



Blue Adept

Piers Anthony

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In Book Two of the epic adventure that began in *SPLIT INFINITY*, Stile discovers life on Proton and Phaze is getting more difficult. On Proton he's a serf trying to prove his right to exist by competing in the Great Games. And on Phaze, where only magic worked, he was the Blue Adept trying to master the powers of sorcery. On both worlds, someone was trying to assassinate him. And as if that weren't enough, he has to win the love of Lady Blue, fight a dragon, discover the ultimate weapon, and of course, seek out the all-powerful Citizen who was trying to kill him!

THE APPRENTICE ADEPT SERIES

Book One: *SPLIT INFINITY*

Book Two: **BLUE ADEPT**

Book Three: *JUXTAPOSITION*

From the Paperback edition.

Blue Adept Details

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From Reader Review Blue Adept for online ebook

Jeremy Preacher says

It's not actually worse than Split Infinity, really - it actually moves faster, the stakes are higher, and the many brief Tourney scenes remain entertaining (if slightly irritating once you realize just how implausible Stile's ridiculous breadth and depth of skills is. Seriously, he had a full-time job and he's 35, yet he can run marathons, is a top-ranked martial artist, a serious musician, the best rider on the planet, a competitive gymnast, skilled swordsman, *and he can use a sewing machine?* Come on.)

It loses a star for the last scene, really, in which he (spoilers ahead, but seriously, none of you will care, the book's thirty years old) defeats his enemy by implying that he's in love with her. See, she's such a rabid lunatic man-hater that this causes her to lose her shit and throw the game they're playing in an attempt to beat his head into a pulp.

This of course is the only possible explanation for why she, as a female, did not fall for his unearthly charm. The only other women in the book who don't are a menopausal woman and a child. (And the child totally harbors a crush on him for the next four books.) Psychopathic man-hater! That must be it! Never mind that this comes totally out of the blue in this scene, unsupported by any of the previous interactions with this character (of which there are quite a few.) And is *completely dumb* besides. This totally threw me even as an eight-year-old, and as a thirty-something woman, I have no patience left for this kind of bullshit.

Thomas says

When I was 13, I read a lot of Piers Anthony, and when I say "a lot," I mean a lot. The guy was pretty much all I read, from the Xanth series to the Incarnations of Immortality series, and even the Battle Circle and Bio of a Space Tyrant series, but my favorite of his books from that time would have to be the Apprentice Adept series. I read them again in my late 20s and thought they held up pretty well, so when I got on a bit of a nostalgia kick recently, I thought I'd give these another go, just to see if they were still pretty good. And the verdict is ... well, mixed.

When I was 13, I realized that most of Piers' books had a lot of sex in them (that may have been a reason I liked them as much as I did); what I didn't realize was how much sexism they contained. As I was re-reading this series, I started finding some questionable quotes from them, of which these are some choice selections:

"She evinced the confidence normally associated with a larger person, though of course height was less important to a woman."

"Stile could not pick among women; he had to have one shorter than he. Not because he demanded it but because society did; if he appeared among serfs with a girl who outmassed him, others would laugh, and that would destroy the relationship."

"'You have a Tourney to win,' she reminded him, aptly changing the subject in the manner of her sex."

"She smiled brilliantly and bobbed her cleavage about, enjoying her youthful form as only an old hag could."

“...no one feared age like a middle-aged woman!”

“Yet she was a consummate actress, as so many women seemed to be.”

And perhaps the most egregious, from when he and one of his many paramours are running from the threat of death, hiding inside a hollow wall, and he attempts to get frisky with her but she speaks encouragement, but ultimately denies him:

“To speak readiness while withdrawing — that was often woman’s way.”

I mean, this stuff bypasses plain old sexism and start to take a walk in the land of misogyny. It’s really insulting.

It would be one thing to have these passages written from the perspective of the characters, to indicate their own motivations and feelings. There was another quote I thought to include — “What is a bitch, compared to oath-friendship?” — but in the context of the speaker and the culture (a werewolf, with a pack mentality similar to standard wolves), it fit the moment. But the other quotes were buried in the narrative, indicating that they represented more a philosophy of the author himself. It makes me realize that, much like with Dave Sim and Cerebus, it’s impossible to separate the author’s work from his own questionable philosophies. In the end, Anthony’s portrayal of women wasn’t just offensive, but it was also condescending and arrogant, as if this was just the way it was supposed to be.

