

**AUSTRALIAN**



**NEWS**

*Special Issue*    **4**

*October 2003*

**News**

**Reviews**

and  
A LISTING  
of

**SCIENCE  
FICTION**

**FANTASY**

**&**

**HORROR**



**BOOKS RELEASED IN AUSTRALIA**

## AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS SPECIAL ISSUE 4

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### EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

This is another Special Issue of ASFN endeavoring to catch up a bit on all the books received and more. As I have admitted previously ASFN has not been a true "news" zine for about twenty years. In *THYME* my friend Alan Stewart has been endeavoring to tell our readers about all the SF&F books being published in Australia, details on Conventions, awards and more, but if this is not up-to-date enough for you, do subscribe to *THE AUSTRALIAN SF BULLSHEET* from Edwina Harvey, c/o 12 Flinders St., Matraville, NSW 2036, e-mail [edwinafan@yahoo.com](mailto:edwinafan@yahoo.com). Not wanting to break tradition I will continue to call my column for *THYME* "A SF NEWS", but the emphasis will change. I started publishing ASFN back in 1978 to help publicise the conventions, fandom in general and my bookshop Space Age Books. I ceased publishing it in 1985, but Alan later suggested that I combine it with *THYME*, and we have been doing so for the last ten years. However I am getting a bit tired of listing a lot of fantasy books that are of little interest to me and from now on my contribution will be a bit different. I will only be mentioning in detail selected fantasy volumes and not every one that I receive from publishers, all in minor detail, as I have been doing. However *THYME*/ASFN will continue the "titles released" list and of course review all types of books received and as many as possible. I will endeavor to mention any and all SF books that the publishers send me and any fantasy titles that take my fancy. Out of twenty or more books received over the past few months there was only one SF novel. Surely there must be more SF books being released in Australia than that!

### SF FANDOM EVENTS

**CONTINUUM** SF Convention was held in Melbourne July 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Guests of Honour included authors Kate Forsyth and Chris Lawson, and artists, costumers and movie model makers Marilyn Pride, Lewis Morley and Nick Stathopoulos.

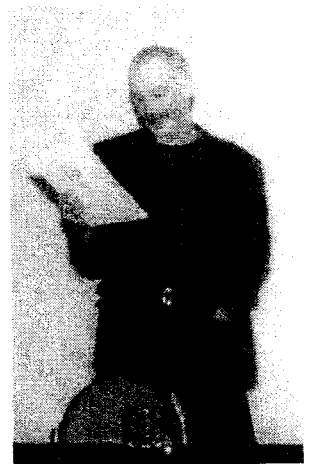


'Exploring the Worlds in Your Head' Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2003  
 Lewis Morley & Marilyn Pride tell the story of a world of their own creation, published as *Peregrine Besset, The Red World*. Their comic strip story book *Red World Holiday* was launched at this session.



The Art Panel Continuum Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2003  
 Nick Stathopoulos shows an example of his original artwork for a book cover design alongside a printed copy of the cover, with fellow graphic artists Conny Valentina (left) and Marilyn Pride

A good program with interesting panels including Marilyn, Lewis and Nick talking about their work as artists and model makers on such films as *Dark City* and the *Matrix* movies, continuous videos, and over all a bit of everything to appeal to a wide variety of fannish interests. There were book launches for Philip Rainford's new book *Zeaton* and Chris Lawson's collection *Written In Blood* and several talks and readings by authors including Sean McMullen (right), Kate Forsyth and Chris Lawson.



Authors including Rick Kennett, Lucy Sussex, Kate Forsyth and Chris Lawson, at a book signing session following the launch of Chris Lawson's collection *Written in Blood*, at CONTINUUM, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2003



Above: Guests of Honour Chris Lawson (left) and Nick Stathopoulos (centre rear), and bookseller Justin Ackroyd (right).

