

A surreal landscape featuring a large, textured red sun in the upper right, a green planet in the lower left, and a jagged, brown, crystalline mountain structure in the foreground. The background is a dark, swirling green and blue sky. The text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

**The Drink Tank**  
Hugo for Best Novel Issue  
[Garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:Garcia@computerhistory.org)

# THE DRINK TANK 319 - HUGO FOR BEST NOVEL

## CHRIS GARCIA - EDITORS - JAMES BACON

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover - Apple World by Ditmar (Dick Jenksen)

Page 2 - Table of Contents

Page 3 - Editorial by Christopher J Garcia

Art from Ditmar

Page 4 - What Was Forgotten - A Social Media Discussion  
by Chris Garcia & Pals

Art from Ditmar

Page 9 - Welcome to Osamaverse

#### **Among Others**

Page 12 - A Loosely Related Article - A Father and Daughter/  
Son Reunion by Christopher J Garcia

Page 13 - Reviewed - Among Others by Jo Walton by  
Beth Zuckerman

Art by Ditmar

Page 14 - Among Others Reviewed by Juan Sanmiguel

Page 14 - By The Cover - A Series of Poems by Espana  
Sheriff

#### **A Dance with Dragons**

Page 15 - A Loosely Related Article - GRRM's Lesser  
Known Masterpieces by Christopher J Garcia,  
Photo by Ken Patterson from a copy of Fantastic  
Four 20 provided by Brad Lyau.

Page 17 - A Look at A Dance With Dragons by Aidan  
Moher

Art from Ditmar

Page 19 - A Dance with Dragons - Reviewed by J Unrau

Page 19 - By The Cover - A Series of Poems by Espana  
Sheriff

Page 20 - I'm Not Reading A Dance with Dragons by  
CB Droege

Art by Ditmar

#### **Deadline**

Page 21 - A Loosely Related Article - On the Inevitable  
Zombie Apocolypse and Blogging by Christopher  
J Garcia

Photo by Linda Wenzelburger

Page 23 - Deadline - Reviewed by Thea James of The  
Booksmugglers

Art by Ditmar

Page 25 - **Deadline by Mira Grant Reviewed by Beth  
Zuckerman**

**Page 25 - By The Cover - A Series of Poems by Espana  
Sheriff**

#### **Embassytown**

Page 26 - A Loosely Related Article - To Build A Lan  
guage by Christopher J Garcia

Page 28 - Embassytown - A Review by Anaea Lay

Page 28 - By The Cover - A Series of Poems by Espana  
Sheriff

Page 29 - Embassytown Reviewed by KJ Mulder

Art by Ditmar

#### **Leviathan Wakes**

Page 31 - A Loosely Related Article - Der Ubernovel by  
Christopher J Garcia

Art by Ditmar

Page 33 - Leviathan Wakes Reviewed by Juan Sanmiguel  
Art by Bill Rotsler

Page 34 - Leviathan Wakes - Reviewed by Ana Grilo of  
The Book Smugglers

Page 34 - By The Cover - A Series of Poems by Espana  
Sheriff

Page 37 - Contributor Biographies

Art by Ditmar (Page 37)

Art by Espana Sheriff (Page 38)

**Cover Art by A Dance with Dragons by Larry Rostant,  
Deadline by Lauren Panepinto, Embassytown US by Da-  
vid Stephenson and UK by Crash. Leviathan Wakes by  
Daniel Dociu, Among Others by Kamil Vojnar. Kelly Freas  
painted the cover of the August 1972 issue of Analog.**

It is never easy to start over. Usually, it is the wronged women in Country songs who say that, but in this case it is the cry of a Fanzine Editor who had his computer stolen.

The original version of this issue was on the old computer, some of it material created on it and now lost to the world unless a miracle happens and it is found by the Oakland PD; a police force that won't even take a statement any way but online anymore. Linda and I and the wonderful Chris Rasmussen were watching Prometheus at the Grand Lake Theatre in Oakland when my window was smashed, her tote bag with favorite hat, a pair of cupcakes, a bottle of Bailey's, and my computer was taken. On the plus side, there were two bags in the back that had significantly more electronics, plus clothes and the soon-to-be HUGELY valuable copy of #HardCopyPodcast episodes 3 & 4. Losing the computer doesn't bother me much, I've had that happen before, the last time when it fell off my desk at work was far worse, but losing the issue hurt because it was really good work that I had managed to get and I think I was doing it justice for once. Plus, all of my articles were on there and now, I have rewritten them. Hence, this is a good enough replay. Here's hoping that this one works just as well. This time, using my emergency, ten year-old iBook, I don't have any of my art (I've got a couple of USB sticks full of art around here somewhere), but I did have a disk full of Ditmar in the CD drive here, so thank Ghod for that!

ON the cover, Ditmar had this to say -

*As for thoughts on "Apple World", there's not much I can say.*

*I hardly ever have any idea of what I will end up with when I settle down to generate a graphic. Sometimes, there's a vague idea lurking in the detritus of what I like to think is my imagination, but never anything solid. I was playing with the 3D software (Bryce) when I started to put Apple World together - my main concern was to see how I could manage to create my own sky and clouds and some sort of misty layer. In the process, and for reasons which are entirely a mystery, I opted for a snowy landscape and a nunatak of quite some size. It seemed that the image needed some background so I doodled around and ended up with a ringed planet.*

*Most of the time - for any graphic - is spent adjusting the textures of the various objects, shifting lights, and playing around with the composition. BUT, as I say, there was nothing special or specific about Apple World.*

*Oh - the title comes from the green sky, which reminded me of a Granny Smith*



**EDITORIAL BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA**



## What Was Forgotten - A Social Media Discussion by Chris Garcia & Pals

I was having a hard time coming up with a hook. Every year, we discuss what didn't make the ballot, and it's almost always the same: a list of books that James or I read that tend to focus on a few names that the two of us are fond of. James has said that he thought that *Osama* by Lavie Tidhar. I still haven't read it, but I have heard more good things about it than almost any other novel of 2011. For me, there were three - Carrie Vaughn's *After The Golden Age*, a family of comic books heroes and the daughter who isn't of the type dealing with a mad bastard and the divisions between the family based on expectations, old wounds and new choices. It's a solid book and it was one that I loved reading every second of. The other, though folks have argued that it's not actually SF, is *REAMDE* by Mr. Neal Stephenson. One of the most captivating novels I've ever read, it had me the entire way through and at more than 800 pages (hereby known as a.6 picoMartins), it was a remarkably fast read for me too. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. The third for me was Ian McDonald's *Planesrunner*. Of all the YA novels I've ever read, this was the one that most challenged me to think like an adult while enjoying an adventure that made me feel like a kid! It was awesome, and when it wasn't on the ballot, I was minorly crushed. It also had an amazing cover by Mr. John Picacio. I know the Best Art Work Hugo never really worked, but if there was one, this would have my vote up-and-down!

But I didn't want to do another of those articles. I wanted to get the world of readers involved and know across the board what folks thought should have been on the ballot. So, I sent out a call on my Twitter, which copied to my Facebook, asking a simple question: What novels do you think should have been on the ballot but were not?

And here are the answers!

First, from Mike Perschon, aka Steampunk Scholar, one of the finest critics/academics out there today. He's always willing to share some great opinions. First, he had a question.



**Mike Perschon** @SteamScholar

7 Jun

@johnnyeponymous That means it had to be released in 2011, yes?

[View conversation](#)

After I confirmed that, he started a thinking and a-throwin'!



**Mike Perschon** @SteamScholar

7 Jun

@johnnyeponymous Mark Hodder's *Clockwork Man*, @gailcarriger's *Heartless*, and Alexi Zentner's *Touch*.

[View conversation](#)

The first one was Mark Hodder's *The Curious Case of the Clockwork Man* by Mark Hodder. I loved the follow-on, the third of the series, *An Expedition to the Mountain of the Moon*. It's a great world that Hodder has created, and it's one of those series where I could just jump in late in the game and have a great time. I've not read it, but I hear very good things, including that *Clockwork Man* is easily the best of the series. I may have to give it a try, largely because I love Richard Burton, the drunk explorer not the drunk actor... well, also the drunk actor) and the third book was such a great read.

Gail Carriger is one of my favorite authors, and *Heartless* was my favorite of the Parasol Protectorate series of novels. It's Steampunk, it's romance, it's a lot of fun. It's one of those novels that's a part of a series, but it really gives everything that the series is about in one novel package. Alexia is one of my all-time favorite characters. She's so much fun, and one of the hottest literary characters I've ever encountered.

The last one I had not heard of. *Touch* turns out to be a Canadian novel by Alexi Zentner. It sounds amazing: it's the story of an Anglican Priest returning home to a town that sounds a lot like *Twin Peaks*. I have ordered it and am excited!



**Mike Perschon** @SteamScholar

7 Jun

@johnnyeponymous And a shout out to @monsterhunter45's *Hard Magic* for being really entertaining.

[View conversation](#)

I was on a panel at BayCon where someone mentioned *Hard Magic*, which is a novel that I have now ordered, but have yet to receive. It's by Larry Correia, who is an author I have never read, save for a thing in prepping for my voting for the Hugo Award for Best John W. Campbell Award winner. This one is a world of magic-meeting Noir. It's exactly the kind of thing that I love. Can't wait to dive in on this one!

And two final notes about next year



**Mike Perschon** @SteamScholar

7 Jun

@johnnyeponymous My list will have less steampunk next year, I think...

[View conversation](#)



**Mike Perschon** @SteamScholar

7 Jun

@johnnyeponymous I've had some really great non-SP reads lately, but they weren't 2011 releases.

[View conversation](#)

Aidan Moher, who appears later in these very pages, is also a Canadian, and sent three wonderful suggestions, none of which I had read.



**Aidan Moher** @adribbleofink

7 Jun

@johnnyeponymous THE TIGER'S WIFE by Obreht, THE NIGHT CIRCUS by Morgenstern and THE DRAGON'S PATH by Abraham.

[View conversation](#)

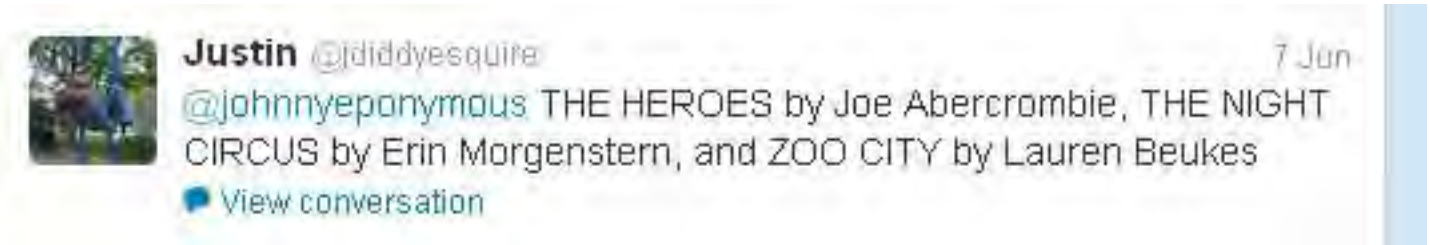
Now, this is a very interesting trio of novels. The first, *The Tiger's Wife*, was completely off my radar. It's not exactly the kind of thing I'd regularly read, Tea Obreht's first novel, *The Tiger's Wife*, is apparently a story of a Grandfather and his granddaughter and the Balkans where the author grew up. I have yet to buy it, but it's one that I'm very interested in giving a read.

*The Night Circus* is one of the books I'm very interested in because there is little I love more than stories

of *The Circus*. Hell, I even read that MASSIVE MZB circus novel back in the day. It's set in an Alternate London and it's supposed to be great. This one I've got a copy of from the Library and two weeks to read it!

The final book he recommended, *The Dragon's Path*, is by an author I appreciate, Daniel Abraham, but it's not in a genre that I would normally read. I'm just not a Hard Fantasy guy... if that's a thing that exists. I did love his novelette *The Cambriest and Lord Iron: A Fairytale of Economics*, and voted for it back in 2008. I don't think this is one that I'll go out of my way to read, but you never know. This is also the first time I've seen this one on a list of best of the year, though I'm not big on checking into the Fantasy circles.

After that, it was Justin, who runs the fabulous site *Staffers Musings* ([staffersmusings.blogspot.com](http://staffersmusings.blogspot.com)) and he had an interesting list.



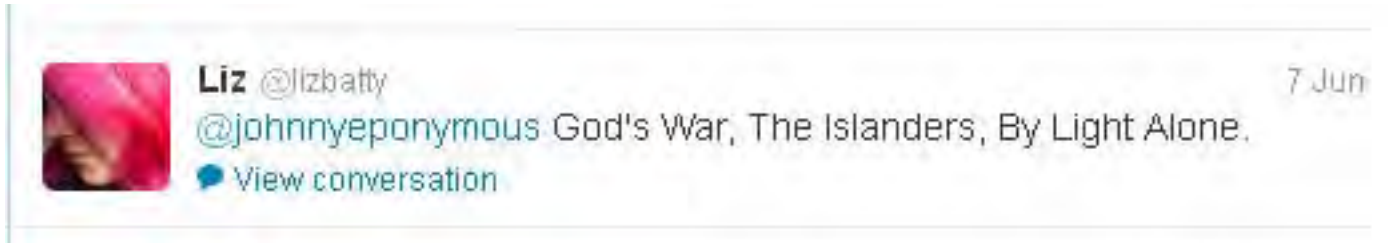
*The Heroes* is another High Fantasy novel, but I'm thinking I'll get around to reading it someday. It is apparently a novel about a battle, which can be an amazing setting. There are a few Civil War-based novels that look at a single battle and this sounds like something that plays in those fields.

The second recommendation of *The Night Circus*, and as I've started reading it, only about five pages in, I can see that this is the sort of writing that might not be fast for me, but it's also worth reading.

We here at The Drink Tank love Lauren Beukes and *Zoo City* is every bit as good as her novel *Moxyland*, which was one of my favorite books of 2009. While I wouldn't say she was robbed of the Campbell, but she was more than worthy. I loved *Zoo City*, and I'm pretty sure it had extended eligibility because it wasn't published in the US until 2011.

Again, I'm not sure. Who do I look like, Kevin Standlee?

This one was followed by the exceptionally amazingly awesome Liz Batty. She had a list that was very different from any of the previous.



*God's War*. Wow. This was one that I was looking at reading last year after seeing a few mentions on Facebook, as who can't love a novel about a bounty hunter? It also had a fine cover by David Palumbo. I really thought it rode that line between haunting realism and structuralist design better than almost any other I've seen in a good while.

*The Islanders* is a novel from Christopher Priest that I have read about but have little interest in actually reading. What's funny is that the novel *The Navidad Incident*, which I've been loving, was described to me as having a lot in common for *The Islanders*. I'm not sure if it won the BSFA, but I do know folks who think that it was robbed by not being on the Clarke Awards ballot. I might give it a shot.

*By Light Alone* is a novel by a guy called Adam Roberts. He writes wtf, some of which I really enjoy. I liked the excellent *Yellow Blue Tibia*, and *New Model Army* was pretty cool, too. A world like this one, where the poor and the rich are separated by a wider gulf than even today, and while the rich go to resorts and have obscene amounts of food and fucking, the poor barely survive using New Hair, as a way to transmute sunlight into sustenance. It's a great concept, but I haven't had a chance to read it at all. When I first heard about it, I really wanted to dive in, but I certainly didn't find the time to get a copy for myself.

I also thought that it sounded like a world that Lauren Beukes might have come up with.

Facebook got a few responses which showed the difference between the readerships of my feeds



A screenshot of a Facebook post with several comments. The post itself is partially visible at the top, showing 'Like · Comment'. The comments are from various users, each with a profile picture, name, and text. The comments mention books like 'Ready Player One', 'The Magician King', 'Deathless', 'The Hum and the Shiver', and 'Mechanique'. The dates and times of the comments range from June 7 at 10:22am to 1:36pm.