The generalizations are insulting, as is the way Anthony writes the women characters to be servile to the men, more so because Anthony writes the women characters to be strong and speak their minds. That would suggest that the characters are independent, but it’s hard to call them such, since ultimately they’re all pawns to the male character. The only independent female characters out of the trilogy appears in the second book, and you can see her over there on the cover of *Blue Adept*. She’s strong-willed, fierce, and independent ... but she’s also a man-hater who gets written out of the story by the end of the book. It’s almost like the only way a woman couldn’t be somehow used to Stile’s needs is if she couldn’t stand men at all, and it was even more insulting and demeaning. The theme mirrors the same theme from *Sos the Rope*, and I imagine that I’ll find that same sort of thing in the last two volumes of that series.

The weird thing about the series is that I knew from the first couple of chapters of *Split Infinity* that the story was going to keep going down that road, where Anthony developed his male characters and used the women as objects for them to use in one way or another (if they weren’t sleeping with Stile, they wanted to, and found other ways to be servile to him), but I still felt pretty compelled to read through the stories. Part of it was morbid curiosity, just to see how bad it would get, and to see if my memory of the stories had somehow betrayed me, but I can’t deny that the stories were interesting and compelling by themselves, either. Shoot, I re-read them all in the span of about a week, so regardless of his feelings about women, Anthony clearly knows how to tell a good story.

Something else that bugged me about the trilogy was the overbearing sense of arrogance, conceit, and condescension of the narrative. Stile, the main character, is basically an example of male perfection (enough so that I started to wonder if Stile is just a Mary Sue character), and while there’s some justification for this — he’s supposed to be a top player in the Game, which requires skill in several areas of sport and art — the way he speaks to other characters is irritating. Lots of “of course”s, “obviously”s, “always”s and “clearly”s are used in the way he communicates, none of them ironically, and after a while it becomes pretty grating. He’s self-confident (of course) and self-assured (obviously), and the few times that he’s not the best at what he does, he’s at least second-best (clearly), so it’s somewhat understandable, but he lacks empathy toward

anyone else who doesn't meet his own standards (always).

So, I re-read the series, and plan to finish off the Battle Circle series (I already picked up the rest of the books in the series), but I think after these, I'll be done with Piers Anthony for good. I have some fond memories of the Incarnations of Immortality series, too, but I also remember all the women characters being patsies of men, even when they were the protagonists. And the less spoken of the Xanth series, I think, the better. Even when I was 13, I felt like those were a lot more juvenile than the stuff my friends were reading.

Kessily Lewel says

This is the second in the Apprentice Adept series continuing Stile's adventures as a lowly serf in the science-based Proton, and an exalted Adept in the magic based Phase. He continues to explore both worlds and Anthony paints a beautiful picture of the world of Phase, making you feel it's the better place to live.

Stile is still trying to win the game, working through one challenge at a time and getting closer to the top with every win, but he's also working to track down the murderer of his other self, the person who still wants to kill him as well. The book builds to the final confrontation between them and a lot of questions are answered, but more are opened setting the path for the next book in the series.

Again this book can feel a bit dated in the male/female relations department because it's almost 40 years old but if you get past that it's a really lovely series and one that mixes both Sci-fi and Fantasy which is rare.

Sandy says

Well, I liked this; but not as much as the 1st one. Stile is still slipping between Proton and Phaze searching for his enemy. He's still being helped by Neysa the Unicorn, Sheen the android and Lady Blue. He's still playing the Game in Proton. He's doing well, with the help of his friends. So, I'm not sure why I didn't like this one as much as the first. However, I will still move on to the next book.

James says

Following Stile further as he continues the struggles from *Split Infinity*. Trying to complete a series of competitions to win his freedom in one world while trying to understand his new position and powers in the other. All while trying to avoid getting killed and working out who's trying to kill him. Phew!

While it doesn't really stand alone as a book, it's a good continuation of the series and keeps the intrigue and revelations coming.

Gwynne Eldridge says

The second book of the series, an excellent marriage of fantasy and science fiction. Anthony is a master of both genres and this is a combination that proves he can weave the two as expertly as he does individually.

W. Boutwell says

Middle book of a trilogy is supposed to be the weakest.

To some extent that is true as the protagonist leans more and more on magic than his own wits.

Serendipity, never very far away in any of the trilogy, presents itself as the solution for Phaze problems.

What saves the book is the Game and especially the GRID, providing interesting negotiations and balances to overcome.

