



One hoarding we're NOT seeing....

Issue XXII - November 2011

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Musings from Under the Mountain

I was going to ramble through SF over the years—but I’ve been rather distracted by all those hoardings all over the place. It’s election time again, and you’ll pardon me for having the urge to talk politics.

I’ve long had a problem figuring out who to vote for. Initially it was because I had fairly socialist opinions on economic matters, and quite conservative views on moral issues. These days it’s more because there’s nobody out there who’s proposing to implement the social and technological solutions needed to deal with the very real environmental issues facing us. (Truth is such policies would be good for the economy as well, since we’re talking conserving resources here). After all, if the human race does not fix those problems, the Earth will still be here—it’s humanity whose survival is far from certain. Yet there is no party for the techno-greenie.

I used to be quite socialist, before I figured out that a lot of socialism resulted in encouraging people who shouldn’t have babies to have more of them. Which simply exacerbates the situation they are in, and we wind up with yet more unemployed, and more unemployable individuals. I still think the public health and education systems are a good thing, and support for the aged, but I do think that there’s a lot of places where the strings of the public purse should be firmly tied.

One place is in parliament itself. We have too many politicians and way too many civil servants. The whole mess needs to be cleared out. Starting with Ministries like Maori Affairs and Women’s Affairs. One is inherently racist, the other sexist as you can tell from their names. Then make a fresh start with the government agencies we actually need. Save the country a whole lot of money...

As for what we need to do, one reason I cannot bring myself to vote for the Greenies is their reluctance to consider technological solutions like nuclear energy. Neither do I see them proposing social solutions like reducing the birth rate among the morons who haven’t figured out how to avoid having babies they (and the planet) can’t afford. I recently read a National Geographic article about how Brazil substantially reduced its birth rate through role models—the liberated women in their soap operas! You have to wonder if that approach would work for some of our own issues, like the binge drinking problem.

It’s a quandary. My electorate vote isn’t going to matter anyhow, because Mangere always goes Labour. As for my party vote, I might just give it to Act—for purely pragmatic reasons. One of the Act MPs was in my class at school, and it’s quite handy to know an MP personally. Which is as good a reason as any. Though it’s hardly democracy in action.

Jacqui Smith

The View from the President’s Chair

BANG! ZAP! POW! FLASH! No. It’s not a rerun of the sixties Batman, just the fireworks that have been erupting outside lately. It’s Guy Fawkes, commemorating that man who, some say, was the only one to enter Parliament with honest intent. His actual plan was to blow it up, with King James and a lot of the English nobility inside, with the intent of turning England back to Catholicism. But the plot was discovered, and the perpetrators executed. According to a Richard Hammond documentary, it would have been a very big bang which would have done lots of damage, including blowing out the stained glass windows in nearby Westminster Cathedral, but not having the desired political effect. History shows that terrorist acts tend to polarise public opinion against the terrorists.

Speaking of Parliament, the madness of the RWC has passed only to be replaced by another madness—the upcoming general election. The place is now crowded with hoardings, nearly everywhere you look. This is when politicians attempt to convince the public, by any means possible, to give them their vote, usually by promising things that they can’t deliver or accusing the other side of doing the same. I’m beginning to wonder if sticking a pin blindly in the ballot paper is a viable option as everyone seems to be promising the moon. Mind you, if someone literally promised the moon, as JFK did, I might actually vote for them. However my concern is that politicians are short-sighted, only thinking as far as the next election and trying to stay in power, rather than thinking about the bigger, more global, picture. We only have one Earth – and some people are starting to think that the conditions that led to intelligent life here were a string of lucky random occurrences – and we need to look after it before we doom ourselves to extinction.

Anyway, a huge thanks to Anne and Peter for hosting our Guy Fawkes SPACE at the beginning of the month. Hopefully with the weather getting warmer we can have a lot more outdoor activities.

See you all at the next meeting,

Keith Smith

President – Stella Nova

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Retribution:

Dark-Hunter Book 20

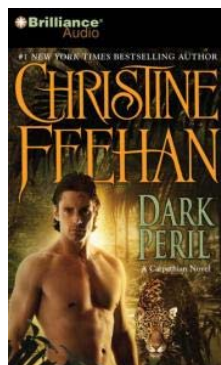
by Sherrilyn Kenyon
 Published by Piatkus
 Supplied by Hatchette
 Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



