



City of Saints and Madmen

By Jeff VanderMeer

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In **City of Saints and Madmen**, Jeff VanderMeer has reinvented the literature of the fantastic. You hold in your hands an invitation to a place unlike any you've ever visited—an invitation delivered by one of our most audacious and astonishing literary magicians.

City of elegance and squalor. Of religious fervor and wanton lusts. And everywhere, on the walls of courtyards and churches, an incandescent fungus of mysterious and ominous origin. In Ambergris, a would-be suitor discovers that a sunlit street can become a killing ground in the blink of an eye. An artist receives an invitation to a beheading—and finds himself enchanted. And a patient in a mental institution is convinced he's made up a city called Ambergris, imagined its every last detail, and that he's really from a place called Chicago....

By turns sensuous and terrifying, filled with exotica and eroticism, this interwoven collection of stories, histories, and “eyewitness” reports invokes a universe within a puzzlebox where you can lose—and find—yourself again.

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City of Saints and Madmen By Jeff VanderMeer Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #254964 in Books
- Brand: Vandermeer, Jeff/ Moorcock, Michael (INT)
- Published on: 2006-02-28
- Released on: 2006-02-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x 1.50" w x 5.20" l, 1.57 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 704 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A master of postmodern game playing, VanderMeer (*The Exchange*) here gathers all the fiction published in his earlier trade paper collection (also titled, in a typically Borgesian maneuver, *City of Saints and Madmen*), plus an equal amount of new material. Set in the haunted city of Ambergris, with its Borges Bookstore, these stories feature bizarre recurring characters and intensely self-referential plots. Among the highlights are the World Fantasy Award-winning *Transformation of Martin Lake*, the tale of a talented painter who's obsessed with a great composer; *The Strange Case of X*, which concerns an incarcerated lunatic found wandering the streets of Ambergris carrying the very book being discussed in this review; the wonderful new story *The Cage*, in which an antiques dealer becomes infected with a fungus that's slowly taking over much of the city; and, oddest of all perhaps, an untitled short story, which fills the entire dust jacket and concerns an unnamed traveler who has a close encounter with a giant squid in the river that runs through Ambergris. Other pieces take many forms, including a history of the city complete with footnotes, psychiatric records from a local hospital, an amazingly funny work of pseudo-biology entitled *King Squid* and entirely bogus bibliographies and glossaries. This beautifully written, virtually hallucinatory work isn't for every taste, but connoisseurs of the finest in postmodern fantasy will find it enormously rewarding.

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Review

a masterful novel...complex and textured, decadent and decaying...a beautiful work of art, both as physical object and text. -- *Locus Online*, 2002

From the Publisher

THE COLLECTION THAT CHINA MIEVILLE CALLED "ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF 2001"-- ENHANCED WITH 55,000 WORDS OF NEW MATERIAL and innovative artwork and design by seven artists and three designers. A SUMPTUOUS FEAST OF TEXT AND ILLUSTRATION. This collection contains VanderMeer's Theodore Sturgeon Award finalist novella "*Dradin, In Love*" and his World Fantasy Award winning novella "*Transformation of Martin Lake*". Garry Nurrish served as chief designer on this ground-breaking project. John Coulthart, of *Hawkwind* and *Lovecraft* illustration fame, contributed several title pages. Here are comments on prior Ambergris titles by reviewers and authors:

"City of Saints packs so much literary and emotional matter into the confines of one city, it defies both the standard category of 'collection' and the newer label 'story suite'. Other fantasy authors may stripmine their invented worlds...for the last scrap of ore; VanderMeer keeps going deeper, and finding new forms of gold."
-Faren Miller, *Locus*.

"...enormously talented, possessing a painterly mastery of the Grotesque that makes his intensely-wrought dark fantasy an experience to be savored." - Nick Gevers, *Locus Online*, the Top 10 SF & Fantasy Short Story Writers

"Ambergris is one of the great and unforgettable fantastic cities...it is a magnificent darkness." – Redsine

"[a] truly wonderful creation, the strange and ancient city of Ambergris pulls [the reader] deeper and deeper into pause-producing insights or startlingly nasty and/or beautiful revelations." - Gahan Wilson, *Realms of Fantasy*

"Written with a richness of language and imagery uncommon for fantasy, and the equivalent of the best

offered by contemporary literary stylists, the authors blends... traditions both literary and social with an equal measure of playfulness. Descriptive passages possess an originality and individual vitality for which it is hard to find parallel." - William Thompson, SF Site

TERRI WINDLING, Editor Year's Best Fantasy & Horror "Walking into Jeff VanderMeer's *Ambergris* is like stepping inside of a surrealist painting by Leonora Carrington or Remedios Varo. I recommend the journey to all travelers with a taste for the fantastic." -Terri Windling, Editor, The Year's Best Fantasy & Horror

S.P. SOMTOW "VanderMeer is a master craftsman. His finely-honed language, laser-sharp, penetrates to the painful core of human experience."

MICHAEL MOORCOCK "Examining VanderMeer one is reminded of the glories of Angkor and Anudhapura combined with the bustle and swagger of Captain Conrad's Indonesia, the adventurous intrigues of Byzantium and Venice, the brutal Spice Wars of the Dutch. But sometimes it is as if Proust intrudes, insensed and reminiscent. VanderMeer describes a world so rich and exaggerated and full of mysterious life that it draws you away from any intended moral or pasquinade deep into the wealth of the world's womb...Make the most of the tapestry of tales and visions before you. It is a rare treasure, to be tasted with both relish and respect. It is the work of an original. It's what you've been looking for."

