



**The City in the Autumn Stars: Being a
Continuation of the Story of the Von Bek Family
and Its Association with Lucifer, Prince of
Darkness, and the Cure for the World's Pain**

Michael Moorcock

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The sequel to *The Warhound and the World's Pain*, *The City in the Autumn Stars* continues the story of the German prince Manfred von Bek and his search for the devil--for the causes of evil in mankind. "A glorious tapestry of late-18th-century historical fantasy".--Fantasy Review

The City in the Autumn Stars: Being a Continuation of the Story of the Von Bek Family and Its Association with Lucifer, Prince of Darkness, and the Cure for the World's Pain Details

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From Reader Review *The City in the Autumn Stars: Being a Continuation of the Story of the Von Bek Family and Its Association with Lucifer, Prince of Darkness, and the Cure for the World's Pain* for online ebook

Mick Bordet says

Disappointing after the first book in the Von Bek series, with a far less sympathetic main character. There are some interesting historical situations, especially early on, but the vague mysticism around the last quarter of the book left me feeling rather unfulfilled.

Luke Johnson says

By far the best of the Von Bek novels. There's a little inconsistent characterisation here and there, but other than that this is pretty great. It even has a fairly strong female character (at least in comparison to Moorcock's other women) in the form of Libussa. Granted, she falls into a few stereotypes here and there, but she has her own goals separate from Von Bek and her life doesn't revolve around him.

Ralph Blackburn says

I've read a lot of Michael Moorcock over the last forty years and have come to expect that it's sometimes great and other times tedious. *The Warhound* and *The World's Pain*, the first Von Bek book is one of my all time favorites. This novel *The City In The Autumn Stars* has its moments and is for me an enjoyable read, but doesn't have near the impact of the 1st book. Moorcock here is still playing around in history, this time in the aftermath of the French Revolution, where Manfred Von Bek, once part of the revolutionary counsel, is fleeing for his life as others of his peers meet the guillotine. The story becomes travelogue, filled with danger, confrontation, and, of course, beautiful women. The prose is verbose and the conversations stretch off into oblivion. Still, I have *The Brothel in Rosenstrasse*, a third Von Bek to read, and I can't wait to get into it!

Tony Calder says

In the late 60s and the 70s, there were two authors who dominated the field of fantasy. One was the writer of a single epic novel (Tolkien) and one was the author of a vast catalogue of work (Moorcock). There were plenty of other authors writing fantasy, but these two were the best known. And in those days Michael Moorcock was churning out a prodigious quantity of work, much of it unlike anything his contemporaries were writing. His writing covered a wide range of styles of fantasy, but one thing almost all of them had in common was that they rarely ran much over 200 pages.

The City in the Autumn Stars, at 405 pages, is a good example of why Moorcock should generally stick to shorter works. The opening is fine, and there are some classic Moorcock moments, but the middle is far too

long and drags, and by the end I was just forcing myself to finish it. This is partly due to the intense metaphysical nature of the story and largely due to the protagonist - Manfred von Bek - being a highly unlikable character. Not as unlikable as Stephen Donaldson's Thomas Covenant, but a character with few redeeming features.

I have many, many Moorcock books, and this is the worst of all that I have read.

Angie says

This was a disappointment, there were a lot of promising aspects to this book but ultimately it just wasn't very good. I took a long time to get through this, because I didn't find it very compelling. The protagonist starts out well, but turns into a cypher. The motivations make little human sense, and much of the action and explanation for the action take place in a passive way. Put together it left me not particularly caring what happens next.

There were some things I liked about this story, particularly that the setting is interesting and quite well developed. There are some scenes that are quite cinematic. Also, I generally enjoy this style of pseudo-mythological ethos of a story. The problem is that it isn't developed in a way that makes coherent sense to the reader, it is layered upon jumbled layer until it is nonsensical, yet somehow still vague. The only filling in of links, incomplete as it is, comes within the last few pages; I found it unsatisfactory. To be fair, apparently this is book 2 of a series and there is a possibility that I missed something essential from the first book, because I read it out of order. At this point, however, I don't think I'll make a point to find out.