After the last few Dark-Hunter books not capturing my attention, I'm thrilled that this is a great story, with a sexy Dark-Hunter (tortured past included), a kick butt heroine, Daimons, and weres, with a bit of Native American mysticism thrown in. And a whole chapter on Acheron! Sundown was an outlaw in the Wild West, a cold-hearted killer. He fell in love and was going to change after marrying, but was shot by his best man before that happened. The best man raped the bride to be leaving her pregnant. She gave her son away and went on to live a relatively happy life. Artemis offered Sundown the usual deal for him to exact revenge in return for her owning his soul as one of her Dark—Hunters, who kill Daimons who eat human souls as sustenance to survive. Someone is murdering Dark Hunters though... Abigail Yeager is the slayer. Orphaned as a toddler, she was raised by Daimons and believes all Dark-Hunters are evil and must be destroyed. She plans to kill Sundown, the killer of her parents, but kills a Guardian instead, whose loss threatens to tip the world upside down. The spirits must be appeased... The characters were very well developed and the banter between them made me want to see more of Sasha and Ren. It was nice seeing established characters like Talon, Sin and Zarek make an appearance. The plot was face-paced with a lot of action. The only unbelievable bit was how fast Abigail went from loathing Sundown to getting it on with him in the car while killer wasps were attacking it. Artemis took responsibility for her mistakes and realised her actions made her lose the one person she actually wanted. I doubt she's reformed though. I'm looking forward to seeing more of the heifer-goddess in all her nasty glory!

**Dark Peril:
 A Carpathian Novel**

by Christine Feehan
 Published by Piatkus
 Supplied by Hatchette
 Reviewed by C. A. Hargreaves



Dominic of the Dragonseeker lineage takes drastic measures to infiltrate the enemy camp – he ingests vampire blood with parasites. His plan is to get in fast, get the information he finds to the leader of the Carpathians living in the area, and go out fighting. He doesn't factor into his plans that he would meet his life mate. A complication that he never saw coming. Why do I like Dark Peril? Because it is well written, keeps you interested from start to finish and you get to see that even though you are traumatised, there is still a chance that you can find peace within yourself and the ability to trust again. You get to see two strong fierce warriors find a softness for each other as they learn to trust in each other and to find hope in their lives.

**Darkness Unbound:
 Dark Angel Book 1**

by Keri Arthur
 Published by Piatkus
 Supplied by Hatchette
 Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Risa Jones is half werewolf and half Adeh, a non-physical being that can assume a physical form. She can go to the grey world between the physical and dying, where the souls of the dying are. Asked by her clairvoent mother Dia to check a client's comatose daughter, Risa finds the child's soul has been torn out of her body and destroyed. After making the terrifying discovery that a sinister force is stealing souls, preventing the dead from ever knowing the afterlife, Risa finds supernatural beings are trying to kidnap her, and Azriel, a reaper, is following her. Reapers are beings that escort souls through the grey world to heaven or hell. Azriel is following Risa in the hope of finding her father, an Aedh priest. The Aedh are the gatekeepers that guard the gates between heaven and hell and mortality, stopping demons from escaping. If the gates are permanently closed they would prevent souls from moving on. Keys were created to permanently lock the gates, but now they have gone missing. The only person who can find them again is a blood relative of the man who stole them - Risa's father. Risa's best friends/flatmates help her out, Illiana – a powerful witch, and Tao – a werewolf with fire abilities, as well as some rather interesting new characters. Riley, Rhoan and the gang also play a role in pursuing the practitioner of blood magic seizing souls. There are also two sexy men for Risa, the mysterious Azriel, and Lucien - an Aedh who may have lost his wings but none of his sex appeal.

Quiz: Computers in SF

1. In one of the earliest fictional descriptions of a device analogous to a personal computer, in a 1946 short story by Murray Leinster, it was called a 'Logic'. What was its name?
2. Who programmed the Hal-9000?
3. Who designed a computer-like device called the Prime Radiant to store the psychohistorical equations determining the future development of humanity?
4. What was the name of the Liberator's computer in Blake's 7?
5. Which original series "Star Trek" episode featured an experimental computer designated M5?
6. What is the name of the magically powered and self-building computer housed at the Unseen University?
7. In which TV series was a biotech computer named TIM a major character?
8. What was the name of the ship computer of the Axiom in WALL-E?
9. ANGEL 1 and ANGEL 2, the Ancillary Guardians of Environment and Life, are the control computers of the starship "Challenger" in which radio series?
10. What is the name of the extraterrestrial computer is installed in the attic of Sarah Jane Smith's home in "The Sarah Jane Adventures"? ?

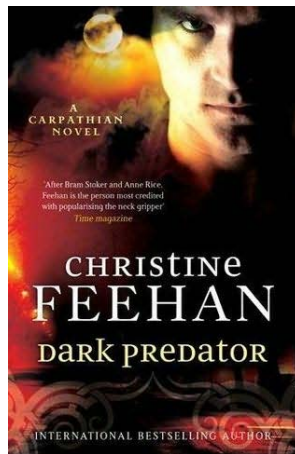
by Jacqui Smith

**Dark Predator:
A Carpathian Novel**

by Christine Feehan
Published by Piatkus
Supplied by Hatchette
Reviewed by C. A.
Hargreaves

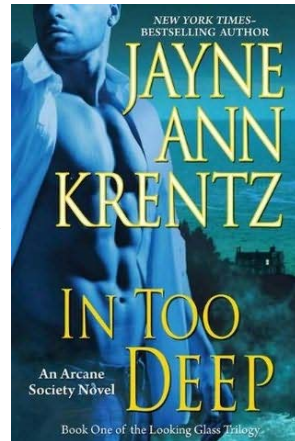
Zacharias De La Cruz is on the brink of turning; he is becoming more dangerous and deadly as each day passes. He journeys home to Peru for one last fight against his enemies... and finds his lifemate.