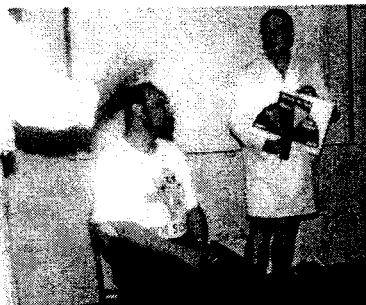
Authors and Guests of Honour mingled with fans at the CONTINUUM cocktail party on the evening of Friday 11<sup>th</sup>.

Below: Also at the cocktail party, Melbourne authors Jenny and Russell Blackford with Tasmanian SF identity Robin Johnson.



CONTINUUM also saw the introduction of a crazy item called *The Mega Panel*, a bizarre conglomeration of interviews, stand-up comedy and song-and-dance acts, all on nominally SF themes.

Right: A Continuum first: THE MEGA PANEL 10pm Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July Presented by Aaron Jacks & Mitch, with victim/guest interview subject, artist Nick Stathopoulos, having his lifetime career performance rated on the MegOMeter



A big feature of most SF conventions is the Masquerade, usually a formal parade of costumes. CONTINUUM broke with this tradition, as did CONVERGENCE last year, having instead the 'Maskobolo', a musical free-for-all with guests invited to dress in costume but no formal parade or judging of costumes.  
(Left): Author Sue Bursztynski in costume as a Hobbit at the CONTINUUM Maskobolo.



Publishing on paper and electronically, presented against the backdrop of the YWCA's stained-glass window by fanzine editors Bill Wright (*Interstellar Ramjet Scoop*) and Bruce Gillespie (*Metaphysical Review, Science Fiction Commentary, brg etc*), with Aaron Jacks, Lily Chrywenstrom, & Russell Farr.

Being held at the Cato Conference Centre, otherwise known as the "Y" (formerly the YWCA headquarters) at the top end of Elizabeth Street, CONTINUUM was very close to the Victoria Market and plenty of food outlets. The success of CONVERGENCE in 2002 encouraged fans to put on CONTINUUM ONE and CONTINUUM TWO is already accepting memberships for next year. The organisers intend that Melbourne has an SF con every year from now on and that is great news.



Guests of Honour Kate Forsyth and Chris Lawson with CONTINUUM organizer Danny Heap (right).

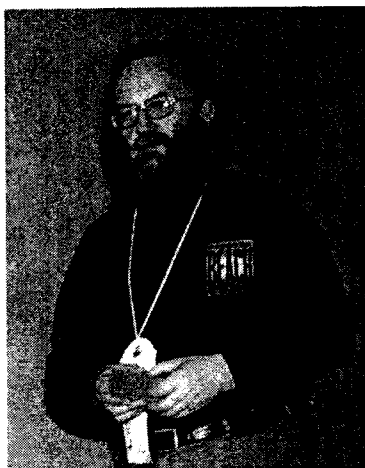
Next year's National Australian SF Convention is CONFLUX being held in Canberra, ACT April 23-26 2004. The Guests of Honor are Gregory Benford, Sean McMullen, Harry Turtledove and Karen Herkes. For more details contact the con on [www.conflux.org.au](http://www.conflux.org.au) or Box 903, Belconnen, ACT 2616

More from the Maskobolo: Expert costumers Robert Jan as Sauron, the 'Dark Lord' of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" and Gail Adams in a scarlet and black pre-Raphaelite style fantasy medieval gown.



## FAREWELL TO A FRIEND

On April 6<sup>th</sup> this year our old friend and one of SF fandom's best known and admired fans **JOHN FOYSTER** passed away in Adelaide, South Australia, after a two year fight against a brain tumor. His funeral was held in Adelaide where he had been living and working for some years. Originally coming from Melbourne, John was a major force in Melbourne SF fandom in particular, but was known and appreciated worldwide. His efforts put Australian fandom on the map and enabled us to hold the three World SF Conventions that we have held here. His fanzine writing and publishing was legend. A memorial was held in Melbourne on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May at the Linden Gallery in Acland Street, in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda. Many of his Melbourne friends



JOHN FOYSTER 1941 - 2003

(and some from further afield) joined with his family and relatives to remember John.



