



The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into the Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

Crossing Over (II): Why Do We Love It So?

Bret M. Funk

Crossovers are everywhere. Comic book superheroes have television series (live action and animated), movies, books, songs, and breakfast cereals. A few even broke into radio, before television (kryptonite to audio-only shows) came along. Television series are made into movies, movies are made into TV shows, and those TV shows will probably be made into new movies in the near future. Novelizations of hit movies are a big money maker, but not as big as adapting hit novels into blockbuster movies.

Even video games are not spared the crossover: more than a few games have become movies, and I've lost count of all the movies that have made the transition to the gaming world. Book-to-game is not as common (unless the book has become a movie first) but it happens; in fact, I expect that I'll be playing *Gone With the Wind* any year now.

But why all the crossovers? As I mentioned last month, crossovers aren't often very good. Most of the people I know, at least those devoted – or

obsessed by – a certain book, show or game, dread movie crossovers. They talk for months about their fears: that the movie will ruin the book, that it won't stay true to the author's vision, that it will eliminate key characters or plot points. They scream and rage that another fine novel will be ruined by Hollywood, that an entire generation or two will be poisoned to an epic work of classic speculative fiction. They grumble and mutter while they order their tickets, while they stand in line, while they watch the movie, and for days afterward. Unless the

movie turns out to be good, in which case they proceed to talk endlessly about the film's merits (and how the sequel will probably stink).

The point is, despite all the grumbling, they go. Each and every time.

This is a phenomenon that fascinates me, even when I pony up my own ticket money or stand in line at the bookstore with the newest *Star Wars* book, and I've spent a great deal of time trying to understand the motivations behind our obsession with the crossover.

Part of me, the sentimental part, cries out 'Nostalgia!' It's impossible for a series to last forever, but movies allow the cast of *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5*, and other hit shows to reunite periodically. Crossovers also allow people to relive their youth without embarrassment. Many people (not me!) might feel self-conscious if caught watching an episode of *Scooby-Doo* on the Cartoon Network, but if they go to the movie, they have a legitimate excuse: "I wanted to see how badly they screwed it up!" Safely ensconced within the armor of the critic, they can watch silly movies, read terrible books, and laugh at television adaptations. At the same time, they can free their inner child and revel in the memories of yesteryear.

While nostalgia may be the driving factor behind TV-to-film adaptations, it alone is not enough to explain the popularity of media crossovers, especially within the realm of book-to-film. One does not often find oneself nostalgic for a book, and if it does happen, the book is usually still available.

Another part of me, a very cynical part, believes that lack of imagination is to blame. America's (and the world's) growing need for instant gratification has poisoned our minds. As television, videos, and the internet gained in popularity, our need to think for ourselves, to visualize what we read (or to read, for that matter) diminished. With lack of use comes atrophy, and that, coupled to even newer technologies, will further decay the imagination, creating a vicious cycle that will eventually force mankind into the role of mindless automatons.

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Flights of Fancy (v): Space Travel

by **Brian Otridge**

Man set foot on the Moon on 20 July 1969. I know; I watched it live on TV although the cynics will argue that it was Spielberg's first epic! And how far have we come since then? Zilch, nix, the square root of three tenths of damn all. Commercial space travel is a long way off.

The first problem of interplanetary travel is to escape the gravity well of Earth. Of the places in the solar system that we might wish to visit, it is the steepest hill to climb. The Space Shuttle burns around 2000 tons of fuel to insert a 100-ton craft and payload into low-Earth orbit. That's quite a cost in fuel, money and pollution. Using that technology, commercial travel to other parts of the solar system would be a non-starter.

A more fuel-efficient method is required, and it's on the drawing boards. Why not use both the lifting and burning properties of oxygen in the atmosphere to get part way there? Piggyback a single-stage shuttle on a large aircraft like a 747, fly to twelve miles high, and release it from there. The speed advantage isn't very great, but the height, the reduced atmospheric resistance, and reduced fuel weight help enormously.

There are other ways. Nuclear rockets are infeasible - from the safety point of view - for Earth launch, but cold fusion might work. Tremendous amounts of energy could be obtained from a small amount of fuel, although reaction mass would still be required. In the realms of science fiction, ha-ha, there are ideas such as an elevator to a geo-stationary satellite. It's a neat idea; shame there's no suitable material for the cable, yet. Other things, like ion drives, have also been postulated.

Let's assume we've overcome the problem of lifting reasonably large payloads into Earth orbit at a reasonable cost. I predict that one of Arthur C. Clarke's space stations would be constructed as a staging post. Given that passengers will not be trained astronauts with asbestos stomachs, Clarke's idea of artificial gravity from a rotating wheel seems like a wise precaution against needing vast armies of vomit cleaners.

A staging post is needed because craft optimized for Earth-Orbit insertions/returns would have different features to one optimized for interplanetary journeys. Orbital craft need aerodynamics, wings, heat tiles and rugged construction. Interplanetary

craft need long duration life support systems and specialized navigation systems. However, they would have more freedom with power sources than orbital craft.

