

Hub Magazine

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EDITORIAL:

by alasdair stuart

The Book of Life

Nine years into the 21st century it's a little difficult to not feel that everything's too big. Climate change, damage to the environment, governmental and societal collapse and SwineFlu, when taken all at once, make it very difficult to not put on a Mad Max leather jacket/plate armour combo or at the very least take out a subscription to the Daily Mail.

But think about this. Fishermen monitoring, in real time, which shoals are strongest and stand the most aggressive fishing. Farmers logging and reporting on invasive species, providing a first line of defence against the next swineflu. Climatologists using the change in migratory patterns or a drop in bird populations to provide real tangible evidence of climate change.

Ten years from now, if all goes well, the Encyclopedia of Life will be fully active and all of this will be possible. The EOL, based at the Smithsonian in Washington DC and the Natural History Museum in London is designed to be a single, massive collection of constantly updated information about not only all the world's flora and fauna but the changes it undergoes. Described as a 'macroscopic observatory', it will do everything from monitor fishing levels to recording when plants first flower. It will, the hope is, act in a similar way to the world wide system used to watch for and record earthquakes, using local observations as well as expert knowledge to create a site of unprecedented detail and potentially unprecedented versatility.

It can be found here and they need some help: www.eol.org

Nice living in the future, sometimes isn't it?

An Apology

In issue 92 we ran a wonderful story by Lincoln Crisler called "Three Blind Dice". Unfortunately we misnamed it "Three Blind Mice" and forgot to state that it was an excerpt from Lincoln's book *Despairs and Delights* published by Arctic Wolf Publishing.

Lincoln can be found at www.lincolncrisler.info

Arctic Wolf Publishing can be found at www.arcticwolfpublishing.com



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FICTION

Last Flight

by malin larsson

He was sitting at a table in the bar looking at a couple dancing slowly on the dance floor to a sensual song he had once heard. It must have been half a century ago, when he was barely fourteen, but he was unable to remember where he had heard it. He grimaced at the thought because he did not like to think of himself as old but when you have lived for nearly seventy years, you're considered old no matter how well preserved you look. Last time he had looked in the mirror, rather reluctantly as shaving the other day, the only sign of age had been his grey hair and the wrinkles around his eyes. There were a whole lot of people much younger than him that looked more bent and worn out. Neither did he feel like a man past the age of retirement. In fact, he did not feel much worse than when he was forty, although this last week he had been feeling a bit breathless and tired. Hoping not to catch the flu, he had drunk a whole carton of orange juice and bought some pills in the nearest pharmacy. Better safe than sorry.

He slumped comfortably in the chair, feeling nicely half drunk and sleepy. He raised his gaze when the door slipped open. A man stepped in, clad in only a white shirt and black pants despite the icy season. He was tall and had to bow slightly to get in through the door. His penetrating bright eyes rapidly looked through the all-but-abandoned space of the cellar. Then he walked straight over to the man sitting in the corner.

"Paul Sloan?" he asked with a calming voice.

It was the kind of voice you use to put your children to bed. Paul kept staring at the man and his heart felt heavy at the sight.

"So, you guys found me," the man sighed.

His brown eyes looked sadly down on the empty beer bottle on the table.

"We always do," the tall one confirmed quietly and sat down.

The old man nodded sadly, stared at the table for a while and then burst out:

"But I've done everything!"

"Indeed, you have fought hard. We have followed every step."

Paul sighed again, a shivering little sigh. The music still played and the couple swayed lightly, untroubled, tangled to each other.

"I would have loved to have had a life like that," Paul said longingly.

The bright-eyed man blinked and twisted his neck to watch the two on the dance floor.

"How?" he asked finally, watching the couple with furrowed brow.

All he saw was a man and a woman in their forties, stumbling around trying to find the rhythm in the

awfully pseudo-rhythmical music.

"In love. Married," the older man sighed.