Like · Comment

 **Juan Sanmiguel** Of the top of my head only one book comes to mind, *Ready Player One*.  
June 7 at 10:22am · Like

 **España Sheriff** *Ready Player One*, *The Magician King*, *Deathless*.  
June 7 at 11:41am via mobile · Like

 **Michael Damian Thomas** *Deathless*, *The Hum and the Shiver*, and *Mechanique*.  
June 7 at 11:47am · Like

 **Juan Sanmiguel** Oh I forgot *Rule 34*  
June 7 at 11:49am · Like

 **Stephen Libbey** I'm glad I'm not the only one who was a fan of *Ready Player One*. I expected that to be a gimme. Shows what I know  
June 7 at 12:27pm via mobile · Like

 **Warren Buff** I enjoyed *Ready Player One*, but it didn't move me to nominate it. Since I don't think I read three other eligible novels that didn't make the ballot, though, I guess it makes it into my top three with *The Magician King* and *The Quantum Thief* (since that had its eligibility extended).  
June 7 at 1:21pm · Like

 **Petréa Mitchell** *City of Ruins*, *When the Saints*, and... pass, can't think of another one I would've nominated.  
June 7 at 1:36pm · Like

The first book mentioned by Juan was also the first book that I am certain was written for my exact demographic, that is to say for Video Game Historians who also love wild world-building. *Ready Player One* I read late last year, and any novel that features so many awesome concepts, from the escape of humanity in the nearly dead world into an MMO that becomes almost as real as the real world. The plot, kinda shockingly, is very reminiscent to the 8-Bit episode of *Community*. It's a blast, and while Warren Buff, America's greatest living Southerner, enjoyed it, he was outside the Juan, Espana, Stephen Libbey group of worshippers.

Both Warren and Espana mentioned *The Magician King*. A solid book by last year's Campbell winner, and a lot of folks thought it was even better than *The Magicians*, the first in the series. Lev Grossman is awesome!

Espana and Michael Thomas, two AWESOME Humans, both mentioned Cat Valente's *Deathless*. She's a great writer, and while I love Russian folk tales, which I believe is the basis for the novel, I've not gotten around to reading it. I did love her *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Boat of Her Own Construction* (or whatever it's called!) and *Palimpsest*, so I really should give it a try.

*The Hum & The Shiver* is a book I knew NOTHING about. Less than nothing. I was pretty sure that Michael was completely making it all up, that I was being put on, but in fact, *The Hum & The Shiver* DOES exist, and it sounds like it could be great, even if it does not sound like the kind of fantasy novel I could get into. There's a girl from a people called The Tufa, who returns from Iraq to Appalachia to heal. I've gotta get to reading this one, and it's on my reading pile.

*Mechanique* is a novel from Genevieve Valentine. It's Steampunk-y, and that should have put it higher on my reading list. It's another Circus book. It's also a mechanical circus, which is EVEN MORE AWESOME!!!! How have I not read this? I am fail on all levels.

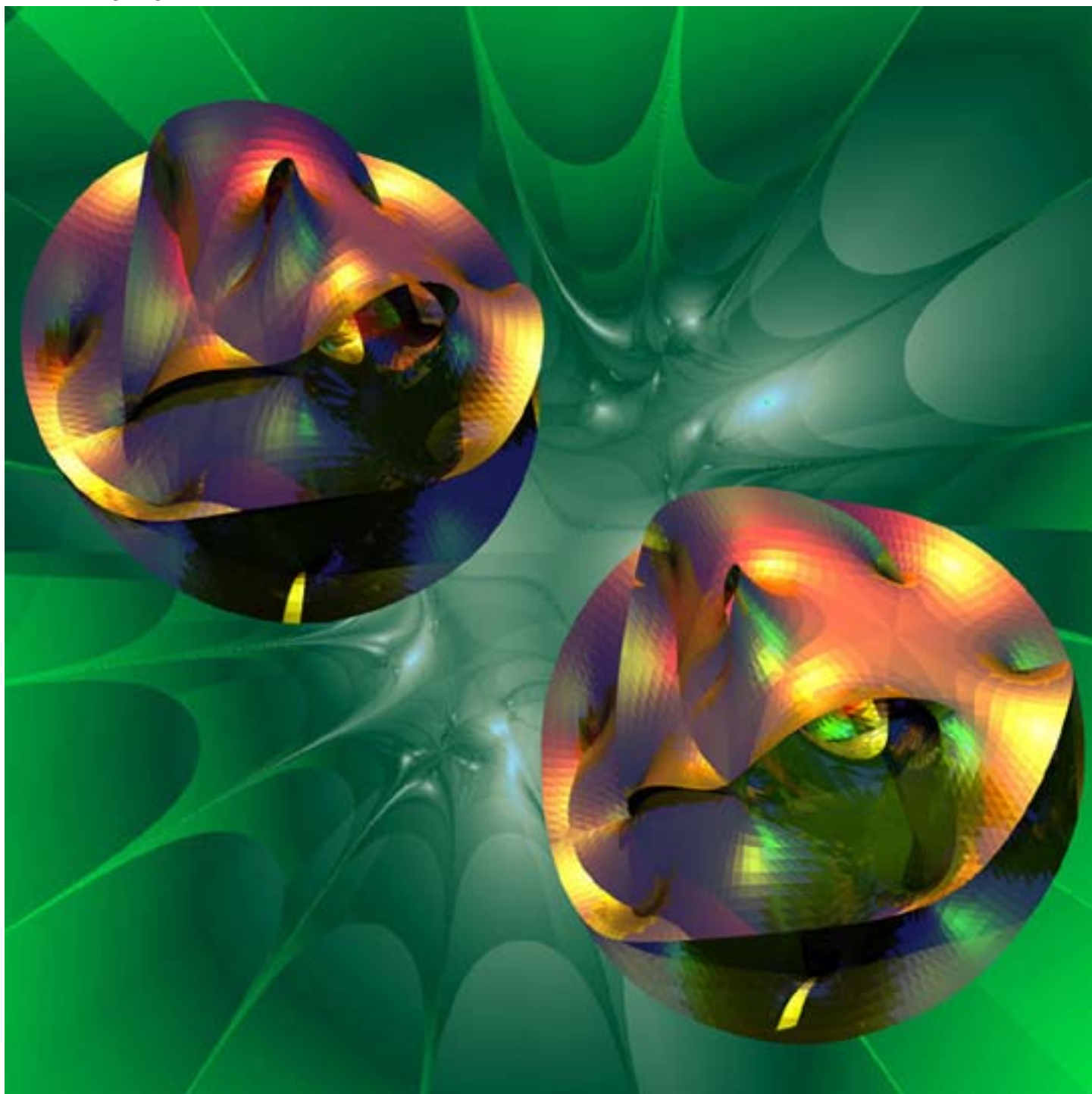
When the Saints is the sequel to a novel called *Speak of the Devil*, though it's the kind of fantasy I'm not all that interested in usually. *City of Ruins* is a Kristine Kathryn Rusch book. I'm not a big fan of Rusch's, but I have to say that the follow-on to it, or at least a book that sounds like a follow-on, wasn't my cup of tea.

And then there's *Rule 34*.

It's Stross, so it's at least good, but it's also Stross from the last few years, so it's not nearly as good as the stuff he was doing in the 2003-2007 timeframe. I didn't make it all the way through, but what I read was pretty good. But only good. Maybe I was spoiled by *Accelerando*.

SO, that's the stuff that my friends all thought was worth getting on to the ballot. I think it's a really list of things, but also it's a list that is heavier on fantasy than it is on SF, which is weird as I always expect my friends to be much heavier into SF than Fantasy.

So, go figure.





# Welcome to the Osamaverse by James Bacon

This is a novel that should have been on the Hugo List. Really it is an exceptionally brilliant read.

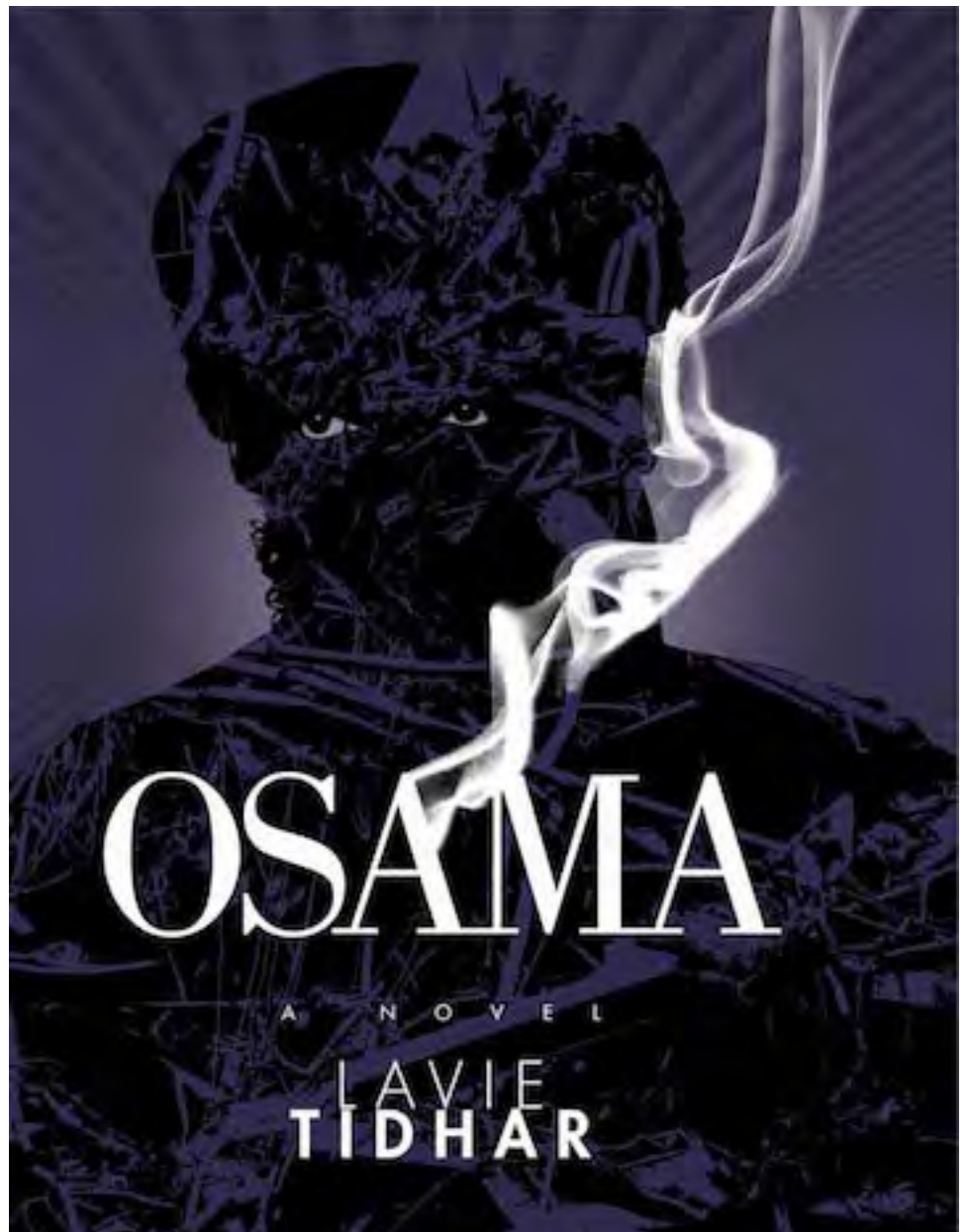
Reading is believing. What kicked this off for me, and one of the things that interested me most about Christopher Priest's polemic, regarding the Clarke Award was that he had read the books, and had an opinion on them and spoke highly of *Osama* by Lavie Tidhar.

Now, Priest was quite harsh, his language unforgiving and the accusations and feelings of the judges, calculatingly cruel, but he had read the same books they had, and felt they had made a mistake. He was not the only one, although he was the most reported, Ian Sales had made noises of unhappiness about the Clarke short-list. Of course, despite many people criticising Priest, he himself went on to win the BSFA award. SF fandom is an odd beast.

But this is the way the Clarke is. There was once similar but more widespread clamouring when *Brasyl* was not included in the Clarke short list, yet it won the the BSFA. Go back all the way, when Atwood beat Bob Shaw for the first Clarke and even then there was controversy. You know, the literary world may know Atwood more, but for me the Shaw is the better work of science fiction.

So, it wasn't until I read *Osama*, that I realised that maybe Priest was indeed accurate. Did he have a point about one of my favourite authors of this 21st century? China Mieville. I adored *The City and The City*, was really very impressed with it, love the Baslag stories, but felt that *Kraken* was like a Robert Rankin novel but lacking the humour, and I have failed to grasp *Embassytown* although am loving *Railsea* and *Dial H* is potentially the comic of the year, but then, I would feel that.

That is my opinion of China's work. I hold him in the highest regard, and wonder if he would prefer slavish mindless adoration, or the appreciation of a reader who can discern good works, as I feel I



do. I know that *Embassytown*, so far, as it has failed to grasp me and is not the best SF book of the last year, that I have read, but it may still win the Hugo.

The best book of last year, well that book, is *Osama* by Lavie Tidhar

I read *Osama* in just over 36 hours, it captured me, stole me immediately, and is for me the book of 2011, just as the book of 2009 was *The City and The City*.

I think the snappiness of the chapters, not needing to be chapters, but broken up nicely, always giving me a pace, that made the book move quite promptly, never slowing, or stalling, or shunting me into a siding, but always like a fast moving train, going onward.

The details of the incidents were very precise, so like a history that it appealed to my love of the subject.

I loved the familiar way that Tidhar manages to so vividly place Paris, even though I have only been a tourist there, I know the area around the foot Monmartre, having stayed in Anvers, and walked up to the Place du'tart and sat outside Chez Eugene and ordered Moules mit Frites and there was just something that felt really right in Lavies' prose, and this was before the protagonist made his way London.

The accounts of people caught up in the terrorism, the people on the plane, was very unnerving, the way the explosions happened, the lack of understanding of those injured, realising their jaw was gone, stunningly written, more journalistic in a way than fiction.

The use of opium, is clever. A friend of mine, perhaps the most well read SF reader in Ireland, told me of the time he went onto heroin for a short period, two weeks or so, to see what it was like, he has of course experimented and tried most drugs known to man, and seems to have found hashish and Musrooms suit his taste. Yet I will never forget his warning about Heroin, it was hugely addictive of course, and to a virtual drug virgin like myself, would mean a soul combusting descent into immediate addiction, but it wasn't the addictive nature of the drug, which one assumes is just part of its make up, it was the addictive nature of the incredible feeling of euphoria and brilliance and the way the drug was so powerful that it would make you just not care about anything else apart from having the drug that was so consuming. This was not how addiction was meant to work in my head, many people enjoyed a cigarette, but wanted to stop but found it addictive, Heroin is a different kind of addictive, not so much addictive as transcendent to a world that makes you not care about anything except that next leap into a wonderfulness occluded hell and in his opinion why the world authorities fight heroin so hard, because they need people to care, to pay taxes, to be responsible, to vote, to keep them in power, and Heroin could actually destroy that.

That is scary. And since that thought entered my head, I realise that there is a power to opiates, that does not immediately compare to what I had learned. Holmes was a user, when boredom took its hold.

Drugs as a method for sliding, or seeing into parallel worlds is not a common idea, it's interesting as many people describe Tidhar as similar in style to Philip K. Dick, for me, he is to that Calibre, for sure, and the use of drugs is indeed in a way a link to Dick, as is the question of 'who am I' but that part of it is a later part of this novel, and the what world are we in, is an all pervasive theme throughout.

'These were the facts. Facts were important. They separated fiction from reality, the tawdry world of Mike Longshott from the concrete spaces of Joe's world.'

