



Pattern

K.J. Parker

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K.J. Parker's SHADOW began a ground-breaking new series that takes fantasy into remarkable new territory. Now, with PATTERN, the extraordinary story of Poldarn takes a new shape.

In a world he does not know, Poldarn's future is uncertain. Pursued by invisible enemies, and haunted by the demons of his past, nobody can be trusted - not even himself, it seems. Attempting to piece together his own life from whatever scattered fragments he can find and dreams that hide as much as they reveal has brought him nothing but trouble. Now all he craves is peace. But will he find it on the island he believes to be his childhood home? Or will this place hold more terrors for him to confront?

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Pattern Details

Date : Published March 6th 2003 by Orbit UK (first published May 16th 2002)

ISBN : 9781841491820

Author : K.J. Parker

Format : Paperback 568 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction

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Mark Redman says

Pattern is a very original book and story. The plot continues to develop (plot elements are left out as a device to deliberately obscure the reader). After a while plot elements start making sense, just as Poldarn continues to regain his memories. At times humorous, full of the usual Parker slight of hand plot devices, overall a worthwhile sequel.

Jeremy Jackson says

Volcanoes, blacksmithing, and dreams encompass almost 600 pages of excellence. It's a slow burn, as you might imagine, but foreshadowing and metaphor spur you on (for the puzzle's sake, if nothing else). There's a passage in this book that uses scrap iron and a forge to create one of the most beautiful metaphors of human love and loss I've ever read.

The ending is almost Hellenistically tragic, and it pays dividends for your patience. The entire trilogy can be likened to the old tragedies: a man whose intentions are innately good loses all memory of who he is, and spends his time discovering who he was and trying to redeem himself for acts he cannot even remember. Poldarn learns how much of who we are is choice, and how far intentions go when set beside results; what does it mean to change who we are, and can it even be done? What makes a good person: their intent, or their accomplishment? If intent, are we then absolved for evil results? If accomplishment, can a bad man be called good if his actions have favorable consequences, or a good man be called bad if his choices lead to disaster? Whatever Parker's intent with the Scavenger Trilogy, the result is a fine one. Highly recommended.

Frank says

For some reason, this series gets a lot of hate in the reviews - most of the negative reviews fixate on the "complexity" and difficulty in following the story. I'm glad I ignored the haters on this one.

My personal experience is that I read the first in the series some years ago, loved it, and stumbled upon the remaining bits in the trilogy in a used bookstore. After finishing the second, I immediately picked up the third because the series is that damn good. I picked up the necessary back story as needed and the mechanic of dreams from multiple contexts is fascinating and not that difficult to grasp.

The humor is dark and dry, just like I like it. It reminds me of Abercrombie's work. If you liked The First Law series, you will probably dig this series as well.

John says

I'd really liked the first book in this trilogy (Shadow), and this was probably even better, though very different. It's very slow-paced, detailed, and focused on 'slice-of-life'. Poldarn is trying to get back to how his life used to be, despite his amnesia, and a lot of the story is the day-yo-day life and him trying to fit in with the locals. It is told so well that it doesn't feel boring, even when there's just a page of blacksmithing, or

descriptions of them building a house. There are still hints at his past life, which are doled out by other people, or by his dreams/flashbacks which are suitable confusing on the first read, but begin to make sense as more is revealed.

Things are revealed that make throwaway lines in the first book have way more meaning, and there is some incredibly subtle foreshadowing that was great when it paid off. My only quibble is that a lot of the characters felt very similar (although there is a very good reason for this), but it did make Poldarn stand out more.

Liviu says

Great sequel to Shadow; Poldarn back home, householder, farmer and soon to be married, and death, disaster and mayhem follows despite his best intentions; just great

Tom Loock says

Revised comments now that I've finished Memory.

Easy to see why this one divides Parker/Holt-fans:

It's an unusual novel for him. While the first novel in the Scavenger-trilogy, Shadow, follows Poldarn and plays (or should I say, intentionally confuses the reader) with events in the present and at various times and places in the past, this one is all Poldarn, all straight forward, all one location.

