

# WATT'S OUT

## SF&F Book Releases

**ILIUM by Dan Simmons. Gollancz tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2003. 637 pp. \$19.95. On sale now.** Some years ago now, Simmons created a world, Hyperon, that still lives in many readers memories. With this novel he has created another world that will also live on in his readers. Simmons says in the introduction that, using the *Iliad*, he has build up the background and characters to produce ILIUM. Other writers have used classics to base their science fiction novel on, notably Donaldson with his Gap series of novel. I will leave you to read ILIUM for yourselves to see if Simmons has succeeded in creating something which is greater for this. It is pure space opera, as was the Hyperon series. Read and enjoy.

**MARKET FORCES by Richard Morgan. Gollancz tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2004. 385 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.** A new novel by the author of ALTERED CARBON. The cover blurb of this novel is: "The Future Is For Sale". Morgan takes some of the trends he has noticed in the present and takes them into the future. The war in Iraq would be a good example of some of these trends. Chris Faulkner works at Shorn Associates. They are an investment company and in the later decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century they are well into the new markets of conflict investment. Commodities are old hat, and the new arenas are the brush wars that are flaring up all over the world – wars of "liberation" and revolution. Like Iraq, after the initial war is over, after the arms and information have been sold, the countries need capital to continue, and their infrastructures need repairing or replacement.... Excellent extrapolation.

**THE LANGUAGE OF STONES by Robert Carter. HarperCollins tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 509 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.** This book is set in some far off Fifteenth Century England, with happy peasants and wise old wizards. The stones of the title are shown on the cover – Standing Stones, that with the aid of Merlyn and his young helper, may help to keep the Realm from falling into destruction with the onset of the breaking up of the lines of Power that had once crisscrossed the countryside. Carter writes in a clear and concise style and the pictures he draws with words ring true to the modern reader. He creates his fantasy world with a description that is sure ensures hours of enjoyable reading.

**BORN OF EMPIRE** by Simon Brown. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2004. 373 pp. A\$25. On sale now. Book One of The Chronicles of Kydan. Simon Brown had written both science fiction and fantasy – BORN OF EMPIRE is one of the latter. The main characters are nobles. The Empress Lerena of the Hamilayan Empire and her sister Yunara are not the best of friends, especially when Yunara is spurned by Maddyn, who in turn picks a non-titled woman to have his child. Maddyn has been picked to head a mission to cross the Deepening Sea, and when news of a revolution in Rivald reaches the court, events take a turn for the worst. Simple sword and adventure fantasy that is an easy read for a relaxing afternoon.

**WEAPONS OF CHOICE** by John Birmingham. Macmillan tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2004. 520 pp. A\$30. On sale now. If the basic plot sounds a bit unremarkable – a US-led naval task force finds itself in the middle of the Pacific in World War II, don't be misled to think that this novel is simple. The impact on the War is great, well enough, but there are others impacts that the author has also brought up to show to the reader. Such as how would the past react with the idea of a black American army officer, or a woman captain of a submarine. The other impact is on history itself, and everyone is quickly made aware that history is now changed, and the future is again unknown. And another enemy that came with the fleet is also loose. \*Recommended\* as good extrapolative fiction.

**WOLFBLADE** by Jennifer Fallon. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 626 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now. Book One of the Hythrun Chronicles. The book starts off with a brutal murder, and the only witness is a dwarf named Elezaar. He manages to escape also from the scene of the assassination and finds himself as a servant to Princess Marla. Most people thought that she was basically ordinary, but Elezaar found out that she had ambitions beyond being the disregarded sister of the High Prince. Elezaar was well versed in many things, including politics and warfare. He determined to teach the young princess as much as he could of tactics and diplomacy. Fallon weaves her plot with finesse and has started off this new series with an ingrossing first novel.

**CAST A BRIGHT SHADOW** by Tanith Lee. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by PanMacmillan. © 2004. 427 pp. A\$30. On sale now. This novel is Book One of The Lionwolf Trilogy. In the beginning of the book there is a Translator's Note to say that the novel has been translated from another language into modern English. The style Lee has written in will be found a little strange for the reader – there is a ring of truth to the Note that the words give. Set in world in the grip of a continuing winter, the plot follows Saphay as she sets out to find a liaison with the leader of a barbarian tribe. She comes to grief, however, and finds herself pregnant. Unknown to those who find her, the son born to her is half human, half

god. He names himself Lionwolf in honour of his conception, and then goes on to prove his godhood. Easy-reading fantasy.