The other man shrugged with a miserable look in his eyes.

"They are not always the same thing," he pointed out sadly.

"I know. But for them it is."

Once again the bright-eyed man watched the couple, more interested this time and then nodded a bit more cheerfully.

"You are right."

They sat quiet for a while.

"We better go," the bright-eyed man said.

The grey haired man looked up with a surprised look in his lined face.

"Just like that? No ropes, manacles, chains?"

The bright-eyed man smiled, amused, and shook his head.

"I could if you like, but if you follow obediently I feel no need for such things. I leave it for others to judge your guilt."

"Oh."

Paul rose stiffly. He put on his coat and pressed down the red gloves in the pockets. The other man had already risen and waited patiently until he was finished. Side by side, they left the bar.

"So, what's your name?" the old man asked in the doorway.

He didn't like the silences, they left him feeling lonely.

"Angelo."

"You don't look latin-american."

"I am a bit of everything."

"Of course," the man reprimanded himself.

Paul let the other go out in the chilly winter's night first. Streetlights shone warmly over them but didn't chase away the piercing coldness. A car passed in the snowy mud, sliding slightly in the corner.

"Aren't you cold?"

The bright-eyed man shook his head. Then he looked up and took a deep, pleased breath.

"I like winter," he said simply, "it is so fresh and innocent."

"Prefer summer myself."

"You mostly do."

Angelo turned his face to the man and pointed at the corner to the left. They headed there in silence, the bright-eyed man in the pensive casualness of a work done often before. Paul, his face wet of tired tears, walked slowly, rather unwillingly but he knew he no longer had anywhere to run. Then they reached the corner and halted under a streetlight. A slight humming filled the air, otherwise the streets were deserted and quiet.

"So," the old man said and squinted up at the bright-eyed man who smiled kindly. "Are those wings of any use?"



REVIEWS

The Clone Wars Series 1 – Episodes 19-21

reviewed by richard whittaker



“Storm Over Ryloth” Directed by Brian Kalin O’Connell, written by George Krstic

“Innocents of Ryloth” Directed by Justin Ridge, written by Henry Gilroy

“Liberty on Ryloth” Directed by Rob Coleman, written by Henry Gilroy

Starring: Matt Lanter, James Arnold Taylor, Ashley Eckstein, Dee Bradley Baker, Catherine Taber, Matthew Wood, Corey Burton

It could be time for the producers of *The Clone Wars* series to admit a terrible truth: That the half-hour format isn’t necessarily paying off for the show.

The reality is that, bar a couple of exceptions, the show’s themes of the compromises and internal contradictions of being the good guys in a bloody war are often a little too complex for 22 minutes (plus ads.) But where this show roars and astonishes is in the three-episode arcs. Earlier in the season, the remarkable *Malevolence* saga marked a highpoint in the show, and it took a full hour to achieve it. Now the *Ryloth* arc proves that the series needs to think of episodes like acts of an opera, not individual stories.

It’s an epic war story. The Separatists have taken Ryloth, home of the tentacle-headed Twi’leks: Old school Star Wars fans will probably recall Jabba the Hutt’s major domo, Bib Fortuna, but don’t expect any half-naked slave girls, dancing and getting eaten by the Rancor. Instead, this is the pure hard slog to liberation. Every episode is a different tactical challenge for the Republic: First a path must be cleared through the orbiting blockade, then a landing area must be cleared, then the population must be saved and the cities wrenched back from the grasping paws of Techno-Union emir Watt Tambor.

It begins in orbit, as the thinly-stretched Republic fleet finds itself out-gunned and out-flanked by Separatist cruisers. Skywalker (Lanter) and his Padawan Asoka Tanno (Eckstein) have been dispatched to lead the forces through the barrage, and it’s a major test of their relationship and skills. The series has sort of forgotten why Yoda assigned the precocious Padawan to be trained by Skywalker in the first place: That she is as impetuous and headstrong as he is and that, through training her, he may train himself – or at least realize his own flaws. When Asoka leads a full-frontal assault on the Separatist fleet and ends up losing half her squadron to the superior tactics of Captain Mar Tuuk (Burton), she becomes like the brooding, vengeful and (most worryingly) over-emotional Anakin of *Attack of the Clones*. How he deals with that is one of the key moments in the show.

