



The King in Yellow

Robert W. Chambers , David Stuart Davies (Introduction)

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With an Introduction by David Stuart Davies.

'I read it and reread it, and wept and laughed and trembled with horror which at all times assails me yet'.

With its strange, imaginative blend of horror, science fiction, romance and lyrical prose, Robert W. Chambers' *The King in Yellow* is a classic masterpiece of weird fiction. This series of vaguely connected stories is linked by the presence of a monstrous and suppressed book which brings fright, madness and spectral tragedy to all those who read it. An air of futility and doom pervade these pages like a sweet insidious poison. Dare you read it?

This collection has been called the most important book in American supernatural fiction between Poe and the moderns. H. P. Lovecraft, creator of the famed Cthulu mythos, whose own fiction was greatly influenced by this book stated that *The King in Yellow* achieves notable heights of cosmic fear.

The King in Yellow Details

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From Reader Review *The King in Yellow* for online ebook

Amy (Other Amy) says

*Along the shore the cloud waves break,
The twin suns sink beneath the lake,
The shadows lengthen
In Carcosa.*

*Strange is the night where black stars rise,
And strange moons circle through the skies
But stranger still is
Lost Carcosa.*

*Songs that the Hyades shall sing,
Where flap the tatters of the King,
Must die unheard in
Dim Carcosa.*

*Song of my soul, my voice is dead;
Die thou, unsung, as tears unshed
Shall dry and die in
Lost Carcosa.*

Cassilda's Song in "The King in Yellow," Act I, Scene 2

(I probably shouldn't open a review with lines from a play that has such ill effects on people, but the excerpts from the play were my favorite parts.)

I have done homework for this review, which I now share with you: In about 1887, Gustave Nadaud writes a poem called "Carcassonne" (available online here) about a man dying before he sets eyes on the city of his heart's desire. This inspires Lord Dunsany to write a short story of the same name (included in *A Dreamer's Tales*), William Faulkner to write a short story of the same name (available in *These Thirteen*), and, apparently, Ambrose Bierce to write a short story called "An Inhabitant of Carcosa" (available in *Can Such Things Be?*).

Bierce's story in turn inspires Robert W. Chambers to write a collection of short stories called *A King in Yellow* (a review of which you are now reading), in which the first four interlocking stories follow the repercussions of a fictional play also called *A King in Yellow* set in the theoretically still fictional Carcosa. Which in turn inspired H.P. Lovecraft to do something I haven't finished researching yet. Which has apparently spawned a whole cottage industry of books about the king in yellow and Carcosa (just judging by what I'm seeing on Amazon, here). So this is a literary iceberg we're standing on.

The Repairer of Reputations

The first story stars a Mr. Hildred Castaigne, convalescing from a concussion, poor man. The story shines in the first part for the sheer 'what on earth am I reading?' reaction it provokes, but half that reaction comes from the fact that the book was written in 1895 and describes a utopia (complete with a nasty little bit of racism) imagined in 1920. The other half comes from Mr. Castaigne, (view spoiler).

The Mask

The second story stars a character mentioned briefly in the first story, Boris Yvain, and narrator Alec. I think of this one as a retelling (view spoiler). I rather enjoyed this one.

In the Court of the Dragon

This one stars an unnamed narrator and only names a Monseigneur C _____. It is therefore difficult to say the exact links, but I have my suspicions.

The Yellow Sign

The fourth story stars Jack Scott (from the second story), an organist who may or may not be from the third story, as well as (view spoiler), and references the events of the first story. This is the most horrific story of the quartet.

The Demoiselle D'ys

Starring Philip and Jean D'ys. No links to other stories, but a pretty tragedy.

The Prophets' Paradise

A little bit of experimental fiction that didn't really work for me, although the words were strung together nicely enough; it might be better understood as poetry.

The Street of the Four Winds

The last four stories also form a quartet, but they have nothing to do with Carcosa or the horror genre. This first of the four stars Severn and Sylvia Elven. I kind of like this one, because Severn is the kind of man who will feed a hungry cat better than he feeds himself.

The Street of the First Shell

This one also has a Sylvia, and a Jack Trent? Annoyed. Long war story. Skipped.

The Street of Our Lady of the Fields

Americans studying in Paris. Romance. Officially bored now. Barely skimmed.

Rue Barree

Same Americans (different set), still a romance. Skimmed.

Overall, this was really a 2.5 for me (as a 200 page book that took me over a week to read). But I'm glad I read it for the sake of all the allusions I'm sure I've been missing and will now be able to understand. So it's got that going for it. And looking back I really did like the first four stories and a couple of the later ones, for all that the book was a slog. Rounding up.

Reviewed 10/18/15

Nate D says

A classic of proto-weird, bearing all the marks of decadent era during which it was conceived (ie 1895; Chambers was likely exposed to the currents of fin-de-siecle writing when studying in Paris a couple years before), at turns uncanny and voluptuous. Borrows some names from Ambrose Bierce, lends some themes, much later, to H.P. Lovecraft. Opening story The Repairer of Reputations is justifiably the most noted here for its projected dystopian 1920s, creeping unease, and rather spectacularly unreliable narrator. Subsequent stories build on the myth of the titular madness-inducing play with somewhat diminishing returns, then shift gears into a cycle of less genre-inflected Parisian stories, of which "The Street of the First Shell", set during in the 1870 bombardment of Paris by Prussian forces, is actually among the best developed pieces here.

El says

In 1986 Robert Chambers killed a young woman in Central Park in New York. The media called Chambers the Preppie Killer.

This Robert W. Chambers is *not* the same guy. Robert W. Chambers died in 1933 and, as far as I know, didn't kill anyone. Just so we're clear on that.