This was a compelling read that makes you want to read on to see if this great warrior gets to see in colour again. I like how such a deadly predator can care so much about one woman and how for her he would try things he normally wouldn't for example inviting her friends into their house when it goes against his grain.



**In Too Deep:
Looking Glass Trilogy
Book 1**

Jayne Ann Krentz
Published by Piatkus
Supplied by Hatchette
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth
Fallon Jones is the head of Jones & Jones, an investigative agency that handles paranormal crooks. Fallon sees patterns inside of chaos that helps uncover conspiracies. He can also



send power that kills. A rich, quiet, muscular, just-the-facts ma'am type, Fallon is a classic romantic hero. He's also recovering from a relationship that went bad despite every logical reason why it should have gone well. Everybody believes he's on the edge of sanity. Isabella Valdez is on the run and takes shelter in the tiny town of Scargill Cove, where she finds a job as Jones & Jones's office manager. Isabella finds lost things - people, bodies, objects. She insists on taking on a job investigating a haunted house and discovers a serial killer and a mysterious psychic weapon. Working together, Isabella and Fallon solve four different mysteries. Each mystery has something to do with a mechanical object like a lantern or clock. The objects have different powers, such as they can kill or make someone unconscious. These weaponised psychic threats make for an intriguing world to read about.

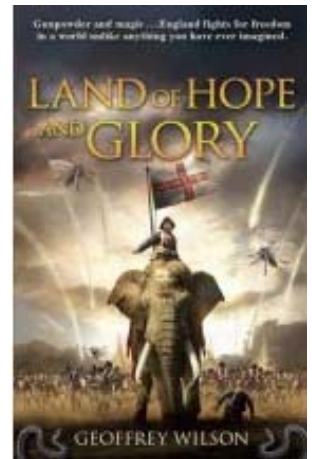
The book didn't have much action, instead a lot of long explanations about past events. When action did happen it was cleverly written and gripping though. The romance between Isabella and Fallon was a bit dry and boring. There was a lot of description of their psychic powers but not enough focus on their relationship and the building of it. They got together way too quickly and smoothly. This was a sweet book and fans of the Arcane Society should enjoy it. It was a bit too dull for me.

Land of Hope and Glory

by Geoffrey Wilson
Hodder & Stoughton, pp376
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

It has to be said that this novel is definitely different. Most alternate history fantasy (such as Mercedes Lackey's Elizabethan "Doubled Edge" series) employs Western Magic and doesn't mess in any major way with the timeline. In "Land of Hope and Glory" the magic is based in Indian philosophy and in utilising the flows of "sattva". That's unusual enough by itself, but then Wilson turns the timeline upside-down and gives us a mid-19th century Britain that has been invaded multiple times, and is now a far-flung and rebellious colony of the Rajathanan Empire. Here we find Jack Casey, gifted with native talent, and able to use sattva to help him track the untrackable. He is coerced into using his gift to find his former friend, the rebel William Merton, when the Rajathanans threaten to hang his daughter Elizabeth as a mutineer. He ends up chasing him across England, only to get caught up in a massive battle as the Rajathanans confront the rebels in London.

Now, I have to say that this book is somewhat flawed – Jack is at times an annoying protagonist, and you can't help wondering why he doesn't just go join the rebels and get them to rescue his daughter. I'm also inclined to think that the author allows his personal views on the Raj and the Indian Mutiny to intrude over much. But much can be forgiven in an alternate history fantasy as original and entertaining as this one, and I'm certainly looking forward to the sequel.



Quiz Answers

1. Joe—first published in the March 1946 issue of "Astounding Science Fiction".
2. Dr Chandra—this was from the movie "2010".
3. Hari Seldon—in Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" series.
4. Zen—there was also a portable AI with attitude called "Orac". The computer on "Scorpio" was called "Slave".
5. "The Ultimate Computer" - written by D. C. Fontana, this was episode #53, in season two.
6. Hex—created by Ponder Stibbons and some student Wizards in the High Energy Magic building, first appearing in the novel "Soul Music".
7. "The Tomorrow People", which first ran between 1973 and 1979.
8. Mother - voiced by Sigourney Weaver.
9. Earthsearch—written by James Follett, and first broadcast on BBC Radio 4 between January and March 1981.
10. Mr Smith—is at his core Xylok, a member of a crystalline race which crashed to Earth as a meteorite some 60 million years ago.