The ability to see across parallels the fuzzy wuzzy refugee, opium fuelled visions, its all very clever, but the political history element is more exciting, this is what really caught me, and the distinctiveness of this prose, despite its literary nature, the descriptive vividness, the lovely use of words and language.

I shall illustrate 'the floor was stained concrete, and the spots on the floor and walls could have been old blood stains from the German war or they could have been spilled coffee—either way they weren't telling'

The 'German war', my goodness, its such a simple yet descriptive statement, and captures my speculative mind so readily, and it was that subtle yet different way the language came through the narrative, that really enticed me.

Of course, then there is the fact that *Osama* is a work of fiction, a character written by Mike Longshot, who himself is illusive, yet, the Osamaverse, the readers of the 'Vigilante' series of books, have indeed some similarities that made me smile wide, especially when the protagonist encounters the world of readers who gather.

*'Are you a fan?' He made 'fan' sound like a dirty word. Joe slowly shook his head.*

*There were two people, a man and a woman, seated behind the registration desk downstairs. The same man was*

still in reception, tired eyes looking far away. The Osama Bin Laden cut-out stared at Joe as he walked past. It could have been looking at the same nothingness the man at reception did.'

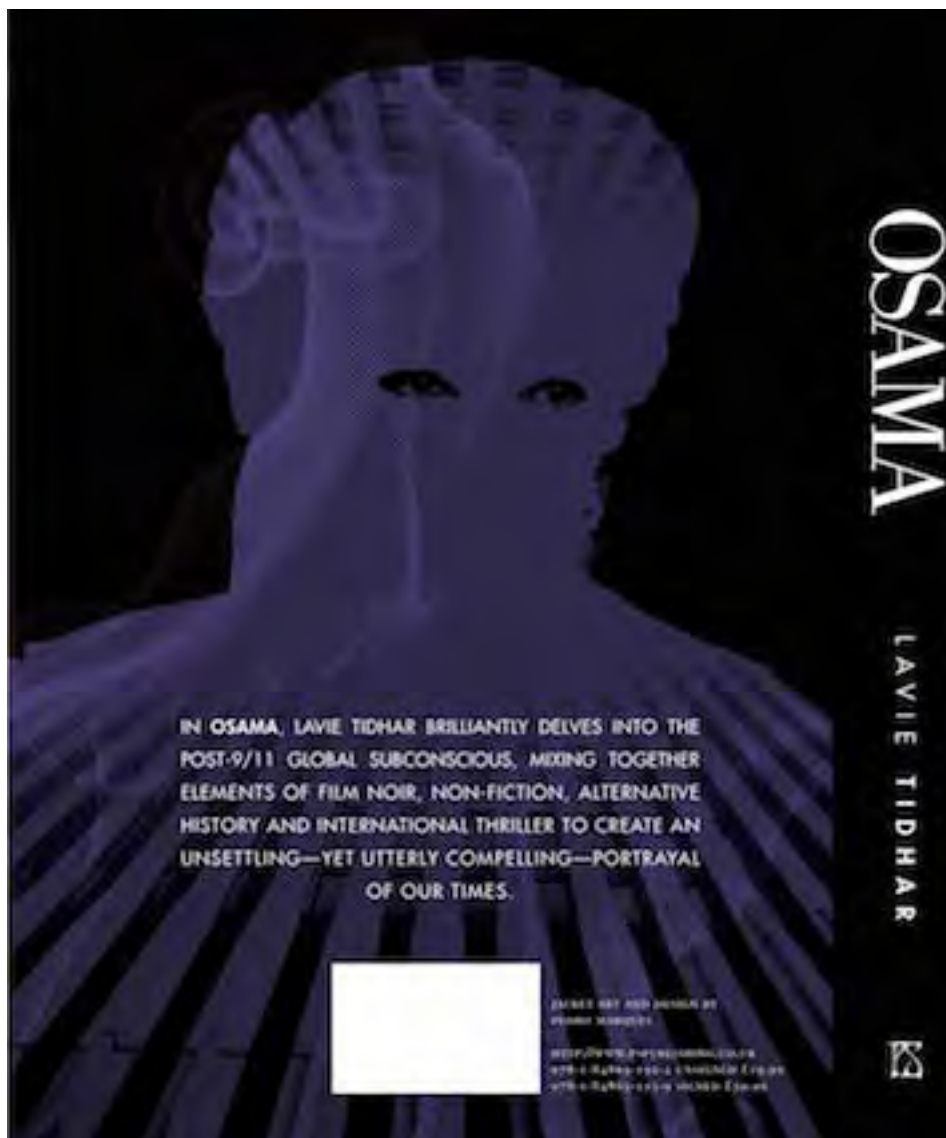
I have to admit that these convention scenes made me smile so wide, reminiscent yet different and a tool for the author to progress the story. What type of story is it, well that is indeed very hard to tell, one might feel from an early stage that there is a strong science fictional, parallel, alternate history bent to the book, but as it progresses, the opiates muddy some of this genre specific water, but for me not sufficiently enough to stop it being an amazing alternate history.

One of my favourite passages, illustrates the authors ability with history and of course, it asks the wonderful question;

*'the question of what if. Right? What if the Cairo Conference of 1921 went ahead as planned, with Churchill and T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell dividing up the Middle East for the British? What if they chose a Hashemite king to rule Iraq, and would that have led to a revolution in the nineteen fifties? Or, what if the French war in Indochina somehow led to American involvement in Vietnam? Or if the British held on to their colonies in Africa after the Second World War? You see—' he was in full steam now, his eyes shining like the headlamps of a speeding engine—'the Vigilante series is full of this sort of thing. A series of simple decisions made in hotel rooms and offices that led to a completely different world. And also—' 'And also they're just good escapist fun,'*

I loved it. But there is more, for in the Osamaverse, there are small publications, fanzines or club magazines, which again, lovingly portrayed show how the author in creating a whole new fandom, knows ones that exist.

*'What's this Osama Gazette?' The men exchanged glances. Clearly, their looks said, this was a*



*stranger, an outsider in their midst. 'It's a fanzine,' one of the men in the hunting vests said.*

*'A what?' 'It's a small publication dedicated to a scholarly discourse of the Osamaverse.'*

*'The w—?' he decided not to ask. The man sighed. 'You can find copies in the dealers' room,' he said. 'It's already open.'*

*Inside one of the fanzines, the contents include articles such as Oil and ideology in the Osamaverse. Fictional Wars #2: Afghanistan. Terrorist, Freedom Fighter or Soldier? Osama Bin Laden as a Liminal Figure. The Twentieth Hijacker Hypothesis.*

Of course, dear reader, I hope I have not given too much away, and more whetted your appetite for this work of brilliance. For me, it is indeed the best book of last year and I hope you give it a try.

**You can read more about OSAMA at <http://www.pspublishing.co.uk/osama-signed-jhc-by-lavie-tidhar-843-p.asp>**

# AMONG OTHERS

## A Loosely Related Article - A Father and Daughter/Son Reunion

I had a moment on a plane. I know that many letters to Penthouse Forum have started that way, but this one is far more real. It started with the announcement of the Hugo nominees during Easter weekend. I was the Fanzine Guest of Honor at Minicon and as such, I got to announce the nominees. I was up for four of them, I knew that, but I had no idea what else was getting nominated.

Well, I had a clue on some...

Anyhoo, I looked over the list and read the names and one of them was a novel by Jo Walton (the Writer GoH when I am the Fan GoH at SFCOntario), who is a writer that I am a big fan of. I was so happy to see *Among Others* on the ballot, having blasted through it and never finished it, several months before. I bought a copy at the Dealer's Room to read on the plane flight home. I don't fly well, the slightest turbulence can send me into one of those "Oh God, how have I angered you?" modes, clutching at Linda's arm. I was so happy to have something that could at least take my mind off of things for a while.

Jo Walton's main character, Morwenna, is a young girl who has just broken free of her witch of a mother who killed her sister and nearly managed it with her too. She goes to stay with her family, and most interestingly, meet her father. In the first chapter, she meets with her father in his library; a library full of science fiction and fantasy books. They talk about their favorite sci-fi authors and at one point, they come upon a shared love of Kurt Vonnegut.

Now, at the point when the story takes place, Vonnegut's list included the ones he'd be best known for: *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Cat's Cradle*, *Player Piano*, and *The Sirens of Titans*, but he had not released things like *Breakfast of Champions* that would be massive best-sellers. This was an interesting time as he hadn't released anything in a few years. So, Mor and her Dad were bonding, at least a little bit, over Kurt Vonnegut.

My Ghod, that had happened to me.

You see, while I saw my Dad a fair bit, we hadn't been close since he and my Mom broke up. He'd gone on his way, spending time touring with a Carnival (that's right, I am HONESTLY related to Carnies!) and some time at homeless shelters. He had a hard time, no question, but he was happy, and he helped people. Eventually, he got into housing and I would go over and we'd watch wrestling. One time, I brought over a copy of *Cat's Cradle*. Later, while Dad was dying of his personal cancer, I forced him to write in notebooks, trying to record his life best I could knowing he'd have no patience for a real oral history. He had a section where he talked about the times I'd come over when I was a teenager that really hit me in the days after KV died.

"I remember; Chris came over to the house and he had a copy of *Cat's Cradle* with him. Until then, I didn't know he was a teenager."

He had several other quotes, including one where he basically said that Kurt Vonnegut's philosophy basically said that there was no meaning and that everything he believed was being questioned. That was the moment I really dealt with my father's death for the first time, a good year after Pop's passing and a few days after Vonnegut's. It was that moment that started the train that didn't really come to a stop until the day I made it to the stage after winning the Hugo and getting to say his name in front of that other family I have called fandom.

I re-read the section probably a dozen times during the flight and every time it brought me a little more joy, a little more realisation, a little more connection. There's not a lot I can say I have in common with Mor from *Among Others*. We're probably not in the same Karrass, but the connection to Vonnegut that I've always had and the moments we shared with our fathers as we rediscovered them is as close to magic as I'll find.

And I don't mind saying, a few tears ran down my fuzzy cheeks onto the book. Maybe they'll clone me from them someday.



# Reviewed - *Among Others* by Jo Walton Beth Zuckerman

**Appeared on Beth's Facebook page on Tuesday, November 15, 2011 at 9:12pm •**

I don't usually read fantasy or anything involving magic, because I usually don't enjoy it and there's plenty of hard SF out there to read, anyway. I also normally dislike tales that are mostly psychological with relatively little action. But Jay Lake gave such an appealing description of Jo Walton's *Among Others* that I picked it up. I am very glad that I did, because I loved it! Although the book shows a publication date of 2010 on the added title page, Lake tells me it actually came out in January and is thus eligible for the 2011 Hugo.

What made me love this book so much is its sweet, warmhearted writing style. It reminded me somewhat of Audrey Niffenegger, but perhaps that's because Niffenegger also wrote a book with twins as principal characters (*Her Fearful Symmetry*). *Among Others* is a coming-of-age tale about just one twin. I completely loved the narrator, Mor, and sympathized with her entirely. This is a book for everyone who was ever a lonely teenager who found solace in science fiction books. Most of the action takes place when Mor is 15 years old, in 1979 and 1980. I am a year younger than Mor, and I started reading SF when I was a bit older, in 1982. But the times are close enough that I read oh-so-many of the books that Mor writes about, and this made me very nostalgic.

Mor and her sister were abandoned by their father at a young age, and were primarily raised by their grandparents in South Wales. An unfortunate family situation forces Mor to flee to England and her father, where she is placed in a stuffy girls' boarding school. She longs for a karass, and circumstances lead her to a local science fiction club. Mor has a fabulous time discussing all of her favorite books with her club. While there are some spoilers here for those of you who haven't read the classics, those of you who have read them will thoroughly enjoy hearing Mor's loving descriptions.

Walton has written a truly endearing character, and she has written the scenery to match her. I loved the descriptions of South Wales in particular. It sounded exactly like the videos I had seen of my husband's trip there. Walton brings the scenery to life in a way normally only seen in photography. Her descriptions of the time period, modern but before cell phones or the World Wide Web, bring back clear memories. These are some of the things that make the book so special.

Ordinarily, I am put off by obvious crowd-pleasing references, like mentions of cons, the SCA, or, to be perfectly honest, most steampunk. These references usually seem both contrived and pandering. Here, however, the references didn't bother me particularly because Mor's search for and discovery of a community of SF fans are integral parts of her coming-of-age experience.

More troubling for me, though, was the ending. There were some odd ambiguities that left me feeling somewhat confused. It wasn't as clean as I would have liked it to be, and it didn't seem to match the rest of the book in quality. These ambiguities prevent me from giving *Among Others* an unqualified Hugo nomination recommendation. But it's still a very enjoyable book, and may very well make it into my top five for the year.

# Among Others Reviewed by Juan Sanmiguel

Science Fiction about science fiction fandom can be really funny. It can show the positives of the community or show its soft underbelly which needs to be done every now and then.

Morwenna has just prevented her mother, a witch, from executing a nefarious scheme. In the process of that, she received a crippling injury to her leg and her twin sister died. Now she is relocating from Wales to England to live with her father and. She is sent to a very dreary boarding school. Mori, as she likes to be called, deals with the situation by reading. She reads Science Fiction and Fantasy mainly. She also likes historical fiction and classic Greek works. As times goes on Mori goes through the school and public library and buys whatever she can afford. She slowly starts to adjust to her situation. There are set backs such as being laid up in traction for several days and her mother attacking her by mystical means. This is offset by meeting her paternal grandfather, joining a science fiction reading group in town and making new friends.

This is told as a series of journal entries that take places between 1979-80. We see things happening through Mori's point of view. Her joy and her pain are conveyed very well.

This book conveys the joy of reading. It reminds one of that time when we first discovered reading for pleasure. It is not completely nostalgic. Mori reminds of the pains of adolescence. Her school has none of the fun of Hogwarts. She also reminds us she was growing in the Cold War and nuclear holocaust was a serious

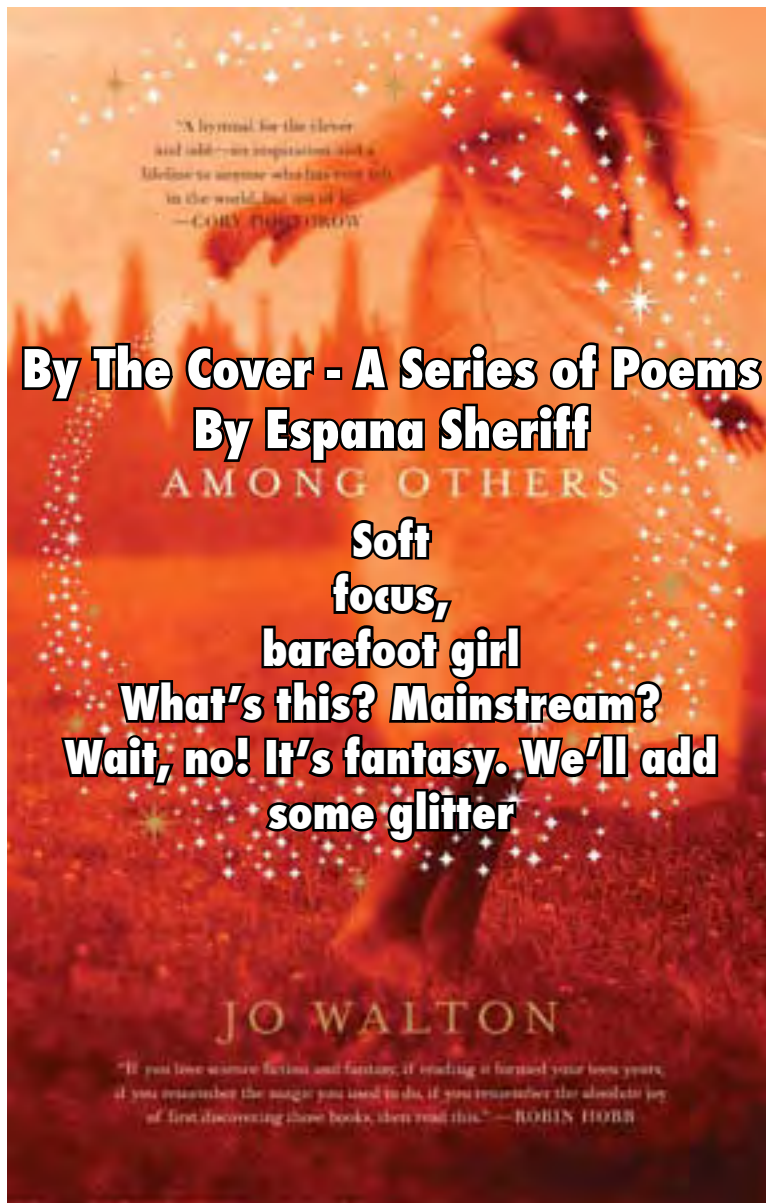
possibility. Still there is a thrill when she talks about reading a book that one read at that same age. It reminds one of the great feelings that come from a satisfying read. This is what helps Mori get through the physical and emotional pain she goes through.

