

The WSFA Journal

Sept/Oct 2017

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WSFA Approves New Book

The September 1, 2017 meeting began with VP George saying, “Your backup emergency president is here.” Rodger immediately fired back, “Please state the nature of your science fictional emergency.” George called to the people in the back, “Care to join us, we’re having a meeting.” <noise> HEY!
<quiet> This first Friday in Virginia was called to order at 9:14.

Sam L read the minutes and there were some corrections. Treasurer Sam S. reported \$money as of Sept 2017. Year over year +money.



Capclave present. Surveys went out and Cathy will start data entry. There were some inevitable changes. She will do some more invites. Bob and Cathy did the hotel walkthrough. Hotel is doing new wallpaper and carpeting so should be done by Capclave. Cathy needs a volunteer wrangler, and workshop minder. She plans a “fun weekend of me nailed to my computer.” She will coordinate with Bill for GoH. There is more content up on website. Things are moving. Anyone wants to volunteer, see Cathy. For Labor Day sales, if you come across 5 for \$10 sales of soda cans, send to WSFA list. Elizabeth volunteered to buy soda. For Capclave Future, Cathy said, we’re still working on hotel issues. She is looking for two year contract. Hank said the hotel will pick up people from the MARC station. Sam S. gave a reminder, if you have not registered, please do so. You can only prereg by the end of Sept. You can pay tonight. Cap Far Future: Sam P had nothing to add.

WorldFantasy/Cap 2020: Bill said there will be meeting on Sept 9th Saturday, a week from tomorrow. 2pm at the BSFS clubhouse. There will be a big push next month at WFC in Texas. He listened closely to Cathy’s commentary on hotels.

Publications: There will be a WSFA Press book, said Gayle, but there are problems with printing. Maybe we could do it through digital printing. Otherwise we’d have to mail them out. We brought forms. We will have a book, don’t know if available at Capclave or not. Ken will be out of the country so don’t know if he can do the signature sheets in time. We are still selling the old books, Christmas is coming up and they make great gifts. Elizabeth said there are eight nights of Hanukkah and we have at least eight books.

Small press award: Paul said winner is... one of the nominees. The award has been engraved and should get to us next week. So at least something will be on time. Sam S. said the announcement appeared in Locus. Certificates have been printed and given to Cathy. Cathy knows who it is. Paul suggested making a special effort to make sure the winner attends or come up with speech for someone else. Cathy said she will be doing follow up emails, most of the nominees aren’t close by, so will be following up with publishers. A number are not in the country. Following up. We will have a decent crowd of nominees and their representatives. We were in File 770. Rodger said people are tweeting about it.



Social media – tweet tweet, squark. Meetup, no date change. Constitution has to meet at Steve. Intertivities: There is an upcoming book festival. Escape Velocity. Some board games.



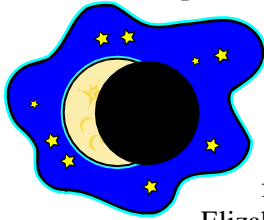
No old business. New business: Bill had his hand up. There was discussion of a new WSFA Press Book. We authorized up to \$cost for a book in 2018 and Sean is authorized to negotiate.

Elizabeth seconded. Bill said, “\$cost is the upper limit.” Kathi asked, “Is this comparable to what we’ve been paying?” Yes. We have quorum. Motion passed, one abstention.

No one here for first, second or third. First Friday in November will be here.

Announcements: Except for next month when will be at Capclave, First Fridays will be here. Kim turned over two copies of his novel to Fairfax library at their request. Should get review at Howard. 2 week from tomorrow, song circle at Mark’s.

Bill – in my non-WSFA list, bidding for Worldcon. Brought the fan bait. Ice-cream chews. Bid Party at Capclave.



Kathi said she needs help with her haunted house. Weekends in October.

Arlington Planetarium will be opening up. Want eclipse pictures.

Judy – if people have cars to transfer stuff for Capclave, see me.

Mike Walsh - Books for sale. Post Worldcon went to Russia. Sprite tasted strange. Was cucumber flavored. Rodger – If it sits awhile, does it become pickle flavored?

Elizabeth- I want to thank Cathy Green for stepping up to run Capclave on very short notice.

Cathy: I haven’t put my hair on fire yet.

Paul: Have forms to preorder the book.

