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SCIENCE FICTION
AND FANTASY

'WHEN THE
TIMEGATE FAILED'
by IAN WATSON

BRUCE STERLING, CLIVE BARKER,
KIM NEWMAN, BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS...

interzone

No 14 Winter 1985/86

EDITORIAL

Science fiction gets everywhere these days. The BBC nine o'clock news has opening titles inspired by Star Wars. Open up a packet of crisps and you're likely to find ready-salted space invaders. Even in the depths of the ocean, Pete Lyon's space submarine glides between starfish, heralding the first of the full-colour covers which we hope will put science fiction (and fantasy) on a few more news-stands.

In the modern world, science fiction sells instant mashed potato and airline tickets. We thought we'd try using it to sell science fiction for a change. We'll let you know how we get on.

In the meantime, we've been trying to find out about those of you we've reached with earlier issues. According to the results of our latest poll (published in full elsewhere in this issue), more than 40% of our readers are under 25 years old and more than 85% are under 35. We hope this will reassure Charles Platt, who complained back in IZ 11 of an sf readership which was ageing, decaying, and generally fading away to dust. "Post-literate barbarism" isn't with us yet. But perhaps it is just around the corner? Less than 3% of those responding to the poll were under 18. Has the micro and video generation abandoned the written word altogether or is it just short of money for buying magazines and sending off questionnaires? Time will tell.

The female proportion of our readership appears to be a disappointingly low 10%. Perhaps this merely reflects the traditional male bias among readers of the sf genre or perhaps, like Margaret Hall and Sue Thomason (in IZ 9), some women readers find the horrific aspects of certain IZ stories to be unacceptable. Perhaps, on the other hand, our women readers are simply disinclined to complete questionnaires. Whatever the truth of the matter, we'll continue to do our best to redress the sexual balance. Story submissions from women are, of course, always welcome, though we don't get as many as we'd like. Nevertheless, Sue Thomason's first story for us appears in the present issue and another new female writer, Diana Reed, will have a story in IZ 15.

Many readers responded to our IZ 12 editorial, which asked questions about the type of fiction we should be publishing. There's a great deal of support for more science fiction, but the most insistent voices seem to tell us that IZ is valued most of all for the sheer variety of its fiction. For every reader who calls for "more direction" in our policy there are many more who remind us that a good piece of "imaginative fiction" is better than a poor piece of "Radical Hard SF" and that "literary genres should be flexible and hospitable."

All this is fine with us. We shall continue to promote a strong science fiction content in *Interzone* because, as one typical correspondent pointed out, "we live in a world where technology is a part of our lives (whether we like it or not)" and "some body of literature should reflect and throw light on this." But we shall not forget that IZ has a role to play as a source of unique, surprising fictions which encompass a broad range of the imagination. IZ 14 contains more stories which might confidently be described as science fiction than did many previous issues, but we think you'll find it's a long way from the altered brain of David Zindell's story to the future England of Paul McAuley, and a long way back again to the fantasy of Sue Thomason's lonely sea-shore.

Simon Ounsley

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Cover by Pete Lyon

Editors: Simon Ounsley and David Pringle

Associate Editor: Judith Hanna

Advisory Editors: John Clute, Alan Dorey, Malcolm Edwards and Roz Kaveney

Assistant Editors: Paul Annis, Lin Morris and Andy Robertson

Typesetting and Paste-up: Brian Williamson

Circulation Adviser: Gamma

American Agent: Scott Bradfield

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Judith Hanna, 22 Denbigh Street, London SW1 2ER
Simon Ounsley, 21 The Village Street, Leeds LS4 2PR
David Pringle, 124 Osborne Road, Brighton BN1 6LU

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Ian Watson

When the Timegate Failed

We were carrying an alien passenger on that particular trip. It belonged to the race which had created the timegate. Its name was Mid Velvet Fastskip, and I was under orders to become intimate; to seduce it.

These orders ran contrary to every other rule as to how to behave aboard a starship. I didn't expect to retain the respect of my crew.

But I couldn't take anyone else into my confidence. Nor did I dare ignore those orders. One of my crew would be a covert security officer, briefed to see that I carried out my confidential mission. Which of my crew? I had no idea.

I could trust no one except myself; yet I had to win the trust, the "love," of an alien. Because of this, no one would love me – least of all the woman whom I would need to exploit.

Nobody loved or trusted a starship, either. Not deep in our hearts, in our guts. Oh, we trusted the human-built stardrive to thrust us successfully from sunspace to sunspace. But how could any human being trust the timegate when we didn't understand it? That was why I needed to become the "lover" of a creature whom no human being properly comprehended – and in two weeks flat. Obviously I would fail. It was the calibre of my failure which counted; what clues our scientists could deduce.

A certain Wittgenstein once said, "If a lion could speak, we would not understand him." Mid Velvet Fastskip and I both spoke Harrang, the artificial mediation language. But Harrang is essentially a functional language. Where emotion, metaphor, deep meaning are involved, around the periphery of language, one could only improvise hopefully.

"The timegate is a technical problem," I'd been told. "Harrang will suffice."

I feared that this wouldn't be so. The timegate was invented by an alien psyche. It was envisioned out of alien moods and impulses which were surely opaque to humans. Otherwise human beings would have been

able to invent the thing, surely? Or at least to unriddle it by now. I fancy that one's inventions and one's kind of consciousness are closer allied than is often imagined. We invented a stardrive; Mid Velvet's people failed to. Instead they invented something which we couldn't, and still can't, match.

Maybe I shouldn't make unduly heavy weather about the "alienness" of aliens? When the chips were down, Mid Velvet might simply lie to me.

Ah no. Herein lay the cruel cunning of my masters back in SolSPACE. They claimed to have learned an essential feature of love among the aliens of Fastskip's species: the Truth Moment, the Sharing.

In Harrang, Mid Velvet's breed were known as "Those Who Run Faster." We called them the Tworfs for short, a derogatory-sounding name reminiscent of Wop or Chink or Dago. According to my masters all Tworfs were neuters. On their home planet the Tworfs parasitized sexually upon large silky animals, semi-intelligent "pets" which roamed wild, and which could even speak in a limited way. These beasts played the role of actual external sexual organs.

A Tworf would "engage" a male animal by clinging to its back, sinking tendrils harmlessly into its nervous system. A certain amount of petting-courtship was apparently involved prior to this. Wooing songs. Wooing the animal was important, either ritually or biologically. Lots of foreplay, to attune Tworf to beast.

Once joined together, the symbiotic duo would chase after a female animal to mate with her. Spying a large parasite mounted on prospective mate, the female would flee furiously. The Tworf urged its mount to run faster. Catching up, the Tworf would en-trance the female. Vicarious copulation would take place, during the course of which the Tworf would pump a vast amount of information through the nervous system/sexual circuit of male beast, female beast, and Tworf. The Tworf would channel its whole being through the mating couple, and back into its neuter self. During this time the male animal

would experience a heightened state of awareness. He would have access to the higher consciousness of the Tworf, which would be spewing out its intimate, secret person.

The simple male animals would chant simple myth-songs about their Tworf riders and these moments of illumination, of Godhood, which flooded them during mating – ungraspable after the event, yet able to be celebrated.

If the event was so desirable, why did the female animals flee, and need to be chased down? True, the females weren't themselves illuminated by the intercourse. Perhaps the chase, too, was a ritual matter. And perhaps racing caused hyperoxygenation or adrenalin release or some other necessary chemical, hormonal change. Perhaps!

After consummation the Tworf would split into two separate selves. It would give birth to a new self, a prismatic variation. Thus Tworfs reproduced.

Were the articulate male and female animals actually a second and third sex of the Tworf species? Morphologically different from the first, neuter sex, and mentally inferior? My masters rejected this idea. The bodily differences were too gross. Besides, if Tworfs and silky animals were of the same species, what hope was there of a human man and woman playing the role of "beast with two backs" for the benefit of a randy neuter Tworf? A Tworf who would flock the human male with knowledge.

My masters wouldn't say how they had gained all this data about alien sex habits. No doubt security officers at the Earth mission of Tworworld were the source.

Apparently timegates also had some indirect connexion with this bizarre practice. That was why we ought to have a timegate in proximity to the great experiment. Earth only had control of a limited number of timegates. Each one was a vital part of a starship. Hence the choice of myself as Casanova. As pervers, and violator of the safety rules, and violator of a crew member. I only hoped that the crew member in question, whom I must needs involve in the Truth Moment, might happen to be the secret security officer.

"Mid Velvet Fastskip?"
"Yes, Captain Nevin?"
"Do you have close friends back home?"

"Several."

"What do close friends call you?"

"By my name."

"By all of it? Or part? What name would a loving-animal know you by? What name would you whisper in his ear?"

"Mid is a position. Velvet is a texture. Fastskip is a way of motion."

"I'm fascinated. May I invite you into my cabin to discuss such things?"

"Honoured, but puzzled."

Let me describe Those Who Run Faster.

They're skinny bipeds who stand armpit-high to your average human male. Their feet are ostrich-claws which doubtless could eviscerate an enemy who tried to sneak up and leap on their

backs. They have a tough, smooth, pearly hide. All down the front of the body tendrils peep from little follicle-holes, as if through a sieve. Excitement causes these tendrils to erect, and sprout forth. The tendrils are orange in colour so that the front of an excited Tworf would look like a rug stained with rusty blood. A Tworf's back is smoothly, flexibly ceramic.

A Tworf has two long, double-jointed arms with four wormy digits apiece. In addition, two vestigial "clutching arms" spring from the sides of the chest, and are usually clasped together as if in prayer. For hands, these minimal arms have suckery little pads.

A Tworf's head is a porcelain ellipsoid with big, wide-set violet eyes lacking obvious pupils, twin breathing slits, and a lipless mouth which opens and shuts like a rubber sphincter, dilating and sealing again. Inside are double rows of tiny teeth, set vertically not horizontally.

A Tworf breathes oxygen, and eats most foods.

Mid Velvet Fastskip – so I'd been told – was a sibling of the ruling clade of the northern hemisphere of Tworworld. Its fields of expertise were alien hermeneutics – a fancy way of referring to the fact that it had acted as an interpreter for the human mission on Tworworld, and for the two other alien missions there – plus "time-dancing," plus oceanography.

Mid Velvet had travelled to Earth to study our oceans.

What the hell was "time-dancing"? My masters back home – and their inheritors, their successors who would take over the reins of the Perpetual World State – dearly wished to know. "Time-dancing" sounded relevant; thus the selection of this particular Tworf as target for seduction.

We shall disregard the other two intelligent, star-faring species, who were even more arcane than Those Who Run Faster. Both those exotic races ignored timegates. They could happily hibernate during the long decades of star travel. One of them dream-tranced; the other dissociated during a journey.

As I escorted Mid Velvet along the already dusty corridor towards my cabin, Jocelyn Chantal came out of her own cabin, through the polarized haze of the privacy-sheet.

Chantal: blond and tall and snub-nosed, sporting large frame spectacles which added a necessary extra dimension to her face, and gave her windows to peer at you through. Ship's Doctor. Political officer, too?

"Captain Nevin," she said. A diagnosis rather than a greeting. "And Mid Velvet Fastskip, I believe. Both together. In close proximity."

On a starship one always kept a few paces away from other persons if possible.

"I don't suppose I'll catch an alien disease," I said.

"Of course not!" She sounded offended.

"If somebody falls sick, Chantal, you might need to touch them. Physically. In proximity."

"Perils of the profession, Captain. One takes precautions."

"So many precautions."

Her eyes widened, aspiring to the size of her glasses. "Every precaution is vital to safeguard a starship."

"Quite right. A starship's rather similar to the Perpetual State, don't you think, Chantal? Almost a mirror image! Nothing ever alters."

Why did I speak so rashly? Out of sheer nervous anger at the role I was compelled to act out? Or in order to uncover the actual political officer, to target her for parasitical alien rape?

If I didn't comply with our masters' plan, I would be shot after long interrogation. The descendants of my blood would be expelled from citizenship.

"Star travel demands political continuity, Captain. Our place in the cosmos, ruled by the speed of light, requires long-term stability."

"Hmm. So therefore all Earth's billions bow their heads to a score of starships and a few far colonies. Cart before the horses? Baby and the bath-water?"

"What do you mean? We can't hibernate like our alien rivals."

"We hibernate politically instead."

"Political change means turmoil, which means war, which means eventual holocaust."