The role of the self-aware robots is odd; Anthony has difficulty being consistent with what is an essentially impossible condition to distinguish, on the written page, from a human.

Nevertheless, I think book 2 holds its own, has enough character development to be engaging and the twists and turns of a "good" man in a "bad" system are explored with some grace.

Joey V. says

So there *will* be spoilers, but I don't really care. If anything I say makes you feel that you wouldn't want to read this, then good for you. The book really isn't good enough for me to concern myself with such things. Still reading? You were warned fair and square.

So. Stile rapes his way through yet **another** book. In the first, he declares that he has raped Sheen by forcing her to reveal information that she wanted kept secret. Not exactly what I would call rape, but that's how he defined it, so I'm counting it. Next, (and still in book one) he rapes Neysa. This is unquestioned, but also unmentioned. Seriously, he spends an entire chapter forcing her to his will, but never seems to realize this is wrong. He makes several retroactive statements about having "broken her will" or "taming" her, but as he said in his own defense, he had needs. Not even making that up, he excuse was, he needed something, and she was available.

Moving on to Book Two. Lady Blue informs Stile that she loves him, *because of the magical roofie spell he cast on her*. While she is talking about the magical roofie spell, that also involved Neysa, he is reminded about how he'd "raped" Sheen in book one. But not Neysa. Even though Neysa is part of the conversation they are actually having. Even though his "rape" of Sheen was more forcing her to tell him a secret. Even though he had violently raped Neysa and they are talking about Neysa and he does not even once think of Neysa!

Ahem. My point here, is that he himself identifies his magical roofie spell with sexual coercion, but when Lady Blue tells him she's ion love with him anyway, his only response is "Yippy." So, victim #3, COME on DOWN! You're the next contestant on The Price is Rape!

Let me step away from the Rape Box for a few minutes. I'm pretty sure the Werewolves were included in these book just so Anthony would have an excuse to call females "bitches." Yeah, I get the joke. you can't *not* get the joke. Every time there's a woman near a werewolf, she *will* be called a bitch. And oh, hee-hee that's just how we talk.

Oh, and the Red Adept? The one who you can see on the front cover, summoning a demon? Turns out she's NOT a dude! Now, this may not be entirely Mr. Anthony's fault, but *someone* has to take the blame for this.

Stile doesn't find out she's female until almost exactly 3/4 of the way through the book. If you're trying to save that up for a surprise twist, you don't put it on the cover where the readers can see it!

And then we get to the final (for this book) match in The Tourney, Stile vs Red Adept (thus far unnamed in Proton Frame.) And how does Stile win this all-important semi-final match? Why, with forced sexual contact, of course! It's a free-form interpretive dance competition, wherein the competitors must act out a story that the computer devises. So yes, they *are* told to act out a love scene, but it is up to *them* how they would like to do that. And Stile chooses the way that he knows will be the most offensive. But that's okay, because Anthony goes out of his way to portray her as a man-hater. Specifically, in the text calling her a man-hater. And (out of nowhere, mind you) telling us that she hated all men because of the fact that they ARE men.

And what evidence do we have for this hatred of all things male? Only the fact that she is the *only* female of any species who hasn't tried to bed the protagonist. Seriously, every single female creature who Stile comes across, wants have The Sex with him, except this one. Therefor she is evil, and must be tamed. Just like Neysa was.

Honestly, I'm only still reading at this point because I bought all three of the first trilogy at a used book sale, and I have this thing about finishing a series when I start it. And *most* of the story is okay, with the magic, and the Games, and the Mythical Creatures and whatnot. But Book 3 is going to have to *really* surprise me before I'll even consider picking up the next one.

Douglas Debner says

3.5 stars really.

One of the things I've enjoyed about Piers Anthony is his ability to tell a complete story in each book of a series. Its been awhile since I've read them but, if memory serves, that is true of his Incarnations of Immortality series. However, that doesn't appear to be the case here. In the first book of this series a lot of the story is focused on the "Game" the people of the planet Proton sponsor. So, when the book ended without the Game actually being played it felt incomplete.

So now this book, book 2 in the series, does finally have the the Game being played, but not completed. Instead, simultaneous with the Game Stile identifies who killed the predecessor Blue Adept and the book ends with the conclusion of that confrontation (which is particularly annoying since it happens very near the end of the game). Along the way Stile discovers that his antagonist was manipulated into killing the prior Blue Adept so that mystery isn't solved either.

Still, for a book that fails to tell a complete story it is well written with interesting characters and setting.