This is a world of magic. There are witches and fairies that Mori has to deal with. It is almost a secondary thing. This is another scary world Mori wants to get away from. Mori associates magic with her mother and is not disinterested in it except for using for protection or protecting others. She does have affection for the fairies since they once helped her. Mori focuses on the natural world.

The story focuses on the aftermath of a traditional "save the world". Mori stopping her mother happens off screen. What we see is Mori's dealing with this event. Usually this is handled in an afterword. Here we see Mori for six months after the event. It adds a layer reality. It shows world saving can have physical and emotional trauma that one needs to recover from.

At the end Mori is faced a challenge. She knows there may be more to deal with but she feels ready for it. Her love of reading has prepped her for it. A nice testament to reading.

**First appeared in Event Horizon: the Newsletter of the Orlando Area Science Fiction Society.**



# A DANCE WITH DRAGONS

## A Loosely Related Article - GRRM's Lesser Known Masterworks by Christopher J Garcia

Greg Benford once asked me what I thought the point of saving all the fanzines at the Eaton Collection was. What purpose would it serve for the future. I said "you know, I really want to know what you were like when you and Jim were teenagers, and when your robot body finally gives out, that library will be the one remaining record."

The roots of Pros, back when they were still fans, tend to be awesome. Some of the best writers were awful fan writers when they were kids. I've found some very bad poetry from a couple of very well-regarded Pros of the last few decades in various zines. It's impressive to think of just how these pros get their starts, and when we can point to them, we can make connections to what happened later.

Though sometimes, even that is tenuous.

Let us start with the earliest work of George RR Martin.

His first published work was in issue 20 of Fantastic Four. GRRM was only 14 years old. He had already been reading comics for a few years, but this was his first published letter. I'm not 100% sure he hadn't written other letters, but this was the first one that had been published. I had heard that it existed, so I contacted Comic Collector extraordinaire and all-around good guy **Brad Lyau**, who I knew would have a copy and he was kind enough to bring the issue, now a pretty darn valuable issue, to a BASFA meeting where the good man known as Ken Patterson, was able to get a good photo of the cover and the letter itself.

And it's awesome. He gushes. I mean he positively gushes extreme



all over Stan (Lee) and Jack (Kirby) and the work they were doing on Fantastic Four. If you have read those issues, and I have in a couple of different formats, they don't hold up. I guess in the same way that films from the period between 1900 to 1915 really don't hold up either, even when compared to the silents of the 1920s, super hero comics of the 1950s don't hold up very well. The Goshwow in this letter is pretty supreme. It's a kid telling his heroes that they're his heroes in the parlance of the time. AMAZING!

The letter has been referenced over the years, despite Mr. RR Martin using the clever disguising name of George R Martin. The most recent mention I could find was on io9.com. This is a far cry from the character torturer that GRRM would become while writing the Song of Ice & Fire books. From tiny acorns do mighty Oaks grow.

Excelsior.

Of course, that was not the only lesser-known work that GRRM wrote. One was for Analog and was about a fish. Well, it was about a fish that was a computer. You see, George is a chess player and when a chess player sights a lesser chess player, he thinks of them as a fish, an easy mark, waiting to be reeled in. Since the 1950s, people have been experimenting with a way for computers to play, and beat, human masters at chess. The first experiments were simple, some end game calculators, a very simple chess programme that had no way of making sure that the play you just made was legal. In the 1960s, there were several quantum leaps in computer chess, going from games that even novices could beat, to being games that only talented novices could beat. One of my favorite was called Chess X.0, as in Chess 2.0, or 3.0 or so on, by a fellow named Richard Greenblatt. There were several programmes that did OK, but it wasn't until the early 1970s that programmes such as Belle, MacHack, Chess 5.0, Schachspeilmachin and the like were able to beat people with US Chess rating scores of 1905 or higher.



1905 just happens to be George RR Martin's US Chess Rating.

George wrote The Computer Was A Fish at the point where computer chess was just turning a corner, where the best computer programmes were able to beat decent players, and even give hard core players challenge. This was an interesting time when you look back because the microprocessor, while having been invented, was not yet fully deployed and that would be the technology that would change the world of computer chess, including enabling the design of Deep Blue, the machine that would beat the world champion Gary Kasparov, thus enslaving mankind forever.

The funny thing is that this article, in the August 1972 issue of Analog, is one of the longest and most fun non-fiction articles of that particular magazine at the time. There's a lot of talk about computer and about chess that shows that Martin had an appreciation for both. There's not nearly as much Goshwow as in the letter to the Fantastic Four, but there's a lot of appreciation there. Plus, there's a mention of a computer chess programme, I believe from MIT, called CCCP, which had a certain Mr. Benjamin Yalow on the team...





# A Look at *A Dance with Dragons* by Aidan Moher

When *A Dance with Dragons* was released, I didn't write a review of it, in fact, I barely discussed within my community of fellow Fantasy fans. I wrote a piece or two about it, debated a bit with friends, but otherwise, I let one of Fantasy's most impactful and anticipated releases slip me by. This is odd given that I run a fairly well trafficked Fantasy and Science Fiction publication, **A Dribble of Ink**, and a lot of my readers were interested in hearing my take on the fifth volume of Martin's mega-successful *A Song of Ice and Fire*. But, I let them down, and, a year later, I've thought a lot of why I never wrote about the book, never formally reviewed it, despite enjoying it a fair bit more than the average fan seems to have, and it's all because of expectations. Mine, and those of the fans around the world.

At first, as an entrenched fan, I felt special. Because, you see, I'd discovered Martin years earlier. He was my little secret. But, then it became clear that Martin wasn't just a fad, wasn't just a passing ghost of geekdom on the mainstream, he was a real thing. Maybe it was seeing Martin spoofed on *Saturday Night Live*, or when he was sitting there in the crowd at the Emmys, but finally it clicked with me. He's not my secret anymore. Hell, he's not even our secret anymore. Fantasy has a new ringleader, he wears a Greek sailor's hat, thick glasses, and rides a wave of popularity the likes the genre hasn't seen since *The Lord of the Rings*.

Expectation is something that Martin is familiar with. He openly struggled with the demons it raises, and it was a force that nearly crushed *A Song of Ice and Fire* as he struggled for nearly 11 years to rein in the chaos surfaced at the end of *A Storm of Swords*, producing during that time the two most criticized volumes in the series. This expectation doesn't come simply from his ravenous fans, but from, among others, his publishers, the execs at HBO, the cable providers, and Martin himself. *A Dance with Dragons* came at a time in Martin's career as a writer when his career as a pop-culture icon, or at least the creator of pop culture icons, was about to explode beyond the walls of Fantasy geekdom, where he'd been a darling for years, and, with shocking speed, become a factor with mainstream audiences. All of a sudden, it was cool to like George R.R. Martin, to discuss dragons and dwarfs around the water cooler. Everywhere you turned, whether they were old or young, socially ill-equipped or popular socialites, Martin's books were rarely far from sight. Your mom was reading them. That kid behind the counter at the 7-11 was reading them. Martin's rise to fame isn't unprecedented, but it's not hard to imagine how difficult it would be to stay afloat in the ocean of new fans, detractors, and critics. Fantasy fans are often a forgiving bunch (just look at the middle and later volumes of Jordan's still-successful *Wheel of Time* series, for instance), but this wasn't the average group of Fantasy fans anymore. I'm not sure that anyone, Martin, his publishers, his family and friends, were prepared to weather the storm.

So how can any novel live up to such expectations?

In a sense, it didn't. It couldn't. In the intervening years between *A Feast for Crows* and *A Dance with Dragons*,

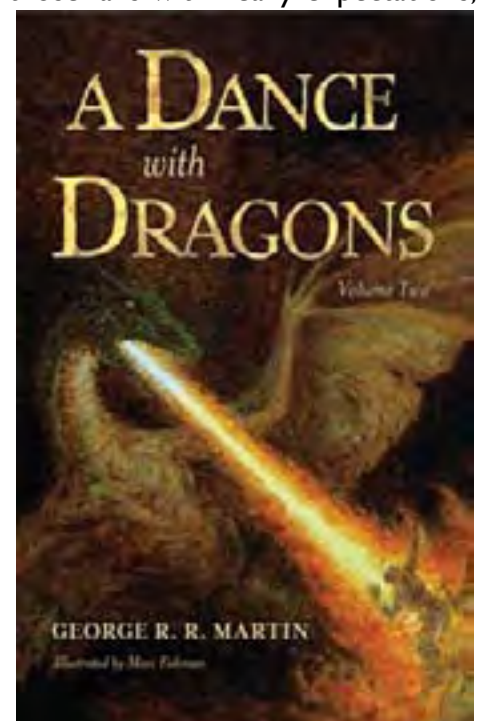
Martin's audience grew so large and ravenous that anticipation levels were so dangerously high that, no matter what Martin did, he was bound to disappoint. *A Storm of Swords* was a climax novel, bringing many events from the first two volumes to a head and all the tension building over the first two novels unleashed itself in a bloody fury. Martin had a delightfully chaotic playground to play in, full of villainous soldiers, virtuous (and not so virtuous) women, and righteous fools. Every storyline hit a climax at once... and *A Feast for Crows* and *A Dance with Dragons*, which are essentially one long novel split over two volumes, were left to pick up the pieces. Act two, if you will, in the longer work of *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Now, all stories need an act two (arguably), and Fantasy series are often plagued with 'middle-book syndrome,' in which the authors must move the pieces together, preparing for the third act and the climax. But, could there be a less compelling time for ravenous new fans to be anticipating a new volume in the series? They gobbled up the first four books, and then were met with the second half of the second act of a loooooong series. From the perspective, it's no surprise that the novel failed to meet the expectations of its fans, new or old.

Martin was free to write the first three volumes (and, it could be argued, the fourth as well) of his series in relative obscurity, without the weight of his legion breathing down his neck. How that affected the eventual quality of the release, if at all, will probably never be known. I was among those fans with heady expectations, and that same anticipation kept me from talking about the book, not trusting my own opinions after finally reading the novel after so long. Were my disappointments a reflection of the novel's innate qualities and failures? Or because I wanted one thing, and was served another.

A year removed, I would argue that *A Dance with Dragons* is a good-to-great novel, and a poor-to-okay addition to *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Some of Martin's best writing happens in *A Dance with Dragons*, from his improved prose, to Reek's chilling character arc. Equally, some of Martin's weakest writing happens here, like Dany's insipid behaviour as she treads water, waiting for the rest of the world to catch up to her, or bloated descriptions of attire and banquets. Thirty years from now, however, a new reader will discover Martin's series in a bookshop (or whatever passes for a bookshop, should they no longer exist) and she will devour the series, gobbling up all the goodness found in Martin's seven (or eight) volumes. During the middle portions, she'll hit something of a bit blip, her enthusiasm might wane, but she will push on, and reflect on that period as a necessary evil for the series, the first tip of the boulder that sets off the avalanche that happens in the following volumes. Or so I like to think. Hope.

Was *A Dance with Dragons* the best novel last year? No, it wasn't. Is it the best on the Hugo shortlist? No, it isn't. Will I vote for it? No, my vote will go to Walton's wonderful *Among Others*. But I think there's an argument made, one that might be unfair to Grant, Corey, Walton and Mieville, that *A Dance with Dragons* is to George R.R. Martin as *The Departed* is to Martin Scorsese — it's flawed and fascinating, overlong, but dense with riveting relationships and a labyrinthine plot — and, for an author robbed of a Hugo in 2001, when *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, one of the weaker volumes in J.K. Rowling's equally enormous Harry Potter series, won 'Best Novel,' would it not seem just for Martin to finally get his hands on the Hugo he deserves by taking home the prize with one of his weaker volumes. Or maybe I am just too fond of irony.

Early in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Tyrion Lannister says, "I have a tender spot in my heart for cripples and bastards and broken things." And that so succinctly sums up my thoughts on this hulking mess of a book. As Tyrion is compared to Jaime, *A Dance with Dragons* appears broken against its older siblings, struggling to find its place in the series proper, but, when all is said and done, I think we will look back on it as a volume of transition, change and, most importantly, an ugly duckling that one day proves an important piece to Martin's magnificent swan.



# A Dance With Dragons – Reviewed by J Unrau

I haven't been waiting for the latest in George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire series for as long as some people, but I was glad to see *A Dance with Dragons* come out this year. Reading it was my reward for finishing up my fantasy and science fiction for younger readers course. I was in the mood for some Knights Who Say Fuck. And in that I wasn't disappointed.

As far as the book itself went though? It was okay. I was glad to catch up with what was happening to all the characters I hadn't heard any news from in so long (most of the story in this book is about characters whose shorelines were left out of the previous book, *A Feast For Crows*). And in the last third of the book we got a few glimpses into other areas of Westeros and beyond as well.

It was all fine, but it felt more like a letter from a friend you haven't seen in a while than an actual story with a beginning, middle and end. It really is just a bunch of stuff that happens. Yes the stakes escalate through the book, and terrible things happen to characters we like (which is one of those things you have to deal with get-

ting into this series), but it didn't feel like a story, just the latest instalment to leave you waiting for the next one.

It's good though. Theon Greyjoy has a great arc in this book. Ramsay Snow/Bolton is a terrifying villain. Tyrion is in this book and it's really hard not to enjoy his chapters (though I bet when they get to doing the TV version of this book his trip to Meereen will be a bit less needlessly complicated). There are dragons doing dragony things and princes from fairy tales trying to do princely things. Things turn out better for one of those groups than the other.

