



The One-Eyed Man: A Fugue, with Winds and Accompaniment

L.E. Modesitt Jr.

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The colony world of Stittara is no ordinary planet. For the interstellar Unity of the Ceylesian Arm, Stittara is the primary source of anagathics: drugs that have more than doubled the human life span. But the ecological balance that makes anagathics possible on Stittara is fragile, and the Unity government has a vital interest in making sure the flow of longevity drugs remains uninterrupted, even if it means uprooting the human settlements.

Offered the job of assessing the ecological impact of the human presence on Stittara, freelance consultant Dr. Paulo Verano jumps at the chance to escape the ruin of his personal life. He gets far more than he bargained for: Stittara's atmosphere is populated with skytubes—gigantic, mysterious airborne organisms that drift like clouds above the surface of the planet. Their exact nature has eluded humanity for centuries, but Verano believes his conclusions about Stittara may hinge on understanding the skytubes' role in the planet's ecology—if he survives the hurricane winds, distrustful settlers, and secret agendas that impede his investigation at every turn.

The book also includes the short story "New World Blues" (2012) which is based on the same painting that graces the cover of the book.

The One-Eyed Man: A Fugue, with Winds and Accompaniment Details

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Author : L.E. Modesitt Jr.

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From Reader Review *The One-Eyed Man: A Fugue, with Winds and Accompaniment* for online ebook

Connie Jasperson says

The One-Eyed Man: A Fugue, With Winds and Accompaniment, by L.E. Modesitt Jr.

The Blurb:

In *The One-Eyed Man: A Fugue With Winds and Accompaniment*, by L. E. Modesitt, Jr., the colony world of Stittara is no ordinary planet. For the interstellar Unity of the Ceylesian Arm, Stittara is the primary source of anagathics: drugs that have more than doubled the human life span. But the ecological balance that makes anagathics possible on Stittara is fragile, and the Unity government has a vital interest in making sure the flow of longevity drugs remains uninterrupted, even if it means uprooting the human settlements.

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My Review:

One thing you can always count on L.E. Modesitt Jr. to give you is a real morality tale. He asks the tough questions about how far we are willing to go to and what we are willing to sacrifice, pointing out as always, that there WILL be sacrifices. Deciding what the sacrifices will be is never easy, but that tension makes for a great tale.

In a move that is a bit unusual, L.E. Modesitt Jr. begins this sci-fi fantasy in a divorce court. Dr. Paulo Verano is left wondering what to do with his share of the nothing, wondering if he will even be able to keep his business alive. Also, most unusually, one of the supporting characters speaks in cryptic rhymes. The subtle use of short snippets of poetry at the beginning of some chapters serves to create an image of a wealth of culture in the mind of the reader, building the world without resorting to a boring infodump.

Paulo, as a protagonist, is a real departure for Modesitt, in that he is not the naïve likeable young man usually found at the beginning of a Modesitt tale. Instead we meet a bitter, cynical and paranoid man. Paulo jumps at the opportunity his job offers him, glad to leave his selfish, ungrateful daughter and exwife behind, both in terms of distance and time. His reasoning is, during the short (to him) time he is gone, 145 years will have passed on his home world. They will have grown old and forgotten him, and his financial holdings will have recouped his losses.

Paulo's cynicism and inability to trust affects each of his relationships. Of the passengers he travels with on the ship, none are what or who they appear to be. Several are lying as to their identities. Once on Stittara, he can't be sure who is lying, and he is not sure who will harm him. He is not sure what his investigation will uncover, or how far those affected will go to protect their empires.

The world is vividly drawn in small strokes, emerging gradually as the tale progresses. The plot never stalls, and the action is both believable and engrossing. As always in Modesitt's work, music and the quest for love

are a large part of the tale. The events that unfold, taking Paulo to the final crisis had me obsessively clicking to the next page, unable to put my Kindle down. A wonderful read for true sci-fi lovers.

My only issue with this book is the incredibly high price the publisher set for the Kindle download. \$10.99 in today's market is highway robbery and may well keep the eBook sales down, which may be the publisher's misguided intention.

