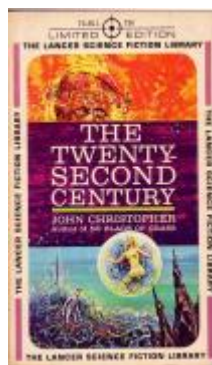


Christopher, John

Entry updated 19 July 2021. Tagged: Author, Fan.

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Principal working name of UK author Sam Youd (1922-2012), whose birth forename was Sam rather than Samuel; he adopted the first name Christopher on confirmation into the Church of England, but was never so called by intimates although many sources give his full name



[\[gallery.php?id=Christopher-22ndC2.jpg\]](#)

as Christopher Samuel Youd. He was active in sf Fandom [\[entry/fandom\]](#) (see *The Fantast* [\[entry/fantast\]](#); *The Satellite* [\[entry/satellite_the\]](#)) before World War Two, in which he served; very early he published a non-genre story, "For Love of Country" for *Lilliput* in February 1940 and a poem, "Dreamer" for *Weird Tales* [\[entry/weird_tales\]](#) in March 1941, both as C S Youd. Some Fanzine [\[entry/fanzine\]](#) writing appeared under the pseudonym Fantacynic. He began publishing sf proper with "Christmas Tree" for *Astounding* [\[entry/asf\]](#) in February 1949 as by Christopher Youd. His first novel, *The Winter Swan* (**1949**), again as by Youd, was a fantasy; over the years – under a variety of names including Hilary Ford, William Godfrey, Peter Graaf, Peter Nichols (not the playwright), Anthony Rye, William Vine, Stanley Winchester, Christopher Youd and Samuel Youd – he wrote many non-fantastic novels [not listed below], several reissued along with his sf in the present century by the Youd/Christopher-focused specialist publisher The SYLE Press. His first sf book, *The Twenty-Second Century* (coll **1954**; with 1 story dropped and 1 added, rev **1962**) as Christopher, assembles early work. After the success of his first sf novel, *The Year of the Comet* (**1955**; vt *Planet in Peril* **1959**), and the even greater impact of his second, *The Death of Grass* (**1956**; vt *No Blade of Grass* **1957**), he concentrated for some years on adult novels, soon becoming perceived as John Wyndham [\[entry/wyndham_john\]](#)'s rival and successor as the premier writer of the post-World War Two UK Disaster [\[entry/disaster\]](#) novel in the decade 1955-1965.

The disaster which changes the face of England (and of the world) in *The Death of Grass* (filmed in 1970 by Cornel Wilde as *No Blade of Grass* [\[entry/no_blade_of_grass\]](#)) is, as the title makes clear, an upset in the balance of Nature which causes the extinction of all grass and related food plants, with catastrophic effects. Where Wyndham's novels featured protagonists whose middle-class indomitability signalled to the reader that the crisis would somehow come out right in the end (see *Cosy Catastrophe* [\[entry/cosy_catastrophe\]](#)), Christopher's characters – as witness John Custance's gradual hardening and deterioration of personality in this novel, dramatized through his reenactment of an ominous Cain and Abel scenario with his isolated brother – inhabit and respond to a darker, less secure universe. It is a harshness of perspective characteristic of most of his work at this time: *The World in Winter* (**1962**; vt *The*

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Long Winter **1962**) (see [Climate Change](#) [/entry/climate_change]), *A Wrinkle in the Skin* (**1965**; vt *The Ragged Edge* **1966**) and *Pendulum* (**1968**) all deal decks similarly stacked against political or environmental complacency, and their protagonists concentrate on the grim business of staying alive and making a life fit to live in a Post-Holocaust [/entry/post-holocaust] world stripped of culture and security; and the late novel *Bad Dream* (**2003**) treats the Near Future [/entry/near_future] subjection of Britain to Europe with jeremiad intensity.

When Christopher turned to other kinds of stories his touch was sometimes less assured, though *Sweeney's Island* (**1964**; vt *Cloud on Silver* **1964**) plausibly updates the traditional [Island](#) [/entry/islands] theme as the eponymous tycoon creates a Dystopian [/entry/dystopias] microcosm under stress; and *The Little People* (January-March 1967 F&SF [/entry/fsf]; dated 1966 but **1967**) cleverly misleads readers expecting a traditional fantasy, based on its title and Irish setting, for the eponymous one-foot tall creatures are in fact artificial beings with scarifying Psi Powers [/entry/psi_powers] created by a Nazi Mad Scientist [/entry/mad_scientist]. However, in 1967 Christopher successfully inaugurated a fresh phase of his sf career, this time in the Young Adult [/entry/young_adult] market, with the **Tripods** sequence: *The White Mountains* (**1967**), *The City of Gold and Lead* (**1967**) and *The Pool of Fire* (**1968**); a prequel, *When the Tripods Came* (**1988**), followed much later. In these books, the Alien [/entry/aliens] tripods control all adults [for renumbered vts, see Checklist below]. However, the young protagonists avoid their thrall, discover their secret and save Earth (whose adults revert to their distressing old ways). The first two books of the **Tripods** trilogy were serialized on BBC TV: *The White Mountains* (13 parts, 1984, adapted by Alick Rowe) and *The City of Gold and Lead* (12 parts, 1985, adapted by Christopher Penfield). A BBC adaptation of *The Pool of Fire* was cancelled in preproduction.