Though marketed as 'fantasy' there is no a fantastic element here (as in all of Parker's novels so far) while a great deal of space is given to even minute details of work in a forge and during the construction of a timber-frame house.

Simply for the sake of comprehension you *could* just skip this second part and would not miss much regarding the main storyline - *but please don't!* Pattern is well worth reading. It takes place in one location and is told in a straight forward-style, almost linear, with a different cast of characters. It's not your typical *weak second part* at all, but it is the odd one out.

Brett Maack says

Disclaimer: I am a HUGE fan of Tom Holt / K.J. Parker and I think the man is a genius.

Unlike "Shadow", everything that Parker sets up within the narrative of "Pattern" is paid off by the end. However, my only quibble with this novel is that it is indeed paced very slowly. There's nothing inherently wrong with that. Farm life and volcanoes are both rather dull until something bad happens.

Our protagonist, Poldarn, starts transitioning from his reactive nature in "Shadow" to a more proactive temperament. The typical Parker poetics are spectacular as always, and when things start to heat up in the narrative the storytelling becomes very gripping.

The real reason behind why "Pattern" is slower than "Shadow" is because Parker decided to make the rather uncharacteristic choice of not having any other POV characters besides Poldarn. With the narrative device of changing characters, Parker is usually capable of telling very briskly paced stories. However, with just one POV, we have to live with Poldarn through everything, whether it be compelling leadership during crises or monotonous farm life.

But in truth, these are minor objections. The book is written quite beautifully and there are times where the author's depiction of ancient blacksmithing or farming made me want to go try and learn metalworking.

You will NOT regret reading this book, but I'd recommend taking it slow and reading a chapter every day or two. After all, contemplating the divine takes time.

Duncan says

Second in the series, continuing to unravel the past of our memory-less "hero," who is now back on his island of origin but still largely unable to remember anything about his past--and yet his actions play out familiar patterns, and he finds himself unexpectedly gifted at certain tasks, many of them involving violence. Explores similar themes as Iain M. Banks's *Use of Weapons*, but narratively this works very differently, and the ostensible focus is on whether we are the sum of our actions or something else. Shot through with mordant humor and philosophical asides.

Doughtier says

I am so confused but I can't stop reading.

Jason says

2 Stars

I only made it 12% into this one. I loved book one of the Scavenger Trilogy even though it is not an easy read. I reviewed book one before starting this one and was looking forward to it. Unfortunately this book has been way too slow for me at this time. Nothing has happened. Zero, zilch, nada...

I will make my way back to this when my attention span can handle the glacier pacing. until then...

David Scrimshaw says

Pattern is the second book in a pretty weird fantasy series. It's completely readable and interesting, but, although we're starting to get clues about what's going on, by the end of this book, we're still as lost as Poldarn the main character.

This book might appeal to people interested in how Vikings lived when they weren't raiding their

neighbours. That is, if Vikings could read each others minds.

I'm hoping that I'll get to read the final book, *Memory*, but the Ottawa Public Library doesn't have it, they won't let me suggest they buy it because it was published too long ago, and their interlibrary loan page is broken.

No talking cats, but sometimes a crow talks.

Carina says

Our confused and amnesia suffering Poldarn (who knows what is name is anymore!) has finally made it home on an Island that he spent his childhood. His people have abilities he has long forgotten how to use and that makes him the outcast, something they keep reminding him that he was before he left as well, so nothing much has changed really. He tries to settle though, but starts peering up at the mountain that has been named Poldarn's Forge, a Volcano. He spends most of his time having flash backs, trying to take up his trade of a Blacksmith by making nails, surviving mud ash slides from the Volcano erupting and marrying someone young. He acts like a dick at his wedding games, murders a few people and keep alienating himself further from the people who are supposed to be his kin.

After a few days after I finished the book I thought a lot of paper had been wasted on nothing, but a lot happens. Its slow paced and interesting, obscure and you can't decide wether you like the guy or not, he is (as I discussed with a friend who recommended the series) the ultimate anti-hero. Lovable and distasteful at the same time. I can't wait to see what he gets up to in the next book. Hopefully some major revelation of his identity will be revealed in a spectacular way.