The first four stories or so in this collection are loosely related, in that there's this connecting theme of a fictional drama called *The King in Yellow*. Those who get their paws on it and read it wind up going crazy. These stories are great. I enjoyed the shit out of them.

The rest of the stories did not follow along the same theme and it took me a while to realize that. Like an embarrassingly long time. Like I sat there wondering how the fifth story related to the first four. I didn't realize that they wouldn't all be related in some way, so after my mind was blown by the actual King in Yellow stories, I was disappointed in the other stories. Though, in reality, had I read those other stories separately I would have really enjoyed them as well. Latin Quarter, Paris, bohemians - I love that stuff! But it wasn't what I wanted with this read. I am reading spooky stuff for Halloween-month, and while the first four stories fit my theme so well, the rest left me feeling cold and a little sad.

That being said, *The Street of the First Shell* is a wonderful story. What I will say about Chambers is he was incredible at writing atmospheric fiction. I felt like I was with every character he wrote, I felt like I was in every circumstance. Even in the stories I didn't care for, I felt like I was making a connection to Chambers' words.

He was a romantic writer, who also wrote some macabre. Personally I would have enjoyed more of the macabre, but then I'm like the Queen of Death over here, so y'know.

I would say if you can read *The Repairer of Reputations*, *The Mask*, *In the Court of the Dragon*, and *The Yellow Sign*, do so. I don't think you'll be disappointed. They're incredible and slightly freakish and I can see how Lovecraft would be influenced by them. And then read *The Street of the First Shell* because it's just a really good story. Very powerful.

The others can probably be skipped. Unless you want the romantic, flowery Chambers. Phooey.

Jason Pettus says

FTC DISCLOSURE: I am the publisher of this book.

Are you a fan of the hit HBO show "True Detective?" I sure am! And after finally checking out the real 1895 horror collection that this show's Satanic mythos is based around, Robert W. Chambers' 1895 "The King in Yellow," and especially after being disappointed at all the crappy, sloppily done editions currently for sale at Amazon, I decided that my arts center could do better; and thus volume one of our new "CCLaP Victoriana" series, in which we present gorgeously designed yet scholarly accurate editions of cult classics from the 1800s, along with brand-new introductions from yours truly that give you more of the book's historical background. You can of course download this book for free at places like Project Gutenberg; but for an

Pinkerton says

???? says

Jadranka says

Zbirku "Kralj u žutom" ?ini 10 pri?a, i kao i na ve?inu drugih ?italaca i na mene su daleko ve?i utisak ostavile pri?e sa po?etka zbirke koje odišu tom lavkraftovskom atmosferom strave i užasa. Me?u njima posebno izdvajam prvu pri?u "Majstor za reputacije" u okviru koje je poseban utisak na mene ostavila Smrtonosna dvorana - državna ustanova u kojoj "bezbolna smrt ?eka onoga koji više ne može da podnese tuge ovog života."

Osim ove, još bih izdvojila pri?e "U Zmajevom sokaku" i "Žuti znak".

Zapravo centralni motiv ovih pri?a jeste drama u dva ?ina pod imenom Kralj u žutom, koja na ?itaocima destruktivno uti?e, uništavaju?i im zdrav razum zbog ?ega je prakti?no i zabranjena u tom zamišljenom ?ejmbersovom svetu.

Sa druge strane, kroz pri?e sa kraja zbirke autor prenosi atmosferu boemskog života mladih umetnika iz Latinske ?etvrti u Parizu. Može se re?i da nemaju gotovo nikakvih dodirnih ta?aka sa pri?ama sa po?etka, mada na momente i kroz njih provejava dah nekog nespokojstva ili uznemirenosti, ali dalje od toga autor ne ide. Me?utim, daleko od toga da su ove pri?e loše ili nezanimljive. Ovde bih istakla kao najzanimljiviju pri?u "Ulica prve granate".

Kao zaklju?ak mogu da istaknem da su prvih pet pri?a pravo malo remek-delo natprirodne književnosti, i da ?e sigurno svi koji vole Lavkrafta uživati i u ovim pri?ama; a da je druga polovina zbirke jednostavno razli?ita i druga?ija, pa na ?itaoca ostavlja slabiji utisak.

I na kraju, jednostavno moram da uputim posebne pohvale uz standing ovation na ra?un ekipe iz Kluba knjige i umetnosti Gavran iz Smedereva. Ovi mladi ljudi su se odvažili na veoma hrabar i smeo poduhvat, a to je da se srpskoj ?itala?koj publici predstave jednim ovakvim prvcem. Prevod je besprekoran, prelom teksta na najvišem nivou, a na samom kraju zbirke je i odli?na i veoma pou?na recenzija Dejana Ognjanovi?a, autora romana "Naživo" i "Zavodnik".

Ocena:4*

Kay?p R?ht?m says

Lovecraft evreni için Necronomicon ne kadar önemli ve tamamlayıcı ise R. W. Chambers için de Sar? Kral o kadar önemli. Aslen bir tiyatro oyunu (tabii ki kurgusal) olan Sar? Kral, özellikle ikinci bölümünde tasvir etti?i sahneler ve anlattı?ı olaylarla okuyanlar? delirtme ve yoldan ç?karma gibi özelliklere sahip. Chambers, Sar? Kral'ın içeri?inden asla tam olarak bahsetmeyerek harika bir denge tutturmu? ve oyunun ad? her geçti?inde içinizde derin bir merak oluşmasın?ı sağlamı?ı.