You can find the list of computers in fiction discussed at the last meeting here:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computers_in_fiction

**Tymon’s Flight:
Chronicles of the Tree
Book One**

by *Mary Victoria*
Harper Voyager pp546

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith
I’ll admit right now, that I had one constant niggle with the “Chronicles of the Tree” – and that was the physics of the Tree itself. I just couldn’t imagine how a Tree with branches hundreds of miles long supporting canopies the size of large islands could possibly remain upright! My difficulty with suspension of disbelief was only exacerbated by the concept of steam engines in a world without metals. I wouldn’t mind so much if this was pure fantasy, but the “Chronicles of the Tree” has more the feel of science fantasy, resonating more with “Dune” and “Star Wars” than it does with the “Lord of the Rings”. You only need to substitute the Sap with the Spice or the Force...

None of this subtracts from the quality of the author’s writing, which is very fine indeed, or from the quantity of her imagination which is certainly not lacking. The amount of detail lavished upon the Tree and the peoples who live there is astounding, and the characters are well crafted and thoroughly believable.

“Tymon’s Flight” is the story of discontented seminary brat Tymon, who finds his only escape in his regular visits to the inventor Galliano (whom everyone else in Argos thinks is mad). Galliano is creating a steam-powered air-chariot with the intention of exploring beneath the storm that lies under the tree canopy. Now, while the reader may expect that “Tymon’s Flight” might be about this voyage of discovery, it doesn’t actually happen. The book has more to do with Tymon’s own journey of self-discovery, when he gets thrown out of the seminary and sent to the colony of Marak in the Eastern Canopy. He ends up falling in with Nurian rebels, falling in love, and discovering a hidden talent for “Grafting”, communing with the “Sap”. This is more psionics with a dash of mysticism than anything resembling magic, but it is quite central to the whole story.

As the first part of the trilogy, “Tymon’s Flight” works quite well, and although it is a bit wordy and takes a while to get going, it succeeds in drawing the reader in, and making you want to read more – if only to find out what is going on!

**Samiha’s Song:
Chronicles of the Tree
Book Two**

by *Mary Victoria*
Harper Voyager pp542

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith
The middle volume of a trilogy is always the difficult one, being neither a beginning nor an end. Ideally, it is the meaty bit of the sandwich, and as such should never be lacking in interest. “Samiha’s



Song” is certainly interesting though it is a mite painful in places, as the author is anything but kind to her characters.

It all begins quite happily for Tymon, united with his lady love, Samiha, in a Nurian village, but his joy is doomed not to last. For starters, his talents has a Grafter need training, for which he must seek out the Oracle in the Lantrian settlement of Cherk Harbour. Which is not as easy as it seems with the Oracle in hiding somewhere in the slums, and the bad guys after Tymon and his friends. It all goes to custard... and it’s worse for Samiha who is convinced that as the twelfth Kion of Nur, she is doomed to martyrdom, and gets herself arrested by the Argosians on charges of heresy. Both suffer, as do their friends (and enemies). However, Tymon succeeds in one important thing – he gets out “Samiha’s Song”, though what that is, I’ll leave to the reader.

**Oracle’s Fire:
Chronicles of the Tree
Book Three**

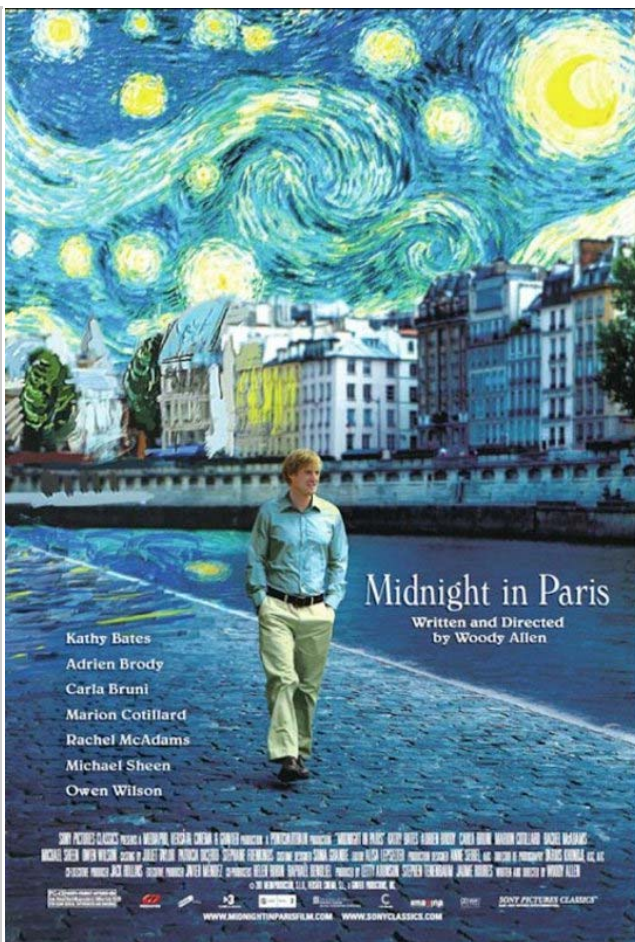
by *Mary Victoria*
Harper Voyager pp 558

