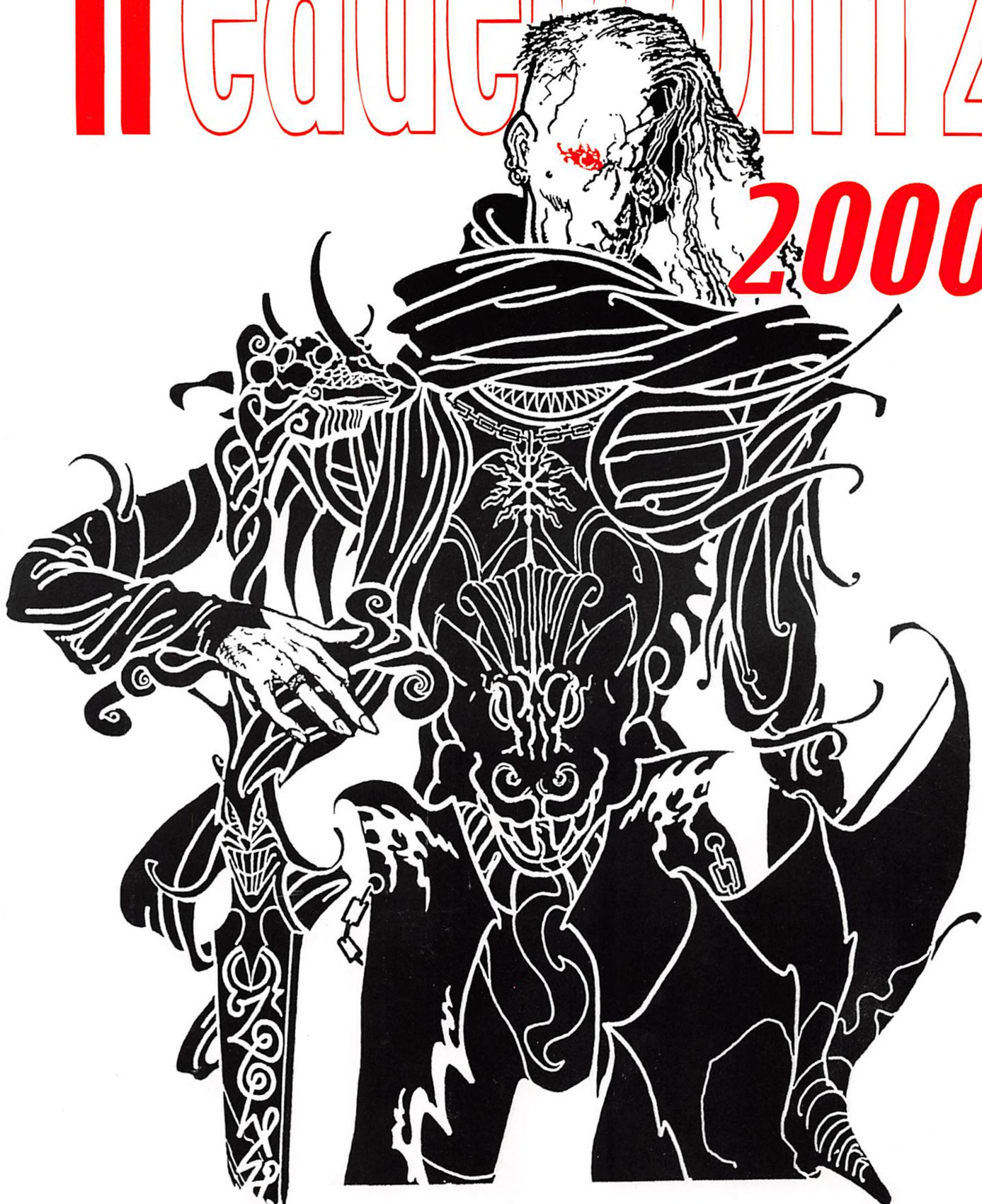


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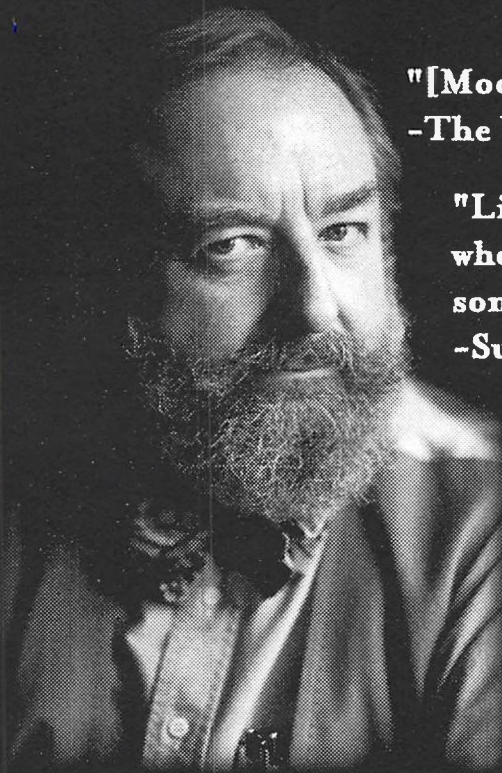
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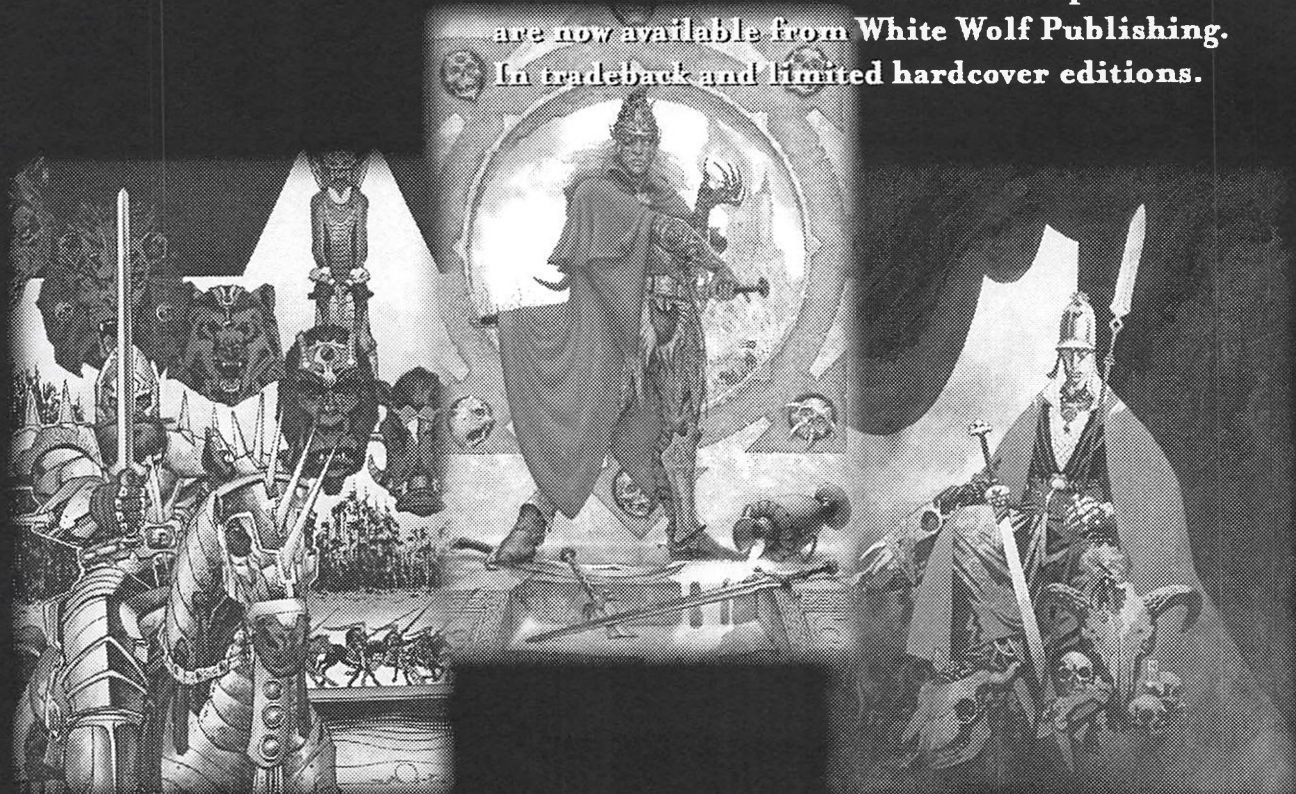
**"[Moorcock] is a major novelist of enormous ambition."
-The Washington Post**

**"Like Tolkien... Moorcock has the ability to create a wholly imaginative world landscaped with vivid and sometimes frightening reality."
-Sunday Times**

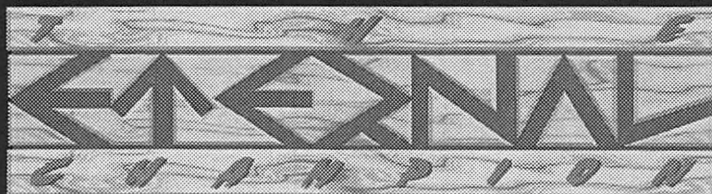
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MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S



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A WORD FROM THE SETTEE

The Readercon Committee are the smartest and hardest-working people we know. They have dedicated untold hours to putting this convention together year after year, so that we can all get together and have a magnificent time. We are grateful to them for their time and effort — it could not have happened without them.

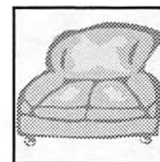
— AMY WEST AND KARL R. WURST

Readercon is a special little con close to my heart. Everyone has their own reason to love Readercon and keep coming back. Mine is that, in college, it was the con where I could apply my school learning to something I loved — imaginative literature of all kinds — and have fun at the same time.

— AMY

The Readercon program is a bit like sausage — I don't want to know what goes into making it, but I really like the end result. I do know what's involved in putting the rest of the con together, and believe me, it's not nearly as frightening as you think. So, if you enjoy Readercon, consider volunteering at the con or, even better, joining the committee — we could really use your help. Contact us at info@readercon.org or the PO box, and we'll let you know when the next meeting is. And if you have a stronger stomach than mine, you could even help with the program.

— KARL



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THE ETERNAL CURMUDGEON

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MICHAEL MOORCOCK

BY HARLAN ELLISON



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Because you're Colonials, given to "gas" rather than to "petrol," given to "elevator" as opposed to "lift," given to pronouncing it VIE-tuh-minn instead of VIT-ih-min; and because you continue to make asses of yourselves by saying "tah" when you take your leave, because you erroneously believe that it is the hip, shortened version of "tah-tah" — it isn't, of course: tah (or just ta) is used by the Brits to mean *thank you*, and ta-ta means good-bye, bon voyage, *auf wiedersehen*, aloha, take care of yourself, see ya soon, don't eat any radioactive frogs — because George Bernard Shaw observed "England and America are two countries separated by a common language," I have to do a minor job of translation and historical informationalizing here before I can tell you my favorite Michael Moorcock story.

I'm patronizing you. Live with it.

Every November 5th, our friends in the U.K. celebrate a holiday that does not obtain here in the Colonies. It is called Guy Fawkes Day, and it annually memorializes a moment in English history known as the Gunpowder Plot.

Guy Fawkes came of a prominent Yorkshire family, and was a convert to Roman Catholicism in Protestant England. He is acknowledged to have been a courageous chap, not to mention a bit of a religious zealot; and so, in 1605, when he became the most active participant in Robert Catesby's plot to kill the King — James I, who was a really mean bastard when it came to decreeing laws against the Catholics — and to blow up Parliament with all of its assembled Lords and Commons, he planted at least twenty barrels of gunpowder in the cellar that extended under Parliament.

The plot was discovered and Guy Fawkes was arrested on November 5th, 1605. They tortured him till he broke on the rack, and he finally spilled the names of his co-conspirators. He was only thirty-six when they executed him opposite the Parliament building.

Now, England's celebration of Guy Fawkes day every November 5th includes fireworks, the burning of effigies of "guys," and the roaming through the streets of raffish masked urchins, pulling carts or little red wagons with a doll meant to represent Fawkes. They panhandle you by coming up and

demanding "a penny for the old guy." The old guy, of course, being Fawkes, as represented by the doll in the cart, which effigy will, by day's end, be tossed on one of the many holiday bonfires that dot London for that annual purpose.

So now you've got the background. If you think *that* was patronizing, it could've been worse. If Larry Niven had been writing this encomium, he'd have taken six pages to tell you how long the damned tunnel under Parliament was.

Anyhow. My favorite Michael Moorcock anecdote. Not second hand; I was actually there when it happened.

Can't remember the year. You can ask Michael. Must've been late '70s, something like that. I was staying at the Portobello Hotel in Kensington, one block over from Ladbroke Grove, where Michael lived. And most every day we would pot off and eat a fine dinner. Well, one evening, which just happened to be November 5th, we were strolling together down Westbourne Terrace, on our way past the Asterix to a modest little Bengali *boite* whose lamb korma had inveigled the both of us on previous visitations, when we were approached by a more than commonly scruffy young lad of ten, perhaps twelve.

Now, as you are sometime this convention to be in the physical presence of Moorcock, there's scant reason for me to limn his proportions in roseate prose.

He is a bear. Not one of your cuddly Paddington sort of bears, no Pooh in evidence: we're talking a Kodiak. The ursine, not the camera.

Large, he is. Of a biggish sort. And there is summat of the golem in his stride. A rolling gait that clears sidewalks.

The urchin came up to Mike's thigh.

He had dirt rivulets where snot had sought the delta of his chin as it meandered down around his mouth. Gimlet-eyed, scrofulous, bits of unidentifiable foodstuffs festooning his clothing. (And the child was pretty unkempt, also.) Had this lad emerged from some Dickensian tome, you would have placed him in the social order somewhere between a footpad and a scullery.

He looked up at Mike, who was blocking his path, this great fantasist that *The Guardian* had identified as "a national treasure," and he says to this veritable god, he says:

“Penny fer th’ ould guy, guv?”

And Mike, from a great Olympian height, looked down on this creature of flake and effluvi-um. The child had on no mask. The child was not dressed up in Guy Fawkes Day costume. He was not carrying or schlepping behind him a doll or other icon apparition meant to *be* “the old guy.” He was just this kid, trying to mooch a copper off this nidus of compassion, this exemplar of ruthfulness, this bottomless well of bonhomie — himself, the Moorcock. Who knew very well that for such an adolescent solicitation to be legit, the child should have a “guy” that would, at evening’s end, be tossed onto the great bonfires soon to illuminate the London skyline. But no such mannequin was in evidence, and Michael says to the kid, he says, in that basso profundo voice:

“Wull, where’s the old guy, then?”

Meaning: where the hell’s your doll, kid?

And the gamin, taken aback, shorn on the spot of his first line of intimidation, looks about as if seeking a Judge Judy-style rationalization, and bluffs it out by responding:

“I’m th’ old guy.”

To which Moorcock, without a moment’s pause, responds, in dead seriousness:

“Oh, good...well, throw *yerself* on the fire an’ I’ll give you the penny.”

I’ll make this short. Mike and I have been friends for decades. I cannot put into words of less than novella length how much I enjoy, admire, and respect what he has written. I believe him to be one of the most significant writers ever to work in these imaginative genres. I have all of his books, in a hundred different editions per title, because — like me — he is never satisfied with the slovenly typesetting, inept proofreading, *faux pas*-laden layouts and general dumpiness of most publishers’ editions, so he continually updates and culls and revises, making it necessary to keep buying the latest incarnation of *The Fireclown* or *The Shores of Death*, among his most germinal works.

But I come to praise Moorcock, not to kiss his ass. So let fly the doves of acclaim for Michael the Writer, nonpareil in every aspect, and let me make

short shrift of paying tribute to Moorcock the Man, with whom I have shared this long friendship.

He is a consummate pain in the ass. Oh, he’ll seem inordinately, even lachrymously charming when you meet him at the convention (that is, if he comes out of hiding long enough for you to catch a glimpse of him). He’ll sign your ratty copies of some obscure Brit editions of the Hawkmoon saga, and he’ll add those extra signatory flourishes that are his nod to *noblesse oblige*, and you’ll come away hoodwinked and mumbling, “What a sweet old man he is. What a charming old coot, this dear geezer.”

Pshaw! Flummery, sir! All a put-on, a masque, a deception, a meanspirited bit of barratry beclouding your senses, so you will not perceive the True

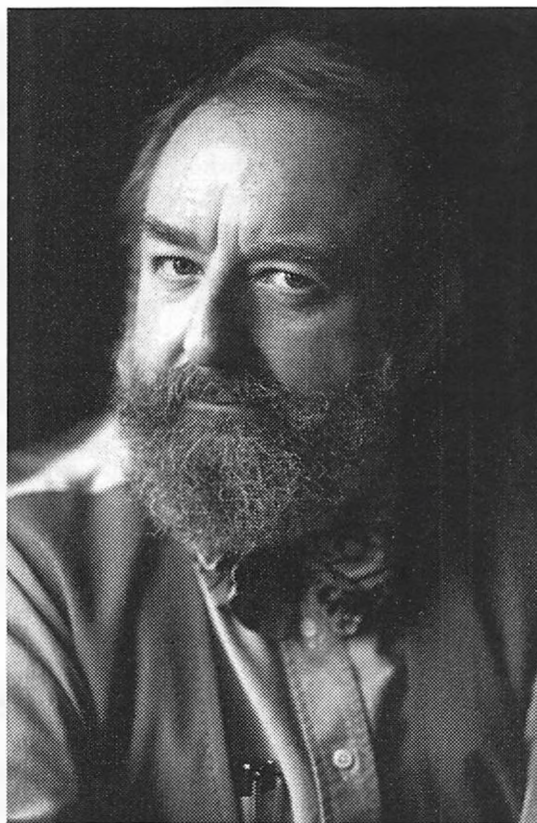
P o l t r o o n
beneath the smirch. This is, in the truest sense of the word, a curmudgeon. A snarling crank. Of huge proportion. Let me give you an example.

Once upon a time, Mike was dragooned into having to deliver a cover blurb for a book that he despised. It was an awful book, badly written, imbecile in most particulars, and not the sort of ingot of coal that a man of Moorcock’s

trumpeted ethical inflexibility would willingly promote. But they had something on him. I don’t know what. Perhaps he owed them a favor for a past kindness; or he took pity on the author who was insolvent or insensate or just plain insomethingorother; possibly he was trying to curry cheap favor for some sinister purpose; or maybe there was a nobler end to be reached. I don’t know. It has happened to all of us at one time or another. They couldn’t get us to do it for any amount of *money*, but they find some hideous gobbet of moral blackmail to hock at us, that gets us to say a nice word or



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two about a piece of auctorial shit. So, anyhow, Mike did the blurb.

The sweet old man, right?

Except.

The blurb he proffered, to anyone who might consider Moorcock's recommendation a reason to buy someone *else's* book, was concocted to let just such a Moorcock-savvy reader know what Michael *really* thought of the book.

Because the blurb read something close to this: "This book is as good as Tolkien."

Sweet old man, right?

Moorcock *loathes* Tolkien. He can go on for hours about the brilliance of Mervyn Peake and *Gormenghast*, but even try to *mention* Tolkein, and he'll huff and he'll puff and he'll give you a stultifying two-hour rodomontade about how childish and awful is *The Hobbit*, et al. "This book is as good as Tolkien." Very sweet. Kiss of bloody death, is more like it.

And his temperament hasn't much improved since he married my ex-secretary, Linda, who forces him to live in Texas. *Texas*, fergawdsake! This is a man who has traveled the world, seen all the great wonders, partaken of the action and passion of his times. A cultured man, an urbane man. Living — if you can call it that — amid vinagaroons and rednecks, thousands of miles from the nearest library or human equipped to walk erect without knuckles scraping the arid sands.

And, meaning no offense, if you think either I or Moorcock is the apex of irritability, walk over and engage *Missus* Moorcock in conversation. This is a woman who could make poison ivy uncomfortable.

And so we come to the burning moment when one hears you ask, "But if he is Moorcock's friend, if he loves and admires him as he clearly does, because no one who didn't enjoy the camaraderie of Moorcock and his old lady would *dare* to say these kinds of things if he didn't feel secure in the liaison, why...oh tell me why...does he say the things he has said in this brief exegesis?" (I really must commend you on your elegant and sedulous use of the English language. You *do* speak *so* well.)

I could tell you, with some truth, that I pass on these revelations, these anecdotes, merely to provide you with a bit of insight so that when you meet Moorcock you don't get up his nose and cause him to mumble ego-crushing *bon mots* that might well scar you for the remainder of your heretofore pitiful existence. I could dissemble and say that, yes, I know intimate and fascinating aspects of Moorcock's life, but I'd rather honor our

mutual privacy than take the easy way out just to get this goddam "appreciation" off my typewriter. I could outright lie and say I give a damn for Truth and Full Disclosure. But the simple of it is this:

If Moorcock is the Eternal Curmudgeon, then I am his pale acolyte. Shorter in stature, yes, and so Grey Mouser to his curmudgeonly Fahfrd. I am a tot older than Mike, but I have grown up in the shadow of his crank nature.

I have learned from it. I have blossomed because of it. And though, if taken at careful analysis, I have had a more lasting and profound influence on Moorcock's life than he has had on mine (though he gives credit to everyone *but* me) I am, in some very important lifestyle ways, the child who studied at his knobby knee.

So here is my advice to you. During this long convention availability, I urge you — each and all of you — to forego meals, and sleep, and conversations with lesser icons. Cleave to Moorcock. Mold yourself to his person. Find him! Pursue him! Dog, hound, shivvy, and stalk him! Seek him out at every possible moment, even if he's eating lunch or taking a whiz. Be the limpet mine to his iron hull. The dik-dik bird to his hippopotamus. The pilot fish to his shark. The colonoscopy to his ample buttocks. Listen to his sighs, hang on his every vile epithet, try to pierce the veil of his thick, guttural accent.

This is your chance! You may never see him again! Don't let him slip from your view. Search, scan, locate! Take away from this convention not merely a funky copy of the August 1943 *Planet Stories* and a case of athlete's foot, but the wisdom and wit of Michael Moorcock, your guest of honor, that *rara avis* from Old Blighty, who contains within his noble frame the potential to make *you* as cranky an individual as he has made me.

Don't let this opportunity pass you by.

Seek him out now.

Seek him, find him. He will only love you for it.

Trust me on this.



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MICHAEL MOORCOCK: SF ON A SUGAR CUBE

BY ALLEN STEELE

Try to imagine this: you're a fifteen-year-old kid in Nashville during the early '70s, hardly the most progressive place in America, particularly in terms of popular culture. Your father is a rather conservative gentleman, a lifelong Republican and an elder at First Presbyterian Church who keeps a Bible by his bedside. A good man, really, but he hasn't quite figured out what's wrong with his son, who's reading science fiction books by the stack, hiding *National Lampoon* and *Rolling Stone* beneath the bed, and listening to strange rock music.

If you're smart, you keep to yourself some of those things you've been reading lately, some of those frayed paperbacks you can only find in second-hand shops because no respectable book store would dare stock them. Most of the time you're wise enough to do this, so your father (along with your minister, your teachers, and even some of your friends) has no idea that you're reading everything from *Stranger in a Strange Land* to *Armies of the Night* to *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, because they're a hell of a lot more interesting than *Lilies of the Field* or *Silas Marner*. But you tend to speak your mind, a trait which often gets you in trouble in school, and one evening over dinner you make the mistake of telling your father about the novel you've recently read.