Sar? Kral'ı okuyanlar öyle ruh hallerine bürünüyor, öyle hareketlerde bulunuyorlar ki, okudukları ?eyin ne olabileceğini düşünürken siz de neredeyse aynı ruh haline bürünme noktasına geliyorsunuz.

Chambers'ın bu oyunu, yani aslında olmayan bir kitaptan/oyundan etkilenen insanlar ve bu kitabın/oyunun arka planına ili?kin anlattı?ı ?eylerin ne kadar ilgi çekti?i ve ilham verici oldu?u ortada. Bu kurgu tarzından en çok etkilenen ki?inin Lovecraft oldu?unu ve aynı takti?i Necronomicon'la uyguladı?ını söylemek de sanırım yanlış olmaz. Chambers'ın Sar? Kral ile anlattı?ı Carcosa kenti/ülkesi ve burada kurulan Hastur kültürü, Lovecraft'ın süzgecinden ve kendi kurgusundan geçerek Necronomicon ve Cthulhu mitosunu olarak karışma?ı za ç?kmakla birlikte, Lovecraft bu öğeleri bazen doğrudan da kullanmış.

Chambers'ın kültürüne seçti?i Hastur ismi ve Sar? Kral'ın geçti?i Hastur ise, Ambrose Bierce'ın öykülerinden alınmış. Sar? Kral Öyküleri derlemesinde de yer verilmiş olan Çoban Hainta öyküsünde Hastur, çobanların koruyucu tanrısıdır. Yine derlemede kendine yer bulan ve Carcosa isminin ilk kez geçti?i "Carcosa'da Ya?ayan Biri" öyküsünde anlatılan mekan ise hem Chambers'ın, hem de Lovecraft'ın tekinsiz öykülerinde kendine yer bulmu?.

Türün farklı yazarların aynı ?eylerden ve yerlerden bahsediyor olması, bana göre, bu türü keyifli kılan etkenlerden birisi. Öyküleri gerçekli?e değil de, kendi içlerindeki gerçekçili?ine göre değerlendirilecek olursak, farklı yazarların kullandıkları ortak öğelerin bu gerçekçili?e büyük bir katkı sağladığını?

*But stanger still is
Lost Carcosa.*

*Songs that the Hyades shall sing,
Where flap the tatters of the King,
Must die unheard in
Dim Carcosa.*

*Song of my soul, my voice is dead;
Die thou, unsung, as tears unshed
Shall dry and die in
Lost Carcosa.*

*Cassilda's Song in "The King in Yellow"
Act 1, Scene 2.</i>*

Sinem A. says

Kitab?; "Sar? Kral" isimli benim bilmedi?im bir karakter etraf?nda toplanan gotik öyküler derlemesi oldu?unu tahmin ederek alm??t?m.

Çok yan?lmamakla birlikte kitap bundan daha fazlas?ym??, okuyunca anlad?m. Öncelikle ; Gotik edebiyat merakl?lar? bence çok sevecektir. Türein duayenlerinden Poe ve Lovecraft da birer öyküsü ile yer al?yor. Kitap Poe'nun me?hur "K?z?l Ölüm'ün Maskesi" hikayesi ile ba?lay?p Lovecraft'?n "Karanl?kta F?s?ldayan" isimli insan?n kan?n? donduran öyküsü ile kapan?yor.

Asl?nda "Sar? Kral" Robet W. Chambers taraf?ndan yarat?lan bir tiyatro metni ve tabiiki kurmaca. Gerçekte böyle bir metin yok t?pk? Lovecraft'?n Necronomicon'u gibi. Kitap ço?unlukla Chambers'?n "Sar? Kral" isimli bu tiyatro oyununa göndermeleri olan hikayelerinden olu?uyor.

Öyleyse Poe, Ambrose Bierce ve Lovecraft'?n bu kitapta ne i?i var diye sorabilirsiniz. Asl?nda bu derleme kitap bir yandan da gotik edebiyat?n geli?imini gösteriyor. Yazarlar kronolojik s?ra ile yer al?yorlar kitapta ve birbirlerini nas?l etkilediklerini hiyaleleri s?ras?yla okurken çok net bir ?ekilde görebiliyorsunuz.

Türein merakl?lar?na ?iddetle tavsiye ederim.

Oscar says

‘El Rey de Amarillo. Relatos macabros y terroríficos’ es una recopilación que recoge cuentos de tres libros de Robert W. Chambers (The King in Yellow, The Maker of Moons y The Mystery of Choice), siendo los pertenecientes a ‘El Rey de Amarillo’ los mejores. Estos fueron precursores del llamado horror cósmico y los Mitos de Cthulhu, e influyeron en parte en la obra de H.P. Lovecraft. Si los personajes de Lovecraft enloquecen al leer el *Necronomicón*, los de Chambers lo hacen al adentrarse en las páginas de una obra de teatro titulada *El Rey de Amarillo*.

Pero Chambers está muy lejos de igualar en calidad a la obra de Lovecraft. Algunos de sus relatos sí logran crear esa atmósfera tan especial de horror y tensión psicológica, sobre todo los pertenecientes a 'El Rey de Amarillo', donde Chambers se deja llevar por una imaginación onírica y un lirismo poco comunes cuando habla de Carcosa y sus lejanas lunas. El resto de cuentos son más bien mediocres y poco destacables y admito que me han decepcionado. Son entretenidos sin más, con un misterio por resolver y un desarrollo a merced de un final que intenta ser impactante, sin conseguirlo la mayor parte de las veces. Me quedo con el recuerdo de cuatro relatos: 'El Signo Amarillo', 'La máscara', 'En el Pasaje del Dragón' y 'El Reparador de Reputaciones'. Solo por ellos ya ha merecido la pena leer este libro.