Let's just consider how long such journeys might be, for example Earth-Mars. The present technology enables a small craft to burn just enough fuel to escape the Earth's gravitational pull, to proceed on a cruising low-energy elliptical orbit, to intercept Mars somewhere in its orbital path. Depending on relative position of the two planets, journey times would be months and years - utterly impractical from a commercial point of view.

We'll assume that a power source can be found to deliver a significant and continuous acceleration for the first half of the journey, and deceleration for the rest of it. Earth orbits 93 million miles from the Sun, Mars 140 million. Worst case would be with Earth and Mars diametrically opposed across the Sun, a straight-line path of 250 million miles, with an allowance to pass the Sun at a respectable distance. Ignoring the speed of the Earth and Mars, at continuous 0.1g acceleration a journey time of 15 days could be achieved, at 1g, 5 days. This is more like it.

A tenth of a "g" would not be perfect from a passenger-comfort point-of-view, but is better than the vomit-making zero-g, except when the ship swung over at the mid-point. The only major problem is the power source. In my opinion, cold fusion and nuclear seem to be the only realistic possibilities at the present time. But an even greater problem would be the reaction mass. Something has to be flung out of the back of the spacecraft to make it go. It could be a cheap commodity, water, or moondust, or whatever. The difficulty would be to get it into Earth orbit to "fuel" the spacecraft. Perhaps it could be moondust, brought up out of the weak gravity well of the moon. At the Mars end, Phobos and Deimos might provide useful sources.

Of course, at the Mars end there would need to be another space station, although the small moons of Mars might provide a cheap solution, and re-entry craft different from the Earth one, facing different problems. With one-third of the gravity, it would be feasible to fire it from ground-level, but with a thinner atmosphere, braking on re-entry would be harder.

What about beyond Mars? Jupiter orbits at 500 million miles from the Sun. At 0.1g and the worst

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RPG Corner (v2.2): Setting and Scale

by Doug <!> Roper of Epic Gaming

In this and future installments, we'll be looking at a few techniques for creating an environment to host the newly formed role-playing game that was developed (quite broadly) in the last column. One might be tempted to gloss over a thing like this, but I strongly suggest that a GameMaster resist any temptation to hurry through this process. To do so would be to risk losing a great amount of detail and richness for the entire game, not just the immediate surroundings of a group of PCs as the trek cross country in between cities. Before we begin with the technical how-to kind of stuff, I'd like to look at the why-both-er find of stuff.

Setting as Character

The setting of a game can be as much of a character as any knight or goblin, and unlike characters that come and go, the hills and valleys, plains and mountains are always with the PCs. Settings are perpetual, and a thorough amount of preparation can lead to memorable events and powerful stories. In literature, one of the most classic dramatic struggles used is the conflict between man (or woman) and nature, and the use of this conflict in a role-playing game can be just as powerful. Natural hazards such as sudden storms, earthquakes, and rockslides can create as much tension as an opposing army of orcs, and the careful depiction of a spooky, old growth forest can set the mood and tone for all of the events that occur therein. The local land can tell stories of disasters and triumphs, if the planning is there. These things cannot happen in the stories told by the GameMaster should he cut corners on creating the environment of the PCs.

The environment creates the imagery that the players will use when imagining the world that they are playing in, and generalizing details will create a sense that no matter where the PCs wander, their world always looks the same. As they travel, they should notice differences in plants and animals and the lay of the land, but the PCs cannot notice these things unless they have been detailed ahead of time by the GameMaster. Could anyone who has read Lord of the Rings ever confuse the Fangorn Forest with Lorien? Of course not, and the same should be true of any two forests or plains or mountain ranges in a world of your own making. To do less is to rob both yourself and any players of a more dramatic and more immersive experience. To continue this

example, if Tolkien had cheated on the setting of Lord of the Rings, much of the impact of the novels would have been lost. The world he created and laid down was meticulously detailed and described in such a way the land itself seemed to be a character. What do you think of when you hear the word Mordor? Just the name conjures mental images of a barren, poisoned wasteland where nothing grows and everything lies in shadow.

Now please excuse me while I climb down off of this soapbox, and begin talking about the methods used in creating the setting. As I stated in the last column, the process will be Top Down, or, from general to specific, but before I discuss methods to do this, I'd like to spend a little time chatting about scale.

Scale

When you are ready to create maps, you are going to need a good grasp of scale to keep everything straight. As Americans (forgive me, all non-Americans reading this) we have a problem with our system of measuring distance, i.e. it's not exactly standardized. Feet, yards, miles and so on just don't stack up as neatly as do the meters, kilometers and so on of the Metric system. For ease of mapmaking, I strongly suggest adopting the Metric system, or a system based on a single factor. For example, my scale of choice for maps breaks down like this:

For homes or dungeons:	1" (inch): 5' (feet)
For towns or local landscapes:	1" : 50'
For broad stretches of land:	1" : 5,000' (~ one mile)
For continents and so on:	1 : 500,000

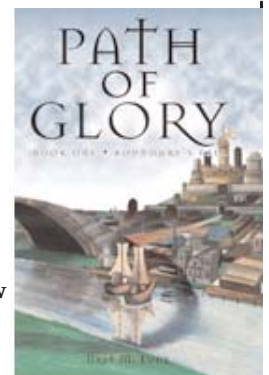
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KeyCOMmentary From Hi-Fi to Sci-Fi: Listening to your Mus(e)ic

by garrie keyman

I can't recall precisely how old I was, that moment I first realized the power of music to transport me into imaginary adventure – I believe I was, perhaps, five – but I do recall the circumstances. As I lay on the floor near the ratty old record player on which my folks occasionally spun their limited LP collection, a scratchy rendition of *The High and The Mighty* suddenly launched me – mind and soul – to other realms. It was as though all at once a mystical secret was revealed to me: a holy truth unveiled. In an instant, I could leave everything (and with seven older sisters and brothers, believe me, I had plenty of impetus to escape) and venture to distant lands or exotic worlds where heroes and heroines prevail.

