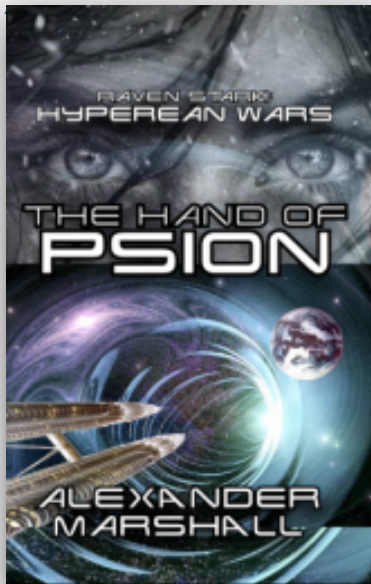


CLARENDON HOUSE PUBLICATIONS

‘The world is better with all this beautiful work seen at last.’ – A. Delf, author

This week from Clarendon House



The Hand of Psion
Raven Stark: Hyperean Wars
Book Three
by Alexander Marshall

1940: the Nazi regime stands poised to invade Britain...

But the nascent British Space Fleet has its hands full with a menace far more powerful, one that threatens all life on Earth...

With her best friend taken by the enemy for purposes too dark to contemplate, and Captain Invincible shorn of his powers, the newly emancipated Raven Stark finds herself confronting the ultimate challenge alone, on the frozen edge of the world...



Welcome!

Welcome to the Clarendon House Newsletter for week ending 29th August 2025! It's almost Autumn!

This week: *The Hand of Psion*, Book Three of the *Raven Stark: Hyperean Wars* saga is out! Don't miss this final third volume in the pulse-pounding *Raven Stark: Hyperean Wars* series which began with *The Return of Captain Invincible* and continued with *Spectrebrood*!

Feedback is welcome. Drop me a line at grant@clarendonhousebooks.com
Below is a popular blog item.



The 'Secret Language' of Fiction That We All Know

Some time ago I joined a number of writing groups online. My idea was to get a feel for the kinds of conversations that I thought must be taking place 'out there' in cyberspace, with a view to communicating about my book, which was all about stories and how they actually work (called, conveniently enough, [How Stories Really Work](#)). My assumption was that there would be groups of people as fascinated as I was about the patterns visible in all kinds of fiction, the interlaced similarities and differences between types of stories, the tapestry of oddities and recurring themes which writers weave as though from one vast collective unconsciousness.

What I found was not quite what I expected. Some groups were quite neurotic about communication and very nervous about newcomers; others concentrated heavily on the mechanical side of writing, seemingly anxious about where to put each comma. Most had fixed ideas about what writing was for and how it should be done. In almost all cases, the groups were dominated by their founders and ruled with the internet's equivalent of an iron hand. That was fair enough, I thought: if you set up a writing group and manage to gather thousands of members, you have the complete

right to determine the rules and grounding of that group. It was not for me to say how to run things or to question the operating practices of these cyber-collectives.

I learned a few things: writers were more numerous and ubiquitous than I had imagined; and many indulged in writing for a different set of reasons than I had thought. I had envisioned at least a few groups of writers who had mastered the art of writing to some degree and were now striving to make contact with the maximum number of readers; I had also thought that there would be quite a few wannabe writers who recognised that they didn't really understand the language of fiction and were desperate to learn it. I don't mean the English language, or whatever their native language might be - I mean the mode of communication which transcends the mechanics but is equally structured and universal among storytellers: the 'secret language' of fiction. In fact, most of the writers I encountered were not writing in order to communicate to readers at all, particularly: they poured out thoughts, images and ideas into manuscripts largely for their own benefit and pleasure.

That's fair enough too - it just isn't what I expected to find. Instead of voyagers seeking orientation on their journeys towards the reality of readers' with the hope of trading ideas and emotions, I found more-or-less contented islanders, happy to work over and over the mechanics of their work or to jot down sporadic snippets of writing, without ever really interacting with the bigger world of story-telling of which they were a part, or even, in many cases, seeing that it existed.