Peter says

A very worthy sequel: In the first book of The Scavenger Trilogy, *Shadow*, many things were discovered about the main character Poldarn, from the scattered memories of his past which returned to him in fragmented form in his dreams. But many more things were revealed about K.J.Parker, the most obvious being this man is a major new talent in the fantasy genre, and has assured himself a place in my personal must-read list from here on; another discovery about him is that he loves to toy with his reader. *Shadow* was littered with false clues and hints, leading the reader to constantly rework their theories over who Poldarn really was. This was one of the book's strongest and most intriguing parts.

It is even more strongly the case in the sequel, *Pattern*. Poldarn's past is by no means decided as he arrives at his childhood home and meets his estranged family. This book takes a different tack to the first, with Poldarn remaining essentially in the same place and having to deal with the other characters around him rather than wandering the hills and taking life as it comes (or, more likely, punches him in the face). This is a welcome change and adds diversity to the Poldarn's story; the dreams also return and with them a plethora of new suspicions and ponderings over who he has been in his forgotten life. And now he is surrounded by people who know something of his past and aren't telling him, so much can be gleaned (perhaps falsely, however) from their reactions to him.

The most enjoyable aspect of Parker's works, I think, is the cynically realistic tone he maintains throughout his novels, a pessimistic, or realistic perhaps, take on life which grounds his characters in a more believable

world than the typical fantasy heroes and heroines of the genre. There really wasn't a poor quality sentence in the whole book (and in a side note, it was incredibly well proof read, with only a couple of missing speech marks to be seen).

It's surprisingly difficult to review this book, because there is so much to commend it which is hard to describe. As this is the second book in a trilogy, I would assume that you have read *Shadow*, and therefore are familiar with what made *Shadow* an excellent book; all that can easily be said from that basis is that *Pattern* keeps up that supreme quality, but moves both Poldarn and the plot forward. It gets a little complicated in the sometimes (intentionally) conflicting dreams and memories he has, and had me keeping some notes to stay on track with the revelations...all to little avail because there is a magnificently surprising twist in the final pages.

To bring that rambling to an end - buy this book. It deserves attention and acclaim, and I look forward to both the final instalment and K.J. Parker gaining the true status as a superb fantasy writer that he has proven he richly deserves with both *Shadow* and *Pattern*.

Ben says

Tedious and failing to engage the reader, this book is a real slog to read through. Parker strings us along with vague hints of something more interesting to happen at some point further down the line. It had been some time since I read the first part of this, so I had forgotten how frustrating it was - but it came back to me with time. Naturally, this ends with nothing at all being resolved and the vague hint that whatever this series is actually about may be revealed in the third book. Unfortunately, after an incredibly boring read without any kind of character interest and far too much repetitive filler or nothingness, I was left with no desire to find out what-so-ever.

If you were not taken with the first book, then do not bother reading any further - you will just find yourself wasting more time. Cut your loses and stop reading now. If it turns out the first book tickled your fancy, then you will probably enjoy this bleak, tasteless and unsatisfying read.

Brian Maicke says

A hard book to describe. The *Scavenger* series seems to be following a similar structure to Parker's *Fencer* trilogy in that the books are following the exploits of one main character in a set of related, not quite entirely separate stories.

In this installment Poldarn goes back to his boyhood home to take up his rightful place on his family's farm. There are no epic battles against evil hordes in this story. Instead, it deals with Poldarn's difficulty trying to fit in with his family and ... Oh, yeah a volcano erupting and threatening to destroy everything he has come to know in his homeland.

Even though there isn't much traditional action that you would expect in a fantasy series, the book moves well and of course has the trademark extremely detailed descriptions of craftsman in a pre-industrial society. If you aren't a fan, the passages are relatively easy to skim over, but I always find them interesting and they

add a weight and texture to the world that I enjoy.

Looking forward to the last book in the series.