Once I learned to read, I adapted my love of music to the written forum, selecting just the right background music to have playing while I swam through stories; the ultimate goal being to enrich the tale by evoking a proper nuance of mood while centering myself in the action. Then in 1977 when I first heard John Williams' sweeping score to *Star Wars* (or to be more accurate, when I first *experienced* it) my Hi-Fi to Sci-Fi journey expanded: I began to write my own tales, scribbling to the tunes that pounded in my brain and pulsed from my stereo speakers. Thanks to Williams, those long-ago adventures that began taking shape when I was only five eventually developed into a multi-novel saga of my own. This was the same composer who (then billed as *Johnny Williams*) scored the 1960's TV series *Lost in Space*. His having been the first television music to propel my imagination beyond the reach of Earth, the John

Williams connection seemed to bring my Hi-Fi to Sci-Fi experience full circle.

Still, while John Williams may have been my first musical Sci-Fi muse, he is by no means alone in this regard, nor does the inspiration that I find come exclusively from composers whose works are solely in the SF&F genre. Specifically, early drafts of my first novel, *The Secret of Sharada Nye*, were penned to the soundtrack of *Dances with Wolves* by John Barry and to James Horner's scores for *Braveheart* and *Legends of the Fall*. Other music by these composers has also been highly inspirational, as well as the work of Sam Cardon, whose score to the IMAX film, *Mysteries of Egypt*, has propelled his work to the top of my personal list of favorites.

When it comes to creating a convincing world and populating it with believable characters whose emotional responses we recognize and can share, and who have experiences to which we relate, for me at least, the right music matters. Not only does the right music help to set mood, dynamic and pace, but it has the power to paint scenery, as well – or, at the very least, the means to convey the *feeling* that the scenery is meant to evoke in character and reader alike.

Well-chosen music can also assist in carving out the nuance of tone inherent in well-written dialog; and should a final product be found lacking, later drafts can be re-tooled to music that more accurately reflects the tale's intended weight. For me, this translated into a need to reduce melodrama, infuse the story with humor, and to pick up the pace. To that end, I found the scores to *Mulan*, by Jerry Goldsmith and *Anastasia*, by David Newman better suited the manuscript's needs.

If you're looking for something that conveys a sense of the tragic-turned-triumph, you might also try Marc Shaiman's score to *Patch Adams* or Thomas Newman's motion picture soundtrack to *Little Women*. Then, of course, there is all the classical music of the ages, though save for several exceptions, I tend to find most classical compositions, while subtly rich, distinctly lack the dramatic dynamic and emotional angst I favor. I like music that brings me to the brink of tears one moment, then makes me feel I've overcome the Supreme Master of Evil in the next, a sort of pianissimo and forte tira misu – luscious layers of magnificent music.

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The Inner Eye (I): Selling the Story: Written versus Visual Media

by Terry Crotinger/montanasing

Hollywood tries to convince us. It is their job. Portraying futuristic fashions and accessories for space-faring individuals becomes complicated, as admittedly, it is easier to see the fashion nuances as opposed to reading about them. But do we, as the consumers, buy into the idea of unrealistic clothing? What happens if we do not? Before discussing the fashions that are found in science fiction books and visual media, the stage needs to be set to remind readers the function and the immense challenge to please readers and viewers, publishers, and of course, advertisers. The task is increasingly complex depending on the technology available. Put simply: provide an appealing or memorable set, including clothing, and it sells the story.

Developing the Inner Eye

Written and visual media have the same challenge but use differing methods. For a moment, think about what information is gathered by the optic nerve. In a moment, a flash, a nanosecond, the screen in front of you displays a gruesome picture of debris and imploded humans floating serenely in null gravity on the dimly lit deck of a space ship - the result of a compromised hull. Reading this last sentence immediately brought images and emotions to accompany it. Some will read it and merely be intrigued. Others will need to look away from that inner sight. Still others will stare and revel in the destruction, wondering at the power that accomplished this... Come back to earth, gentle reader, point made.

Likewise, the writer can excite, repel, ease and restore all while painting a vivid picture using simple (!) tools of language. The writer can compel and motivate within the space of a few sentences. Visual art, media and text attempt to be storytellers. Is one more effective than the other in helping us see the story, or just different but equally effective?

Reading a description of a landscape or the tang of soured, recycled air provides the reader with an appreciation for the scene, provided that they have an imagination. If adding kinetic sensations to movies or television ever becomes the industry standard, our enjoyment of the scene or the action taking place will be greatly enhanced. Imagine smelling the zesty orange, feeling the greasiness of lubricant, or feeling the jolt and even becoming nauseated when the spaceship's engines fail...