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith
The test of the third book of a trilogy is whether or not it brings the series to a satisfactory conclusion, and I’ll happily admit that “Oracle’s Fire” ends the “Chronicles of the Tree” in a way that I found quite satisfying if somewhat

unexpected. The writing has been consistently good across the entire trilogy, and it does keep the reader engaged. There’s every possibility that the things that niggled me won’t affect your enjoyment of these books – I know this because other reviewers (such as Simon on SFFANZ) don’t seem to have complained, so I suspect that I’m just being picky. Although the pure technobabble in the description of an ancient “orah” artifact as a “sub-atomic particle-warping device” confirms my suspicions that this truly is meant to be science fantasy. Maybe it’s set on a low gravity colony...

“Oracle’s Fire” mostly follows Tymon who, after being condemned to slavery by the Argosians, is sold to the owner of a Lantrian Tree mine. Deaf in one ear, and yet literate in both Lantrian and Argosian he becomes a house-slave, his Master’s scribe. Until the day he has a vision of the entire mine collapsing – a fairly predictable result of under-mining the Tree you happen to be living on. He is determined to escape, along with a group of mine slaves he has befriended, and what he believes is a vision of his beloved Samiha is showing him the way. Meanwhile the bad guys are mounting an expedition beneath the Storm looking for something called the “World Key”. Only it’s not quite what they expect. Lots of people die in this third book, including more than one major character, although in some cases they’re pretty good at doing the Obi-wan trick – not as dead as you might think. There are still a number of unanswered questions, and there is certainly room for a sequel, but that’s how it should be.





Directed by Woody Allen
 Produced by Letty Aronson, Stephen Tenenbaum, Jaume Roures
 Written by Woody Allen
 Starring Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams, Marion Cotillard, Kathy Bates
 Reviewed by Nicolette Lewer

If you only ever see one time travel movie set in Paris, make sure you see this one. Gil and his fiancée Inez are on holiday in Paris with her parents. Gil is a successful Hollywood screenwriter who nevertheless wants to be able to publish a Great American Novel... and wishes he could have lived in the golden age (as he sees it) of Paris in the 1920's, to talk with his literary heroes, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway.

One night when he is walking the streets of Paris, Gil finds himself somehow back in the 1920's, with the people he has only read about all around. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Picasso... hey, now is a perfect opportunity to discuss his novel with the people who matter. The past seems more real to Gil and much better than the present. But is it really?

Adrien Brody makes a fun cameo as artist Salvador Dali (who liked painting those melted looking clocks, etc).

Thoughtful and fun, worth watching just for the Paris locations alone.

by Simon Litten

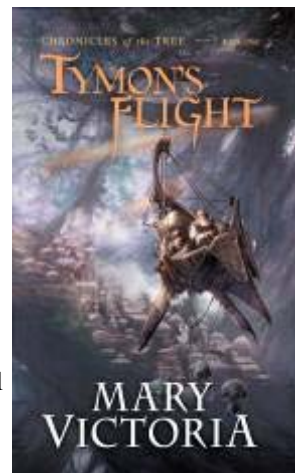
 HarperCollins Publishers
 (New Zealand) Limited

Tymon's Flight
Chronicles of the Tree – Book One
 by Mary Victoria

RELEASE DATE: 13 AUGUST 2010 | RRP: \$26.99

Mary Victoria spent her childhood immersed in fantasy novels. A job on Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movies, working with Weta Workshop, brought her to her adoptive home in New Zealand, and rather neatly back to reading and writing fantasy novels.

Now Mary brings us *Tymon's Flight*, book one of a beautiful new epic fantasy trilogy of a world set in a tree.



The World Tree rises up out of the seething clouds like a green mountain. All creation nestles in its gigantic branches. There is no world besides this one, or so the priests in Argos city would have everyone believe.

Tymon is an orphaned boy growing up at the Argos seminary. The Argosian priests have declared science to be a heretical pursuit, and banned travel beyond the confines of the Tree. But Tymon yearns to discover new horizons. When he discovers a foreigner, one of the stigmatised Nurian pilgrims brought to the town every year as slaves, his life changes forever.

'The magical nature of trees, and their role as keys or portals to other worlds, was an idea familiar to me from an early age,' says Mary. 'I later had the pleasure of discovering through diverse myths and sagas of the ancient world, in both occult mysticism and religious scripture, how the tree encompasses all things, heaven and hell and everything in between.'