Estos son los diez relatos incluidos en la antología:

- El Reparador de Reputaciones (The Repairer of Reputations). (*****) Este cuento es una mezcla de ucronía y *steampunk*. Transcurre en 1920, en una Norteamérica alternativa. El protagonista, adepto al libro maldito *El Rey de Amarillo* tiene un plan para hacerse con el trono del Imperio Americano. Este cuento me ha encantado, porque no sabes por donde te va a llevar el narrador en su desquiciado viaje. Me ha recordado a Gustav Meyrink por las sensaciones de anormalidad que transmite.
- La máscara (The Mask). (****) Un escultor ha encontrado una fórmula secreta para convertir en mármol cualquier objeto. Inquietante relato.
- En el Pasaje del Dragón (In the Court of the Dragon). (*****) El narrador se encuentra en una Iglesia, cuando de repente empieza a alucinar (o no) al escuchar la música del órgano. ¿Alucinación, obsesión? Da igual, lo importante es lo que logra transmitir al lector. Magistral.
- El Signo Amarillo (The Yellow Sign). (****) El narrador, pintor de profesión, gusta de observar la plaza desde su ventana, cuando se fija en un macabro personaje. La trama se complica cuando Tessie, su modelo, le cuenta un angustiante sueño. A destacar de nuevo la atmósfera de irrealidad.
- La demoiselle d'Ys (La Demoiselle d'Ys). (***) El protagonista de esta historia está paseando por el bosque cuando se aleja demasiado. Es entonces cuando se encuentra con un grupo de peculiares personajes, que parecen sacados de la Edad Media.
- El Creador de Lunas (The Maker of Moons). (***) Un grupo de amigos que se habían reunido para cazar, se embarcan en una aventura para desentrañar el misterio de los hacedores de oro. Este relato, con sabor *pulp*, me ha recordado a las aventuras del maléfico Fu Manchú.
- Una velada placentera (A Pleasant Evening). (**) El narrador es un ilustrador que trabaja para una publicación semanal, y al que se le encomienda el trabajo de asistir al zoológico para hacer unos dibujos, lugar donde tendrá un misterioso encuentro. Clásico relato de fantasmas donde lo mejor es el desarrollo de la trama.
- El Emperador Púrpura (The Purple Emperor). (**) Quién iba a decir que la afición a coleccionar mariposas podía ser tan peligrosa. Un correcto, y nada más, relato detectivesco.
- El Mensajero (The Messenger). (**) Relato que tiene en común algunos de los personajes del anterior. De nuevo el narrador se verá envuelto en un misterio que tendrá que resolver, esta vez relacionado con el Sacerdote Negro y una maldición.
- La Llave del Dolor (The Key to Grief). (**) Un hombre huye en una barca cuando iban a lincharle. Su

Jean-marcel says

Can art drive a person insane? Could there be a book, or a film, or a piece of music that vibrates against the cortex in a certain way, or opens great gulfs of revelation so profound and so shattering that you could never be exposed to it without being changed forever? If the truth of such a piece got out, wouldn't anyone and everyone want to be exposed to it, scoffing and thinking that they, above all else, would be well equipped to handle any dangers, and yet feeling inescapably drawn to find out just what it is that makes such a thing work so potently on the human psyche?

Of course, these vistas, this mind-altering vibration, could never, ever be described. They could only be experienced. And having had the experience, you would have to disseminate it to others. You wouldn't even have to try. If you had the presence of mind to warn your friends against it, even that warning would plant the seed of gnosis, and before you could say "Tears shall dry and die in dim Carcosa", they would be turning those mouldering pages, their eyes soon wide, staring into nothingness, but seeing....what?

It's the idea of the King in Yellow that's so powerful and sticks with you long after you've finished Robert Chambers's odes to the play that nobody's ever read and remained untouched. Throughout the first four stories of this book, you'll get tantalising glimpses of the first act of the play, which is apparently harmless. The second act is what shakes everyone to their very foundation, and Chambers wisely does not give us a taste, for anything he could say would pale in comparison to what we might imagine, even if that imagining is but the faintest dark inkling.

The first story in this series, "The Repairer of Reputations", is one of my favourite short stories, rivalling, I think, the best of Poe and many other writers. It's strange and electrifying; set in New York of 1920 (twenty-five years after this book was written), and the future depicted is very odd indeed. The USA seems to have become a fascist state, and the tale begins on the eve of the opening of the first Suicide Chamber, little gas chambers to be set up all over the country where people will be permitted to cleanly destroy themselves if life becomes too difficult for them. In just a few pages, Chambers paints a sharp and eloquent picture of this altered, would-be-future new York, and it is here, among the clean streets and pristine boulevards, that our narrator resides. He's just recovered from an injury (falling from his horse, he says), and during his convalescence had little better to do than to read the now infamous *The King in Yellow*. He believes he's made a sterling recovery, but his friends are convinced that he's not a well man. Throughout the story he rails against comrades and family, secretly plotting to undermine the order of things with the mysterious and bizarrely freakish Mr. Wilde. Their "Reputation Repair" service is designed to make them a good deal of money...but to what end? Well, you simply have to read the story to find out. Then read it again to pick up on the little details you might have missed the first time. It's really good stuff; definitely an unsung classic of the highest order.

The next few stories also deal with the play *The King in Yellow* in one way or another. "The Mask" is my second favourite tale, and its romantic and tragic and haunting, and set around the time when the play first emerged into the world. You may need to read the ending twice to realise what is going on. Just remember that anyone who has claimed to have read the play has perceptions that should not wholly be trusted.