Bill: Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned unanimously 9:58

Attendance: Courtnei Burluson, Rodger Burns, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Kimberly Hargan, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Sarah Mitchell, Kathi Overton, Sam Pierce, Mark Roth, Judy & Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Gayle Surrette, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Stephen Brinich, Crystal Paul, Henry Smith, and Ginny Schneider.

SF Heroes Go Back to School

Further education is very important. Even science fiction and fantasy heroes need to go back to school occasionally to build useful new skills. Here is where they are going:

1. Superman – Flight school
2. Buffy the Vampire Slayer – College to study Folklore & Mythology; will take kickboxing as a sport
3. Paul Atreides (Dune) – Graduate degree in Environmental Studies
4. Harry Dresden – Detective School
5. Fred Cassidy (Doorways in the Sand) – College to study everything that won’t force him to graduate.
6. James Bolivar diGriz (Stainless Steel Rat) – The Universe to study Time Crime
7. Telzey Amberdon (Federation of the Hub) – Medical School to study Brain Surgery (without the scalpel)



8. Johnny Cross (Slan) – Medical School to study Hypnosis
9. Stephen Titus George – Writer’s Workshops to learn the art of Writing without Paper
10. Sophie Mercer (Hex Hall) – Hex Hall to study Demonology
11. R. Daneel Olivaw (Asimov’s Robots) – Police Academy to study Detecting and then postgraduate studies in Manipulating the Universe.
12. Spider-Man – To college to study Arachnology



Convention Dumped

Before the 9/15/17 Third Friday meeting in September, there was a mention of how someone is tweeting all of Moby Dick. "Alright folks," said Prez Bob. "It's about 9:15, close enough." For the Trustees, Barry had nothing to report.

Capclave Present: Cathy said there will be a meeting at her place on Sunday. She is putting the program together. Stuff is underway. Adjustments are being made. She is trying for greater diversity. Things are proceeding. Capclave Future: Collette was busy rescuing her father from Hurricane Irma. She is drafting a preliminary contract. She is hoping to get a contract by Capclave, otherwise we will say there will be a Capclave, will be in October. Elizabeth commented, "I did just dump an entire convention on you." Far future had nothing to report.

WFC – We had a meeting last weekend; Skype worked well. We need to move the mike around. We are progressing. Over a month from WFC 2017 in San Antonio. Selling memberships. Staffingwise, we are adding people into positions. Mike Zipster needs help. We need people willing to be GoH liaisons. Cathy and I discussed, if the Capclave contract for 2018 works out to be last weekend in October, we will reach out to guests to see if willing to come earlier to be effectively special guests at Capclave. We talked to Sean, they don't have a contract yet for a book, but there is an agreement that we are looking at a book. In that case the author would be invited to be a WSFA Press guest.



Capclave 2020, we are looking at hotels. We will continue to look at things. Once get past this year's WFC, we'll know about membership. If we get near cap, should be able to bring in more people.

Cathy went back to Capclave Present for one potential issue she didn't want in official record. Take bookmarks and rack cards. Bill said people on Facebook asking about program. Says it is coming soon. Afro-futurism was responsive.

Subterranean is already advertising the WSFA Press book for preorders.



Small Press Award: Cathy will do followup emails. Neil will be mc for the award.

Some people have sent in who their acceptance people will be. Barry suggested a slide show during award presentation so could see faces of those not there. Prez suggested doing that next year. Bill said Dale Arnold wants winners of the amateur writing contest included. Cathy said she and Rodger are coordinating.

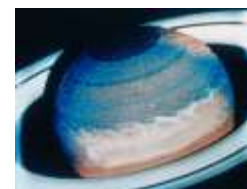
Elizabeth paid for meetup cost. If have anything to go up, let her know. Bill asked about Capclave.

Dodos thanked Cassini for years of service.

Talk SF, will do Clarkesworld with Neil Clarke at Capclave. Bill said working on getting another author to do a reading in November. Trying for third Friday.

Entertivities: Kim said Cassini probe plunged into Saturn. Bill said Saturday 10 PM, Lifetime will have a movie based on Sarah Beth Durst novel.

