

# WATT'S OUT

## SF&F Book Releases

**Knowledge Masters: ANCIENT WORLD** by Richard Tames, illust. by Ed Org, Hemesh Alles, Peter Dennis, Philip Hood & Steven Young. Zigzag h/c, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2002. 32 pp in colour. 220x285mm. CD Rom included. A\$29.95. On sale now. This book is part of a knowledge series, and tells about the earliest civilisations. The chapters cover the Indus Valley, Africa, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China and America. The CD Rom which comes with the book also has Internet links to expand and access updated information. The format of the book is in the form of questions and answers. For instance one of the questions is "Where did civilisation begin in China?". The answer follows, usually in one paragraph. The writing is clear and concise – good for both primary and early high school. Each question also has a colour illustration that goes with the answer. An excellent teaching tool, and one which will help the student also learn how to use the Internet and interactive tools.

**FREAKS** by Steve Miller. Watson-Guption tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2004. 210x280 mm. 144 pp. A\$39.95. On sale now. The sub-title is How To Draw Fantastic Fantasy Creatures. This volume sets out to give the student of Anime some background into creating Animal people. The chapters are headed About the Artists, From the Author, and Introduction, Anatomy, Werewolves, Meoww! Dog People, Sidekicks, Creatures Whose Blood Runs Cold, The Big, the Bad, and the Ugly, Bugging Out, Winged Things, Monkeying Around, Under the Sea, Sports Mascots, Planning Sequences, What You'll Need, and ending with an Index. Each section mostly commences with sketches, and goes on to the complete, full colour illustration. Nearly all the creatures are animal based. I am sure that the artist will find something herein to start to build on for what they need. Looks good.

**Manga Mania SHOUJO** by Christopher Hart. Watson-Guption tpb, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2004. 144 pp. 216x280 mm. A\$39.95. On sale now. Subtitled How to Draw the Charming and Romantic Characters of Japanese Comics. This book is another by Hart on the basics for drawing Manga. The illustrations are both sketches and full colour finished figures. The chapters are headed Introduction, The Basics, Poses, Bishies: The Handsome Young Men of Shoujo, The Magical Girl Style, Other Popular Shoujo Styles, Cool Clothes, Design Details, and Index. Each chapter has a page or pages concentrating on separate parts of the subject, for instance the Bishies chapter is broken

down into Bushie Basics, Profile, ¾ View, Eyes, Body, Male and Female Comparison and Types. The characters picked are a good representative sample that will help the beginning artist. A good background book.

**THE GOLDEN TRANSCENDENCE by John C. Wright. TOR pb, dist in Aust by Pan MacMillan. © 2003. 414 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.**

For those readers who have been following the career of Phaethon as he tries regain his memory and stay free of both his government and aliens who are apparently hunting him, they will find that this conclusion of the trilogy which started with THE GOLDEN AGE, and continued with THE PHOENIX EXULTANT, is well up to the interest created by these latter two books. The story which told of how Pheathon regained part of his memory and his feats to retain ownership of the starship Phoenix Exultant continues here as he battles the aliens as humanity prepares to merge in the mass mind of the Transcendence. An exciting and fitting conclusion to the series.

**THE BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD And Other Stories by Ursula Le Guin. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2002. 362 pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.**

There have been several anthologies of Le Guin's being published lately – this is one of the better ones. The stories are copyrighted from 1994 to 2000, so these are all relatively newly published stories. Those included are COMING OF AGE IN KARHIDE; THE MATTER OF SEGGRI; UNCHOSEN LOVE; MOUNTAIN WAYS; SOLITUDE; OLD MUSIC AND THE SLAVE WOMEN; THE BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD and PARADISE LOST. As with other short stories by this author, they demonstrate that she has a firm grasp of human frailties and strengths, and show these in here in her works. This collection shows that she has not lost her touch. The reader may find the typeface small – there is a lot of material in these 362 pages – but they are well worth reading; in a strong light, if necessary.