CHINA MIEVILLE "Somewhere at the intersection of pulp and Surrealism, drawing on the very best of both traditions, is Jeff VanderMeer's *Ambergris*. Unsettling, erudite, dark, shot through with unexpected humour, the stories engross and challenge endlessly. *Ambergris* is one of my favourite haunts in fiction."

R.M. BERRY, New York Times notable novel *Leonardo's Horse* "A remarkable writer of highly original, utterly hilarious fiction, who continually pushes the boundaries of current literary fashion. The *Early History* and *Dradin*, In *Love* are literary tours de force, in which form and language stubbornly refuse relegation to instrumentality and reassert their irrepressible life. Few works I've read in recent years have given me such pure pleasure.

NORMAN SPINRAD, Asimov's SF Magazine "[The *Early History of Ambergris*] is the sort of thing that reminds us that while publishing modes, genres, literary schools and styles, and even the material matrices in which literature is encoded, come and go, there is a restorative impulse, a literary innocence, that transcends the maya thereof, that has not died yet, that remains eternal. Eternal because it generates literature that is written entirely for fun, without the slightest nod to the shrewdities of careerism...It restoreth the soul. It giveth hope."

PAUL DI FILIPPO "As the shady demiurge who actually 'created' the historical personage known as Duncan Shriek, as well as the whole bloody history and complex culture of a complete world, the character of VanderMeer beggars the imagination. How could one fellow, even half divine, manage to combine the literary qualities of Nabokov, Borges, Barthelme, Cabell, Clark Ashton Smith, Suetonius, and Bernal Diaz into one person? It's impossible to credit!"

LANCE OLSEN "If Franz Kafka had a son, and Jorge Luis Borges raised him with Jessica Amanda Salmonson, I imagine the result would look a lot like Jeff VanderMeer - someone who writes with dark dream-time logic, Escher-like precision, and pure imaginative fire."

BRIAN STABLEFORD "I enjoyed *The Early History of Ambergris* tremendously and I think it's a marvellous piece of work, artfully combining humour and horror to excellent effect. Its mosaic format works beautifully to emphasize and extend the uncertainties of the fragmentary narrative. The greatest challenge facing any modern author is to produce a tale quite unlike any that has ever been produced before, but Jeff

has met that challenge head on and answered it triumphantly. I hope the book is a great success, as it deserves to be - and whatever its immediate fate, I'm sure there will come a time when it will be an important and much-sought-after collector's item."

NEW YORK REVIEW OF SF "A text of lethally hypnotic fascination...a masterpiece of ironic perversity [set in] a brilliantly-realized city."

ST. JAMES GUIDE TO HORROR, GOTHIC, AND GHOST WRITERS "He will make a major contribution to the field of neo-Decadent dark fantasy."

RAIN TAXI "Vivid and beguiling, excellent exercise for the imagination, and efficient means of transportation to other realities. [VanderMeer] liberates us from the miserable reality of our days."

INTERZONE "The author's prose is delicate and ornate, but the narrative has force and wit in plenty...dramatizes and celebrates the anxiety and exhilaration of entering the unknown - quite excellent."

THOMAS LIGOTTI

"...impressive work...I confess I tried to skim its pages - my usual procedure - but soon found that it was unskimmable and that every sentence needed to be read (and often reread)."

TANGENT "A really fine example of fantasy taken down the road a piece...well-drawn, tightly-focused...fantasy in fine fettle, healthy and vital, an intelligent, exciting exploration of the darker realms of the heart, with the good strong currents of myth and archetype to bear it along."

ED BRYANT, Locus "Set in the kind of no-time nowhere city that Jorge Borges, Jack Vance, and Mervyn Peake might these days hiply program into their satellite locator systems...Lyrical, evocative, grim."

ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE "Assimilating and transcending such honorable influences as Clark Ashton Smith, Jack Vance, and E.R. Eddison, VanderMeer strides shoulder to shoulder with such currently working authors such as Paul Park, M. John Harrison, and Thomas Ligotti."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Betancourt:

The book City of Saints and Madmen make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can being your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make studying a book City of Saints and Madmen to get your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your personal capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You may know everything if you like open and read a reserve City of Saints and Madmen. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science publication or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this reserve?

Marvis Byrnes:

Do you have something that you like such as book? The book lovers usually prefer to pick book like comic, brief story and the biggest an example may be novel. Now, why not hoping City of Saints and Madmen that

give your entertainment preference will be satisfied by reading this book. Reading habit all over the world can be said as the way for people to know world considerably better than how they react when it comes to the world. It can't be claimed constantly that reading routine only for the geeky man but for all of you who wants to possibly be success person. So , for every you who want to start reading as your good habit, you could pick City of Saints and Madmen become your own personal starter.

Edward Roth:

Beside that City of Saints and Madmen in your phone, it could give you a way to get more close to the new knowledge or info. The information and the knowledge you may got here is fresh through the oven so don't be worry if you feel like an previous people live in narrow town. It is good thing to have City of Saints and Madmen because this book offers to you readable information. Do you occasionally have book but you seldom get what it's all about. Oh come on, that will not end up to happen if you have this inside your hand. The Enjoyable option here cannot be questionable, similar to treasuring beautiful island. So do you still want to miss the item? Find this book in addition to read it from today!

Maria Peterson:

That e-book can make you to feel relax. This book City of Saints and Madmen was bright colored and of course has pictures on the website. As we know that book City of Saints and Madmen has many kinds or variety. Start from kids until teenagers. For example Naruto or Investigation company Conan you can read and feel that you are the character on there. Therefore not at all of book are generally make you bored, any it makes you feel happy, fun and unwind. Try to choose the best book for yourself and try to like reading which.

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