



Bangsian Fantasy

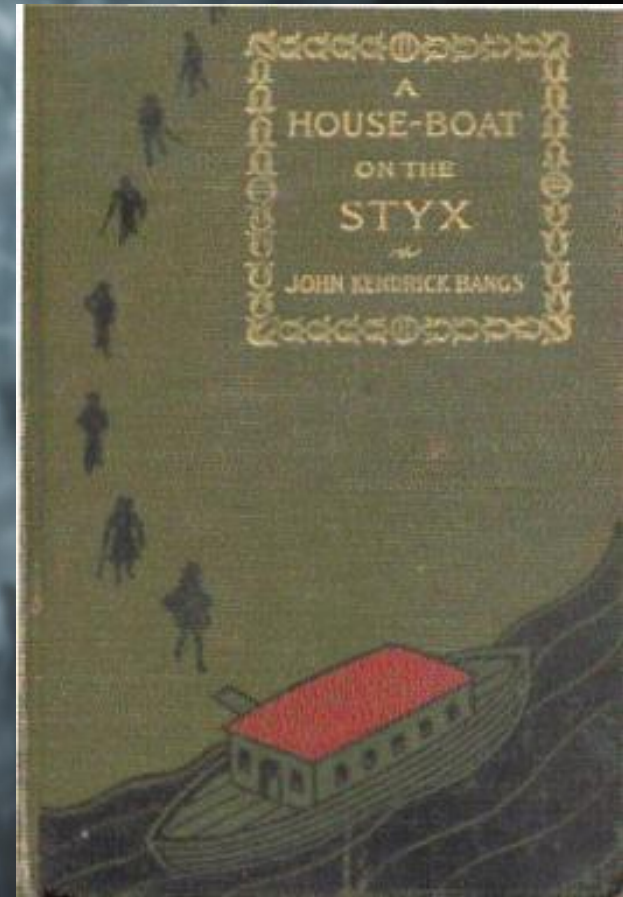
What is Bangsian Fantasy?

- **Bangsian Fantasy** is a sub-genre primarily concerned with the afterlife and specifically with the exploration of the afterlife.

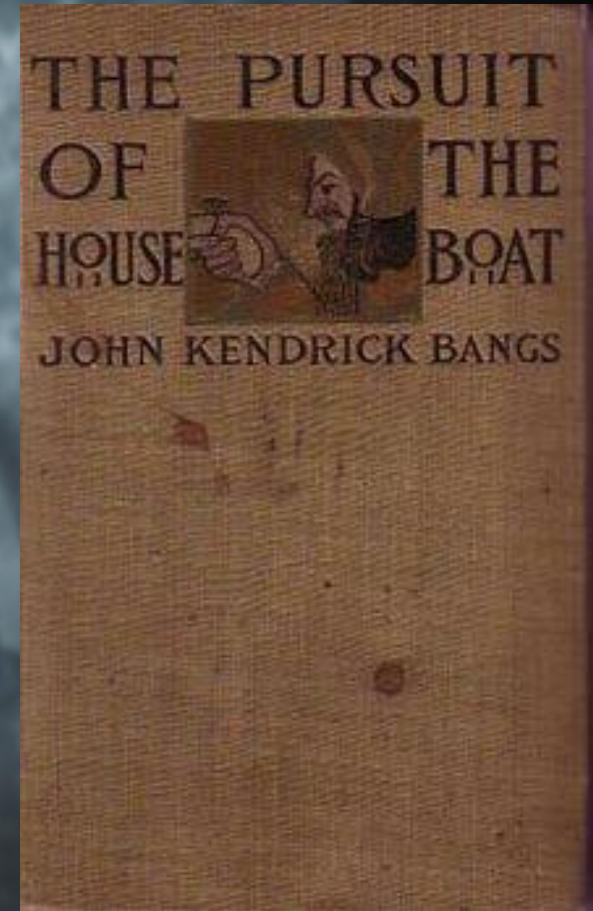


John Kendrick Bangs
(1862 – 1922)