See, it's about this scientist, a very religious man (your father nods approvingly) who nonetheless has trouble reconciling with his faith; he steals a time machine he has recently helped invent (your father raises an eyebrow) and travels back in time to Jerusalem in order to meet Jesus Christ in person. But when he gets there, he discovers that the Bible got it all wrong; Jesus is mentally retarded and his mother is the local whore, and there is no Savior, yet this guy finds himself in the position where he's able to create all the miracles the Bible stated Christ was to have performed, and in turn he attracts a group of disciples, and then....

Try to imagine the expression on your father's face.

It's hard to remember, in this enlightened year of A.D. 2000, that there was once a time when reading novels like *Behold the Man* was a subversive activity — intellectual revolution of the highest

order. Forget the tired arguments of New Wave versus Old Wave, how the stuff being published in *New Worlds* during the '60s was different than what was being printed in *Analog* at the same time; no one except genre historians and a handful of frumpy critics cares about these things anymore, really, and the genre has found room for both Harlan Ellison and Larry Niven. In the long run, what matters is the work itself.

Before I found *Behold the Man*, my first encounter with Michael Moorcock's work was *The Black Corridor*. Of all the space novels I'd read, there had never been one like it before — the terrifying ordeal faced by the sole passenger of a starship who isn't in hibernation — and I don't think there's ever been one like it since. I re-read *The Black Corridor* a couple of years ago, and although its stylistic tricks may now seem a bit dated, I was surprised to discover that they had left enough of a long-term impact that I borrowed some of them in writing one of my own novels, *A King of Infinite Space*. Read the two books back-to-back and you'll see what I mean.

Breakfast in the Ruins. Found a British paperback edition of that novel in the dealer's room at Torcon II, the 1973 World Science Fiction Convention in Toronto, my first Worldcon. It nearly ruined post-apocalyptic fiction for me forever; nothing else compared. *The Warlord of the Air*. Now we would assign this book to the subcategory of alternative-history SF, yet when it came out it was unique. In many ways, it still is; no one else has rethought World War I in terms of Philip Francis Nowlan's *Armageddon 2419 A.D.* A marvelous and thoroughly strange swashbuckler.

In another medium entirely, there's Hawkwind. I didn't know Moorcock was a lyricist for this group until I stumbled upon *Space Ritual* in a head shop; the first lines of *The Black Corridor* make their way into the song "Master of the Universe." The early '70s was the heyday of SF-influenced prog-rock, but while slicker groups like Yes, King Crimson, and ELP were enjoying heavy airplay and concert tours, you knew you were in the company of true heads if you wandered into someone's apartment and found a copy of *Space Ritual* beneath the stereo. I recently bought a British-import CD reissue of that album, and it still blows



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my shit away — although, just as before, you've got to crank it up to get the full effect.

And then there's Jerry Cornelius.

The Elric novels, for which Moorcock is noted, are great work, comparable only to Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd* and the *Grey Mouser* series; I read *Stormbringer* when it was a Lancer paperback and enjoyed it, and my wife is a huge Elric fan. Yet in my own humble and possibly benighted opinion, Elric doesn't hold a candle to Jerry Cornelius.

Am I the only person out there who, upon seeing the movie *Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery*, noted an odd similarity between Austin Powers and Jerry Cornelius? Particularly during the shoot-out in a '60s London disco while the Strawberry Alarm Clock's "Incense and Peppermints" plays in the background. The vision has been pasteurized by Hollywood and made safe for middle-American audiences, yet you can sense the Moorcockian influence nonetheless, unacknowledged yet lingering in the background. Even so, the movie didn't quite get it right, for if it had been scripted by Mike Moorcock instead of Mike Meyers, Austin Powers would have been working in cahoots with Dr. Evil. And he wouldn't have been a dork with bad teeth. And he would have balled the Elizabeth Hurley character before the

end of the first act. And then he would have balled Dr. Evil (which, come to think of it, would have been an interesting special effect).

Jerry Cornelius is one of the greatest underground characters to emerge from the 20th century: James Bond on the side of anarchy, a sex-and-shade-changing assassin with a vibrator gun and a dark agenda. *The Final Programme* (itself made into a film, albeit one which has lapsed into obscurity) sets the tone for *A Cure for Cancer* and *The English Assassin*; read these novels (preferably with the Beatles' *Revolver* and *Abbey Road* albums on the CD rack; a few joints wouldn't hurt either, if you're so inclined), and you're transported to another place and time, one which countless attempts at '60s revivalism have failed to restore. Acid trips without the lousy side effects; impossible to describe unless you've been there.

Moorcock rocks. Moorcock rolls. Have you had a hit of this stuff yet?



I can't remember exactly when I started reading Moorcock books, or which book I read first. It was sometime in my early teens I became fascinated with the recursive plots of his stories, and the way the books tied themselves together into one large metaplot. I started reading any of his works I could get hold of, and re-read them when I couldn't get more. (Folks have been known to use me as a handy Moorcock reference....)

Concepts in his stories have changed the culture around him, more than most writers I can think of. (Just look in the gaming field, where his influence is obvious.)

So I would like to say thank you for: Jerry, the Dancers, needleguns, Arioch and the Chaos lords,

Law and Neutrality and Chaos, Carnaby Street clothes, Motorhead, the Multiverse, soul-sucking swords, chaos mutants and devolution, (really) old Beatles music, and all the other things, both the profound ideas and the trivial ones, which I discovered through his books and which have affected my world.

And this most of all.... When I visited Britain last year, his work enabled me to see the wonder of the mythic England that was everywhere around me. And for that gift there are no words to say thank you. The more things change....

— LISSANNE LAKE

ILLUMINATIONS ON A PALE PRINCE

The first place I ever read about Michael Moorcock, or, specifically, Elric, was in the paperback edition of Sam Lundwall's *Science Fiction: What's It All About?* (1969). As my ever-dimming memory recalls, it alluded to some vaguely homoerotic, not to mention vampiric, relationship he (Elric, not Moorcock) had with the sword Stormbringer. The character sure didn't sound like the usual run-of-the-mill Bran Mak Morn....

The first time I ever actually read something by Michael Moorcock, it was the Elric story "Kings in Darkness" in L. Sprague de Camp's collection *The Spell of Seven*. It was also the first time I had ever heard the name or seen the mastery of FINLAY. The illustration facing Moorcock's story (which originally was done for something else which probably ran in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*) was of a skeleton on fire. A skeleton that looked to be made of jewel-encrusted snow....

Elric has been described at times as resembling bleached bone lit by the fire of his ruby eyes and PAIN.... He is naturally then an alluring subject for any and many delineators of phantasy. Jim Cawthorn was one of the earliest, and, being a sometime collaborator with Moorcock, probably one of the most accurate. Jeff Jones has painted several covers showing Elric to be worn and haggard, denoting a subtle palette of feeling behind Jones's usual muted chromatic brilliance.

Wendy Pini did her masterwork in a series of sketches and paintings for a proposed animated feature, which were fortunately collected and published when the project fell through.

P. Craig Russell and Michael T. Gilbert almost simultaneously fixed the image of the Melnibonean for the popular audience in sequential art adaptations. While I like Barry Windsor-Smith's brief depiction of him in Marvel's *Conan*, it was more for Smith's fine linework than for capturing the true spirit of the character. The same goes for Michael Whelan's paintings. Rodney Matthews turned armor virtually into exoskeleton, and that was a more interesting take.

Noted illustration historian and artist Richard Schindler singles out Robert Gould as doing his favorite version and there is a flavor to his dust-jacket designs of... bleakness? retaining something of the ornate.

In another medium, Hawkwind successfully mounted a stage presentation of *The Chronicles of the Black Sword*. Successful because Dave Brock and Co. rock me own little world no small measure, but I digress.... Of course black metal bands in Norway such as Emperor and Dimmu Borgir have made their own visual and sonik tributes to "The Lords of Chaos"....

The cover to my Lancer copy of *Stormbringer* is my personal choice for someone's depiction of Elric — I believe it to be by Jack Gaughan. The sword is almost as big as Elric, thicker than his arms or legs, which are encased in thigh-high leather boots. He wears a peaked helm resembling a giant thorn matching the spiky minarets of the Dreaming City silhouetted against an autumnal sky. A white metallic rose that can shatter at any second....

Fragility. Strength. Beauty. Horror. Elric has also been labeled an "anti-hero," but I have never been quite able to view him that objectively. A "Multiverse" reflection of...ourselves? Perhaps. I know doing a depiction of him was the hardest assignment I ever gave myself. But at the very least, this sad, sweet, pale prince will at least remain a diamond embedded in the frost of childhood memory.

"Three Kings in darkness lie,
Guthoran of Org, and I,
Under a bleak and sunless sky —
The third Beneath the Hill."

Submitted by

THE JOEY ZONE

Needle Gunner, Hawkwind Army



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I have to confess that by many people's judgment I'd probably be regarded as something of a fake as a Moorcock fan. I started reading SF in my teen/college years and I read pretty omnivorously but I managed to miss all of Elric at the time, largely, I think, because I was more focused on SF and ignorantly regarded much of fantasy with suspicion. I think the first Moorcock I read was most likely *The Black Corridor* or *The Warlord of the Air* because I was a devotee of the Ace Specials of the time, but *Behold the Man* crept in there somewhere and made a lasting impression.

I was, of course, aware of the New Wave and *New Worlds* and its protean, energetic, and highly opinionated editor who created, fomented, and even invited controversy, and eventually caused Questions in the House in his native England.

Once I started working in publishing, my opportunities for catch-up reading were minimal, but I was hooked for life with the opening lines of the proposal for *The War Hound and the World's Pain*. "It was in that year when the fashion in cruelty demanded not only the crucifixion of peasant children, but a similar fate for their pets, that I first met Lucifer and was transported into Hell; for the Prince of Darkness wished to strike a bargain with me." Clearly, here was an extraordinary sense of the fantastic coupled with a refined sensibility, a sweeping view of history and myth and a skill at words that was irresistibly wry, deeply serious, and unquestionably original.

I can't claim to have read his entire oeuvre since then, but I've encountered his Eternal Hero in his many guises, explored *Mother London* and experienced *The Laughter of Carthage* among a wide range of other events and people and places.

I've also enjoyed the occasional privilege of entertaining Moorcock himself at the publisher's expense, most often in the moderating and delightful company of his wife, Linda, and being treated to a torrent of pungent reminiscences, opinions on the state of publishers, publishing, and the world, analyses of why rural Texas is a better place to live than England, and an incredibly wide-ranging and omni-informed outlook on everything in this world and in the vast and many-leveled multiverse which he invented, integrated, and continues to recessively recomplexate.

I've done my bit to repackage, reissue, and rescue from temporary obscurity Jerry Cornelius and various of his avatars, and it

was one of my sad regrets some years ago when I left Avon to desert the publication effort for three installments of a series involving a gambler named Jack, a lady of changeable reality named Rose, and some mysteriously metaphorical journeying on riverboats and between levels of existence.

The last time I had the pleasure of running into him, rather unexpectedly, at a SFWA Author-Editor evening in New York, he quite cheerfully and bluntly informed me that I would never again have an opportunity to work with him so long as I was employed by the likes of that "unprintable" Rupert Murdoch. Well, that circumstance has changed, so there's a particular, lovely possibility open once again in my life.

This weekend, however, I'm just along for the ride as one of his vast, admiring audience of readers. And the one thing I can absolutely guarantee for a weekend spent in the company of Michael Moorcock is an unpredictable set of destinations, a great deal of imaginative stimulation, and an uninterrupted conversation about almost anything under this, or any, sun.

— JOHN DOUGLAS



THE DREAMTHIEF'S DAUGHTER

A TALE OF THE ALBINO

CHAPTER ONE: STOLEN DREAMS

BY MICHAEL MOORCOCK

MY NAME IS ULRIC, Graf von Bek, and I am the very last of my earthly line. An unhealthy child, cursed with the family disease of albinism, I was born and raised in Bek, Saxony, in the early years of the century. I was trained to rule our province wisely and justly, to preserve the status quo, in the best traditions of the Lutheran Church.

My mother had died giving birth to me. My father had perished in a ghastly fire, when our old tower was partially destroyed. My brothers were all far older than I, and engaged mostly in military diplomacy abroad, so the estate, it was thought, would be my responsibility. It was not expected that I would wish to expose, any longer than necessary, my strange, ruby eyes to the light of common day. I accepted this sentence of virtual imprisonment as my due. It had been suffered by many ancestors before me. There were terrible tales of what had become, for instance, of twin albino children born to my great-grandmother.

Any unease I had in this role was soon subdued as, in my questioning years, I became an obsessive fencer.

All my bafflement and frustrations were translated into learning that subtle and dangerous art. Not the sort of silly swashbuckling boy-braggadoccio nonsense affected by the nouveaux riches and ennobled burgomeisters who perform half-invented rituals of ludicrous manliness at Heidelberg.

No real lover of the sword would subject the instrument to such vulgar, clattering nonsense. With precious few affectations, I hope, I became a true swordsman, an expert in the art of the duel to the death. For in the end, existentialist that I am, entropy alone is the only enemy worth challenging and to conquer entropy is to reach at least a compromise with death, always the ultimate victor in our conflicts.

There's something to be said for dedicating one's life to an impossible cause. Perhaps an easier decision for a solitary albino aristocrat, full of the idealism of previous centuries, disliked by his con-

temporaries and a discomfort to his tenants. One given to reading and brooding. But not unaware, never unaware, that outside the old, thick walls of Bek, in my rich and complex Germany, the world was beginning to march to simplistic tunes, numbing the race mind so that it would deceive itself into making war again. Into destroying itself again.

Instinctively, still a teenager, and after an inspiring school trip to the Nile Valley and other great sites of our civilisation, I plunged even more deeply into my archaic studies.

Old Bek grew all around me. A manor house to which rooms and buildings had been added over the centuries, she emerged like a tree from the lush grounds and thickly wooded hills of Bek, surrounded by the cedars, poplars and cypresses my crusader forebears had brought from the Holy Land, by the Saxon oaks into which my earlier ancestors had bound their souls, so that they and the world were rooted in the same earth. Those ancestors had first fought against Charlemagne and then fought with him. They had sent two sons to Roncesvalles. They had served King Ethelred of England.

My tutor was old von Asch, black, shrunken and gnarled, whom my brothers called The Walnut, whose family had been smiths and swordsmen since the time their first ancestor struck the first bronze weapon. He loved me. I was a vessel for his experience. I was willing to learn anything, try any trick to improve my skills. Whatever he demanded, I would eventually rise to meet that expectation. I was, he said, the living record of his family wisdom.

But von Asch's wisdom was nothing very sensational. Indeed, his advice was subtle and appealed, as perhaps he knew, to my aestheticism, my love of the complex and the symbolic. Rather than impose his ideas on me, he planted them like seeds. They would grow if the conditions were right. This was also the secret of his teaching. He somehow made you realise that you were doing it yourself, that the situation demanded certain responses and what he helped you to do was trust your intuition and use it.

Of course, there was his notion of the sword's song.



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“You have to listen for the song,” he said. “Every great individual sword has her own song. Once you find that song and hear it clearly, then you can fight with it, for the song is the very essence of the sword and the sword was not forged to decorate walls or be a lifted signal of victory and dominance, but to cut flesh, bone and sinew, and kill. She is not an extension of your manhood, nor an expression of your selfhood. She is an instrument of death. At her best, she kills in justice. If this notion is objectionable to you, my son — and I do not suggest for an instant that you apply it, simply that you acknowledge this truth — then you should put away the sword forever. Fighting with swords is a refined art, but it is an art best enjoyed when also a matter of life and death.”

To fight for the ultimate — against oblivion — seemed to me exactly the noble destiny the Raven Sword, our ancestral blade, deserved. Few down the centuries had shown much interest in this queerly wrought old longsword. It was even considered something of an embarrassment. We had a few stories of mad ancestors who had perhaps not been exemplary in their tormented curiosity and had put the sword to strange uses. There was a report in the Mirenburg press only in the last century. Some madman, posing as a legendary creature called “Crimson Eye” had run amuck with a blade, killing at least thirty people before disappearing. For a while the von Beks had been suspected. The story of our albinism was well known there. But no person was ever brought to justice. He featured dramatically in the street literature of the day, like Jack the Ripper, Fantomas and Springheeled Jack.

Part of our vulgar and bloody past. We tended to want to forget the sword and its legends. But there were few in the empty, abandoned and lost rooms at Bek, which had no family to fill them any longer, who could remember. A few retainers too old for war or the city. And, of course, books.

When it was time for me to handle that sword whenever I wished, von Asch taught me her main songs — for this blade was a special blade.

There were extraordinarily resonances to the steel, however you turned it. A vibrancy which seemed feral. Like a perfect musical instrument. She moved to those songs. She seemed to guide me. He showed me how to coax from her, by subtle strokes and movements of my fingers and wrists, her songs of hatred and contempt, sweet songs of yearning bloodlust, melancholy memories of battles fought, determined revenge. But no

love songs. Swords, said von Asch, rarely had hearts. And it is unwise to rely on their loyalty.

This particular weapon, which we called Ravenbrand, was a big broadsword of black iron with a slender, unusually leaf-shaped blade.

Our family legend said that it was forged by Friar Corvo, the Venetian armourer, who wrote the famous treatise on the subject. But there is a tale that Corvo — the Raven Smith, as Browning called him — only found the sword, or at least the blade itself, and wrought nothing but the hilt.

Some said it was Satan’s own blade. Others said it was the Devil Himself. The Browning poem describes how Corvo gave his soul to bring the sword to life again. One day I would go with our Ravenbrand to Venice and discover for myself what truth there might be to the story.

But then it was August 1914 and for the first months of that war I longed to be old enough to join it. Then as the realities were reported by the returning veterans — young men hardly older than myself — I began to wonder how such a war could ever be ended.

My brothers died of disease or were blown apart in some nameless pit. Soon I had no other living relation but my ancient grandfather, who lived in sheltered luxury on the outskirts of Mirenburg, in Waldenstein, and would look at me from huge, pale, disappointed grey eyes which saw the end of everything he had worked for. After a while he would wave me away. Eventually he refused to have me at his bedside.

I was inducted in 1918. The war lasted just long enough to demonstrate what cruel folly it was. We could rarely speak of what we’d witnessed.

Sometimes it seemed a million voices called out to us from no-man’s-land, pleading only for a release from pain. Help me, help me, help me. English. French. German. Russian. And the voices of a dozen disparate empires. Voices which could soon be ours. Which screamed at the sight of their own exposed organs and ruined limbs. Which implored God to take away their pain. To bless them with death.

They did not leave me when I slept. They turned and twisted in their millions, screaming and wailing for release, throughout my constant dreams. At night, I left one horror to inhabit another. Yet there seemed little difference between them.

What was worse, my dreams did not confine themselves to the current conflict, but to every war Man had instigated.

Vividly, and no doubt thanks to my intense reading, I began to witness huge battles, and some of them I recognised from history. Most, however, were merely the repetition, with different costumes, of the obscenity I witnessed twenty-four hours a day from the trenches.

Towards the end, one or two of the dreams had something else in common. A beautiful white hare who ran through the warring men, apparently unnoticed and unharmed. I almost felt I should follow her. Once, she turned and looked back at me and her ruby-coloured eyes were my own. Then, gradually, the nightmares faded. Real life proved hard enough, perhaps.

We, who were technically the instigators of the war and subject to the victor's view of history, were humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles and the common people were forced to pay far too high a price for the follies of exiled nobles. We live, die, know sickness and health, comfort and discomfort, because of the egos of a few stupid men.

To be fair, some of those nobles, such as myself, elected to stay and work for the restoration of the German Federation, though I had no liking for the swaggering aggression of the defeated Prussians, who had thought themselves unbeatable.

These proud nationalists were the ones who supplied the rhetoric which, by 1920, was fueling what would be the Nazi and Bolshevik movements, admittedly towards rather different ends. Germany defeated, impoverished, shamed.

The Serbian Black Hand had fallen upon our world and blighted it almost beyond recognition. All that Bismarck had built up in us, a sense of unity and mission, had become diverted to serve the ambitions of a few greedy businessmen, industrialists, gunmakers and their royal allies, a sour echo which many of those, in Berlin for instance, chose to ignore, or turn into an art of bitter realism giving us the likes of Brecht and Weill. The sardonic, popular rhythms of *The Threepenny Opera* were the soundtrack to the story of our ruin.

Germany remained on the verge of civil war, between right and left. Between the communist fighters and the nationalist Freikorps. It was the greatest danger we feared. We saw what it had done to Russia.

There is no faster way of plunging a country into chaos than to make panicky decisions aimed at averting that chaos. There seemed a moment when Germany was recovering. Many thinking people believed that if the other great powers had supported Germany then, we should have had no

Adolf Hitler. These creatures emerge frequently because of a vacuum. They are conjured whole from yearning nothingness by our own negativity, by our Faustian appetites and dark greed.

Our family and its fortunes had been greatly reduced by the War. I was frequently advised to sell Bek. Bustling black-marketeers and rising fascists would offer to buy my ancestral seat from me. They thought they could buy the authority of place in the same way that they had bought their grand houses and large motorcars.

In some ways, having to manage my estates rather more desperately than in the past, I learned a little of the uncertainty and horror facing the average German, who saw his country on the brink of total ruin.

It was easy to blame the victors. It was true their tax on us was punitive, unjust, inhumane and foolish, that it was the poison which the Nazis, over in Munich and in Bavaria in general, began to use to their own advantage.

Even as their popular support began to slide, the Nazi Party was able to take control of almost all the power in Germany. A power they had originally claimed for the Jews. But recently, unlike the Jews, they actually did control the media. On the radio, in the newspapers and magazines and movies, they began to tell the people whom they should love and whom they should hate. It was Hitler, more than Stalin, who inspired the British George Orwell to write his *1984*.

How do you kill a million or so of your neighbours?

Well, first you say that they are Unlike. They are Not Us. Not human. Only like us on the surface. Pretending to be us. Evil underneath in spite of all common experience. Then you compare them to unclean animals and you accuse them of plotting against you.

And very soon you had the necessary madness in place to produce a holocaust. This is by no means a new phenomenon, of course. McCarthyism in America characterised everyone who disagreed with it as a communist. More recently the Hutu majority in Rwanda killed most of the Tutsi minority by comparing them to cockroaches that had to be stamped on. But in those days, save for the embarrassments of Martin Luther's fulminations against Jewry, that kind of talk was strange to me in Bek and I could not believe that ultimately a civilised nation would tolerate it.

But frightened nations will accept too easily the threat of civil war and the promise of the man who says he will avert it. Hitler averted civil war



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because he had no need of it. His opposition was delivered into his hands by the ballot boxes of a country which, at that time, had one of the best democratic constitutions in the world, superior in many ways to the American.

Hitler's opponents were already in his power, thanks to the authority of the State he had seized. We could all see this, those of us who were horrified, but it was impossible to convince anyone. So many German people so badly needed stability, they were willing to cleave to the Nazis. And it was easier to forget a Jewish neighbour's disappearance than it was the concerns of your own relatives.

And so ordinary people were led into complicity in that evil, through deed, or word, or that awful silence, to become part of it, to defend against their own consciences, to hate themselves as well as others, to choose a strutting self-esteem over self-respect, and so devalue themselves as citizens.

It is how a modern dictatorship makes us rule ourselves on its behalf. We learn to gloss our self-disgust with cheap rhetoric, sentimental talk, claims of goodwill, protestations of innocence, of victimhood. And those of us who refuse, it ultimately kills.

For all my determination to pursue the cause of peace, I still maintained my swordsmanship. It had become much more than a mere *pasa tiempo*. It remained something of a cause, I suppose, a method of controlling what little there was still in my own control. The skills needed to wield the Raven blade were highly specialised, for while my sword was balanced so perfectly I could easily spin it in one hand, it was of heavy, flexible steel and had a life of its own, almost like a supple cat. Sometimes it seemed to flow through my hands, even as I practised. The other peculiarity about the blade was that it was impossible to sharpen with ordinary stone. Von Asch, gone off at the beginning of the War and presumed killed, had given me a special grindstone, which appeared to be imbedded with pieces of diamond. Not that the blade ever needed much sharpening. Freudians, who were busily interpreting our chaos in those days, would have known what to think of my tendency to bond with my blade and my unwillingness to be separated from it. Yet I felt I drew power from the weapon. Not the kind of brute, predatory power the Nazis so loved, but a permanent sustenance.