Mkittysamom says

I enjoyed Blue Adept and Juxtaposition (Book 3) My favs of the series!

David Sarkies says

The saga of the sex robot continues

1 March 2012

Hmm, as I glanced at some of the reviews I seemed to notice the suggestion that it really is not a stand alone book, but rather a direct continuation of book one (in the same way that the Two Towers is a direct continuation of Fellowship of the Ring) though that is hardly an issue considering the number of series out there that need to be read in order. Fortunately not all serial books are like that (such as The Dresden Files) but many are (in particular the Wheel of Time). I sort of assumed (and I know what they say about assumptions) that the game had finished in the previous book, and Stile was beginning to work out how to operate as a citizen, but that does not seem to be the case.

One thing I didn't mention in the previous book is the female robot that one sees on the cover.

(view spoiler)

Yes, it is female, and yes it is naked, and yes, Stile does have sex with her. She is basically a self-willed robot, though it appears that she masks herself as a serf for some reason or another. To me I find it a little silly that somebody could have an intimate relationship with a robot, though I have noticed that sex robots that can apparently talk have already been developed. My thoughts are simply that humans are so much better, and while some may argue that the technology is still very much in the development stage, I personally would not be interested.

Phaze, as previously mentioned, is a magical planet that is the opposite of Proton. Almost everybody on Proton has a double on Phaze, however I say almost because there are those who do not, and if you are one of those who do not, then you can cross between the two worlds. On Phaze Stile discovers that he is actually an 'Adept', a powerful magician, as well as a member of the ruling class. As such, by crossing over to Phaze, it turns out that Stile, the serf, becomes one of the planets rulers. However, I don't really understand why he wouldn't stay since back on Proton he is little more than a serf, while on Phaze, he is one of the ruling elite. This is sort of a science-fiction/fantasy/adventure story with Stile discovering who he is and making his way in the world. However there is also somebody out to kill him, and this particular person is also entering the game to become a citizen. It is a little difficult to understand any of the reasoning behind it, particularly since it has been quite a while since I actually read this book. However, I do remember that it did get quite exciting at one stage. Further, I am really not clear on whether I went on to read the second trilogy, and in a way looking at the brief synopsis of the second trilogy, I am a little bit more unsure as to whether I actually read them (though I will add them because in all likelihood I did, it is just that the plots did not turn out to be all that great).

Barbara Sherrick says

Better than book 1. Kept me on the edge of my seat. Loved the books as a kid and still do. They are fun. I don't understand the bashers. These are fantasy books. You suspend belief when you read books like this.

Randy Mueller says

Great author

This is a good read. An old favorite of mine.
Excellent trilogy.
On to the next one to finish the series.

Onefinemess says

So.

I'm continuing on my trek through pulp fantasy I read as a kid – although I'm really not sure if I actually read these 3 books or not, I know I read books 4-7 of the series (I still owned them when I bought (or re-bought) these three). They definitely have that 70s/80s fantasy cover thing down though right? I don't think the hero ever wears a chain mail skirt – yet there he is on the cover! The lady in red with the demon jumping out of an amulet is actually pretty accurate though.

The story itself suffered from some of the same technical flaws as the previous volume – things that are either just obvious to me now because of the quantity of books I've read since then, or because I'm older and pickier. Or both. Some things just seem really juvenile and/or simple. The lead character's romances become slightly more believable – although him going after his alternate's widow in such short time still strikes me as not very heroic. The idiotic forced use of “the,thy,thou” etc. type stuff also gets quite annoying, and I don't think contributed anything to the series. Maybe it was required in all fantasy back then? :)

Still, for all its warts, I enjoyed the book. The skeleton of the plot is interesting, even if the meat may hang loosely in parts or not at all. The magic/tech world overlap is a good device, and that by itself keeps me going to some degree. Also I kept waiting for an event I knew about from reading the newer books, but it never happened, so I guess that comes later.

I think this was the weakest book in the series, although I've already forgotten why I had that particular opinion.

Oh. Maybe it was the ending...wow. Even worse than the first book. It ends at a hard cliff, I mean, shit happens, then shit doesn't. And you don't exactly know what the resolution is. Sure, you can guess – and make a pretty good guess at that – but it just feels really really sloppy the way it dropped off.

TWO AND A HALF STARS

Gwen says

Again, I read this to my kids, editing out as much of the sexist crap as possible on the fly while reading aloud. My kids enjoyed it and definitely wanted me to read the next book, which we have begun.