- The premise of the book is that everyone who has ever died has gone to Styx, the river that circles the underworld.
- The book begins with Charon, ferryman of the Styx being startled—and annoyed—by the arrival of a houseboat on the Styx. At first afraid that the boat will put him out of business, he later finds out that he is actually to be appointed the boat's janitor.
- What follows are eleven more stories which are set on the house boat. There is no central theme, and the purpose of the book appears to be as a literary thought experiment to see what would happen if various famous dead people were put in the same room with each other. Each chapter is a short story featuring various souls from history and mythology. In the twelfth chapter the house boat disappears, leading into the sequel, Pursuit of the House-Boat.



- After the House-Boat was hijacked by Captain Kidd at the end of A House-Boat on the Styx, the various members of its club decided that in order to track it down, a detective would have to be called in. So they hired Sherlock Holmes, who, at the time of the book's publication, had indeed been declared dead by his creator.



Features

- the inclusion of dead famous people and mythological characters;
- ghosts stuck in the living world;
- living people stuck in the world of the dead;
- people who have died in a Heaven (or Hell).

Characteristics of Bangsian Fantasy

- Level of Magic

Low. Magic is not a part of most Bangsian Fantasy.

Characteristics of Bangsian Fantasy

- Level of Grand Ideas and Social Implications High. These are exploratory stories about life and about death and so the implications can be far reaching

Characteristics of Bangsian Fantasy

- Level of Characterization

High. Characters are the driving force of a Bangsian story. Indeed, there are some common characters (grim reaper, angels, demons) who frequently haunt the pages of a Bangsian story. The use of well known people/characters, like Shakespeare, may be construed as a cop-out, but it requires a great deal of skill and character understanding to craft a story around characters who may have been actually living once.

Characteristics of Bangsian Fantasy

- Level of Plot Complexity
Variable. Many Bangsian stories are unconcerned with plot development and instead focus on character interactions and philosophical musings. While other stories have very clear cause and event stories with action.

Characteristics of Bangsian Fantasy

- Level of Violence

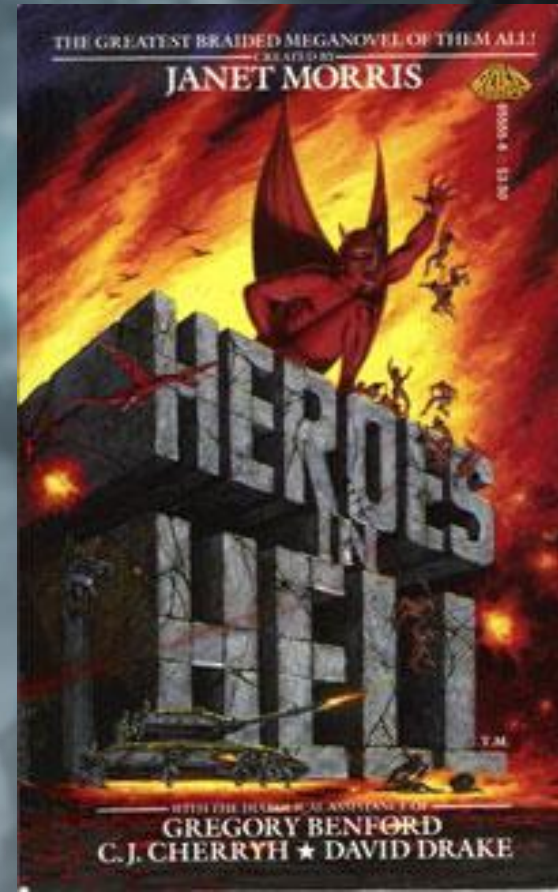
Variable. Bangsian stories that are more like thought experiments tend not to have much violence. However, others are stories about hunting demons and ghosts down who are causing problems in the living world. While the stories are all about what happens after death, scenes of death are inevitable.