Well, perhaps there's a limit.

Because the human brain is sensation oriented, particularly to sight, writers have the responsibility to add to our sensation blindness what the visual industry must do with sound and set. Unfortunately, many science fiction writers tend to leave off descriptions once they feel the reader understands the premise, surroundings, and character descriptions and go straight for the plot with an occasional description - an occasional paragraph! - if the reader is fortunate. Very successful science fiction writers use this technique with abandon. As a result, the reader with a vivid visual imagination is left thick in plot but void in imagining the action. There is a responsibility on the reader's part to fill in descriptions with personal perspective. Likewise, writers need to remember that smell, sound, and sight descriptions are their responsibility to the end of the story.

Covert Forms of Advertisement

Cover art for book jackets and paperbacks, by nature, are limited to that few square inches in which to portray the material within. Essentially the artist's goal is to pique interest - bluntly - to sell. However, the outcome is a tendency to cram into the design too much for the reader to grasp. After the book is read, the Cover Art then becomes symbolic. This applies to movie posters. Take, for example, the original Star Wars poster that has Princess Leia, showing more leg than we ever saw in the movie, at Luke's feet with his lightsaber raised in ominous warning. It is just a little stretch from the movie, but makes a compelling sight and was a large factor in selling the movie to viewers. If it's visual, it's advertising.

Trailers for movies, advertisements and promotional events are just larger and flashier Cover Art. Designed by the extremely talented, sets for the scene in a television series or movie heat or cool our interest. We have all remarked on poorly made sets. Does this not affect our desire to watch as well? Sets, props and costumes impact our interest, and the reality is that they are trying to "sell" the show's concept to the viewer. This is a fairly common practice that has endured from the first tribal ceremony with costume and props before the Egyptians even thought of building pyramids. In this century, the practice is not likely to change other than to increase budgets for more realism and research to do the

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The History of Fantasy: Robert E. Howard

by Charles Gramlich

The field of modern fantasy was founded by two writers, J. R. R. Tolkien and Robert E. Howard. This essay looks at the life and work of Howard (1906 - 1936), who is generally credited with creating the sub-field of fantasy called, variously, sword & sorcery, heroic fantasy, or epic fantasy.

Robert Ervin Howard committed suicide in Cross Plains, Texas in 1936, but he left a legacy of stories and characters that are better known today than they ever were during his lifetime. His most famous character is Conan, often called "the Barbarian" by later writers. Two movies have featured Conan, both starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, and some fifty novels and hundreds of comic books about the character have been published by other authors. Neither the movies nor the books nor the comics have come close to capturing the headlong pace and the vividly realized lost world that Howard achieved in the twenty-one Conan stories he, himself, completed.

If Conan were the only character that Bob Howard had created, however, this Texas writer would not have become the cult figure that he is today among fantasy fans. But before Conan there was Kull of Atlantis, later the subject of more comics and of a 1997 movie starring Kevin Sorbo, and there was Solomon Kane, a Puritan adventurer who battled vampires and other evils in the sixteenth century, long before Buffy stalked Sunnyvale.

There was Bran Mak Morn, legendary king of a dying race known as the Picts, who fought and hated the Romans in ancient Britain. And there was Cormac Mac Art, the Irish reiver, and Wulfhere the Skull-splitter, a Viking marauder of gigantic appetites and savage ferocity. These were the stuff of heroes and legends, and the very beginnings of sword & sorcery.

With equal ease, though, Howard created larger-than-life comedic characters such as Breckinridge Elkins, a hero of the old west whose adventures read like "Pecos Bill meets the World Wrestling Federation," and Sailor Steve Costigan, who, with his bulldog Mike, appeared in such raucous tales as "Fist and Fang" and "Waterfront Law." Compared to Costigan, Mike Tyson is a choirboy in the ear-biting arena.

Howard often said that his characters seemed to stand behind his shoulder and tell him their stories, which he then recorded. I believe this is one reason why Howard's tales have such a sharp feel of real-

ism about them. I don't mean that you're likely to meet Conan walking down the street, though Conan was supposed to be a combination of "various prize-fighters, gunmen, bootleggers, oil field bullies, gamblers, and honest workmen" Howard had known. What I do mean is that the sheer intensity with which Howard's characters fight and laugh and love and hate make them feel vitally real while the reader is engrossed in their stories.

In reading Howard, especially at night or on stormy days, I almost expect Conan or Kull to pause in mid-action and glare at me off the page as if to ask: "Friend? Or Foe?" (I'd definitely answer "friend" to that question. I don't want to die bloodily.) This feeling of being wired into the story, or "hooked" by it, doesn't go away no matter how many times one reads a Howard piece.

Howard sometimes shouted his stories out loud as he banged on the keys of his old Underwood typewriter. Sometimes he was so loud that the neighbors complained. But, by doing this, Howard lent an immediacy to his tales that translates across decades to raise the hairs on a reader's neck even today.

