

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **The Adjacent.**

Priest, Christopher (Author)

Mar 2014. 400 p. Titan, paperback, \$14.95. (9781781169438). Titan, e-book, (9781781169445).

Like some sort of self-assembling jigsaw puzzle, Priest's new novel starts out as a handful of stories that appear unconnected either by character or by chronology. But, as we follow the stories, we eventually realize that these characters, despite being separated by time, are linked via a Nobel-winning theoretical physicist and his discovery, the Perturbative Adjacent Field. Priest, a master of deception and misdirection (*The Separation*, 2005), is being especially mysterious here, leaving us to work out even such basic things as whether the book is set in this reality or an alternate version (the photographer's story seems set in a world in which Britain is an Islamic state, but, on the other hand, the story about a stage magician tasked by the British military to make airplanes appear invisible to ground-based observers seems pretty clearly set during the historical WWII). We frequently get the sense that, like a stage magician, Priest is deliberately focusing our attention on one thing, while he's doing something else, something subtle, between the lines. While it's definitely not a book for people who prefer their fiction to be linear, the book is a wonderful piece of fiction, an intricate puzzle that asks the reader to pay close attention and to read not just the text, but also the subtext and its implications.

— *David Pitt*