While I don't think Chambers ever manages to equal the glory of the first two tales, he does come pretty close at times. "The Court of the Dragon" is a short little piece with some extremely evocative writing. "The

"Yellow Sign" is a little more of a standard horror, but it still makes sense in the context of the play and the maddening effects it has apparently had on the world.

From this point, things move into other territory as the concept of the play is abandoned and we get stories of mysterious love, possible time travel, war-torn France and even a very short and effective ghost story. The last of these is "The Street of the Four Winds", and it's really very good. The image of the young artist taking in this cat and trying to find out where it belongs is evoked so well that I found the story imprinted forever in my memory.

This book has had a quiet, profound influence on many things, I feel. The most obvious would be H. P. Lovecraft and his *Necronomicon*, but the idea of books that rend the mind is a potent one that's burrowed into the literary conscious and has even showed up in a number of movies, too. One might even say that something like Borges's "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" is a perfect extension and elucidation of this very idea. In a way reading *The King in Yellow* makes me sad, because it seems that Chambers, upon receiving some literary success, became rather neutered and churned out a lot of average schlock that's of little consequence, even if perhaps fun to read. If nothing else (and it is many things), *The King in Yellow* is proof that the best work is produced in times when there can be no room for complacency and no substitute for the fire of strange passions, and and that the contentment of a fine house and back-patting accolades are seldom the elements that conspire to create great works.

Rick Soper says

I read this book because I saw an article that mentioned it as a source material for the HBO series *True Detective*. And yes there are parts that might have been pulled from this book, but they aren't the only source for the show. I found this book pretty interesting from a historical perspective because it was very influential to many horror authors who came afterwards, very specifically HP Lovecraft. Now I've always loved HP Lovecraft and i could see where he might have found inspiration in *The King in Yellow*. The book is a collection of 10 short stories broken into three subjects, *The Weird Tales*, *A Ghost Story*, and *The Artistes*. The first two section are pretty cool, not over the top King/Lovecraft cool, but the kind of stories that can stick in your mind. The basic premise being that the people who read the book "The King in Yellow" (which is a play according to the stories) go crazy. The King starts ok in the first act, but then the second tears off the wrapper of the craziness and seeps into the readers brain like a cancer that consumes them with delusions that tear apart their view of reality. But then we get to the *Artistes* stories which were ok from the perspective of historically seeing what Paris was like at the time this book was written in 1895, but other than that they really don't go anywhere and strike me more as filler than a continuation of the wonderment that started off the first half of the book. All in all the first part is worth checking out, but the back half leaves a lot to be desired.

E??is ♥ says

Il re in Giallo è una raccolta di racconti a opera di Robert W. Chambers. L'edizione che possiedo è così strutturata:

(*Valutazione per ogni singolo racconto*)

- Il riparatore di reputazioni (****)
- La maschera (*****)

- Nella corte del Drago (****)
- Il segno giallo (****)
- La Demoiselle d'Ys (****)
- Il paradiso del profeta (****)
- La via dei quattro venti (**)
- La via della prima bomba (**)
- La via della Madonna dei campi (**)
- Rue Barreè (***)

E in appendice altri due racconti:

- Il fabbricante di lune (****)
- Una piacevole serata (***)

I primi quattro racconti sono strettamente legati tra loro dato che hanno come filo conduttore appunto **il Re in Giallo**: una misteriosa figura a cui è legato un libro maledetto che conduce alla follia chiunque si appresti a leggerlo. Scendendo nel dettaglio il genere trattato è sicuramente un misto tra macabro e grottesco. *Il paradiso del profeta*, contrariamente a quanto si pensi, si distingue dagli altri racconti perché non ha una vera e propria trama, ma si presenta come una serie di brevi brani in prosa aventi come protagonisti: la Verità, la Morte e l'Amore. I restanti racconti, invece, sono ambientati a Parigi e del lato macabro dei precedenti scritti non hanno quasi nulla, mostrano bensì un tocco volutamente bohémien e romantico, ma niente di eccessivamente sdolcinato.

Chambers ha saputo combinare sapientemente toni che variano dall'orrorifico al fiabesco; il suo stile è scorrevole, dal fascino ottocentesco ed elegantemente avvincente tanto da farmi evidenziare un sacco di frasi. Questa raccolta si è rivelata un piccolo gioiellino, i brani riguardanti il filone narrativo *gotico* sono splendidi; ho apprezzato un po' meno il cambio di registro, avrei preferito di gran lunga che l'autore continuasse sulla scia dei racconti dal sapore noir, anziché virare sugli altri temi.

Chiara says

Alzai i miei occhi bruciati verso quella luce insondabile e contemplai le nere stelle sospese nei cieli mentre i venti umidi del lago di Hali mi ghiacciavano il volto.

E in quell'istante, lontano, sopra infiniti oceani percorsi da procellose ondate di nuvole, vidi la luna trasudare schiuma e dietro la luna innalzarsi le torri di Carcosa.

Quelle di Chambers sono pagine che sono invecchiate bene: hanno affrontato con dignità lo scorrere del tempo, e si presentano fresche e moderne a più di un secolo di distanza.

Il re in Giallo è una raccolta di dieci racconti che sfuma dall'horror, affrontato nella prima parte del libro, al romantico, presente nella seconda metà. Per quanto io abbia decisamente preferito i primi racconti, anche gli ultimi sono degni di nota e riescono a catturare interesse e creare atmosfera.