In addition to writing fiction, Howard was also a poet, a respected one in magazines such as *Weird Tales*. By combining poetry with sensual and dynamic storytelling, Howard created a mythological tone to his writing. I've often felt, while reading a Howard story, as if I'm a barbarian myself from the days of spear and sword. I see myself leaning over a peat fire, dressed in chain mail and furs while listening to a traveling bard spin a dark tale of treachery, intrigue, and violence.

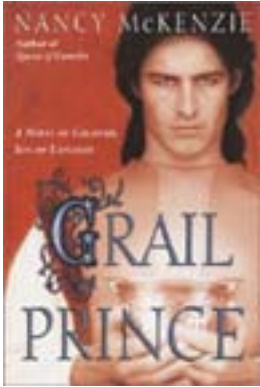
Robert E. Howard was a professional writer, and he made a pretty good living at it even during the terrible economy of the Great Depression. He actually made more money than most of his contemporaries in the tiny Texas town where he lived. He was a good friend to those who wanted him for a friend, a good son devoted to caring for his ailing mother, and a prolific correspondent of such writers as H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith.

But the niceties of Howard's history and personality don't matter to me when I sit down to read one of his stories in the wee, misty hours after midnight. What matters is that he's going to shove me head first in among his characters, and though I'm going to come out the other side alive, I'm going to be thinking: "That was a helluva ride."

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Reviews

Grail Prince Nancy McKenzie



Del Rey, Jan 2003, Trade
\$14.95, 528 pp.

ISBN: 0345456483

Review by Harriet Klausner

In King Arthur's world no person can escape his or her destiny, so prophecy foretold is prophecy fulfilled, no matter how much the person tries avoid it. Galahad, the oldest son of Lancelot and his wife Elaine, knew at an early age that his father's heart was given

to his queen, Guinevere. His mother made no secret that she despised her husband and her cousin the queen. While growing up, Galahad concluded that women were weak and conniving, and he vowed to stay celibate.

He also hated his father for not loving his mother and for spending so much time in Camelot while neglecting his own kingdom of Lancescol. Nevertheless, Galahad goes to Camelot where he proudly served under the Pendragon's banner. Unfortunately, his temper and unruly tongue gets him into trouble with his father and King Arthur. He cannot see that Lancelot loves Arthur and the King his father, and that the queen remains true to her husband.

It was foretold that Mordred, Arthur's son and heir, would be destroyed and though Mordred fought his fate, destiny would not be denied. Father and son kill each other on the Battlefield of Canlann. But before Arthur dies, he assigns to Galahad a quest: to reunite Excalibur with the sword and the Chalice so that Britain will be forever undefeated. Prophecy says that Lancelot's son will be Britain's savior but Galahad spends years searching in vain for the treasures he seeks. Only when he opens him-

self to truth and love will the prophecy be fulfilled, but Galahad has many demons to overcome before he can open himself to the truth about his parents, the queen, and the woman who is his destiny.

Grail Prince is the story of Camelot at the height of its glory and what happens after the king who united Briton falls. It is the story of a son who hates his parents and fears love yet is determined to realize the wishes of a dead king. Lancelot, while not the main character, plays a key role as the catalyst of his son's actions. Readers will love him because his heart is torn between love for his king and queen, and that makes him a hero to everyone but his own wife and son, who feel neglected (there is a price to pay to be a hero).

Although there are times when the reader will feel like spanking Galahad for his self-righteous behavior, the audience will understand that he is a victim of his mother's hatred, his father's unrequited love, and a priest's need for vengeance.

Arthur is presented as the only light in a world of darkness, a civilized man keeping the savages at bay. He is shown to be a man with faults and wishes, a person who makes mistakes but tries to rectify them. He plays an important role in Galahad's life, and it is his influence that eventually sows the seeds of Galahad's redemption. There is a sense of irony in Galahad's friendship with his cousin Percival because it parallels that of Arthur and Lancelot.

There are many stories of Camelot, but *Grail Prince* is one of the better ones as the touch of magic makes this work of fantasy very fulfilling. The novel gives the audience a sense of a place that was not larger than life but rather an amalgam of all the personalities trying to make it work. Camelot is a place of legends but in the hands of myth chroniclers like Nancy McKenzie it is an Eden where readers can see dreams come true.

Reign of Fire Bale Christian, Matthew McConaughey



DVD Release: 2002

Runtime: 102 Minutes

Sometime in the near future, a mining team in London reawakens a slumbering dragon. The dragons multiply, quickly, and within a generation, the world is destroyed, mankind on the verge of extinction.

An rough-and-tumble American (McConaughey) and his remaining troops stumble upon a small settlement of Englishmen, (led by Christian). The Americans have

found a way to kill the dragons. What's more, they've discovered the dragons secret: all of them, except the one in London, are female. By killing him, the race of dragons will die, and mankind will be spared.

Reign of Fire is far from a great movie, even a great sci-fi movie, but it's far from the worst, too. The characters are entertaining, and it's less than three hours long, a rare feat in today's movie market. As usual, some of the details and background activities are better than the actual storyline, but that's to be expected in sci-fi movies.

The movie does leave several questions to be answered. For instance, if there is only one male dragon, and he was the first, then how did there get to be anymore? Plot holes notwithstanding, *Reign of Fire* is a worthwhile watch for die-hard fans of sci-fi.