'I remembered all the poets, madmen and storytellers who had already taken me there — Tolkien, Traherne, Blake, Yeats and Miyazaki just to name a few.'

'It then occurred to me that I should like to do the same, if possible — to hand someone else a key; to invite them to walk through a door, preferably carved from magic timber, and find their own forgotten country. So I wrote a story. It was, inescapably, set in a tree.'

Mary Victoria was born in 1973 in Boston, Massachusetts. Despite this she managed to live most of her life in other places, including Cyprus, Canada, Sierra Leone, France and the UK. She studied art and film, and worked as an animator for 10 years. She now lives in Wellington with her husband and daughter.

Samiha's Song
Chronicles of the Tree – Book One
by Mary Victoria

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011 | RRP: \$27.99



Mary Victoria's love for fantasy brought her to her adoptive home in New Zealand to work with Weta Workshop on the *Lord of the Rings* movies, and is also evident in her beautifully written new book, *Samiha's Song*.

With a stunning cover designed by her husband, Frank Victoria, who works for Weta Workshop, *Samiha's Song* follows on from *Tymon's Flight* and is the 2nd book in the *Chronicles of the Tree*.

'Kill the witch!'
The crowd waited for her. She could
hear its faraway voice, a hundred
mouths speaking as one.

Samiha's Song is the tale of a woman wilfully misunderstood by enemies, ignored by her former allies, and finally forced to stand trial for the crime of being herself. Because she refuses to be squashed and squeezed into the definitions provided by other people, Samiha must pay the ultimate price.

Tymon must leave his new home and his beloved Samiha in order to complete his Grafting studies with the famous Oracle of Nur. He travels with a fellow student, Jedda, to Cherk Harbour, where he finds it a lot harder than he had originally thought to locate the Oracle in a corrupt and lawless city run by pirates and slave-drivers.

Samiha's fate has been predicted by the Grafters down the ages. When she is captured in Cherk Harbour and charged with grand heresy, there seems to be no way out ... but Tymon does not believe in fate and is desperate to save her life. To do so, Tymon must come to terms with who Samiha is and with the unique role she plays in his world. This means he must let go of his own cherished illusions about love and power, and learn what it truly means to be a Grafter in the world of the Tree.

Mary says, 'If *Tymon's Flight* was a homage to all the fantasy adventures stories I loved as a child, then *Samiha's Song* is a tale of powerlessness, the story of giving up what one already possesses out of necessity and in the quest of a greater truth. It's a more personal story, a more painful story, but is an opportunity to explore how strength and femininity interrelate and how they create a combination that is almost always a threat to the status quo.'

Uncorked by Broderick Wells

I was contemplating my latest proposal for expansion of the whisky cellar (nothing major, a bottle or twelve of Blue, a few selected single malts and a bit of blended for when the masses descend) when She Who Must Be Obeyed demanded that I consider her requirements. I had completely overlooked an important food group of late, namely chocolate. So, in pursuit of theobromic excellence, we renewed our passports, filed the necessary travel documents and set forth to Foreign Parts (or Takapuna as it is more commonly called).

The port of call was **Chocolate Heaven**, a delightful little shop at the beginning of Hurstmere Rd. For a small sum, we indulged in a couple of desserts and a drink: Madam had an iced chocolate and I had a Chilli hot chocolate. The gustatory sensations were excellent and the service was prompt without being cloying. Once we'd had our fill, and with food as rich as chocolate desserts, that is surprisingly easy, we selected a few Belgian and French delicacies to enjoy on the long trip back. We were prepared to destroy all evidence should Customs demand that the product not be allowed to leave the North Shore. Particularly interesting was the anise flavoured small slab. It's very nice, get your own.



However, that is not the end of it, and currently I must find time to take She Who Must Be Obeyed to **Theobroma** in Sylvia Park. Once again, I will be sampling the Chilli hot chocolate to decide who does the best. If you think this is some new fangled thing, chilli and chocolate as a drink have a very ancient lineage dating

from pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. So far, my favourite source is Frederick Chopin International Airport, but that's perhaps a little far to go to get a drink.

It is now approaching the traditional silly season when one's nearest and dearest expect gifts for no reason. Those with access to the internet and a reasonable amount of credit on the plastic will be pleased to know that largesouthamericanriver.co.uk are still offering free postage to us colonials provided the purchase exceeds £25 and a few other criteria are met. While many will be filling their stockings with DVDs, might I suggest perusing the book section. If you have literary interests that are frustrated by the expense of local shops, you may be pleasantly surprised at the prices of volumes from Blighty (well, actually it's the Continent as largesouthamericanriver.co.uk tend to subcontract the delivery to Johnny Foreigner). And with free postage, suddenly it's really cheap to spend up large. Pity they won't sell games or electronics (or toys or clothing—Ed). Grumble, grumble, grumble.