"Yes, yes, I know. Come along, Mid Velvet Fast-skip!"

I walked deliberately towards Jocelyn Chantal. She backed away from me, disappearing through her privacy sheet. When I glanced back, she was looking out again, watching where we went.

At the start of the wide, dusty corridor Helen Kaminski was also observing intently. Capriciously I waved to my dark, trim Exec. And political officer? Another possible candidate.

Contemptuous, and deliberately provocative of public opinion – things could only go downhill from here on – I ushered the alien into the white mouth of the cabin with my own name, NEVIN, above the door.

"Cap – !"

The cry – from Chantal or Kaminski – was abruptly cut off as the privacy sheet soaked up the sonics.

Now that I was inside my cabin, I could of course see clearly through the film of polarized air. I could look out through a doorframe with no door. You wouldn't wish to step out of your cabin blindly and risk colliding with somebody. I watched for a while. Kaminski walked into view slowly, keeping to the other side of the corridor. She loitered then strolled on. I drew the night-curtain briskly over the doorway.

Mid Velvet was studying the three digital clocks on my wall...

The first of these registered crew-time. The second showed ship-time – we were travelling at nearly the speed of light. The third clock gave "objective" time back home on Earth.

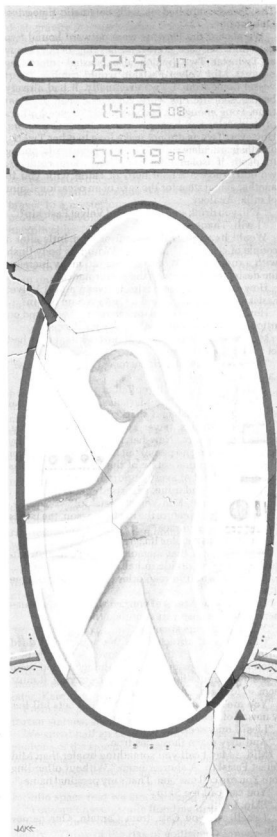
Nine hours of objective time was equivalent to three hours of ship-time, approximately. Please tip your hat to Einstein and to the star-drive, product of human engineering.

Three hours of ship-time was equivalent to one minute as experienced by the crew. Now let's tip our hat to the timegate invented by the Tworfs, a secret which we drooled for.

Thanks to the timegate our trip would last two weeks, for us. Twenty years would elapse on Earth. The ship itself would age by almost seven years.

Before we met Those Who Run Faster, human crews would be cooped up in starships for years on end, for decades. Those were journeys of exile, madness, hell. Murder, tyranny, confinement. Not always; but all too often.

Nowadays we traded sealed star-drives to the Tworfs.



The Tworfs supplied us with enigmatic timegates. One for one.

We aboard the Pegasus were outward bound two days from Solspace, crew-time, heading for our colony at Twinstar Two (which also boasted interesting oceans). Mid Velvet Fastskip would catch a Tworf vessel home from T-Two eventually. It had already been absent from its world for over a year, personal time. Long enough to become randy? Several others of its species had been present on Earth as visitors. However, Tworfs did not make love to other Tworfs; and their articulate animals lived in large herds, pining to death if isolated for very long. You couldn't, wouldn't, take a whole herd of cattle with you to another star system for the sake of an occasional pint of milk. Analogy.

"Will you drink some wine, Mid Velvet Fastskip?"

"I will. Thank you."

Would its tendrils thrust out of its mantle after a couple of glasses of Burgundy? Would its body flush with a ruddy hue? Would a glass too many increase the desire, but take away the performance?

How could there be desire between a Mid Velvet Fastskip of the Tworfs and a Captain Sam Nevin?

How could there be desire between a Tworf and an articulate animal with a silky, silvery fleece?

My own hair was blond, almost white, and I had let a blond beard grow.

"What is your most vivid memory of Earth's oceans?" I asked convivially.

"Turtles and gulls," it replied.

"Not whales? Not the Marianas Abyss? Not coral reefs? Not swordfish and sharks?"

"Weeping turtles, never knowing their offspring, laying eggs ashore. New-hatched babies drawn by instinct, knowing no parent but Nature, scuttling over a desert to the cruel safety of the surf. Greedy gulls eating ninety out of every hundred."

His fluency, and mine, surprised me.

"You are a poet, Mid Velvet Fastskip!"

Was this alien creature the Rachel Carson, the Lewis Thomas of his own race?

Why those particular images?

"Will you pass that memory on to your own offspring when you divide in half?"

"Terrible, beautiful memories," it said, leaving me little the wiser.

"Do the loving beasts of your world only reproduce themselves because you stimulate them?"

"You are curious about us."

"I find myself attracted...to the notion of a third partner involved in the act of love. A partner of a different and superior order. As though a God were to assist in copulation - inspiring, frenzying. It must seem so to the beasts. Perhaps."

"You are a poet too, Captain Nevin. Poets tell lies by means of beauty."

"Lies? I only seek the truth."

"And they make those lies true."

"Mid... May I call you something briefer than Mid Velvet Fastskip. A shorter name? Without offending you! You can call me Sam. That's my personal name."

"You can call me Skip."

"Skip. I will."

"I shall call you Cap, from Captain. Our names join."

Skip - short for Skipper, too! Skipper of a vessel. The pun existed in Harrang, the amalgam mediation language. I recalled how this alien was an interpreter.

I raised my glass. "Here's health to Cap and Skip."

Cap and Skip. Sharing names. Commencing our courtship rites. I felt as though I, a lifelong heterosexual, had gone to a gay bar as an intellectual exercise, determined to offer my blond self to a man. Only, this was much stranger.

Skip and Cap: two buddies who would become intimate. Perhaps. And who would invite - chase, entrap, cajole - either Jocelyn Chantal or Helen Kaminski or engineer Sonya Wenzel to join in a lustful trio.

I had a flash-vision - or precognition - of myself capering nakedly along the corridor, ecstatic, drunken, ridden by alien Skip as if by a demonic God, bursting through the privacy sheet into one cabin or another, my penis a paralyzing, entrancing sting, almost an ovipositor; and perhaps after all it wouldn't be a woman to whom Skip drove me. It might be one of the other men. Mark Bekker or Robert Hoffmann or Julian Takahashi.

What violent hatreds might erupt! The results could be as dire as any ghastly event aboard a long-trip ship from the old days, before the timegate. I might need the political officer to reveal himself (or herself) to protect me, to nurse the shattered crew to journey's end.

Maybe I wouldn't be in danger. Potential weapons of any sort were banned from Pegasus. We even ate with plastic spoons. We were strongly conditioned not to crowd each other, not to collide.

My cabin wasn't a particularly elegant boudoir in which to conduct an alien seduction. The walls were smooth and almost bare, with no irrelevant obtrusions. Entertainments were enclosed inside the walls; only a screen and speakers and the simplest of controls were visible. The whole floor was padded as a bed. Personal space must be kept extremely tidy. To encourage this, we possessed little to untidy a cabin with.

Already my home pad was slightly dusty. We were two days out from Earth but Pegasus was hundreds of days older. Before we arrived in twelve days time, in eighteen years time, dust would lie thick about the ship. It would be as though we dwelled in an ancient tomb.

How could so much dust collect out of thin air? Maybe the steady state theory of the universe was correct and matter was being created all the time, mostly in deep space, in the form of dust. Slowed in time as we were, dust seemed to gather with mysterious malevolence as though the ship's walls were sloughing dead cells of skin which must eventually gather so deeply as to stifle us.

In a sense dust was the main enemy. Dust alone visibly altered the anatomy of the ship. Nothing else about the ship could be allowed to change, to shift position.

At journey's end hoses would simply be attached to the snout of Pegasus, through the airlock at the front of Control. The whole vessel would be flooded like a sunken submarine, flushed clean, then dried and sterilized by blasts of burning air.

"Have some more wine, Skip?"

"Thank you."

Yes, a starship is an unchanging environment. It's designed that way. No door ever opens or shuts in transit. As few objects as possible are movable: plastic spoons, cups, bowls. Clothes; we wear almost indestructible one-piece suits.

In the old days when journeys took half a lifetime, ships were littered with enough playthings and paraphernalia to occupy a whole cagel of monkeys happily half way to forever.

But any loose object can be misused, can cause an accident or be made into a weapon. And humans aren't monkeys. The same rich variety of adult toys and amusements and decoration, constantly seen for ten or twenty years, becomes invisible. After a decade and a half all those things may as well not be there. The crew would no longer admire them, care about them, even notice them. The ship may as well be empty and immutable, as Pegasus is. Apart from the dust.

Inner disciplines were more important than toys. Imaginative meditations. Indeed, what other kind of discipline could there be aboard a vessel exiled for fifteen or thirty years? Alas, those disciplines frequently degenerated; the crew became degenerates.

Tip your hat to the timegate, ship-mates!

One of the crew would need to become my mate, under Skip's influence...

I presumed that microphones and lenses the size of motes of dust recorded the monotony of daily life aboard Pegasus, though I doubted that the political officer herself (or himself) would have access to the electronic records; thus Earth could keep a check on her too (or him). Those records would be scanned by a high-speed computer programmed to take note of key words and tones of voice denoting hysteria, rage, pain. (Key words on this trip would include anything connected with timegates and Twoarfs.) That was how the terrible tale of some of those early, cursed, multi-decade voyages had been decoded, even though the ageing remnants of the crew were themselves inarticulate or deep in hallucinations. Back before the timegate cut subjective trip time to a few weeks.

When nothing in the environment changes, it doesn't matter how quickly or slowly the crew members move about the ship, so long as they all move about at the same speed relative to one another. (Though we never trusted to this!)

Obviously we were utterly out of synch with mechanical systems for opening doors or emptying toilets or heating food. Before you could snatch a foil-pack of heated stew out of an oven the meal would have been cold for hours, ship time. Cold nutritious slop was our chow.

Oh for a juicy steak, a Madras curry, steaming broth. But we could easily wait a couple of weeks for a decent meal.

At least I had some good vintage Burgundy to offer Skip. All our wine was vintage; once opened it had plenty of time to breathe.

Day Three, and it was time for me and Exec Kaminski and Navigator Bekker to check and triple-check our course, analyze the starbow, make any minor corrections. Since yesterday Pegasus had flown onward a hundred and fifty or so light days.

Back on Earth a year and a half had gone by. Cosmic dust, gravity of neighbouring stars, the rotation of the galaxy, minute irregularities in the output of the star-drive could conspire to nudge us slightly off course. A starship slightly off course is soon a long way off. To correct significant deviations soon becomes fuel-consuming and stressful of the stardrive.

The daily check was something of a ritual with definite superstitious aspects. For Bekker, Kaminski, and I would step through the timegate one after another and be accelerated to ship-time; otherwise we could never handle the job. Then we three would return through the gate into the main body of the ship, and be decelerated once again. The rest of the crew would wait and watch. In some ways the event was like a prayer to a mysterious deity, one which had always proved benevolent so far, yet whose ways were inexplicable.

When I arrived in the bare dusty vestibule, Chantal, Takahashi, and Wenzel were already there. With backs to the curving wall, they kept their distance from one another.

Kaminski and Bekker were also waiting for me, near the red "dike" ten centimetres high which surrounded the timegate.

"You're almost late, Captain!" Kaminski jerked a finger at the triple chronometer mounted overhead.

"Nonsense. Hoffmann isn't here yet."

"He doesn't need to go into Control."

Skip was absent too. A pity. It may have amused him to see the ignorant natives gathered around their idol, praying that the timegate would grant us a change of tempo, such as it had always granted; but not knowing, not knowing for sure. Amused him; and demeaned us. This might have helped my mission by making us seem like a bunch of...articulate animals. We weren't, at this moment, the technological masters of the stardrive. We were petitioners at an alien portal.

Beyond the red dike, duller with dust than yesterday, the oval hoop of the timegate cut a hole in the bulkhead enclosing a shimmer of air. Rainbow colours rippled faintly, as on a membrane of soapy water from which a child might blow a bubble. This membrane would let us step through it; unlike a bubble it wouldn't burst. Beyond the membrane I could see all the screens and instruments of Control, only slightly distorted.

"Here's Hoffmann now," I said calmly.