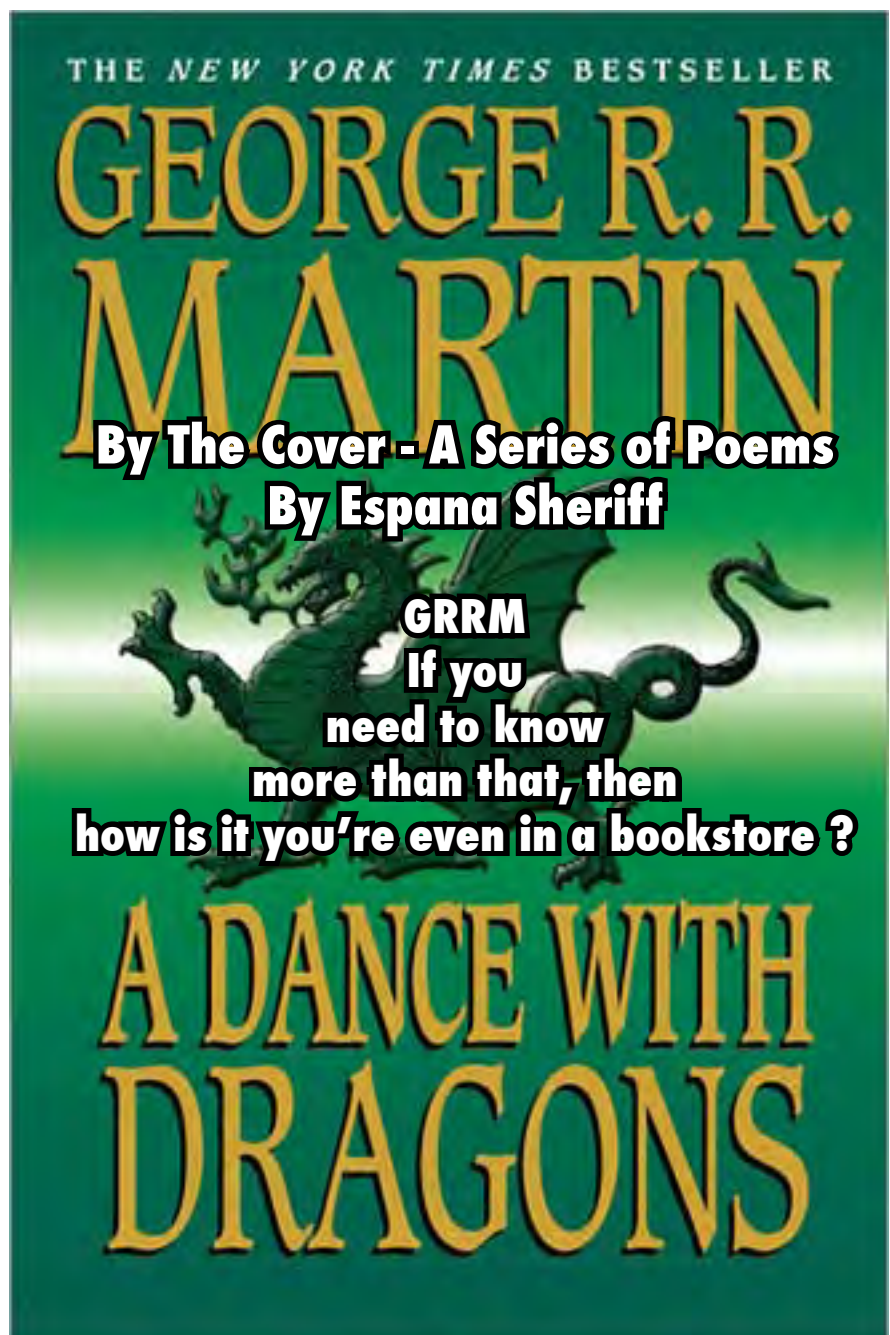
I hope the next book takes a bit less time, and that there aren't too many more to wait for. But if you're in the market for epic fantasy and don't mind an author who isn't afraid to be brutal to his protagonists, this series is very good. I just can't say it keeps getting better and better.

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The best fantasy is  
written in the  
language of dreams.

George RR Martin

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# I'm Not Reading *A Dance with Dragons* by CB Droege

Posted on October 14, 2011 - 17:02 at TGDaily.com

This isn't a review of *A Dance with Dragons*, George R. R. Martin's fifth - of a planned seven - book of the Song of Ice and Fire series. This is about something else entirely.

It's about a reluctance to invest.

I started reading *A Dance with Dragons* a few nights ago - as I said, I'm not reviewing it, so I was in no rush to finish it - I got several chapters in, when I realized something. I had an epiphany, and that epiphany was thus: "I wish this was the TV show."

That's what I said inside my head. Then, I stopped reading for a moment, set my eReader down to better analyze the comment I just heard myself think. Did I really just wish away a book in favor of a television show? I did, and when analyzed, I had good reason.

The TV show, an HBO exclusive series, which will run its second season this coming spring, and which depicts one book of the series in each season, is better than the books.

Not that the book is bad. Even that first book of the series, upon which that first season was based, was a good book. It's just that the show is so good. It's possibly one of the best shows in the history of television. Its production values, writing, acting, and loyalty to the source material are all spectacular.

I found myself thinking that if I read this book, I'll be spoiling the fifth season of that show, and I would be disappointed by that. I also found that I was confused by the story in those few chapters. I had especially lost track of what was going on with Dany. How long had it been since I'd read the third book - the last place Dany is discussed? Ten years. I don't have the time or patience to go back and reread the previous books just to catch up. Besides, the TV show will get to that point soon enough, and it'll tell the story even better. I'm patient, I'll just wait.

Also, I remembered after reading those first few chapters that Martin is not an exceptional writer. I know: that's like heresy to some circles, but hear me out: Martin excels at some aspects of storytelling. He's an amazing world-builder, perhaps the best of his generation, and he knows well how to create dynamic characters who are neither clearly good, nor deplorably evil, and then put them in heart-wrenching situations. These are the things that draw in his readers. These are the things that reviewers extol over, not his fluid prose or economy of language, because he possesses neither.

I've loved the first four books of the series, but I've never been in love with Martin's prose. I was reading only to see what happened next.

The television is actually the best place for his brand of story. The visual medium lends itself to the grand vistas, and harsh characterizations much better than text, and the story is more fun there. Which really, that's the whole point right? A fun story?

I picked my eReader back up and glanced at the words. It felt like betrayal. It felt like I had wronged my best friend, but I went to the main menu and started on a different book. I don't need to find out what happens to Dany and Tyrion just yet. I'll wait for the television version, the more entertaining version of the story to come out. Even now, while writing this, I hardly believe it myself, but it's the only thing that makes sense to me now.



## A Loosely Related Article - On The Inevitable Zombie Apocolypse and Blogging By Christopher J Garcia

Seanan McMiragran's Newsflesh series is based around three things: a massive governmental conspiracy, the rise of zombies, and the creation of a media almost entirely based around bloggers and blogging. The first two I can totally see, it is that last one that I am unconvinced about.

The first problem is the idea that any major media conglomerate would allow bloggers to rise to any portion of the importance they currently hold. Yes, you look around today and say 'Hey, there are all these bloggers who are so much more important than the mainstream media', to which I say 'What do you mean?' Look at the various news sources today, especially the television-based ones. There is no news outlet in the world that is not considered the mainstream that has the kind of sway that groups like CNN, FoxNews, MSNBC (wait... are they still around?) and even groups like the Huffington Post. There's no blogger in the world whose reach is as great, and especially there is no blogger, or series of connected bloggers, who are able to create the kind of fervor or the amount of money that big media conglomerates do. You will hear bloggers say that if you take the number of impressions on the blogosphere and add them together, it far outweighs CNN, except for how many uniques is that? If you look at the various networks, they tend to have loyalty viewers, while those who choose to get their news from blogs and the like tend to be wider in the casting of their nets. There is incredible amounts of overlap, and if you talk to the average joe who consumes news, you'll still find a majority of them are getting their news from traditional sources, and even those that do take in some blogs, many are still majority traditional media eaters.

The problem with the zombie apocolypse (which apparently has already started in Florida and Maryland) is that it would force the government to take HUGE steps towards controlling what gets out into the world. The Bill of Rights does not apply when there are flesheaters out there coming for ya. The reaction would be far swifter and far more powerful than anything we're seeing in the Middle East right now. ALL non-authorized media coverage would be stamped out, and more than likely permanently, for very good reason. The movement of the zombies would have to be closely watched, surveillance maintained, and then if there were areas that are without hope, they need to be left behind, and if that gets out, then there are uprisings, which means that there's even less security for a world that would need nothing so much as security. How easy would it be to just shoot someone you saw with a camera shooting footage of zombies and then say 'Hey, they got bit!' and then on to the next thing. It would be very easy, and would probably keep more people from dying because it's that sort of journalism that leads to information that has to be hidden getting out and doing harm in the name of "Freedom of the Press"

I know, I know, I sound like Jerry Pournelle's wet dream governmentarian, but alas, information security in the face of FUCKING ZOMBIES is no vice! There are times when people shouldn't know, can't know, what's really going on. If you read it right (or maybe I mean Right... or reicht) Feed is saying just that. Maybe.

Now, the other problem with the idea of the government granting licenses to individuals as blogging news entities is that no matter how well-funded they are, no individual is able to come up with the level of protections that a large media company is able to. If there were going to be Governmental licenses, the first thing they'd do is require those who are applying for them to prove they can handle the sort of trouble they'll be encountering and not risk spreading contagion and the like. They certainly wouldn't allow for Irwins, a brilliant concept, to exist. There is no way a government within its right mind would allow anyone to go out and bait zombies for any reason other than killing them. No matter what kind of zombies they were. The idea that a government would allow that is ridiculous, hilarious, but ridiculous! The large media companies, with the right amount of preparation, would be the ones who would know how to handle the situation, and they could be more easily controlled by the Feds. That would allow for a greater sense of security knowing that only what they wanted to get out would be able to get out.

The problem with bloggers is that the greatest plus they have is the fact that they can say whatever they want without fear of pissing off anyone because they are only beholden to themselves and their audiences.

This is a problem I have with the idea of amateur journalism in general, no matter what form it is in. If it's amateur, it ain't journalism. The Drink Tank is not a piece of journalism. Nor is your blog, your zine, your website unless it's sponsored by an actual media company. I know, that sounds bad, but it's true. To me that is a huge plus because that means while you do not have the rights that are afforded to journalists, neither do you have the responsibilities. That thinking is not uncommon in political circles (ask any politician why they still read newspapers and you'll understand), and the idea of blogs being taken to by the government falls to pieces.

And that does bring up another concern - infrastructure. It will not be easy to maintain roads, ship anything, travel anywhere, make any sort of repairs, and maintaining wires across any sort of distance? Forget about it. I want to say that she made note of this in Feed, though I may have missed it. It is large corporations assisting government that will be able to keep these things up. Those that supply the ability to communicate are often the ones who dominate that medium. We are spoiled by the current age where the Internet is wild and free, but that would no longer exist if there is any sort of zombie world. If the government could keep a stable distributed network up under such conditions, I am also not sure they would choose to. A centralized network would be so much easier to monitor and censor, should the need arise, and as I've said, when you're dealing the Zombies, the need has already arisen!

On the other hand, I don't think any of that is the real problem. I think the real problem is Kittens at Eleven. Many, not most but many, blogs are really Meme Generators (like Lolcats) or incubators. They are places that work to generate content to get seen. This is not a bad thing, but what people want is fun content. The average interneter is more interested in light and fluffy than the Hard Core Internetist is interested in meaningful and serious. Look at what gets the most hits on Facebook. What gets shared more - political discussion or pictures of kittens with melon rinds on their head? This may sound like a condemnation, but it's not. It's an understanding. There is a need for lightness, for fun in peoples' lives. The net provides a great place for that and an easy way to reach a large audience. Now, add the concept of zombies lurking like M.U.S.C.L.E. men all around town and you can see why my belief is that the need for fun would far out-weigh those who would want to know every movement, to know the reality. The real media outlets would be out there taking care of getting the info out, in a way that the government would sanction.



# Deadline – Reviewed by Thea James of The Booksmugglers

**Title:** *Deadline*

**Author:** *Mira Grant*

**Genre:** *Post-Apocalypse/Dystopia, Horror, Thriller, Zombies, Speculative Fiction*

**Publisher:** *Orbit*

**Publication Date:** *June 2011*

**Paperback:** *581 Pages*

*Shaun Mason is a man without a mission. Not even running the news organization he built with his sister has the same urgency as it used to. Playing with dead things just doesn't seem as fun when you've lost as much as he has.*

*But when a CDC researcher fakes her own death and appears on his doorstep with a ravenous pack of zombies in tow, Shaun has a newfound interest in life. Because she brings news-he may have put down the monster who attacked them, but the conspiracy is far from dead.*

*Now, Shaun hits the road to find what truth can be found at the end of a shotgun.*

**Stand alone or series:** Book two in the Newsflesh series

**How did I get this book:** Review Copy from the publisher

**Why did I read this book:** I truly enjoyed Mira Grant's first Newsflesh novel, *Feed* and her take on a radical post-zombie apocalypse world, in which bloggers (!) emerged as the bastions of truth and justice and the American Way. *Feed* ended with a hell of a donkey punch, so, naturally, I was thrilled to pick up *Deadline* and continue the story.

**\*\*NOTE: THIS REVIEW CONTAINS UNAVOIDABLE SPOILERS FOR FEED. IF YOU HAVE NOT READ BOOK 1 AND WISH TO REMAIN UNSPOILED, LOOK AWAY! You have been warned.\*\***

Review:

It has been a year since the drastic events that concluded *Feed*. A year since Shaun has had to kill his beloved sister George with a shot to the spine after she was injected with a live dose of Kellis-Amberlee and began to amplify. A year since life has stopped to hold any meaning for Shaun and his news team, and Shaun has officially began to go crazy and talking to the voice of his dead sister in his head. They say the pain is supposed to go away and fade over time, but for Shaun Mason, nothing could be farther from the truth. The only reason his grief hasn't fully consumed and led Shaun to death is for the single fact that he owes George the truth – and he's vowed to find out who was behind the murder of his sister and bring them to justice. Although he has this single-minded purpose, Shaun hasn't been able to make any headway in the investigation and has lost himself to listlessness. Now, aimless and practically retired from all Irwin fieldwork, Shaun is content to run the team from behind the scenes until CDC researcher Doctor Kelly arrives at his team's doorstep, begging for help and sanctuary. Turns out, the chipper young Kelly has faked her death at the CDC because she has uncovered a secret that could blow the lid off of everything – and also shed light on George's murder.

With a government conspiracy of this magnitude, though, breaking the news could be fatal, and Shaun and his group of bloggers find themselves in a deadly race for their lives. It's up to Shaun to rise up to the challenge.

Like many other reviewers and readers, I have mixed feelings about *Deadline*. I know, certainly, that I didn't enjoy this book as much as I did *Feed*, although there are enough things done well that make *Deadline* worth the read. Hell, it's a good book – but it's not without its significant stumbling blocks. What *Deadline* did have going for it, like *Feed* before it, was the painstaking amount of detail and research that went into the imagining of Kellis-

Amberlee and the medical thriller/conspiracy aspect of the book. Mira Grant is not one to shy away from detail or cut back on background, and the level of intricacy that the author uses to describe the genesis, mutation, and virological properties of the chimera/rhinovirus that brought on the apocalypse is nothing short of pure awesomeness. In *Deadline*, the CDC plays a much more central role in the story with nefarious undertones – yes, it's clear who the bad guys are from the start of the book (governments and government organizations are ALWAYS evil), but the medical thriller aspect of the book unfolded in a tantalizing and highly enjoyable way.

As with its predecessor, I remain impressed with the level of worldbuilding in this Newsflesh universe, and I like that humanity has found (at least temporarily) a way to coexist with an ever-present virus that could decimate the population at any time. The blood tests, the bleach baths, the level of bureaucracy, the constant terror that people must live with are all wonderfully imagined and decidedly unique (almost every zombie book/film/comic I've ever seen involves Mad Max-esque wastelands, not an emergence of hi-tech neo-totalitarianism).

Unfortunately, there were a number of things that hampered my enjoyment of this book. The first thing to note is that Shaun isn't nearly as compelling a narrator as (adopted) sister George. *Deadline* begins strong with Shaun's grief as fresh a year after George's death as it was the day he had to kill her, and Shaun is so pushed to the brink by this loss that he actually holds conversations with George in his head. And out loud. And even in person, at some points. While this makes for a fascinating character study initially, over the course of 600 or so pages, it gets annoyingly repetitive. Shaun's interactions would go something like this: someone makes a comment, George comments on the comment, Shaun vocally tells George to hush, everyone looks at Shaun like he's crazy, Shaun titters and waves it off as "Yes, I'm crazy, that was George, she says hi." Lather, rinse, repeat. In fact, the extent of Shaun's characterization was defined by this grief, his crazy conversations with his lost sister, his incessant drinking of coca cola, his motorcycling around, his baring his teeth in weird scary smiles, and his fervent desire to punch everyone in the face. Needless to say, Shaun is not nearly as nuanced as his sister. I don't hold this against him, but the level of monotonous repetition worked against the parts of *Deadline* that actually did work, and took away from my enjoyment of the novel.