Left: Author and bibliographer Peter Nicholls was one of the speakers.

There was also a memorial tribute to John on the first evening of **CONTINUUM**.



From left: John's sister Myfanwy (Foyster) Thomas, Bruno Kautzner, Helena Binns, Merv Binns, Bruce Gillespie and John's daughter Miranda Foyster at the **CONTINUUM** gathering in memory of John Foyster on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2003.



The **NOVA MOB** (a Melbourne group of writers, critics and readers of SF, started by John Foyster) panel, Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2003, featuring Bruce Gillespie (right) with Andrew Macrae and others.

## A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Author, biographer and long-time fan **JOHN BAXTER** was in Melbourne recently researching a new book and had dinner early in July with some of his author and fan friends including Lee Harding and daughter Madeleine, Damien Broderick, Jack Dann, Janeen Webb, Lucy Sussex, Julian Warner, Bruce and Elaine Gillespie, Dick Jenssen, Race Mathews and Helena and myself.



LEE HARDING, JOHN BAXTER and MERV BINNS



Above, clockwise from bottom right-hand corner: **JOHN BAXTER** (cut off), Jack Dann (Jack's back), Lucy Sussex, Julian Warner, Elaine Cochran, Bruce Gillespie, Dick Jenssen, Race Mathews, Helena Binns, Merv Binns, Lee Harding, Janeen Webb. (Photo by Madeleine Harding)

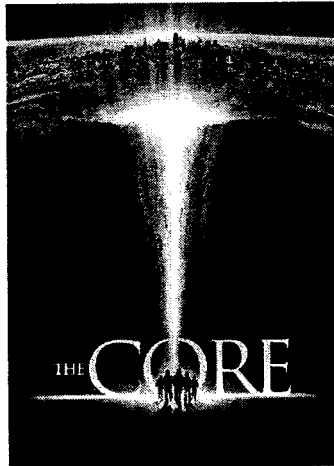
Right: **JACK DANN** and **JOHN BAXTER** share a moment of mutual appreciation of the finer things of life at the Kanzaman restaurant.



## MOVIES

In August we received an invitation, via fan friends in the Melbourne SF Club, to *CYPHER*, which was screened at the NOVA Theatre in Carlton. The movie we found interesting but nothing remarkable. It starred Jeremy Northam who I do not recall seeing before and Lucy (Charlie's Angel) Liu. You might call it SF but it is more into the category of techno-thriller. A plot that you may expect to come across on *Outer Limits* perhaps, with a guy being brainwashed by electronic means into believing he is someone else and being sent out on rather insignificant commercial spying missions. An attempt to include some humor was half-hearted and the surprise ending was not much of a surprise as we twigged to it well before the end. A night's light entertainment but I am glad that we did not have to pay for it. After the movie we visited a rather interesting nearby restaurant, 'Brunetti', which had on display the most incredible range of cakes and pastries. We controlled ourselves and only consumed some great coffee and a fruit torte. Aside from the cramped seating conditions we would recommend Brunetti most highly.

We had to see the SF disaster movie *THE CORE* on the big screen before it went off at the theatres and spectacular, with tons of special effects, as it was, it was still a load of rubbish. However it was one of those tales where you could "suspend your disbelief", at least while watching it and we enjoyed it. The whole premise of the Earth's core acting up the way it does in the movie is almost believable, but the way they go about fixing the problem is strictly 1930s pulp fiction. I do not like having to say it is simply worth seeing just for the SFX, it does have a lot of exciting moments but the visuals are the "star" of the movie. The plot reminds me of other implausible SF movies about odysseys like Bruce Willis' *Armageddon* and in particular *Fantastic Voyage* with simply more and perhaps better SFX as we are coming to expect with movies now. It starred among others Aaron Eckhart, Delroy Lindo, Stanley Tucci and Hilary Swank (who reminds me very much of Joeline Blalock in TV's *Enterprise*). See it but keep your tongue in your cheek.