**MACQUARIE CONCISE DICTIONARY. MacQuarie Library h/c & CDRom, dist in Aust by Pan MacMillan. © 1982, 1988, 1998, 2004. 1430 pp. A\$49.95. On sale now.**

This is the revised Third Edition, and is the Australian National Dictionary since 1982. This is the first updated book edition I have had of the Macquarie Dictionary since the paperback 1982 version I obtained back then, though I do have the (unrevised) Third Edition on CDRom. The edition has obviously been extensively updated since then, and the entries expanded. The paper is thin but strong and the print, though small, is readable and the context is easy and clear to understand. The volume also included a CDRom Macquarie Concise Dictionary Word Genius, which can be installed on the reader's computer for fast searching and research. A *must* for the home (and office) library.

**KUSHIEL'S AVATAR by Jacqueline Carey. TOR pb, dist in Aust by Pan MacMillan. © 2003. 750 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.** The last

volume of the Kushiel's Legacy trilogy. This last book again concentrates on Phedre and Joscelin as Phedre attempts to thwart the gods and rescue her childhood friend Hyacinthe. The reason that she is determined to save him is that he took her place and gave himself to the gods in order that she be free. The two journey to far places and have many adventures as they try to find Hyacinthe. They encounter some very strange peoples and lands, and are more often in danger, but they continue on, and it may be that eventually they will find their goal and then see if they can win Phedre's friend free of his bond. Carey is very good at creating backgrounds that are believable and powerful characters that stay with the reader after they have finished their reading.

**GODS OF THE INFERNO by Fletcher Anthony. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 558 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.**

Book two of The Inheritors. The story of the people living in the rainforest in Java continues, with Fern still acting as tribal shaman. There were changes coming, however, as newcomers from far away arrived and began to force the forest dwellers out of their natural habitat. The visitor to this world of 50,000 years ago, a far distant descendant of that ancestral Fern, was feeling the weight of all that had happened so long ago. Fern Osborne was to travel to Western Australia to visit her ancestral land to try to persuade the locals to let her boyfriend mine there. Most of the action takes place in the past, however, and the trial and tribulations of that long-ago Fern are what makes this novel. A well told and gripping fantasy.

**THE WILD REEL by Paul Brandon. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by Pan MacMillan. © 2004. 332 pp. A\$30. On sale now.**

Set in both Ireland and later Australia, this fantasy is somewhat unusual. The protagonist is Natasha Newlyn, a painter, and she thinks of herself as somewhat of a recluse. She lives in a tiny village near the sea and is quite satisfied with her life, that is, until she begins to hear strange music – music that is from Ireland's past – pipes playing jigs that have not been played for ages. From the start she thought that they were fey – and she found out via her dreams that they were – the Faerie King had become enamoured of her, and was determined to make her his. Natasha later travels to far Australia, believing that the distance would keep the King at bay. She was wrong... For readers who like both modern and medieval fantasy in one volume.

**RIVER OF GODS by Ian McDonald. Simon & Schuster tpb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2004. 583 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.**

The action takes place in India in the year 2047. There is a large but manageable cast and the scent of a sub-continent that has one and a half billion people crammed on it. One of the central features around which the book revolves is the Ganges river. There are many characters that are particularly Indian in the behaviour – a criminal, a policeman, the Prime Minister's advisor, a political activist, a street kid, and several

others. McDonald is known for his crisp plots that grab the reader and carry them for most of the novel. The RIVER OF GODS is another such, and the creation of cultures that have evolved a little into the future is another tether. A well crafted book.

**Dune: THE MACHINE CRUSADE by Brian Herbert & Kevin J Anderson. Nel pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. © 2003. 660 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.** Volume 2 of Legends of Dune. Herbert and Anderson continue the story commenced in *The Butlerian Jihad*, when humans started their long-awaited rebellion against the machines that ruled them, with some little hope of success. Serena Butler had been captured by the machines to be studied. When her captor killed her baby son, she went berserk, and the people watching the event rebelled, and the war erupted, it spread like wildfire. The continuing story is told in this volume. The book is long, at 660 pages, and also the print is small, so the reader is really getting a much longer book. This is a worthy addition to the novels by Frank Herbert about the desert planet Dune. These “preludes to Dune” explore the events that shaped the settlement of Dune, and the politics that created it. Excellent hard SF.