On that same subject, from another writing-voice perspective I liked all the swearing and the guns and general badassness in this book, but at the same time it's a little hard to swallow because all the characters speak in the same way (the emails from the good doctor Abbey, for example, sound exactly like Shaun), and that's kind of frustrating.

Of course, the biggest bone of contention lies in one huge jaw-on-the-floor revelation made in the late chapters of the novel. I won't spoil, but I will say that the revelation came out of left field and did not seem to hold any integrity with the first novel.<sup>2</sup> I don't mind the revelation for what it is, but it bothers me in that it felt gratuitous and played for shock value, as opposed to a natural development. That is, this monkeywrench did not sit well given George's prior narration.

In that vein, many of the plot developments in *Deadline* were less...organic than those in *Feed*. While the first book employed twists effortlessly and built towards a dramatic conclusion that never once wavered towards contrivance, *Deadline* depends more on huge, hulking twists that bordered on the melodramatic. It's a fine line between mind-blowingly cool Season -I-LOST-WTFPOLARBEAR-ness and Season-6-LOST-We-live-in-a-magical-floating-island-with-a-LIGHT!-silliness, and the end of *Deadline* unfortunately strayed towards the latter. I'm intrigued by the big ol' surprise ending – but I'm also a little worried because when plots need huge deus ex machina sorts of devices to bail them out, I fear that the story has gotten away from the writer. Also, the strongest elements of the Newsflesh books are the scientific detail and worldbuilding, and the ending of is rooted in science fantasy. I have no problems with fantasy technology – but to date this series has been so grounded in plausibility that I fear the conclusion of this penultimate book is a huge Jump The Shark moment. I continue to hope for the best and for explanation in book 3, *Blackout*, though.

Despite my gripes with the narration, repetition, and hard-to-swallow twists, *Deadline* is a hell of a ride, filled with fascinating nuance about the origins and proliferation of KA and what it means for the future of humanity. I'll be around for book 3, with hopes that Ms. Grant can capture that awesome realism and tension from *Feed* once more.

**Rating: 6 – Good**



# Deadline by Mira Grant Reviewed by Beth Zuckerman

Posted to Facebook on Monday, October 31, 2011 at 6:07pm

After enjoying Mira Grant's *Feed* so much earlier in the year, despite a nagging irritation about the Big Flaw in the novel, I very much looked forward to reading the sequel, *Deadline*. I started reading it last Friday morning and spent an entire week very excited about it. It is, as Andy Trembley described it, "a political allegory in the form of a zombie novel," but it's also a real thriller, the perfect thing to be reading during the Hallowe'en season. Reading about the characters' continuing narrow escapes from infected zombies and overzealous CDC agents, desperate to get the Truth out to the masses in the fine tradition of journalism, I was just hanging on the edge of my seat with it, very excited.

The book has 608 pages. When I got into the office this morning, I was up to page 578. I was thinking to myself that Shaun had very few remaining pages in which to exact vengeance for the terrible tragedy that happened in *Feed*, which vengeance had been his goal from the beginning of *Deadline*. On the other hand, I was pretty close to the end of the book without some Big Flaw having come along to ruin it. I was fully expecting to give *Deadline* a fantastic review.

About half an hour into my work day, one of my bosses sent me downstairs to the street to meet an accountant who would be driving up in a Lexis hybrid SUV with an envelope for him. Great, I thought, I can read a few more pages in the elevator. I started reading page 579, and I was suddenly deeply disturbed. Deeply, deeply disturbed. Not quite as disturbed as I was about halfway through the last season of *Battlestar Gallactica*, but still pretty disturbed. Oh, no, I thought. She's going to ruin it after all. I got to the street and kept reading, periodically poking my head up to look for an accountant driving a Lexis hybrid SUV. I flipped from page 581 to page 582, and saw the word, "Acknowledgements."

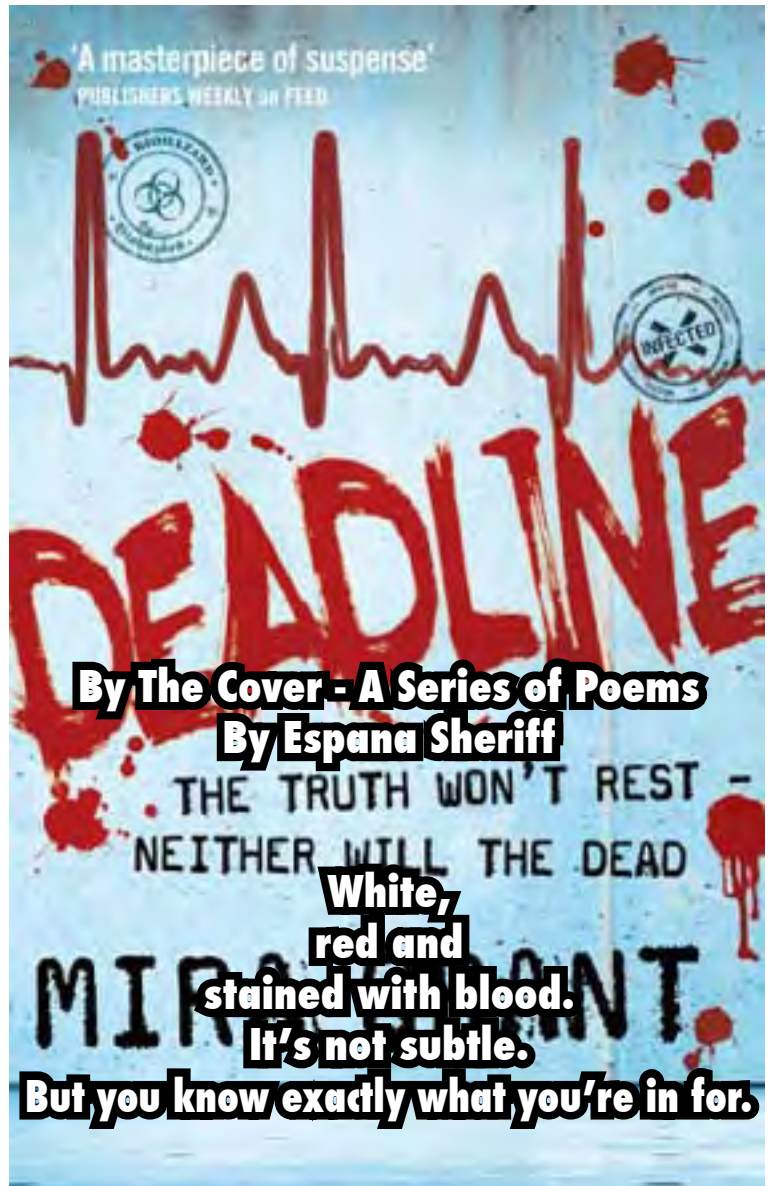
"What?" I literally shrieked out loud in the middle of the San Francisco Financial District.

I absolutely hate it when one novel in a series ends without any resolution of the plot whatsoever. I especially hate it when I didn't know that there was another book in the series. The final pages after the acknowledgements are a teaser for the third book.

I was, fortunately, able to compose myself before the accountant showed up with his Lexis hybrid SUV and the envelope for my boss.

So, at this point, I don't know what to say. I was so, so excited, absolutely loving the book, up until the last three pages. And now, I'm really frustrated and upset. One thing I can say for sure is that the book will move you emotionally. You won't be bored.

*Deadline* is excellently written, amazingly paced, and has an incredibly endearing narrator voice. This crazy zombie story is completely believable (of course, it's believable because it's really a political allegory). I hung on every word. As frustrated as I am, I absolutely can't wait for the next one.



# EMBASSYTOWN

## A Loosely Related Article - To Build a Language by Christopher J Garcia

In High School, I designed a language. I was in that period of my life where I actually thought I was smart. I'm not, I know that now, but at the time, I REALLY thought I had all the ideas that would save the world.

And most of them came from video games.

The language I devised was called PACEM, the PACEM word for Five. It was a language that was only somewhat designed to be spoken, but it was designed to be written, and it was meant to be used for translations of literature. That's right, a language that would not be used for speaking, but for writing, with the idea that writing and translating into and out of it would be the central reason for it to exist. This was my idea, and it was a great one... to the 16 year old Chris.

The idea did indeed come from video games. There was a company called Infocom, they made video games that were text-based like *Planetfall*, *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. They produced games for every major, and quite a few minor, home computer systems of the 1980s. They found a way to do this called the Z-Machine. This was a virtual machine that would run the software on the disks, and that meant that all that the games simply had to be written one time and it was the Z-Machine that simply had to be re-written for each system once, then all the games could only be written once. This saved time, and therefore LOTS of money on every title.

The idea behind PACEM was that a literary work could be translated into PACEM and then out of that form, be universally translated into any other language.

Why you wouldn't simply go straight from one to another was something that never came into my mind, I guess.

The role of PACEM was to be a lingua franca for the world. Everyone would learn it as their second language and that would allow for everyone to enjoy the world of literature because everything would be available in PACEM. I admit, it was a grand idea, but that's what I've always been about, right?

The name PACEM came from five rules. They were the basis for the entire idea, and beyond that, there were a series of Fives that also ruled the language.

The PACEM, as it were -

1) All words in PACEM will all contain either a Noun or a Verb, which will be capitalized within the 'words in which they appear. For example, in english "In the house" would be rendered as a single word "intheHouse"

2) All nouns contain Specificity (in English, comparable to 'the', 'a', 'that', 'this' or 'THE'), Plurality (singular, plural, or absent), Possession (whether it is a part of a group, absent of the group, or holding the group), Totality (whether or not there is other than the contained set indicated or excepted) and Aspect (whether it is a subject, subject to or recipient) which are all expressed in word endings or prefixes.

3) All verbs contain Tense (present, past, or future), Continuity (whether it applies to only the tense it is ends in or if the action continues), and Relation (whether it is the primary action or secondary action).

4) All nouns may be verbs, such as To Sit (Charer) with noun endings (charen) becomes a sit (Chair, in English), and Nouns may be verbs (such as 'birth' birten, become birter).

5) There is no word order, and parts of a word, have no order other than the line of prominence within a Noun's or Verb's indicated endings.

OK, those are the five big rules, but there are so many more. So many, many more. These were the basics for dealing with the language, which was a world of nouns and verbs. I didn't know it at the time, but this idea could be seen as influenced by the language that was used by the Apollo Guidance Computer in the 1960s. There, every command was expressed as 'Noun-verb', such as 'display velocity'. Now, with PACEM, there had to be enough flexibility to deal with all literary concepts, but the best way to break down language was to come at it as a combination of actions and objects. This language was almost certainly influenced by my years of trying to teach myself BASIC, LISP and, most importantly, C++. Working with only those things, you can come up with every idea that can be expressed in language.

By the way, yes and no were both Verbs and Nouns. It was weird.

So, one of the first things I did was to try and translate a full book. Traditionally, in the world of Language Construction, there are three things that get translated first - *The Bible*, the "To Be or Not To Be" speech from Hamlet, and "Hello World", though that is more for computer languages than communication languages. I, having no fondness for the complexities of speech required for those, decided to go for something else - *Slaughterhouse-5*.

"All this happened, more or less"

OK, this is actually a very tough opening line. Looking at it, it's going to be at least four words: a verb and three nouns. "Allthis(stuff)" is the first. 'Almost always, when there's an understood portion of a sentence. in PACEM it is treated as the English word 'stuff' would be, or 'tufen'. Now, in this case, you need to deal with the All This. It's very Specific ('This' in English, the ending -on in PACEM), and it's also Total (-ol) and it's the subject (which has no ending). So 'All this' would be 'tufenonol' in PACEM. Happened 'okarer' is past tense (-t), and it's non-continuous (no ending), and it's primary (again, no ending).

So, the first part is Tufenonol Okarert (or Okarert Tufenonol, since word order without phrases is irrelevant). then a comma, and now 'more or less'.

These are both Nouns, so they'll be two words. More was 'Mor'en and it's non-specific (no ending), singular (no ending), unspecified Totality (no prefix) and it is subject to (in this case, it is subject to the amount of stuff happening. What, I was sixteen!). So it would just be Moren. Less, with all the same endings, would be 'lesen', but one of them needs the 'or', which is Totality being 'excepted' or 'excluded' which is indicated by the prefix 'or-'. Doesn't matter where it goes, but in this case, it might sound best sticking closer to the original, so I'd render 'more or less' as 'Moren orlesen'. And, all that said, the opening line to Kurt Vonnegut's masterpiece would be mangled as 'Tufenonol Okarert, Moren orLesen.'

You can see why I loved this concept: lots of internal capitals!

The funny thing is that I never really got very far with building a vocabulary. There are languages that evolve naturally, and those that have a basis on spoken languages (like Esperanto) can borrow things and have natural evolution. Natural languages go through phases: jargon, pidgin, dialect, and then full-fledged language. There are languages that come straight from the mind of the creator, which PACEM was, mostly. The idea that this wasn't to be a spoken language actually makes it closer related to computer languages than to modern, evolved languages.

One of the things I most enjoyed about *Embassytown* was the way he looked at philosophy and language. He took it into far different areas, and that made me love it. Maybe I'll set out to translate it...

# EMBASSYTOWN - A REVIEW BY ANAEA LAY

Embassytown is, I suspect, the best book of Miéville's I've read. The prose is every bit as erudite and skilled as you'd expect from a Miéville book, but achieves a grace that makes it engaging where it has, in others of his works, veered toward pretension. Avice is definitely the first of his characters I've cheered for, the first who felt fully accessible, likable, and real.

As with any Miéville book, though, the brilliance is in the world building.

The premise of the books is that *Embassytown* is a sub-city for humans inside an alien city. The aliens have an interesting quirk in that their language is spoken with two mouths, and while other species are perfectly capable of learning it to understand them, they cannot understand it when it's spoken by another species. That is, until humans figure out how to raise clones so that they are similar enough to fake it. The alien language, or Language as the book refers to it, does not change, cannot abstract, and ruthlessly constrains the thinking possibilities of the aliens thinking it. This is Miéville tackling the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the linguistic theory most likely to show up in science fiction books despite having been categorically refuted. (Weak versions have been established pretty thoroughly, but we're talking so weak that we use other names to talk about those phenomena.) I was heart-broken to see Miéville going down this thoroughly hackneyed route, right up until one of the characters question whether the aliens were actually conscious, given the limitations of Language.