I carried the sword with me whenever I travelled, which was rarely. A local maker had fashioned a long case, rather like a gun case, into which Ravenbrand fitted discreetly, so that to the casual

eye, with the case over my shoulder, I looked like some bucolic landsman prepared for a day's shooting or even fishing.

I had it in my mind that whatever happened to Bek, the sword and I would survive. Whatever the symbolic meaning of the sword was, I cannot tell you, save that it had been handled by my strange family for at least a thousand years, that it was said to have turned the tide at Roncevalles, leading the monstrous horses of Carolingian chivalry, against the invading Berber, had defended the Danish royal line at Hastings and served the Saxon cause in exile, in Byzantium and beyond.

I suppose I was also a little superstitious, if not completely crazy, because I sensed there was a bond between myself and the sword. Something more than tradition or romance.

Meanwhile the quality of our civil life continued to decline in Germany.

Even the town of Bek, dreaming gables, twisted old roofs and chimneys, green-glazed windows, her weekly markets and ancient customs, was not immune to the 20th-century jackboot.

Before 1933, a small division of self-titled Freikorps, made up mostly of unemployed ex-soldiers commanded by NCOs who had given themselves the rank of Captain or higher, paraded occasionally through the streets, though they were not based in Bek, where I refused to allow any such goings-on, but in a neighbouring city. They had too many rivals in the city to contend with, I suspect, and felt more important showing their strength to a town of old people and children, which had lost most of its men.

These private armies controlled parts of Germany and were constantly in conflict with rivals, with communist groups and politicians who sought to curb their power, warning that civil war was inevitable if the Freikorps were not brought under control. Of course, this is what the Nazis offered to do — to control the very forces they were using to sow the seeds of further uncertainty about the future of our poor, humiliated Germany.

I share the view that if the allies had been more generous and not attempted to suck the last marrow from our bones, Hitler and the Freikorps would have had nothing to complain of. But our situation was manifestly unjust and in such a climate even the most moderate of burghers can somehow find himself condoning the actions of people he would have condemned out of hand before the War.

Thus, in 1933, fearing Russian-style civil conflict worse than tyranny, many of us voted for a "strong man," in the hope it would bring stability.

Sadly, of course, like most "strong men," Hitler was merely a political construct, no more the man of iron his followers declared him to be than any other of his wretched, ranting psychopathic type.

There were a thousand Hitlers in the streets of Germany, a thousand dispossessed, twitching, feckless neurotics, eaten up with jealousy and frustrated hatred. But he had a gift for cheap political oratory, drew power from the worst elements of the mob, and spoke in the grossest emotional terms of our betrayal not, as some perceived it, by the greed of our leaders and the rapacity of our conquerors, but by a mysterious, almost supernatural, force they called "International Jewry."

Normally, such blatant nonsense would have gathered together only the marginal and less intelligent members of society, but as financial crisis followed crisis, Hitler and his followers had persuaded more and more ordinary Germans and business leaders that fascism was the only way to salvation.

Look at Mussolini in Italy. He had saved his nation, regenerated it, made people fear it again. He had masculinised Italy, they said. Made it virile as Germany could be made virile again. It is how they think, these people. "Guns and boots, flags and prongs/Blacks and whites. Rights and wrongs..." as Wheldrake put it in one of those angry doggerel pieces he did just before his death in 1927.

Simple pursuits. Simple answers. Simple truths.

Intellect, learning and moral decency were mocked and attacked as though they were mortal enemies. Women were treated with sentimental contempt.

We are slow to learn. Neither the English, French nor American experiments in social order by imposition came to any good and the communist and fascist experiments, equally puritanical in their rhetoric, demonstrated the same fact — that ordinary human beings are far more complex than simple truth and simple truth is fine for argument and clarification, but it is not an instrument for government, which must represent complexity if it is to succeed. It was no surprise to many that juvenile delinquency reached epidemic proportions in Germany by 1940, although the Nazis, of course, could not admit the problem, which was not supposed to exist in the world they had created.

By 1933, in spite of so many of us knowing what the Nazis were like, they had taken control of parliament. Our constitution was no more than a piece of paper, burning amongst great, inspired books, by Mann, Heine, Brecht, Zweig and Remarque, which the Nazis heaped in blazing pyres at crossroads and in town squares. An act they termed "cultural cleansing." It was the triumph of ignorance and bigotry.

Boots, blackjacks and whips became the instruments of political policy. We could not resist because we could not believe what had happened. We had relied upon our democratic institutions. We were in a state of national denial. The realities, however, were soon demonstrated to us.

It was intolerable for any who valued the old humane virtues of German life, but our protests were silenced in the most brutally efficient ways and soon there were only a few of us who continued to resist.

As the Nazi grip tightened, fewer and fewer of us spoke out, or even grumbled. The stormtroopers were everywhere. They would arrest people on an arbitrary basis "just to give them a taste of what they'll get if they step out of line" and several journalists I knew, who had no political affiliations, were locked up for months, released, then locked up again. Not only would they not speak when they were released, they were terrified of speech.

This, I gather, was Nazi policy, to cow the protesting classes. They succeeded fairly well, with the compliance of the church and the army, but they did not entirely extinguish opposition. I, for instance, determined to join the White Rose Society, sworn to destroy Hitler and work against his interests in every way.

I had advertised my sympathies as best I could and was eventually contacted by telephone. A young woman. She gave her name as "Gertie" and told me that she would be in touch as soon as it was safe. I believed that they were probably checking my credentials, making sure I was not a spy or a potential traitor.

Twice in the streets of Bek I was pointed out as an unclean creature, some kind of leper. I was lucky to get home without being harmed. After that, I went out as little as possible, usually after dark. Frequently accompanied by my sword. Stupid as it sounds, for the stormtroopers were armed with guns, the sword gave me a sense of purpose, a kind of courage, a peculiar security.

Not long after the second incident, when I had been spat at by brownshirt boys, who had also attacked my old manservant Reiter as an aristo-



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crat's lackey, those bizarre, terrifying dreams began again. With even greater intensity. Wagnerian, almost. Thick with armour and heavy warhorses, butchering steel and blaring trumpets. All the potent, misplaced romance of conflict. The kind of imagery which powered the very movement I was sworn to fight.

Slowly the dreams took on some kind of shape and in them I was again plagued by voices in languages I could not understand, full of unlikely, tongue-twisting names, almost a litany. It seemed to me I was listening to a long list of those who had already died violent deaths since the beginning of time — and those who were yet to die.

The resumption of my nightmares caused me considerable distress and alarmed my old servants, who spoke of fetching the doctor or perhaps getting me to Berlin to see a specialist.

Yet before I could decide what action to take, the white hare had appeared again. She ran swiftly over corpses, between the legs of metal-covered men, under the guns and lances of a thousand conflicting nations and religions. I could not tell if she wished me to follow her. This time she did not look back. I longed for her to turn, to show me her eyes again, to determine if she was, in fact, a version of myself — a self freed at last from that eternal struggle. It was as if she signalled the ending of the horror. I needed to know what she symbolised. I tried to call out, but I was dumb. Then I was deaf. Then blind. And suddenly the dreams were gone. I would wake in the morning with that strange feeling of rapidly fading memory, of a vanishing reality, as a powerful dream disappears, leaving only the sense of having experienced it. A sense, in my case, of confusion and deep, deep dread. All I could remember was that vision of a white hare racing across a field of butchered flesh. Not a particularly pleasant feeling, but perhaps a relief from that nightly violence.

It was not only my nightmares that had been stolen, but also my ordinary, waking dreams, my dreams of a lifetime of quiet study and benign action. Such a monkish life was the best someone of my appearance could hope for in those days — which were merely an uneasy pause in the great conflict we began by calling World War I. Now we think of it as an entire century of war, where one dreadful conflict followed another, half of them justified as holy wars, or moral wars, or wars to help distressed minorities, but almost all of which were actually inspired by the basest of emotions, the most short-term of goals, the cruelest greed and that appalling self-righteousness which no doubt

the Christian Crusaders had when they brought blood and terror to Jerusalem in the name of God and human justice.

So many quiet dreams like mine were stolen in that century. So many noble men and women, honest souls, were rewarded only with agony and obscene death.

Soon, thanks to the compliance of the church, we were privileged to see in Bek's streets pictures of Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany, dressed in silver, shining armour and mounted on a white horse, carrying the banner of Christ, recalling all the legendary saviours of our people.

These bigoted philistines despised Christianity and had made the swastika the symbol of modern Germany, but they were not above corrupting our noblest idealism and historical imagery to further their evil.

It is a mark, I think, of political scoundrels that they are the ones who speak most of the people's rights and hopes, who use the most sentimental language and blame all others but their own constituents for the problems of the world. Always a "foreign threat," fear of "the stranger." "Secret intruders, illegal aliens...."

I still hear those voices in modern Germany and France and America and all those countries we once thought of as far too civilised to allow such horror within their own borders.

After all these years I still fear, I suppose, a recurrence of that terrible dream into which I finally plunged. A dream far more real than any reality I had known, a dream without end. A dream of eternity. An experience of the complexity of our multiverse in all its vast, limitless variety, with all its potential for evil and its capacity for good.

Perhaps the only dream that was not stolen from me.



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CHEERING FOR THE ROCKETS

A JERRY CORNELIUS STORY

BY MICHAEL MOORCOCK

1. NOON

"There is this same anti-Semitism in America. I hear the swirl and mutter of it around me in restaurants, at clubs, on the beach, in Washington, in New York, and here at home. No basis exists for the statements that accompany it. 'The Jews,' people say, 'own the radio, the movies, the theaters, the publishing companies, the newspapers, the clothing business, and the banks. They are just one big family, banded together against the rest of humanity, and they are getting control of the media of articulation so that they can control us. They have depraved every art form. They are doing it simply to break down our moral character and make us easy to enslave. Either we will have to destroy them, or they will ruin us.'"

Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*, New York, 1942.

Let a Jew into your home
and for a month you will have bad luck.
— Moroccan proverb

Let an American into your home
and soon he will own your family.
— Lebanese proverb

We call them 'sand niggers.'
— Coca Cola senior executive
in private conversation

A nation without shame is an immoral nation.
— Lobkowitz, *Beyond the Dream*, Prague, 1937.

"THEY APPEAR TO have broken another treaty." Jerry Cornelius frowned and removed something like a web from his smart black coat. Slipping his Thinkman™ into his breast pocket he fingered his heat. His nostrils burned. There was a wired, cokey sort of feel to the atmosphere. Probably only gas.

"Pardon?" Trixibell Brunner, dressed to kill with a tasteful U.N. armband, was casting about in the dust for something familiar. "So fill me in on this one. Who started it?"

"They did, naturally." The U.N. representative was anxious to get the interview over. They had staked him into the ash by way of encouragement and the desert sun was now shining full on his face. His tunic flashes said he was General Thorvald Fors. The Pentagon had changed his name to

something Scandinavian as soon as he got the U.N. appointment. It sounded more trustworthy. He had already explained to them how he was really Vince Paolozzi, an Italian from Brooklyn and cursed with a mother who preferred his cousin to him. His familiar family reminiscences, his litanies of favourite foods, the status of his family's ethnicity, his connections with the ultra-famous, his mafiosities, the whole pizza opera, had finally got on their nerves and for a while they had given him a shot of novocaine in the vocal chords. But now they were exhausting the miscellaneous Sudanese pharmaceuticals they'd grabbed at random on their way out. The labels were pretty much of a mystery. Jerry's Arabic didn't run to over-the-counter drugs.

"I see you decided to settle out of court." Jerry stared at the general, trying to recognise him. There was a memory. A yearning. Gone. "Are you on our side?"

"What we say in public isn't always what we mean in private?" The general's display of caps seemed to be an appeal.

"A legalistic rather than a lawful country, wouldn't you say? That's the problem with constitutional law. Never has its feet on the ground."

Lobkowitz came to look down at the general. He was behaving so uncharacteristically that for a second Jerry was convinced the old diplomat would piss on Fors. The handsome soldier-bureaucrat now resembled a kind of horizontal messiah.

The prince fingered his fly. "Nowadays, America's a white recently pubescent baptist festooned with an arsenal of sophisticated personal weaponry. Armed and ignorant. Don't cross him. Especially if you're a girl. Captain Cornelius, we're dealing with Geronimo here, not Ben Franklin. Geronimo understood genocide as political policy. He knew what was happening to him. Somehow inevitably that savage land triumphed over whatever was civilised in its inhabitants. They are its children at last." Prince Lobkowitz turned in the rubble to look out at the desert, where the Egyptian Sahara had been. His stocky fatigue-clad body was set in an attitude of hopeless challenge. His long grey hair rose and fell in the wind. His full mouth was rigid with despair. He was still mourning for his sons and his wife, left in Boston. For the dream of a lifetime. For peace. "Our mistake."



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Jerry sniffed again at the populated air. "Is that cordite?" He touched his lips with his tongue. "Or chewing gum." He was wearing a vast white gelabea, like a nightshirt, and a white cap. His skin had lost some of its flake. He wondered if he shouldn't have brought more power. He'd only come along for the debris.

"All that informal violence. Out of control. Reality always made Yanks jumpy." Shaky Mo licked his M-18's mechanisms, feeling for tiny faults. "They're good at avoiding it, or forgetting it. If it can't be romanticised or sentimentalised it's denied. That's why they export so much escapism. It's their main cash crop. That's why they've disneyfied the world. And why they're so welcome. Who wants to buy reality? Fantasy junkies get very aggressive when their junk is threatened. You all know that sententious American whine." He was hoping to identify the grade of his oil. He had become totally obsessed with maintenance.

"If I were Toney Blurr I would stick a big missile right up Boston's silly Irish bottom. Where the republican terrorists' paymasters live. Remind them who we are. Bang, bang. And it would make the protestants feel so much better. People in the region would understand. They admire that kind of decisive action. CNN-ready, as we say. Such a precise, well-calculated, single, efficient strike would cut off the terrorists' bases and supplies and lose them credibility with their host nation. Bang. Bang. Bang."

Everyone ignored the baroness. Behind her yashmak her mad old eyes glared with the zealotry of a recent convert. Since her last encounter with Ronald Reagan she had become strangely introspective, constantly trying to rub the thick unpleasant stains from the sleeve of her business suit. Not that she had been herself since three o'clock or whenever it was. There was a lot to be said for the millennial crash. It had questioned the relevance and usefulness of linear time.

"Universal Alzheimers," said Jerry. "Where?"

"Eh?" Lady B's wizened fingers roamed frantically over her ice-blue perm. "Would you say it was getting on for four?"

"Water..." General Fors moved pointlessly in his bonds, the stakes shifting in the ash, but holding. His uniform was in need of repair. His cheeky red, white and blue U.N. flashes were offensive to eyes grown used to an overcast world. Even his blood seemed vulgar. His skin was too glossy. They hadn't been able to get his helmet off easily so Mo had spray-painted it matte black. General Fors was

also mainly black. His face gleamed and cracked where the paint had already set. "Momma..."

"You're coming up with an unrealistic want list, pard." Jerry was the only one to feel sorry for him. "Anything more local and we'll happily oblige."

"Home..."

"You are home. You just don't recognise it." Mo's guffaw was embarrassing. "Home of the grave. Land of the fec. You discount everything you have that's valuable. You sell it for less than the traders paid for Manhattan. Now all that's left are guns and herds of overweight buffalo wallowing across a subcontinent of syrup. They don't hear the distant firing any more. Or see the clouds of flies."

"Fries?" said General Fors.

Prince Lobkowitz had now relieved himself. His hopeless eyes regarded the general. "You had a vital, successful trading nation reasonably aware of its cultural shortcomings. Which everyone liked. We liked your film stars. We liked your music. Your sentimental cartoon world. And then you had to take the next step and become an imperial power. Burden of empire. Malign by definition. Hated by all. Including yourselves. You're not a country any more, you're an extended episode of the *X-Files*."

"Missiles!" The general tried a challenge. His head rolled with the fear of it.

"All used up now, general. Remember? HQ filled them with poisoned sugar and wacoed them into your own system. The bitterness within. Double krauted. Flies? You think this is bad. You should see California." Babbling crazy, Mo appeared to take some personal pride in the decline.

"You told him this *was* California." Any hint of metaphor made Trixibell uneasy and simile got her profoundly aggressive. "Is that fair?" She cleared her throat. She patted her chest.

"Lies..." said General Fors. His big brown eyes appealed blankly to heaven. The sun had long since disabled them.

"I call it retrospeculation." A goat bleated. Professor Hira came waving out of the nearest black tent. With their vehicles, the Berber camp was the only shelter in a thousand miles. The plucky little Brahmin had an arrangement with the sheikh. He was still wearing his winter djellabah. He had his uniform cap on at a jaunty angle. Behind him, above the dark folds of heavy felt the tribe's cycling satellite dish forever interpreted the clouds. "Anyway. What does geography mean now?"

"Lies..."

"Too right. You dissed the whole fucking world, man. Then you ojoyed it. But not forever. You were

neither brave, free nor respectful. Once we couldn't use your engines what could you offer us except death?" Shaky Mo stepped in the general's lap, crossing to the useless desert cruiser and climbing slowly up the camouflage webbing to his usual perch on the forward gun tower. "Not that I approved of everyone leaving the U.N."

"We are the U.N.," explained General Fors. "At least let me keep my Ferraris."

"Your mistake was to nuke Omdurman. No understanding of religion, you people. And what's worse, you have bad memories." Pulling down the general's shades, Mo set himself on snooze. Gently, his equipment fizzed and muttered, almost a lullaby. He swung slowly in his rigging. From his phones came the soothing pounding of Kingsize Taylor and the Dominoes.

To be fair, General Fors had got up all their noses. Leaving old Lady Brunner wandering about in the dried-up oasis, the rest of them moved into the desert leviathan's shade. They felt uneasy if they wandered too far from the huge land-ship. Her Kirbyesque aesthetics were both comforting and stunning. But her function left something to be desired. *The Praisegod Gordon* had been breaking down ever since they'd fled Khartoum. The vehicle had been the best they could find. At a mile to the gallon it wasn't expensive to run. The world was full of free gas. From somewhere inside the ship their engineer, Colonel Pyat, could be heard banging and cursing at the groaning hydraulics and whispering cooling systems. Sometimes it was hard to tell the various sounds apart. The machine had its own private vocabulary.

Jerry wondered at the sudden sensation in his groin. Was he pregnant?

He paused and looked up at the pulsing sky. At least they'd had the sense not to fly.

2. NON

Last winter, in the first precious weeks of war, our Senate used three of them to argue the moral turpitude of one member. That is as sad a sight as this democracy has seen this century.

— Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*

We kept reporting to our officers that there were large numbers of Germans all around us, together with heavy transport and artillery, but the brass told us we were imagining things. There couldn't be Germans there. Intelligence hadn't reported any.

— survivor, the Battle of the Bulge

For some weeks after their arrival in Bosnia the Americans spent millions of dollars in a highly-publicized bridge building exercise. The whole time they were building it local people kept telling them there was an easy fording place about half a mile downriver.

Intelligence had not reported it.

— survivor, Bosnia

You have to tell the White House and the Pentagon what they want to hear or they won't listen to you. That's how we got blamed for the Bay of Pigs after we'd warned against it.

— ex-CIA officer

WE DON'T DIAL 911

— commercial Texan home signboard painted on silhouette of a six-gun

"EVERYTHING'S PERFECTLY SIMPLE." General Fors had rid himself of his various stigmata and had repainted his helmet a pleasing apple green. His attempts at Arabic lettering were a little primitive, but showed willing, even if his crescent looked like a sickle. "It's just you people who complicate everything. We were so comfortable."

They had made him security officer and put him near the revolving door. The hotel was deserted. Through the distant easterly windows guttered a wasteland of wrecked cars and abandoned flyovers, a browned world.

"Too many, you know, darkies." Jillian Burnes, the famous transsexual novelist, was the only resident now. She was reluctant to leave. She had been here for six months, she said, and made a little nest for herself. She had come on a British Council trip and lost touch for a while. Her massive feet up on the Ark of the Covenant, she was peeling an orange. "This operation was aimed at thinning them out a bit."

"So far it seems to have firmed them up a bit." Jerry was helping the general buckle his various harnesses together. He dusted off his uniformed back. "All this red plush is a natural sand trap."

In the elegant lobby, its mirrors almost wholly intact, they had piled their booty in rough categories — domestic, religious, entertainment, military, electronic, arts — and were resting at the bar, enjoying its uninvaded largesse. Even the sky was quiet now. The customers had all fled on the last plane. And the last plane had gone down in the rush. They could have been in New York or Washington. Had there still been a New York or Washington.



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Giving the general a final brush, Jerry wondered why so much of Jerusalem was left.

The other British Council refugee was dwarfish Felix Martin, son of the famous farting novelist, Rex. A popular tennis columnist in his own right and virtual war face for the breakfast hit *Washington Toast*, Felix dabbed delicately at his dockers and looked tragically up at Trixibell.

"Baby?" said Trix.

"Have you been over here before? Is that blood, do you think?"

3. NONE

But, until man is willing to pay the cost of peace he will pay the price of war, and, since they must be precisely equal, I ask you to consider for how many more ages you think man will be striking balances with battles?... But recollect that, to have peace, congresses will be compelled to appropriate for others as generously as they do now for our armies, and the taxpayers will have to pay as willingly, and as many heroes will have to dedicate their lives to the maintenance of tranquillity as are now risking them to restore it.

— Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*.

Man is still so far from considering himself as the author of war that he would hardly tolerate a vast paid, public propaganda designed to point out the infinite measure of his private dastardliness and he would still rather fight it out in blood than limit the profitable and vain activities of peace in order to study his personal conscience.

— *ibid.*

Once you get it (your market economy) in place, you'll take off like a rocket.

— Bill Clinton to the Russian Duma,
September 1, 1998

"THEY MUST HAVE felt wonderful, bringing the benefits of German culture to a world united under their benign flag." The three had strolled out to what was probably the Reichstag or possibly a cinema. The set, so spectacular in its day, had received one of the first strikes specifically aimed at Disney. Jerry picked up a fluffy Dumbo.

"These aren't Germans," Trixibell tucked everything back in. "These are Americans." She remassaged her hair.

"Did I say Americans? They loved the Nazis, too. I remember when I worked for Hearst in '38. Or was it CBS? Good old Putzi. A Harvard man, you know. Or Ford? Or Goebbels? Or '49? Uncle Walt admired the artwork and slogans, but he

thought he could make the system function better over here. And they were, indeed, far more successful. Still, the patterns don't change."

"You have to take the jobs where you find them." Trixibell, in sharp black and white, pouted her little mouth. In her day she had firmly enjoyed the ears, tongues and privates of cardinals and presidents. She was a prettier, modern and more aggressive version of her old mum.

"It's what the fourth estate is all about.

"It's what the public says.

"It's what we say.

"I mean, this is what we say, right?" Felix was having some trouble getting his sentence going. He didn't like the look of Mo's elaborate ordnance. "Are those real guns?" His melancholy nose twitched nervously above prominent teeth, a glowering dormouse. Tough cotton shirt, serviceable chinos, jumper, jacket, all bearing the St. Michael brand. Marks guaranteed middle-class security. From Lands' End to Eddie Bauer. Oxfam gave him the shudders. He was strict about it. His life was nothing if not exclusive.

He withdrew into his clothing as if into a shelter. It was all he had left of his base.