To understand what was happening, we have to look at something that we normally take for granted. Even in reading this sentence, you are making certain workable assumptions of which you may not be fully aware. The word 'reading' comes from Old English *rædan*, of Germanic origin, related to the Dutch *raden* and German *raten* 'advise, guess'. We might assume that it means something like 'taking information from a page in coded form and

decoding it to make sense' but its original meaning has a lot more to do with guesswork and the imagination: it embraced the concepts of 'advise' and 'interpret' as in 'interpreting a riddle or dream'. What we call 'reading', when you stop to think about it, is much more like dream-interpretation than information gathering. When reading, one is taking symbols in sequences and drawing meaning from them, both the meaning that the author installed in them (it is hoped) as well as various other meanings that one may install for oneself. Examined closely, this can be seen to be a series of suppositions: what one ends up with at the end may only be an approximation of what was written, and could even be at wild variance with the original intention depending on what exactly has taken place in the interim. The intentions of an author are cloaked both in the words and structures used and another level of symbol which needs more attention, I think.





We teach children to read by encouraging them to see that a set of particular symbols, chosen over time by the surrounding culture, has individual sounds connected with it. We call this 'phonics' and regard it as a fairly scientific undertaking: one takes a symbol and 'learns' that it 'means' a sound. The symbol 'T' is connected to the sound 't' and not to any other sound, for example. Though it looks scientific, it also has something almost sorcerous about it.

Then things get more arcane: the sound 't', coupled with other sounds, adds up to something quite different from a mere noise. The child comes to see that the symbols 't', 'r', 'e' and 'e' combine to form the sounds 'tree' but also the meaning 'tree'. Another layer of understanding is achieved. The green and brown branching object which we see collected

together in woods has been captured for the purposes of communication by a set of symbols and a sound, which, in itself, is quite a mystical accomplishment. The young human being has linked physical sounds with written shapes and has progressed beyond what most animals are able to do, and then has transcended even that and joined those same shapes with something more intangible, the idea behind them.

'Tree' may seem a little too palpable as an example, like most physical nouns; 'love' may make the point more strongly. A feeling, an idea which has outward signs but which is in itself a mental or spiritual thing, has been bound to a set of emblems imprinted on a page. No wonder that the word 'spell' is derived from the same root as the 'spell' that is practiced by a mage.



But things get even more complex. Placing these representative tokens that we have come to know as 'words' together, one can achieve almost infinite effects through sentences (the word 'sentence' stemming from Latin *sententia* 'opinion', from 'feel, be of the opinion'; reflecting that approximation of what was written indicated earlier). 'I love trees' may be sentence a young child might write, but what vast concepts it entwines and ties down in just a few symbols! Our children become sorcerers at this point.

Then sentences of various types and complexities go on to form paragraphs; paragraphs develop into chapters; chapters evolve into books. And every step of the way, the writer weaves symbols together on many levels and works with them to capture meaning.

That expression 'on many levels' deserves a closer look: one level on which this works is the level of written symbols and structures with which we are familiar from school - from the 't', 'r', 'e' and 'e' basis described above to the weaving of meaning using words in which both writer and reader play a part.

But there are other levels.



While children are learning about letters and words in a more-or-less organised way at school, they are also observing and participating in a wider cultural world which contains another level of communication. Whether from stories that they are told in their cradles, songs they hear as babies, or from picture books, comics, television and other media that they are exposed to from a young age, they are learning a language of archetypes, genres and expectations: There are such things as 'goodness' and 'badness'; there are representatives of both; these representatives interact in particular ways, with specific outcomes and consequences. Mysterious constructions called 'characters' are formed; these entities interact in structured and recognisable