Related Fantasy Subgenres

- **Christian Fantasy**. With topics like Heaven and Hell, Christian Fantasy is a strong crossover sub-genre with some Bangsian stories.
- **Portal Fantasy**. Sometimes the portal is to the afterlife.
- **Allegorical Fantasy**. Allegory and stories about death are natural partners.
- **Historical Fantasy**. Bangsian Fantasy is not Fantasy set in an historical time, but it does often borrow historical figures and cast them as characters.

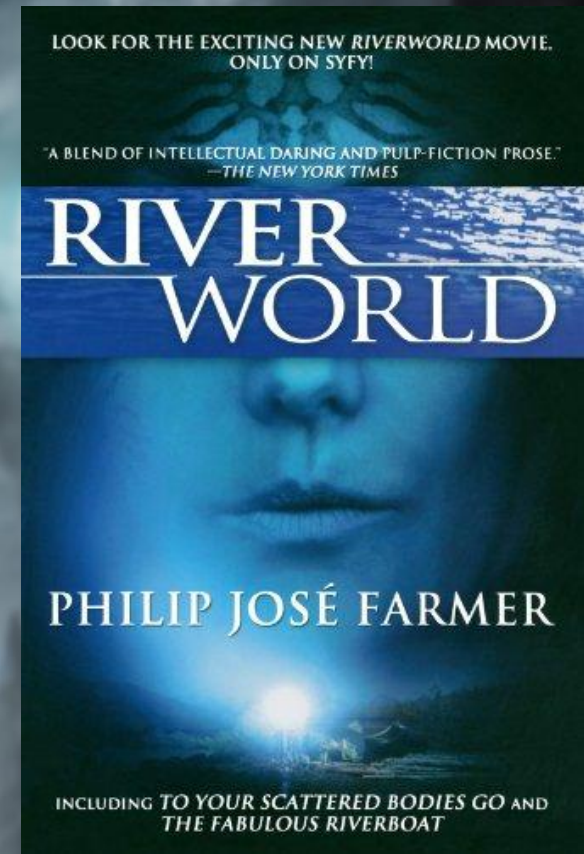
Popular Bangsian Fantasy

- *Heroes in Hell*
By Janet Morris, Chris Morris, and C. J. Cherryh et. al. A series of short stories written by various authors is a modern take on Bangsian Fantasy. The premise of this shared world series is that people die, go to Hell, and then pursue whatever they did while living.



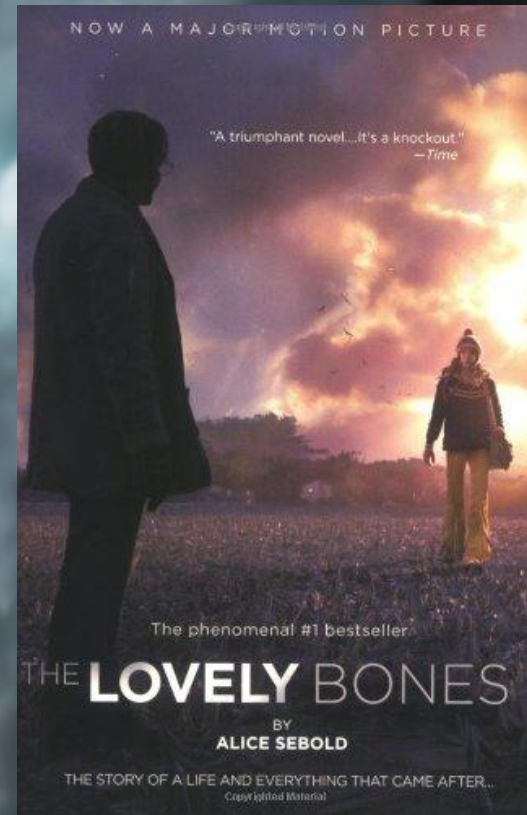
Popular Bangsian Fantasy

- *Riverworld series*
By Philip Jose Farmer. This series can also be considered Science Fiction. Humanity is resurrected (from across all of history) on the banks of a constructed world.