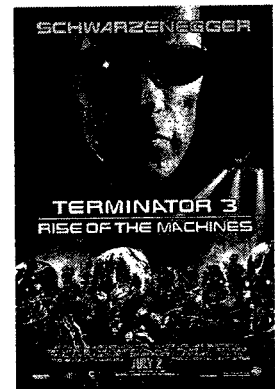


The work of the Disney Studios has come in for a lot of criticism over the years for the way they have bastardised classic tales. I must agree with that criticism to a large degree, but I will always remember that the first movies that I recall seeing as a very young child were Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, *Bambi* and later *Fantasia*. (The latter contributing to my interest in classical music.) So I have a soft spot for Disney stuff and I can still enjoy good animated movies. I believe I missed a good one in *Atlantis* but I may catch up with that in due course. I enjoyed the *Toy Story* movies and *Beauty and the Beast*, and have seen and enjoyed other animated shows such as *Shrek*, *A Bug's Life* and *Ants*, but hated *Final Fantasy*. I also must admit though that glimpses of some animated movies on the TV and at CONTINUUM did not encourage me to see more. The innovative artwork can be interesting but the stories are something else again. I loathe *The Simpsons*!

Recently I got to see Disney's *SINBAD* and that really brought back the childhood memories of *Snow White* and all. The art of animation has, like special effects, found new techniques, mainly related to computer graphics and they are able to come up with some mind-blowing stuff, but although I enjoyed the *Sinbad* movie in general, the most memorable scene for me was of the magical city as Sinbad and his crew come sailing back from their adventures.

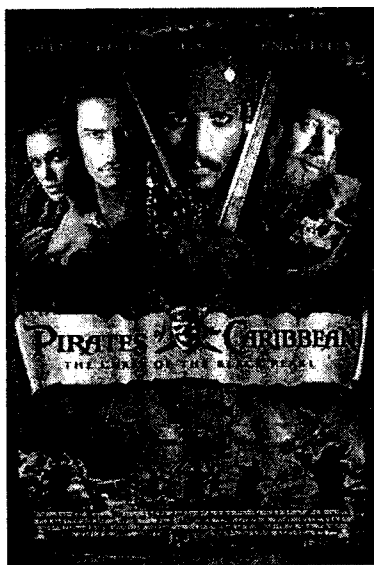


They say that sequels are never as good as the originals. I do not always agree with that, particularly when you need to look at the whole sequence to fully appreciate the tale, as you have to do with *TERMINATOR 3: Rise of the Machines*. It stars would-be governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger. As far as Special effects go the second *Terminator* movie was great and for that reason alone you could say that it was better than the first but definitely a good double. However with number three they were laboring to carry on the story and bring it to what seemed to be a logical if, if a bit weak, conclusion. The SFX were as you may expect even more spectacular than the second movie but the plot left a lot to be desired. Another attempt is made to stop the young hero from reaching his goal as the leader of the opposition to the robots, having to deal with a new Terminator robot in human female form and even more powerful than the second one. But in fact as fate would have it he does actually attain that position with the help of old Arnie again and a lady who was destined to share his destiny with him, as the movie ends. So is that the end of the *Terminator* movies or can we expect them to carry on and show the remnants of humanity battle it out with the machines? Time will tell, but I have a feeling this really is the end. (Since I wrote that, newly elected governor Schwarzenegger is now being referred to as "The Governator"! And he has sworn off further movies for the duration of his term in office.)



Still on the subject of sequels, the second movie starring Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft, *TOMB RAIDER II*, was a little disappointing and quite simply not as good as the first one. The action seemed to be a combination of *James Bond* and *Indiana Jones* adventures and did not have the originality of *Tomb Raider 1*. However it undeniably does have its moments, with many spectacular jaunts and scenes and is certainly worth a look.





