



The Palace Of Eternity

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'The planet Mnemosyne, surrounded by a lambent shell of tiny moon-fragments, was known throughout the Federation as the Poets' World. It was a beautiful planet far inside the frontiers of Man's long war with the alien Pythsyccans, and it was to this quiet world that Mack Tavernor retired when he resigned from the Federation forces.

But suddenly the peace of Mnemosyne was shattered; the Federation was moving its military headquarters here. Man's forces were in retreat – and now that Mnemosyne had become Earth's military centre, it became also the target of wave after wave of alien attacks, in a continuing onslaught that could not fail to break through Man's last defences.

Tavernor was caught up in that battle, and he knew that neither he nor humanity would ever again find the peace they sought... unless, perhaps, in death.'

Blurb from the 1969 Ace Paperback Edition

The Palace Of Eternity Details

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Author : Bob Shaw

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From Reader Review The Palace Of Eternity for online ebook

John says

1980 grade B

Alien says

In alten Zeiten gefiel mir Bob Shaw immer recht gut. Dieses Buch habe ich vor Jahrzehnten schon mal gelesen. Allerdings erinnerte ich mich nur an wenig.

Beim zweiten Lesen gefiel es mir von Anfang an nicht richtig. Die Idee mit den ETs, die die Menschheit ausrotten wollen und die langsam an Boden gewinnen, finde ich eigentlich recht gut.

Aber der Plot war von Anfang an nicht sonderlich stimmig. Der Roman geht in x verschiedene Richtungen. Für so ein (nach heutigem Maßstab) kurzen Buch waren es entschieden zu viele.

Die Kosmologie / Welterklärung mit den Ergons gefiel mir dann überhaupt nicht mehr. Auch der Schluss war für mich unbefriedigend. Trotzdem gebe ich ihm 3 Sterne, weil doch einige Ideen recht gut waren.

Raj says

It's the Future and Humanity is at war with an inscrutable alien species. A war which they're losing. The book focuses on one man, who had previously fought in the war and is now a mechanic on a remote planet far from the front.

Bob Shaw is an excellent writer with a great gift for words. I have to say that I saw the "twist" coming from the start of part two but it was nice seeing how it got there.

Larry says

Took me a while as I wasnt really in a Sf mood at the time but oh what fabulous writing-and what a great opening line!

Want more Bosh please!

(Mine is a paperback edition but with the same cover as shown here)

David says

This is a remarkable attempt to combine classic space war drama with one of the most important ideas

people have ever been possessed by - survival after death. Without giving too much away, the future of the human race, which is locked in a losing struggle with the unpleasant Syccans, depends on a man who has been killed. The title is taken from Milton, and the palace in question is the universe itself.

Marianne says

A solid short sci-fi book, with a good introduction to the world and the war with an incommunicable alien race. The twist two-thirds of the way through the book was alluded to, but still felt a bit random to me, and thereafter I felt the story a bit rushed. I don't regret reading it, as it was a reasonable extrapolation of the future and had some neat concepts, but I wouldn't read it twice.

Manny says

- Hi Beatrice! Nice to see you again. And this must be Dante? Signor Alighieri, it's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Solomon. Welcome to the Heaven of the Sun. What do you think?

- It's, uh, neat. And I'm honoured to meet you, King Solomon -

- Call me Sol. No need for formality in the afterlife. So, let me introduce you to the Hosts of the Wise. I bet you'd get on with Boethius, and the Venerable Bede, and Al Einstein -

- Who?

- Oh, I'm sorry, I keep forgetting. After your time. A philosopher from the twentieth century -

- Who's the blessed soul over there?

- Ah, that's Bob Shaw. Also from the twentieth century. A science-fiction writer -

- I'm sorry?

- Hm, it's a bit difficult to explain, but it's a literary tradition that in a way grew out of your books. I mean, I know you haven't written them yet, but you will. It's rather complicated -

- What did he write?

- There's this book called *The Palace of Eternity*. A kind of romance. He explains that, when you die, you don't really die after all. Your spirit ascends into the heavens -

- Well, duh.

- I know, I know. But that's not all. You see, your spirit is really an electromagnetic field -

- A *what*?