"Oh bum. Oh piss. Oh shit.

"Oh bum. Oh piss. Oh shit.

"Oh bum."

"Hallelulla," said Jerry. He was beginning to feel his old self. "Or is that Hallelujah?"

"Bum again?" Trixibell scented at the wind. "Was that Felix? Or you?"

"Childish bee. Where's the effin loo, lovey?" Jillian Burnes hefted her magnificent gypsy skirts and stepped lushly into the shaft of light coming through the roof. "Must be the Clapham Astoria." For years she had survived successfully on such delusions. "I used to be the manager here." She swung her borrowed mane. She fluttered her massive lashes. She smacked her surgical scarlet lips. "This is what comes of moving south of the river. What actually happened to the money?"

"Computers et it." Mo was admiring. He had found some more glue. "The Original Insect et it. Millennium insect. Ultimate bug. Munch munch. Bug et everything. Chomp. Chomp. Chomp. Et the time. Et the dosh. Et the info. Et the control. Et the entire lousy dream. The house of floss. It all went so quickly. Gobbled up our world and all its civilization and what do we have to show for it?"

"Some very picturesque ruins," she pointed out. "Heritage sites. Buy now while they're cheap. Especially here at the centre of our great common denominator! Imagine the possibilities. Yes. Yummy."

"Yum, yum, yum," said Jerry.

"Yummy. That's so right," said Trixie.

"Fuck all," said Mo. "I mean fuck off."

"How?" Jillian swung like a ship at anchor. Then she remembered who she was. She sighed, as if making steam, and continued her stately progress across the floor. Mo traipsed in her wake.

"Lies," said the general.

Jerry whacked at the old soldier's head with a sympathetic slapstick. "Those aren't lice. They're locusts."

4. NO

To maintain our low degree of vigilance we had to adopt the airy notion either that nobody was preparing for war or else (since almost everybody was) that the coming war could not touch us. We necessarily chose the latter self-deception.

— Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*.

The news out of Jonesboro, Ark., last week was a monstrous anomaly: a boundary had been crossed that should not have been. It was a violation terrible enough to warrant waking the President of the U.S. at midnight on his visit to Africa, robbing him of sleep till daylight.

— *Time*, April 6, 1998

It is our goal
to teach every school child in Texas to read.

— *George W. Bush election commercial*

"FAID-BIN-ANTAR" touched his cup to the samovar and his servant turned the ebony tap. Amber tea fell into the silver bowl. Listening with delight to the sounds it made, the old sheikh seemed to read meaning into it. His delicate, aquiline face was full of controlled emotion. Behind the RayBans his eyes held a thousand agonies.

Brushing rapidly at his heavy sleeve, he stared through the tall ornamental window to his virtual garden where Felix Martin's head, its bushy brows shading uncertain eyes, continued to present his show. His body had been buried for twelve days. His ratings were enormous. The virtual fountain continued to pump. The antique electronics flickered and warped, mellow eccentricities. Sepia light washed over Jerry's body, giving it strange angles, unusual beauty. Jerry was flattered. He was surprised the generator had lasted this long.

"We who work so hard for peace are insulted by every act of aggression. When that aggression is committed by individuals, whatever cause they

claim, we are outraged. But when that aggression is committed in the name of a lawful people, then we have cause to tremble and fear the apocalypse."

The sheikh sighed and looked carefully into Jerry's painted features. He turned his head, contemplating the dust.

"For fifty years I have struggled to bring understanding and equity to North and South. I have brought fanatics to the discussion table and made them into diplomats. I have overseen peace agreements. I have written thousands of letters, articles, books. I have dissuaded many men from turning to the gun. And all that has been destroyed in a few outrageous moments. Making diplomats into fanatics. To satisfy some pervert's personal frustration with the United States and to make an impotent president and his overprivileged, under-informed constituency feel good for an already forgotten second. The very law they claim to represent is the law they flout at every opportunity." Sheikh Faïd was still waiting for news of his daughters.

Jerry took a handful of pungent seeds and held them to his nose before putting them in his mouth. "They're trying."

But the sheikh was throwing a hand towards his glowing, empty screens. His voice rose to a familiar rhetorical pitch.

"As if any action the Americans ever attempted didn't fail! They never listen to their own people. Those officials are all swagger and false claims. True bureaucrats. When will it dawn on them that they have lost all these phoney wars. When will they be gracious enough to admit failure? How can they believe that the methods which created disaster at home will somehow work abroad? They spread their social diseases with careless aggression. It's a measure of their removal from reality. There was a time, sadly, when the U.S. people understood what a farce their representatives made of things. They used their power to improve the world." He beamed, reminiscent. For a heartbeat his eyes lost their tragedy.

"I used to enjoy those Whitehall farces when I was a student. Do they still run them? Brian Rix's trousers fell as regularly as the sun set. Simpler satisfactions, I suppose."

"Failure," Jerry said. "They don't know the meaning of the word. Imperialism's no more rational than racism. That's why they fly so well together."

"Well, of course, you know all about imperialism. You'll enjoy this." With both hands the sheikh



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passed Jerry the intricate cup. "The English love Assam, eh? Now, what about these Americans?"

Jerry shrugged.

He reached beyond the carpet to run his gloved hand through the ash. It was fine as talc. You could powder a baby with it. "We're defined by our appetites and how we control them. They've made greed a virtue. What on earth possesses them?" He tasted and returned the glittering cup.

Folding his slender old fingers around the bowl's delicate ornament, Sheikh Faïd savoured his tea. He considered it. He scented at it.

Jerry wondered about watching a video.

After a while, Sheikh Faïd began to giggle softly to himself. Behind him the endless grey desert rose and fell like an ocean. The wind cut it into complex arabesques, a constantly changing geometry. Sometimes it revealed the bones of the old mosque and the tourist centre, but covered them again rapidly, as if disturbed by memories of a more comfortable past.

Soon Sheikh Faïd was heaving with laughter. "There is no mystery to how those Teutons survive or why we fear them. It is a natural imperative. They migrate. They proliferate. Like any successful disease. It's taken them so little time. First they conquered Scandinavia, then Northern Europe and then the world. And they wonder why we fear them. That language! It reminds me of Zulu. It buzzes with aggressive intelligence. It cannot fail to conquer. What a weapon! Blood will out, it seems.

Ah, me. It costs so much blood. The conquest of space."

As if remembering a question, he reached to touch Jerry's yielding knee. Signaling for more tea, he pointed to the blooming horizon.

"It is their manifest destiny."

THE END

Author's Note: Philip Wylie (1902-1971) wrote *Gladiator* (1930), the direct inspiration for the Superman comic strip. As well as co-authoring *When Worlds Collide* and *After Worlds Collide* (1933 and 1934), he wrote a number of imaginative and visionary stories including "The Disappearance" (1951). His non-fiction, such as *Generation of Vipers*, is relevant today. His essay *Science Fiction and Sanity in an Age of Crisis* was published in 1953. His work was in the Wellsian rather than the U.S. pulp tradition and remains very lively. He scripted *The Island of Lost Souls (Dr. Moreau)* (1932) and *The Invisible Man* (1933). Other books included *Finnley Wren*, *Corpses at Indian Stones* and *Night unto Night*. Much of his work was a continuing polemic concerned with his own nation, for whom he invented the term 'momism' to explain how sentimentality and over-simplification would be the ruin of American democracy.



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A MOORCOCK BIBLIOGRAPHY

COMPILED BY DAVID G. SHAW

This bibliography has been distilled from two comprehensive Web sources: Barry Sizemore's *The Multiverse* (www.multiverse.org) and Max Wilcox's *The Terminal Cafe* (www.uq.net.au/~zzmwilco/). Both of these sites in turn cite John Davey as the final arbiter of Moorcock bibliographic information.

Novels and Other Book-Length Works

Novels are grouped by story cycles. Within each cycle, the works are listed in order of internal plot chronology

Alternate titles are in parentheses () and are frequently the original titles.

John Daker novels

The Eternal Champion

1970

The Silver Warriors (Phoenix in Obsidian)

1970

The Swords of Heaven, The Flowers of Hell

1979, graphic novel, with Howard V. Chaykin

The Dragon in the Sword

1986

Elric novels

The Elric Saga:

Elric of Melniboné (The Dreaming City)

1972

The Fortress of the Pearl

1989

The Sailor on the Seas of Fate

1973

(The) Weird of the White Wolf

1976

The Vanishing Tower (The Sleeping Sorceress)

1971

The Revenge of the Rose

1991

(The) Bane of the Black Sword

1977

Stormbringer

1965

Other:

Elric at the End of Time

1984, published as collection of short stories, only some of which have a connection to the

Elric Saga, and also as just the novella, illustrated by Rodney Matthews

The Singing Citadel

1970, linked narrative collection, only some have a connection to the Elric Saga

The Stealer of Souls (The Stealer of Souls and Other Stories)

1963, linked narrative collection

The Fade Man's Eyes

chapbook

Elric: The Return to Melniboné

short graphic novel, drawn by Philippe Druillet with text by Michael Moorcock

Hawkmoon novels

Hawkmoon (The History of the Runestaff):

The Jewel in the Skull

1967

The Mad God's Amulet (Sorcerer's Amulet)

1968

The Sword of the Dawn (Sword of the Dawn)

1968

The Runestaff (The Secret of the Runestaff)

1969

The Chronicles of Castle Brass (Count Brass):

Count Brass

1973

The Champion of Garathorm

1973

The Quest for Tanelorn

1975

Corum novels

Corum: The Coming of Chaos (The Swords

Trilogy):

(The) Knight of the Swords

1971

(The) Queen of the Swords

1971

(The) King of the Swords

1971

The Prince with the Silver Hand (The Chronicles of Corum):

The Bull and the Spear

1973

The Oak and the Ram

1973

The Sword and the Stallion

1974



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Cornelius novels

The Cornelius Chronicles (The Cornelius Quartet):

The Final Programme
1968

A Cure for Cancer
1971

The English Assassin
1972

The Condition of Muzak
1977

A Cornelius Calendar:

The Adventures of Una Persson and Catherine Cornelius in the Twentieth Century
1976

The Entropy Tango
1981

The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle (Gold Diggers of 1977)
1980, chapbook

Other:

The Lives and Times of Jerry Cornelius
1976, linked narrative collection

The Nature of the Catastrophe
1971, collection by Michael Moorcock and others, edited by Michael Moorcock and Langdon Jones

The New Nature of the Catastrophe
collection by Michael Moorcock and others, edited by Michael Moorcock and Langdon Jones, a massive expansion (with exclusions) of *The Nature of the Catastrophe*

Michael Kane novels

originally as Edward P. Bradbury

City of the Beast (The City of the Beast) (Warriors of Mars)
1965

Lord of the Spiders (The Lord of the Spiders) (Blades of Mars)
1965

Masters of the Pit (The Masters of the Pit) (Barbarians of Mars)
1965

Oswald Bastable novels

The Warlord of the Air
1971

The Land Leviathan
1974

The Steel Tsar
1981

Dancers at the End of Time

Dancers at the End of Time:

An Alien Heat
1972

The Hollow Lands
1974

The End of All Songs
1976

Other:

Legends from the End of Time
1976, linked narrative collection

A Messiah at the End of Time (The Transformation of Miss Mavis Ming)
1977

Colonel Pyat novels

Byzantium Endures
1981

The Laughter of Carthage
1984

Jerusalem Commands
1992

The Vengeance of Rome
not yet published

Von Bek novels

The War Hound and the World's Pain
1981

The City in the Autumn Stars
1986

The Dragon in the Sword
1986, see also under John Daker

Karl Glogauer novels

Behold the Man

1969, expansion of an earlier novella of the same title

Breakfast in the Ruins
1972

The Roads Between the Worlds

The Wrecks of Time (The Rituals of Infinity)
1967

The Winds of Limbo (The Fireclown)
1965

The Shores of Death (The Twilight Man)
1966

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(The novels *The LSD Dossier*, *Somewhere in the Night*, and *Printer's Devil* feature the character Nick Allard. When *The Chinese Agent* and *The*

Russian Intelligence were published, they were revised to include a change of character names, including changing Nick Allard to Jerry Cornell.)

The LSD Dossier

1966, anonymously rewritten — originally by Roger Harris

The Chinese Agent (Somewhere in the Night)

1966, as Bill Barclay

The Russian Intelligence (Printer's Devil)

1966, as Bill Barclay

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Blood: A Southern Fantasy

1976

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1976, linked narrative collection

The War Amongst the Angels

1976

Other

The Birds of the Moon

chapbook

The Black Corridor

1969

The Brothel in Rosenstrasse

1982

Caribbean Crisis

1962, as Desmond Reid, with James Cawthorn, chapbook

Casablanca

1989, collection

Death is No Obstacle

1992, with Colin Greenland, non-fiction

The Deep Fix

1966, as James Colvin, collection

The Distant Suns

1975, with Philip James, a pseudonym for James Cawthorn, chapbook

Dying for Tomorrow (Moorcock's Book of Martyrs)

1976, collection

Earl Aubec (Earl Aubec and Other Stories)

collection

Epic Pooh

1978, a single chapter of *Wizardry and Wild Romance*, chapbook, non-fiction

Fantasy: The 100 Best Books

1988, by James Cawthorn and Michael Moorcock, non-fiction

Gloriana; or, The Unfulfill'd Queen

1978

The Golden Barge

1958

The Ice Schooner

1969

Letters from Hollywood

1983, illus. Michael Foreman, non-fiction

Lunching With the Antichrist: A Family History: 1925-2015

1995, linked narrative collection, linked to the **Von Bek** series

Mother London

1988

My Experiences in the Third World War

1980, collection

The Opium General and Other Stories

1984, collection

The Real Life Mr. Newman

1979, chapbook

The Retreat from Liberty

1983, chapbook, non-fiction

Sojan

1977, collection

The Sundered Worlds (The Blood Red Game)

1970

Tales from the Texas Woods

1997

The Time Dweller

1971, collection

Wizardry and Wild Romance (Heroic Dreams, Enchanted Worlds)

non-fiction

Editor

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1975

England Invaded

1977

The Inner Landscape

anonymously

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collection by Michael Moorcock and others, edited by Michael Moorcock and Langdon Jones, see also the **Cornelius** section

The New Nature of the Catastrophe

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New Worlds: An Anthology

New Worlds Quarterly

six volumes, including one co-edited

The Best of New Worlds

Best S.F. Stories from New Worlds

eight volumes

The Traps of Time



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Related

Eternal Champion stories — introduction and one story in each by Michael Moorcock:

Michael Moorcock's Elric: Tales of the White Wolf collection

Michael Moorcock's Pawn of Chaos: Tales of the Eternal Champion collection

Hawklords trilogy

by Michael Butterworth

The Time of the Hawklords

erroneously credited to both Butterworth and Moorcock

Queens of Deliria

Ledge of Darkness

graphic novel, scripted by Michael Butterworth, story by Bob Walker

Adaptations

by James Cawthorn

Elric:

Stormbringer

Hawkmoon:

The Jewel in the Skull

The Crystal and the Amulet

The Sword and the Runestaff

not yet published

Short Stories

Stories are listed chronologically by first publication.

Short Stories to 1969

The Lovebeast

1957 *The Deep Fix* anthology

Published under the name of James Colvin

Peace on Earth

1958 *New Worlds* Vol. 30 No. 89

With Barrington J. Bailey, published under the name Michael Barrington

This is the first story Michael sold to *New Worlds*

The Dreaming City

1961 *Science Fantasy* No. 47 June

While the Gods Laugh

1961 *Science Fantasy* No. ? October

Duel Among the Wine Green Suns

1961 Later published in *Time Centre Times* 1995

With Barrington J. Bayley

Going Home

1962 *Science Fiction Adventures* No. 25

With Barrington J. Bayley

The Stealer of Souls

1962 *Science Fantasy* No. 51 February

Kings in Darkness

1962 *Science Fantasy* No. 54

With James Cawthorn

The Flame Bringers

later changed to Caravan of Forgotten Dreams

1962 *Science Fantasy* No. 55 October

The Greater Conqueror

1963 *Science Fantasy* No. 58

Black Sword's Brothers

1963 *Science Fantasy* Vol. 21 No. 64

The Deep Fix

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Published under the name of James Colvin

Flux

1963 *New Worlds* Vol. 44 No. 132

With Barrington J. Bayley

Not By Mind Alone

later changed to Islands

1963 *New Worlds* No. 134

Wolf

1963 *The Deep Fix* anthology

Published under the name of James Colvin

The Time Dweller

1964 *New Worlds* Vol. 46 No. 139

Master of Chaos

later changed to Earl Aubec or The Dream of Earl Aubec

1964 *Fantastic*

With James Cawthorn

Good-bye, Miranda

1964 *New Worlds* Vol. 48 No. 143

The Shores of Death (Part 1)
1964 *New Worlds* Vol. 48 No. 144

The Shores of Death (Part 2)
1964 *New Worlds* Vol. 48 No. 145

The Mountain
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 48 No. 147
Published under the name of James Colvin

Escape from Evening
1965 *New Worlds* No. 148

Preliminary Data
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 153

The Pleasure Garden of Felipe Sagittarius
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 154

The Girl Who Killed Sylvia Blade
1966 *Golden Nugget*

The Golden Barge
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 155

The Wrecks of Time (Part 1)
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 156
Published under the name James Colvin

The Wrecks of Time (Part 2)
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 157
Published under the name James Colvin

Further Information
1965 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 157

The Wrecks of Time (Part 3)
1966 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 158
Published under the name James Colvin

The Real Life Mr. Newman: Adventures of the
Dead Astronaut
1966 *The Deep Fix* anthology
Published under the name of James Colvin

Phase Three
1966 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 156

The Ruins
1966 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 161
Published under the name of James Colvin

Consuming Passion
1966 *New Worlds* Vol. 49 No. 161

Environment Problem
1966 *Golden Nugget*
Published under the name of Ken MacBeth

Behold the Man
1966 *New Worlds* Vol. 50 No. 166

The Delhi Division
1968 *New Worlds* Vol. 52 No. 185

The Tank Trapeze
1969 *New Worlds* Vol. 52 No. 186

The Peking Junction
1969 *The New S.F.*

The Dodgem Decision
(or The Dodgem Arrangement or The Dodgem
Division)
1969 *Speculation* No. 23

A Cure for Cancer (Part 1)
1969 *New Worlds* Vol. 52 No. 188

A Cure for Cancer (Part 2)
1969 *New Worlds* Vol. 53 No. 189

A Cure for Cancer (Part 3)
1969 *New Worlds* Vol. 53 No. 190

A Cure for Cancer (Part 4)
1969 *New Worlds* Vol. 53 No. 191

Short Stories — The Seventies

The Last Vigil
(later changed to Waiting for the End of
Time)
1970 *Vision of Tomorrow*

The Nature of the Catastrophe
1970 *New Worlds* Vol. 53 No. 197

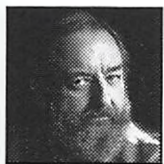
The Sunset Perspective
1970 *The Disappearing Future*

Sea Wolves
1970 *Science Against Man*

Voortrekker
1971 *Frenz* #3 – 5



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All the Dead Singers
(or Dead Singers)
1971 – *Ink*

The Swastika Setup
1972 *Corridor* #4

The Longford Cup
1973 *Penthouse* Vol. 8 No. 7

The Entropy Circuit
1974 *An Index of Possibilities*

A Dead Singer
(or Dead Singers)
1974 – *Factions*

Pale Roses
1974 *New Worlds Quarterly* #7 Vol. 58 No. 208

White Stars
1975 *New Worlds Quarterly* #8 Vol. 58 No. 209

Ancient Shadows
1975 *New Worlds Quarterly* #9 Vol. 58 No. 210

The Stone Thing: A Tale of Strange Parts
1975 *Triode*

My Life
1975 *You Always Remember the First Time*

Constant Fire
1976 *New Worlds Quarterly* #10 Vol. 58 No. 211

The Guardian
1978 *New Worlds* Vol. 60 No. 212

The Last Enchantment
(or Jesting with Chaos)
1978 *Ariel: The Book of Fantasy*

Going to Canada
1978/1979 *My Experiences in the Third World War*

Leaving Pasadena
1979/1980 *My Experiences in the Third World War*

Crossing into Cambodia
1979 *Twenty Houses of the Zodiac*

Short Stories — The Eighties

The Murderer's Song
1981 *Tor Zu Den Sternen* / 1987 *Tales from the Forbidden Planet*

The Opium General
1984 *The Opium General*

Hanging the Fool
(or Wheel of Fortune)
1987 *Tarot Tales*

The Frozen Cardinal
1987 *Other Edens*

The Last Call
1987 *Fantasy Tales*

Mars
1988 *Other Edens II*

Casablanca
1989 *Casablanca*

Short Stories — The Nineties

The Gangrene Collection
1990 *City Limits*

The Cairene Purse
1990 *Zenith* 2

The Romanian Question
1991 *Back Brain Recluse* #18

Colour
1991 *New Worlds* 1 #217

Corsairs of the Second Ether
1992 *New Worlds* 2 #218
Published under the name of Warwick Colvin Jr.