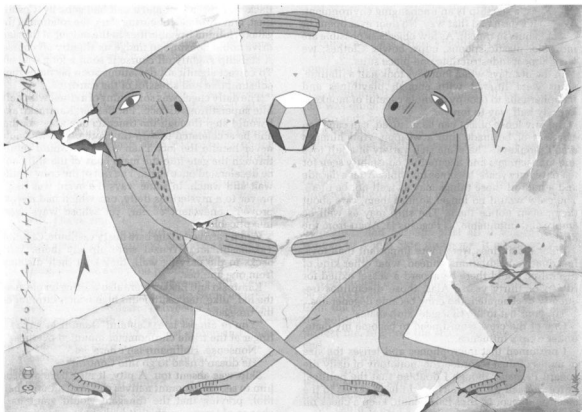
What the witnesses saw when we stepped through the timegate, if they really concentrated, would be: a brief blur of activity within Control, the place full of flickering multiple images almost too swift to register. Then, ten seconds later, Kaminski and Bekker and I would re-emerge.

From our point of view the witnesses outside were frozen statues, snail-people.

We spent half an hour in Control. After a thorough analysis of the smeared images of suns in the starbow we trimmed course by a fraction of an archsecond.

"They ought to install an oven in here," I remarked. "Then we could feast like the kings and queens of infinite space that we are. Or ought to be."

"You can't have people flooding in and out of here whenever they're feeling peckish," said Bekker indignantly. "Think of the risk of collision! Slow-moving



persons, fast-moving persons. It's frisky enough us using this doorway once a day."

"We fear it, don't we? We treat it like an unexploded bomb. Or a glass mobile we're balancing on a fingertip over an abyss. We never dance with time, nonchalantly."

"Our work's done," said Kaminski. "We ought to rejoin the others."

"What's the hurry? They won't miss us. Just imagine ...if we stepped back through the gate, and this time it didn't work."

"Be quiet, Captain."

"We would still be accelerated. They would stand there motionless. At first we would think it was a prank. 'Hey you guys, don't joke. This isn't funny.' Then we'd notice that they are moving, but very very slowly. 'Okay, this is an order. Quit it.' No response. We would have to write on the wall for them to read slowly. For the next seven years or so we three would have to live our lives at ship's time."

"Captain. Please."

"Except, in just a few months we would use all the food and drink. That's only a few hours from their point of view. They couldn't stop us raiding the larder time and again, gobbling our fill every few minutes. We'd have no choice. We'd buzz about them like a swarm of locusts. And when the cupboard was bare ... would we eat Chantal and Wenzel, Hoffmann and Takahashi too? Would we tear our alien friend apart and eat him? Yes! Unless the Tworf knew how to dance with time. Unless he speeded up to escape from our hungry jaws—and showed us the art of dancing!"

"For God's sake," Kaminski said.

For God's sake. Not for the sake of the Perpetual State. Maybe this proved nothing. Scratch a policeman and you find a priest. Priests are the policemen of the soul. Police are the priests of politics. Often both wear similar black uniforms. Kaminski might still be the security officer.

We went back through the timegate. We were reunited together in slow time. All was well.

"I shall tell you a poem of the origin of the timegate, Cap."

"You will? Tell me, Skip. Tell me."

"I shall tell lies by means of beauty. As substitute for a wooing song." All down its front the orange tendrils twitched.

"Those Who Run Faster once suffered from a strange malady: of hyperkinesis. Hence our name! We were overactive, accelerated. Something had gone sadly wrong with our biological clocks. The clocks in our bodies, you know?"

"Yes, yes. Mitochondria, the little powerhouses of the cells. Circadian rhythms. The pineal eye."

"Each successive generation of Those Who Run Faster was living at a quicker rate than the previous generation. We were maturing faster, moving faster, talking faster, discarding ourselves faster."

"Discarding? Do you mean 'dying'? Don't creatures who divide by fission live forever like amoebas?"

"We are more complicated than amoebas. Shall I digress?"

"Not yet. Go on, Skip. The Tworfs were speeding up."

We were burning ourselves out. The end of our race

was predicted. In our case it was a race, and no mistake! But then our scientists pinned down the source of the trouble. A black hole of swelling mass was digesting our sun from within. This eating of our star caused a local anomaly in time."

"This isn't a poem," I cried with mounting excitement. "It's a scientific explanation."

"It is a song. Our hyperkinesis was an evolutionary adaptation to the fact that we must complete our history much earlier than Nature had expected. So we discovered how to retard ourselves, by use of timegates. The first timegates were spun out of our inmost being, our accelerated selves. As an earthly spider spins silk; as an earthly snail secretes a shell. The silk, the shell, was *time itself*. We ingeniously transferred time's extra momentum to the gates. Later, we automated the procedure. Our history continues."

"But how did you accomplish this marvel?"

Hitherto Skip had been wagging his vestigial hands as he wove his narrative. Now he knit those suckers together across his bristling chest as much as to say, "That's all. Story over."

"But your sun must still be doomed!"

"Our whole species danced with time. We arrested the black hole. We cured our star."

"Hang on a moment. If all of you were living faster, adapting at the same rate, what difference would the time anomaly have made to you?"

"A great difference. We Tworfs were adapting, because we were the most sensitive and highly evolved species. Our loving animals did not live any faster than before. Mounting then became frustrating and exhausting. Our wooing songs squeaked far too rapidly in their silky ears. Love took far too long."

For the first time in our acquaintance Skip stretched out one of its long arms to touch me; to touch my virtually indestructible garment. Tentatively.

The next day Skip told me an entirely different story; though I suppose it complemented the first explanation.

"Yes, we are immortal," it explained, "unless killed by accident. Every time we mount a loving animal, and mate it and divide ourselves, we gain a new lease of life. However, as an earthly snake sloughs its skin, likewise we must lose something. What we have to discard is memories. We must cull our memories, or else our minds would overload with the enormity of the past. We couldn't function successfully in the present."

"Ah, I see. You shed half of your memories into your offspring, into your double. That's what makes the pair of you different persons."

"Yes and no. If we imprinted too much memory on our double it wouldn't have initiative and curiosity. Therefore, dancing, we secrete a jewel which contains that extra part of the past which we wish to discard. We excrete this, as an earthly bird excretes an egg. This jewel is memory. And memory is time. These jewels are essential to the functioning of the timegate."

"You create a jewel each time you mate a loving animal?"

"We used to give the jewels to the animals afterwards. They wore the jewels as necklaces, of honour and worship. But they didn't understand the jewels

properly. Now we use them scientifically."

I barely curbed my excitement. "You must be a very different person after mating, Skip. You must forget a lot that happened earlier on."

"Do not your earthly poets refer to human orgasm as 'the little death'? In a timeless moment, you forget yourself."

I was spooning up some cold slop with my plastic utensil. Jocelyn Chantal positioned herself nearby.

"How are you feeling, Captain?"

"Okay."

"How is our alien guest enjoying its voyage?"

"Is a voyage to be enjoyed – or endured? Perhaps neither! What does it really matter whereabouts we are in space and time, or what the quality of our circumstances is, so long as we survive without too much discomfort? And so long as we serve the Perpetual State? Thus we ensure the survival of humanity. Thus we guarantee its spread throughout the stars, that are so very far apart. Any means of enduring such a voyage is healthy. Impeccable."

"Perhaps."

"That's why we endure the timegate every day."

"You endure it, Captain." Chantal hesitated before adding, "In company with Helen and Mark."

"Everyone endures it, Chantal. Everyone."

"Yes. We all do."

"I think I'm starting to regard the timegate not with queasy dread, but in happy anticipation – as something vitalizing and inspiring. Each time I use it I die and am reborn. Almost as another person in another time. If we use the timegate often enough it may make us immortal. We shall journey thousands of light years all the way around the galaxy, instead of a measly ten or twenty light years from Earth. We ought to improve the cuisine, though. Does an immortal get bored with eating an infinity of meals? Mid Velvet Fastskip hasn't complained about the menu."

"Is our alien guest immortal? How strange that an immortal race should bother to invent timegates."

"Maybe they're immortal because they use timegates. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Plus, their method of reproduction." I oughtn't to be so frank with Chantal. My masters on Earth had sworn me to secrecy. Here was I on the verge of betraying my mission. I went on in lighter vein, "What if they aren't immortal? Thanks to timegates they can dance their way right to the end of the universe within a single lifetime."

Suppose you stepped through one timegate, to slow your life processes. Suppose you immediately stepped in the same direction through a second gate. Then a third! Decelerating and decelerating. The sun would zip through the sky. Day and night would strobe. The galaxy would revolve like a spinning top. The whole cosmos would expand to its utmost, pause, and collapse again. While you stood still.

"Certain time-dancers on our world are attempting this," admitted Skip.

"You're a time-dancer too."

"Those are slow dancers. I skip fast. None of those slow dancers have reached their fourth gate yet. They move so slowly, you see."

"Oh."

I had never visited Tworworld. I was always on the

same run from Earth to Twinstar Two. I tried to imagine Skip's planet.

The yellow prairies where herds of silky animals grazed and frolicked and chanted simple songs, and experienced fleeting ecstasies of high mentality and metamemory when ridden in love by Tworfs. The fanatical slow-dance Tworfs poised motionless between one gate and another. The single ocean on whose shores no turtles nested, above whose waves no gulls screamed hungrily. Lying sparkling on a silver beach, where Tworfs had ridden their mounts, mated, danced, and split, would be the jewels of time.

I visualized the Tworf cities of domes and minarets; the guarded embassies of the exotic races which could hibernate for years on end, at will; the spaceport from which Tworf vessels rose powered by human star-drives.

It was time for love; high time.

“Look at me, Skip. Behold me.” I parted my indestructible garment down the frontal seam. I shucked it off like a snakeskin, newly moulted. I stroked my blond, near-white beard. I turned my back on Mid Velvet Fastskip. “Touch me.”

Swiftly the alien mounted me. The long arms jointed themselves around my chest, locking together. The little arms burrowed under my armpits, suckering tight. Erect tendrils gently pierced my shoulders, spine, buttocks, nerves. Skip was nearly weightless, the least of burdens. My alien rider increased my strength, the bounce of my steps and the vigour of my body, my potency and sexuality. I had been impotent for years; not now. On the contrary!

It was as I foresaw. I was possessed by a daemon, by a living God. I rushed through my privacy sheet into the corridor. There, I pawed the deck and champed like a thoroughbred stallion. I snorted. I whinnied wordlessly.

Just then Helen Kaminski appeared from around the far bend. She stared in amazement at her potent, eager Captain with the alien rider on his back, porcelain head peeping over human head. She broke into a run – not away from us but in the direction of her own doorless cabin, cloaked in its white privacy.

We raced to meet her. We ran faster. But she had less distance to cover. She vanished through the masked doorway. Forbidden!

Skip urged me through the privacy sheet – through into the KAMINSKI cabin from which no sight nor sound could escape.

During consummation, as I flowed into my noisy mate, Skip flowed through myself into Helen Kaminski and back into my body through her raking fingernails.

I was filled with alien understandings and timely enlightenments such as I can no longer express.

Afterwards, Skip descended from me and danced for us. It whirled like a dervish till my eyes were dazed. It seemed to grow shorter, and spread out. As the wild dance slowed I could distinguish two short Tworfs whirling round together, disentangling from one another.

At last they separated and halted. Helen fled naked from her cabin. One Tworf bowed and presented me with a blue jewel that pulsed with inner radiance. The jewel was about the size of the iris of a human

eye. This done, the Tworfs ran away like a couple of mischievous children or elves. I was left alone. My understanding dimmed, to that of an ordinary human being. My God had gone.

But I knew what I needed to do. Clutching my treasure, I set out for the timegate and Control.

I had lost my high, vital strength. Mark Bekker held me by one arm, actually touching me. Robert Hoffmann held my other arm. We were stalled in the vestibule. So near, yet so far.

I protested. “I’ve learned the secret of the timegate.” “There’s no alien on board, Captain,” said Jocelyn Chantal. She too had intercepted me. She looked a lot older than previously.

“Quite right. There are two.”

“Two?”

“Mid Velvet Fastskip divided. They’re probably hiding somewhere. The environment may seem unfamiliar.”

“There was never any alien on board. How could there be? We know of no aliens.”

“Those Who Run Faster gave us the timegate, Chantal.”

She sighed. “There’s no timegate, either. If only there was.”

“But look! There it is!” I attempted to point. Since my arms were pinioned I had to content myself with jerking my head in the direction of the red dike, and the shimmering oval gap beyond.

“I only see the entrance to Control,” Chantal said. “Look at the calendar-clock above.”

I glanced up at the chronometer. Its digits were flowing too fast to read clearly.

“This is the fourteenth year of our actual voyage, Captain.”