L'autore mostra infinita delicatezza sia nell'affrontare il tema dell'orrore, sia nel delineare situazioni più "classiche"; l'horror di Chambers è un horror velato e misterioso, mai diretto od esplicito. Ed è proprio questo il pregio dell'opera, a mio modesto avviso. Si ravvisa qualcosa che sia canale di profonda angoscia e disperazione, ma non lo si analizza; rimane lì, nell'ombra, in agguato ad attendere. Il filo conduttore tra i primi romanzi è proprio questo: il terrificante *Re in giallo*, con la sua pallida maschera, la sua Carcosa, Hastur, Cassilda, il lago di Hali. Ed un libro che non deve essere letto... Capisco benissimo perché tanti altri autori successivi si siano sentiti ispirati da tutto ciò.

Riguardo la seconda parte, invece, l'unico racconto che non sono proprio riuscita a digerire è *La demoiselle d'Ys*, e nemmeno *Via dei quattro venti* mi ha entusiasmata molto. Ciò che davvero è degno di nota è l'atmosfera nostalgica e sognante, oltre che decadente, che Chambers imprime a Parigi, città che mi ha

sempre affascinata, ma che solitamente funge solo da teatrino per del romanticismo ordinario; ho apprezzato il vento fresco, senza dubbio.

Una lettura meritevole, in definitiva. I primi quattro racconti sono da cinque stelle e lode!

mark monday says

?????

5 Stars for the wonderful opening story "The Repairer of Reputations".

although i wonder if 'wonderful' is the correct word. after all, this is a story that opens with a bizarre, sometimes dire alterna-history leading up to a 1920s America where on-lookers gather to contemplate terminally dispirited disportment within suicide-abetting "Lethal Chambers." and after this bit of surprising strangeness, the reader is plunged right into the mind of a classic Unreliable Narrator (the poor lad struck his head after a fall from a horse and was never quite the same again), complete with insanely grandiose ambitions and malicious thoughts of revenge and devious yet doltish plans for his enemies - who are everywhere, simply everywhere! with the added bonuses of various books of ill repute, some surreal shenanigans starring a peculiarly malevolent cat, and the creepy Repairer himself. all in all, it is a bracing and imaginative bit of darkness on the page. and, to me at least, quite wonderful. the style is so breezy, the pacing so brisk, the imagination so fertile and so oddly modern, the experience was pure pleasure. it is hard to believe that this story was written over a 100 years ago.

i also enjoyed the three tales of weird horror that followed, chock-full of dread and formless despair. good stories. interesting and off-kilter and pleasingly sinister. the big take-away is the idea of a monstrous play ("The King in Yellow") that horribly impacts anyone who dares read it, and which is a key element in each of the first four stories.

here's an excerpt from said monstrous play (please don't kill yourself or anyone else after reading):

Camilla: You, sir, should unmask.

Stranger: Indeed?

Cassilda: Indeed it's time. We have all laid aside disguise but you.

Stranger: I wear no mask.

Camilla: (Terrified, aside to Cassilda.) No mask? No mask!

hey, take a look at this cover for an edition i wish i owned:

if you are at all familiar with this author or classic Weird Fiction in general, then you know the drill. those first four stories (along with Ambrose Bierce's "An Inhabitant of Carcosa") set the template for much Weird Fiction to come, from H.P. Lovecraft to Clark Ashton Smith to Karl Edward Wagner and beyond. the names, the places, the idea of fell books of unhealthy influence, creeping dread, hysterical romanticism, humans viewed as repulsive insects... this story-cycle's place at the beginning of it all is well-known.

it is also a well-known disappointment. only those first four could be classified as Weird Fiction. a fifth, "The Demoiselle d'Ys", is an elegant, wispy ghost story/romance - and is also quite traditional. following that

is "The Prophet's Paradise" - a collection of bits of ambiguous prose poetry, or impenetrable fable, or snatches from a larger tapestry never completed, or something.

the remaining four tales (each fancifully titled after certain streets) have barely a whiff of horror about them and so have met a chilly reception over the years from Weird Fiction enthusiasts. they are all about living the lifestyle of a bohemian art student abroad in bohemian Paris' bohemian Latin Quarter. think Trilby minus Svengali. they are about romance, art, naive americans, lack of money, enticing but sometimes tragic whores, some bloodshed (at least in one story), a sad and lonely ending (in another story), some unbearable lightness of being... what it feels like to be young and artistic and ready to enjoy life in a bustling and sometimes violent big city. these stories were slim, rather quaint, rather witty, and quite vibrant. i particularly enjoyed "The Street of the First Shell", which plunges the reader into a you-are-there-now account of the milieu itself and then what it feels like to suddenly find yourself in the middle of a bloody, confusing battle full of heretofore-unexperienced chaos, terror, and death.

overall this is an unusual and surprisingly quirky collection of stories. all of them were interesting and a couple really sang.

Chris_P says

The Repairer of Reputations: **

The Mask: ****

In the Court of the Dragon: ***

The Yellow Sign: ***

The Demoiselle D' Ys: ****

The Prophets' Paradise: *****

The Street of the Four Winds: *****

The Street of the First Shell: **

The Street of our Lady of the Fields: **

Rue Barée: ***

3.2

Before Algernon Blackwood, Robert E. Howard, Ray Bradbury, Thomas Ligotti and many more, there was Robert W. Chambers. But the one who was influenced the most by Chambers was H. P. Lovecraft. Some basic ideas from the myth of The King in Yellow were used by Lovecraft almost intact. How the creator of Cthulu managed to maintain his well-known originality is a whole other story.

Chambers uses haunting atmosphere to create cosmic horror and he does it well. Not all his stories focus on horror, though. Therefore, the reader might get distracted from the atmosphere that was built at first, especially with the last three stories. My personal favorites are *Demoiselle D' Ys* and *The Prophets' Paradise* with the latter being an excellent example of the surrealistic/absurd literature that would flourish later in the 20th century.