Other juveniles followed, including *The Guardians* (**1970**), a Dystopian [/entry/dystopias] vision of a Britain under the ruthless control of a central Conurb which won the *Guardian* award for best children's book of the year; *Dom and Va* (**1973**), much expanded from *In the Beginning* (**1972** chap); a tale for smaller children, *Wild Jack* (**1974**); the **Fireball** trilogy – *Fireball* (**1981**), *New Found Land* (**1983**) and *Dragon Dance* (**1986**) – set in a Parallel-World [/entry/parallel_worlds] version of Roman Britain and elsewhere, as the young protagonists test (and find wanting) various political systems (see [Politics](#) [/entry/politics]). The **Prince in Waiting** sequence – *The Prince in Waiting* (**1970**), *Beyond the Burning Lands* (**1971**) and *The Sword of the Spirits* (**1972**), assembled as *The Swords of the Spirits Trilogy* (omni **1980**; vt *The Prince in Waiting Trilogy* **1983**) – initially reads as Fantasy [/entry/fantasy] set in a medievalized version of England, but it is in fact about Scientists [/entry/scientists], some of whom have survived in hiding, who are pretending to magical powers (see [Medieval Futurism](#) [/entry/medieval_futurism]). As with his adult sf, most of Christopher's juveniles are set in post-Disaster [/entry/disaster] or Ruined Earth [/entry/ruined_earth] venues, in which the romantic individualism of young protagonists finds itself pitted against some kind of conformist or even brainwashed system, sometimes symbolized as a struggle between the country and the city. A much later novel, *A Dusk of Demons* (**1993**), sets a similar conflict in a haunted Scotland. They have been remarkably and deservedly popular. [JC/PN]

see also: [Children's SF](#) [/entry/childrens_sf]; [Ecology](#) [/entry/ecology]; [Great and Small](#) [/entry/great_and_small]; [Pastoral](#) [/entry/pastoral]; [Publishing](#) [/entry/publishing]; [Radio](#) [/entry/radio]; [Supernatural Creatures](#) [/entry/supernatural_creatures].

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Sam Youd

born Huyton, Lancaster, Lancashire: 16 April 1922

died Bath, Somerset: 3 February 2012

works (selected)

Alphabetical

Chronological

series

Tripods

- *The White Mountains* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+White+Mountains&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1967**), [**Tripods**: hb/Roger Payne]
 - *The Tripods #2: The White Mountains* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Tripods+#2&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster/Aladdin, **1999**) [vt of the above: **Tripods**: pb/Eric Lee]
- *The City of Gold and Lead* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+City+of+Gold+and+Lead&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1967**) [**Tripods**: hb/Michael Heslop]
 - *The Tripods #3: The City of Gold and Lead* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Tripods+#3&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster/Aladdin, **1999**) [vt of the above: **Tripods**: pb/Eric Lee]
- *The Pool of Fire* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Pool+of+Fire&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1968**), [**Tripods**: hb/Michael Heslop]
 - *The Tripods #4: The Pool of Fire* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Tripods+#4&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster/Aladdin, **1999**) [vt of the above: **Tripods**: pb/Eric Lee]
- *When the Tripods Came* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=When+the+Tripods+Came&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: E P Dutton, **1988**) [**Tripod**: hb/]
 - *The Tripods #1: When the Tripods Came* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Tripods+#1&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster/Aladdin, **1999**) [vt of the above: **Tripods**: pb/Eric Lee]

The Prince in Waiting

- *The Prince in Waiting* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Prince+in+Waiting&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1970**) [**The Prince in Waiting**: hb/Trevor Stubbley]
- *Beyond the Burning Lands* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Beyond+the+Burning+Lands&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1971**) [**The Prince in Waiting**: hb/Graham Humphreys]
- *The Sword of the Spirits* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Sword+of+the+Spirits&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1972**) [**The Prince in Waiting**: hb/Emanuel Schongut [/entry/schongut_emanuel]]
 - *The Swords of the Spirits Trilogy* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Swords+of+the+Spirits+Trilogy&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, **1980**) [boxed set: **The Prince in Waiting**: hb/]
 - *The Prince in Waiting Trilogy* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Prince+in+Waiting+Trilogy&field-author=Christopher+John] (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, **1983**) [vt of the above: **The Prince in Waiting**: hb/]