Brody says

Uhh, the book was a writing exercise inspired by the painting on the cover and reads like one, true story.

Jim says

Pretty good, but a bit too low key & obtuse, even for Modesitt. That seems to be a general trend in his writing. I really appreciate that he's not writing for idiots, though. It was a good mystery & a very different SF setting. His take on the ecology was interesting, too.

Sarah says

So, the final verdict? The One-Eyed Man is thought provoking, very realistic, and incredibly subtle in so many ways. This is one of those rare books that speaks to anyone at any period of time because the story is so important to all of us. The futuristic world(s) and advanced technology are all very nice touches, but Verano is one hell of a protagonist, and his story is one that will resonate.

Read my full review here:

<http://www.bookwormblues.net/2013/10/...>

Paul says

Didn't finish; it's hard to get enthused about a protagonist that thinks that talking about capital gains tax is great dinner date conversation. NEXT!

Fantasy Literature says

I am a big fan of Modesitt's science fiction work, even when he gets on his political soap box for gender, socially progressive politics, and environmental issues. The One-Eyed Man is a solo novel that encompasses

all of these topics, but this time there is almost a feeling of cynicism that I really enjoyed.

Paulo Verano is an idealistic Environmental Analyst who has just been taken to the cleaners. In a scene that is familiar to many, his ex-spouse has left him for another person and has financially devastated him. His daughter is estranged from him and his business, while viable, is a means for his ex to continue to reap financial support. It's a bleak picture.

Stittara is a distant world from the major planets of the Unity of the Cyeseian Arm. It produces a naturally occurring substance that essentially doubles the human ... Read More:

<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

Howard Cincotta says

Mondesitt, author of shelves of multi-volume fantasy and science fiction, has done something unprecedented here: created one of the most boring alien worlds imaginable, populated it with a collection of dull workers, and added a protagonist who proves to be an indefatigable bureaucrat and little else.

I picked up this novel on the recommendation of *Asimov's* book reviewer: bad decision.

Paulo Verano, having been taken to the cleaners by a ruthless ex-wife, heads off to the remote planet of Stittara to conduct an environmental survey. Yes, Stittara holds some secrets: it has sky tubes, which many or may not be sentient, and which trigger extremely violent storms, forcing the population to live largely underground. The planet also grows a product that works as a longevity drug.

Otherwise, the place is about as interesting as an underground mall stuck in the middle of a Kansas wheat field, except that those fields are of blue-green grass, and little else. There are no mountains, rivers, or fauna of interest; I think I witnessed one small bird in flight.

Verano survives assassination attempts and violent storms, but for the bulk of the book he collects his equipment and travels to different locations to conduct his water-and-air-quality surveys, which are about as exciting as they sound. All of which, by the way, are within normal parameters. *All* of them.

The rest of the time, Verano meets tightly wound bureaucrats in antiseptic mall restaurants that all feel like upscale Appleby's. We learn that the women are coming on to him because he is an outsider -- the natives may live a long time, but they have low libidos and low birth rates. Does Verano tumble into the sack with any of the women hot for a little off-world action? No, he's too busy packing up for his next survey trip.

Even after he escapes a car bombing, Verano dust himself off -- and heads out for another survey. As a focused bureaucrat set on completing his report, he is unstoppable. By the last third of the book, I was cheering on his next round of greeting some new facilities manager and once again hauling out his stuff.

When finally, disaster does strike, -- an experiment that goes badly -- it is geographically limited -- and it happens off stage. Incredibly, Verano, after watching the event on video monitors, observes that the devastation won't really change his overall environmental report, although he might make a note of it.

Jarod says

This book was ok. I had trouble understanding the political environment the main character was dealing with. There were hints, but nothing that really spelled things out. Also the main character would see clues in his investigation that led to the conclusion, but there was not enough information for me to see what was so important with the observations. Some of the characters were interesting while others were rather flat and forgettable. This made things difficult when the characters were referred to later in the book.

