



Blood: A Southern Fantasy

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The world is swirling with entropic decay, opening pockets of chaos that draw unsuspecting souls into a paralled universe. Blood tells the heartbreaking story of two pairs of star-crossed lovers caught between the old world, a lawless society ruled by gamblers and riverboat captains, and the new reality called the "Second Ether" in the first novel of a new fantasy trilogy.

Blood: A Southern Fantasy Details

Date : Published September 1st 1996 by Avon Books (first published December 1994)

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Author : Michael Moorcock

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From Reader Review Blood: A Southern Fantasy for online ebook

Carolyn says

I have picked this up and put it back down a couple of times... this time for good I think. It feels like Moorcock is trying to recapture the freely-streaming psychedelia of Final Programme, but this seems forced and is just boring.

Ian Johnston says

This is probably Moorcock's magnum opus, and I'm starting the sequel immediately. It's not for everyone, and I suspect you need to have read a fair amount of his earlier work before this would really work for you. I thought I was done with Moorcock, but this book has revitalized my interest.

The plot and setting, such as it is, deserves some explanation. It's an alternate earth where Africans rose to international power and colonized the world. The white races are sometimes enslaved or at least ghettoized. After discovering "colour spots" as a source of power, an attempt was made to drill into reality which resulted in the Biloxi fault, a massive rift in reality through which you can watch infinite realities being extinguished. The world is unstable and ever shifting, with typical Moorcock imagination.

Our protagonists include Jack Karaquazian, the greatest jugador alive. Jugador's are expert gamblers with a refined code of honour. What do they bet on? In the game "Desdemona's Luck" they create a virtual universe from scratch and contrive to make events play out such that Desdemona is responsible for Othello's death and Iago's redemption and conversion to Islam.

Meanwhile, there is war in the multiverse between the Singularity and the Chaos Engineers. This plays out in some ways like pulp science fiction if written in an odd dialect from an alternate dimension.

The book is strange, moves at a frenetic pace but manages to be extremely compelling. Motivations and character are always well realized. It turns the southern US into a strange fantasy world before slipping off into the Second Ether. It's almost nonsensical in places but it works.

Definitely a recommendation for a fan of Moorcock, and possibly if you like more challenging fantasy. I suggest reading some random samples or the first few chapters first to get a taste, because it certainly isn't straightforward.

Ellery Fell says

I found this very difficult to follow. I listened on audiobook so didn't have the visual division of stories that you get when changing chapters. I couldn't find any attachment to any of the characters as I was too busy trying to work out what was happening. I felt compelled to finish it in the hope that all would become clear but it didn't! Don't think I'll be rushing to get the next one.

Derek says

At times it reads as an experimental work: how little concrete information can Moorcock actually put on paper while retaining an accessible narrative? Whole swaths of ideas, from the nature of the machinoix to the Second Ether itself, hurl past, and the reader's imagination is left to construct a picture from the blur. You just sort of ride this story wherever it goes.

And, at its heart, it is yet another reformulation of Moorcock's core Multiverse / Law-and-Chaos concepts sliced a new way, or perhaps a superset of every idea he had presented along those lines. You can detect ideas from the Dancers at The End of Time, Nomad of the Time Streams, the Seas of Fate, and endless Eternal Champion tales. But the new element is a dollop of chaos theory and mathematics, which if possible renders the extra-cosmic adventuring even weirder and less explainable. There is so much here that stretches beyond human existence and understanding. I never had a clear picture in my head about what Moorcock was describing.

Annie says

this is the first of a trilogy - Fabulous Harbours comes next, then War Amongst the Angels is the finale. Many of Moorcock's characters from other series are in it. I found Blood not to be as good as Fabulous Harbours, and War Amongst the Angels rates ok, but of the three, Fabulous Harbours is the best. It's a stand alone, too, I think, moreso than the other two. Moorcock has such a variety of ideas.

Shannon Appelcline says

This is a very innovative and fun story that also does a great job of reframing a lot of the ideas of the Eternal Champion mythos. The fact that Moorcock has since spent 20 years refining the ideas of the Second Aether speaks to their strengths.

There are parts of the book that a bit rambling, with not enough happening for too long, and parts that are a bit too "New Wave" for me. Nonetheless, the imagination and the ending pay out all, making this a great work.

