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Gordon R. Dickson , David W. Wixon

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Gordon R. Dickson's "Childe Cycle" of novels depicting the future of the human race has been one of the grand epics of science fiction. At the time of his death in 2001, Dickson was writing *Antagonist*, the tale of Bleys Ahrens' turn toward darkness. Now Dickson's assistant David W. Wixon has brilliantly finished the long-awaited book, working from Dickson's copious notes. *Antagonist* is a fitting capstone to one of the most ambitious series in SF history.

The Childe Cycle is the story of a new human evolution: the development of a real, hardwired sense of "responsibility" shared by all human beings. Donal Graeme was a Dorsai, a mercenary soldier, and also a mutant gifted with insight into the path forward for the human race. Through his gifts Donal would come to bend time and live three lifetimes--and, in the process, run into problems he had not expected: first, his own flaws, and second, the existence of another mutant, Bleys Ahrens.

Following *Young Bleys* and *Other*, *Antagonist* advances the story of the formidably powerful Bleys Ahrens. Bleys is a man with a clear vision of the struggle in which he's involved--but an increasingly deficient sense of human values. He and his organization, the Others, are tracking down an elusive interplanetary opposition. Meanwhile, Bleys' own intricate conspiracies and devisings, and his quest for power, which began with the best of motives, have become something darker and fiercer.

He's committed to his plans. They may bring about the advent of *Homo superior*. And they may destroy the human race.

Antagonist Details

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From Reader Review Antagonist for online ebook

Jim says

Kind of a let down... I was hoping to read to find out how it all worked out, but I didn't. This book & the preceding, Other, basically follow the same timeline as The Final Encyclopedia, but from Bleys Ahrens POV, instead of Hal Mayne's. So we learn a lot more about Bleys, who I never liked. Good ending, but if I hadn't read the last two books of this series (which I hadn't before) I really wouldn't have missed much.

I just realized I missed reading 2 of the books in the series; #8 & 9 as listed below. Don't know how I messed that up. I have #8 & might read it in the future since I see it has Amanda in it. I've always liked all the Amandas. I think I'll pass on #9, though. I've had more than enough of Bleys.

Childe Cycle

1. Dorsai! (1959) aka The Genetic General
2. Necromancer (1962) aka No Room for Man
3. Soldier, Ask Not (1967)
4. The Tactics of Mistake (1971)
5. The Spirit of Dorsai (1979)
6. Lost Dorsai (1980)
7. The Final Encyclopedia (1984)
8. The Chantry Guild (1988)
9. Young Bleys (1991)
10. Other (1994)
11. Antagonist (2007) (with David W Wixon)

T.I.M. James says

For the first time in a long time I have given up on a book, even ignoring my own rule of finishing the first 100 pages before I make my decision.

Hoping that might be an acceptable conclusion to Dickson's Childe Cycle, first I find that it is an additional book, not a conclusion.

It is written by a second author (completing a work started before his death), but the new author cannot write, long drawn out chapters of conversation covering the same points over and over again, hardly the engaging style that Dickson had. (I can remember reading 100 pages + on mining, and thought it fascinating in the Final Encyclopaedia)

No, it seems to be in trend at the moment to have others complete the works of deceased authors,

unfortunately in most cases it seems these writers have no true skill, or worse are doing it for the money.

This will go on my shelf with the other Dickson books, and maybe one day I read it.

Should they try to complete the Childe Cycle in the future, I pray they get a decent writer to do it.

Wayfarer says

After „Other“ which I managed to finish only with a huge effort and perseverance, „The Antagonist“ finally beat me. With all the flaws of poorly constructed dialogues and heaps of unnecessary sentences, even whole paragraphs and pages that “Other” suffer from, “The Antagonist” only took it to a new level of uninspired writing. So much so that at some point along the way I simply gave up and did what I very seldom do – stopped and never finished the book. One star.

Helga Ganguly says

The Antagonist in this case is Dickson and the friend who helped him by finishing a fairly good series after his death. This book tells us nothing new unless you include errors by the author-like the resurrection of characters long dead. The last 1 1/2 pages said something new but by then, I really didn't care.

Kathi says

5/10

Apparently we will never know the end result of the conflict between Bleys Ahrens, with the Others and the Younger Worlds, and Hal Mayne, with the Final Encyclopedia, Dorsai, Exotics, and Old Earth. Author Gordon R. Dickson died 6 years before long-time assistant and co-author David W. Wixon finished and published this volume, which was meant to be the penultimate installment in the Childe Cycle. The planned final book is not forthcoming, but Dickson and Wixon managed to lay enough groundwork in this book to lead readers to draw their own conclusions about how the threads of the future will likely play out.

There is little doubt that the trilogy of books focusing on Bleys Ahrens were neither as tightly plotted nor as thought-provoking as the original Dorsai books and those focusing on Hal Mayne, but even the later Mayne books were far too heavy on either internal or conversational philosophizing. This book follows that pattern, although the few conversations between Ahrens and Mayne are the highlights of the book.

I am a completist, so I am glad I persevered and finished the Childe Cycle.

Samuel Lubell says

At some point in the series, the focus of the shifted from the Dorsai to their antagonists which causes a problem in trying to make the lead characters, who previously were the bad guys, sympathetic. It's especially bad that the series ended here.

Conal says

A book that sounded interesting when first heard about but one that did not live up to expectations. This is not a close to the Childe Cycle (that apparently will never be written) but rather another book about Bleys Ahrens. This one follows a similar timeline as the Final Encyclopedia but tells the story from Bleys point of view. This might have been a good addition to the series of books but unfortunately this book was finished after Gordon Dickson passed away and the story is very uneven. I would only recommend this to other fans of the series who might need a final Dickson fix.

Balthanon says

Overall, not as enjoyable as the other two books in the trilogy (though it has been a long while since I've read those)-- Bleys's transition into an antagonist for Hal Mayne leaves quite a bit to be desired and his actions lack any sense of subtlety or notable intelligence or insight, despite being described as such. It was a bit disappointing capstone to the series, though it might have been inevitable based upon the integration with the Childe Cycle which I haven't read directly.

Will says

For those lamenting that the Childe Cycle will never be finished, the last of the Bleys trilogy, "completed" by David Wixon "from Dickson's notes". As there is no prefacial material, we have no way of knowing how much of this is really Dickson's and how much his "collaborator" just came up with, something I consider not playing fair.

This takes up the phase where Bleys' plans become more evidently sinister, as well as his final reckoning with Dahno. Conspiracies on conspiracies pop out of the woodwork. The confrontations with Hal/Donal from THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA are retold from Bleys' viewpoint. Somewhat slow-paced, but fans of YOUNG BLEYS and THE OTHER will not want to miss it.