Other movies seen recently included **PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: The Curse of the Black Pearl**, starring John Depp, Orlando Bloom and Geoffrey Rush among others. As a kid, pirate stories and movies always fascinated me and a large format, full colour comic book called *Middy Malone* that I was given as a ten-year-old or thereabouts, certainly encouraged my interest. In due course I enjoyed

movies such as Erroll Flynn's *CAPTAIN BLOOD* and Tyrone Power's *THE BLACK SWAN*, not to forget a few years later Burt Lancaster's *THE CRIMSON PIRATE* and various other minor pirate and sailing ship movies, such as the *Mutiny on the Bounty* incarnations, over the years. I must have seafarers amongst my previous lives, as I loved tales about the big sailing ships in the Nelson era and the war between Britain and the French of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. I believe Russell Crowe's next film to be released is set in that era. *The Curse of the Black Pearl* is a great fantasy romp that while making fun of all the pirate movies ever made, still comes over as a very enjoyable adventure and I wholeheartedly recommend it



The "must see" movie breaking box office records is *FINDING NEMO* which is a Disney animated movie using the Pixar technique, as did *Toy Story*. The animation and the colour are absolutely incredible and it is a cute little tale that "kids" of all ages can enjoy. As seems to be the plan these days, the voices of the characters are those of high profile actors (most of them Australian). See it even if you normally have no interest in animated movies, just to see what the state of the art is today.

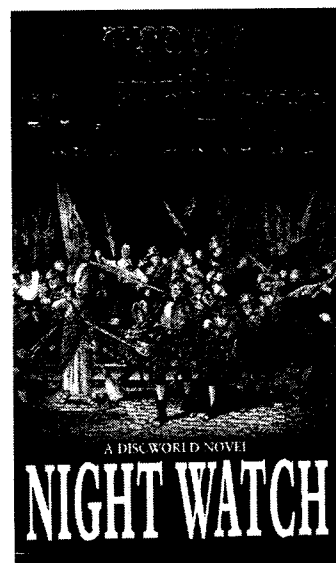
Rumour has it that a movie version of British TV's *RED DWARF* is a strong possibility and it may be shot in Melbourne.



## BOOKS RECEIVED & MORE

One SF book received by me personally from publishers recently was *ALIEN EARTH* by Megan (Robin Hobb) Lindholm, in Voyager paperback from Harper Collins. An intriguing space adventure set in a future where the human race has been transported by aliens to far distant worlds after making Earth uninhabitable. Now a ship is being sent on a voyage back "home", with a small crew of two humans and an alien and what they discover when they get there makes a great story. I am anxious to read Sean Williams and Garth Nix's *Evergence* series but I have not been able to locate the first two books, *Prodigal Sun* and *Dying Light*, which I was reminded of on receiving the paperback edition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> book in the *The Change* fantasy sequence and winner of the Aurealis Award, *THE STORM WEAVER AND THE SAND*, by Sean Williams. Voyager Pb. As I have said, I am not a fantasy reader myself, but it was interesting to see Sara Douglass interviewed on the *Sunday* program on the ABC yesterday. She answered good and intelligent questions and her interests and intents in her writing came through. The most recent book of hers to hand is *THE CRIPPLED ANGEL*, The Crucible Book 3 now out in Voyager Pb. It is obvious that Ms Douglass knows her history extremely well and is able to cleverly twist the real events, in this case in medieval England, to her own ends and come up with fantasy writing which is far above the average. Also received from Harper Collins the three books in the *Axis* sequence by Ms Douglass: *BATTLE AXE*, *ENCHANTER* and *STAR MAN*.

I could easily be captured by Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* tales, but so far I have not succumbed. The latest one received is *THE WEE FREE MEN*, set in a part of Discworld that bears a slight resemblance to that bit of the British Isles that lies North of Hadrian's wall, with characters that would have given the Romans even more cause to build the wall. Needless to say a cast of incredible characters that only Terry Pratchett could invent. A Doubleday/Random House hard cover. Also received from Random House/Corgi by Terry Pratchett: *NIGHT WATCH*, new in paperback (whose cover artist Paul Kidby has paid tribute to Rembrandt's famous painting *The Night Watch*), and a new hard cover Doubleday/Random House *Discworld* novel *MONSTROUS REGIMENT*. The list of books, plays and other associated publications that Terry Pratchett has produced takes up two pages at the front of this volume, indicating the enormous output of this man and his incredible popularity with the readers.