Lisa says

I am between 3 and 4 stars. Michael Moorcock develops such complete worlds and they are so different from anyone else's ideas. His blend of sci fi and fantasy is terrific - but sometimes his writing style can just make reading difficult for me.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in August 2003.

When Moorcock began writing his vast collection of tales about multiple universes and the battle between Law and Chaos, there was no such discipline as chaos theory. *Blood* is the novel (first of a trilogy) in which he seeks to use ideas from the mathematics of chaos, particularly self-similarity and attractors, to add to his earlier ideas.

Blood purports to be part of a collection of manuscripts inherited by Moorcock, which (says the introduction) at first seemed disjointed and unconnected but whose overall coherence was eventually perceptible. The two main threads that Moorcock presents are a bizarre fantasy set in the American South and a parody of pulp-era space opera. The fantasy takes up by far the majority of the narrative, and is reminiscent of J.G. Ballard's apocalyptic science fiction. Civilisation as we know it has been changed dramatically by the appearance of pockets of physical chaos around the world; they can be used to provide power, and reckless drilling has spread their dangerous subversion of physical law. Most of the people who remain live as best they can, but there are some, the elite Gamblers, who spend their lives pitted against one another in complex games of chance and metaphysics.

The space opera sections are less serious, and are about a great struggle across the multiverse between two factions, the Chaos Engineers and the Singularity; most of the weapons and mechanisms of travel described have connections to fractals and chaos theory.

Most of Moorcock's writing seems influenced mainly by his ideas about the science fiction and fantasy genres as a whole, and by the writers he loved in his formative years. *Blood* is, as far as I know, unique in his output in seeming to show influences which are more individual and recent - Morris rather than Banks and Howard, Banks rather than Peake. The space opera sections have a more general influence. The style of the novel is opaque, quite difficult to see the meaning, similar to but more successful than John Clute's *Appleseed*. It doesn't all work, but *Blood* is an interesting experiment.

Red Dog says

A wonderful book, but one difficult to review (and probably read), especially for those not already inculcated in Moorcock's multiverse.

Think I might just pitch straight into *Fabulous Harbours* next...

Charles Dee Mitchell says

As with the Owen Bastable time travel series, Moorcock positions *Blood* as a manuscript he has edited from papers he has inherited, this time from the estate of Edwin Begg, the famous Clapham Antichrist. He writes that he found the papers initially unintelligible, but that eventually a pattern and a narrative emerged. We are in an alternate version of the American South, where the landscape has been altered by the catastrophic efforts to mine "color," a recently discovered power source whose disruption unfortunately rips a hole in the fabric of the universe. The rip creates the Biloxi Fault, in which the kaleidoscopic layers of the multiverse tempt adventurers and madmen to enter. The fault has destroyed electrical power, giving the novel a nineteenth century feel with steamboats, horses, and pirogues. This is also a world where African and Middle

Eastern races dominate whites who take service positions except up north and in the Western Free States. Our heroes are jugadores, master gamblers who play high-stake games that involve role- playing, improvisation, and a working knowledge of chaos theory. The term “jugadores” epitomizes the language games Moorcock plays in this novel. Jugadores is Spanish for “players,” but you are on your own with the machinoix .There is much French crossed with Spanish, perhaps to create his own form of Creole, along with bits of German and Latin thrown in. You may be able to either read or work out most of this. Some may keep Google Translate open while they read. Or you could just let it slide by.

And I should come out and say that the novel is almost impossible to follow. Although for the last third I felt that I more or less knew what was going on, I might have been kidding myself. Moorcock must keep in his head all the complexities, all the crossed destinies, and all the fantastic physics of the multiverse that run through his novels. One sign of his excellent storytelling is that he often appears to be making it up as he goes along. But it’s fun, and Moorcock’s inventiveness is at times dazzling. I still wondered, however, if he was not possibly have more fun than his readers.

James Turner says

I found it a little hard to follow at times. Still a solid story.

Simon Vigneault says

So far my favourite Moorcock novel. In many ways this is a magic realism novel. A great work of art.

Nick says

This was the one and only time I found myself wishing that Moorcock would have taken a more conventional approach. Blood contains some of Moorcock's most beautiful, poetic prose, some of his most perfectly painted imagery, it's peopled by intriguing characters and explores several great ideas . . . but its all somewhat undermined by a meandering, non-linear plot. Moorcock's more adventurous and experimental narratives usually works just beautifully for me. Here, I couldn't help but wish for a more clearly defined plot to hold onto.