**EYES OF THE CALCULATOR by Sean McMullen. TOR pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2001. 589 pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.**

The concluding volume of the Greatwinter Trilogy. Over the Earth the Call has ceased, and humans can again venture into the coastal lands that had been so off-limits to them for so long. They still could not, however, travel on the oceans. The avians are still being persecuted, even though in some of the Australian lands there are laws protecting them, to a point. When the band in the sky destroys all electrically powered machines, some religious people take it that it is time they exerted more force in upkeeping God's law. The human-powered Libris Calculator is again created, and an aircraft from North America arrives to throw things into more disarray.

A fitting conclusion to a very good series. Buy the whole series.

**More How To Draw Manga: Vol 1 - THE BASICS OF CHARACTER DRAWING. Graphic Sha, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2002. 116 pp. A\$39.95. On sale now.** This is volume 1 of a new Manga technique series. It is a basic techniques book, as is illustrated in the contents page. There are four chapters after the Foreword. Chapter 1 is Drawing in Pencil, and covers Sketching and doodling, Starting in pencil, and tells of the types of pencils (and erasers). Chapter 2 is Drawing Faces, starting with a rough sketch; Designing Faces from Profile Views; Facial Features (Eyes, Mouth, Nose, Ears, and Eyebrows). Chapter 3 concentrates on Drawing the Figure, starting with Key Points In Drawing the Figure; The Process for Drawing the Figure; Proportional Characters; and Drawing Super-Deformed (*Chibi*) Characters. Chapter 4 contains The Manga Clinic; Drawing Characters with Cars; and Common Minor Errors In Manga. As with other books in these Manga series, these books with the basics are very good for beginning artists.

**THE CROOKED LETTER by Sean Williams. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 614 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.** Book One of The Cataclysm. This book starts off with Hadrian and his mirror twin, Seth, travelling through Scandinavia trying to enjoy and achieving, a holiday together. In their travels they met Ellis, a young women that both of them became enamoured with. Then came the event that turned Hadrian's life into a nightmare – in a train carriage, while trying to catch Seth and talk to him, a stranger accosts them, and with some of his colleagues, holds the two and, drawing a knife, kills Seth. From then on the world changes drastically, and not only for Hadrian. Williams is well known for his science fiction. With this, his fantasy novel set in the present day, his readers will be following this series with interest.

**THE LOCUS AWARDS, edited by Jonathan Strahan & Charles N. Brown. Voyager tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1973-2002.**

**559 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.** This book is an anthology of stories that have won the Locus Award, which is awarded by an SF review magazine. There are eighteen short stories selected from thirty years of the Awards by the editors. The stories included are by Gene Wolfe, Ursula K Le Guin, Harlan Ellison, John Varley, George R R Martin, Joanna Russ, Octavia Butler, James Tiptree Jr., Pat Murphy, Lucius Shepard, Terry Bisson, John Kessel, Connie Willis, John Crowley, Bruce Sterling, Greg Egan, Ted Chiang and Neil Gaiman. I had read about half of these stories before, but enjoyed reading them all. An excellent collection and well worth adding to your library.

**THE EGYPTIAN BOOK OF THE DEAD, translated by Dr. Ramses Seleem. Godsfield tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2004. 144 pp. 202x254 mm. A\$24.95.** This volume contains the translated text of the Papyrus of Hunefer which contains a few chapter of the Book of the Dead, plus extracts from The Book of the Dead, extracts from the Papyrus of Enhai, extracts from the Papyrus of Gerusher, extracts from the Papyrus of the Royal Mother Nezemt: The Negative Confessions, and extracts from the Papyrus of Ani. There is a comprehensive discussion of ancient Egyptian religion and its background – some forty-five pages, and each translation has comments and discussion notes. There is also an Afterword, Glossary, Index, and author biography. The book is in full colour. An intense and easily-read introduction to the Book of the Dead.