Lunching with the Antichrist
1993 *Smoke Signals*

A Winter Admiral
1994 *The Daily Telegraph*

Free States
New Worlds 4 #220 1994

The Affair of the Seven Virgins
1994 *The Time Centre Times*

The White Pirate
1994 *Blue Motel*

The Black Blade's Summoning
1994 *Tales of the White Wolf*

Crimson Eyes
1994 *New Statesman & Society*

The Adventure of the Dorset Street Lodger
(or The Further Adventures of Sherlock
Holmes)
1995 – privately published

No Ordinary Christian
1995 *Tombs*

The Birds of the Moon: A Traveller's Tale
1995

The Enigma Windows
1995 *New Statesman & Society*

Sir Milk-and-Blood
1996 *Pawn of Chaos*

London Bone
New Worlds Vol. 64 #222 1997

The Ghost Warriors
1997 *Tales from the Texas Woods*

A Catalogue of Memories
1997 *Tales from the Texas Woods*

The Spencer Inheritance
1997 *The Edge*

The Camus Referendum
1998 *Gare du Nord*

Cheering for the Rockets
1998 *Interzone*

Furniture
1999 BBC Book at Bedtime

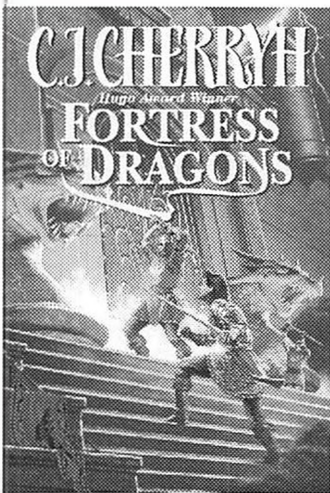


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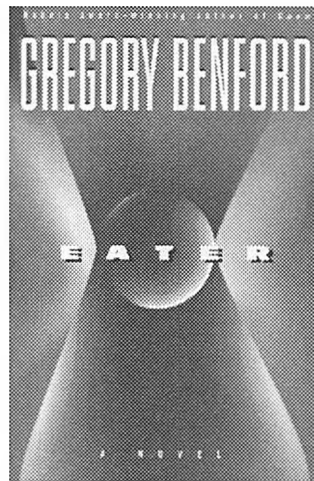
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Fortress of Dragons

C.J. Cherryh

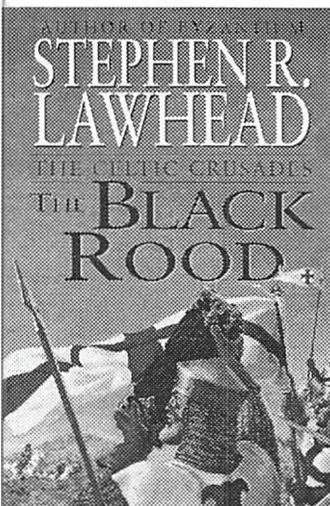
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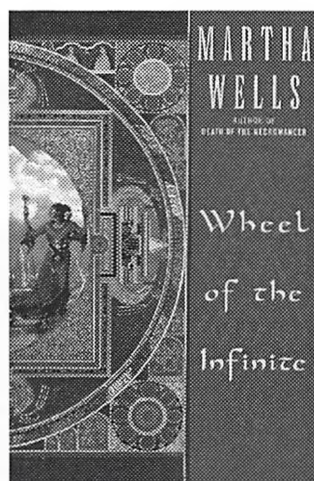


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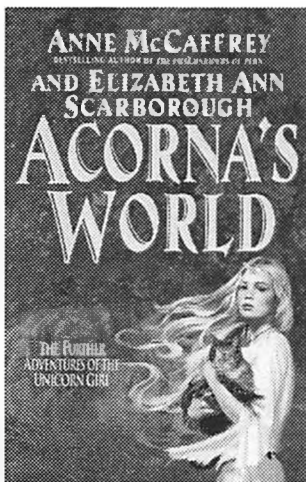


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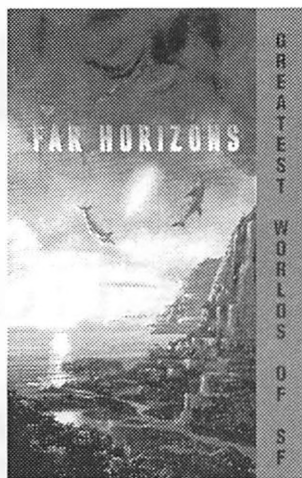


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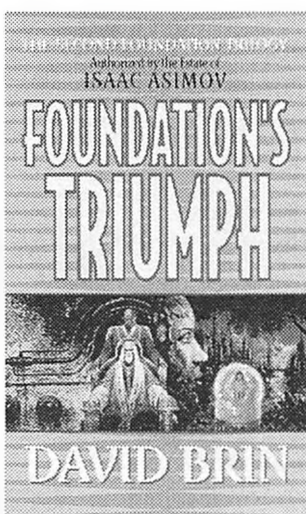


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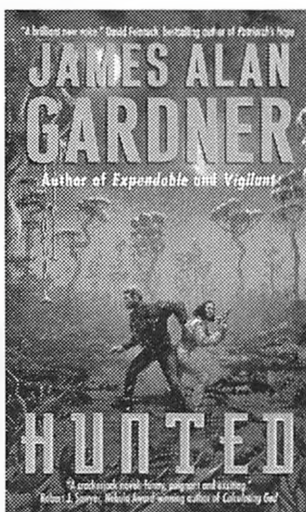


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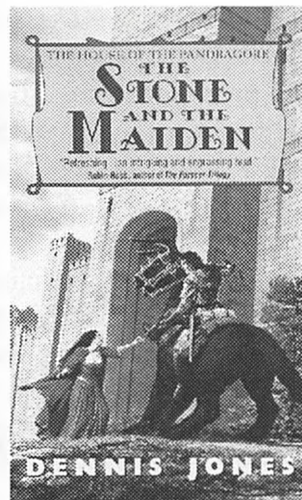
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HERSTORY: THE HOLDFAST CHRONICLES

BY CHERYL MORGAN

"When I think of all the wrongs that have been heaped upon womankind, I am ashamed that I am not forever in a condition of chronic wrath, stark mad, skin and bone, my eyes a fountain of tears, my lips overflowing with curses, and my hand against every man and brother!"

— Elizabeth Cady Stanton, quoted at the beginning of *The Furies*

If there is a seminal feminist SF story, then Suzy McKee Charnas's Holdfast Chronicles are almost certainly it. This is not necessarily because of the quality of writing, though Suzy is very good, but because of the openness and honesty with which she approaches the subject, and because of the breadth of feminist history that the books cover. This is a tetralogy that has been a long time in the making, and the world has changed a lot in the 25 years it has taken to come to fruition. Here is the story of our liberation, encapsulated and writ large.

Before I get stuck in, a few words of warning. I am going to review a whole four-book series here, including a lot of interpretation. It simply isn't possible to do that job properly without a few spoilers. If you don't want to know the basics of the plot (and by the way there isn't that much really surprising in it), stop reading after this paragraph. The two older books are out of print and hard to get hold of, but Tor has taken the sensible step of repackaging them as a single companion book to the final installment so you should be able to get the whole series quite easily. Male readers should, of course, approach with caution — it ain't going to be comfortable.

Probably the place to start is to admit that yes, this is another post-disaster novel. David Brin gets very angry about the fact that feminist SF almost always starts with the destruction of the known world and he attributes this to some sort of collective revenge fantasy amongst feminists. A more likely reason is that many feminists believe that it will not be possible to construct a feminist society from one in which men are currently in charge. That again is a debatable claim. You could, for example, employ extreme violence, but that would just be sinking to the level of the opposition. You could espouse separatism instead, but the men

would probably resist that. Suzy looks at all these issues and more. The Wasting, as Suzy terms it, seems to be simply a device which allows her to set up an allegorical world rather than deal with the real one. That is a standard SF technique, and it seems to work.

And so to the first novel. *Walk to the End of the World* is, perhaps surprisingly, not really about women at all. It introduces us to the world of Holdfast, a small, post-holocaust community of men learning to find their way in a world in which all animal life and most edible plants are extinct. The men, who survived the Wasting in a bunker, are all white. Blame for the disaster is placed squarely on the shoulders of the blacks, browns, yellows, reds, liberals, and, of course, the women. Inconveniently, all of those are dead except a few white women needed for breeding stock. Guess who gets to pay the price of their past sins.

So we have a world in which all women, known as "Fems" (short, of course, for Feminists), are despised slaves, used only for labour and breeding. This results in an unusual innovation on Suzy's part. Despite their WASP origins, the men of Holdfast are avowedly homosexual. Breeding is a duty, not a pleasure, and men who enjoy sex with Fems are looked upon as disgusting perverts. The other unusual feature of Holdfast is that there is a strong age distinction. The old men, the Seniors, are in charge; the young do as they are told and are kept well in their place because they are dangerous. This is drawn from the Holy Book, for is it not written that the Son rebelled against his Father, preaching all sorts of wishy-washy, liberal nonsense, and was crucified for his sins? In Holdfast, it is an abomination for fathers and sons to know each other, for if they did, nature would surely lead them to try to kill one another.

To understand this strange setup, we have to remember that the book was written in America in 1974. It comes from the world of hippies and Vietnam War demonstrations. It is no accident that rebellious young men are known as "freaks." By finding a logical explanation for why Holdfast should embrace homosexuality (and, indeed, cannabis), Suzy is pointing a none-too-subtle dig at the arbitrary nature of social prohibitions.

It is a time too when feminism, despite the good work of the suffragettes, seemed hopeless. For all their rebelliousness in other areas, hippie men



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were just as much unregenerate, chauvinist pigs as their fathers. For those who dared to think rebellion, it was a time of anger.

The main characters of the book are two young men. Servan d Layo is a loafer and a drug dealer, a classic, laid-back, golden-haired surfer boy for whom everything seems to go as he would wish it. His lover, Eykar Bek, is more thoughtful, though no less rebellious. He is also a man with a problem, for he knows who his father is, and is anxious to kill the man before he himself is killed. As it happens, Eykar's father engineered the situation. He too is a thinker, an engineer, and a reader. He has all sorts of grand ideas for Holdfast and, having read a few old books, wants to make sure that he has a son to take over from him when he is gone.

The book is a story of plots within plots. The Seniors wish to use Eykar to kill his father who is threatening to become too powerful. The young men see a potential father-killer as a focus for rebellion. Servan sees the whole affair as a big opportunity for self-advancement. And the Fems see a small chink of hope.

Alldera, a young girl trained as a courier, is inserted into Eykar and Servan's group as a slave in return for help against the Seniors. The hope is that she can use her running skills to escape as the rebels travel on the edge of the wilds and perhaps reach the mythical "Free Fems," escaped slaves rumoured to live free in the wilds. In fact what happens is that Eykar and Alldera discover in each other a common passion for intellectual discussion (here Alldera is highly unusual; for their own safety most girl children are not taught speech, and many have their tongues cut out to keep them quiet).

You might think at this point that we are destined for a sappy ending. No such cop-out is in store. What happens, of course, is that Eykar finds his father and quarrels with him, significantly over the father's plans to use Fems for food. In the ensuing chaos, Alldera escapes, and Holdfast is plunged into war.

And so to book two, *Motherlines*. Alldera, alone, hungry, and pregnant (both Eykar and Servan have raped her), struggles across the great desert in search of the Free Fems. On the brink of death she is discovered by a scouting party of Riding Women, a society whose existence Holdfast never suspects.

The Women (so called to distinguish them from Fems) operate a mounted society based on that of some American Indians. They are clones, the

result of a pre-Wasting experiment to ensure the survival of the race. Male sperm is required to quicken the child, but any male sperm will do and they choose to use their horses'. The Women know how men treat the Fems in Holdfast, and they have a simple solution to the problem. Male humans are killed on sight. Each woman and her clone daughters form a Motherline, hence the title of the book. Naturally, the Women are all lesbians.

(I note in passing and with some amusement that Suzy has chosen pretty much the same method for constructing a feminist society as David Brin used in *Glory Season*. David chose a biological method of keeping men under control rather than getting rid of them, but other than that the idea is the same. Suzy, of course, did it first.)

What Suzy has done here is create a society that is every Rad Fem's dream. No men, no need for men, even an opportunity to get even with the bastards every now and again. And a social structure that every liberal American could approve of. Were this a Joanna Russ book, the story would probably end there. But Suzy is made of sterner stuff. She is not afraid to examine this "perfect" society and find it wanting.

After a while, Alldera gets to be reasonably comfortable amongst the Women, despite the animosity of the ferocious warrior Sheel, who thinks the Fem will bring nothing but trouble. However, there are ways in which a Fem simply cannot fit into the Women's society. To start with, Alldera is not a clone. More importantly, her daughter, now being raised with the camp's children, is not a clone either. There will be trouble for her when she grows up.

More subtly, Alldera cannot get used to clone society. As clones, the Women place great store on tradition. Everything is done precisely the way it has always been done. This suits their tribal society just fine. But, as we have seen, Alldera is a thinker, she is forever seeing ways in which things could be done better. In frustration, she goes off to try life in an alternative society.

For it turns out that the Free Fems do exist. Some women have managed to escape from Holdfast, and now they live on the edge of the plains, growing tea and trading it with the Riding Women. But whilst they might have escaped physically, they have yet to escape from Holdfast's memes. Once a slave, always a slave. Unable to imagine a society without masters, the Free Fems have created their own, specifically the fat bully, Enola Green Eyes. The Free Fem camp is a hotbed of sedition and intrigue as each person does her

utmost to insinuate herself into Enola's favours, and by doing so demote her rivals. Alldera, who has learned the meaning of freedom from the Women, does not fit in at all. Eventually she is beaten up and expelled.

It is at the Free Fem camp that we first meet the character who is to become the greatest villain of the series. Daya is a Pet Fem, a woman whose beauty had caught the eye of a perverted Senior and who was kept in a harem rather than used for labour. She escaped after a jealous rival caused her face to be scarred. Many readers, I suspect, will see Daya's role as a villain simply as a case of jealous revenge upon the beautiful, but Suzy is never that crude. Daya's "crime," the reason for her evil, has nothing to do with her looks, or her liking for sex with men. It is that she knows no other life but the pleasing of others. Briefly, amongst the Riding Women, she has a taste of freedom and courage, but away from them she immediately reverts to her suspicious, servile lifestyle and her habit of intrigue.

What Daya represents is the traditional role of women in a male-dominated society. She is the schemer, the power behind the throne, the woman who, although clever, cannot act on her own because it is not seemly for a woman to do so. Because she sees her life solely in terms of her relationship to others, she can never be free. It is no accident either that she is an expert storyteller. Daya

lives in a world of fantasy, convincing herself that all is well, and that others are brave, because she doesn't have the courage to come forward herself. This is what Suzy is telling us is wrong with women's lives. This is what we must reject in order to be free.

By the end of *Motherlines*, egged on by Daya's mythologizing, the Free Fems have come to believe that Alldera was right all along. They have abandoned Enola and come to ask Alldera to be their new leader. What they want, of course, is for her to teach them to be warriors like the Women. Eventually, they want her to lead them home to Holdfast in triumph. Perhaps they are learning freedom at last.

"Men are forked like us, even if they carry different equipment between their legs," Sheel said. "A man could sit that horse of yours, if he was let."

The Rois laughed. "I don't believe they could ride at all, with that tender sex-flesh of theirs stuffed between them and a horse's backbone."

"They'd manage, if it was the difference between freedom and slavery," Sheel said. "You could design a saddle with some kind of special pocket..."

That was in 1978. It took over a decade for Suzy's friends and fans to persuade her to write the next volume. I'm glad it did, for things changed a lot in the meantime. *The Furies* was published in 1994, and by that time a lot had changed for feminism. I may be doing Suzy an injustice, in fact I probably am, but there is a danger that if *The Furies* had been published in, say, 1980, the Free Fems would simply have conquered Holdfast and that would have been an end to it. The 1994 version is an entirely different tale.

Of course Alldera's army marches. It is the only possible thing for the Free Fems to do. But it is a very different Holdfast that awaits them. The war between the young and old that Eykar started has left the men severely weakened and the social structure all but collapsed. In desperation, the men have started treating women better because they need every hand they can find just to survive. The arrival of Alldera's warriors

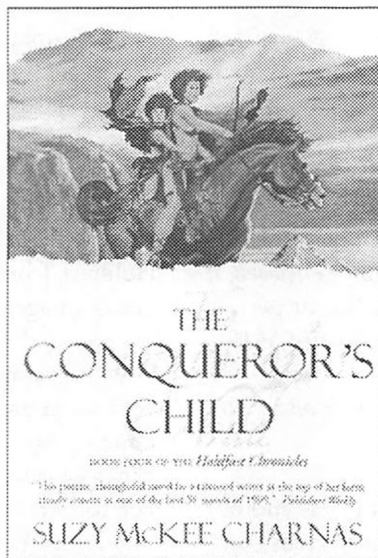
is like a group of Rad Fems from the '70s suddenly turning up in a modern workplace and wondering what the hell all those gaudily dressed women are doing in the management offices.

Nevertheless, the condition of Fems is still bad enough for most of them to be grateful for being liberated. A few side with the men against the invaders. Significantly, the army's first death comes at the hands of a Holdfast Fem. But in the end, the army of liberation triumphs, and brings a whole new set of problems.

The most obvious question is what to do with the men. Some of the Free Fems argue that they should simply all be killed. Clearly this is not feasible. The Fems are not clones. They will die out without men. Besides, many of the Free Fems are getting old, and are desperate to get pregnant while they still can. Alldera, reunited with Eykar, hopes



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for some sort of peaceful resolution, but her hand is forced when a small group of men escape and wreak bloody vengeance on their captors. The die is cast: Holdfast will survive, but now it is the men who will be slaves.

The other burning issue is one of leadership. Many of the Free Fems are followers of the Cult of Moonwoman. Alldera, an intellectual, frowns on this superstition. This earns her no favour with her followers. But the real danger comes from Daya. Now that Alldera is triumphant, it seems that she no longer needs the Pet Fem's support. Without Alldera to serve, Daya must find another master, and that means Alldera must die.

In the end, it is Eykar, a bright young woman from the newly free, and her old enemy Sheel who save Alldera's life. Having seen the pent-up violence of her own people explode into action, and how readily they revert to the ways of the past, Alldera at last understands why Sheel was so afraid of her. Holdfast has not been liberated, it has been conquered.

"Fems aren't Riding Women." Alldera paced away from her, hands behind her back. "Though I'm not sure we're Fems any more, either. We were slaves, isn't that why you despised us? But we're not slaves now. Are we Women, if we're free? Can we be Women of the Holdfast, as you and Nenisi and the rest are Women of the Grasslands? Help me make it so."

Sheel's throat felt tight. "You ask too much, and of the wrong person."

There had to be a resolution, but it was another five years in coming. Now, at last the cycle is complete. *The Conqueror's Child* is the story of Alldera's daughter, Sorrel, and of the fight to make Holdfast a place fit for humans, not just for Fems.

During the liberation of Holdfast, one of the newly freed Fems, Juya, was discovered to be pregnant. For her own safety, Sheel had her sent to the Riding Women to give birth. It had never occurred to Sheel that the child might be a boy. Normally he would have been killed, but with Alldera's daughter living at the camp, no one dared touch the child. Left to care for young Veree because no Woman would touch him, Sorrel tried putting him with the camp children, but it was obvious he was different and he was rejected. In despair, Sorrel took the boy to live with her mother, unaware that she was condemning him to a life of slavery.

Sorrel is not the only Fem with sympathy for the men. Many of the Free Fems have taken partners for breeding purposes and are getting fond of

them. Eykar is free to run the city library, and this is seen as a sign of Alldera's patronage, though in truth there is too much pain between them for them to be lovers. Yet others, led by the implacable Kobba Red Hand, still call for all men to die. The majority are just scared. Given what they have done in the past, how could they dare let men be free?

The answer is that before they can be free, a dream must die. That dream is the macho ideal of conquest and mastery. It is exemplified by the Bear Cult, an underground movement amongst the slave men which preaches that the mythical Sunbear will come and save them. Little do they know that the Sunbear is real. After many years travelling the wilderness with a band of brigands, Servan d Layo is about to return to Holdfast. He has women, he has strange and highly edible animals called goats, and best of all he has a gun. Servan's dream is of conquest.

We are in allegory land here. Not only does Servan have to die, he has to do so in a way that redeems his fellow men. The key to this redemption must, of course, be Daya. Desperate to revive her position in society after the failed attempt on Alldera's life, the Pet Fem determines to save Holdfast from d Layo. To do so, of course, she needs an agent, because she would never have the courage to do it herself. In order to get herself into d Layo's camp, she needs a man.

Daya might be old and scarred, but she has lost none of her old skills. She easily seduces a young runaway called Galligan and persuades him to get her to Servan. Once there she contrives to make him attack her. Galligan rushes to her rescue, and the younger man prevails. Thus the cycle is complete. The Sunbear, and the dream he represents, is dead, killed not by a Fem, nor by one of the alien Women, but by a man protecting the woman he loves.

So at last Holdfast is on its way to being truly free. The Riding Women, the old Rad Fems of our past, have outlived their usefulness and ride away into the west, into legend. Alldera goes with them, leaving Sorrel to guide the new nation into adulthood and Veree as its symbol of hope and unity. Gosh, but it is corny stuff, put like that; but remember that I'm extracting all the meaning from the allegory for you. This is no *Star Wars*, bearing its message on the belly of a 20-mile long Imperial Battle Cruiser just in case you might miss it. Suzy is a great storyteller, and for the most part the parable does not interfere with the plot.

I've read better books than these, literary-wise, but I don't think I've ever read any more thoughtful books. Suzy has taken one of the defining political questions of our times and has turned it into a tale that is both entertaining and insightful. And she never stops digging, never stops turning the searchlight on our complacency. You see, the women that Servan brought back from the wilds

are black. Their welcome in Holdfast is uncertain. No matter how much we grow, we always have something new to learn.



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THE CONQUEROR'S CHILD

THE 1999 TIPTREE AWARD WINNER

With this remarkable conclusion to the Alldera Cycle, Charnas brings to fruition the complex and compelling issues raised — and at the heart of feminist concerns for the past couple decades — in the previous novels, providing the cycle an inspiring and satisfying conclusion. With respect to the specific issues the Tiptree award acknowledges, this narrative also stands on its own and questions with acute vision human relationships in the context of gender, power, and history. While concluding on a hopeful note, the narrative refuses to sidestep the minefield of conflict women and especially men (who must work to overcome the consequences of what centuries of artificial gender differences have inculcated in society, resulting in unnatural distinctions that uphold male domination) must negotiate to understand and confront gender-based inequalities that inform society.

— BILL CLEMENTE

Demanding, rich, compelling, intelligent. This outstanding exploration of gender vastly expands our understanding of how gender works in significant areas of human experience and puts one of the major problems of political equality on the map in a way that has simply not been done before. In Charnas's post-liberation Holdfast, we see that for society to become politically inclusive, not only do men have to cease to be masters, but also their conception of what a socially normative man is must change. This is science fiction as political laboratory at its finest.

— L. TIMMEL DUCHAMP

A wonderful, wonderful, complex book. One of the great pleasures of being on the jury this year was the opportunity (excuse) to re-read and think about all of Charnas's Holdfast Chronicles, and then to concentrate on this book in particular. There's a lot in it: the current society of the Holdfast is in flux. The past is exclusionary: religion, relationships, history, and storytelling (the men's books and the Riding Women's self-songs) all split along gender lines. The future must include both sexes: the women of the Holdfast will give birth to sons as well as daughters. I take away three images: the abandoned open Grasslands, the dark, claustrophobic structure of the Endpath, and the memorial of stones that Sorrel builds for the male child, Veree, in the shape of a Riding Woman's tent, attempting to build a future which will include both male and female.

— KELLY LINK

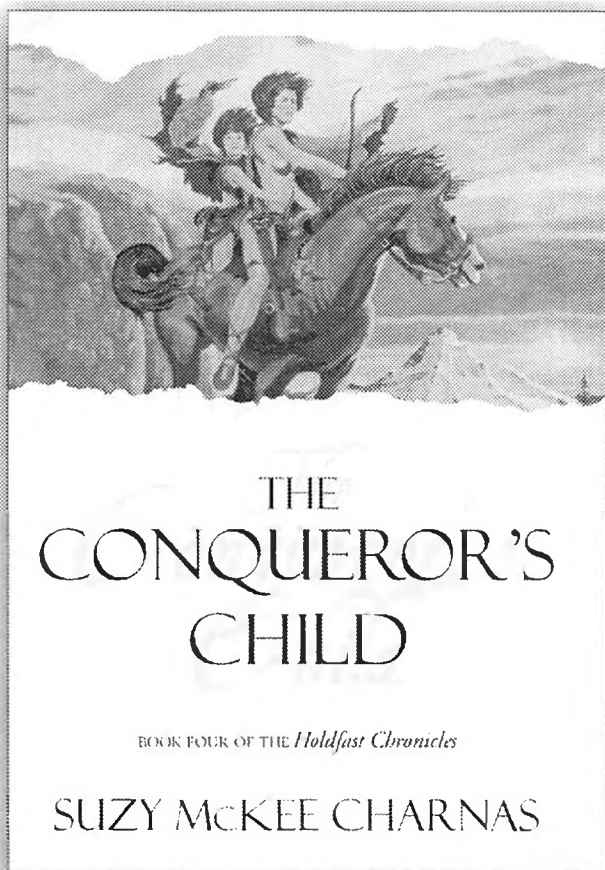
While *The Conqueror's Child* rides on the shoulders of the previous three books in the Holdfast series, it's also a monumental work all by itself. It explores gender, power, and personal as well as social change. Far and away the best gender-bending novel I've read this past year — maybe in the past 20 or 30 years. Strong, thoughtful, relevant, and beautifully written.