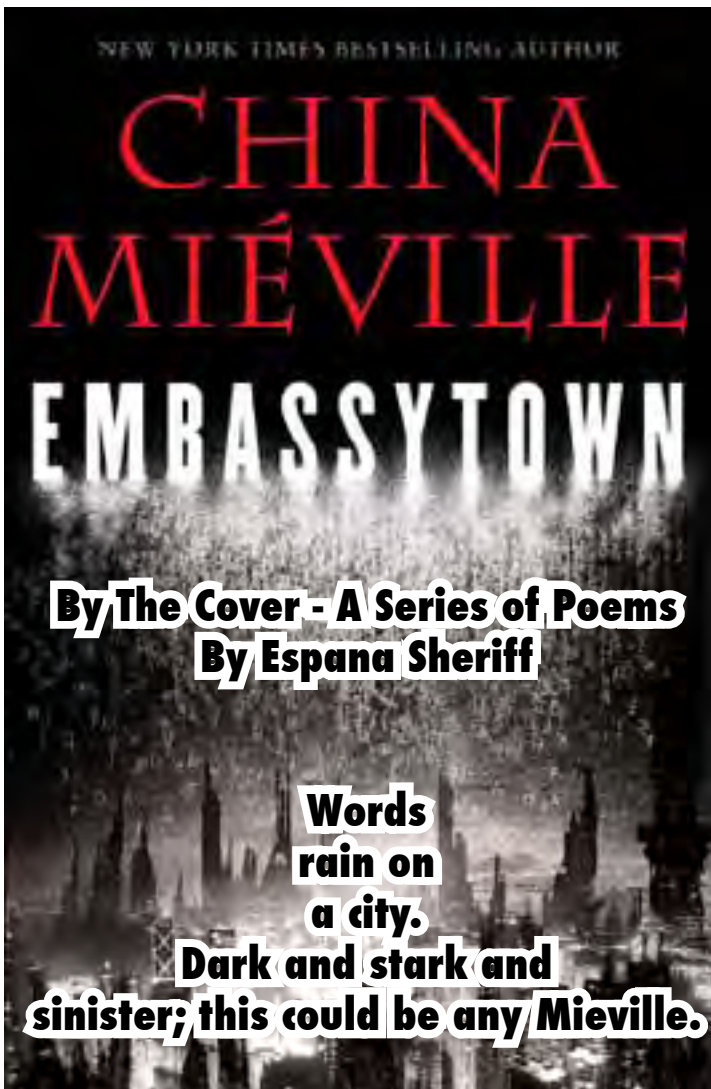
Miéville knew what he was doing. He takes the concept of Language and pushes it, giving us fabulously winding plot that pokes into all the implications of an intelligent species actually bound by literal language, while applying his usual acuity with developing realistic political and social structures for, not just the human ghetto inside the alien city, but the presence of a human colony

and the larger space-faring structure.

I coasted through the very first section of the book, mildly intrigued but not thoroughly hooked. *The City & the City* never did quite get off the ground for me, but I love Miéville's prose enough to get by on just that. With the second section of the book, when we start getting into the real meat of the story, everything takes off and soon you're wrapped up in what's going on without realizing how that happened to you.

I want to give a special calling out to Ehrsul, a super-intelligent semi-independent computer. As a character, I think she's what let me develop actual interest in Avice. As another vector along which to explore questions of consciousness, free will, and possibly coping with an awareness that you have less of both than you thought, she's a brilliant bit of craft, letting Miéville introduce and foreshadow themes that build and pay off with a beautiful elegance at the climax. Maybe I'm just a sucker for smart computers.

I am so, so happy *Embassytown* got nominated for a Hugo; it utterly deserves it and otherwise, I probably wouldn't have read it until next year. I still need to read the rest of the books on the ballot, but this one has definitely set a high bar to beat. I hope none of them fall short because angsting over which of the brilliant books to vote for sounds like a voting problem I'd love to have this year.





EMBASSYTOWN REVIEWED BY KJ MULDER  
ORIGINALLY APPEARED AT [HTTP://WORLD SININK.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://worldsinink.blogspot.com)

**Title: Embassytown**  
**Author: China Miéville**  
**Pages: 405**  
**ISBN: 9780230754317**

*Embassytown: a city of contradictions on the outskirts of the universe.*

*Avice is an immerser, a traveller on the immer, the sea of space and time below the everyday, now returned to her birth planet. Here on Arieka, Humans are not the only intelligent life, and Avice has a rare bond with the natives, the enigmatic Hosts - who cannot lie.*

*Only a tiny cadre of unique human Ambassadors can speak Language, and connect the two communities. But an unimaginable new arrival has come to Embassytown. And when this Ambassador speaks, everything changes.*

*Catastrophe looms. Avice knows the only hope is for her to speak directly to the alien Hosts. And that is impossible.*

My first introduction to China Miéville's work was *Perdido Street Station*. It was unlike anything I've read before, so when I heard that *Embassytown* was going to be a science fiction novel I just had to see what magic he could bring to the genre. *Embassytown* is everything you would expect from a Miéville novel and so much more. Describing it to someone is almost like telling a blind person about a color. It's not really possible and you'll quickly find yourself at a loss for words. Each person will experience it in a different way and on a different level, but I'll try my best.

Miéville delivers a weird and wonderful world that is dazzling in its scope. Embassytown is populated by truly bizarre aliens, begging automa and biological technology that makes the city and its buildings an actual living breathing place in the truest sense of the word. Initially it is this complete and utter strangeness that makes it difficult for the reader to comprehend what's going on, but as the story progresses, things slowly start to make sense.

Embassytown is located on the planet Arieka situated at the edge of the known Immer (equivalent of space). The native population of Arieka is known as the Hosts since they allow the human colony to exist and provide for the colony. The Hosts speak Language. For them speech is thought and they are unable to say some-

thing that is untrue. Due to their physiology Language needs to be spoken simultaneously with two mouths, but by one mind. In order for the humans to communicate with the Hosts special Ambassadors are needed. These Ambassadors are human twins (doppels) that have been trained since birth to think as one mind which gives them the ability to speak Language.

The story is told in the first person through the eyes of Avice a human immerser (the equivalent of an astronaut with the ability to traverse the Immer). We first get to know her as a child growing up in Embassytown where she is enLanguageed by the Hosts (used to act out a simile to allow the Hosts to speak it). Later after traveling the Immer, she returns home and is present when a new type of Ambassador arrives. She witnesses the utter chaos which ensues when he speaks Language for the first time. In order to save Embassytown itself Avice must find a way to communicate directly with the Hosts, a seemingly impossible task.

Language and communication is the core of *Embassytown*. Everything revolves around language - its definition, its use and misuse, the power it has and how it shapes and controls thought. Throughout the novel there is a slow progression and transformation in how the Hosts think. Language slowly evolves into language and it is this transformation, and the subsequent changes in thought, that ultimately saves Embassytown.

The characters are well fleshed out and although the aliens are truly alien you empathize with their plight.

The horrific downward spiral of addiction and slow decay of both the Host population and their biorigged buildings and livestock evoked a visceral emotional response in me. You could feel the escalating sense of despair and anxiety as the situation deteriorated. The final act of desperation, when the Hosts mutilate themselves, affected me deeply. It was heart-wrenching to see the sacrifice they were willing to make in order to ensure a better future for their children.

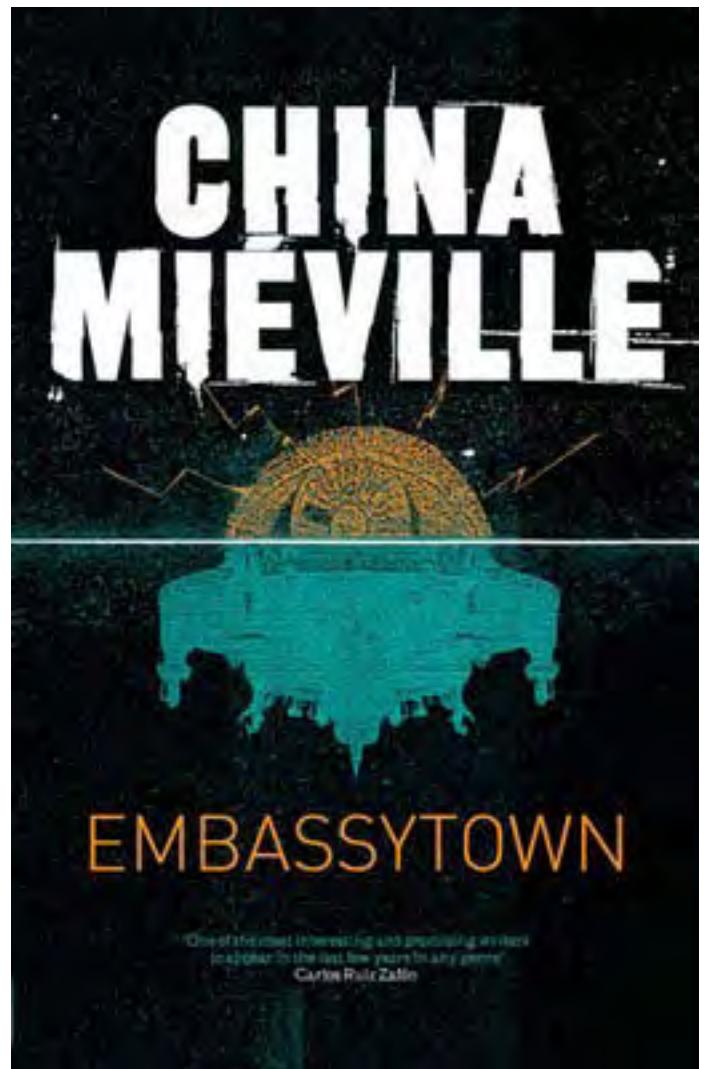
I enjoyed Miéville's crafting of words. His own creations are both memorable and apt (exots, immer, automa). I'm sure floaking could, in time, experience the same cult status as grokking. His descriptions of the world and its inhabitants, while somewhat vague, provided just the right amount of impetus to have my imagination working overtime picturing the Hosts and their biorigged buildings, farms, transport and other technologies.

### **The verdict:**

*Embassytown* is a challenging but rewarding read. It was slow going for the first hundred pages, but once the new Ambassador appears on the scene the pace picked up considerably. I was so engrossed in the later chapters that I actually lost track of time and found myself reading into the early hours of the morning.

People with an interest in language and how it shapes thought will absolutely love this, but you definitely don't need to be a linguist to enjoy it. Don't expect a quick and easy read though. *Embassytown* has many layers and requires an attentive mind to unravel all the hidden meanings and complexity. I'm sure even subsequent re-reads will reveal something new each time.

**Rating: 7.5/10**



# LEVIATHAN WAKES

## A Loosely Related Article - Der Ubernovel by Christopher J Garcia

*Leviathan Wakes* is a science fiction novel of the Space Opera variety. *Leviathan Wakes* is a police procedural of the Buddy Cop variety. *Leviathan Wakes* is an adventure novel. I'm pretty sure it's also a Western of the 'Gotta Get the Girl from the Indians' variety. It's one of those novels that plays with multiple genres in a way that is amazingly layered. Just what it should be sold as, that's a good question (SciFi just seems to be the stickiest) but I could see anyone who loves any form of genre fiction really getting into it. The book does so much, they had to have two authors combine their efforts to create it!

There is a long history of mixing genres, though very few to the extent of *Leviathan Wakes*. Since there was so much cross-over between writers for the different genre pulps. You'd see Leigh Brackett in westerns and SF, Hubbard in SF and Adventure, Robert Silverberg anywhere that paid. The way that authors would cross over was a way to ensure that you could make a living. It wasn't until the 1960s that you'd see load of people writing exclusively for one genre. One of the writers who has mixed up their genres is Mike Resnick. His fantasy cum detective stories like *Stalking the Vampire*, are actually readable, though dated by now. There was a period where detective novels wixed up with Fantasy and with science fiction. This is the combination that I love the most. There's always a lot of stuff that you can do with it, especailly when you consider the possibility that there is so much we don't understand about space, time, science, and on the other side, so little we know of the mind, the soul, magic. In recent years, there's been something of an explosion in the number of detective stories that also go into the worlds of SF. The first one that comes to mind that is recent is Ken MacLeod's *The Night Sessions*. It's another police procedural, more or less, with a touch of philosophy, a seriously interesting look at the world of religion, and more than a bit of a take on human intelligence. *The Night Sessions* won the Bristish Science Fiction Society award a couple of years back, and PYR just published it in the US this year. The other one is a Hugo-nominated story from Mary Robinette Kowal called *Kiss Me Twice*, which featrures a great detective and an AI based on Mae West. It's an amazing story, a whole lot of fun when it comes to the characters, both real and virtual.

The Western and the Science Fiction story, both overt and subtle, migh tbe the oldest combination. The name 'Space Opera' is derived from 'Horse Opera', an old-timey word for a Western. The fact is pretty much all the major science fiction stories comes from a source in Westerns, which is the younger genre, but did not develop nearly as quickly as Westerns did. The legendary 'Save The Maiden' story dates back centuries, but the Western really fleshed it out even better, adding so many elements. The rowdy band of bastards story dates back too, some of the best being from olden tymes Japan, and that led to the Mob story when mixed with True Crime stuff, but it was the Western that gave it the defining tropes that we consider today. The Bad Town story was really created by the Western, as was the Gunfighter story, though you could say these would be related to the classic duelist story and, though they probably never encountered each other, the Ronin story.

The most visible form of Western mixed with F&SF-type stuff is the Weird West Tale. There are a lot of them, ranging from the comics with characters like Jonah Hex and the various stories of fantastic efforts surrounding places like Deadwood and Tombstone. The best Weird West tales are those that play with actual history, including my favorite, *The Buntline Special* by Mike Resnick.

If I say Science Fiction meets Western, the first thing you think of is *Firefly*, right? Well, it should be! It's also not the first of the genre by any stretch of the imagination. What is is a hard call, though it would almost certainly be something from the 1950s, though you could call some of the 1890s SF-like stuff fitting that mold. The anime of the 1990s that had very similar senses, like *Trigun*, would also count. The entire world of Western-Science Fiction cross-overs is one of the major components of Steampunk, though it tends to be Cowpunk if it's heavier on the SF than the Western.

The most fun you'll ever have conceiving of a world to create in (at least if you're like me and let's face it, I'm an Everyman...) is the collision of science fiction and romance. There's a lot of that, though far more of romance meeting fantasy, and it's a lot of fun. I love a good love story, and something like the David Freer's book *Cuttlefish* could certainly be seen filling that need... what little there is of it.

We saw a lot of crashing of horror into SF in the 1980s, and I guess you could call the entire Splatterpunk movement to fill that segment. Mentioning Splatterpunk, especially right after talking about the SF-Western combination makes me think about the world of Steampunk, which feeds off multi-genre-ism, but it also has morphed into a genre of its own. Hugo proves that you can do Steampunk without any other genre to fall back on. It's not SF, or fantasy, though it is informed by both. This Frankenstein of a genre (and I think it has passed out of its pupal sub-genre phase, it's time as a pidgin, and become a full-fledged genre with a grammar of its own) has managed to change the way that people look at the melding of genres.

There is a literary theory which I hold dear, that says that all forms of genre will eventually come crashing into each other, that no genre can avoid being played with in the context of any other genre, and that eventually there will be no boundaries at all. So it's natural to have Western Romances or Noir Fantasy or Space Opera Horror or whatever other combinations you might discover. What will be happening is a decreasing of the spread and all literature becoming a mix of ideas as the world we live in becomes better able to theoretically support them. We've entered the Genre Endgame!





# Leviathan Wakes Reviewed by Juan Sanmiguel

## **Leviathan Wakes by James A. Corey (Daniel Abraham & Ty Franck)**

The Human population is expanding in the Solar System. The governments of Earth and Mars are the major powers. Then there are colonies in the asteroid belt and moons of Jupiter and Saturn. The Epstein Drive makes routine travel to the outer Solar System feasible. There is a movement in the asteroid belt population to achieve political independence. They are loosely organized as the Outer Planets Alliance (OPA). Tension between the major parties is inevitable.

Jim Holden is the executive officer on the Canterbury. On a routine water run from Saturn to the Belt, the Canterbury finds an abandoned ship, the Scopuli. Holden takes a team to investigate the ship and while they are on the Scopuli, the Canterbury is destroyed by unknown agency. The transmitter which led the Canterbury to the Scopuli has Martian equipment. Holden sends a transmission about his findings on the Scopuli. The news puts the Martians and the OPA on war footing. Holden and his crew try to find a friendly port. They are found by a Martian navy vessel, the Donnager. The Donnager is



also attacked and Holden and his crew escape in a Martian missile ship, which Holden's team names Rocianate. Holden and his crew try to find sanctuary in the Belt.

Miller is a detective working for the firm in charge of security on Ceres. He has been tasked to find Juliette Mao. Mao's father is wealthy industrialist, and has gone missing in the Belt. Miller's investigation ties Mao to the Scopuli. With tensions rising in the Belt, Miller is told to put the investigation on low priority. Miller still investigates Mao's disappearance while dealing with the civil unrest connected with the conflict in space. When Ceres' security is taken over by another company Miller uses it as an excuse to leave and continue the case. His investigation takes him to Holden's crew.