From Allen & Unwin I received *POLYSTOM* by Adam Roberts, which is SF but the universe in which the story unfolds is so bizarre it sounds more like fantasy. The people living in this weird environment could not believe that there could be anything else beyond their reality, could there! VG Tpb.

As the new title broke all records for its release, I saw that *HARRY POTTER* was again being banned in certain school libraries. When can we expect them to start calling for author J. K. Rowling to be burnt at the stake as a witch and for teaching young people about witchcraft? I thought that went out with the witch trials in Salem about two hundred years ago. What a lot of rubbish! Kids more than ever now are well aware of the real world and the fantasy world of books, movies and TV and the *Harry Potter* books are pure fantasy and a lot of fun. The intolerant religious groups give me a pain. When are they going to join the real world?

**OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED INCLUDED:**

From Harper Collins: Voyager titles:

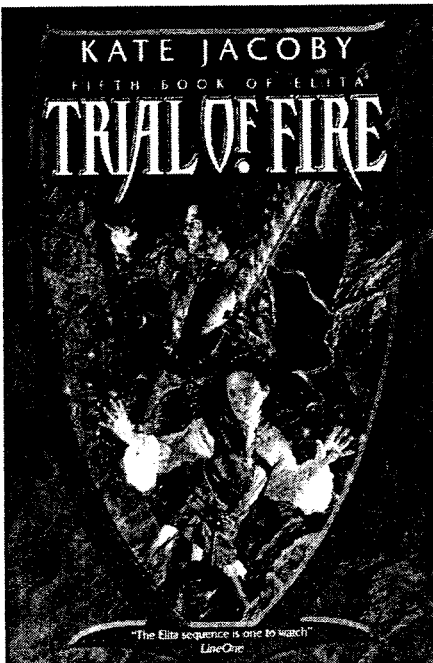
Hard Covers – NAKED EMPIRE by Terry Goodkind F/N, THE ELDER GODS by David & Leigh Eddings F/N. Trade Paperbacks: FOOLS FATE by Robin Hobb, FN, THE AUTUMN CASTLE Europa Suite: 1 by Kim Wilkins F/N, HADE'S DAUGHTER Troy Game: Book One by Sara Douglass F/N, HIDDEN WARRIOR The Tamir Triad Book 2 by Lynn Flewelling FN, QUICK SILVER RISING by Stan Nichols FN, LEGENDS II edited by Robert Silverberg F/A, which includes stories by Robin Hobb, George R. R. Martin, Orson Scott Card, Tad Williams, Anne McCaffrey and others. Small Paperbacks: TALON OF THE SILVER HAWK by Raymond E. Feist FN, THE ALLEGIANCE OF MAN BY Jane Welch FN, LORD OF THE SHADOWS Second Sons Trilogy Book 2 by Jennifer Fallon FN, MYRREN'S GIFT by Fiona McIntosh FN, BOOK OF DREAMS by Traci Harding FN, THE CRIPPLED ANGEL The Crucible Book 3 by Sara Douglas F/N, ANGEL OF RUIN by Kim Wilkins Dark F/N, PICTURE MAKER by Penina Spinka, a prehistory -FN. Also received from Harper