Reviews

In the Forests of the Night Amelia Atwater-Rhodes



Delacorte Press, May 1999
\$8.95, Hardcover, 147 pgs
ISBN 0385326742

Review by Devin James

Big fan of vampires, shapeshifters and witches, yet tired of old stereotypes of warts, pointy hats, and the all-famous hate of unions? You're not alone; it's hard to find a realistic fantasy, but here is a young girl who has found a new twist. Amelia Atwater-Rhodes she has written

four books: *In The Forest of the Night*, *Demon in My View*, *Shattered Mirror*, and her latest, *Midnight Predator*. Each is a modern twist, a new style of vampire novel. Her books are based in the present, with modern characters that seem to truly exist.

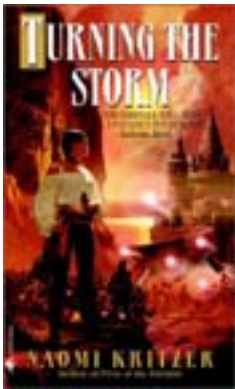
The first book, *In The Forest of the Night*, is a weaker novel when compared to her later works, written with a simple premise: a vampire curse, a lonely life, and memories of a lost family. The rather old-fashioned writing seems to

slide, enabling the reader to breeze through Atwater-Rhodes' story while enjoying every moment of the characters' thrilling lives. The anger rushing through the villain's cold heart as all she had was torn from her by another vampire is clearly conveyed to the reader.

Next comes *Demon in My View*, an amazing new twist that all romantics, as well as any adventure seeking soul, will love. It is the twisted tale of a confused young girl (if one would dare call her such) that continues the first book and leads further into the life of the villain, showing his dead heart come alive again when he finds love. He must protect his mortal love from the grip of another vampire that seeks to kill her.

Yet again Atwater-Rhodes thickens the tension with her third book, *Shattered Mirror*. In this novel, there is a twist at every turn. When a witch on a mission to kill meets some friendly vampires, a love is born from hate, creating a tale to rival Romeo and Juliet. The witch's hate is controlled by a friendly character from one of Atwater-Rhodes' earlier books, but when another enters the scene, bringing the true dark past of the family into the view, she is forced to act.

Turning the Storm Naomi Kritzer



Bantam, Jan 2003
\$6.99, Mass Market, 384p.
ISBN 0553585509

Review by Harriet Klausner

The realm of Verdiana and the Kingdom of Vesuvia went to war over perfume, with mages on both sides unleashing powerful magic. The result is a wasteland where nothing grows and magic no longer works. Refugees were imprisoned in wasteland camps and used to build a

barrier between the two kingdoms. The religious order of the Fedeli use the tactics of the Inquisition to make sure everyone observes the religion they practice, and the Circle of Mages uses magic as a battle tool.

At the conservatory where Eliana practices the violin, the Fideli kill a student for practicing the outlawed religion of the Redentori. When the Circle comes to kidnap her friend Mira who escaped from them, Eliana walks out of the Conservatory and looks for her family. She ends up in one of the camps for exiles. The conditions are so poor and terrible she joins the resistance and frees the camp, and in the process becomes the leader of the newly formed band known as the Lupi. The Lupi, under the direction of Eliana, liberate the other camps and soon have a large and fearsome army. When they leave the wastelands, the mages

attack them, leading to large number of the Lupi dead. The Lupi retreat into the wastelands while Eliana transforms herself into a boy named Danieel, who is a violinist in the enclosed part of the capital city of Cuore.

While there, she tries to learn anything that can help her army defeat the Fedeli and the Circle. She comes across a secret meeting of a group of Redentori. At a masked festival, she meets one of the Redentori and is shocked to discover he is the Emperor Travan. She is able to spirit him away, but the Fideli catch her.

Eliana is a warrior in the tradition of Boadacia. Her troops are loyal to her because she wouldn't have them do anything she wouldn't do first. She is a symbol of the resurgent Redentori religion and the resistance fighter who despises what mages have done to their land. The people also want the Fedeli overthrown because they will not allow any religion but their own. Eliana is a young woman who had to grow up fast, and though she leads her army, she is never sure if she is steering the right course. Her doubts endear herself to readers.

The story is fast-paced and exciting because the reader never knows what is going to happen next. The underlying themes deal with the repression of religion and the abuse of power by those in power. The villains are complex, three-dimensional characters who have reasons (bad ones for acting as they do so that the reader will understand their logic and despise them for it). Naomi Kritzer, with only two books to her credit, has already left her mark on the fantasy genre.

Reviews

The Dragon Reborn (Wheel of Time, 3) Robert Jordan



Tor, Oct 1993
\$7.99, Mass Market, 699p.
ISBN 0812513711

Book three of Jordan's Wheel of Time series takes a slightly different track than the earlier two. The story opens high in the mountains, where Rand al'Thor, the newly-proclaimed Dragon, and his companions have hidden through the winter. Below them, the Almoth Plain is in chaos, with the nations of Tarabon and Arad Doman fighting not only each other, but also the Dragonsworn, those men and women who have pledged themselves to the Dragon Reborn.

Except that Rand is not convinced that he *is* the Dragon. He worries that the Aes Sedai Moiraine is using him as a pawn at the Amyrlin's request, especially since she will not let him join the Dragonsworn, to protect them from being slaughtered.