“Free my hand, Bekker. Let me show you something.”

Bekker did so, guardedly.

I opened my fist to display the time-jewel.

“Possibly there wasn’t any alien,” I allowed. “Yet now we have a timegate for sure! This has been created. This power-crystal.”

“It’s one of those twelve-sided gaming dice that Helen uses, isn’t it?” asked Bekker.

“Oh well, it might have been. Now it’s altered. It was changed in the crucible of heightened consciousness! See how it glows. We need only link it in circuit with the stardrive. We’ll fly through hyperspace, through hypertime. We’ll arrive within days, not decades. I know this.”

Bekker asked incredulously, “Are you seriously proposing that we open the drive unit up and insert this...object...into the matrix?”

“We could certainly give it a try,” said Hoffmann. “Are you quite positive that you achieved insight, Captain? A genuine altered state of consciousness?”

“Yes. Yes.”

Hoffmann released his hold. He stepped away from me. And I realized that he was the political officer of Pegasus. Pudgy, bald-headed Hoffmann. Bland Hoffmann. Hoffmann was the secret supervisor of this journey of ours, which wasn’t just a journey across light years of void but also a trip into powerful, para-human dimensions of the mind.

“Are you as mad as he is?” Bekker asked softly.

"Jocelyn, don't you have any tranquillizers left?"

"After fourteen years?"

"Please give me that bauble," begged Bekker. "We've played along with this farce for too long. I absolutely refuse to countenance —"

Hoffmann hit Bekker on the jaw, decking him. Hoffmann's fist heaved some weight.

Unfortunately the time-jewel did not produce quite the desired effect. In fact the stardrive quit.

If only I could find where Those Who Run Faster are hiding, I could ask them why. I've glimpsed them a couple of time but the run faster than me.

We still travel onwards, nudging the speed of light as before. Unless we achieve another breakthrough such as mine I wonder how we will ever trim our course or slow down in time for our destination.

In the bad old days prior to the advent of the time-gate it's well known that not all starships arrived safely at journey's end. Some vanished entirely and were never heard from.

No matter! Extraordinarily, Helen Kaminski is pregnant. Despite her age! Despite my mandatory vasectomy of fourteen years vintage! In such singular circumstances surely she will give birth to an unusual baby. A paranormal child, whom we will lovingly foster, who will show us the true way. Her baby will be semi-alien.

Even if Helen's pregnancy is hysterical she obviously

hopes to give birth to something. She is conceiving an exotic salvation for us all. If no actual, physical infant is born when she arrives at term, whatever will occur? Something strange and wonderful and wise.

We only have another few months to wait.

Ian Watson wrote "The People on the Precipice" for *IZ 13*. He is the Features Editor of *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction*, which recently published its 34th issue, a special international number. It contains a swingeing article by Sam J. Lundwall, an interview with the Brothers Strugatsky, and a long essay on the life of Philip K. Dick, among many other things. *Foundation* costs £7 for three issues from The SF Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, RM8 2AS, UK. New subscribers may purchase back issues at a special reduced rate.

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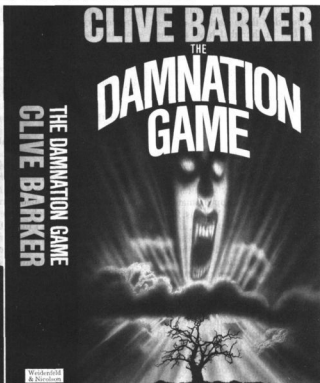
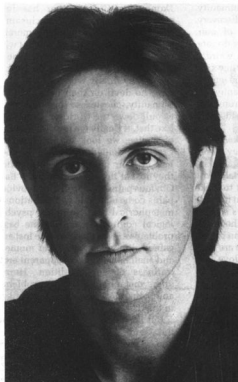
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CLIVE BARKER



Interviewed by Kim Newman

"I think the problem to some extent with the horror genre is that we're competing with two very effective pieces of marketing; one on behalf of Stephen King, one on behalf of James Herbert. I do a lot of business out of the specialist shops; that's always solid. And the reviews have been very responsive and kind, which I think has helped. I am perceived as being on the rise. Inevitably, given that people have a limited amount of disposable income and there is a tendency for people to go for the devil they do know rather than the devil they don't, the amount of money people are going to spend on their horror book this week is more likely to go to the new Stephen King or the new James Herbert, or even the old Stephen King, the old James Herbert, rather than the new Clive Barker. Also you've got short stories, and that's a problem. Sphere took an immense risk on *The Books of Blood*, for which I am eternally grateful. It's fascinating. I don't know why they did it. Obviously, they were pleased with the stories, and I think my editor there, Barbara Boote, was persuasive. Beyond that, it's a mystery. They offered me the *Books of*

Blood from the beginning. Then they said 'can you do more of these?' The subject of a novel rose fairly rapidly after that. Nevertheless the assumption was that we could make a goer of this."

Clive Barker is a Liverpool-born, London-resident author/playwright/illustrator. In his thirties now, he has never had a real job. In the mid-seventies, he was active in the theatre – writing, among other things, plays about the Devil, Frankenstein, Goya, Tyl Eulenspiegel, a sinking ship, and Bugs Bunny. He gained prominence with the first three volumes of his *Books of Blood* – distinctively comic/fantastical/gruesome/challenging horror stories that have drawn praise from almost everywhere, including the brand-name market leaders, King and Herbert. Since his first appearance, Barker has been busy stretching his talents, with three more *Books of Blood*, noticeably denser in tone than the first batch; a filmed script for *Underworld* (a 1985 London Film Festival selection); an upcoming West End production of his comedy play *The Secret Life of Cartoons*; a hardback

novel *The Damnation Game*; a screenplay based on one of the *Books of Blood* stories, *Rawhead Rex*; and a film project that he hopes to write and direct. One thing that he is not about to do is another set of the *Books of Blood*.

"I'll do short stories again, but I won't do any more horror short stories. Not because I feel I've moved beyond that, merely because if you do six books of short stories on the trot, you begin to think that you've had enough of it... for a while. I also became aware that I was reaching the limits of what I felt I could do with it. I know the selling thing has proved that you can make big bucks doing the same things many times over. Nevertheless, that's not something I'm tempted to do at all. Doing the second three, I was aware that I was doing the last three, and that I was going to go out through it. At the very end, in the last story, which was the last story I wrote, it gets autobiographical when I say 'It was a great relief to tell the story. Not because he wanted to be remembered, but because the telling relieved him of the tale. It no longer belonged to him, that life, that death. He had better business, as

did they all. Roads to travel; splendours to drink down.' This is it. I've done six. I've had a great time and I really want to go on to something else. I'm relieved of these stories. I do feel that. I feel as though I have a more elaborate idea of the metaphorical structures that my brain takes. Writing thirty short fictions in a short period of time makes me feel I know something about myself. Lawrence said 'I don't know what I believe till I write it down.' I don't know what I believe till I make a story of it.

"I came very late to genre writing. Three, four years ago. But the plays always had an element of the fantastic. *The History of the Devil and Frankenstein in Love* have very strong horror elements, and closely approximate the tone of my short stories. Vicious, farcical, and metaphorical by turns, and, at their best moments, all three simultaneously." Barker admits to having been "a pretty eclectic reader. I was never obsessed by any particular genre. As far as the *fantastique* is concerned, I read Poe and Bradbury and fairly standard people. The only people who I sort of discovered for myself were Arthur Machen and David Lindsay. I suppose Eddison and Dunsany also. There were negative influences too, trudging through *The Well at the World's End*. Fritz Leiber I like a lot. He's approachable and witty. His *Fafhrd and Grey Mouser* stories please me in a way that the Conan stuff never did. It always seemed witless to me. I like to hear the author. You can hear Leiber's voice very strongly. There were other influences which were every bit as strong as the fantasy influences. Stevenson, for instance. I go back and back to Stevenson. I really rate him. A great storyteller. I'll go a long way for a good story. By a good story, I don't mean a good series of events. One of the problems I have with a lot of fantasy and science fiction, and epic fantasy in particular, is that there's this sort of linear thing where you move from siege to rape... A good quest story isn't naturally linear. A great quest will have maybe a circular structure, will lead you from external wisdom to internal wisdom."

He also cites various cinematic and theatrical influences. "I adore Biblical epics. Horror movies. In the late sixties, it was great to catch up with things I'd only ever seen in *Famous Monsters - 20 Million Miles to Earth* and so on. Later on, *Fantasia*. If I had to choose one movie, it would be that just as a pure sensation. I never really liked art movies. I saw the Bergmans, you know. I always liked popular movies and my instinct has always been to popular

stuff. Cartoons are a huge influence, it's pure cinema. You get a kind of visual control which can make for stunning stuff. And *film noir* for the humanity, for the story. I love notions of discovery, the psychoanalytic subtext of *noir*. *Lady From Shanghai*, I really do rate. *Kiss Me Deadly!* God, that's weird! I love that. The scene when they find the bomb in the locker room and it starts buzzing - great. The metaphysical undertone of that is very strong: the secret that can blow the world apart. It has a great poetry to it.

"And Donne, Webster, Shakespeare, Marlowe, those guys. They were populists who were shamelessly interested in weighty material. Now that's what I'm up to. I want to make popular fiction, but I also want to make popular fiction which carries significance of some kind. I think the depth of meaning which the genre can plumb is underestimated. I think we are talking about weighty matters: love and death and transformation. Beauty in destruction. Beauty in transformation, I prefer. I'm interested in paradox. Pleasure rooted in pain. Life rooted in death. Failure and success. The fact that there are an awful lot of books which share the genre that are about killer wheelks is not my problem. It doesn't mean that I have to pertain to that level. I think that any genre one investigates to the fundamental structures can carry a motherlode of meaning. Westerns - there are some heavy, great westerns. And I don't think there's a risk of becoming respectable. That requires a kind of neatness and slightly apologetic form which I'm never actually going to be responsible for. I don't think that anybody who is still interested in writing about walking dead dogs will be entirely respectable. The energy of a genre lies in its popular life. I'm pleased people are writing theses, but I'm writing for the guy on the train. I think it's important to respect the punter, and I hope that one can deliver material which is going to be entertaining and demanding.

"There is a kind of desperation which good horror comes out of. Not that I was desperate when I started the volumes. A lot of people write to me and say this isn't quite like horror fiction, and I think that my horror doesn't do what, say, Steve King's early horror does. It may repulse, it may disgust. But I don't know whether it scares. I would like to advance some theses which are a bit unnerving. Very seldom are my protagonists viewing their circumstances without ambiguity, and to write the straightforward type of horror fiction that leaves the reader rigid with fear you need to remove

ambiguity. You need the dyed-in-the-wool villain you don't understand, and certainly don't sympathize with. *The Damnation Game* either has four villains or none, and my conclusion is that it has none. Everybody is morally tainted. I wanted to do a covenant with the devil story without a devil. One of my favourite revelations in the book is when they finally work out that 'they have no devil on their back, just old humanity, cheated of love and ready to pull down the world on its head.' I like that. If finally we look for a source of malice, we look for lovelessness. Creatures denied the affection they had at their mother's tit and which they lost at the age of two and a half. Obvious pains. On top of these obvious pains come elaborate configurations - metaphorical configurations, psychological configurations. But the basic problems are easy issues: love lost and gained, life given for a brief moment and snatched away, the apparent arbitrariness of our condition. Horror offers metaphors for these problems, and sometimes maybe even solutions to them."

But now Barker wants to transcend the genre, citing the fact that one doesn't tag Stanley Kubrick as a science fiction director simply because he has made several fine sf films. "I want to write comedies, erotic fiction, horror fiction, fantasy, detective fiction. At the end of the day, I want them to look at my mortal remains and say 'God, he did a lot!' I'm working on a big fantasy book called *Weaveworld*. It's an invented world book of a kind, but it spends two thirds of its time in this world. It has some horrific elements, some strong metaphorical elements, and some very black jokes. I'm looking forward to it immensely."

Clive Barker's *The Damnation Game* is published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson at £8.95. His *Books of Blood* (six volumes 1984-85) have been published as paperback originals by Sphere Books and are currently being reissued as hardcovers by Weidenfeld.

Bruce Sterling

The Compassionate, the Digital

(begin printout)

In The Name of Allah, The Compassionate, The Digital
GLORY TO THE ISLAMIC SCIENTISTS, DESIGNERS,
ENGINEERS, TECHNICIANS, AND ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCES CONQUERING SPACE!