Overall, a pretty interesting collection of stories with its ups and downs.

Alex says

Camilla: You, sir, should unmask.

Stranger: Indeed?

Cassilda: Indeed it's time. We have all laid aside disguise but you.

Stranger: I wear no mask.

Camilla: (Terrified, aside to Cassilda.) No mask? No mask!

- The King In Yellow

I came to this by way of the HBO show **True Detective**, which is pretty cool although not anywhere near as clever as it thinks it is, and which features references to the Yellow King and to a ruined city called Carcosa. Robert Chambers was the first guy to write about the Yellow King, in the first four stories in this 1895 book.* And they're pretty cool. I liked the first and last ones the best - "Repairer of Reputations" and "The Yellow Sign".

** El says not to bother reading the rest of it, so I didn't.*

The King in Yellow here is a play, and if you read past the first act of the play you go nuts. And these stories are weird, macabre fiction in the grand American tradition that reaches back to Poe - if we're being honest, past him and back to that master of horror Jonathan Edwards.

Carcosa is mentioned here, and that in turn is a crib from the short story "An Inhabitant Of Carcosa" by Ambrose Bierce, which shares themes with his more well-known "An Incident At Owl Creek Bridge." Bierce doesn't really do it for me.

And later on Lovecraft will borrow the King in Yellow for his story "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930). The idea of fiction spilling over into life, like The King in Yellow does, is one that Lovecraft took about as far as anyone else has, so you can see why he grabbed onto it; his Necronomicon almost exists at this point, so carefully has it been insinuated.

So True Detective is part of a long conversation here, and my friend Liz pointed out over brunch that we're seeing the creation of a myth, like Faust: an idea fun enough that people want to pick it up and play with it and make it theirs. It's a meme. Outside of the specific myth of the King in Yellow, the broader idea of entertainment that will kill you is increasingly ubiquitous. David Foster Wallace plays with it in Infinite Jest, and there's the 1991 Japanese novel Ring, better known for its movie adaptations, and Cronenberg's 1983 Videodrome, and etc. It is *not* an example of a **tulpa**, a thing created by force of imagination a la Slenderman. That is a silly idea and it doesn't exist. It is not, in other words, possible that by producing and consuming enough stories about stories that drive the consumer insane, we might inevitably, eventually produce a story that will actually drive us insane. That's ridiculous.

Anyway, I'll write more about this later but my wife wants me to watch a movie with her.

Paulo "paper books always" Carvalho says

This is a hard book to give a rating.

There are more things that made me wanna stop the book than to continue. But I stand firm and continue my path unfortunately the last two stories were too much for me. I read and skipped several paragraphs at time because it was too damn boring without any purpose or interest. But there are some cool stories.

First of all, if you would like to try reading Robert W Chambers start with the first four short stories/novellas. These are the beginning of Weird Fiction as later Lord Dunsany, HP Lovecraft, William Hope Hodgson, Robert E Howard, Arthur Mchen or Clark Ashton Smith made it so popular.

That's no coincidence that HP Lovecraft used some elements in it's Mythos and he said about Robert Chambers:

"Very genuine, though not without the typical mannered extravagance of the eighteen-nineties, is the strain of horror in the early work of Robert W. Chambers, since renowned for products of a very different quality. The King in Yellow, a series of vaguely connected short stories having as a background a monstrous and suppressed book whose perusal brings fright, madness, and spectral tragedy, really achieves notable heights of cosmic fear in spite of uneven interest and a somewhat trivial and affected cultivation of the Gallic studio atmosphere made popular by Du Maurier's Trilby. The most powerful of its tales, perhaps, is "The Yellow Sign," in which is introduced a silent and terrible churchyard watchman with a face like a puffy grave-worm's. A boy, describing a tussle he has had with this creature, shivers and sickens as he relates a certain detail. "Well, sir, it's Gawd's truth that when I 'it 'im 'e grabbed me wrists, sir, and when I twisted 'is soft, mushy fist one of 'is fingers come off in me 'and." An artist, who after seeing him has shared with another a strange dream of a nocturnal hearse, is shocked by the voice with which the watchman accosts him. The fellow emits a muttering sound that fills the head like thick oily smoke from a fat-rendering vat or an odour of noisome decay. What he mumbles is merely this: "Have you found the Yellow Sign?"

A weirdly hieroglyphed onyx talisman, picked up in the street by the sharer of his dream, is shortly given the artist; and after stumbling queerly upon the hellish and forbidden book of horrors the two learn, among other hideous things which no sane mortal should know, that this talisman is indeed the nameless Yellow Sign handed down from the accursed cult of Hastur—from primordial Carcosa, whereof the volume treats, and some nightmare memory of which seems to lurk latent and ominous at the back of all men's minds. Soon they hear the rumbling of the black-plumed hearse driven by the flabby and corpse-faced watchman. He enters the night-shrouded house in quest of the Yellow Sign, all bolts and bars rotting at his touch. And when the people rush in, drawn by a scream that no human throat could utter, they find three forms on the floor—two dead and one dying. One of the dead shapes is far gone in decay. It is the churchyard watchman, and the doctor exclaims, "That man must have been dead for months." It is worth observing that the author derives most of the names and allusions connected with his eldritch land of primal memory from the tales of Ambrose Bierce. Other early works of Mr. Chambers displaying the outré and macabre element are The Maker of Moons and In Search of the Unknown. One cannot help regretting that he did not further develop a vein in which he could so easily have become a recognised master."

In my opinion, the four first stories are excelent linked horror stories as Lovecraft said before. The rest are not that interesting nowadays. To me they are boring(with the exception of **The Demoiselle d'Ys**).