— DIANE MARTIN

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SUZY MCKEE CHARNAS,

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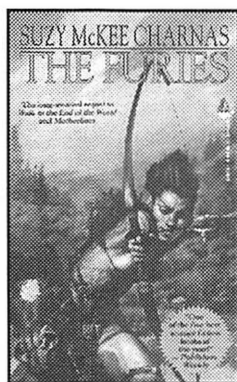
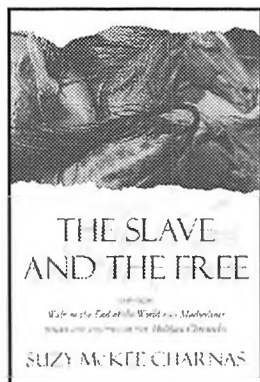
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CONFESSIONS OF A SNOB

BY SUZY MCKEE CHARNAS

I refused at first to go and see Andrew Lloyd Webber's show, *The Phantom of The Opera*. Raised on classical music, I have a regrettable tendency toward snobbery about the stuff, and then there was all that tacky publicity that hit New York in advance of the arrival of the show from London. The *New York Times* gave *Phantom* a sneering put-down of a review on the front page of the Sunday entertainment section, and as far as I was concerned that was it.

Besides, I had always hated the Lon Chaney film of the same name; I don't get nightmares often, but when I do, they are doozies, and I take care not to feed my eyes with horrific images that I know will get served back to me when I am asleep and helpless. To this day I stay away from horror films, and even Chaney's historic, silent *Phantom* was too much for me: just TOO DAMN UGLY, if you see what I mean. Chaney was a genius, and I am as susceptible to genius as anybody else, but more squeamish. I'm the one who hid under the seat in the theatre when my sister conned me into seeing *House of Wax*, while she laughed and teased me, insisting that it was all just makeup.

Well, of course it was; so what? My dreams are perfectly capable of translating the junkiest special effects into a rip-roaring, stomach-churning counterfeit of reality, the more horrific the better. I don't like to encourage them. I like the ones with pussycats, and — well, not always the ones with pussycats, either, come to think of it. There was this dream of an inside-out cat — never mind, you get the idea.

However, as more and more people raved publicly about the show, including, of all people, Katherine Hepburn (who doesn't strike me as a pushover about such things), curiosity got the better of me. At last, finding myself with time on my hands one evening during a convention in San Francisco, I went to see *Phantom* and I was a goner. Yes, truly, even I, lover of string quartets and weird film scores by Philip Glass.

For one thing, I had been softened up by years of attending opera performances in Santa Fe, and music with a romantic soul will always get to me, even fairly simple-minded music played really loud and over and over. Sheesh. Oh, all right; I

cried. Me and everybody around me, males and females alike, as it happens (and it does happen, at every performance I've gone to since). Clearly, there was a real emotional hook there, something very, very powerful about the combination of great artistic gifts with complete and bitter exile from society. I began to see that there was a story in there for me, something not yet told.

That's my favorite kind of work: to get hold of some hoary old tale and find a new, rich way into it that can jolt a reader out of her settled and accustomed way of thinking about that particular story.

So I got to work. I read Leroux's silly old book, saw the Chaney movie again (with my eyes open this time), and slowly homed in on what it was that was nagging so promisingly at me: that wretched idiot Christine, the soprano, of course, as portrayed in all the versions of the story that I could find. She just didn't ring true as a believable human being, and her shallowness and general wimpiness made the Phantom's fixation on her seem ridiculous. In some ways this works for the show, as it renders him even more pathetic than he might otherwise appear, a mature and gifted but socially backward man falling for such a dreary little drip, just as if he were an earnest, idealistic adolescent. But what if — ?

My mind got to working, working, and what it worked on was the question of what sort of Christine I would have wanted to see instead. I don't find one-dimensional, stereotypical female characters satisfying, since they tend to pull even a good story out of true and weaken it drastically. But I know a good story when I see one, and this one needed a seriously real girl for the Phantom to fall for to draw out the full, grown-up potential of the plot.

My parents were both artists, painters actually, but they and their circle had many musician friends in the days when the upper West Side of Manhattan was home to hundreds of creative people who were refugees from Hitler's Europe. I had models tucked away in what passes for my memory, which is an attic that my creative mind has access to even when the working, everyday mind is going crazy trying to figure out where I have left my glasses. I made my Christine out of forgotten memories, and out of the reading I've done over my lifetime about *fin de siecle* Paris and its artistic



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community (I've forgotten most of that, too, but it resurfaces when I need it, thank God).

And I looked upon her, and boy, was she good, a bright, talented girl toughened, sharpened, and saddened, too, by the struggle to survive in the exploitative world of the arts.

Once I had her in focus, the inevitable happened: her monstrous lover became clearer and stronger too, to match her — deeper, brighter, more mature and more dangerous, and tougher in his own way. Out of all this came a novella called “Beauty and the Opera, or the Phantom Beast,” first published in *Asimov's* in 1996, and still available in Gardner Dozois' collection *Modern Classics of Fantasy* from St. Martin's Press (1997).

In this story, Christine and the Phantom strike a bargain resulting in a five-year marriage lived in the Phantom's magical cellar apartment under the Paris Opera House, and ending in — well, ending in Christine's relation of the story as she recalls it in her old age, in the Paris of 1927. The novella did what I wanted it to do — nifty psychological and erotic things, too — and I was and remain content with it.

But some stories have so much resonance, whether cultural or personal (or both and beyond), that they continue to throw off sparks even after the main fireworks display is over. Sure enough, additional ideas about this mythic couple kept popping up, demanding to be used. Dimensions of the story — including dimensions of humor that the tightly sealed, high-pressure tale of “Beauty and the Opera” could not have tolerated — remained to be explored, for the sheer fun of it.

When a young Phantom phan, Carrie Hernandez, announced that she was putting together a sort of tribute-volume of phannish writings on the Phantom, I dashed off the following three snapshots of the story taken from other vantage points different than any I had encountered or used before. Carrie published them in her anthology, *Rhapsody on Leroux*, in 1997.

That's the only place they have ever appeared, until now. These fragments are not science fiction but they are surely fantasy, in the spirit of play and of light-minded speculation with no other object than to entertain.

I am pleased to offer them here for the delectation and, I hope, delight of the Readercon membership.

Enjoy!

I. Mirror, Mirror

“Come to me, my Angel of Music —”
But as the hands of the shadowy figure reached as if through the glass toward Christine, suddenly there came a creaking sound and a startled grunt.

“Uff,” said the shadow, kicking at something behind the wall. “Cursed thing's stuck. What —”

Another thump, and the mirror shivered, throwing Christine's reflection into a shimmering movement as if she saw herself beneath a sheet of disturbed water.

A dank draft was emerging from the gap between the mirror and the wall, and the prospect of slipping into that dark and chilly void with an eccentric person — surely an *angel* would not have mechanical problems? — was becoming somewhat less attractive. Christine, ever mindful that she owed the evening's triumph to her work with her mysterious tutor, inquired timidly whether she might help with anything.

“No, of course not,” hissed the cloaked figure irritably. “I built the damned thing, I don't need any help!” Catching hold of her hand in a tense, bony grip, he drew her into the gap with surprising strength. “Look, do you think you can squeeze through here? Turn sideways, that's right.”

As she struggled to obey, she heard someone approaching in the corridor outside, singing (rather flat) a bit of an aria from *Faust* — Raoul, returning for her!

“Hurry,” urged the Angel, tugging painfully at her hand. “That idiot's coming back!”

“Ugh,” she gasped. “I'm sorry, I can't —”

“Too much goose-liver pate,” muttered the Angel bitterly. “Of course a singer must keep up her strength, but overindulgence — try pressing your back really hard against the frame, here, and then slide toward me — almost — try harder — if only you didn't have those two —”

A cheerful thunder of blows rained upon the dressing room door. “Come along, my darling, it's time to celebrate!” caroled Raoul, and the brass knob turned.

“Merde!” snarled the Angel, giving her hand one fierce, final, and useless tug. Then he planted his foot against Christine's hip and with a tremendous heave dislodged her so that she reeled back into the dressing room and staggered into the arms of the astonished — and smiling — Raoul.

“What are you doing, dancing in here all by yourself?” he inquired, smacking a kiss onto her cheek. “With balance like that, you definitely need

a partner, my dear. You couldn't wait five minutes for your Raoul to join you? We will go dancing, my darling, if you wish it — but first, we must eat. I know you singers and your appetites! I've booked a table for us for a late supper at Maxim's, what do you think of that?"

She had to admit that she was very, very hungry.

Christine glanced back over her shoulder as he whisked her out the door, but the mirror sat flush with the wall again as if it had never moved — had it? A scraped place on her shoulder stung, and she was sure she had torn her dress somewhere in the failed struggle to join her Angel (or whatever her instructor could be, with his cloak and his mask and his jammed secret panel).

Perhaps she had learned all that she could from him. Certainly the idea of further comments on her diet and her figure from that supremely critical source made her squirm inside. Wasn't tonight's triumph a sign that she was capable of advancing on her own, without her Angel's patronizing attitude and decidedly peculiar habits? All singing teachers were odd, in her experience, but this one, really —

On the whole, she thought, tripping down the corridor with Raoul toward the dinner at which she was freshly determined not to eat too much of anything, it might be a good idea to request a different dressing room . . .

II. You Can Take the Phantom out of the Cellar...

The rain was pouring down, and the gray afternoon light might have been that of evening. Christine finished her scales and her warm-ups and continued to practice the "Jewel Song," with which Erik continued to pronounce himself unsatisfied. "That," he kept saying impatiently, "is not the way I hear it in my mind. Again."

When at last, in tears, she refused to go on, he put on his hat and coat and mask and slammed out of the apartment, his footsteps drumming a rapid diminuendo down the stairs of the building.

Not again, Christine thought, blotting hastily at her eyes with her handkerchief; where does he go when he gets like this?

But she had her suspicions, and this time she was determined to set doubt at rest. She put on her rain-cape and bonnet, both still damp from the morning's excursion for some household items, and hurried downstairs herself. The concierge was mopping the third floor landing and gave her a sly

look as she passed — "Good idea, Madame, don't ever let your husband leave in a huff like that!" she said.

Christine took a cab to the Rue Scribe and let herself in at the iron gate.

The air was colder than usual in the underground passage. Erik was there; he had of course taken the boat across and kept it on his side of the water. The secret stair above on the wall around the lake was slippery with damp, and he had left only one lamp burning. Luckily, he had lost his acute night vision from living in the gaslit above-ground world, or she would have had to negotiate her approach in total darkness, for she had neglected to bring matches.

As she pressed the panels that opened the front door to Erik's long-abandoned lair, she heard the notes of the pipe organ and smelled the musty odor of neglect in the underground rooms. Untrimmed lamp wicks were smoking in the drawing room, and dust lay thickly on everything except the organ itself, which he must have wiped off before sitting down at the keyboards.

He did not turn as she slipped into the room, being absorbed in the music — a slow lament, typical of his compositions in its relentless gloom — and she hesitated, wondering whether to advance, or to withdraw quietly and pretend she had never come.

Then she noticed the bride-doll, that horrible mannequin he had always kept seated on a throne-like chair near the fireplace. The doll now wore not a white wedding dress, as before, but a gray tulle gown of Christine's which Erik was to have taken to be cleaned only last week.

"My dress!" she cried, darting forward.

Erik turned sharply to face her. "What are you doing here? Can't I have even a moment's solitude?"

Christine stopped and took a deep breath. "You have as much solitude as you like, Erik, when I'm gone to rehearsals and fittings at the Opera, or out on other errands."

"The building is full of other people," he muttered, "and that Cotille boy practices his flute until I am nearly mad with it."

"I thought you would like having other musicians as neighbors."

"Musicians!" he snorted. "If you mean those cabaret singers on the second floor, their taste is vulgar and their notes are flat, and the composer in the garret can talk and think of nothing but Wagner."



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"I didn't know you'd spoken to him," Christine said, encouraged to learn that he had made a social overture to someone on his own.

But he went right on without acknowledging her comment. "The cabs and carriages clop and rattle past ceaselessly, and Madame O'Halloran's dogs bark every time someone walks up or down the stairs, which is all the time. Why anyone would let an apartment in a fine building to an Englishwoman with lap dogs I will never understand. And that damned old woman *watches* me all the time, and gossips about me with the other concierges over coffee. I've seen them with their busy old heads together!"

"I told you we needed a house of our own," Christine said in a small voice.

"If you wanted a house on one of the *grandes boulevards* close to the Opera, you should have married de Chagny; with his family connections and wealth, he might have managed to obtain one. As for a house in the suburbs, we've been over all that. You would have had to travel too far to your work, and I — on my own journeys to the city I would have had that much more time out in public to endure, with children pointing out my mask to their mothers, who otherwise would never notice it, of course."

"It's so cold," Christine said, shivering. "Why do you come back here, Erik?"

"I like it cold," he said. "You keep the apartment too warm. It's stuffy."

"You tell me yourself that I must avoid catching a chill!" Christine objected. "For my voice's sake!"

"Ha, yes, and you heed me by running out in the rain without even a scarf round your throat!" he retorted, pointing an accusing finger.

"I was following you," she countered. "I had no time —"

"Well, no one asked you to follow me."

"Erik, I want my dress back. It will go all moldy down here."

He got up and crossed the room with angry strides. Pulling the doll roughly forward so that it sat bent nearly double over its lap, he began undoing the back of the dress.

"I wish you would close this place up for good," Christine added, looking around unhappily at the shrouded furniture.

"I like having somewhere to go," he said. "Oh, here, you do it — there are so many buttons!"

With trembling fingers she stripped the gown from the doll and folded the garment over her arm. She looked about her, then went to the divan and

began slapping one of its many cushions against the arm of a chair to get the dust out.

"What are you doing?" Erik demanded.

"I'll use the cushion cover to carry my dress in," she said. "It will be ruined if it gets drenched in the rain."

"You're choking me with all that dust," he said.

She looked at him. He was hugging the doll defensively in his arms.

Christine sat down and began extracting the pillow from its cover. "You love that doll better than you do me, I think."

No answer.

"Maybe you always did. I think you were happier in this carpeted and draped cellar with a stuffed figure than you are in a fine, big apartment in the city with a live woman. Perhaps a doll suits you better."

"She has her advantages," he answered, with hollow humor.

"Well, then, you're welcome to her, Erik." Christine fitted the folded gown into the cushion cover and refastened the seam. "And to your cellar, and your lake, and all the rest of it. I'm going home. You can come and get your things any time you want to."

Erik buried his twisted cheek in the doll's stringy hair. "These *are* my things," he said.

She left, the strains of organ music keening after her over the black lake into which she let her tears silently fall as she passed along the steps above.

III. Dutch Courage

Someone was sitting by the lake, morosely plunking pebbles into it. Erik let the thin cord of the lasso slide down out of his sleeve and approached silently, his muscles tensing, his mind racing ahead to thoughts of weights to sink a body with.

The seated figure stirred as he loomed above it, and Raoul, Vicomte de Chagny, blinked blearily up at him. "Ha! Thought you might still be around here, 'n' here you are. Sneaking up on a fellow, eh?" He wagged his forefinger admonitorily at Erik. "Saw your reflection in 'a water, see? Not so smart, for a genius. Genius, genius, genius, that's all she ever talks about. Genius, genius, genius," he chanted mournfully.

Erik sank slowly onto his haunches beside the disheveled young man, his heartbeat subsiding to something like normal. *Just slip him forward and hold him under.* The smell of drink on the Vicomte's

breath suggested a quick and easy finish, hardly any struggle at all.

"Genius," Raoul ended, on a sigh that sounded like a sob. "You know wha's like, to marry a girl who does nothing but talk about another man? She's made a little altar to you, thinks I don't know about it — a mask she bought for a party, a shriveled-up little flower, a something else, I can't remember —"

"Well, think, man!" Erik snapped. "Tell me what else there is, I'd like to know." *Could kill him any time, why rush? Why not find out a little first, get some questions answered, work up to a really satisfying and thoroughly appropriate rage and do it then?* "Look here, we can't camp out here all night. My boat is over there — step inside, I'll take you across and we'll talk it over like gentlemen."

Raoul's puffy eyes narrowed. He leaned closer, speaking in a confidential tone. "Tip me out and bang me on the head with the pole, right? Who'd ever know? *She* wouldn't know, 'less I go haunt her — dripping water all over; not too horrible, though. Don't want to scare her, just enough t'make her a little bit sorry. Can't be a genius, might make a fairish ghost, you think? Your field, right?"

"Oh, get up. Be careful or I'll have to fish you out, and the water's none too clean."

Once out on the water the Vicomte began to sing a song about missing his dear mother, some sentimental, popular tripe, in a drunken howl. Erik considered bashing him over the head just to shut him up, but just then the noise was lost in hiccups, and the hiccups in retching. On the far bank, with Erik holding him up, Raoul contributed a little more contamination to the shallow black lake before being hustled into Erik's lair and unceremoniously dumped into an armchair.

"How long were you waiting for me?" Erik asked, wondering if anyone had seen the boy there or on his descent into the cellars.

"Months," groaned Raoul. "*Years*, seems like. Got anything to eat?"

"No. What are you doing here?"

More blinking. "Waiting for you. Didn't you just ask me how long — ?" Erik leaned on the mantel and stared at him, disgusted with himself for allowing the arrogant, drunken young fool into his secret home in the first place. "You look terrible," he said sharply, "and you smell worse. Did you really have to drown yourself in drink in order to work up the courage to come here?"

Swaying where he sat, Raoul nodded vigorously. "Genius, and mad at me, too. Course I was scared. Nothing to drink either? 'S cold."

"Pull your chair closer to the fire, then; do something for yourself, you spoiled puppy. I don't have the luxury of getting myself drunk and being rescued from my own folly by helpful hands."

"Heh, heh," Raoul said, giving him an attempt at a shrewd look. "But you keep something around for medic'nal purposes, right?"

"Yes. It's not for you, though. You've obviously had enough."

At this, Raoul bent forward and took his own hair in his fists, the picture of despair. "I have. I have, you're right. But you won't take advantage, will you? *She* thinks you're a saint, you know that? Erik this, Erik that. 'Erik would never take me to boring parties full of dreary, dull rich people.' 'Erik didn't bite his fingernails, and he had much more reason than you do.' 'Erik knew how to live within his means —" The Vicomte stared sullenly around the room. "Nothing to spend money on down here, don't go out gambling, say you don't drink — no temptation. Doesn't take a genius to resist not having any temptation, right?"

"You're not happy," Erik said slowly, with dawning comprehension. "Together, I mean. You and her. Christine." The name he had promised himself never to speak aloud again.

"Not happy, no, not happy at all," moaned Raoul. Suddenly he slipped forward out of the chair and onto his knees in a sloppy approximation of the attitude of prayer. "You understand. I can't talk to anyone else, nobody knows, but you do. She wants a genius. And I'm not. One."

"No, you're not, and collapsing on my floor won't make you into one," Erik said coldly. "And if you vomit on my Turkey carpet, I will take you back outside and drown you after all."

"Good," said Raoul. "She'd be sorry then. I do love her, you know. Not like you, not like *genius*, however that is, no mysterious mask, no — no — love her, though. Really hurts."

Erik sighed. "Yes, I suppose it really does."

Raoul rocked back and forth, then sat down heavily on the floor in front of the chair. "F I told my brother that, he'd hit me. He thinks 'm'n idiot, sneers at her for common blood — can't talk to mother, she only wants to hear good things, and father —" More vehement shakes of his head. Then he looked up at Erik, his eyes swiming with more than drink.

"Why couldn't you be my father, 'stead of him? You know what I'm talking about, he doesn't, never loved anybody in his life, but you do. If you were my father I might even be a little bit of a genius too, 'stead of just an ordinary fellow. Well, but



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that's not so good, is it? People don't trust you if you're too smart, know that? Don't like you, either. Makes them jealous if you have a chateau and brains too, and anyway then you might be some kind of secret revolutionary, like so many bright fellows. But if you were my father I wouldn't have a chateau, would I? Just the brains, maybe. Might even be worth it if I had to be a little bit ugly, too."

Erik reached down and raised him by the lapels of his expensive coat. "Be careful, M'sieur le Vicomte," he said through gritted teeth. "You are in my house now, with none of your family's wealth and influence to protect you."

Raoul put up his hand and pulled off the mask.

Erik froze, his blood roaring in his ears.

"Not any better," Raoul said sadly. "Just how I remember it. Too bad, really." Frowning with concentration, he re-affixed the mask in place with both hands, sticking one clumsy finger in Erik's ear. "Now, I look good, right? Handsome, even, no need to hide my mug behind a mask. Ladies like me, always have, they smile at me. But *she* wants to see you, not me. Looks at me, wants to see you."

With that he flung his arms around Erik's neck and hung there, weeping wetly down Erik's collar until he was none-too-gently peeled away and deposited firmly in the armchair again. With a whimper, he curled up and at once fell asleep.

In the morning Erik shook him awake, directed him to the loo, and upon his shuffling return handed him a cocktail of juice and raw egg.

"Sorry," Raoul said, after downing this manfully in one gulp. "I think I behaved badly last night."

"You did," Erik said, sitting down across the dining table from him. "Now tell me what you want from me, Vicomte."

Raoul fixed him with a bloodshot glance. "Take her back," he said. "She wants to come, but she's afraid you're angry with her. If I send her here, will you accept her?"

Erik closed his eyes. "Good God, boy, she's not a parcel, to be mailed back and forth!"

"I mean, will you be nice, will you welcome her? I just want her to be happy."

By God, I'll kill him after all. "Are you suggesting that I might harm her, treat her badly, to take some petty revenge on her for choosing you?"

Raoul began to shake his head, winced, and stopped. "But she didn't. I mean, she did, but it was a mistake. She's so kind," he added sorrowfully. "Sweet and patient. But I can't sing worth a damn, you know. Music all sounds pretty much the same to me, actually, except for a good, rousing march,

and then marches all sound pretty much the same too, don't they? I like music, but I'm not *musical*, if you see what I mean. Well, it's just not good enough. I try, she tries, but honestly I don't think she likes me much any more."

"You miserable young dog," Erik snarled, his chest all but bursting with a chaos of emotions, "I should have drowned you as soon as I saw you out there! You have the gall to take her from me and then to make her unhappy? I wish I'd killed you when you first came to her dressing room, and I saw you through the mirror!"

Raoul clasped his hands in his lap and lowered his head. "You can hit me, if you like."

"I'm not going to hit you, you cretin," Erik said, rising quickly to his feet and going to his writing desk. "I'm going to give you a message for her and throw you out of here." "Oh, good," Raoul said with evident relief. "You'll send for her, won't you? Otherwise she'll be all alone, you see. I'm going on an expedition soon, and then there will be others after that. I don't expect to spend much time in Paris after this. I'm good at expeditions, but not very good at Paris."

"A wise assessment," said Erik. "Travel, and I am an authority on this, travel broadens the mind. Perhaps it will do even you some good. Go, fast and far, with my blessing." He frowned hard at Raoul, thinking. "You were just back from a foray into the far north when you first met Christine, weren't you: It's not the Arctic again this time?"

"No, Turkey and points east. We're looking for —"

"Never mind what you're looking for," Erik said. "I don't care a fig what you're looking for. Here, take a piece of paper and make me a list of all the places that your expedition plans to visit. It may just be that I can furnish you with a useful letter of introduction or two. Even if the men I knew are dead now, their families will honor their obligation."

"You'd do that for me?" Raoul said, wonderingly.

"Gladly, if it will help to assure that I won't have to see your witless face again. Write, boy. There's an atlas on the shelf, there, if you need to prompt your memory."

Then, to the scratching of Raoul's pen, the ticking of the clock and the triumphant thunder of his own heartbeat, Erik wrote out his invitation: "Christine. I love you. Come. Erik."



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MERVYN PEAKE: AN INTRODUCTION

BY MICHAEL MOORCOCK

I remember how impressed I was when, as a boy, I first visited Mervyn and Maeve Peake and discovered, contrary to my rational expectations, that they actually did live in a great, grey Gothic house surrounded by mysterious foliage! True, this Peake mansion was just a large Victorian family house in an otherwise ordinary suburban street on the southern edge of London, within walking distance of my own home, but I hesitated on the path to the recessed front door, conscious of the sharp rattle of rain on the rhododendrons, beginning to wonder if, after all, the author of *Titus Groan* affected as bizarre a life as his creations. I thought twice before pressing the bell.