- Oh dear. We should ask James Clark Maxwell to explain, he'll do it properly. He was here just a moment ago -
 - Never mind. So my spirit is actually a - whatever it was. And then?
 - You are just as inquisitive as Beatrice said, Signor Alighieri! Now Mr. Shaw tells us in his romance that the spirit, or the electromagnetic field, is not in fact immortal. It can be affected by -
 - ALERT! INCOMING! INTERSTELLAR RAMSCOOP SPACESHIP SIGHTED AND CLOSING FAST!
 - Excuse me, Signor Alighieri, we have an emergency. Bea, if you'd just grab hold of one of his wings, I'll take the other. We should be able to hide behind that solar prominence... okay, I think we're safe. Where was I?
 - Mr. Shaw's romance?
 - Yes, of course. He said that intense electromagnetic fields, like those caused by a certain kind of ... ah, winged chariot, like the one you just saw ... could destroy the soul.
 - But... that's heresy! Whatever is he doing here?
 - Um, to everyone's surprise, it turned out he was right. We'd all assumed he was headed for the other place - open and shut application of *Deus v. Blish* - but he had a good lawyer and won on appeal. Apparently it's all part of the Divine Plan.
 - I ... ah ... are you sure?
 - I'm afraid so. Tom Aquinas and Dick Feynman have been trying to figure it out. At least they say they're making progress. Hope to have a preliminary theory any eon now.
 - I'm ... lost for words.
 - I know just how you feel. Look, if you don't mind, could I ask you not to include this episode in the *Paradiso*? I mean, when you get around to writing it?
 - Uh, well, of course ...
 - Thanks. We appreciate it. Well, I'm sure you must be getting on. Mars is that way. And I look forward to seeing you again in 1321.
 - What?
 - Oops. Me and my big mouth. I never said that, okay? We're cool?
 - Um ... right. Nice meeting you. Bye.
 - Bye! And watch out for those ramscoop spacecraft. Godspeed!
-

Roddy Williams says

'The planet Mnemosyne, surrounded by a lambent shell of tiny moon-fragments, was known throughout the Federation as the Poets' World. It was a beautiful planet far inside the frontiers of Man's long war with the alien Pythsyccans, and it was to this quiet world that Mack Tavernor retired when he resigned from the Federation forces.

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Bob Shaw is one of the unsung heroes of British SF. Outside of SF readership his name is virtually unknown and much of his generally excellent work is sadly out of print.

The war with the Pythsyccans has been raging across space for forty years. The aliens are elongated, spindle-shaped monstrosities who seem determined to wipe Mankind from the galaxy and show no desire to communicate or seek a peaceful solution.

Mack Tavernor, retired Army Colonel turned engineer, has settled on the planet Mnemosyne, 'The Poet's Planet' which boasts an orbital shell composed of fragments of a long-destroyed moon.

Tavernor's history has, to a certain extent, been dictated by the Pythsyccans, since his parents died saving him during an attack by the aliens when he was a child. He subsequently dedicated himself to engineering and specifically to the design of weaponry capable of defeating the aliens.

Tavernor discovers that the military have chosen to use Mnemosyne as the Central Control for War Operations when his house is destroyed to make way for a military headquarters.

Suspicious of the military's true intentions – particularly after several demonstrators are killed by military forces – he joins the rebelling artists who are hiding out in forests outside the city.

Later, hearing that his girlfriend Lissa, is planning to marry one of the military leaders, he returns to persuade her to change her mind, but is captured. Realising that it is only a matter of time before he betrays the other rebels he engineers his own killing whilst being interrogated.

Death, however, is not the end, for Tavernor finds himself reborn as an Egon.

Egons are particles of life-essence which connect to every life-form at conception and are basically – a copy or back-up of the life-experiences of the organism. At the moment of death, the Egon returns to the Mother mass which surrounds every life-bearing planet and whose influence is responsible for flashes of creative or scientific brilliance.

A foretaste of what the Egon masses actually are is sensed by Tavernor at the start of the novel as he stands alone in the forest, witnessing the results of a man-made supernova whose light has just reached Mnemosyne after seven years.

'Tavernor found himself gripped by the ghastly stillness, reduced to the level of one of Mnemosyne's forest creatures, virtually mindless, yet he had in that moment a sense of being aware of Life's relationship to the space-time continuum in a way that men no longer understood. The vast and transparent parameters of the eternal problem seemed to parade on the surface of the gestalt mind of which he might suddenly have become a part. Life. Death. Eternity. The numinous. Panspermism. Tavernor felt a tremendous elation.