Josh says

Oh my goodness. I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I started this book. There are so many genres involved in the story that it's hard to know how to categorize it. It's like a sci-fi detective story, almost like an X-Files episode in novel-form. And I mean the first years of the X-Files, aka the good ones. Within the first couple of pages of the story, our hero, Pablo Verano, is divorced, virtually bankrupted, and given a new assignment at the outer limits of the colonized universe. He's an ecological surveyor sent to Stittara to do an environmental assessment of industry on the planet. It's so far away that any report that he writes will take 150 years to get back to the authorities. So, he senses that there is some political posturing afoot. Luckily for the reader, Verano is up to the task. He arrives on Stittara ready to his job. The planet is the universal source for anti-aging drugs which have added decades to human longevity. Anything that interferes with that part of commerce is trouble. So, Verano has to investigate multis (corporations supposedly doing research) and determine whether they are harming the possibly fragile Stittaran environment. And that's where the fun begins. There are all kinds of things being hidden from him that only become apparent as his investigation progresses. The author has a deft hand with characters and dialogue. It's a hoot to follow Verano along on his quest which becomes more complicated with each revelation. What is really happening on Stittara? How do you navigate the entrenched political interests and their counterparts light years away? What really happened on Stittara millions of years ago that left a civilization buried in dirt? Can a catastrophe be averted? Could the entire planet be one, giant alien intelligence, suffering the appearance of humans? I could go on, but why. Just pick up the book. I have rarely had as much fun reading a book as I have with *The One Eyed Man*. It's fast-paced but the issues dealt with are heavy and topical. Politics, commerce, anthropology, and an alien environment meet together to create who heck of an adventure. This one is a must-read.

Matthew Coiner says

Modesitt is one of my favorite fiction authors. I've enjoyed both his sci-fi and fantasy. This book was a real treat for me. In a way, Paulo Verano reminded me of Karl, the lead character in *"Wellspring of Chaos"* and *"Ordermaster."*

Unlike many of the characters in his sci-fi novels, this man has no prior military training, isn't trained within the story, and isn't a pilot. He is well-educated, though, and does practice martial arts in his spare time as exercise. He is just a man who suddenly finds himself in an interesting position and has to figure out how to deal with it.

I read a scathing review about the number of conversations held over dinners and the lack of sudden action in this book. That is actually one of the things that appealed to me. Paul is an average man in a situation that is largely outside of his control and he is required to face some tough ethical dilemmas. He has to do so by working within his realm of expertise and with what little power and latitude his job affords him. Like most

people, he can't just run in with guns ablazin'. Instead, he has to talk, listen, learn, and adapt.

This was a very well written story that deals with political intrigue from the unique perspective of an ecologist. The story contains twists and subtleties that keeps the reader on his or her toes. While there is action in the book, it is much more restrained from some of his other novels relying instead on quick thinking, successful use of contacts, and political positioning.

If you're looking for a recommendation of a Modesitt sci-fi with a lot of action, read 'The Parafaith War' and its sequel 'The Ethos Effect.' if you're looking for one that is more of a political thriller, then read this one!

The great thing about Modesitt, though, is that all of his books will make you think.

Jenny says

In a soundbite, this book is slow but intriguing. The world was rich and the descriptions left me with very vivid imagery. I liked the overall idea, but I wasn't able to really appreciate it until almost the very end of the book, and even then I felt it could have been done better.

Other reviewers have praised Modesitt for his writing in this book, but I confess I had trouble with it. I was kind of flabbergasted by all the super long, run on, complicated sentences. I would lose track of what the narrator was trying to say halfway through. It also seemed that the narrator could hardly make a single statement without immediately second guessing that statement. I suppose this was meant to reflect a scientist's mode of thinking, since the narrator is an ecologist, but I didn't feel it made for very interesting reading. The narrator also made many statements such as, "Suddenly, all the pieces came together to suggest a certain conclusion," or "The implication of this information chilled my spine." But then he never said what the conclusion actually was! He never said what the implication actually was! Maybe I was being too intellectually lazy and I should have been able to figure it out myself. But reading novels is a relaxing pastime for me - I don't expect to have to work very hard to understand what I'm reading. In the end all the conclusions and implications were finally clear, and I did appreciate them at that point. But prior to that point I was getting pretty frustrated with the whole thing.