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The Sky at Night – December 2011

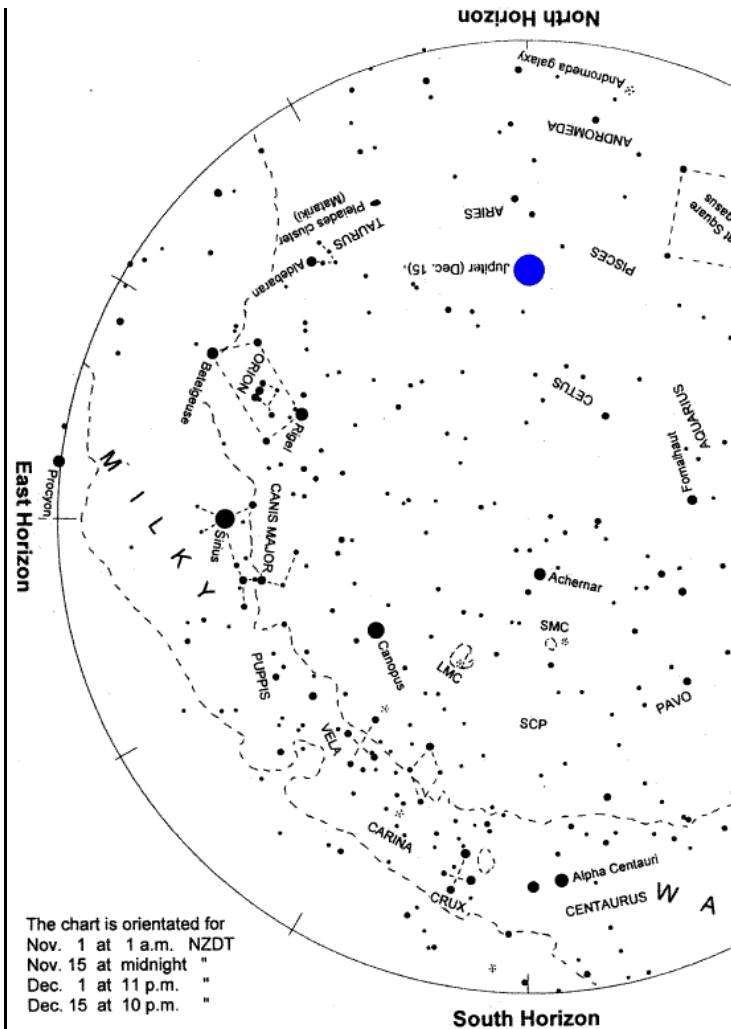
If anyone is following my Facebook page, you will have noticed that I've been posting astronomical photos from a site called www.slooh.com. Basically these are telescopes that are accessible via the Internet, consisting of two domes in the Canary Island and one in Chile. Viewing is in real time, and is obviously weather dependant, but some excellent images can be achieved from the comfort of one's own armchair. I have to admit, it's not quite the same as actually doing it yourself, and you only get PNG, not RAW images, but at least it's something considering the frustrations that I have had this year. There are other online sites but, so far, I've found this one very easy to use and reasonably cheap. Their observations are called 'missions' and one can either watch passively and take pot-luck at where the telescope is pointed or you can book your own 'mission' using a list of visible objects, selecting an object using a catalogue number or even typing in the RA and DEC coordinates of the point of the sky you're interested in. Each mission takes either five or ten minutes, depending on the telescope, and you have a choice of either wide field or high magnification. You then watch the object appear on your screen as the telescope gathers up photons and, when you are satisfied, you click on 'snap pic', which takes that image and stores it. You can then share the link on Facebook or Twitter or download the image to your local hard drive for later processing.



The Slooh telescopes in the Canary Is.

Every so often Slooh have what's known as 'live events' where they track an object. They covered lunar eclipses, transits of Jupiter's moons, the passing of near-earth asteroids, comets, and various other events. Many of these can be found on YouTube. Another bonus, if you've got your sound on, you can listen to a commentary that gives you information on the object you're looking at. I've found it a great site to use for basic astrophotography and I would recommend it to anyone wanting to start out.

In other news, Mercury and Venus have been high in the western sky after sunset recently and close to each other. Mercury, at the time of writing, was shining to the left of brighter Venus and looking



slightly pinkish (as many people noted at the Club meeting). Jupiter has also been dominating the night sky, high in the eastern sky at the moment. You can't miss it – unless it's really cloudy.

December is the best time to find the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) but you need a dark northern horizon to see it, so if you're in South Auckland you're going to be dead out of luck. I was just able to find it in a pair of high-powered binoculars last year from our deck but that was only because I knew where to look.



by
Keith
Smith

compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

Turning south, the two Magellenic Clouds are very high in the sky and well placed. This does mean that the Southern Cross and co are near the six o'clock position and hence skirting the horizon.

