Club at the library. However, my mind instantly went to topics like time travel, interdimensional travel and the very timely space travel. With the billionaire space race underway, the cosmos is on my mind and those of many Americans, so here are some books I recommend for travel among the stars.



'Semiosis' by Sue Burke

We often think of space travel as the first step in colonizing new planets when our planet runs out of natural resources. So, imagine finding a planet like the one Burke details called Pax. The flora is diverse and plentiful, providing addictive fruit. And why wouldn't it be? What better way for intelligent plants to entice their next victims?

What I especially love about this book is its narrative style. Each chapter is narrated by a member of the next generation of humans to live on Pax. So, not only do you get to travel to a beautiful and dangerous, ecologically diverse planet, but you will witness the evolution of an interstellar culture that feels foreign, yet familiar.



'Radiance' by Catherynne M. Valente

Not all space fiction is strictly sci-fi, so for mystery lovers, I recommend "Radiance." Also, unlike most science fiction, this novel takes place in 1946 — a 1946 that is both stuck in the past and hurled into the future. Silent movies are still the norm, but people can freely fly through the solar system on spacecraft. Severin

Unck, our heroine, is the daughter of a famous Hollywood director, but her interests lie in documentary filmmaking, particularly of the cosmic variety. She travels from planet to planet filming the different cultures that reside there, until she decides to document the lost colony of Venus and goes missing. This is another book I love for its narrative style because it's told using press snippets, crew interviews, audio transcripts and more.



'Arabella of Mars' by David D. Levine

If 1940s space travel is not retro enough for you, you can always visit the space-traveling 1812. This young-adult book for adults begins on Mars, as the title suggests. Tomboy Arabella Ashby was born on Mars and grew up on a British colony plantation. After 16 years of independence, and being raised by a really cool Martian nanny,

her mother decides that the harsh surface of Mars is no place for proper young ladies and takes Arabella and her two younger sisters back to London, Earth. Practically Martian, Arabella struggles to adjust to Earth and the social conventions of London. Then, tragedy strikes, and she must find her way back to Mars, at times posing as a boy. Arabella is a character that you just love to follow.