No old business.
No new business:



Second meeting: Barry Carver.
 First meeting. Joe Marxy. Friend of Deidre.
 Judy wrote a con report for Worldcon 75, for SF Revu.
 Eva Whitley brought Capclave rack cards to Bronycon
 Bill congratulated Eva for becoming BSFS recording secretary.
 Commercial for keyboard.
 Courtni got promotion at work.
 Meeting adjourned at 10:01 unanimously.

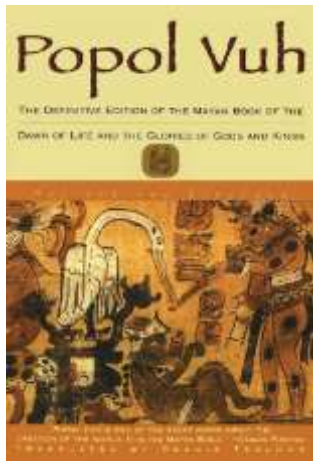
Attendance: Courtni Burleson, Rodger Burns, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Green, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Beth Jones, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Candy Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Michael Nelson, Barry & Judy Newton, Evan Phillips, Steve Smith, Deidre Tracy, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Eva Whitley, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, David Holden, Joe Moxey, and Barry Carver

WSFA Meeting at Capclave

10/6/17 – WSFA met briefly at Capclave. No business was done. Instead we spoke about the club, its activities, and the upcoming World Fantasy Convention.

A Review of *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings* by Dennis Tedlock

Review by Kim Hargan



On a recent visit to my local library I saw a copy of Dennis Tedlock's translation of the *Popol Vuh* on the shelf, and as a former archaeologist, I just had to check it out. After I read it, I then had to review and recommend it for my fellow WSFA members. Why? As Americans, we are already quite familiar with the Judeo-Christian view of the universe, and to a certain extent with Greco-Roman, Nordic, Islamic and other Middle Eastern religions and mythologies (think Gilgamesh and ancient Egypt). As fans of science fiction and fantasy, we are interested in alien worldviews and world building. The *Popol Vuh* provides us with about as alien a worldview as we can get before we actually meet extraterrestrials.

The *Popol Vuh* (the Book of Counsel) is a sacred text of the Quiché Maya people who live in southwestern Guatemala. The most fascinating thing for me is the continuity it shows with the iconography (and therefore the reconstructable mythology) of the Classic Maya – which of course makes sense, as the Quiché (and other Postclassic to Historical [i.e., the time of the Spanish conquest] Maya peoples) are the direct inheritors of the culture of the Classic Maya.

Dennis Tedlock was the McNulty Professor of English and a Research Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He took a wonderful approach to “getting inside the heads” of the authors of the *Popol Vuh*. Much of what we know about traditional Maya religion has to do with astronomical cycles that are important for getting planting times right. (If you doubt as to how critical a role a correct calendar plays for an agricultural people, consider the fact that the priests of ancient Rome kept a stranglehold on power by keeping the workings of the calendar secret. Julius Caesar broke their power by reforming what had been



an overly complicated system and making it public.) The Maya calendrical system places a large significance on the 260 Venus cycle. We know from the inscriptions of the Classic Maya that they had three cycles for calendrical use: they had the 365-day sidereal year, a 360-day “prophetic” year (they had a distinct preference for cycles divisible by 20, connected with their base 20 numerical system), and the 260-day sacred cycle. As the sacred (Venus) cycle can be factored as 13×20 , they expressed this cycle as a system of 20 day names and 13 numbers, which in all possible combinations gives the necessary 260 days. That cycle has what we would call both astrological and numerological “uses” in traditional Maya culture to this day. The specialists in this system are called by a Mayan term which Tedlock translates as “daykeeper”. A daykeeper’s role in society is to serve as a matchmaker (making sure the prospective spouses have auspiciously compatible day-number matches) and as “fortunetellers” (psychological counselors who “read” the day/number signs when counseling someone, using the signs as the “authority” for the counsel). In order to grasp the full significance of this system for the mythology of the *Popol Vuh*, Tedlock found himself a master Quiché daykeeper and trained with him until Tedlock himself qualified as a daykeeper. Then, as he translated the *Popol Vuh*, he was able to tap the master daykeeper as a consultant for the underlying meanings of the text.

