

Morality Play Unsworth Barry

it is the late fourteenth century a dangerous time beset by war and plague nicholas barber a young and wayward cleric stumbles across a group of travelling players and compounds his sins by joining them yet the town where they perform reveals another drama a young woman is to be hanged for the murder of a twelve year old boy what better way to increase their takings than to make a new play to enact the murder of thomas wells but as the actors rehearse they discover that the truth about the boy s death has yet to be revealed

barry unsworth a writer with an almost magical capacity for literary time travel new york times book review has the extraordinary ability to re create the past and make it relevant to contemporary readers in land of marvels a thriller set in 1914 he brings to life the schemes and double dealings of western nations grappling for a foothold in mesopotamia now iraq in the dying days of the ottoman empire somerville a british archaeologist is excavating a long buried assyrian palace the site lies directly in the path of a new railroad to baghdad and he watches nervously as the construction progresses threatening to destroy his discovery the expedition party includes somerville s beautiful bored wife edith patricia a smart young graduate student and jehar an arab man of all duties whose subservient manner belies his intelligence and ambitions posing as an archaeologist an american geologist from an oil company arrives one day and insinuates himself into the group but he s not the only one working undercover to stake a claim on iraq s rich oil fields historical fiction at its finest land of marvels opens a window on the past and reveals its lasting impact

barry unsworth returns to the terrain of his booker prize winning novel sacred hunger this time following sullivan the irish fiddler and erasmus kemp son of a liverpool slave ship owner who hanged himself it is the spring of 1767 and to avenge his father s death erasmus kemp has had the rebellious sailors of his father s ship including sullivan brought back to london to stand trial on

charges of mutiny and piracy but as the novel opens a blithe sullivan has escaped and is making his way on foot to the north of england stealing as he goes and sleeping where he can his destination is thorpe in the east durham coalfields where his dead shipmate billy blair lived he has pledged to tell the family how billy met his end in this village billy s sister nan and her miner husband james bordon live with their three sons all destined to follow their father down the pit the youngest only seven is enjoying his last summer aboveground meanwhile in london a passionate anti slavery campaigner frederick ashton gets involved in a second case relating to the lost ship erasmus kemp wants compensation for the cargo of sick slaves who were thrown overboard to drown and ashton is representing the insurers who dispute his claim despite their polarized views on slavery ashton s beautiful sister jane encounters erasmus kemp and finds herself powerfully attracted to him lord spenton who owns coal mines in east durham has extravagant habits and is pressed for money when he applies to the kemp merchant bank for a loan erasmus sees a business opportunity of the kind he has long been hoping for a way of gaining entry into britain s rapidly developing and highly profitable coal and steel industries thus he too makes his way north to the very same village that sullivan is heading for with historical sweep and deep pathos unsworth explores the struggles of the powerless and the captive against the rich and the powerful and what weight mercy may throw on the scales of justice

obsessively pursuing a bizarre underground life of darkness and spying simon sees innocent josh as a threat to the labyrinth of tunnels he has built unde his sister audrey s estate and takes steps to prevent their exposure

winner of the booker prize a historical novel set in the eighteenth century sacred hunger is a stunning engrossing exploration of power domination and greed in the british empire as it entered fully into the slave trade and spread it throughout its colonies barry

unsworth follows the failing fortunes of william kemp a merchant pinning his last chance to a slave ship his son who needs a fortune because he is in love with an upper class woman and his nephew who sails on the ship as its doctor because he has lost all he has loved the voyage meets its demise when disease spreads among the slaves and the captain s drastic response provokes a mutiny joining together the sailors and the slaves set up a secret utopian society in the wilderness of florida only to await the vengeance of the single minded young kemp

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donald cuthbertson prided himself on being a model for his students and teachers but he had lately begun to lose his focus degree day is approaching along with a birthday party for his wife lavinia who is not going quietly into middle age her lavish costume party provides the revelers with a darkly comic resolution to romantic dalliance and political intrigue

this volume offers a series of analyses on the renewed interest of western culture in themes and aesthetic proposals that either

look back to the past or recreate future worlds the turn of the century has witnessed artistic efforts to reconsider past literary and cinematographic forms and adapt them to the new social concerns of contemporary artists and readers viewers similarly science fiction and utopian narratives have attempted to reshape the world as we know it and speculate about the mysteries the future might hold for us this book includes contributions that focus on and problematise the dialogue between past present and future in literary works and films produced within the english speaking context in the last two decades of the 20th century it is divided in five sections maps of the postmodern the postcolonial experience stories revisited popular narrative genres and views of the future which attempt to include all the motifs associated with that dialogue from the interaction of memory and history to the reformulation of old stories and forms or the representation of dystopian and utopian futures

troy meant one thing only to the men gathered here as it did to their commanders troy was a dream of wealth and if the wind continued the dream would crumble as the harsh wind holds the greek fleet trapped in the straits at aulis frustration and political impotence turn into a desire for the blood of a young and innocent woman blood that will appease the gods and allow the troops to set sail and when iphigeneia agamemnon s beloved daughter is brought to the coast under false pretences and when a knife is fashioned out of the finest and most precious of materials it looks as if the ships will soon be on their way but can a father really go to these lengths to secure political victory and can a daughter willingly give up her life for the worldly ambitions of her father throwing off the heroic values we expect of them barry unsworth s mythic characters embrace the political ethos of the twenty first century and speak in words we recognize as our own the blowhard odysseus warns the men to not marginalize agamemnon and to strike while the bronze is hot high sounding principles clash with private motives and dark comedy ensues here is a novel that stands the world on its head

in twelfth century norman sicily king roger presides over palermo in the aftermath of the second crusade for the time being latins and greeks arabs and jews are living together in uneasy harmony within this milieu young thurstan beauchamp serves faithfully as a civil servant of the king his daily environment filled with tiny accountings schemes machinations and bribes when he is dispatched to investigate a conspiracy against the king he will find his loyalties tested and when he encounters both his childhood sweetheart and a seductive dancer his heart torn an extraordinary tale of ambition politics and the loss of innocence set against the glittering backdrop of medieval europe the ruby in her navel powerfully traces the clash of civilizations from its historical origins with deep resonances for today

golden umbria is home to breathtaking scenery and great art it is also where hannibal and his invading band of carthaginians ambushed and slaughtered a roman legion and where the local place names still speak of that bloodshed unsworth's contemporary invaders include the greens a retired american couple seeking serenity among the umbrian hills who are bilked out of their savings by the corrupt english building expert stan blemish the chapmans a british property speculator and his wife whose dispute with their neighbors over a wall escalates into a feud of nearly medieval proportions anders ritter a german haunted by the part his father played in a mass killing of italian hostages in rome during the second world war and fabio and arturo a gay couple who searching for peace and self sufficiency find treachery instead and at the center of all these webs of deceit and greed is the cunning lawyer mancini happy to aid the disputants and to exploit to the fullest the faith that these innocents abroad have placed in him

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