Juli says

In *City in the Autumn Stars*, Manfred von Bek escapes from revolutionary Paris, heading for home in Mirenburg, when he falls into the age-old von Bek family plot of serving, or not, Lucifer (those who've not read the series, their work even became part of the family motto: Do you the Devil's Work)...or rather, their duty, I should say, to protect the holy grail from Satan. The problem is, those two services seem to combine more than von Bek (especially, it seems, poor Manfred) would like.

So to *City in the Autumn Stars*. I found Manfred von Bek sweet, but not as dynamic as his predecessor. In fact, it's been a while since I read *Warhound and the World's Pain*, but I don't remember Ulrich Von Bek being as easily (shall we say) led by the (er...) nose by his heroine, The Lady Sabrina?

I'm not even sure I would use the term heroine for Manfred's Libussa, mostly because of the way Manfred follows her every whim. Why, he even follows her into a strange new world--as does his foe of the French revolution, Montsorbier.

Also, where *Warhound and the World's Pain* has clear nods to the Elric series, I didn't see the same relationships here in *City in the Autumn Stars*. (Not that that's a criticism, it's just something I'd hoped for in beginning the novel.) There are nods, (and in some cases) I felt characters split. Klosterheim shows up, but also so does a new character, in the form of Manfred's French nemesis Montsorbier, who felt like, half of Klosterheim, somehow. While Odrahan is charming and I enjoyed his almost steampunkish ambitions, he

didn't quite have the same spunk or loyal streak as a Sendenko (from Warhound) or Moonglum. However, he does advise Manfred that Libussa's ambitions to find the Holy Grail might get him in serious trouble. He ignores that in a way I don't remember Ulrich doing and that might be because he is (or feels) younger.

Because of Manfred's devotion to Libussa, I came out of the book feeling sorry for the poor boy, who seemed, to put it another way, bewitched into helping Libussa achieve her alchemical ambitions. Almost to his detriment.

(and for spoiler reasons, that's all I'll say about that plot point!)

However, for all my comparisons and criticism, I did enjoy *City in the Autumn Stars*, and was particularly delighted with its setting during the Reign of Terror.

J'aime says

I love Michael Moorcock, but I hated this. Convoluting, confusing, and very hard to stick with. I am trying to read all of the *Eternal Champion* novels but I guess this one will have to be my glaring omission because I gave up two thirds of the way through.

Nick says

One of Moorcock's more polished pieces, this novel, set during the French revolution, explores the same Jungian and alchemical symbolism as the *Chronicles of Corum* and some of Moorcock's other work, but does so in a controlled and sophisticated way.

The city of the title ranks among his most vivid creations.

Travis says

The parts set around the French revolution were cool, the beginning of the quest is interesting (I liked the fox) but by the end it gets all surreal and metaphorical and lost me.

I love Moorcock's stuff, but like Grant Morrison, the 'clever weirdness' can get away from him. This was one of those books.

Daniel says

There are many different layers in this book as well as so many multifaceted characters but the main theme of the book is man always dealing with the boundaries of fanaticism regarding one kind of belief: religious faith, political faith, moral and ethics.

I see that Moorcock wrote this book as he said "briefly and for entertainment" but it is hard to put the plot in the backyards of your conscience after reading it.

The book starts dealing with the French Revolution and at the dawn of a century where mankind is transitioning from the dark age to a new age of science and reasoning. At the same time it seems man is still not tolerating disagreement which obviously always leads to violence.

As the book progresses Manfred, a natural atheist, man of reason and science meets a real strong, smart and sensual woman that turns his views towards life and influences his acts since this event.

Supernatural and religious aspects populate the book. But as we know, devil worshipers are not different from Nazis or killers and the essence of their evil is human not supernatural. This is not a book about devil worshipers and it is clearly a book about freedom, choices between the right and wrong.

The book takes place on the early 18th century Europe and two imaginary but fascinating cities appear: Mittlemarch/Mirenburg which seem to have influenced the imaginary cities of Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore or Jeff Vandermeer.