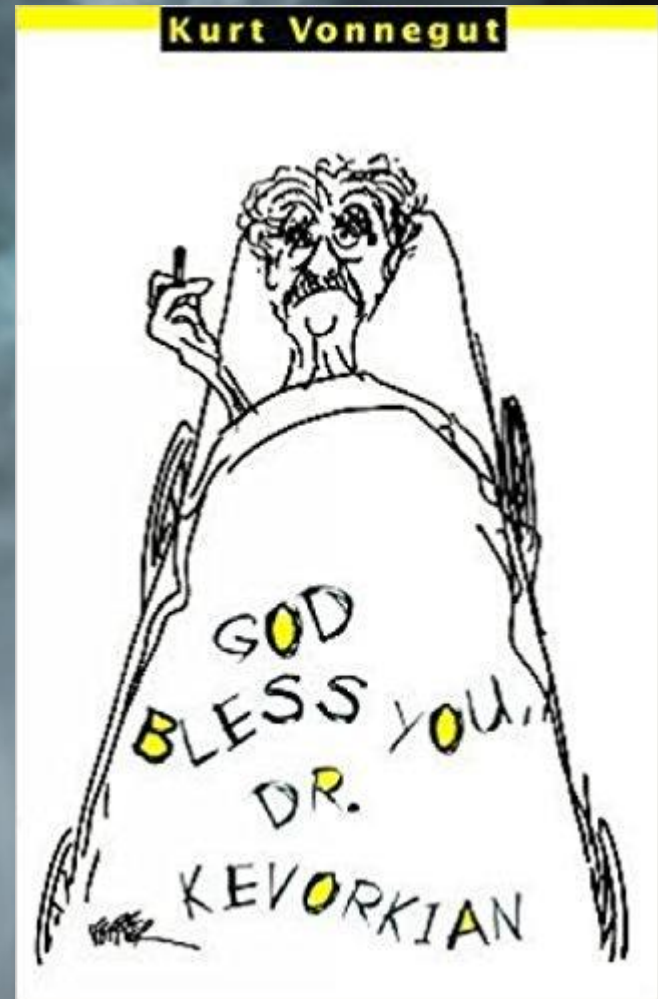
Popular Bangsian Fantasy

- *The Lovely Bones*
By **Alice Sebold**.
A story narrated
by a teenage girl
who has died
and comes to
terms with her
own death.