To prove to himself, and the world, that he is the Dragon, Rand leaves for Tear, where *Callandor*, the legendary Sword That Cannot Be Touched is held. Prophecy says that only the Dragon can wield the sword, a remnant from the Age of Legends. Only, Rand is being lured into a trap set by one of the Forsaken, one of the greatest Aes Sedai of all time, one of the thirteen that turned to the Shadow.

Meanwhile, Moiraine, Lan, Perrin, and Loial set out after Rand, hoping to catch him before he reaches Tear or is

caught by the Dark One's minions. Egwene, Elayne and Nynaeve have returned to the White Tower to continue their training, bringing a nearly-dead Mat Cauthon with them. Mat's bond to the Shadar Logoth dagger is killing him, and the White Tower is his last hope, though the price of healing might be more than he is willing to pay.

The Dragon Reborn, though a well-written, engrossing novel, failed to draw me in as much as the first two books. This is in part because the action sequences in the book – dramatic climax notwithstanding – did not have the same power as *Eye of the World* and *The Great Hunt*. But mostly, it is because Rand, the titular character (and my favorite) spends most of the book in the background, seen only in the other characters' dreams and in brief flashes of narration. The bulk of the story shifts between Egwene and company in the tower; Perrin and his companions in pursuit of Rand; and Mat's attempts to escape the Aes Sedai.

TDR does spend a lot of time with Mat (my second favorite character), finally allowing him to develop. Other secondary characters are given a chance to shine as well, bringing more depth to Jordan's world. Many familiar faces return, and a host of new characters are introduced, further showcasing Jordan's ability to develop a host of disparate, unique characters. And Jordan's style continues to improve, though the novel sports more than an average number of clichés, odd analogies, and wordiness.

The climax more than makes up for any lag in the body of the story. The last one hundred pages keep the reader riveted, almost desperate to find out how the story ends, and it sets the stage for the next book in the series, *The Shadow Rising*.

Sci-Fi Buzz

Movie Releases:

Darkness Falls (Jan 24th) -- Horror

Book Releases:

Crossroads of Twilight (Wheel of Time, 10), Jordan
Golden Fool (Tawny Man, 2), Hobb, Hardcover
Area 51: The Truth, Doherty, MM
Abhorsen, Nix, H
Starfist Kingdom's Fury, Sherman, MM
Stars and Stripes Triumphant, Harrison, H
The Gathering Storm (Crown of Stars, 5), Elliot, H
The Fifth Ring (Fifth Ring, 1), Graham, TP

DVD Releases:

Jan 7th
Robotech - New Generation Collection
Evolution
Buffy the Vampire Slayer 3rd Season
Dragonball Z - Buuvegeta's Plea
Signs (Vista Series)
The Shining (TV Remake)
What Lies Beneath
Sailor Moon - Time Travelers
Sailor Moon - Love Conquers All

Jan 14th
Fear Dot Com

Jan 21st
SimOne

Flights of Fancy (con't)

case opposition either side of the Sun, makes for a 60-day journey. This might be tolerable if the only passengers were miners and such like. But could such a craft carry enough reaction mass? It would be a trade-off between the fuel and payload, as always.

If you weren't in too much of a hurry, there would always be the low-cost option of using solar sails. The theories are great, use the solar winds to "inflate" sails square miles in area. Acceleration would be sure and steady, if slow. Stopping at the right planet would be achieved by furling the sails and letting gravity do the rest. Coming home to Earth from Jupiter or Mars, gravity would get you going down the well to the Sun, to use the sails to break to a halt. I would imagine that the captaincy skills required would be very similar to those of a sailboat skipper.

It won't happen in my lifetime, but perhaps in my grandchildren's time they'll be able to buy a ticket for a "Slow Boat to Callisto".

RPG Corner (con't)

Why choose 5 as a base and not 1? Well, the truth is simple; this scale is particularly useful when you have graph paper with 5 squares to the inch, which is my paper of choice. All of the measurements are easy to read, and expansion from one scale to the next is blissfully easy. Increasing the distance by a factor of ten is easy for the mathematically challenged, and exactly the same as the standard metric system, except my base unit is 5 feet, instead of 1 meter.

Of course, finding a scale you are comfortable with is entirely your decision. If you choose to keep the Standard system of measurements, that's just as good for you as my system is for me. Also keep in mind that scale only truly becomes important if you plan on having lots of maps of different areas. I've seen games that took place within a single square that was 500 feet long and 500 feet wide, and others that ranged over the whole of the known world. For the first example, there were only two sizes of maps, the base 1":50', and the 1":5' of the individual homes involved. In the second example, maps of every size were used. Scale is just another tool for the GameMaster to use to adjust his world to his tastes.

I see that I've run out of room, so in the next column, we'll move right into techniques for creating the actual landscapes of the new world, from the global to the local. If there is time (and space) we'll look at how to take a two-dimensional map and create a 3-D model of the landscape.