Fireball

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- *Fireball* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Fireball&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Victor Gollancz, **1981**) [**Fireball**: hb/Michael Garland]
- *New Found Land* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=New+Found+Land&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Victor Gollancz, **1983**) [**Fireball**: hb/Josh Kirby [/entry/kirby_josh]]
- *Dragon Dance* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Dragon+Dance&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Viking Kestrel, **1986**) [**Fireball**: hb/Stephen Marchesi]

individual titles including collection (selected)

- *The Winter Swan* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Winter+Swan&field-author=Christopher+Youd] (London: Dennis Dobson, **1949**) as by Christopher Youd [hb/Seton McConnell]
- *The Twenty-Second Century* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Twenty-Second+Century&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Grayson and Grayson, **1954**) [coll: hb/uncredited]
 - *The Twenty-Second Century* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Twenty-Second+Century&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Lancer Books, **1962**) [rev of the above: one story dropped and one added: pb/Ed Emshwiller [/entry/emshwiller_ed]]
- *The Year of the Comet* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Year+of+the+Comet&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Michael Joseph, **1955**) [in the publisher's **Novels of Tomorrow** series: hb/]
 - *Planet in Peril* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Planet+in+Peril&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Avon Books, **1959**) [vt of the above: pb/Ed Emshwiller [/entry/emshwiller_ed]]
- *The Death of Grass* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Death+of+Grass&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Michael Joseph, **1956**) [in the publisher's **Novels of Tomorrow** series: hb/Trevor Denning]
 - *No Blade of Grass* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=No+Blade+of+Grass&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1957**) [vt of the above: hb/]
- *The Caves of Night* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Caves+of+Night&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, **1958**) [hb/Ian Ribbons]
- *The World in Winter* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+World+in+Winter&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, **1962**) [hb/Stein]
 - *The Long Winter* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Long+Winter&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1962**) [vt of the above: hb/Paul Bacon [/entry/bacon_paul]]
- *Sweeney's Island* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Sweeney+Island&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1964**) [hb/Paul Bacon [/entry/bacon_paul]]
 - *Cloud on Silver* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Cloud+on+Silver&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, **1964**) [vt of the above: hb/]
- *The Possessors* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Possessors&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1965**) [hb/Paul Bacon [/entry/bacon_paul]]
- *A Wrinkle in the Skin* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=A+Wrinkle+in+the+Skin&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, **1965**) [hb/Brian Keogh]
 - *The Ragged Edge* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Ragged+Edge&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1966**) [vt of the above: hb/Paul Bacon [/entry/bacon_paul]]
 - *The Little People* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Little+People&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1967**) [book is dated 1966:

first appeared January-March 1967 F&SF [/entry/fsf]: hb/Paul Bacon [/entry/bacon_paul]]

- *Pendulum* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Pendulum&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster, **1968**) [hb/Paul Bacon [/entry/bacon_paul]]
- *The Lotus Caves* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Lotus+Caves&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1969**) [hb/Trevor Stubley]
- *The Guardians* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=The+Guardians&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1970**) [hb/Trevor Stubley]
- *In the Beginning* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=In+the+Beginning&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Longman, **1972**) [chap: preliminary version of *Dom and Va* below: pb/Clyde Pearson]
- *Dom and Va* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Dom+and+Va&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Macmillan, **1973**) [hb/]
 - *In the Beginning* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=In+the+Beginning&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Simon and Schuster (Aladdin), **2015**) [omni of the above two: both versions together: hb/Anton Petrov]
- *Wild Jack* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Wild+Jack&field-author=Christopher+John] (New York: Macmillan, **1974**) [hb/]
- *Empty World* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Empty+World&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1977**) [hb/Craig Dodd]
- *A Dusk of Demons* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=A+Dusk+of+Demons&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Hamish Hamilton, **1993**) [hb/Stephen Player]
- *Bad Dream* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Bad+Dream&field-author=Christopher+John] (London: Severn House, **2003**) [hb/Corbis]

about the author

- Phil Stephensen-Payne [/entry/stephensen-payne_phil]. *Christopher Samuel Youd: Master of All Genres: A Working Bibliography* [/sfeshop.php?field-keywords=Christopher+Samuel+Youd&field-author=Stephensen+Payne+Phil] (Leeds, West Yorkshire: Galactic Central Publications, **1990**) [bibliography: chap: second edition: in the publisher's **Bibliographies for the Avid Reader** series: pb/nonpictorial]

links

- The Tripods: John Christopher's life and works (fan site, archived) [https://web.archive.org/web/20140219120943/http://www.gnelson.demon.co.uk/tripage/jc.html]
- The SYLE Press [https://thesylepress.com/]
- Internet Speculative Fiction Database [http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?378]
- Picture Gallery [https://sf-encyclopedia.com/gallery.php?link=christopher_john]

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