The door was opened by a beautiful woman with startling hazel eyes and honey-coloured hair who introduced herself as Maeve Peake but who might, save for her warmth, have been the Countess of Groan. She had invited me to tea in response to my note about an article I was writing on Mervyn. As she led me through the shadowy hall I glimpsed at least one white cat, and felt watched by the gallery of stuffed birds, perching everywhere there was not a painting. When we entered a comfortable living room Mervyn rose, with some difficulty, from his armchair to shake hands. He was already suffering from the early stages of the illness which would kill him, but we did not know that then, and I found him pleasant, humorous, courteous, perhaps a little vague and inclined to tire easily. I also felt that for the first time I had met an authentic genius. In my enthusiasm I stayed too long, but in spite of that was invited again, coming to enjoy a valuable friendship with the Peakes and their children, Sebastian, Fabian and Clare, who were of my own generation.

Mervyn Peake was born in China in 1911, the son of a Congregational missionary doctor, and his first eleven years were spent surrounded by the exotic and often wretched sights of China in her imperial decline. He had already shown considerable skill as a writer and artist, and when with his parents he returned to England, to "Woodcroft," the same Wallington house where I met him, he was sent to a school in Surrey where his talents were recognised and encouraged. At Croydon

College of Art and, ultimately, the Royal Academy Schools he did well and began to mature as a draughtsman and a poet.

Flamboyant, enthusiastic, handsome, he was thoroughly dedicated to his art. For two years he lived on Sark, where he helped found the Sark school of painters. By 1935 he had an established reputation as a painter, some recognition as a poet, and was back in London, venturing out almost every day on what he called his "head-hunting expeditions," to sketch the people of the city. He became a part-time teacher at the Westminster School of Art, continued to publish his poetry, designed stage sets (notably for Copek's *The Insect Play*), planned novels, children's books, and elaborate drawing projects. Mervyn received a number of commissions for portraits (Walter de la Mare, Ralph Richardson, Graham Greene, and others), which were published in the London *Mercury*. In 1939 his first book, for children, appeared, written and illustrated by him (most copies were subsequently destroyed in an incendiary raid). *Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor* shows all the relish for human eccentricity, all the sense of fun, all the generous gusto Peake brought to his life. As well as his talent for comic drawing, it revealed a surprising talent for comic writing.

In 1936 Mervyn had met Maeve Gilmore, a shy student at the Westminster School of Art, and within a year they were married. As always, Mervyn discussed his ideas — his work in progress — with Maeve and she became actively involved in the conception of all his projects. Sometimes, on their frequent visits to Mervyn's parents near Arundel Castle, they would discuss what eventually became the first *Titus Groan* book. When war was declared in September 1939, Maeve was several months pregnant with Sebastian. As the air raids grew intense, Mervyn moved his wife and baby to Warningcamp, near his parents' home, and while awaiting call-up began offering his services to the War Artists Commission.

In spite of all his efforts, Mervyn was, perhaps inevitably, sent into the infantry, where life became increasingly anxious and terrifying. His army career was a disaster: inadvertently, he burned down his barracks, and then had a serious nervous breakdown. At this time he had been working on *Titus Groan*, writing it wherever and whenever he



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got the chance. Mervyn provides some insight as to his methods of working and the ways in which he absorbed and used experience in his description, an early commission, to record the daily work of a glass-blowing factory near Birmingham.

I found on entering the huge, ruinous, grimy wharf-walled buildings a world upon its own, a place of roaring fires and monstrous shadows. It appealed immediately to my imagination. Not only did I start to draw at once, for the glassblowers, weaving to and fro through scaring lights, were strangely rhythmic, as though in the spell of their craft, as they "gathered" from the furnace-mouths or juggled with the molten sand — but I found at the same time that phrases were forming in my mind, and verbal images, tangential or even remote from what was actually taking place before my eyes, began to follow one another. And so what I actually wrote was an attempt to give substance to the firelit flutter of words and images — a substance very different from the drawings that I made, though dependent in the first place upon the visual impression of jugglers in a world of grime and firelight.

During this time Mervyn produced a fine series of pictures, a book of poems, and many images which went into his later novels. "His head and hands are built for sin" begins the first poem of *The Glassblowers* — which could be a description of Steerpike, the protagonist, in spite of the title, of *Titus Groan*.

Even before *The Glassblowers* was commissioned, Mervyn had continued working. In spite of all setbacks, by 1944 he had published his first volume of poems, *Shapes and Sounds*, and two more children's books, *Ride a Cock Horse* and *Rhymes without Reason* (in which he revealed his talent for nonsense verse), and had illustrated, among others, *The Hunting of the Snark*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and Quentin Crisp's *All This and Bevin Too*. As his technical skills improved, his ambitions grew and gradually *Titus Groan* began to take on its author's own increased assurance and authority. Mervyn was one of the first civilians into Belsen, working with Tom Pocock for *The Leader*. Pocock wrote the text and Mervyn provided the drawings. Pocock, quoted in John Batchelor's study *Mervyn Peake*, gives us a description which any of Mervyn's friends would recognise:

His dark, sombre good looks and the deep-set, troubled eyes might have belonged to a most forceful person. But he was intensely gentle... a delightful and generous companion.

Mervyn left a record, in poetry and drawings, of what he had seen in Belsen. Every inmate's face is the face of an individual, drawn with profound respect. The scenes, translated into his fiction, occur again and again, most fully in *Titus Alone*. Mervyn never exaggerated. He described what he saw. By the end of the war he had completed the manuscript of *Titus Groan*. This was published in 1946 to considerable critical praise from the likes of Graham Greene, Henry Reed, and Elizabeth Bowen — but it sold poorly.

Eventually, partly for financial reasons, partly for much-needed tranquility (with Fabian a further addition to the family), Mervyn and Maeve went to live on Sark, enjoying something of an idyll with their two sons, while Mervyn worked on commissions and wrote *Gormenghast*. He had been witness to some of the most appalling manifestations of human brutality, but the war had also given him a wealth of imagery and ideas which became drawings, paintings, poems, prose, and, increasingly, plays. Always a prolific worker, Mervyn enjoyed a growing reputation. At length Sark life proved impractical and with his daughter, Clare, on the way he and the family returned to London in 1949.

In 1950 *Gormenghast* was published. It received some excellent notices but, although Mervyn was awarded the Royal Society of Literature prize for both *Gormenghast* and *The Glassblowers*, contemporary taste was against him. We had entered the grey flannel decade. He was considered altogether too romantic — "Peake's ok if you like your blackness utter," said one editor to me, dismissing him as little more than a bad horror writer. Mervyn's great comic and narrative gifts were never acknowledged, his eloquent and original use of language was ignored.

Those years, when the first signs of his illness began to appear, became increasingly difficult for the Peakes. Money was scarce and the books had small sales (both were eventually remaindered). His other novel, *Mr. Pye*, also received praise and a prestigious prize, but it did not sell well, even after Mervyn had adapted it as a radio play. He tried his hand at more plays, but they, too, were unsuccessful. In 1957, when his play starring Kenneth Williams, *The Wit to Woo*, failed (the fashion was for *Look Back in Anger*), it became increasingly clear that Mervyn's symptoms were not merely those of nervous exhaustion. It was thought that he had contracted a virus in Belsen.

We believed at the time that he might recover and that the great flood of drawings, paintings,

poems, short stories, novels, and plays had merely slowed down for a while. But then, after joyously completing the last words of *Titus Alone*, sitting under the kitchen table at Woodcroft, Mervyn experienced a dramatic deterioration in his energies, and thereafter he declined rapidly. Astonishingly, he was still able to produce, for instance, his masterly drawings for Balzac's *Droll Stories* (The Folio Society 1961) and attempt a few other commissions, but soon, after a move to a more convenient house, it became impossible for Maeve to care for him at home and his last years were spent in institutions, most of which were depressing at best.

Now, with bitter irony, Mervyn's star began to rise again. A chance discussion with my friend Oliver Caldecott, then fiction editor at Penguin, resulted in Oliver's enthusiastic decision to repub-

lish all three books as Penguin Modern Classics and to have them illustrated with Mervyn's own drawings. This was to be a crucial turning point in Mervyn's career for, as soon as the public found him in easily available editions, his audience was assured. Almost everything he had written or drawn began to be reprinted.

My last vivid memory of Mervyn is in the garden of a mental hospital where Maeve and I were visiting him. Maeve was distressed because it seemed Mervyn was being bullied, perhaps tortured, and was certainly being stolen from. Mervyn had no understanding of why she was troubled but lifted his hand, by then very palsied, in a gesture of comfort. When this didn't seem to work he rose with our help and, in his dressing gown and pyjamas, began to shuffle by himself across the grass, trying to hop on one leg and perform a little comic

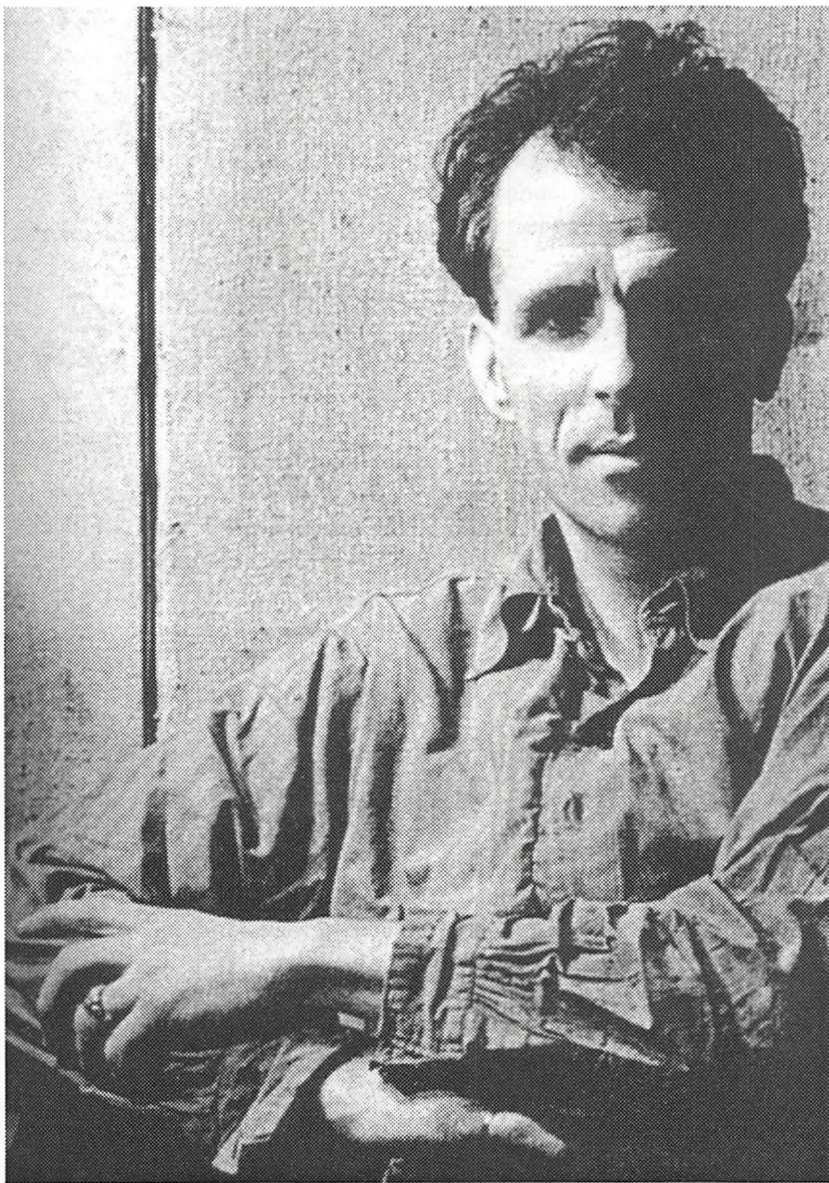
dance meant to cheer up Maeve. Eventually Maeve's brother, running a small private home for people with Alzheimer's, was able to look after him. Thanks to James Gilmore, Mervyn's last days were happy. In November 1968 he died, in the arms (Maeve told me) of a nurse called Rosie, to whom he had become attached.

Unfortunately, Mervyn's increased popularity made him something of a cult figure. When alive he had been too unwell to counter the image of him as a doomed romantic, tortured by visions of cosmic horror, obsessed with presentiments of his own tragedy, and now that he was dead the media continued to picture him in this way. They presented an image far removed from the typical reality of Mervyn with a cat on one arm of his chair, a child on the other, a cigarette dangling from his lip, listening to the radio, making jokes, and doing, for instance, the drawings commissioned for The Folio Society's wonderful *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1948).

This playful, sardonic man had more of the cheery, toler-



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ant personality of a Leigh Hunt than the profound self-involvement of a Byron. His enjoyment of and respect for children made him arguably the best child portraitist of his day. He sympathised with the injustices children suffered. He had a natural, unsentimental sympathy for the underdog. He had a strong, essentially Christian sense of egalitarianism which refused the narrow confines and necessary evasions of political cant. Like most thorough-going romantics, he saw himself as a thorough-going rationalist. He had, moreover, a deep respect for the classical method, which is clear in all his work. He worked regularly as a teacher at the Central School of Art and his classes, specifically those on technique, were stimulating. The vulgar representation of him as a wild *naif* was in no way discouraged by Mervyn's refusal to take himself seriously and pretend, when bored by questions, to have no truck with analysis of any sort.

By the mid-1980s, however, with all his work in print, the range of Mervyn's achievement was generally acknowledged. A major exhibition, displaying the whole spectrum of his talents, was staged at the South Bank and finally gave the lie to the myth of Mervyn as some kind of Gothic eccentric. One of the impressions taken away from the exhibition was of Peake's enormous sense of comedy. It is in the end, I believe, that comedy which most distinguishes Peake's greatest prose work, just as his sympathetic but ironic eye distinguishes his best portraits.

Although inclined to reject any explanations of his work which smacked of academic abstraction, Mervyn was nonetheless a thoroughly conscious artist, constantly refining and increasing his techniques. That he knew exactly what he was doing is demonstrated by one of the most illuminating essays on the art of drawing, *The Craft of the Lead Pencil* (1946). In so many ways the quintessential bohemian — handsome, alert, witty, eloquent, talented, dandified — he hated airy talk of art or politics and the elevated status many artists claimed for themselves. His talents were so plentiful, his spirit so generous, that he could write in one of his poems, "I am too rich already, for my eyes mint gold." He identified himself thoroughly with "the common man" — his heroes, like Mr. Pye, were often very ordinary indeed. Fundamentally his imagination was, without question, a romantic one, but perhaps paradoxically, it is his humanity, his less idiosyncratic gifts (including the gift of farce), which distinguished him from other great vision-

ary novelists like Wyndham Lewis, Zamyatin, or Cowper Powys.

In the *Titus Groan* books especially, with their ornate language, long soliloquies, bursts of nonsense verse, vivid descriptions, weird anecdotes, comic extravagances, we continue to be interested in the characters and their stories. Peake's control of his subject matter, his skill at handling such a large cast, is demonstrated on every page of *Titus Groan* and *Gormenghast*, which are essentially a unity. The plot marches, with all the remorseless inevitability of a novel by Hugo or Conrad, towards an unpredictable resolution.

These abilities and his genuine love of people, his concern for others, his relish for life, make Peake, in my opinion, the greatest imaginative writer of his age. Neither Tolkien nor T. H. White, for instance, has Peake's monumental complexity or originality, his moral and formal integrity. Perhaps that is why Peake was so often praised by writers most identified with naturalistic novels of character, like Elizabeth Bowen or Angus Wilson, who also appreciated the moral qualities of Peake's novels. He offers a solid clue to his sentiments (and his method) in the opening sentence of *Titus Groan*:

Gormenghast... would have displayed a certain ponderous architectural quality were it possible to have ignored... those mean dwellings that swarmed like an epidemic around its outer walls.

By the first few paragraphs of the first *Titus Groan* novel our sympathies are already alerted. Peake is not merely writing Romance — he is *examining* Romance. He is, perhaps, even finding fault with it, or at least is looking for flaws in its arguments. He was of a generation which had seen the corrupt romanticism of Nazi Germany infect most of Europe, and his conscience remained essentially that of a radical Christian. He admired Bunyan as well as Blake. He was attracted to the imagery of pomp and ritual, but he was also deeply suspicious of it, always searching for what it hid. In those early pages of *Titus Groan* we find blind injustice, decadent ritual and haughty cruelty, folly, moral corruption, atrophied emotions and sensibilities, wretched hypocrisy and dumb despair; turbulence and terror are masked by a pretence of activity, a reliance on ritual which in the end has no function save to maintain the *status quo* — the power of the Groans. Yet here, too, is all the dusty glory of a decadent court, ancient mysteries, bizarre secrets, peculiar dependencies and relationships, old rival-

ries, and a history already so encrusted with legend and myth that it is no longer a record of events but a litany of blind faith.

This could be the China of Mervyn's boyhood translated to England. In that China the poor committed suicide on the surgery steps of doctors unable to cure them, and ancient wealth was displayed against a background of dreadful social suffering. It was a hallucinatory imperial twilight, common to all declining empires, which obscured the hardships of the many from the undemanding eyes of the privileged few — a light Mervyn detected in England, too. He was in many ways a conventional patriot, but he was also amused, frustrated, and infuriated by the follies of the English ruling class. His own wartime experience of bureaucratic folly and the ignorant arrogance of leaders, the casual decisions which affected the lives and deaths of thousands, informed the pages of *Titus Groan* as he wrote it in various barracks, railway stations and transit camps while the army tried to make a gunner of him. Yet the novel never becomes a diatribe, never becomes a vehicle in which to express his own suffering.

By the time we finish *Titus Groan*, with all its wonders, its invention, its vastness, its confident eloquence, we have become engrossed in the fate of the boy, Titus, his relatives and retainers. By now we are intimately involved with Fuchsia Groan, Lord and Lady Groan, Nannie Slagg, Cora and Clarice, Rottcodd, Swelter, Flay, the Prunesquallors, and all the others — but chiefly we want to know what has become of Steerpike.

Steerpike is Peake's greatest creation and, ultimately, in *Gormenghast* he confronts that fresh embodiment of the Groan tradition, the new Lord Titus, who has come to the title indirectly as a result of Steerpike's own machinations. Steerpike has something of the knowing, reckless villainy of Richard III, something of the cold, envying evil of Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*, and yet we frequently find ourselves feeling sympathy with his ambitions and his conflicts. We share his frustrations, his anger,

his schemes, his secrets, his knowledge of all the illusions, hypocrisies, and deceits required to maintain Groan power in that seemingly limitless castle, that model of the mind, whose Gothic outlines bear only superficial resemblance to Walpole's or Radcliffe's.

Yet poor silly Cora and Clarice, dreamy Irma Prunesquallor and her ebullient, yet oddly pathetic brother also receive our concern, because, even though they might seem grotesque or larger than life, their dreams, if not the details of their lives, are common to most of us. Their passions and desires, sadness and despair, are easily understood. There are no airy metaphysics in the Titus Groan books (unless for farcical effect), no comfy reassurances (unless from a hypocrite), no universal rail-

ing (unless from a fool). We follow Steerpike, who uses all the quick cunning and subtle understanding, all the knowing play-acting of a Lovelace, in his rise from kitchen boy to secret power of Gormenghast. His motives are credible. Again, from the first pages, Peake has led us to understand how an intelligent youth, destined for a life of humiliation and grinding servitude, is consumed with anger at the monumental injustices upon which his misfortune and the continuing fortunes of the Groans is based.

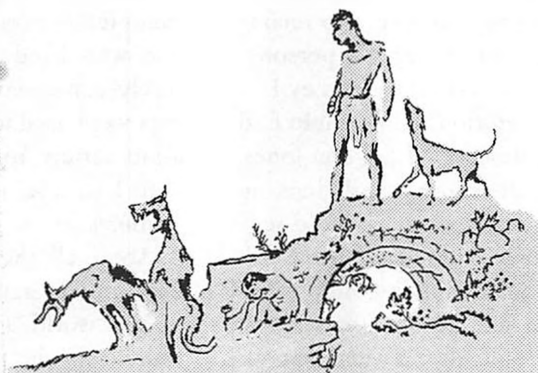
If Tolkien's hobbits display a middle-class fear of the Mob, Steerpike might be said to represent the vengeful Mob itself, all hope of justice lost, turning its ruthless fury upon those who, in their unearned, unadmitted power — no matter how innocent they seem to themselves — enjoy careless privilege. And, like the Mob, Steerpike is by no means fussy about his methods — and by no means invulnerable. Eventually common sentiment becomes both his doom and his redemption.



PEAKE

new worlds

HARLAN ELLISON: *A Boy and His Dog* ■ J. G. BALLARD: *The Beach Murders* ■ M. JOHN HARRISON: *The Ap-Centur*
PLUS *Atlas*, *Hydras Quest*, *Macbeth*, *Moravians*, *Mundic*, *Thomas*



Mervyn Peake illustration of Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog" for the cover of *New Worlds*.



PEAKE

At the close of *Gormenghast*, Titus begins to come into his own. Like Steerpike, he struggles against the weight of ritual and convention which imprisons him, but he struggles only to be free, not to control. He understands the price of such power and wants none of it.

In the final volume, *Titus Alone*, which was to be the first of a new set of adventures, Titus at last assumes centre stage. In the first two volumes he figures rather less than Tristram Shandy in the work named after him, but now he is a kind of wandering innocent, consciously based on *Candide*, adrift from his roots in Gormenghast, determined not to be crushed by the stifling decadence of his ancestors, yet knowing little of the world beyond the walls. With the help of the half-mad Muzzlehatch and Juno, who becomes Titus's lover, he makes a transition from the hermetic sur-reality of Gormenghast Castle to the bizarre realities of a world far more familiar to us.

Titus Alone is packed with images of authoritarianism, of the Blitz, of Belsen and all the other horrors which the Allies had witnessed as they moved through the nightmare the Nazis had made of Europe. Those who demanded from Peake a more specific moral examination than they found in the first two books, found it here. For me, in many ways, *Titus Alone* is the best of the three novels, the most ambitious of them. It seemed to me that Mervyn was confronting and trying to reconcile his faith in human goodness with his personal experience of grotesque and brutal human evil.

Sadly, *Titus Alone's* first edition did not help find Peake the recognition he deserved. Langdon Jones, the writer and composer, discovered while looking through the original manuscripts that whole segments had been summarily excised by Mervyn's first editor. Characters were missing, important narrative links had gone, and so on. Jones set to work restoring the book and, after a year's labour of love, had managed to bring it as close to Mervyn's intended text as possible. This was published, thanks to the good offices of Penguin Books, as the second edition.

In spite of its minor flaws, *Titus Alone* reflects Mervyn's growing confidence with his own distinctive forms and subject matter, his deeper engagement with the contemporary world — a world still largely familiar to us since the social outrages he describes have not disappeared in past decades. Indeed, the picture of "Cardboard City" on the South Bank could have come straight from a Peake story.

The fourth Titus book, as one sees from Mervyn's few notes, would have ranged even further and extended his powers. His work was taking on a new, equally creative vitality, far more informed by anger and a growing belief in positive resistance to active evil, when the disease began to overwhelm him. He made various attempts to continue Titus's story but his narrative skills were the first to leave him. He was fifty-seven when he died, after a twelve-year illness. Sadly, he was never to realise that his work had at last found a wide audience.