Tedlock’s analysis of clues in the text suggests that the three master daykeepers (representing the three ruling houses or lineages of the Quiché) who wrote it still had an original Maya hieroglyphic codex in their hands. The problem with that was that Spanish priests had declared the images in the codices as evidence of devil worship, resulting in confiscation and burning. The authors wrote it out in two columns, one in Spanish and one in the original Quiché. The text is divided into five sections or chapters. The general story in the text is told in the past tense, but the head of each section is written in “demonstrative” present tense: “Here is . . .”, “This is . . .”, suggesting descriptions or captions for pictures in an original hieroglyphic manuscript. So the daykeepers were “re-recording” the *Popol Vuh* in a format that could possibly escape the charge of idolatry and therefore the fate of the hieroglyphic codices, which it did and which is why we have it today.

Tedlock’s book is very readable for an academic product (possibly the result of his also being a professor of English). He includes explanations of the Maya calendar and Mayan poetics (which influence the structure or “style” of the text). He begins with an “Introduction” in which he essentially tells the whole story of the *Popol Vuh* in plain, straightforward English. That is followed by the direct translation of the text, which even in English is sufficiently bizarre in its cultural assumptions and formulations. Next is a section of notes on the text offering deeper insight into what the authors were trying to get across and the cultural context of the ideas expressed. Then there is a glossary (mostly of names) and a bibliography. All told, it’s not that long – the text itself might make one book within the Old or New Testament, so it’s actually a fairly quick read.

The essence of the text is how this world was created and a history (explanation or justification) of how the Quiché ended up where they are now, how the three ruling houses were established, and how they came to build a kingdom that dominated their neighbors – until the Spanish conquistadores arrived.



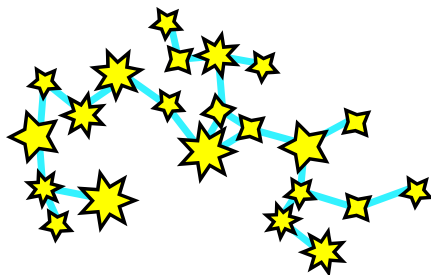
The Maya creation of this world was not all that long ago – according to the Mayan cyclical notion of time, the world (or at least the “world” of mankind) is regularly destroyed (one time by a universal flood, another by fire, another time by earthquake, yet another by a plague of jaguars that eat everyone) and recreated by the gods. The *Popol Vuh* begins with the gods at the beginning of “this” world making several attempts to create humans who can worship them properly

(apparently even the gods have to practice to get it right). It then moves on to a tale of several generations of culture heroes whose exploits took place during the beginning phase of this epoch of the world, even before the sun of the new creation had risen for the first time. (No mention is made of how they got around to do what they did in the total darkness before the sun rose – I guess they were just heroes. Mythology, you know.) The first two generations are up there with Hercules in their mythical exploits, mostly dealing with outwitting the lords of Xibalba, the Maya underworld. The first pair of hero twins is defeated and sacrificed by the lords of Xibalba, but their heads remain in a cassaba tree (the gourds of which resemble human heads in shape). The unusual “fruit” attract the attention of the daughter of one of the lords, they spit into her hand, and she becomes pregnant, making them the joint fathers of the next pair of hero twins. These twins achieve vengeance for their fathers by defeating the lords of Xibalba, boldly outwitting them with trickery (which is only fair, because the defeat of their fathers was the result of the trickery of the lords of Xibalba).

The story then moves on to the next generation, consisting of four married couples (apparently one for each compass direction) who are the founding ancestors of the three ruling houses of the Quiché (one couple didn't have any children to found a house). Their names are wonderfully evocative, and I got a kick out of the men's names: Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Dark Jaguar and Not Right Now. These four couples travel to Tollan Zerua (possibly the site in Guatemala now known as Copán) for signs and symbols to establish their suzerainty over their eventual kingdom, including the gods which each house would worship. On their way to find a place for themselves (and they seem to have had quite a few children by this time, and in spite of the fact that they are described as “the first people created” there are a lot of other people of unexplained origins whom they have to contend with) the very first sunrise of this epoch occurs, and the gods who had been walking with them turn to stone and have to be carried to their eventual temple sites. I find the reference to needing to get the proofs of legitimacy from Tollan Zerua (“the second or not-the-original place of reeds”) to be fascinating. Tollan Zerua is described as being much closer in the east than the (real) Tollan located to the west, which appears to refer to the site known as Teotihuacan to the Aztecs. The mounting evidence from years of research indicates that Teotihuacan was something of a regional superpower before its decline, “providing” legitimacy to Classic Maya ruling lineages, and even deposing and replacing lineages that it disapproved of (for whatever reason). The echoes of actual history from the Classic period in the mythological text are quite interesting.