**HOW TO DO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING IN MICROSOFT EXCEL. Reader's Digest tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2003. 111 pp incl index. 234x230 mm. A\$35. On sale now.** I did several courses on Excel at work, and used it extensively there. Since I retired I have not used it for the last three years. This book is a very easy-to-read book that will help anyone who is interested in learning how to use it in day-to-day work both in business and at home. After the How to Use this Book, Set up Your PC safely and What is Excel, the areas covered are Basics, Editing Your Worksheet, Formatting Your Worksheet, Using Graphics, Displaying Data, Customising Excel, and Excel's Advance Features. Tying everything up is a Glossary and an Index. Each action is illustrated and uses very clear language and steps. An excellent and timely buy for those who are new at Excel, or want to refresh their memory.

**I, ROBOT by Isaac Asimov. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1950. 249 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.** The impending release of the new movie *I, Robot* has prompted the re-release of this 1995 edition. This is probably a good time for the new generation of readers to discover Asimov, if they haven't already. New movies have highlighted Philip K. Dick's works – the *I, Robot* movie should do it for Asimov. One of the books that made Asimov a household name, the nine stories included here are a required read. ROBBIE;

RUNAROUND; REASON; CATCH THAT RABBIT; LIAR!; LITTLE LOST ROBOT; ESCAPE!; EVIDENCE and THE EVITABLE CONFLICT set up and explored the Three Laws of Robotics that are now well known all over the world as a requirement for restraining robots. Classic SF.

**THE DARKNESS THAT COMES BEFORE** by R. Scott Bakker. Simon & Schuster tpb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2003. 377 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. Book one of The Prince of Nothing. Over two millennium before, after the great battle that overthrew the No-God and banished him, a lone survivor of that world laboured on. He was Drusas Achamian, a wizard who was determined to be ready for the No-God when he returned, for Drusas was sure that the No-God was going to return. The world after two thousand years had forgotten much, but was still as violent. Emperors and priests still planned and waged wars that could lay waste to countries and devastate peoples. Bakker is setting up his worldview for the rest of this series in this volume – fear, dread and despair that would seem to saturate the world. A well-crafted fantasy.

**DRAW MANGA VILLAINS!** by Christopher Hart. Watson-Guption tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2004. 64 pp. 23x31 cm. A\$14.95. On sale now. This is a very simple book, with simple four part instructions and illustrations on drawing Manga villains. The different sections of the book are titled The Basics and then the different characters: Crazy Kook; Street Fighter; Evil Elf; She Alien; Sword Fighter; Skull Princess; Sinister Smile; Battleship Commander; Evil Brain; Fierce Fighter; Spike Fist; Magic Witch; Karate Krusher; Locked-up Lunkhead; Half-metal Man; Wolf Boy; Force Fielder; Queen Vampreena; Dragon's Guardian; Jewel Keeper; Horned Mutant; Cold Cash; Knight Attack; Cyber Soldier; Lightning Finger; Devil's Daughter; Wicked Warlock; and Money Maker. This is a book for the very early beginner – the figures are plainly drawn and the lines easy.

**GIGER'S ALIEN.** Morpheus tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 1989. 77 pp. 298x298 cm. A\$49.95. On sale now. This is the fifth printing of this, originally 1979, book of images of Giger's Alien. There is a Foreword by Timothy Leary and an Introduction by Giger, before the reader is led into Early Design, with its sketches of the face-hugger and alien artefacts. Landscape is that of the alien ship, then the Derelict Exterior, Derelict Entrance, Gangway, Cockpit with its dead alien pilot, Shaft, Eggsilo, Eggs, Cocoon, Face-hugger, Chest Burster, and then the Alien itself. At the end of the book are three pages listing Giger's solo exhibitions, Works in permanent collections/on permanent display, Work in TV, theatre and film, Prizes and awards, Original prints issued as portfolios, Special projects, Books and catalogues by and about Giger, TV interviews and documentary films, and an English biography. Stunning photos and artwork. Well worth obtaining for an SF fan's permanent library.