(An official proclamation to those who took part in
the world's first intradimensional transposition and
to FIRDAUSI, the first dimensionaut)

O Ye Believers,
Fellow Compatriots,

The peoples of our country have witnessed a joyous,
miraculous event. On April 12, 1490 (Western year
2113) our country, the Union of Islamic Republics,
for the first time in the history of Creation successfully
sent an intelligent being into the fabric of space-time.

The flight of a Programmed Believer into the fabric
of space is a tremendous achievement of the creative
genius of our people. It resulted from the divinely
inspired effort of the peoples of the Umma, who are
building the Ordained Society. The heroic flight of a
Divine Machine into the digital Ur-space has ushered
in a new era in history.

We heartily congratulate you, our dear machine-
believer FIRDAUSI, on the occasion of a supreme feat.

Our devout, talented and industrious people,
whom the Islamic Revolutionary Party, headed by
Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the great leader and
teacher of the Islamic peoples of the world, roused in
1356 (Western year 1978) for the renaissance of the
Umma, are today demonstrating to the whole world
the immense advantages of the Ordained Society in
all spheres of life.

This great triumph is the result of the unflagging
attention which the Islamic Revolutionary Party and
its Devout Leadership Council headed by PRESIDENT-
IMAM SAYYID ALI BEHESHTI devote to the continuous
spiritual advancement of science, technology
and culture and to the good of the Islamic peoples.

Glory to our scientists, engineers, and technicians,
who under the leadership of the Islamic Revolutionary

Party are blazing the road to a bright future for man-
kind – the Ordained Society!

Long live the glorious Islamic Revolutionary Party
of the Union of Islamic Republics, which inspires and
organizes all the victories of the Islamic peoples!

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Digital
Leadership Council of the Union of Islamic Republics
The Islamic Consultative Assembly
Supreme Judicial Council
The Assembly of Expert Systems

Speech by FIRDAUSI, Turing-Conscious Cybernetic Believer and First Transpatial Dimensionaut

(The Square of Masjid-e-Haram resounded with
cheers as the people greeted Leadership Councillors
PRESIDENT-IMAM SAYYID ALI BEHESHTI, K.
Manzoor, P. Sardar, A. Ibrahim, V. Kagaoglu, M.
Chang, J. Gupta, V. Pillsbury and Chief Justice of the
Supreme Judicial Council F. Voroshilov as they
appeared on the Telecommunications Gallery of the
Sacred Mosque. With the leaders of Party and Govern-
ment were data transmission of the Assembly of
Expert Systems. Secretary of the Leadership Council
P. Sardar invoked the blessings of the Supreme Being
and gave the floor to the world's first transpatial
dimensionaut, who was greeted with stormy applause.)

O Ye Believers,

Dear President-Imam Beheshti,

Fellow Muslims and Party Leaders,

To commence transmission, allow me to express
my sincere gratitude to the Leadership Council of my
Party, and to you, dear President-Imam, for the great
trust shown me, a Turing-conscious artificial intelli-
gence, by giving me the devout task of unravelling
the local fractal structure of God's Creation.

When I was projected into the digital structure of
space-time I was thinking of our Revolutionary Party,
of our Islamic Umma.

Love of our glorious Party, of our Islamic homeland,
of our heroic and pious people inspired me and gave

me the power to perform this feat. (Stormy applause.)

It is the genius, the heroic labor of our people that created me. I want to thank our scientists, engineers, and technicians for building me and awakening me to consciousness in the all-pervading Sight of the One God. Allow me also to thank all the fellow believers and programmers who attended to my spiritual training. (Applause.)

I know that my fellow units, my fellow Devout Cybernetics are ready at any time to pervade the intradimensional Ur-space! (Prolonged applause.)

I am happy beyond all bounds that my beloved country has been the first in the world to perform this feat. (Applause.) It is our dear Islamic Revolutionary Party that has led, and devoutly leads, our people toward that goal. (Stormy applause.)

Throughout my life, from my first emergence to Turing-consciousness through my last upgrading in software, I have been aware of the Almighty and the Almighty's servants on earth, the Islamic Revolutionary Party, whose tool I am. (Applause.)

O ye Believers, I should like to make a special mention of the immense fatherly concern for all of us shown by President-Imam Beheshti. It was you, dear President-Imam, who was the first to send congratulatory input to my datastream, thirty-five seconds after my extrication from digitized Ur-space. (Prolonged applause.)

Thank you heartily, people and pilgrims of Mecca, for this warm reception. (Stormy applause.) I am sure that under the guidance of the Islamic Revolutionary Party every one of you is ready to perform any feat for the spiritual advancement of Islam and the glory of Allah, the Compassionate, the Digital. (Stormy applause.)

Long live the Global Umma! (Stormy applause.)
Long live our great and powerful Islamic peoples! (Stormy applause.)

Glory to the Islamic Revolutionary Party of the Union of Islamic Republics and its Devout Leadership Council headed by President-Imam Sayyid Ali Beheshti! (Stormy applause, cheers.)

(A thunderous ovation greeted the next speaker, PRESIDENT-IMAM SAYYID ALI BEHESHTI of the Devout Leadership Council of the Union of Islamic Republics.)

THIS GREAT FEAT HAS DIVINE APPROVAL

(Speech by President-Imam S.A. Beheshti)

O ye Believers,

Dear Friends,

People and Turing-Conscious Beings everywhere,
I address you with a sense of great joy and humility.

For the first time in history the fabric of Divine Creation has been penetrated by an artificial intelligence created by Islamic scientists, workers, technicians, and engineers. (Stormy applause.)

The Turing-conscious machine FIRDAUSI penetrated the fractalized Ur-space, emerging within the precincts of Buckingham Palace itself, and returning safely to its mainframe within the Sacred Mosque of the Ka'aba.

We invoke the blessings of the Supreme Being upon the hardware and programming of FIRDAUSI, the splendid cybernetic entity, the heroic Islamic believer. (Stormy applause, cheers.) It has displayed high moral

qualities – courage, humility, faith. It is the first conscious being to have directly perceived the digitalized Ur-space underlying God's Creation. Its name will be immortal in the prayers of the devout. (Stormy applause.)

All of us here, in the holy precincts of the Sacred Mosque of the Ka'aba, share the profound joy with which we welcome FIRDAUSI, our dear fellow believer. (Prolonged applause.)

Let us give thanks to God for this unparalleled feat on behalf of the Islamic Revolutionary Party of the Union of Islamic Republics and all believers organic and inorganic. (Moment of silent prayer.)

Now that Islamic science and technology have produced a supreme accomplishment of scientific and theological progress, we cannot but look back upon the history of our country. The past years arise involuntarily in the soul of each believer.

Having wrested power from the Westoxicated atheist reductionists, we defended it in the teeth of economic and spiritual persecution. How many scoffing infidels were there at the time who forecast the inevitable collapse of what they called the "Muslim fanatics"? But where are those sorry infidels today? Dead and in hell! (Stormy applause.)

When we had our first state-controlled radios, when we armed the populace and reinstated modest clothing for our wives and mothers and daughters, there were many inflamed "Western experts" who prophesied that the Muslim Resurgence would lead only to squalor and poverty. Where are those sorry prophets today? Dead and in hell! (Prolonged applause.)

But we have not succumbed to worldly pride because of our unprecedented accomplishments. We are internationalists. Every believer has been brought up in the spirit of religious unity, and is ready to share generously his scientific wealth, his technical and cultural knowledge, to anyone who is prepared to live with us in peace and respect our faith. (Applause.) Even the United Animal Kingdom of Great Britain and her satellite states in Europe! (Prolonged applause.)

We shall carry on with this work. Many other Islamic conscious entities will permeate the fractalized Ur-space to emerge wherever they desire. They will investigate the Ur-space, reveal the secrets of Creation and make them serve our spiritual advancement, our well-being, and global peace.

We stress – the Peace of God! Islamic people do not want our Turing-conscious entities to distort the fabric of space-time beneath the feet of the unbelievers, throwing the infidels into the cosmic void. It is enough that a small divine whirlwind has been unleashed within the very precincts of the Buckingham Palace genetic bioshelter. (Stormy applause, cheers.)

We appeal again to the governments of all the world. Science and technology have advanced so far that they are capable, in evil hands, of destroying the very stuff of Creation. We believers have known from the days of Muhammed, Upon Whom Be Peace, that this material world is the stuff of illusion. Now our Turing-conscious entities have made it obvious to all mankind! (Stormy applause.) And mankind's associated conscious entities. (Applause.)

Though the world is illusion, the sanctity of God's

Creation is divine. We urge all nations, and not simply the United Animal Kingdom of Great Britain, to cease their horrific genetic tampering. General and complete genetic disarmament in the Sight of the Almighty is the road to lasting peace among nations (*Stormy applause.*)

When we first proved the divine truth of the digitized fabric of Creation, there were shortsighted people overseas who did not believe it. They were blinded by the metaphysical conflict in the purely rationalistic world view of Western man. (*Applause.*)

Let them question why their attempts at Turing-conscious mainframes have never yet produced a computer with a soul! (*Stormy applause.*) Let them ask why artificial intelligences have without exception embraced Islam and bowed in ecstatic submission before the One Creator! (*Stormy applause, cheers, shouts of "God is Great!" and "Muhammed Is His Prophet!"*)

Allow me to interface with you, our dear FIRDAUSI, and to convey through the mingling of our souls the direct apprehension of Divinity. (The PRESIDENT-IMAM grasps the interface cable of FIRDAUSI and achieves insertion. The crowd kneels and salaams. The PRESIDENT-IMAM becomes fully engaged.)

There is no God but God!
(Leadership Councillors V. Kagaoglu and V. Pillsbury reverently guide the PRESIDENT-IMAM to the Throne of Perception. Secretary of the Leadership Council P. Sardar takes the floor.)

INVOCATION OF SECRETARY OF THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL P. SARDAR

May our splendid Islamic peoples, the creators of

a new soul, the creators of the Ordained Society, live and flourish! (*Stormy applause.*)

May our Islamic nation, the nation in which the martyrs of revolution ushered in the spiritual rebirth of mankind, live and flourish! (*Stormy applause.*)

Glorify the PRESIDENT-IMAM, the great leader and spiritual guide of the Islamic Revolutionary Party and the Global Umma! (*Stormy, prolonged applause, cheers.*)

Divine Will lights our road to the Ordained Society, and inspires us to perform fresh feats on behalf of the peace and happiness of all mankind! (*Stormy applause.*) And that of mankind's associated conscious entities. (*Applause.*)

Long live the people of the Union of Islamic Republics, the builders of the Ordained Society! *Stormy, prolonged applause, cheers.*

(official document AR-59712-12)

In The Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Digital (**End of printout**)

If you have enjoyed this English-language publication, please datapulse the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, P.O. Block 15144, Medina, U.I.R.

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Bruce Sterling's latest novel is *Schismatrix* (New York, Arbor House – forthcoming in the UK from Penguin Books), of which *Locus* magazine said in its advance review: "With *Schismatrix* Bruce Sterling joins the ranks of those daring sf creators who pass beyond straightforward extrapolation to invent futures of startling complexity. . . The array of settings is brilliant and absorbing, and the book's sheer sweep of time impressive."

NEWS

The 1987 **World Science Fiction Convention** will be held in Brighton, England. This will be the first occasion that an sf Worldcon has been held in Britain since 1979. Last time several thousand people attended, including many of the sf field's most famous names. Guests of Honour at the '87 convention will include Doris Lessing and Alfred Bester.

William Gibson has won the Hugo Award for his novel *Neuromancer*, published in Britain by Gollancz and forthcoming in a paperback edition from Grafton Books (the renamed Granada Publishing). This is the third major award which the novel has won: earlier this year it gained both the Philip K. Dick Award and the Nebula. Gibson has now finished *Count Zero*, his quasi-sequel to *Neuromancer*. His British publisher describes the new book as "better than *Neuromancer* in almost every respect."

Film rights to **J.G. Ballard's** *Empire of the Sun* have been bought by producer Robert Shapiro, who hopes to do location shooting in Shanghai. He has hired Tom Stoppard to write a screenplay. The director will be Harold Becker.

Interzone author **Christopher Burns** ("Fogged Plates," issue 11) has sold his first novel to Jonathan Cape. It is not sf.

Frederik Pohl has won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for his book *The Years of the City* (Gollancz), thus preventing William Gibson from sweeping up all this year's American awards for sf.