**PANDORA'S STAR by Peter F. Hamilton. Macmillan tpb, dist in Aust by Pan MacMillan. © 2004. 882 pp. A\$30. On sale now.** Part One of The Commonwealth Saga. Space Opera has some younger writers who have been giving the genre some needed new blood. Hamilton is one of these. His past novels, notably the *Night's Dawn* trilogy, has made a name for him in the genre. This novel is another which is definitely space opera – action adventure SF. Astronomers have noticed that a star more than a thousand light years away has disappeared. An expedition is put together to travel there by starship. Travel around Sol and its Commonwealth of nearby stars is linked by wormholes; however the event is too far away to reach by such means, so another way has to be found. The *Second Chance*, the starship sent on the mission may have a dangerous time there – whoever who could put a force-field around a sun was way ahead of human technology. A very readable novel.

**NATURAL HISTORY by Justina Robson. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan MacMillan. © 2003. 393 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.** I haven't read either of Robson's two previous novel, but after reading NATURAL HISTORY I am inclined to search them out. This novel is space opera, a name that has in the past had some bad associations, but I have found that the best space opera can stand alone against the best of the other compartments of SF. Far in the future, humankind and its technology has evolved together to form a synthesis, each reinforcing the other. This has worked well for thousands of years. The reinforcing is put to the test however, when a First Contact is made with a sentient piece of alien technology. The contact does not go quite as planned in the “what to do”

category, and the humans find they must work quickly to try to understand just what they have found. A very readable book.

**BREAKAWAY by Joel Shepherd. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2003. 563 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.** The second Cassandra Kresnov novel. I reviewed the first Cassandra Kresnov novel back in 2001 and gave it a Highly Recommended. This new novel continues in the same mould. Being part of the Special Forces she, who helped foil the assassination of the world's President, is in a good place to keep an eye on things, working on making more and better connections with various organisations. Then the League arrives onworld for talks with the planetary government. Cassandra can't get rid of the idea that they are still interested in her (as she had escaped from them before) and is determined to keep out of their clutches. They will find out the truth, but not without some stress to her... Great action adventure.

**KILLSWITCH by Joel Shepherd. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 585 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.** The reason these two books are being reviewed together is that I missed the release of BREAKAWAY last year. KILLSWITCH is the third Cassandra Kresnov novel. The results of the action that took place in BREAKAWAY is still unwinding. The planet Callay is under blockade by a fleet doing Earth's bidding and the locals are hard at work trying to build up a navy that will have some chance against the Earth fleet. Cassandra has troubles of her own, however. It seems that to make sure that androids like Cassandra continue under their control, her makers have built a "killswitch" into her. Luckily her boyfriend, Ari Ruben, has connections and Cassandra is able to hide away using her networks. That can only be a short term solution, however, and something needs to be done to ensure her future is sustainable. One of the better series around.

**TANEQUIL by Terry Brooks. Simon & Schuster tpb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2004. 357 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.** Book Two of High Druid of Shannara.

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

*Pan Macmillan:* The Best Australian Science Fiction Writing ed by Rob Garrard  
The Real Mars by Michael Hanlon

*Simon & Schuster:* Tanequil by Terry Brooks.

*Walter Books:* Bee Man of Orn by Frank R Stockton

*Allen & Unwin:* Doomsday Book by Connie Willis  
Century Rain by Alastair Reynolds.

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE MY NEW ADDRESS: 95 SOUTHEE Cct, OAKHURST, NSW 2761, AUSTRALIA\*\***

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**WATTS OUT #31**, a supplement to THE MENTOR Magazine. Edited, printed & published by Ron Clarke of 95 Southee Cct., Oakhurst, NSW 2761, Australia. 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. October, 2004

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