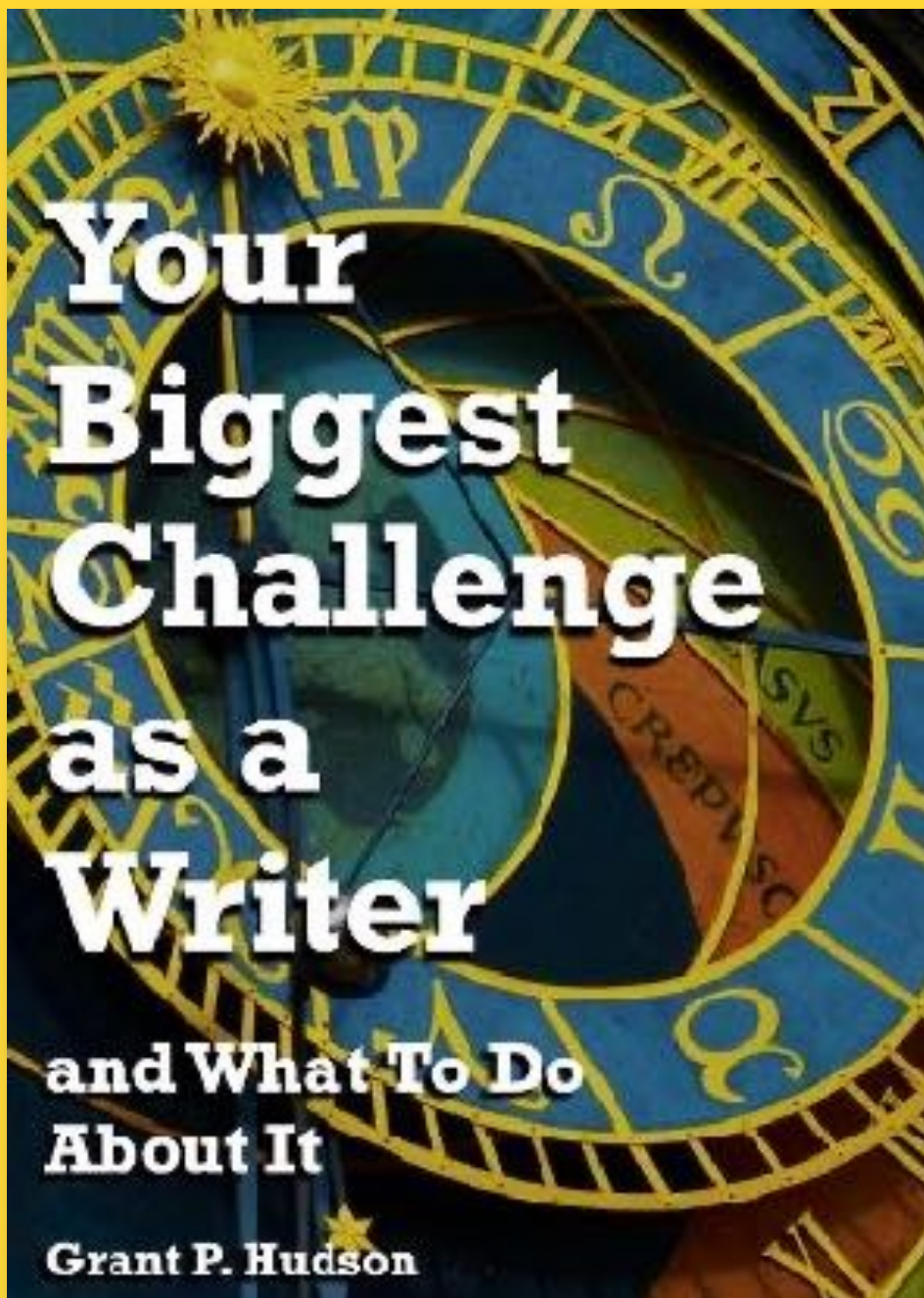
ways and achieve particular things through things called 'plots'. Before a child has learned to compose his or her first sentence, he or she has imbibed to one degree or another this background 'atmosphere' of stories. It is unavoidable: to deprive a child of it, one would have to bring him or her up on the Moon, using only heartless machines.