While the last arc, the *Blue Shadow Virus* story, was filled with those little character notes, that was all it had. By comparison, the taking of Ryloth is as close as this series has come so far to the multiple strands and ensemble cast of *The Longest Day*. Having the three-episode structure, and keeping different directors for each one, allows for intriguing experiments in tone. Similarly, each episode takes advantage of bringing the different personalities and strategies of the cadre of Jedi to the fore: Anakin Skywalker as the ace pilot, Obi-Wan Kenobi as the stealthy commando, and Mace Windu as the unstoppable tank. Arguably director Coleman, who oversees the final assault on the city of Lessu, does the most enthralling work by making Windu into a force of nature, steely-eyed and a little bit terrifying.

This is a story about cost: As the venal Tambor ravages the planet and prepares to burn what he cannot steal, the suffering of the Twi’leks is what drives the story. A sub-plot in which two clones - Waxer and Boil (both, as with all clones, voiced by Baker) – find a seemingly orphaned Twi’lek girl may seem like a superficial diversion, but it’s really the heart of the arc, and in many ways of the series. Waxer wants to protect her: Boil, with a soldier’s logic, wants to leave her to her own devices. If she’s made it this far, he

argues, she can make it without them. What they're really arguing about is the soldier's contradiction: That they are destroying things to save things. The whole situation is exacerbated when the Republic forces start the liberation, and find themselves struggling to arbitrate between the government in exile, and rebel forces that see themselves as the true defenders of their home world.

This is heavy, heavy stuff, but so beautifully paced across its full length that even the firebombing of an entire city isn't too distressing for children, but simply mournful. It also marks the continuing evolution of supervising script writer Scott Murphy and series writer Henry Gilroy in engineering the different strategies of the disposable ranks of the droid army (who aren't dumb, just a little slow) and the limited forces of the clones, with their burgeoning humanity fighting with their commitment to serve. So when the battles come, it's not just armored suits versus wires and metal joints: There's a real feeling that something is on the line.

FEATURES

The Evolution of Vampire in Fiction

by janet neilson

From the bloated, purple-faced, shroud-wrapped corpse feared throughout Europe in the 18th century to the 'sparklepire' brought into vogue by Stephenie Meyer, the vampire as a concept has come a long way since its folkloric origins, and horror and paranormal romance authors have brought the entire concept to an interesting evolutionary point. As the tales mutated over the course of centuries, a question has come further and further into focus until now, with *Twilight* as despised as it is adored and indisputably in the mainstream, it can no longer be ignored:

Is the vampire truly a horror story monster in the modern era?

Prior to the early 19th century, the vampire was more a precursor to the modern-day zombie than the vampire that most audiences know today. Wrapped in their burial shrouds, with their hair and fingernails overgrown, they rose from their graves and caused mischief and death in the neighbourhoods in which they lived while they were still alive. The concept of the life-draining creature from beyond the grave was commonplace, with variants reaching back as far as Mesopotamia and ancient Greece. However, in the early 1800s, a different vampire came to the fore, one who was less obvious, more subtle, and less likely to be winnowed out by an angry mob on sight. This was not Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, but *Lord Ruthven*, a creation of John William Polidori in 1819. While Stoker's work is more famous, Polidori's effort was the first to successfully wed the vampire mythos to sex, and turn the vampire from a standard mindless monster to a successful theological and psychological horror metaphor.