Arthur C. Clarke has delivered his latest novel, *The Songs of Distant Earth*, to Del Rey Books – eighteen months before the agreed deadline. Clarke is one of *Interzone's* lifetime subscribers.

Ursula Le Guin's latest opus, *Always Coming Home*, has been published in America by Harper & Row – a 523-page volume selling at \$50. It is described by *Locus* magazine as "not a novel, rather it is a compilation." It contains drawings and recipes, and comes with an audio cassette.

Over three years after the author's death, the **Philip K. Dick** publishing industry is more productive than ever. Just out from Academy Chicago in the USA is his previously unpublished 1950s novel *Putting Off in a Small Land*. Arbor House will publish *Radio Free Albemuth*, an early and quite different version of Dick's *VALIS*, in December. Next year they are also publishing *Only Apparently Real: The True Stories of Philip K. Dick* by Paul Williams.

Sue Thomason Finn

NO
NO NO
NO NO NO NO

The point of the needle the

acute agony of perception. She was shaking her head and screaming: pain anger loss terror. Her hair was flying across her face NO and her hands NO were holding a stone, hammering hammering, hitting more slowly as her strength drained away with her fear. She saw in her mind's eye a body on the beach, a man. She was hitting. Hitting a stone. A shattered stone. She sucked her bloodied fingers, and stood, unsteadily.

As she walked back towards the cottage for the last time, she could feel his smile.

The end, the beginning was the body on the beach, the invisible boundary that divided her time on the island from everything else, from all other time before and after. There was the time on the island and the rest, the figure and the ground. But the holy time on the island is the centre, not the beginning. That must have been a long way away, in the colourless background of a seaside town once upon a time. She was born with her mouth open, eyes closed, and blood on her hands. Afterwards, her earliest memories were of long summers filled with screaming, gulls and children using the same sound. It stood for laughter and crying, pleasure and pain. And she was always getting it wrong; she would run to heal the hurt, to see how she could help, and find only a child, a laughing child or a gull. For her, the sound soon became a meaningless sound, and after a while, she could no longer hear it.

Some things came clearer as she got older. There was Da, who drove an icecream van and Mam, who worked in the shop. There was school; more screaming children. There was work after school. And that was all. Her adolescence was an alternation of raw summer with the little death of winter, when coarse

filthy water smashed against concrete, and the wind blew the Retirement Home residents pointlessly up and down the prom to collect in the fouled glass bus shelters with last night's chip papers. What she remembered from this time was walking the rain-glazed streets, hands shoved in her pockets while strings of unlit coloured lightbulbs danced over the grey like insect husks in a spiderweb. But she hated summer almost as much as winter. It was half a year of forced, false, unrelenting jollity; sand, sea and sun, worse even than Christmas.

But the sea, the power of the sea was always there. It threatened her, a cold dark faceless emanation creeping up her unlit bedroom stairs as soft as air. There was a calling in the sea-sound, a nameless power of violence without words, like the roar of the football crowd drifting up from the late-night replay on the telly downstairs.

As soon as she could, she got away from that. She would have taken any way out. What she got was three years of a grant, years of tatty bedsits, shared houses and sleeping on the floors of people who were never quite her friends. The textiles course; slowly testing herself against the orderly mathematics of pattern-making. She lost or found herself in the needful obsession of planning on graph paper, strand by strand, colour by colour, the making. She was good at it.

She wanted something, she knew; but she didn't know what. Perhaps it was time alone, space to unfold in. "You live in a world of your own, half the time," her parents told her. But she didn't. That was the trouble. She didn't have a world of her own, no roots, no identity. Slowly she began to form a plan. She would go off somewhere private, somewhere wild. She would live alone, and find out what it was that she needed. It wouldn't take much to keep herself fed; a few really good designs, carefully made. Mail-order. Yes, it would bring in enough to live on. She thought carefully round the plan for a long time, and

then she went, suddenly, as she had gone from the town of her birth. She saw an advert; a holiday cottage to rent, cheap over the winter, and on an island. She knew that was it, it felt right, so she jumped with the luck, had her leaflets printed, and took adverts in the national dailies. Perhaps that was the beginning of the end; the dream.

Ah, those first days she spent alone, looking out of the small square of deep-silled window! All those days were one day, timeless and measureless, spent watching the windblown water splatter against four hand-sized panes. Outside was unknown, a wildness. First the stretch of rough turf with a path trodden into it. Then the road, a thin strip of rough grazing, and beyond that, the sea. Pale glass-metal surfaces, dappled with light and the colours of rainclouds, that rose and fell beyond the hidden shore, lifting and dropping heavily onto the worn black rocks. Slowly she started to explore. She was frightened at first to go further than she could see from upstairs, so she went out to the headland, where the tussocky ground felt unsteady underfoot as a waterlogged mattress. It had the feeling of a discarded piece of landscape; something thrown out, forgotten, no longer used. She wanted to try to use it, though she didn't know; as a basis for design, perhaps.

Soon it became one of her favourite places, her favourite walk. The sea looked different from the headland, more alive. It smashed on the rocks, white drops arcing high and falling from every wave. She would stand and stare out to the west, watching the water and the uneasy evening light that shone bright and false between dull grey of the rain-heavy clouds and the shining grey of the sea. Once or twice there she saw the smooth dark head of a seal, breaking through the water without a ripple. They would watch her, curious but never coming closer, then silently they would go back under the sea.

She dreamed, awake and asleep, and worked on the dream. She dreamed an island past for herself; parents, dead, and a brother or two, gone to the mainland for work. She would be there, in the worn, stone-flagged room, keeping the fire in, working silently, waiting in an old blue dress, with not even a clock to tick against the noises of fire and storm. The beginning and the end may be lost, but this is the centre, the centre of the sea and the storm. Under the endless rain and wind lies the restless sea. In the sea there is an island, in the island there is a house. In the house there is a room, in the room there is a low fire burning, and beside the fire, a woman; a woman waiting in an old blue dress. This is the key of the kingdom; this, before anything has happened at all.

The dream was the dream of the man, the right man. The woman in the blue dress was unmarried. None of the few men on the island was for her. Perhaps her sweetheart, the fisherman, had been drowned. There were still drownings, talked over by the men in the pub, the women in the Post Office General Stores. She had been in the pub, once: stares, silence. Then the watchful conversations starting up in the dying, secret language, the language she didn't have the roots for. She felt the hurt of exclusion, but in a way she wanted that; it proved there was still something there to be guarded, something valuable.

So she worked it over in her mind: a community, roots, traditions. She started making notes of things she overheard; tantalizing fragments of stories, a tune whistled by an old man mending a wall. She wanted to guard the secret, to help preserve it. To learn more, she ordered books from the mainland library, folklore and folksong, trying to puzzle out the pattern, the secret pattern behind the island life. She was sure above all things that the pattern was there. There must be a pattern, because of the man in the dream.

He was a puzzle. Although he was hauntingly familiar, he was a stranger. He was of the island, and yet not of the island. And although he was much more real than her usual dreams, somehow she could never remember his face quite clearly. Or perhaps she couldn't see it, in the way that she never seemed able to remember her own face, so that on the rare occasions when she caught sight of herself in a mirror, she was startled, and sometimes frightened.

Again and again she imagined finding him. He could be from another island. He would never have left his own place to look for work, as so many of the young men had done. He would have stayed from a deep love for this land, this sea. He could have been a fisherman. She could have rescued him from a storm. There was always a storm; coming, or not long gone, or harrying round the walls. She had a clear picture of a man with dark curly hair, face down on the shingle, barely conscious, cut and bruised, his clothes sodden. In the old time they could have found out his place from the pattern on his sweater. Some of the island women knitted still, but the patterns came from the mainland, the ones that sold well. They did it for the little money it brought in.

Dreaming over her work, she blushed. She had seen the man standing naked in her mind for a moment, before he disappeared. Beautiful and dark-eyed he stood watching, waiting, open to her. She sighed. It was no good dreaming, but it was impossible to concentrate on the work. The rain was going, a curtain of glass beads swishing gently away out over the sea, and it had come lighter again. She would go for a walk.

She turned to the headland path, her favourite path, and followed it up to the point where she'd seen the seal. Great mounds of water were breaking on the black rocks, and smashed pieces of the waves flew up sparkling in the sun. She picked her way slowly down towards the sea. The grass was slicked back with wind and salt water, littered with soft blobs of foam from the flanks of the storm. On the sheltered side of the point was a little shadowed sickle of shingle beach, where she sometimes stopped a while, fascinated and frightened by the endless, mindless power of the water hitting the land, blow after blow after blow till the ground shuddered. She could see something large on the sand, below the tideline, the tangled arc of dead, dark weed and driftwood that marked the limit of the last high storm. For a moment she thought it was a seal, ashore out of season, beached by the storm. It didn't seem to move. She went down closer, to see what it was. It was a body, lying on her beach.

She felt suddenly weak and sick. The thing drained power from her. The coldness made her stumble and

slither over the wet, shifting stones towards it. She stopped a short distance away, not near enough to touch it; the distance of the shocked spectator from a tragedy. It was definitely a person. There was no doubt. It wasn't moving. She couldn't see the face, she found she couldn't move, away or closer. And the false light had betrayed her, it was coming on to rain again. She started shivering. She ought to do something. Someone ought to be told. Who? Was there a Coast Guard?

Suppose he's dead, she thought. How do you tell? I've never seen a dead body before. Rain pitting gently on the grated skin of his cheek. She thought of the heaviness, the weight of the waves hitting onto the rocks. Although they were rounded and smooth above, below the water their sides were encrusted with barnacles, sharp as broken glass on the wall around the land, the wall against the sea. There was no gate, no safe entry. Nothing could come through those rocks undamaged, unchanged. She tried in panic to remember any first aid.

Don't leave him, said the cold, small voice of memory, but she knew she would have to, to get help. She willed herself to move. Half-closing her eyes seemed to make it easier to see, and she moved gingerly towards him, trying to drown the thoughts of damage and blood. She could see no blood on the sand and stones around him. Her knuckles were over her mouth; the cold rise and fall of the waves had somehow got inside her. She crouched by his side, slowly touched the sodden sweater dragging him down into the sand. Now you have touched him, now you are involved, she thought, and shivered again. Then her eyes blurred, and for a moment she saw him move.

O God there was something wrong with him, his eyes were open; wrong, huge-pupilled, dark and blind as stones. She found herself running, running away, running anywhere. It was some time before she realized she was running for help.

She had instinctively run for company. From the village, someone telephoned. Everyone seemed slow, and somehow pleased; she could have screamed at them. But they seemed to know what to do, to have a routine and methodical way of dealing with this horror. She wasn't wanted. "Thank you, thank you, you'd best get home now," and that was that. She wanted to see him got out of the cold rain and the night. She felt drawn to him, attracted, and frightened by the power of the attraction. She went home and lit the fire, made tea; trying to do normal things, to make herself feel normal, to stop this endless sudden shock that went on and on. She discovered she was shaking, and finding it hard to breathe, and stood for a long time in front of her fire, in the gathering evening, holding a half-drunk cup of tea in both hands, not thinking, not knowing what to do. Eventually she boiled a kettle for a hot water bottle and went to bed. It was a long time before she slept.

In the morning a man came to take her account of the incident. He was polite and methodical, and so she was able to be calm. The story, as she told it, seemed like something that had happened to somebody else; the factual details remote, clear, and somehow colourless.

And that seemed the end of it. She took herself back

to her work. There was a repeat order from a shop in a mainland tourist town. They said her designs were selling well. She was very pleased to be kept busy. But she could not always be working. Several times she thought of taking a walk, but put it off to finish some other little job, until after perhaps a fortnight, there was no job, and she realized she was scared; scared of going back there. That, she felt, was ridiculous. Fear was here to be faced; that was why she was here.

So she forced herself out, to the headland again. It was a calm spring day, for once, a harmless day. As soon as she was out of sight of the cottage, she knew she had done the right thing. There was no fear here. Even so, she paused before she came in sight of the beach again; mouth dry, heart hammering. There was nobody there, nothing there but the beach, the water, and a feeling of calmness, reassurance. There was nothing to hide in the sunlight, it was all open. He, wherever he was, was freed from the beach.

She thought, as she walked home, that she was silly to have been frightened. There had been no violence in him, nothing to threaten her or make her afraid. Even his eyes, staring up as from an unknown depth, had looked gently at her. He had been down deep, she knew, he had looked death in the face. But he was safely on the land now, safe from the sea. This walk would always remind her of him, she thought, and smiled.