Other reviewers have mentioned the problems with tempo - the book progressed in a very slow, thorough, and methodical way. It made it difficult for me to stay interested at times, but again this may be an expression of the narrator's character. He is a scientist and the story is "written" by him - and certainly, many scientists write in a slow, methodical, and rather boring kind of way. Was the sacrifice to tempo worth the characterization? I'm not sure. There is little that resembles a character arc in this book, so I suppose these are the character details we are meant to chew on.

As a sometime-biologist myself, when I was finally able to piece together the ecological mystery that Modesitt painted, I thought it was very clever and interesting. But I really felt he didn't leave big enough bread crumbs, and for a book that was as slow and detailed as it was, I wished he had gone more into the ecological science while he was at it. There were several mini-mysteries he set up along the way that in the end didn't matter much to the plot, at least from my point of view. I feel those could have been sacrificed for some more meaningful explanations.

(Spoiler warning)

In particular, the narrator continually finds evidence of the environment being incredibly stable over hundreds of thousands if not millions of years. This is really really weird! We know from the history of earth that on geologic time scales, environments change frequently. In the past hundred thousand years on Earth we have seen ice ages come and go, causing certain locations to change from rich forest to bare tundra and

back again. This history of our planet tells us that where there were once oceans there are now deserts; where there were once jungles there are now savannas; but on the planet of Stittara, apparently the whole world has been sparse grassland for its entire known history. This fact is extremely important to the final ecological mystery, but the narrator merely notes the consistency, followed by his cryptic "chilling implications" comments. This and other indications of remarkable stability suggest another very important concept - homeostasis. The active maintenance of a stable set of conditions. Like how your body keeps your internal temperature within a certain narrow range, how your kidneys keep your blood electrolyte levels in a certain narrow range. Homeostasis is something *organisms* do, not ecosystems, not planets. Unless, of course, the planet isn't just a planet.

Liviu says

another sf book that was so-so - enough interesting stuff to keep going and an author I really enjoy, but have seen the content millions times and this book had nothing special either (content this time being alien world, alien aliens, humans not understanding them and doing by stupidity/malice stuff that may throw everything out of balance and wreck the world etc etc - even the title is an obvious hint as the hero is the "one eyed man in the country of the blind" - see Embassytown for a celebrated recent example, Disestablishment of Paradise for another...)

Scott Radtke says

I read this due to a positive Kirkus review, and I am honestly surprised I finished it.

I give every book at least 100 pages to grab me, and this one took them all, and a couple to boot, before I stopped wanting to take a red pen to it. I couldn't tell if Modesitt writes like this in general or it was a quirk of the narrator but I had three major problems here:

- 1) The narration was overly descriptive and yet, somehow, completely inscrutable.
- 2) Characters were only differentiated by their names and their hair color. They all spoke in the same voice (see above), never came off as quite human, yet were intergalactic travelers that still seemed like complete shut-ins.
- 3) If the Turing test could be applied to novels, this one might not pass. Seriously, there were more than a few passages where I seriously wondered if the novel was written by a robot, and then I worried that the robot wasn't getting out enough.

Yet by page 100 (more like 105) my curiosity got the better of me and I managed to power through.

I can't honestly recommend this, but it isn't quite terrible, just deeply frustrating.

Scott

George Irwin says

People who love all over this book are not terribly critical. Like all of Modesitt's work, it is a very complete and deep world, but also suffers from a distinct lack of drama or actual action to move the plot forward. The book echos his story, "The Eternity Artifact" and others. This isn't to say it's a horrible work, or bad, but it has its pluses and minuses. I really enjoyed his take on an ecological event within a nature situation, and was more comparable to modern situations (though not as interesting) than The Windup Girl. Don't know if I'd recommend it for someone looking to get into Modessit's work (Eternity Artifact is a good starting point for his sci-fi), but it was fun to have him return to Science Fiction.

Bob Lopez says

Wow. A lot of eating. Some lager. Lots of research. Not very exciting though the librarian in me really appreciated all the hard work.