When Maeve died, as courageously as she had lived, in 1983, she had seen her husband's name firmly established as one of Britain's leading artists. A fine painter in her own right, she had devoted herself to Mervyn and her children with a dedication which had frequently meant giving up her own ambitions as a painter. Her last work, however, in the years following Mervyn's death, has an almost frightening intensity, as she tried, somehow, to come to terms with their tragedy. She, more than any of us, felt the loss of a man of unique vitality and humanity, as generous in his personal life as he was with his talent. She had shared in his delight at his extraordinary gifts, about which he always seemed faintly astonished. She had admired his habit of self-deprecation, of minimising his gifts in conversation, and sometimes felt frustration when he offered them to anyone who liked them, in an act of sharing that rarely contained any thought of money. His talents were used to describe and inform the world in all its variety; to celebrate the human spirit — and that, I believe, is why these books are assured of immortality.

Above all, the Titus stories remain a joyous celebration, the achievement of a man who delighted in the world and its works, who believed profoundly in the value of human individuality and who dedicated himself to recording it in all its strange and beautiful manifestations. In 1949, in his introduction to a collection of his drawings, he wrote:

If I am asked whether all this is not just a little "intense" — in other words, if it is suggested that it doesn't really matter, I say that it matters fundamentally. For one may as well be asked, "Does life matter?" If a man matters, then the highest flights of his mind and his imagination matter. His vision matters, his sense of wonder, his vitality matters. It gives lie to the nihilists and those who cry "Woe!" in the streets. For art is the voice of man, naked, militant, and unashamed. ... As the earth was

thrown from the sun, so from the earth the artist must fling out into space, complete from pole to pole, his own world which, whatsoever form it takes, is the colour of the globe it flew from, as the world itself is coloured by the sun.

And finally, for all its shadows and dark mysteries, the world of Titus Groan is indeed richly coloured by the sun.

For an account of life with Mervyn Peake I would recommend Maeve Peake's own *A World Away* (1970), which is one of the most moving memoirs of its kind. Sebastian Peake, too, has written an interesting account of his father and family,

A Child of Bliss (1989), and John Watney has written a good general biography, *Mervyn Peake* (1976). John Batchelor's book of the same title (1974) contains more specific criticism. *Peake's Progress* (1978), a chronological compendium of Peake's shorter work, various drawings, and plays, contains biographical and bibliographical notes by Maeve Peake and is highly recommended.



This originally appeared as the introduction to the Folio Society edition of the Gormenghast trilogy. It is reprinted with the author's permission.



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A CASTLE AS BIG AS THE WORLD

BY COLIN GREENLAND

I

When I was working on *Seasons of Plenty* and people asked me to tell them about it, I used to say it was Gormenghast in space.

It wasn't, of course. It hasn't the emotional complexity, the thoroughgoing romanticism, the hallucinatory texture of Mervyn Peake's chronicle of life and death in a castle as big as the world. No one in Captain Jute's motley crew of spacehopping wastrels exhibits the supreme mountainous menace of Abiatha Swelter, or the petulant vulnerability of Lady Fuchsia. Dodger Gillespie was not Mr. Flay. Grant Nothing was never Steerpike.

Still, it was a good motto: a good way of holding Peake's masterpiece before me as an example while I wrote; and along with Peake's, that other superb novel conceived in homage to his, Michael Moorcock's *Glorianna*. There is something absolutely right — not just right — inevitable, about this impulse we seem to have inherited to depict Britain (which is Gormenghast, and Albion, and Plenty) as a sealed unit, vast and ancient and decrepit, with giant rats in her walls, and her rulers as the self-appointed custodians of some wonderful, elusive flame of glory who have failed completely and gone mad in the attempt. The story of Titus Groan, 77th Earl of Gormenghast, is the eternal, insoluble European story, the story of the individual and the establishment, just as the story of America, from Beverly Hills all the way to Lake Wobegon, is the story of the frontier and the high-

way, the fight to win something from time and the land.

There are two kinds of fantastic literature, two divergent streams. On the right is the orthodox tradition, from Malory through Tennyson to Tolkien and Kenneth Grahame. It's National Trust literature: consolatory, conservative, hierarchical; stately, in every sense of the word. Its principal activities are restoration and preservation.

The left-hand stream is wilder, more rocky, with dark depths that sunlight can't reach. It's a perilous spot for a picnic. Its literature is comical, and violent, and bizarre, and faintly or loudly disreputable. There was Lewis Carroll before Mervyn Peake, and then there was Michael Moorcock; and then M. John Harrison, Clive Barker, Neil Gaiman.... Peake was right to put the artists on the outside of the castle, gluing them to the walls like barnacles on the flanks of a whale. Gormenghast tolerates its Bright Carvers neglectfully, disregarding their work, all except one piece which is raved about for a day or an hour, then stuck on a dusty shelf in a museum. The rest get shoveled into the fire.

Many of Mervyn Peake's bright carvings survive. There are good things in the poems, I know, and good paintings too, and more than those, to me, the illustrations: his pictures of the Snark hunters and the Ancient Mariner, Dean Swift's rabbit and Quentin Crisp's giraffe. I love books that have pictures in them. Best of all, though, is the tale of Titus Groan, how he was born in the castle, and grew up there, and dared to leave, vanishing



PEAKE

into the bright, splintered atrocity that is the modern world.

II

The prospect of pictures of Gormenghast, moving pictures of real people dressed up and speaking Peake's dialogue, pictures beamed into every domicile in the land by the power of the British Broadcasting Corporation — that was a frightening prospect. How much I wanted them to get it right. How many ways there were to get it wrong. I knew they were going to get it horribly wrong.

I was reckoning without Estelle Daniel. I didn't know about Malcolm McKay, or Andy Wilson. I'd forgotten that Michael Moorcock and Neil Gaiman and I weren't the only people who had read Peake, read him and loved him, and conceived a passion for what he did and the way he did it. I didn't know it was possible, still, even in the British

Broadcasting Corporation (which is Gormenghast, and Albion...), to carry a project over obstacles and past misunderstandings and against opposition, through exhaustion and beyond, to triumph, because you care about it and are determined to get it right.

Well, no, okay — it's not completely right. There aren't enough shadows, visually or morally; there isn't enough vertigo. It's at least an hour too short, and all the deaths are rushed, except Barquentine's, which is magnificently ghastly. Dot Cotton is a perfectly fine Nanny Slagg, but nothing like the Nanny Slagg Peake wrote. And some people have the wrong names and so on. Stuff you can argue about, if you want to.

I'm just going to say three things. The names of three characters.

Dr. Prunesquallor.

The Countess Gertrude.



And Master Chalk.

As fictional characters go, Dr. Prunesquallor is an awkward bastard. He starts off as a hideous, irritating nuisance, and somehow turns into the moral heart of the whole saga, the only one you'd willingly sit down with for a cup of tea. (Mr. Flay, you might object, but Mr. Flay is an unnerving creature, especially as Christopher Lee presents him, wordless and shattered. Mr. Flay is all loyalty, but Dr. Prune is all heart. Mr. Flay is a scarecrow. Dr. Prune is a teddy bear.)

John Sessions does Prunesquallor perfectly. He gives him a luminous frustrated intelligence and a repellent silly grin, and makes him utterly trustworthy, and quite lovable. I have no idea how this is even possible.

The Countess Gertrude, Titus's mother, is a monster, a swollen embodiment of that broad streak in the British character which adores animals and despises human beings. Gertrude never wanted this baby and can't be bothered with him now she's got him. She never has a moment's doubt about sacrificing him to the ritual, which is the Law, which is Gormenghast.

As Gertrude, under half a ton of make-up and costume, Celia Imrie delivers what's quite likely the supreme performance of a distinguished career, and makes you glimpse (just glimpse, but perfectly clearly) the terrifying depth of the pain Gertrude has shut off. She lets you see that Gertrude knows she's done it, too. She knows she's a monster. (The official BBC website calls the Countess Gertrude stupid. A more stupid comment I can't, offhand, imagine.)

And then there's Master Chalk. Master Chalk's the first character you see, the herald to all that follows. Which is as it should be.

Master Chalk is Jimmy White. And Jimmy White is simply a miracle. It's as if the heavens opened over Andy Wilson's head and sent down Jimmy White to spread his wings in benediction. Whoever's watching *Up There* must have been well pleased.



This piece was written for the new Peake website that is being constructed by Tim Concannon. No URL is available at press time, but you can email Tim, if you're interested, at liberator.one@virgin.net.



P
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st/index.htm](http://www.unil.ch/angl/docs/peake-st/index.htm)) by Peter Winnington.*

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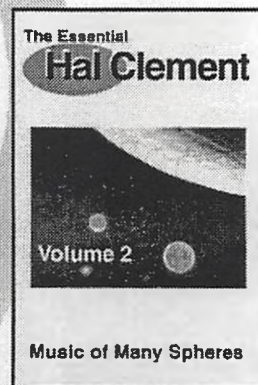
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JOE MAYHEW REMEMBERED



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When you look around today's Readercon, you might be surprised to know that it wasn't always considered a sure thing. Early on, it was thought to be something of a radical, quixotic enterprise, and even those who were sympathetic were often not sure that it could be pulled off. In fact, when our relationship with our first venue deteriorated and it became obvious that we were going to lose money the first time out, a number of people thought it might be better just to bag the whole notion.

That this did not happen was due to a very small number of people, and Joe Mayhew was among the most prominent in that number. Joe's enthusiastic embrace of the Readercon concept, and his tireless evangelizing of it, were a powerful counteragent to the frustrations involved in trying to obtain recognition for a different way of doing things. At the worst of times, they reminded myself and the rest of the crew that we were here to make a difference, and that there was a special audience that was expecting special things from us.

So we continued, and for me one of the sweetest moments of Readercon 1 was being told by Joe Mayhew that we had created a new family. Though there were still struggles to come, moments like that were a very big part of what kept us going.

Thank you, Joe.

— BOB COLBY

In so many ways Joe was larger than life, a giant in the community, but it was his small, quiet, almost unconscious acts of caring that I cherish most. Back in the early '90s, Joe's opinion of "those punk kids who sit in the hallways playing boom boxes" was about the same as the great majority of established fen in the Mid-Atlantic region — which was to say, we didn't quite rate up there with Trekkers who insisted that they should be addressed as "Commander" all the time, and wore their Federation uniforms to drive home on Monday. At a Philcon, on Sunday, one of the DC punk (goth, really) kids came down with a nasty case of the flu and had no way home. Some older Philly fen were trying to find someone to take the goth to the train station, at least, though the sufferer admitted to nausea and possibly worse, which had given pause to any would-be volunteers.

Joe showed up just then, and when the situation was explained he said, "Well, why didn't you ask

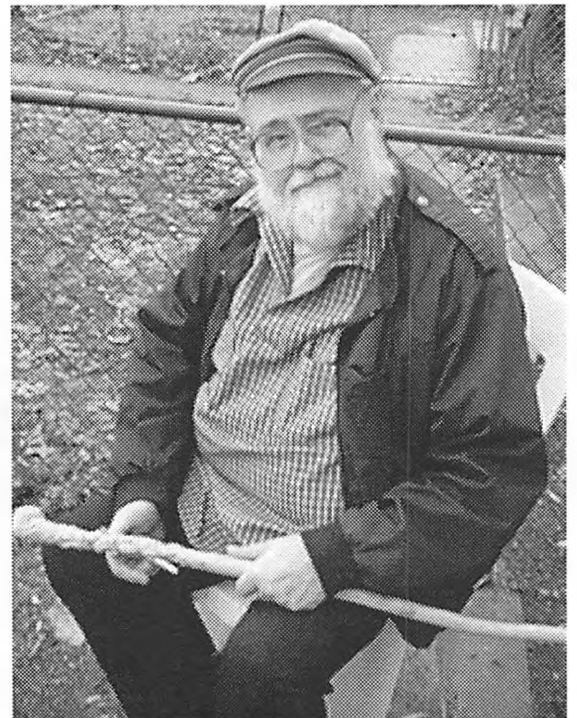
me before? I'll drive her home." All delivered in that tone that brooked no opposition, that made it clear that his answer was absolutely obvious and that he should have been contacted in the first place.

It was an hour out of his way. He could have gotten the flu. His passenger could have thrown up in his car. He thought that the goths could possibly cause problems for conventions, both with the hotels and the other fen. This wasn't someone he knew. And he acted as if he were doing it for his own good pleasure and never mentioned it again to anyone.

I must have seen Joe do that dozens of times, do something that was hard or unpleasant or boring because someone else needed the help, and then act as if he were the one who had been granted the favor. Of all the impressive things Joe Mayhew did and achieved, his absolutely selfless charity and caring for everyone in this community is, to me, by far the greatest.

— SHARIANN LEWITT

I remember the first time I was really aware of Joe's work. It was at a Balticon many years ago. I went to the art show and there was the ugliest chess set I had ever seen! Then I took a closer look, and realized the craftsmanship in the set.



Unfortunately, I could never afford it. Many years later, at a Balticon art show, there was this box of hand-carved walking sticks just sitting in the corner. Lee homed in on them, we met Joe there, and spent the next hour or so discussing his carving and where the ideas came from. It was a fascinating insight into the workings of Joe's mind, and one conversation I have never forgotten. Another light now gone from the world.

— **BONNIE MILLER**

My last memory of Joe (aside from hospital visits) is when I visited Joe a few days before he planned to go to Balticon in a wheelchair. Anyone else would have been somewhat regretful about what this meant for his health. Not Joe. He was as excited as a kid with a new toy, talking about what this would allow him to do.

To me that was Joe. I cannot remember ever hearing a topic that did not excite him, an idea on which he did not have an opinion, or a subject on which Joe knew nothing. Nor can I imagine him not caring about something or someone. Whenever a new person walked into a meeting of the Washington Science Fiction Association, Joe would be the first person to greet him or her, the first person to have a substantive conversation with the newcomer, and, frequently, the only one who remembered the new guest's name on subsequent meetings.

Joe had been editor of *The WSFA Journal* at various times in the club's history. But when I took it over (after his heart attack) he never said a bad word about anything I did, and gave generously of his cartoons, even though he was selling cartoons to paying markets.

Joe published cartoons and stories, reviewed books in magazines and the *Washington Post*, and even recommended sf books for the Library of Congress. But he insisted he was just a fan and was proud to be one.

In a nutshell, Joe cared. He cared about everything and everyone. He was a talented artist, a skilled carver, an insightful reviewer, a knowledgeable conversationalist, a gifted linguist, an imaginative author, and a creative humorist. We shall not see his like again.

— **SAMUEL LUBELL**

Iam not sure when and where I met Joe for the first time, but it must have been more than a decade ago, probably at either Disclave or Balticon. Joe was always a serious man, even though he liked to draw cartoons for fun — which

got him a coveted Hugo at the Worldcon in Baltimore. His manners were courtly, perhaps showing his earlier upbringing at a Catholic seminary. Joe now goes where he has not gone before. I hope he will find what he has sought in this world — an eternal peace and fulfillment.

Godspeed, Joe!

— **YOJI KONDO/ERIC KOTANI**

My earliest recollections of Joe Mayhew are from 1976 or 1977. Joe was hanging art at a Relaxicon (ArtCane or DatClone?) in York, Pennsylvania. After Joe finished assisting the artists with their hangings and the room emptied, I remember Joe walking around the room and commenting on which pieces he considered exceptional and the features that made them outstanding. He also commented that some of the submissions were substandard. However, the intimacy of this tiny con and its non-threatening nature could permit timid artists to exhibit their work, and maybe learn from the comments to improve.

Joe drew steadily while he provided security to the room. Joe was an irascible curmudgeon who set standards and strove to meet them and assist others in meeting them.

I asked Joe's opinion on which were the best books to read and he drew from a wealth of knowledge to make excellent recommendations. He was an amazing bibliophile whose quick mind and vast talents continually amazed.

When I needed a logo for ConStellation City Tours, Joe drew the caricatures of the concom at sea. When I asked for science fiction cover art for a bat mitzvah "program" book, Joe drew GOLEM vs. GOLLUM.

Joe was one of the "vertebrae" of the fandom's convention circuit spine. He will truly be missed.

— **MIRIAM WINDER-KELLY**

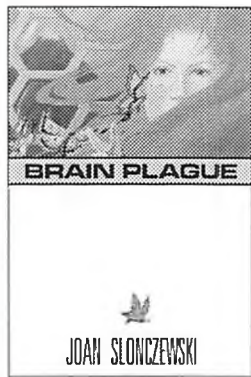
Possibly the first person I ever saw, at the first science fiction convention I ever went to, was Joe Mayhew. Since I live in his area near Washington, D.C., that con was certainly a Disclave, in the early '80s. Joe was a faithful supporter of fandom and of the genre. He encouraged me in writing from my very first novel, and was an enthusiastic shiller of my latter work. And it was intelligent and informed support too. In the review pages of *Absolute Magnitude* and the *Washington Post* he helped to shape the growth of science fiction.

— **BRENDA CLOUGH**



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WHETHER IT'S THIS WORLD OR ANOTHER, THE PAST CENTURY OR CENTURIES TO COME . . .



BRAIN PLAGUE

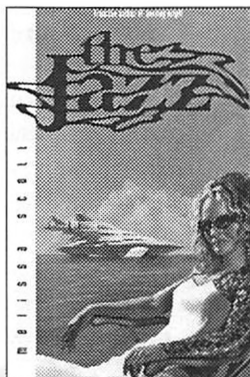
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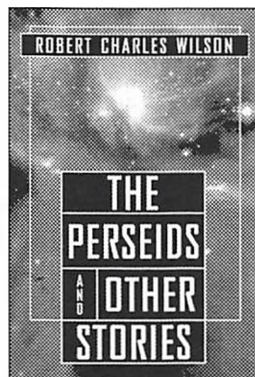
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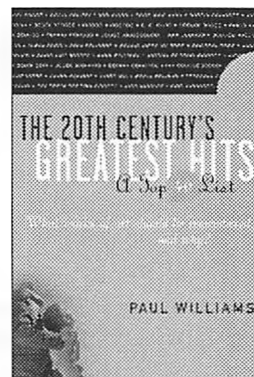
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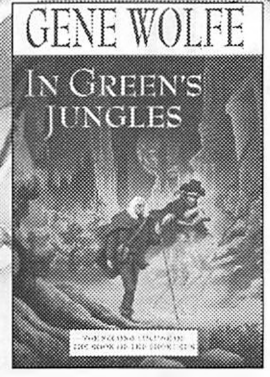
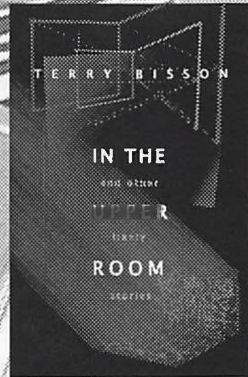
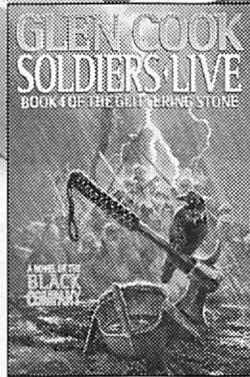
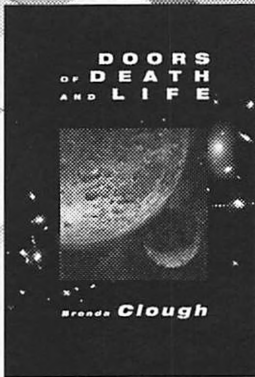
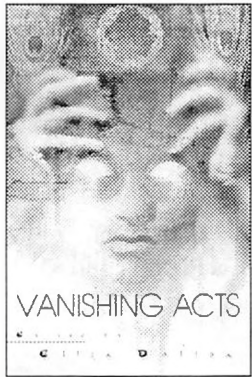
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THE READERCON COMMITTEE

Ellen Brody has been a member of the committee since shortly after Readercon 7. This might explain the alternate reality where she lives in Antarctica and teaches penguins to tango.

Julianne Chatelain is still glad she took the blue pill that dissolved the fabric of "reality." Quests and obsessions online at world.std.com/~jchat/.

As of this writing, **Bob Colby** is unemployed for the first time in more than 20 years. His most productive use of that free time lately was the production of the second coming of TypeCon, a conference for type lovers that seeks to provide something of the Readercon experience in a different cultural context. The curious are invited to check us out at www.typesociety.org.

Richard Duffy, though not quite as fossilized as a horned ceratopsid, dates back at least as far as the dawn of the Readercon era. Having been sucked into its committee since right after the first convention in 1987, he has only in the last few years been able to attend a decent amount of the program, and finds it so interesting that he's sticking around to stay involved in the process of putting it together. Some people are simply incorrigible.

George Flynn proofreads and copyedits for NESFA Press, Haffner Press, and anybody else who asks, fortunately including the Real World. As usual, he is also on too damn many con committees.

When not working hard to make sure your Readercon hotel experience is the best it can be, **Merryl Gross** is hard at work designing software at Curl Corporation. She'd tell you what her company does, but then she'd have to kill you.

Bob Ingria is about to embark on a trial of eXtreme Programming, which seems natural, since he has been part of an experiment in eXtreme Con Running for many years. In fact, the current year in Bob's life has been full of eXtremes, including eXtreme Tenancy and even eXtreme Stress. He looks forward to next year being less eXtreme, and wonders if he shouldn't retire to Lawrence, Kansas to relax amongst the missile silos, close to the William S. Burroughs Memorial

Shooting Gallery, Heavy Metal Farm, and Adding Machine Museum. In the meantime, he has been spending his free time contemplating the deep inner truth of Sturgeon's Law.

Diane Kurilecz likes to feed people but doesn't have room for them all at her house. We let her vent her frustrated culinary tendencies at the Readercon Con Suite. She has grand plans for her website, and had better get going on it now that she's published the address. She has a house in Cary, North Carolina, and earns the mortgage money working as a migrant programmer.

B. Diane Martin lives with two Shaw men, and marvels at the maturity of one and the childishness of the other. Which is which varies on a daily basis.

Mike Matthew got involved with organized fandom fairly late, and was delighted to learn how much fun it is. He is still convinced that one meets the nicest people at Readercon.

Lois Powers thinks that all books suggesting that she simplify her life should have been written in the '70s before she had children. Convinced she has been grandfathered (or grandmothered?) and is therefore exempt from such modern platitudes, she has decided to write a book titled "Complicate your Life." Lois has joined the Readercon Committee to begin research.

David G. Shaw continues to read the Human Genome Project reports in a desperate attempt to discover the location of the *sleep* marker.

Miles Martin Shaw probably met you at Readercon 11, which he attended at the age of 3 months. Reintroduce yourself if you see him; he'll be all too happy to drool on you.

David Walrath spends most of his spare time traveling to the 18th century, but spends some time working on Readercon, his house, and corrupting children and one small monkey (www.helping-handsmonkeys.org).

Amy West started out 18 years ago as a volunteer door guard at a Boskone Art Show. She and her husband Karl fell in love at Nolacon, the New Orleans Worldcon. Readercon was the one convention she actually attended panels at, but she knew there was more to it, so she volunteered to help out. In real life, she's been a lexicographer, a proofreader and copy editor, and a stay-at-home mom.

Alexander E. Wurst attended last year's Readercon in utero. He's not convinced that this year's con will be any more pleasant.

Karl R. Wurst went to Readercon 7 to see Ursula K. LeGuin. Within minutes of his arrival he was working at Registration and it took him until this year to finally escape — unfortunately he had to become con chair to do it. He's just finished his first year as a college professor, and still hasn't learned his lesson about chairing — next up he's chairing a professional conference.

Nicholas K. Wurst attended his first Readercon at the tender age of six weeks. His primary committee responsibility is to share his Legos with Eric Van at meetings.

The following committee members are being held in an undisclosed location, awaiting deportation: Adina Adler, Shoshanna Green, Sheila Lightsey, Kathei Logue, Susan Murosako, John O'Neil, Eric Van.



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