With the first rising of the sun, the text begins a transition into history. The Quiché move from one place to another, all of which still exist as identifiable ruins, before reaching the place that was their capital when the Spanish arrived. A list of kings and important ministers is given, including one who was the “Alexander” of his day, conquering most of the surrounding Maya peoples and greatly extending the sway of the Quiché kingdom. The list ends with the first Quiché lords to have Spanish Christian names, obviously marking the Spanish conquest.



One facet of great interest in the early creation and heroic stories is how they represent actual astronomical cycles of the appearance, setting and reappearance of certain stars and constellations, and how this all connects with the agricultural cycle. We see all these things as more or less separate entities today, but the *Popol Vuh* reveals a holistic view of the universe in which they all relate directly to the life of the people (in terms of the society's agricultural livelihood). Between buying our food

from supermarkets and restaurants, and being so busy with everything we do at night under the light-polluted skies of cities, our civilization is almost entirely disconnected from the yearly rhythm of seasons and the stars and constellations that mark them. In that way the *Popol Vuh* shows us an alien mindset in contrast to our culture and society's current way of thinking.

And besides all that, you've just got to love a text in which one of the culture heroes is named Not Right Now, and an important historical minister from one of the ruling houses was named Armadillo Dung. It just doesn't get any more alien than that.

Afrofuturism at Capclave

The 10/20/17 Third Friday meeting began with "All right folks," said prez Bob. "It's 9:15 Third Friday in October." Sam L. read minutes from last time.



Cathy spoke for Capclave past. It went well. The gender stickers were popular; the people who wanted them sounded happy. No final figures from the other Sam. Bob said they were up on the Capclave wiki. Cathy said Sam L will do more publicity next year. Bob said we had more at the door than expected. Cathy said, we don't set the workshops early. I've typically done separate releases to the colleges and universities in the area. That needs to be done each year because creative writing professors tend to change. Ceres Wright did an afrofuturism panel and on writing diverse characters and brought in new program participants. The afrofuturism network pushed out. Added diversity. We can do better, but good start. I heard good stuff about programming, participants sounded happy. Will do committee autopsy soon. Still need addresses for some small press finalist certificates. I plan on doing quick survey. The lack of a gripe session an accident. We need feedback.

Cap Future. RFPs out at hotels. There was a discussion about hotels and possible uses of space as well as concerns about dealers and configuration of dealer's room. The idea is to get the hotel signed. A one year contract and to tell Collette to focus on 2019.

Elsbeth asked about getting the way of holidays. Cathy said in 2019 cannot use our current weekend because too close to Yom Kippur. But going two years out things are more flexible. Let's not screw with high holidays. Once get a contract, we go into overdrive about press releases and rack cards.

Capclave 2019 and 2020/WFC are not here. Cathy thought Rockville might work for 2020.



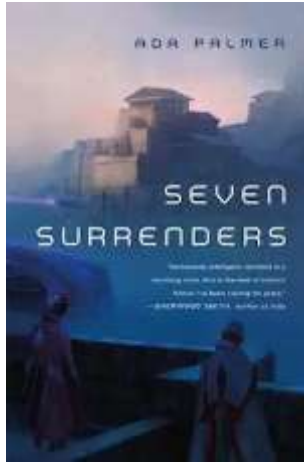
Talk SF gave its schedule. No social committees. No Webmaster or WSFA press. Entertivities: Arlington Central Library book sale. This weekend. Patrick Henry (Fairfax) library. Kim was there for Indie Author day. The *Blade Runner* sequel continues the atmosphere of original, but Bob said it is long and somewhat predictable. 2:20 hours.

No old business. No new business. Sandy Olson back after a while. Came after a decade. Jenny Jurling met Kim at Capclave and he said I should come to Greenbelt meetings. Carolyn is making cookies. Mike Walsh has box of books. Julian May died at 85. Chaired second Chicago Worldcon at age 22. Meeting adjourned 9:48 unanimously.