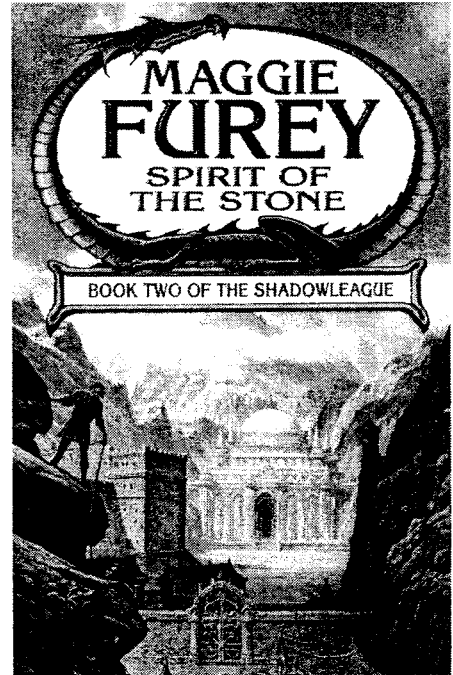
Collins is a very nice leaflet publicising Garth Nix's 3<sup>rd</sup> book in The Old Kingdom Trilogy, ABHORSEN, which follows Sabriel and Lirael.

From Allen & Unwin Australia:

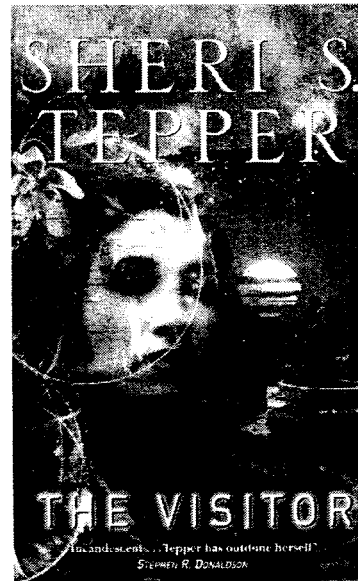
Gollancz and Orion titles TALES FROM EARTHSEA a collection by Ursula K. LeGuin in HC, TRIAL OF FIRE by Kate Jacoby, the 5th book in



the Elita sequence Tpb, SPIRIT OF THE STONE Book Two of the Shadowleague by Maggie Furey Tpb, DEEP BLACK by Stephen Coontz and Jim Defelice, a hi-tech political thriller, Tpb, POLYSTOM by Adam Roberts is a science fiction tale set in a highly imaginative astronomical environment, Tpb.



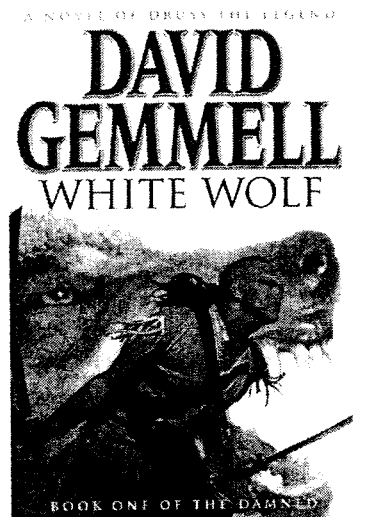
SHADOWHEART Legends of the Raven 2 by James Barclay FN Tpb and in pb Book One ELFSORROW, THE VISITOR by Sheri Tepper SF/N pb.



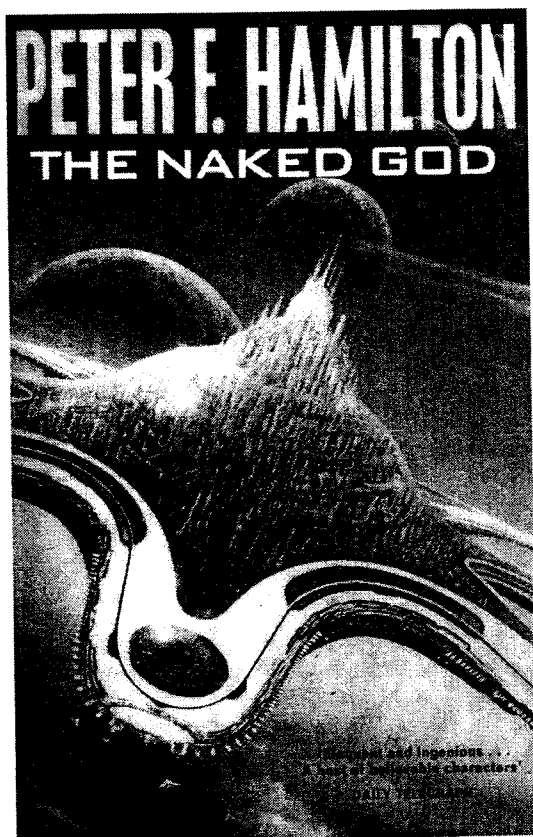
From Random House: Another Discworld novel from Terry Pratchett, MONSTROUS REGIMENT in HC, along with NIGHT WATCH by Pratchett new in pb, WHITE WOLF by David Gemmell is book One of the Damned, FN Tpb, HOUSE OF CHAINS a Tale of the Malazan Fallen by Steven Erikson, FN Tpb, FIRESONG by William Nicholson FN, pb, A CARESS OF TWILIGHT by Laurel K. Hamilton FN, pb, THE