So when a first attempt is made to write a story, a child not only draws on a mechanical knowledge of letters, words, sentences, syntax, grammar and so on - a child also, largely unconsciously, partakes of cultural energies which have surrounded it from birth. The stories that are written reflect, add to and participate in these cultural energies, contributing to the whole.

The not-so-simple act of writing and its concurrent (and also complex) action of reading is not therefore a direct, one-way transmission of information, perception or opinion from one mind to another, but a participative act: the writer captures meaning and the reader brings both a personal understanding (or misunderstanding) and a personal contribution (or lack of contribution) to the process, not only on the level of words but on a sometimes-almost-invisible level of symbols, expectations, genres and archetypes.

It is these which form the secret language of fiction - an ironic name, as we will come to see, as it is perhaps the least secret part of story-telling there is. Though, as I found in my foray into cyberspace, it is hardly ever recognised for what it is, even by its main participators.

For more, get [How Stories Really Work](#) -and my course, [Become a Professional Author](#).



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- how you have been bamboozled by our culture into swallowing some counter-productive and dangerous ideas - and how to 'unbamboozle' yourself
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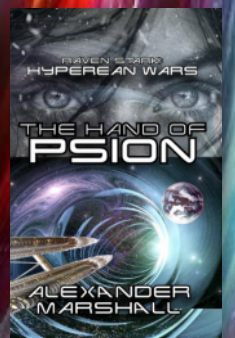
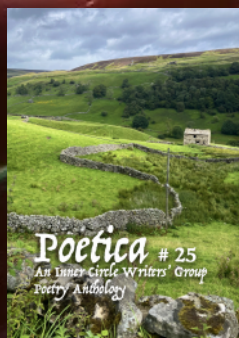
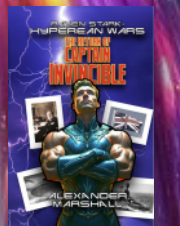
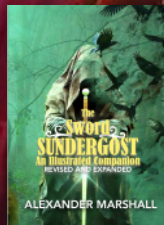
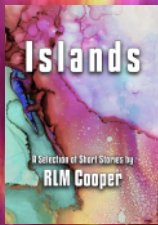
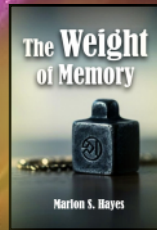