From that point on, vampires were by and large the metaphor for sex and lust. In an age where sex before marriage was considered taboo by the churchgoing masses and looked upon as an unseemly loss of control by the upper classes, *Lord Ruthven*, *Dracula* and their ilk represented the animal power of lust and the descent into sin and degradation. Give in to the seductive power of the vampire and lose your soul, your humanity – the vampire was still, at that time, an animal, reaching out to remind the humans who were meant to be above such base urges that they are still animals deep down after all.

Sexual mores and views on religion changed over time. Atheism, agnosticism and queries about the nature of the soul loosened the choke hold on lust and premarital sex. Other views had to be taken by writers to find reasons to fear the vampire. *The Lost Boys*, for example, uses the fear adults harbour of the next generation. To most adults, teenagers are incomprehensible and a little frightening. They sleep all day, eat like they've been starved for weeks, often appear moody and irrational and occasionally seem unnecessarily vehement or even violent. While this 'teen fear' is mostly the purview of the modern werewolf

story, it works just as well for vampires.

The other route used to maintain vampires in horror is the 'unwilling victim' trope, where a standard human is turned into a monster against their will. Lured by promises of power and eternal life, the vampire loses everything, though modern vampire mythology tends to mourn the loss of sun more than the loss of God's grace. Thus the vampire becomes less a monster and more a philosophical conundrum, a way to explore the nature of the soul and its importance in the lives of human beings. Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* are good examples of the 'philosophy lesson' vampire; while *Angel* clings to his soul at the cost of his happiness because he turns into a monster if he doesn't, *Spike* fought for his soul and changed surprisingly little once he got it. This begs the question of how much the soul really matters in the grand scheme of things, and while the ideas of soul and conscience presented in both programmes are thought-provoking, neither *Spike* nor *Angel*, nor any of the nameless, faceless vampires so easily beaten to a pulp in the course of twelve seasons total, are particularly scary or monstrous.

The appeal of the vampire in regards to sex and death still exists, but that no longer makes the vampire a monster, given the sexual mores of the last few generations. Women are more in charge of their sexual destinies and have been for the last fifty years or so. So now the vampire is considered a tragic, romantic figure – misunderstood, maligned and in need of love and care to overcome their nastier urges. Instead of the vampire luring the unwitting maiden into an eternity of sin, women seek to redeem the vampire with the power of love. This may be scary for the vampire, but it is not so for the audience. Instead, the vampire is a source of wish-fulfilment for a section of the female audience who dreams of a man who is enough of a 'bad boy' to merit the concern of their friends ("But what if he hurts you?") but is no actual threat, a man who can be controlled and redeemed through the sheer power of their love and their love alone. Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series covers the 'bad boy redeemed by true love' vampire quite well, with *Edward* as the untouchable, marble-hard moody young man who serves as *Bella*'s dangerous bit of stuff who uses his dangerous elements only for her protection.

Some writers still do try to keep vampires from losing their edge. *Jim Butcher* has created a wide variety of vampires in his 'The Dresden Files' series, some more monstrous than others but all horrific in their way. The Black Court vampires are closest to the folkloric vampires of old; powerful, but retaining the inhumanity and corpse-like appearance of their earliest predecessors. Meanwhile, the Red Court vampires wear their human countenance as a skin suit to hide the demonic-looking monster beneath, whereas the White Court follow a different legend – that of the succubus. However, while one branch of this Court feeds off of lust the way the traditional succubus does, others feed off fear or despair, making them a different sort of monster, but frightening all the same.

For the most part, however, vampires as a horror movie monster are a dying breed. Instead, the modern audience often views the vampire as a misunderstood victim, a darkly romantic figure and a projection of that inadvisable but oh-so-physically-satisfying one night stand they had in college, or wish they'd had. The horror intrinsic in a vampire is not what it is but what it does with the power it wields. Therefore, vampires can be as little or as much of a monster as any human, and in the end, it all comes down to personality. What this means for the horror genre is that not everything with a vampire in it can be considered 'horror' anymore. After all, It takes more than the name to make the monster.



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