Imagine this to understand what I think of the stories.... A man is walking and finds a woman in a house where he talks with her. As the day/night advances he fell in love with her but it's late he got to get home and

promise to return (At least five or six pages of talks/images and such). As he passes a church he talks to a priest and the priest says that there is no-one alive in that house. It existed a family there but they died "insert method of choice". The man frights himself and died. The end. In my experience this is the typical gothic story.

There are similar story arcs in epic fantasy. A boy (usually), orphan, is found by a powerful magician/knight/seer or such and says that he is destiny to save the world/country/woman from a powerful evil, that no-one can defeat. But this boy who had no training in magic/war turns to a warleader/best magician, and fights an undefeated evil lord/magician and lives to tell the tale, unscathed. He and his powerful, beautiful, amazing wife.

Oh well, I am getting sidetracked here.

Review

So, the four stories are linked to a book called *The King in Yellow* (try imagining *Necronomicon*). There exists also a powerful evil entity and a terrible Yellow Sign. Two of the stories are in a nearby alternative future America (Circus 1920) and two other stories are set in Paris.

The first story "**The Repairer of Reputations**" Hildred, our main character in the first tale is one of the first attempts of an unreliable narrator and as the story progress we get hints that he is delusional and had a broken mind. And this is what interests me, because the plot itself is not important. He thinks that he is the last Heir to the The Imperial Dynasty of America but his cousin is the way.

The main protagonist reads a book called *The King In Yellow*, which is represented as a universally censored play which deeply disturbs him. This supposedly book makes people going insane and noone can read from end to end. It's legal and exist the Government Lethal Chambers in each city, were people can commit suicide, after reading part of this play.

The second story **The Mask** is also connected to the first (the damned book and the land of Carcosa) and its straightforward with 10 pages. Maybe Yeovil Genevieve comes from this tale.

In the Court of the Dragon is a fast paced story about a man who has been followed by an church organ player. As he tries to escape through Paris he awakes in the church all began. Suddently it seems, a dream upon a dream, he awakes in Carcosa dying... *"And now I heard his voice, rising, swelling, thundering through the flaring light, and as I fell, the radiance increasing, increasing, poured over me in waves of flame. Then I sank into the depths, and I heard the King in Yellow whispering to my soul: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!'"*

The Yellow Sign is the last tale and what a tale it is. A tale about a painter and his muse. As the story progress we see the interaction between those two characters and a man by the churchyard that spooks them. As she gives him something she discovers (the Yellow sign) it seems that all come to light...

"I am sure I wished to do so, but Tessie pleaded with me in vain. Night fell and the hours dragged on, but still we murmured to each other of the King and the Pallid Mask, and midnight sounded from the misty spires in the fog-wrapped city. We spoke of Hastur and of Cassilda, while outside the fog rolled against the blank window-panes as the cloud waves roll and break on the shores of Hali. The house was very silent now and not a sound from the misty streets broke the silence. Tessie lay among the cushions, her face a gray blot in the gloom, but her hands were clasped in mine and I knew that she knew and read my thoughts as I read

hers, for we had understood the mystery of the Hyades and the Phantom of Truth was laid. Then as we answered each other, swiftly, silently, thought on thought, the shadows stirred in the gloom about us, and far in the distant streets we heard a sound. Nearer and nearer it came, the dull crunching of wheels, nearer, nearer and yet nearer, and now, outside the door it ceased, and I dragged myself to the window and saw a black-plumed hearse. The gate below opened and shut, and I crept shaking to my door and bolted it, but I knew no bolts, no locks, could keep that creature out who was coming for the Yellow Sign. And now I heard him moving very softly along the hall. Now he was at the door, and the bolts rotted at his touch. Now he had entered. With eyes starting from my head I peered into the darkness, but when he came into the room I did not see him. It was only when I felt him envelop me in his cold soft grasp that I cried out and struggled with deadly fury, but my hands were useless and he tore the onyx clasp from my coat and struck me full in the face. Then, as I fell, I heard Tessie's soft cry and her spirit fled to God, and even while falling I longed to follow her, for I knew that the King in Yellow had opened his tattered mantle and there was only Christ to cry. I could tell more, but I cannot see what help it will be to the world. As for me I am past human help or hope. As I lie here, writing, careless even whether or not I die before I finish, I can see the doctor gathering up his powders and phials with a vague gesture to the good priest beside me, which I understand."

Conclusion

The four first stories are worthwhile but the rest are not that good. They are romantic stories with some supernatural/horror elements... IF you can call that horror. Since all these stories are free try reading them for yourselves. If you enjoy weird fiction, lovecraft and the rest of the gang try reading them. As I said, the book "Necronomicon" was based on "King of Yellow" no doubt about it.

Now an excerpt from it...

Camilla: You, sir, should unmask.

Stranger: Indeed?

Cassilda: Indeed it's time. We have all laid aside disguise but you.

Stranger: I wear no mask.

Camilla: (Terrified, aside to Cassilda.) No mask? No mask!

He mentioned the establishment of the Dynasty in Carcosa, the lakes which connected Hastur, Aldebaran and the mystery of the Hyades. He spoke of Cassilda and Camilla, and sounded the cloudy depths of Demhe, and the Lake of Hali. "The scolloped tatters of the King in Yellow must hide Yhtill forever," he muttered, but I do not believe Vance heard him. Then by degrees he led Vance along the ramifications of the Imperial family, to Uoht and Thale, from Naotalba and Phantom of Truth, to Aldones, and then tossing aside his manuscript and notes, he began the wonderful story of the Last King.