Attendance: Courtnei Burleson, Rodger Burns, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Green, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Beth Jones, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Steve Smith, Mike Taylor, Deidre Tracy, Michael Walsh, Sander Olson, Elspeth Kovar, and Jenny Moser Jurling.

Review of *Seven Surrenders* (Terra Ignota #2) by Ada Palmer Reviewed by Sam Lubell



The first book in this series, *Too Like the Lightning*, was a finalist for the 2017 Hugo Award. It also won the Compton Cook award given by the Baltimore Science Fiction Society. In my review, I predicted that Palmer would become an important voice in science fiction. So far, she's making good progress on that.

Seven Surrenders is really the second half of *Too Like the Lightning*. Palmer wrote the two as a single book that Tor later divided into two. For this reason, more than most sequels, this continuation will be totally incomprehensible to those who have not read the first book--and even those who have should review that book before jumping into this one.

Summing up the plot of this book is extremely difficult as most of it revolves around revealing the truth behind the mysteries and secrets introduced in the first book. Unfortunately, the first few chapters appear to be fragmented in a way better suited for the middle of a novel (which this admittedly was) as a collection of unrelated incidents, religious discussions, and flashbacks. The book opens, after a quick note about censorship, with a chapter about his kidnapping narrated by Sniper, not Mycroft Canner who narrates the rest of the book. Then the book jumps to a discussion among the world's political leaders about the investigation into the Black Sakura Seven-Ten list and the secret assassinations performed by the Saneer bash (family) which serves to remind readers of some of the events of the first book. Then there is an elaborate religious discussion when Carlyle Foster is tricked into visiting Madame's brothel/secret religious order only to learn that Dominic is now Carlyle's sensayer (a sort of combination religious advisor/psychiatrist). Dominic uses 18th-century religious philosophy to expose and shatter Carlyle's religious beliefs to convince Carlyle to help Dominic take control of Bridger, the child who can work miracles.

A flashback shows Mycroft's trial for murdering the Mardi bash, revealing that he was saved through the intervention of JEDD Mason, then a child, who recognized that Mycroft was not able to do evil for evil's sake so was essentially benign. After Dominic captures Saladin, Mycroft's lover and partner in killing, Caesar forces Mycroft to admit that Apollo had predicted an inevitable war and was trying to launch it ahead of time so that its severity would be reduced. This was the true reason why Mycroft murdered the Mardi bash, leading to Mycroft becoming a Servicer, a servant to the political leaders, JEDD Mason, and the Saneer bash.

But the true virtue of the book is not the extremely complex plot, but the wonderful 18th-century style narrative voice. At some points, Mycroft, an extremely unreliable narrator, admits that he has been concealing the true sex of some of the characters. At other points, Mycroft speaks directly to the reader. *"So I raced, and watched, and dispatched a silent prayer too... You may if you wish to aid us, pray as well, reader. The Hand that weaves Providence knows everything from creation to infinity, and takes account of the future when He plans the past; if prayer has any power to sway Fate then, even though, from your perspective, Carlyle was either saved or not saved long ago, it could still be your prayer, now, as you read, that swayed the Judge."*



The world of *Seven Surrenders* is set in our future but a future with strong links to the 18th-century. The author, Ada Palmer, is a Professor of Early Modern European History at the University of Chicago and is also affiliated with its Classics Department and Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies. This series draws on all these aspects of her academic career.

A key feature of the book is that in this future, Madam has rediscovered the power of femininity and sex paired with religion to control others in a gender neutral world since people have not developed their resistance to these tactics through persistent exposure. Ironically, by tying the political leaders to herself, she also ties them to each other, postponing the conflict Apollo foresaw. But not all corruption stems from Madam's attempts to rule the rulers. The

Sensayers have been corrupted by Julia Doria-Pamphili's campaign against the Mitsubishi family and the Cousins Feedback Bureau has been rigged.

This complex book really needs a list of all the characters (especially as some have multiple names), their Hives, and their bashes.

Like *Too Like the Lightning*, *Seven Surrenders* is an extremely difficult book. It is simultaneously political, philosophical, historical, and religious. There's little traditional action, most of the conflict takes place through conversations and through exposures of the truth. Readers who accept the challenge posed by this book will find themselves with a book that can affect how they think about the future, present, and past. This is not a beach book, but a rich and highly complex sophisticated novel that calls for repeated re-readings.