One of the main issues in the novel is the access to information. Holden believes if information is freely released, people can make informed decisions. Miller believes that information needs thorough examination before being released. Miller's view is justified since every time Holden releases information the interplanetary conflict escalates. When Miller joins Holden they clash over how to proceed when they find more information about Mao and the attacks in space.

There is also the conflict between traditional judicial procedure and frontier justice. Miller defends the harsh, informal justice in the Belt. When all the lives of a colony can be endangered by negligence, punishment is immediate and severe. Holden believes in due process and clashes with Miller on the type of justice he practices. When they find out who is causing the problems, Miller argues that the power of the perpetrators will make them immune to prosecution and takes matters in his own hands. Holden finds this view hard to accept.

There is a lot of action in the novel. Some of it comes in news reports describing the conflict with OPA and Mars. Holden and Miller find themselves in some tight situations. The action is impressive, easy to follow and plausible. Outside the use of the Epstein drive and the real cause of the war, there is little in the novel outside the realm of science.

This is the first part of a series, and it is off to a great start. Things are set into motion which can re-define humanity and its relationship to the stars. The discovery made in the book may facilitate man's continued expansion into the Solar System and beyond. This may come at a price some people are not comfortable with. It is a topic worthy of future discussion.

# Leviathan Wakes – Reviewed

## by Ana Grilo of The Booksmugglers

**Title:** Leviathan Wakes

**Author:** James S.A. Corey

**Genre:** Science Fiction, Mystery/Noir, Space Opera

**Publisher:** Orbit

**Publication Date:** June 2011

**Hardcover:** 592 Pages

*Humanity has colonized the solar system – Mars, the Moon, the Asteroid Belt and beyond – but the stars are still out of our reach.*

*Jim Holden is XO of an ice miner making runs from the rings of Saturn to the mining stations of the Belt. When he and his crew stumble upon a derelict ship, The Scopuli, they find themselves in possession of a secret they never wanted. A secret that someone is willing to kill for – and kill on a scale unfathomable to Jim and his crew. War is brewing in the system unless he can find out who left the ship and why.*

*Detective Miller is looking for a girl. One girl in a system of billions, but her parents have money and money talks.*

*When the trail leads him to The Scopuli and rebel sympathizer Holden, he realizes that this girl may be the key to everything.*

*Holden and Miller must thread the needle between the Earth government, the Outer Planet revolutionaries, and secretive corporations – and the odds are against them. But out in the Belt, the rules are different, and one small ship can change the fate of the universe.*

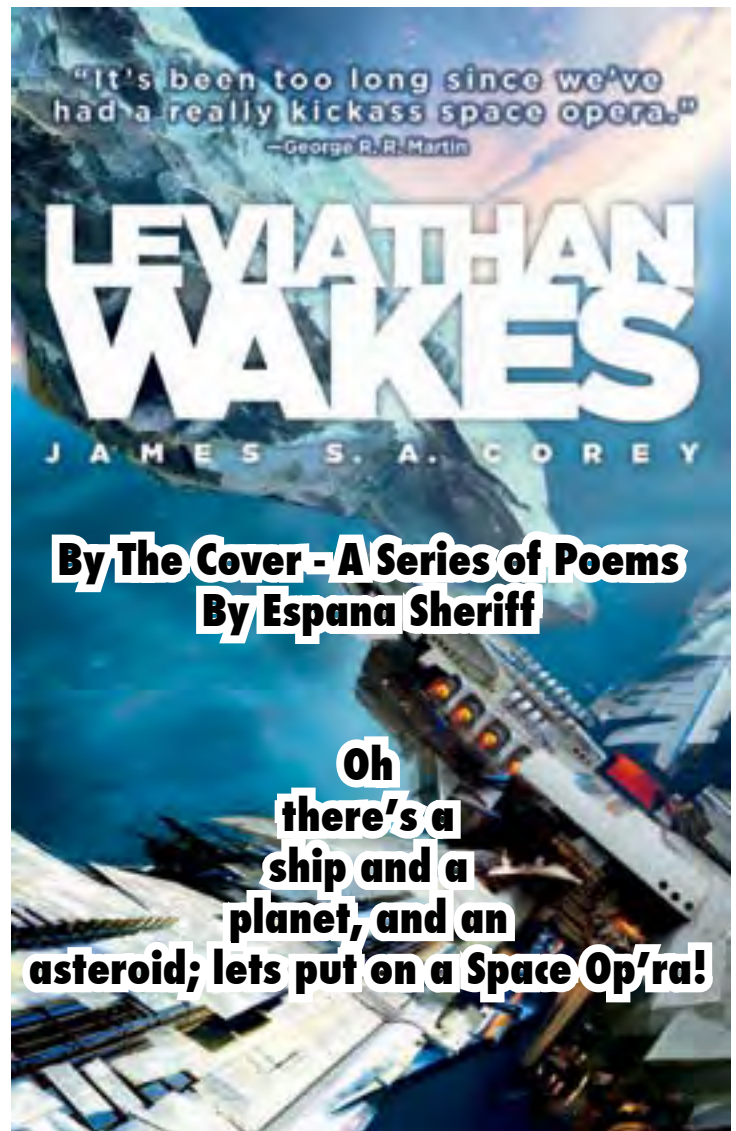
**Stand alone or series:** Book I in the Expanse series

**How did I get this book:** ARC from the publisher

**Why did I read this book:** Having tried and enjoyed MLN Hanover's as well as Daniel Abraham's fantasy writing with this year's release of , I was intrigued when I learned that Abraham/Hanover also wrote Leviathan Wakes with GRRM's assistant Ty Franck under the James S.A. Corey nom de plume. Solid synopsis, great reviews, and a wicked fine cover (look at that baby! She's gorgeous.) only cemented my book-greed.

Review:

Humankind has found a way to expand from the inner planets of Earth and Mars to the further reaches of the Solar System, with colonies and outposts along the asteroid belt to the moons of the great gas giants. Though people may have been able to build ships with the ability to traverse the solar system, light-speed travel (or anything even remotely approaching luminal speeds) remains a distant goal; the stars an unattainable, unfathomable mystery. All that changes, however,



when the crew of ice-mining vessel the Canterbury pick up a distress beacon from a wayward starship amongst the rubble of Saturn's rings. When executive officer Jim Holden and a small landing crew investigate the cold, breached hull of the Scopuli, they discover a dead ghost ship and a beacon powered by a Mars-branded transmitter. Moments later, Holden and his handful of crewmates watch as impossible cloaked ships appear and nuke the Canterbury, vaporizing the hundreds of souls aboard. Terrified and enraged, Holden broadcasts the event, pointing the finger at Mars as the responsible party.

On the Belt outpost of Ceres, run-down detective Miller goes through his usual routine of keeping the peace between civilians, the law, and organized crime syndicates. When Holden's foreboding message reaches the settlement, however, the tenuous coexistence goes to hell. Long unsettled with their outsider status, taxed and levied by the superpowers of Earth and Mars, the Belters rise up against anyone with the stocky appearance that comes from growing up in full gravity. As human civilization inches ever closer to total annihilation and full-scale interplanetary war, Miller doggedly works on his last case – a routine missing persons job that turns out to have much deeper implications than anyone could have expected. As Miller uncovers the whereabouts about his erstwhile heiress and Holden and his crew try to survive numerous close encounters with blood-hungry political parties on all sides of the war, a deeper, more terrifying truth comes to light, and humanity may never be the same again.

So far as cinematic sci-fi goes, *Leviathan Wakes* is as entertaining and summer-blockbuster as you can get with a 600 page book. Beginning with an undeniably awesome hook (comparable to an *X-Files* episode intro, right before that sweet Mark Snow track begins to roll), *Leviathan Wakes* manages to be both a space opera and a futuristic hardboiled noir-style detective yarn. As opposed to the trend of many space operas, however, this first novel in the Expanse series is deceptively insular, as humanity is confined to the sandbox that is our local solar system. As such, the strongest element of this book lies with its construction of this future human society, scattered across the planets and asteroid belt, as the tensions between Mars, Earth and the Outer Planets Association (the OPA) mount and the fate of mankind hangs in the balance. Like many familiar colonization stories, it's hard for a superpower, or corporation, or any form of tyrant, to reign over a distant outpost, and the rebellious attitudes of the OPA have a familiar revolutionary ring. The added difference of physiological appearance between those stockier humans accustomed to life in IG, versus the elongated Belters adds an interesting new level of discrimination, handled expertly by Mr. Corey (or should I say, Messers Abrams and Franck). Though this certainly isn't a hard science fiction rendering, *Leviathan* sticks to the realms of technical plausibility, spurning Battlestar Galactica-esque FTL drives and taking care to address the physical tolls of accelerated space travel, heat signatures, and radiation woes.

From a storytelling perspective, *Leviathan Wakes* also does an admirable job for a first novel in a series. The plotting is solid, jumping from incredible opening hook (one of the rare times I was pissed off that my train was actually on time) to a burst of explosions and near-death escapes. There are two storylines tracked along the course of the novel, told in alternating protagonist/chapter style (not unlike epic fantasy). Though the book is a bit overlong and tends to drag in the midsection, especially as only marginal progress is made with the overall mystery that is at the core of the book, when the main thread is picked back up the novel ends with a hell of a bang. The only tedious parts of *Leviathan Wakes* concerned the main characters, as the cast is somewhat underdeveloped in relation to the worldbuilding. The two leads and narrative focal points of the book are archetypal, with the aging, divorced, drunk, Humphry Bogart-esque gumshoe and the idealistic, charming XO-reluctantly-cum-Captain. Though there is a solid attempt at providing motivations and backstories for these characters, I honestly could have done with a little less exposition – there's far too much time spent on menial exchanges (Miller with his partner, Miller at one of many bars; Holden feeling the tiring, ball-retracting effects of g-force acceleration, and so on and so forth). That's not to say I didn't enjoy the characters – quite the contrary. Though, to be perfectly frank, Miller's character arc was far more engrossing to me than Holden's annoyingly blase (and frustratingly stupid) self-righteousness. There's also a female component to the cast that I appreciated, as Naomi (the new XO after Holden's unwitting promotion) is both capable and confident (and totally doesn't settle for Holden's BS). Of course, there's also the allure of the mysterious Julie, the disappearing dame that started it all, who we only meet directly in the prologue of the book.

Despite some unevenness midstory and a bit of tedious repetition in the character building department,

*Leviathan Wakes* ends with a dramatic flourish, full of promise for the subsequent books in the Expanse series. I, for one, will definitely be around to check them out.

### **Notable Quotes/Parts: From the Prologue:**

*The Scopuli had been taken eight days ago, and Julie Mao was finally ready to be shot.*

*It had taken all eight days trapped in a storage locker to get to that point. For the first two she'd remained motionless, sure that the armored men who'd put her there had been serious. For the first hours, the ship she'd been taken aboard wasn't under thrust, so she floated in the locker, using gentle touches to keep herself from bumping into the walls or the atmosphere suit she shared the space with. When the ship began to move, thrust giving her weight, she'd stood silently until her legs cramped, then sat down slowly into a fetal position. She'd peed in her jumpsuit, not caring about the warm itchy wetness, or the smell, worrying only that she didn't slip and fall in the wet spot it left on the floor. She couldn't make noise. They'd shoot her.*

*On the third day, thirst forced her into action. The noise of the ship was all around her. The faint subsonic rumble of the reactor and drive, the constant hiss and thud of hydraulics and steel bolts as the pressure doors between decks opened and closed. The clump of heavy boots walking on metal decking. She waited until all the noise she could hear sounded distant, then pulled the environment suit down off of its hooks and onto the locker floor. Listening for any approaching sound, she slowly disassembled the suit and took out the water supply. It was old and stale; the suit obviously hadn't been used or serviced in ages. But she hadn't had a sip in two days, and the warm loamy water in the suit's reservoir bag was the best thing she had ever tasted. She had to work hard not to gulp it down and make herself vomit.*

*When the urge to urinate returned, she pulled the catheter bag out of the suit and relieved herself into it. She sat on the floor, now cushioned by the padded suit and almost comfortable, and wondered who her captors were – Coalition Navy, pirates, something worse. Sometimes she slept.*

**Rating: 7 – Very Good**





# CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

## **James Bacon - Co-Editor**

James has won a Hugo for Best Fanzine, he's won a Nova for Best Fanzine, and he's done just about every other thing you can do in fandom. He's also a damn fine human being!

## **Christopher J Garcia - Co-Editor**

Chris managed to put this issue out. That is actually kinda amazing.

## **Dick Jensen aka Ditmar - Cover Artist / Interior Artist**

Legendary Australian fan artist and the only guy I know who has an award named after him. These works were delivered to me on a DVD in 2008, which was the last time I regularly used this computer to create an issue of *The Drink Tank*. Many of these images had been used in Australian fanzines and a few in *The Drink Tank*. I hope to get to meet Ditmar someday, because he saved my bacon and I owe him a drink!

## **Bill Rotsler - Interior Artist**

One of the true legends, and another guy who has an award named after him. I never got to meet him before he passed away in 1997.

## **Espana Sheriff - Poet Laureate of The Drink Tank 319**

Espana is a whirlwind. She's one of the editors of *Science Fiction/San Francisco, YIPE!*, and has appeared in various other zines as well. She's also a helluva artist and a *Fanzine Lounge* regular! You can see her writing and art at [espanasheriff.com](http://espanasheriff.com).

## **The Booksmugglers**

Making their second appearance in this theme issue, Thea James and Ana Grilo are two of the best reviewers out there today on their joint blog, *The Booksmugglers* (<http://thebooksmugglers.com/>) which is one of the first things I check if I'm looking for a new book to get reading.

## **CB Droege**

CB has been writing about geek culture since 2001, and has been covering genre media for *TGDaily.com* since 2010. His poetry has appeared in *Abandoned Towers* magazine, and his fiction was included in the Sci-fi adventure anthology "First Contact Imminent". He was recently awarded the R.M. Miller Award for Outstanding Fiction Writing. CB lives in Cincinnati, where he is also an Adjunct Instructor of English at Galen College.



### **Anaea Lay**

Anaea Lay is lazy and does not like to work. That's why she's juggling at least three careers and doesn't sit still. She has an adorable kitty cat, two roommates, too many books, and an inexplicable obsession with parrots. You can read her excellent stuff at [anaealay.com](http://anaealay.com).

### **Aidan Moher**

The man behind the blog *A Dribble of Ink* (<http://aidan-moher.com/blog/>) and one of the leading lights in SF/F commentary. He's also a Canadian and his reviews and commentary on the field is some of the best out there. You should be reading him. His name has an 'e' in it, which is something I shant forget again!

### **KJ Mulder**

KJ is a South African based blogger and self-confessed book addict. His main passion is science fiction, but also enjoys reading fantasy, horror and thrillers. You can find his wonderful reviews at [worldsinink.blogspot.com](http://worldsinink.blogspot.com).

### **Juan Sanmiguel**

A fan and writer who is from the Orlando area. I'm not 100% sure about that, I've only seen him in the flesh at WorldCons! He's appeared in several issues of *The Drink Tank*, and both his reviews appeared in *Event Horizon*, the newsletter of the Orlando Area Science Fiction Society.

### **Justin Unrau**

Justing Unrau (@jjackunrau on Twitter) is a restless librarian who blogs about books and libraries at [brarianaut.com](http://brarianaut.com)

### **Linda Wenzelburger**

The Lovely & Talented Linda has managed to put up with Christopher J Garcia for half-a-decade! That makes her eligible for Sainthood. She lives in Oakland with her two cats and way too much fabric.

### **Beth Zuckerman**

A science fiction fan, she often runs some of the best reviews you'll find in Facebook on science fiction novels. Her taste is very different from mine, but I have to say she's seldom wrong! She's also appeared in the pages of *The Drink Tank* a few times.