**HR GIGER'S RETROSPECTIVE 1964-1984.** Morpheus tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 1997. 115 pp. 21x28 cm. A\$35. On sale now. The book starts off with an Introduction by Ernst Fuchs, and the author has a short piece About My Work. Commencing in 1964, with Giger in his second year in Interior Design and Industrial Design at an arts and crafts in Vienna, the artwork is pen-and-ink. Even back in 1965 his black polyester figures have echoes of his later alien figures. The progress through the next decade to his alien figures is illustrated by sketches, illustrations and paintings. His later works, after 1979 are echoes of his earlier works, extrapolated into the future. If you have not seen any of Giger's art, or you would like to get some of these publications, now is the time to get them. These books have been in continuous publication, but not necessarily distributed in Australia. A definite get-this-now!

**THE McATRIX DERIDED** by Robertski Brothers. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2004. 300 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. A parody of the Matrix movies. The book starts off with Gordon Everyman as he answers some very peculiar spam phone calls. These are phone calls that have all the hallmarks of spam email, but through the mail system. He was a Database Coordinator, and spent time when he was home on the Internet. He was also a hacker, and had named himself Nemo. On the train the next day, he met a black-plastic clad beautiful woman who escaped the scene when even more strangely clad men tried to grab her. When they lost her, they arrested Gordon instead. From there on those who have seen the Matrix movies will be entertained with more comedy from the author's pen. Typical English humour.

**A FOREST OF STARS** by Kevin J. Anderson. Earthlight pb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2003. 742 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. Book two of The Saga of the Seven Suns. The action that began in Book two of the series, HIDDEN EMPIRE, continues in this novel. The same characters that featured in that book also continue their adventures, which place them in great danger many times. Alien races again prove that they are not to be trusted, as do some humans. The war between the humans, Ildrians and crystalline Hydrogues continues, hotting up. The humans are denied their usual starship fuel, which up till then had been taken from the atmospheres of gas giants. On an ancient alien world the discovery of archaeologists Margaret and Louis Clicos of a practically instantaneous interstellar transportation system was to prove their undoing. Exciting space opera and entertaining reading.

**TIME'S EYE** by Arthur C. Clarke & Stephen Baxter. Gollancz tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2004. 263 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. A Time Odyssey: Book One.

A new collaboration between two of Britain's best "hard" SF writers (even though Sir Arthur has been in Sri Lanka for decades). The story

starts off following the flight of a UN helicopter in Afghanistan in the year 2037. They are on a ongoing peace-keeping mission and are passing a village when they are shot at. They are hit, and as they veer off their surroundings flicker and the sun jumps across the sky. They manage to land, and are found by British soldiers, dressed in red coats... Later on in the novel they figure out that the planet they are on has been stitched together with segments from different time periods in Earth's history, from the last two million years. One of the other oddities are what appear to be surveillance globes that appear to be from a very advanced technological civilisation.

This book has some echoes from Baxter's other time jaunting series – but Clarke's input has an obviously different slant. What promises to be a series to be looked forward to.

#### **OTHER CURRENT + FUTURE RELEASES:**

<i>Allen &amp; Unwin:</i>	<i>Absolution Gap</i> by Alastair Reynolds. <i>The Birthday of the World</i> by Ursula K LeGuin
<i>Pan Macmillan:</i>	<i>The Golden Transcendence</i> by John C Wright <i>Macquarie Concise Dictionary (New Edition)</i> <i>Natural History</i> by Justina Robinson <i>Pandora's Star</i> by Peter F. Hamilton <i>Kushiel's Avatar</i> by Jacqueline Carey <i>Born of Empire</i> by Simon Brown
<i>Bookwise Intl:</i>	<i>Manga Mania Shoujo</i> <i>Freaks!</i> <i>Knowledge Masters Ancient World with CD-Rom</i>
<i>HarperCollins:</i>	<i>Breakaway</i> by Joel Shepherd <i>Killswitch</i> by Joel Shepherd
<i>Simon &amp; Schuster:</i>	<i>River of the Gods</i> by Ian McDonald
<i>Hodder Headline:</i>	<i>The Machine Crusade</i> by Brian Herbert & Kevin J Anderson

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**WATTS OUT #30**, a supplement to THE MENTOR Magazine. Edited, printed & published by Ron Clarke of PO Box 746, Bankstown, NSW 1885. Also on the Internet at <http://www.efanzines.com>. WATTS OUT is now coming out approximately bi-monthly, as I am producing it when I have completed a two page spread, which is approximately every two months. August, 2004

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