Hi-Fi to Sci-Fi (con't)

At times, I think there is a tendency for all of us to limit the depth and scope of the creative endeavor by too narrow a sensory focus. What I mean by this is that we are, by nature, sensual beings. We experience the world and all that is in it through each of our senses at every given moment — whether we realize this or not. Yet, how often do we go to an art show primarily thinking it a *visual* experience, or attend a symphony expecting an *auditory* extravaganza? What encounter could not be enhanced, would not be all the more enriched, by both broadening and deepening our exposure?

What if the next time you go to an art show or museum you swath yourself in the undulating scent of pure vanilla, or comb a little cinnamon into your hair and, dressed in flowing robes, stroll the show while listening to a Loreena McKennitt CD? What if the next time you attend a concert you discover to your great surprise that, instead of dull shades of brown, all of the instruments are finished in an astonishing tie-dyed motif and not one musician is arrayed in mere black? If nothing more, you can *imagine* all of your senses taking part in your next seemingly one-dimensional experience. Until you do...

...May the *Forte* be with you.

Inner Eye (con't)

same. If we can imagine it, it can happen, whether the media is text or visual. But do we buy into it? Part Two will examine each component of gear needed to exist on another world or dimension and the response of the viewing or reading public to this form of advertising. Fighting attire, casual daywear, uniforms, footwear - even accessories! - will be discussed and dissected. Get your 'inner eye' ready for future fashions - functional or fairy tale?

Want to Write for the *Illuminata*?

The *Illuminata* is seeking aspiring writers interested in producing SF&F related articles, reviews, and editorials. There are openings for both regular columnists and occasional submissions, and we give our writers a great deal of latitude when it comes to choosing their topics. Unfortunately, we are unable to pay for submissions at this time, so interested parties must be satisfied with the knowledge that their work is being read by fans of SF&F around the globe. If you are interested in writing for us, please contact Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com

History of Fantasy (con't)

Robert Howard's work is still available in used book stores and on the internet. In 1995, Baen books started bringing out the "Robert E. Howard (REH) Library," which concluded in 1996 with Volume 7. These books don't have Conan in them, but they reprint some of Howard's best stories, such as "Worms of the Earth," "The Fire of Asshurbanipal," and "By This Axe I Rule!"

Also, with a few exceptions, the Baen books reprint all Howard and only Howard, without mixing in the revisions of later writers who so often diluted the power of Howard's prose. Reading the material as it was originally published will help people shed some of their preconceived ideas about Howard's characters. For example, Howard never showed Conan as dumb. That's an idea created by the movies and by later writers.

In addition to the Baen books, still available at many big bookstores, a publisher called Wandering Star has begun to produce their own REH library. So far, volumes on Solomon Kane and Bran Mak Morn have been released, and other books are planned. These books not only reproduce Howard's original words, but are also beautifully illustrated. They have an "illustrated classic" feel. Howard has long deserved such treatment, and I believe his name should appear on bookshelves alongside such respected American authors as Jack London and James Fenimore Cooper. He's even more fun to read, though.

Original Fiction Wanted!

One of the goals of the *Illuminata* is to promote aspiring authors. To that end, we are interested in including original fiction and/or poetry in each edition of our newsletter. All submissions must meet the following guidelines:

- Submissions should not exceed 5,000 words
- Must be SF&F oriented
- Must **not** be fanfiction (for liability reasons)
- Violence and profanity are allowed, but stories that use either unnecessarily will not be considered

We will consider published stories, provided that:

- 1) The author certifies (in writing) that the story was published nonexclusively
- 2) The author retains full rights to the work
- 3) The author provides the name and contact information for all publications in which the work was published

For more information, contact
Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com

Crossovers (con't)

But lack of imagination cannot be the explanation, either; at least, not solely. Crossovers of classic novels and popular literature were one of the first applications of moving pictures. The Superman shorts first appeared in 1941, not too long after the Man of Steel appeared, and Batman quickly followed with a live action serial in 1943. Granted, at this point, the public had no previous crossovers to complain about, but if these early efforts had met with resistance, I wouldn't be dreading the eventual release of *Thundercats: Live!* and *Digital Diet: The Oracle's Guide to Cooking in the Matrix*.

So the answer must lie in another direction. In fact, I believe it lies in the opposite direction. The public loves media crossovers not because they remove the need for imagination, but because they provide a platform for the *confirmation of imagination*. When we watch movies and TV shows, the characters are there in all aspects. In living color. What you see is what you get. But when we read a book (or comic) or play a video game, there are things left to the imagination. Each person adds their own details, develops their own interpretation of the characters based on the descriptions and dialogue of the author or programmer.

When a story crosses over into a visual format, it gives the fan something with which to compare and contrast his vision. An adaptation should be a baseline, a standard, but to work correctly, it must remain true to the original. When it does not, when characters, plot and themes are modified to make the work 'more suitable to film,' it ruins not only the story but the fan's ability to see his imagination realized.

This explains the love/hate relationship with the media crossover. Fans yearn for, and will continue to yearn for, movie adaptations so they can see their own imaginations made real. At the same time, they fear for the integrity of unreleased movies, and scorn those adaptations that have been tainted by disinterested directors, marketing considerations, and the almighty dollar.

Next month, I will delve deeper into the realm of media crossovers, and examine the reasons behind a fairly recent, and even more inexplicable phenomenon: an epidemic of well done, true-to-the-original adaptations.