Raymond Walker says

Marvelous and enchanting this tale of one of the offspring of Ulrich Von Beck (it has been many years since i have read this so i may have some details wrong) But the young Von Beck, continues in his antecedentes mein and conducts another deal with the merciful Lucifer, the Lucifer that wishes to be redeemed and gain, again. the good graces of god. Moorcock i think the master of the evil goodie (or anti- hero) and the benevolent (shit)do badder plays this out with aplomb. This story from my memory takes you to mirenberg (a rather adolescent prague, if memory serves- though it may have been Koln. just guessing) And plays happily with your ideas of god and satan in the jewish angel type senario. Marvelous, I can say that with assurety as i know i finished the novel in one night- it had grabbed me so. So far as i remeber an absolute craker of a novel. One not appreciated enough.

Traummachine says

This is an indirect sequel to *War Hound*, with a direct descendant of that protagonist playing the lead this time around.

Moorcock continues with a more modern fantasy setting here, and Manfred Von Bek is a big proponent of the Enlightenment. Revolution, the Rights Of Man, and Science are Manfred's gods, and yet he must play his role in his family's ongoing dealings with Satan. This dichotomy of mind-sets, moral conundrums, and blending of styles are something Moorcock pulls off well. I enjoyed *War Hound* more, but this was still a really good read.

Jordan says

Slowly working my way through all of the Eternal Champion books, honestly this one didn't feel like it added anything at all to the total structure of the series and felt very tertiary. Until the end I don't think I would have ever assumed it had anything to do with the previous book, Warhound and the World's pain which was definitively a fantasy story even if it was pseudo historical. Hopefully the next one will be better.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in June 2001.

The second, much longer, von Bek novel has as its hero the young man of the family in the later eighteenth century, who has already been involved with the Russian court of Catherine the Great and in the American Civil War. When the novel opens, he is a deputy in the revolutionary French National Assembly, but is fleeing Paris, disgusted by the increasing atrocities of Robespierre's reign of terror.

The adventures Manfred von Bek faces in southern Germany and then in the magical countries of the Mittelmarch are, like those of his ancestor in *The War Hound and the World's Pain*, a quest for the Holy Grail, motivated not by desire for the object itself but by love of a beautiful woman. The adventures are quite similar in character, except that Manfred does not face attack from the Dukes of Hell. This is because the theological situation envisaged by Moorcock has now changed; in the earlier novel, Lucifer sought the Grail to help him to become reconciled to God against the wishes of his lieutenants; now, both have abandoned humankind while discussing this reconciliation.

Some might consider the ending of the novel, which involves a recreation of the crucifixion at a time of astrological significance to influence future events, blasphemous. Since many of Moorcock's novels are about religious ideas from the standpoint of a non-believer, this is a charge which has fairly frequently been levelled at his writing. In this case, such an accusation is not, I think, justified, because of the way in which the reconstruction is set up. The motivation of those involved is based on the idea that the crucifixion is an important event in spiritual history, so that (on alchemical principles) a recreation at an appropriate time would have similar power. What is depicted is clearly not intended by the participants, nor I feel by the author, as a mockery.

The City in the Autumn Stars is structured so that it begins mundanely, and magical elements gradually creep in. It is the early part which is the best, and it shows just how good a historical novelist Moorcock could have been. As a whole, the novel is overshadowed by its predecessor, which comes across as more individual.

William says

More of the Von Bek family adventures in *THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN STARS*, which isn't as rollicking an adventure as *THE WARHOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN* (although there is a glorious set piece battle in an otherworldly tavern as warring factions attempt to seize the Grail), but more an examination of one man's journey from disillusioned French revolutionary to alchemical perfection.

Of course, being Moorcock, the path to perfection is a rocky one, and the end of the journey is rarely the destination that was in mind at the beginning. But it's well worth going along for the wild ride again, as Von Bek escapes Paris, heads for Switzerland, and gets involved in schemes with an early balloonist to swindle a fortune while searching for an elusive Countess that has stolen his heart.

The Countess proves to be after much more than that, and soon we are off into another part of Moorcock's multiverse, where the quest for the Grail is taken up in one of Moorcock's trademark baroque cities displaced in time and space. There's also a Concordance, a great meeting of the spheres that regular Moorcock readers will recognise as a motif holding everything together (and blasting everything apart.)

There's great characters, typical Moorcockian musings on the nature of humanity, some glorious alchemical symbolism shot through it, and a lovely bittersweet ending.

Another winner from the great man, and a fitting later addition to the Eternal Champion cycle, which has been broadened by these additions weaving later European history into the rich tapestry.