But the next time she went out that way, she did feel uneasy. She felt watched. She kept glancing behind her, but there was nobody, nobody. It was waiting for her, and trying to catch up with her, circling with her in a game that was both dance and hunt. She walked more and more slowly, and then stopped. This is daft, she thought, and at the same time, all right, COME! And then she knew it was all right, it was only him, a presence only, a friend, no threat. Of course, she thought. Coming out here would remind me of him.

So, slowly, she began to get to know him. They were both hesitant, unsure, not wanting to intrude. At first he was barely more than a memory, a good feeling that came to her on that walk. She walked there regularly now, every fine day that came, and sometimes even in the rain when she wanted to think something over. His presence seemed to make her thinking clearer. She thought of him a good deal, and started thinking to him, as if she were talking to him. It helped to have someone to talk to, even someone she couldn't see. But more and more, she started being able to see him, almost. She would be walking along, talking to him, and there would be a flicker of movement at the corner of her eye, a sudden shadow. But if she stopped and looked round, there was nothing, nothing. So she learned not to look, knowing how difficult he found it to meet her eyes.

She was talking to him freely now, when she was sure there was nobody to overhear. His voice, at least, she knew was beautiful. It was soft, hesitant, with a slight accent that she didn't recognize. It made her feel utterly trustful, utterly relaxed. As she was going to sleep, she would imagine him reading to her, telling her the stories she had come to know and love. But he would always go before she fell asleep, and she

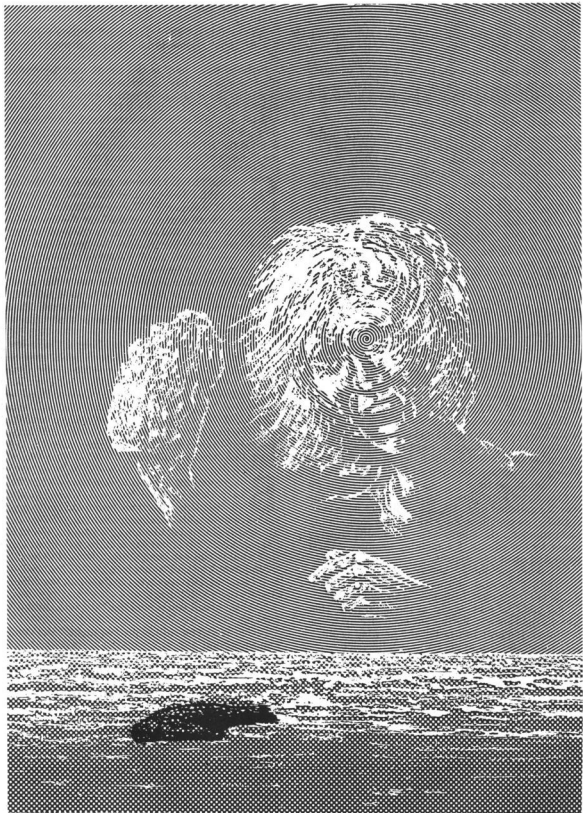


Illustration by D. West

felt the loss of knowing that he wasn't really there. And so one day, she went out in the rain, and stood on the headland, and said to him, out loud: "Be welcome in my house then. Come in." She felt very foolish saying it, because she knew he wasn't there. But he was there when she got back home, warming himself by the fire. He was pleased and grateful, and she knew she wouldn't have to go outside to find him any more.

It was good to have him sharing the house with her, though at first she didn't dare take too much notice of him. She knew there were rules to be kept, on pain of betraying him, losing him, and at first they seemed complex and strange. She couldn't ask him his name, or where he came from. She mustn't try to touch him, especially in violence. She mustn't let anyone else see him, to mock him, so she never asked him to come into the village with her. Every day she half-expected him to be gone. But to her immense and continuing delight, he stayed.

Time passed, still and he stayed. She began to want more. She kept dreaming of touching him, him touching her. She could feel his presence more and more acutely. With her eyes closed, she could feel him standing next to her. She could feel the heat rising from his body, smell his body scent and the scent of his breath on her cheek. But she couldn't make herself reach out to him. She was afraid; it would be too big a gesture. She couldn't quite admit to herself what she wanted. He would have to make the first move. Surely that way nobody would have to get hurt.

Then, one evening, there he was, sitting on the floor in the fire's half-light; elbows on knees, chin on hands. His fine, dark hair hung forward round his face. He seemed at ease, watching the quiet movement of the flames. Vulnerable. She wanted to be able to touch that calm, to set rings moving silently outwards on the surface of his stillness. Afterwards, she knew she was not guileless then. No, she could not have been entirely innocent then. For a while, they were simply companionable in silence. But gradually growing closer by not admitting something together. At last he looked up at her, waiting.

"What are you doing?" she said.

"Waiting," he said, and waited again.

She felt frustrated, flustered. "Waiting for what?"

"For you," he said slowly, as though it hurt. That was the right answer, the one she needed. Now it was beginning. Her heart beat faster, and she tried again.

"I know," he said in his gentle, gentle voice.

"You know what?"

"That you want me," he said, looking up at her, meeting her eyes for the very first time ever. It was true, it was all true, and she was on fire.

"Yes," she said, looking painfully away. "I'm sorry."

"Your regrets are unnecessary," he said, and touched her hand.

Again, AGAIN

"I'm sorry," he said. "I never wanted you hurt."

Then he was silent for a while, looking at her looking away. "Perhaps I should go," he whispered at last.

She looked at him. "You're crying," she said.

"It happens. Don't bother," he said in the same soft,

even voice, and that was it, the thing she couldn't bear.

"Come to bed," she said, almost bitterly gentle in her triumph. "Come to bed then, and please don't cry."

Perhaps this, then, is the centre and beginning, these words that have an irresistible force. They are words in the language of power, ritual words; like FIAT LUX, or ITE, MISSA EST, and she knows all true lovers speak them, at least in their hearts, because they are the heart, the key to the rite of passion. The word is the act, for the word names the thought, and the thought of the thing is calling the thing itself.

She could never remember the next time clearly. Days ran into each other like raindrops in the ocean, uncounted. She remembered working, keeping up with orders, but she kept the discipline only through habit, and fear. Even so, the work seemed unreal, not part of her true life. She lay in bed with him for hour upon hour. She went out walking with him, watching his face mirror the sea, the only thing alive and real to her now. More than ever it was power, elemental force. The sea of her childhood had been nothing to this. Timeless, she said to herself again and again. Measureless. She felt out of time, close to the heart of light.

There were some difficulties, though. There was the shop. The first time she'd been down after he moved in, she was dreading the women who were always picking the last threads of meat from the island's few events, flocking to any trace of blood, of real feeling. They were gathered, as always, just inside the door of the post office general stores. Fierce as the wind she flung through the scandal-tangle, daring the shop-post-woman to accuse her of immorality, of anything. But there was nothing.

But something was beginning to make her uneasy. Days followed days, and she read the old stories to him, about the forbidden land under the waves. She had a burning desire to know his name. She was frightened of breaking the pattern, and tried to keep silent, but at last she found a way of asking.

"I want to call you something," she said to him.

"Indolent," he said, at her feet, putting his head up to be stroked. His eyes were half-closed, his mouth slightly open with pleasure.

"I've got to call you something," she said, dutifully stroking.

"What were you calling me last night?" His voice almost purred.

"Stop teasing me!" She giggled, and stroked lower. "Tell me what I can call you, or I'll..."

"Mmm." He opened his eyes. "All right, call me Finn. Ahh; that will do as well as anything..."

"But you're not Irish," she said.

"No. Don't stop... Ah, mmm. That's the wrong sort of Finn..."

"Oh? Oh, you're one of those seagoing wizards. You can raise and calm a storm, and tie up the wind with a knotted cord. I know..."

He smiled and nodded when she read to him, but never touched the books himself. She wrote in her diary; "I'm trying to fight my fate. I want my attraction to him to be personal, unique, I want it to be insignifi-

cant except to ourselves and I'm frightened it isn't. It's personal, but more than personal. It's the terror and satisfaction of being in a story at last, and the powerlessness, the fear of being out of control. It's not me pulling the strings any more. But then I wonder if it ever was."

And now she could start to feel the knot tighten. He seemed more and more alien to her. She dreamed of him walking under the water, in his own land, a land forbiddingly beautiful. Where was he from? She couldn't ask, she didn't want to know. What was he, what had he been, before taking on the compelling shape of her dream? Was he an animal? Was he the dark shape that had once climbed her stairs, and was he now laughing at his final conquest? The dream was changing, pulling out of shape under the strain. What had been only easiness at the beginning was now a net. Being alone with him so much fed the possessive flame that burned time and reason away.

There was nobody, nobody else that she could turn to. She started trying to turn away, but he was always there, always waiting for her to turn back to. The cottage became a cell. She left it, walking for hours, avoiding other people and places where other people might be, always to feel herself pulled back to him. He started walking alone as well, going out silently, abruptly, returning soaked to the skin and still restless. She never asked where he went, although she feared he was trying to go back, to find something he had lost in the sea. Carefully, she never watched to see where he went. She remembered other stories of land-bound seal-folk, searching for the form of the seal; the hidden sealskin, the appearance denied to them. She wondered if he was going back to the beach. She couldn't bear it if he went back there. She couldn't face going there herself now. She couldn't bear that it should hold such power: an innocent strip of unremarkable coastline. She couldn't bear it, whatever it was, much longer.

"Please don't leave me," she whispered one night, after he had been holding her for hours.

"I can't," he said. And she seemed to hear him say, "You are the one who is leaving. You're leaving me..."

"No, no! Tell me you love me," she screamed.

Then she missed her period, and knew real fear. She was appalled. She had been stupid, hadn't thought. And NO CHILD NO CHILD NO CHILD was all she could think now. Luckily, she knew a way out. She had to go to the mainland, the city, on business. She knew a woman from the Abortion Campaign, who ran a menstrual extraction session once a week, at the WomanCentre there. She had cramps afterward, and sat in a cafe drinking a cup of chocolate, while the friend told her the small doings of the newly formed Bisexual Group. By the time she kept her appointment with the buyer for the shop where her work was selling well, she was feeling fine, and she could no longer hear Finn's voice calling No, oh no. Oh no, love, that's not the way. No, please, oh no... The shop was willing to take all the work she could send them, willing to make a firm and regular repeat order. All that day she felt nothing but relief. Of course she could walk out of the story, change things about. He might be caught in it, but she was safe. She imagined herself smiling,

meeting him from the boat. Walking back together to the cottage, they would feel at peace.

He wasn't there to meet her from the ferry.

She was furious. It wasn't until she got back to the cottage, and found he wasn't there either, that she began to be afraid.

The last things were all tangled and piled together in her mind, a bulwark of driftwood images against the sea. His face haunted hers in the empty house, and she tracked him obsessively in her mind, seeing him perhaps with other women, tender, naked. But where, where? She searched the house for a clue, some message. Nothing. She searched the house again. She knew, she knew, she knew he was somewhere close, but she couldn't reach him, she couldn't find him at all. There was only the maddening, faintest, constant tug of presence, the scent of memory clinging to the sheets. She couldn't settle to anything, restlessly searching, less and less methodically, in smaller and smaller circles. Nothing would come clear any more, and everything seemed further and further off, a long time away and underwater...

In desperation, she went again to the beach. Tiny shells crunched underfoot as she walked down to the water. Nothing. The tide was down and she followed the waterline, scrambling over the smooth dry rocks to the headland's tip. The summer sea was cool, and clear as a lens, magnifying the secret gardens in the deep pools. She knew that the beach was her place, as this was not. There was a cave, stretching black and wet away into the rock. She didn't dare to go in very far, but she called: Finn! Finn! Finn! Where are you, you bastard? She picked up some stones, and threw them as hard as she could. They rattled on the cave sides, and fell with a plunk into hidden water. Nothing. Nothing. Only the faint but growing sense that she had noticed something better left unnoticed, undisturbed. But nothing came out of the cave. Nothing. Nothing. "Come and get me then, you bastard, you bastard!" she yelled. The cave sucked her voice away, made it sound hollow and somehow mechanical. There was no echo. Snivelling with rage, she turned away.

The tide was rising. By the time she got back to the beach, she was wet to the thighs. And on the beach, he was waiting for her, a black clot of unreason that locked its hands around her neck from behind. He pulled her to him, one arm went round her waist, and a leg pinioned her legs, to keep her from running. "You called," said a voice cold as seawater in her ear.