Panspermism – the concept of ubiquitous life. Justification for believing that every mind in existence was linked to every other mind that had ever been? If so, then novae and supernovae were only too well understood by the quivering inhabitants of the dark burrows and shielded nests around him. How many times in this galaxy alone had a star gone berserk? A million times? And in the eternity of galaxies? How many civilisations, how many incomputable billions of lives had been blasted out of existence by the star death? And had each being, intelligent or otherwise, in that last withering second, fed the same message into the panspermic all-mind, making it available to every sentient creature that would ever exist in the continuum's dark infinities? Look out, little brother, whether you walk, crawl, swim, burrow or fly – when the sky suddenly floods with light, make your peace, make your peace...' (Page 11)

Egon individuals are virtually immortal, but, unbeknown to living humanity, the Egon masses are being decimated by the effects of the Bussard Ramjet butterfly ships which Man employs to travel between the stars.

Tavernor is sent back, grafted to the consciousness of his unborn son in an effort to persuade Humanity that the only way to avoid extinction at the hands of the Pythysccans is to abandon Ramjet technology. (It becomes clear that the Pythysccans are aware of Egons and the damage that Man's ship are doing to the sentient masses)

Although oddly structured, it's a well-characterised work, with quite a few of what Shaw used to call his 'wee thinky bits', such as the telepathic batlike creatures which Tavernor employs to great effect in one of his guerrilla attacks on the occupying military. Where other writers would be satisfied with merely introducing a telepathic species, Shaw provides – if not a scientific explanation for telepathy – at least a solid evolutionary basis for why such a talent should have developed and a plausible description of how they mesh into their ecosystem.

Above all, this a story about real people relating to real events and significantly, given that it is a novel of the sixties, a very anti-establishment work in which the military are untrustworthy and pursuing the wrong course.

Bob Rust says

The Palace of Eternity (1969) a wide canvas featuring interstellar warfare, the environmental degradation of an Edenic planet and human Transcendence; the central section of the novel where the hero finds himself reincarnated as an "Egon" or soul-like entity is in fact an effective handling of a traditional sf displacement of ideas from Metaphysics or Religion.

Jim says

This one is one of the books from the box of books that are from my late father. He was a BIG fan of science fiction of the 50s and 60s and most of the books are paperbacks from those years. The latest one I picked out is this one published in 1969. The story is set in the far future. The human race has been spreading through the stars--and has run into an alien species that is determined to eradicate the humans from the universe. The Federation is being defeated--and the Feds' HQ is set up on the beautiful planet of Mnemosyne. Mack Tavernor retired there after resigning from the Fed military. Now, he finds himself once again on the front-lines... The first 2/3 of the book thus read like standard SF fare--but the final third comes as a big surprise, a real mind-blower. I had never read anything by Shaw before, but based on this book, he seems to be an excellent writer --and--a rare quality-ORIGINAL. His writing reminded me of that of Philip K. Dick (can I

say he's "Dickesque?")

Bob Shaw was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1931 and died in England in 1996.

Palmyrah says

I first read this book in the Seventies, when I was in my early teens. I really liked it, mostly for the protagonist's encounter with the Syccans – the alien bad guys – in the last part of the story.

I just finished re-reading it for the first time in about forty years. The first part of the book was exactly as I remembered it. Then I came to a part of the story I had forgotten, no doubt because it made little impression on me at the time. The hero is recovering after a beating, and he is visited by a little girl, not yet four years old, who turns out to be a healer (and much else, later). The child heals the hero by touching his bruises and contusions. Among other places, she touches him (it's mentioned in passing) on his genitals. Later, there is another, similar scene in the shower.

There is nothing overtly erotic about the scene but I did feel rather uncomfortable re-reading it.

As an adult, I was less impressed with the basic conceit of the story than I had earlier been. Reading it today, I seemed to find elements of Scientology coupled with a Blakeanized take on Christian mysticism – all secularized and scientifictionalized, of course – but nothing terribly original. The unexpected and somewhat shocking turn taken by the plot about two-thirds of the way through the book still retained its power for me, but the ending was a lot less satisfactory than I remembered.

A disappointment, then, and one that leaves me feeling rather uneasy for having liked it so much as a youngster. It is, however, powerfully and muscularly written, and Shaw's prose is frequently lightened by unexpected shafts of poesy.