Achernar is the bright star near overhead in the south while, in the east, we should be seeing Orion, Taurus and Canis Major. Jupiter is overhead, in Pisces, with Venus low to the west. Mercury is starting to appear just before dawn while Mars and Saturn don't turn up until a few hours before dawn.

Events:

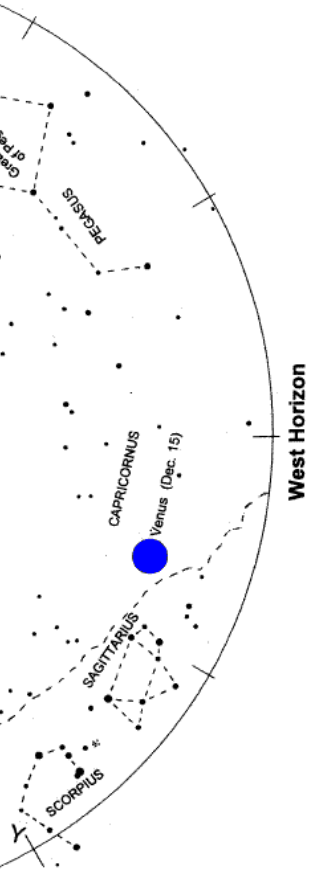
- 2nd December – First Quarter Moon
- 11th December – Full Moon
- 18th December – Last Quarter Moon
- 25th December – New Moon

The Summer Solstice is on the 22nd and the Moon will be at its closest to the Earth on the 22nd as well.

The Geminid meteor shower should be visible on the morning of the 14th

There is a total lunar eclipse on the 11th. The moon enters the umbra at 1:46am, is at mid eclipse at 3:32pm and leaves the umbra at 5:18am. Full totality lasts from 3:06 to 3:57am for a total of 51 minutes. If it's cloudy this time, like it was last year, I'm going to be watching it on Slooh.

More information can be found at:
<http://www.astronomy.co.nz/pub/home.asp>
<http://www.astronomy.org.nz/>
<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/index.html>



Obits

October 23

Herbert A. Hauptman, (aged 94), American chemist who won the Nobel Prize in 1985 for his work in the 50's and 60's on the phase problem of X-ray crystallography.

October 24

John McCarthy, (aged 84), American computer scientist and cognitive scientist. He coined the term "artificial intelligence" (AI), invented the Lisp programming language, and developed an early form of computer time-sharing (which was essential in the development of the Internet. He also helped originate the idea of the space fountain, a form of "space elevator", and wrote the occasional SF short story.

October 29

Sir Jimmy Savile, (aged 84), English disc jockey, television presenter and media personality, best known for his BBC television show "Jim'll Fix It", and for being the first and last presenter of the long-running BBC music chart show "Top of the Pops".



October 31

Mick Anglo, (aged 96), British comic book writer, editor, artist, and author. He is best known for creating the superhero Marvelman, (later known as Miracleman), the "best-loved and best-known British superhero" and the longest-running British superhero.

November 6

Margaret Field, (aged 89), American actress who appeared in TV Westerns including "Wagon Train", "The Virginian" and "The Range Rider". She also appeared in the science fiction films "Captive Women" and "The Man from Planet X" However she was more famous as the mother of actress Sally Field (aka the "Flying Nun").



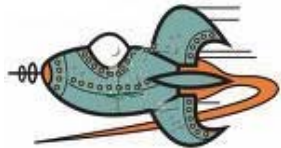
November 8

Gene Cantamessa, (aged 80), American sound engineer who won an Academy Award for Best Sound for his work on the 1982 Stephen Spielberg film, "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial". He received six additional Academy Award nominations in the same category during his career including "Close Encounters of the Third Kind", "2010" and "Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home".



UnCONventional 2012

33rd New Zealand
National SF Convention
Auckland
1-4 June 2012



UnCONventional will be held at
“The Spencer On Byron”, located
in the North Shore suburb of
Takapuna.

We can announce that our Fan GOH is Lorain Clark. Lorain is a familiar face behind the registration desk of many a con, and she who works behind the scenes has not escaped notice either!

Our Guests of Honour have yet to be confirmed, but we are negotiating with a kiwi icon or two. We intend to use the convention to showcase the wealth of talent to be found in our own backyard.

www.unconventional.sf.org.nz

Look for us on Facebook.

This year, we have selected two
worthy charities:
WSPA and Breast Cancer NZ.

Both will appreciate your support.



Stella Nova Wiki:

http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

Nova Zine Back Issues:

<http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/StellaNova:Novazine-new>

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This Month:

- DOS Saturday 19th November at Chez Smith.
(Disk-Oriented Surveying)
- BOOK Monday 28th November at
Marie Williams' place.
- SPACE Friday 2nd December at Chez Smith
starting at 6 pm for BBQ—bring
something different.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 14th November, 2011 at 7:30pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road, Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

June 1-4th 2012 UnCONventional 2012
33rd New Zealand National SF Convention
www.unconventional.sf.org.nz