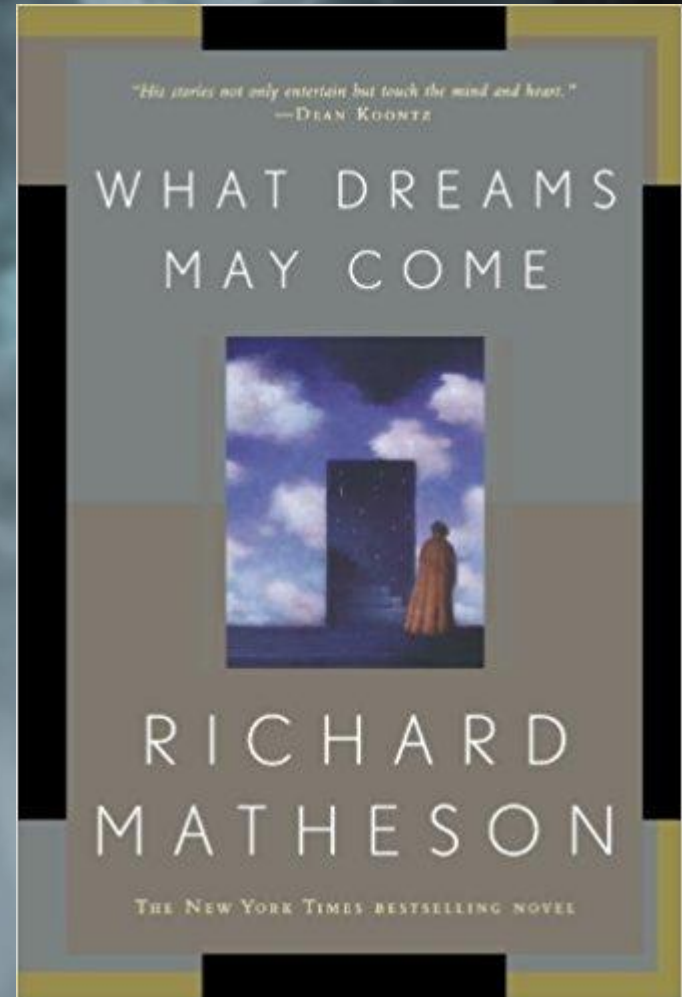
Popular Bangsian Fantasy

- *God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian*
By Kurt Vonnegut. A collection of stories where Vonnegut as an interviewer is granted access to heaven for short periods of time and meets a range of people like Shakespeare, Hitler, and one of Vonnegut's own fictional characters Kilgore Trout.

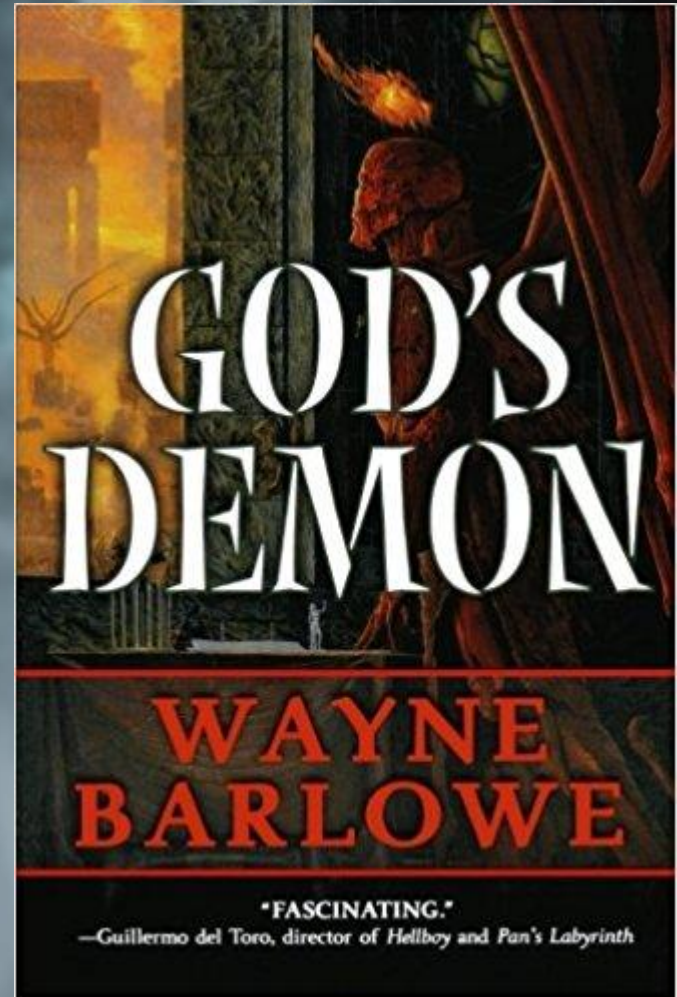


Popular Bangsian Fantasy

- *What Dreams May Come*
By **Richard Matheson**. A novel about a husband who is sent to heaven, but descends to hell in order to rescue his wife. A stunningly visual movie of the same name was based on this novel.



Popular Bangsian Fantasy



Beelzebub



Lucifuge



Sargatanas



The Wargate



Watchtowers



The Molars of Leviathan



The Avenue of Ritual



The Damned



Damnation



Eligor