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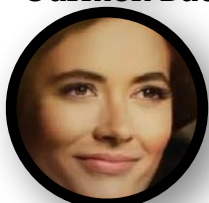
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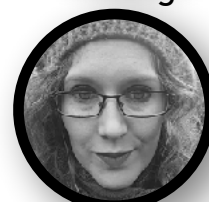
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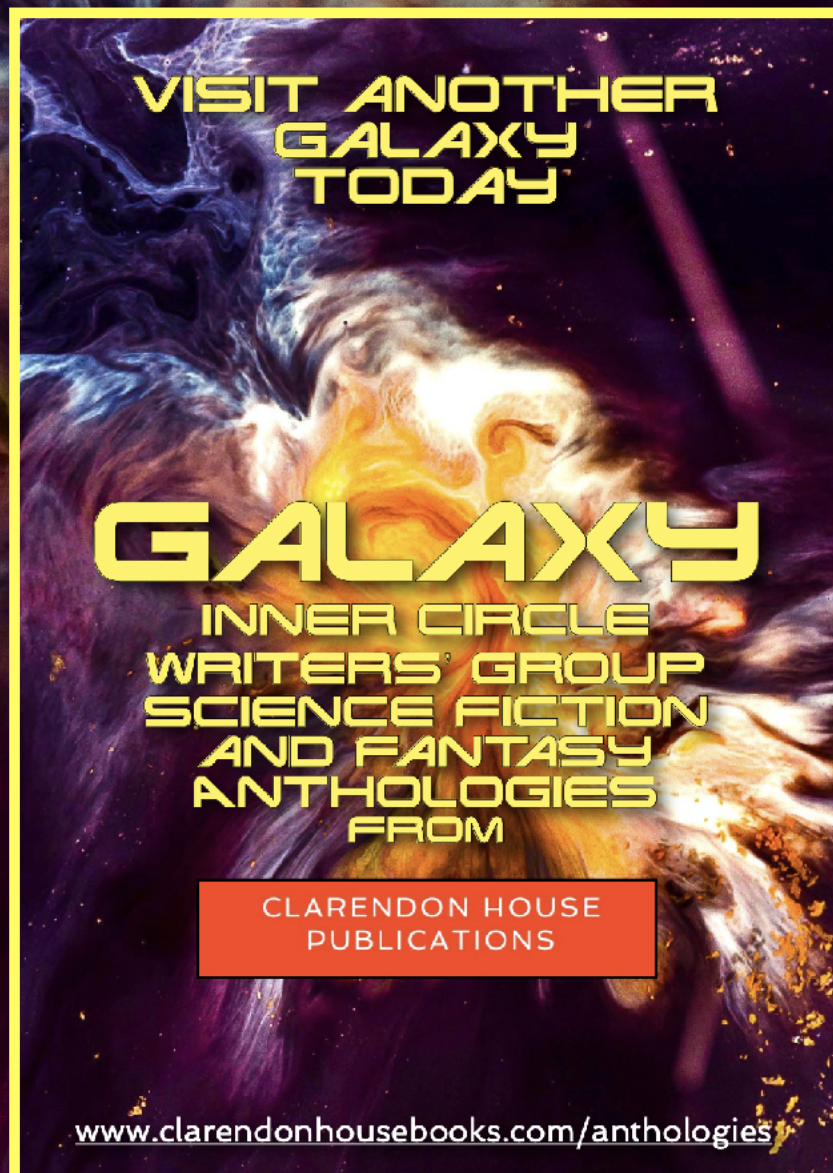


Samantha Hamilton

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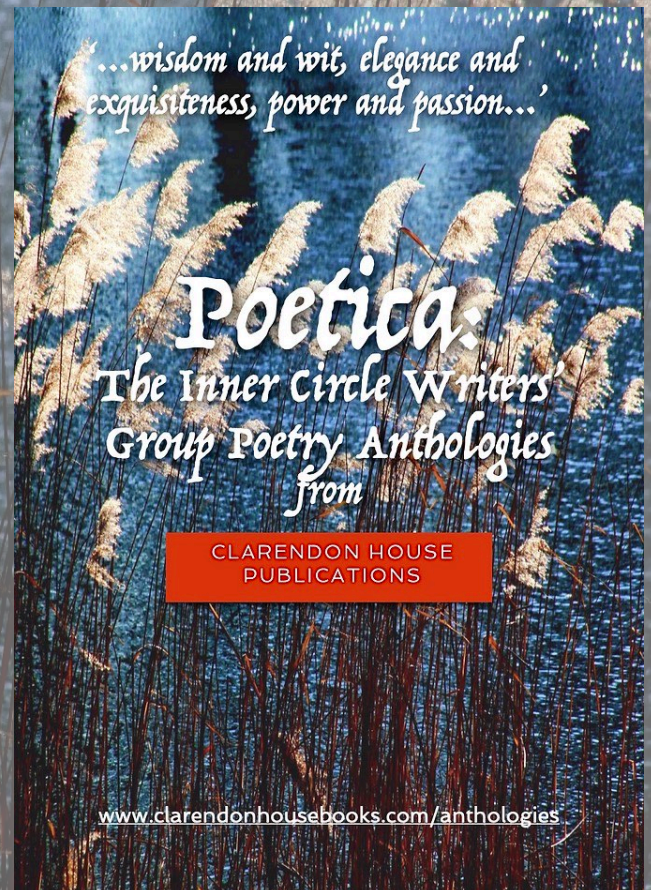
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The