STANDING DEAD by Ricardo Pinto is book 2 of the Stone Dance of the Chameleon Trilogy, FN, pb.

Finally one rather daunting volume published by Wakeman Publishers, THE SHIFT OF THE AGES Volume One At the End of Time by Jan Nemeyeth, which is a science fiction come occult tale by an Australian author, in TPB. A tale of dire warnings for the world today from the past and prognostications of a near future.



## BOOKS READ



About two years ago I picked up Peter Hamilton's novel *THE NEUTRONIUM ALCHEMIST*, which certainly looked interesting to a space opera fan like me, but before I could start reading it I needed to get hold of the preceding volume in the series, *THE REALITY DYSFUNCTION*. I luckily picked up a second hand copy a few months later and later still, volume three, *THE NAKED GOD*. I began to read the first volume but soon got bogged down. There were too many places and too many people for me to keep up with and I was bored, despite the spectacular places and events described. So I put it aside and over the years since I have been going back to it and reading a bit more until finally I have finally completed it. Helena picked up a companion pb, *The Confederation Handbook*, which explains the different cultures of the planets and spacefaring people in the books and their history, plus a list of all the characters and their roles. Unfortunately I did not find this of much help as it only made it all more complicated. I needed an outline of the events in the story, as I could not remember who had done what and who was from where, which the companion volume did not give. However by the time I got to the final volume and it was all starting to fall into place, I was reading it more often and remembering who was who and from where.

The whole concept of the series was quite unusual for a SF tale, being more what you would expect from a horror story. It was a bit hard to accept the premise that the ghosts of everybody who had ever lived were out there somewhere in limbo and were coming back and taking over the bodies of living people. What made it all exceptionally interesting though was the various cultures of the living people and their reliance on microcomputer technology inbuilt in their bodies, the living spaceships and habitats and the things that the possessed people could do.

Some great ideas no doubt, but my complaint is that Hamilton tried to put too much into the story and with less characters and a more concise narrative concentrating on them, I would have enjoyed it more and got through reading it a lot sooner. Okay! I am a slow reader and that did not help, but the whole thing was too long-winded and the story could have been told in a lot less words. It was published over 1996 and 1999 in large format pbs and later in smaller unmanageably thick pbs, but it needed to be done in at least six relatively small volumes. My final word being that it was a great idea but badly handled by author and publishers. Another volume, of short stories, titled *A Second Chance At Eden*, is set in the same universe. Read them all if you like a very long read. All were published by MacMillan.

*ALIEN EARTH* by Megan Lindholm is a recent release from Harper Collins in paperback. The concept of living spaceships that can travel through space at FTL speeds has become quite popular of late. The TV series *Farscape* has them, the series just reviewed, *The Reality Dysfunction* has very sophisticated spaceship entities and so does *Alien Earth*, although these creatures are not so intelligent. The larger part of the narrative involves the interaction of the two human crewmembers and the one alien, who interacts with the ship. An alien from the race who transported the human race to two planets where they are surviving, under an alien, sort of benign, control, after Earth has become inhabitable. Or at least that is what humanity believes, but a human organisation has managed to get a ship sent on a mission home to Earth, after a few generations, just to check things out. It takes a while to get to the point of the tale but certainly worth a read.