Poetica

anthologies

*Poetry should surprise
by a fine excess and not
by singularity—it should
strike the reader as a
wording of his own
highest thoughts, and
appear almost a
remembrance.
— John Keats*



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CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR ALEXANDER MARSHALL RAVEN STARK: HYPEREAN WARS



THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN INVINCIBLE

1940: Britain and Nazi Germany are at war.

HMS Eagle, under the command of Captain John Strange, is sent to investigate a huge craft of extra-terrestrial origin which has plunged into the ocean west of Spitsbergen. He finds that the Germans have been there first - and that the secrets of the ship threaten to alter not only his life, but the entire destiny of humanity...

In this novella launching the Raven Stark series, sorcery and spectral evil meet super-science and space wars - and the world will never be the same again...

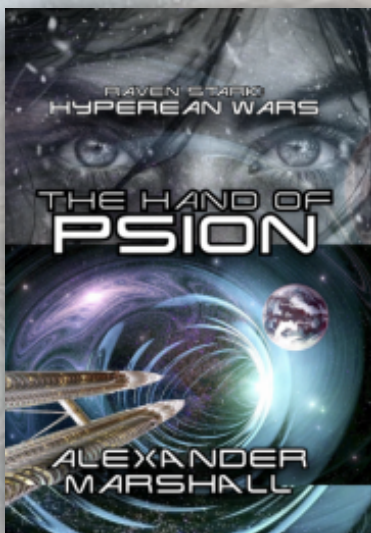
SPECTREBROOD

1940: Britain stands alone on the threshold of an invasion...

But from an alien craft in the Arctic Sea comes an evil even greater than the Nazi threat...

Raven Stark, a gifted but physically challenged orphan with a talent for tackling bullies, stumbles upon a secret initiative to save humanity hidden under an ordinary London shop...

When her best friend disappears while seeking her sinister father, Raven is driven to make decisions that will change life on Earth in ways no one could have imagined - and to find out who, or what, she really is...



THE HAND OF PSION

1940: the Nazi regime stands poised to invade Britain...

But the nascent British Space Fleet has its hands full with a menace far more powerful, one that threatens all life on Earth...

With her best friend taken by the enemy for purposes too dark to contemplate, and Captain Invincible shorn of his powers, the newly emancipated Raven Stark finds herself confronting the ultimate challenge alone, on the frozen edge of the world...

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

ALEXANDER MARSHALL



THE PHANTOM SWORD OF RONDAR

Annua Larkswing once studied to be a Herald of Raendu in the Hall of Ramsgarden high in the hills of Rondar - but she abandoned the ways of peace and went to fight in the War of the Sword, becoming one of the fabled Crimson Company...

Fearful Fretravorn is home to the Bloodseekers, vicious raiders who seek the downfall of the kingdom of Rondar across the sea; they will stop at nothing to utterly destroy that realm...

*When a savage raid upon the coastal village of Tagavorn results in the cruel death of Krisain, Annua's adopted daughter, a wild and vengeful power is unleashed which neither the lord of the Bloodseekers nor the queen of Rondar could have foreseen: it is time for the **Phantom Sword of Rondar** to strike again...*

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-David Bowmore, author of *The Magic of Deben Market*

The Sword SUNDERGOST

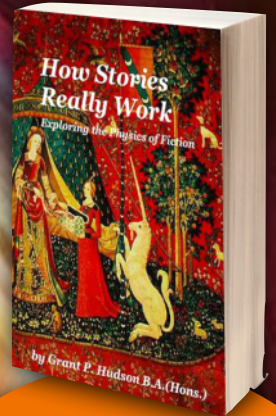


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