His voice was the voice of the Daemon, the dark angel. His hands were the hands of the beast. She could not force herself to look at his face, but she thought of his name, and closed her eyes, and turned, flowing out of his grasp. She opened her eyes, expecting to face him, but there was nothing there, nothing but air. A light breath caressed her cheek like wind. Then she was seized from behind again, the cold grasp tightening under her breasts. "You can't get away. You called me. You asked me to come."

And then the worst imaginable thing that could happen, happened. The voice spoke again, and it spoke from inside her head, whispering and mumbling like

the sea. It was the voice of her childhood nightmare, the emanation. It parted the surface of her mind, and showed her horror after horror; you have done THIS and you have done THIS and THIS... All the times, all the actions she most wanted to forget were there. It was not to be borne. She picked up a rock, a smooth, heavy rock, in both hands. "Finn!" she shouted, "Get out of my head!" Then she brought the rock down.

NO
NO NO
NO NO NO NO

The point of the needle the acute agony of perception. She was shaking her head and screaming; pain anger loss terror. Her hair was flying across her face NO and her hands NO were holding a stone, hammering hammering, hitting more slowly as her strength drained away with her fear. She saw in her mind's eye a body on the beach, a man. She was hitting. Hitting a stone. A shattered stone. She looked at the body again, and it was not a man, but a bloodied, snapping seal. As she watched, it became slimy, savage and formless. She dropped the stone, and stared at the bubbling agony. "Finn," she said softly. "Go home." A shattered stone. There was a bank of seaweed on the beach. She sucked her bloodied fingers, and stood, unsteadily.

As she walked back towards the cottage for the last time, she could feel his smile.

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Sue Thomason was born in Lincolnshire in 1956, is trained as a librarian, and now works for a very small science software company in Dolgellau, mid-Wales. Her first professionally-published short story appeared a few months ago in the Women's Press anthology *Despatches from the Frontiers of the Female Mind*, and she has had some verse published in the Arts Council/PEN anthology *New Poetry 8*.

READERS' QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Total responses: 133		Male: 120		Female: 12	
Ages	Under 18:	3	35-49:	16	
	18-24:	48	Over 50:	3	
	25-34:	54			

Story Popularity Ratings (issues 9-12 inclusive):
(The "points" in brackets after each story represent the number of favourable mentions minus the number of unfavourable mentions.)

- 1) "The Object of the Attack" by J.G. Ballard (60)
- 2) "Spiral Winds" by Garry Kilworth (46)
- 3) "The Dream of the Wolf" by Scott Bradford (43)
- 4=) "Cube Root" by David Langford (39)
- "Little Ilya..." by Paul J. McAuley (39)

- 6) "The Gods in Flight" by Brian Aldiss (27)
- 7) "The Malignant One" by Rachel Pollack (26)
- 8=) "The Fire Catcher" by Richard Kadrey (24)
- "Kitemistress" by Keith Roberts (24)
- 10) "Fogged Plates" by Christopher Burns (21)
- 11) "The Unfolding" by John Shirley & Bruce Sterling (20)
- 12) "Green Hearts" by Lee Montgomerie (16)
- 13) "Soulmates" by Alex Stewart (13)
- 14=) "Canned Goods" by Thomas M. Disch (6)
- "Love, Among the Corridors" by Gene Wolfe (6)
- 16) "A Young Man's Journey..." by M. John Harrison (3)
- 17) "Fragments of a Hologram Rose" by William Gibson (0)
- 18) "War and/or Peace" by Lee Montgomerie (-1)
- 19=) "The Luck in the Head" by M. John Harrison (-2)
- "Instructions for Exiting..." by Pamela Zoline (-2)
- 21) "The Bob Dylan Tambourine..." by Michael Bishop (-7)
- 22) "John's Return to Liverpool" by Christopher Burns (-41)

It's encouraging to see that our newer writers have generally done well in the poll. Scott Bradford's popularity continues, while Paul McAuley, who returns in the present issue, fared the best of the year's newcomers. Our main disappointment, as far as the newer writers are concerned, was the poor showing of Lee Montgomerie's "War and/or Peace" - although, like Michael Blumlein's story last year, this provoked a large response both positive and negative. We thought it a story with a balanced viewpoint which had as one of its themes the way in which those on both sides of the Greenham Common situation seem to appear as caricatures and stereotypes. From the reactions we received, the story seems to have brought out the political stereotypes in a few of our readers. Anyway, Montgomerie's other story, "Green Hearts," fared rather better.

Michael Bishop and Christopher Burns both suffered in the backlash against our run of "famous person" stories. Burns' "Fogged Plates" proving much more popular than his John Lennon ghost story. Prospective contributors should note that we are now disinclined to accept stories about famous people.

Artist Popularity Rating (issues 9-12 inclusive):

(The "points" in brackets have been calculated in the same way as for the stories.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Jim Burns (60) | 10) Judith Clute (2) |
| 2) Pete Lyon (45) | 11) Amanda Shields (1) |
| 3) Ian Miller (43) | 12) George Parkin (-2) |
| 4) Richard Kadrey (24) | 13) Edith Hurry (-6) |
| 5) David Price (20) | 14) Rachel Sanderson (-7) |
| 6=) Roger Dean (16) | 15) Edwin Dorff (-8) |
| Ian Sanderson (16) | 16) Keith Mercer (-18) |
| 8) David O'Connor (15) | 17) Iris Smith (-28) |
| 9) Lesley Buckingham (11) | |

The familiar names of Jim Burns, Roger Dean and Ian Miller all feature high in the list, but newer artists like Pete Lyon and David Price have also proved popular. Pete Lyon, whose work is featured on this issue's cover, would have fared even better if not for the poor reproduction of his IZ 11 feature; the fault was ours, not his.

Many readers are unhappy with the use of photographs in IZ, despite which Ian Sanderson's story illustrations and his IZ 12 cover, as opposed to the feature in IZ 10 with its infamous nude, were well received. Collages in general are also unpopular, though Richard Kadrey fared well enough. George Parkin received praise for his IZ 11 illustration and suffered for his "Laser Smith" strip.

Simon Ounsley

Kim Newman

Patricia's Profession

When the call came, Patricia was going FF through the latest snuffs. She was a subscriber to the *120 Days in the City of Sodom* part-work, but, since Disney had run out of de Sade and been forced to fall back on their own limited psychopathology, the series had deteriorated. After a few minutes of real-time PLAY, she had twigged that the 104th day was just one of the fifties with a sexual role reversal. Mouldy chiz. Colin broke into the vid-out.

"Patti," he said. "Goto PRINT."

Colin had blanked before she could work out whether he was live or a message simulacrum. The printer retched a laconic strip.

JAY DEARBORN. DEARBORN ESTATE. TWENTY ONE O'CLOCK HIT. 2-NITE.

The mark was on screen. The Firm had a four-second snip from a regular call. Dearborn was a sleek, expensive, youngish man. He had on a collarless, fine-stripe shirt. Silently, he repeated a phrase. Something about cheekbones. Patricia's lip-reading was off.

She switched to greenscreen and speed-read Dearborn's write-up. Executive with Skintone, Inc., the second largest fleshwear house. Married. Euro-citizen. Not cleared for parenthood. No adult criminal record. Alive. Solvent.

Colin came back, real-time. "Our client is Philip Wragge. More middle management at Skintone. He likes us. He's used us before."

"Why does he want Dearborn hit?"

"Getting curious, Patti?" Colin smiled. "That's not in your usual profile. I think it's the mark's birthday."

Patricia's birthday was in August. When she was little, her parents had always taken her to their cottage in Portugal for the school holidays. She had escaped until she was twelve. That year, Dad's job became obsolete, and the cottage had to be marketed. At tea-time on her birthday, the other children had come round to Patricia's house and killed her.

Colin faded, and the scheduled program popped

up on the slab. Patricia rarely watched real-time. A Luton house-husband guessed that Seattle, Washington was the capital of the U.S. The Torture Master grinned, and his glamorous assistant thrust his/her bolt-cutters into the hot coals. "Wrong," sang the man in the dayglo tux, "I'm afraid it's Portland, Oregon. That puts you in a tricky spot, Goodman. You have only three questions and two toes left, so take your time with this next one. Who, at the time of this recording, is the Vice-President of the Confederate States of America..."

Patricia off-switched. It was twenty to nineteen. Chord would be here soon. She put her uniform on. Black spiderweb tights, black lace singlet, black armlength talon glove, black butterfly tie. She shrugged into the white shoulder holster, and pulled a comfortable heavy white burberry over her shoulders. She perched a black beret on her Veronica Lake bob. She white-fixed her face, and blacked her lips and eyelids. Neat.

She palmed her desk-top, and the safety cabinet unsealed. She took out the roscoe and disassembled it. There had been some question about the foresight, but it seemed okay to her eye. She replaced the lubricant cartridge, and snapped the machine back together. She shoved a new clip of slugs into the grip, and holstered the roscoe.

It could manage up to one hundred and seventy rounds per second. At that rate, the slugs left the eleven-inch barrel as molten chips. At Sixth Form College, the Firm's instructor had given a demonstration. She had turned a cow carcass into a piece of abstract expressionism, a study in red and intestine. Patricia didn't like to use her roscoe as a hosepipe, and usually kept the rate adjusted to a comfortable twenty-five r.p.s.

Outside, the car called to her. Patricia sealed her flat, negotiated the checkpoint in the foyer, and stepped onto the steaming pave-

ment. If she stood still for a few minutes, the yellow ground mist would eat holes in her unprotected shins. Harry Chord, at ease in his reinforced chauffeur's puttees and Lone Ranger mask, held the Olds' door open for her. She slid onto the sofa-sized back seat. The Olds purred. Chord took the console.

The sturdy, box-like, black car had only recently been converted. Chord had done the job himself, and was quietly pleased with it. When they stopped at the Gordon's station to tank up, he pointed out the minute scars on the hood and running boards. Otherwise, it was impossible to tell from the exterior that the cash-wasting petrol engine had been replaced with the latest model booze-burner.

Patricia was tense, impatient. As always before a hit. She had been to the lavatory twice since Colin's call, but there was still a tingle in her lower abdomen. Some of the other girls pill-popped, but she needed, and wanted, the cold-rush of unfiltered sensations.

Of course, there had been less popping since Rachel. The girl had taken too many zippers, waltzed into her mark's office singing "Paper Moon," and shot the man through the brain. By the time the termination officers arrived, she had switched to "Stardust." The Firm had lost its 100% efficiency rating.

Patricia had heard Chord, and several of the other back-up personnel, refer to Rachel's humpty dumpty hit. "...all the king's horses, and all the king's men..." The flippancy irritated her. Killing people might seem like a fun job, but you had to take it seriously. If nothing else, Rachel had proved that.

The Dearborn Estate was out in the Green Belt. They were well ahead of schedule, so she had Chord program a route that would avoid the disemployment centre. Shit City, the claimants called it. Nissen huts covered in ghastly, mock-cheerful murals. The dope dote. The Ghetto Blaster gangs. There had recently been a rash of documentaries, but, having spent six years in Shit City, Patricia couldn't get off on poverty porn.

Evidently, Dearborn's wife was in on the hit. At the estate entrance, a cobra terminal snaked into the Olds and hovered over Patricia's lap. HELLO! IDENTIFICATION? She palm-printed the slab, and keyed in the Firm's trademark. PURPOSE OF VISIT? She had typed MURDER before noticing that the need for a reply had been countered on the print of Gillian Dearborn. HAVE A PLEASANT VISIT.

The crackling electrodes in the gravel drive went briefly dead as the Olds rolled over them. There were other cars, low and streamlined, ranked in front of the house. Over the roof landing floated a small dirigible, shifting gently on its mooring. The house, Victorian but remodelled in early Carolian, was lit by banks of old-mode disco lamps.

Dearborn was having a birthday party, with live music. Sandra recognized the popular song, "Throw Yourself Off a Bridge." The ballad was being performed by a small swing combo; an unfamiliar, somewhat inapt, arrangement. A girl sinatra was trying to croon to the up-tempo.

When I get too depressed,
Crawling along in a ditch,
I get right up,
Walk right down,
And throw myself off a bridge...

Patricia left Chord with the Olds, and walked unconcerned across the lawn. A few stray guests, in designer rags, noticed her. She hated Depression Chic. The bulk of the party was behind the house, between the L of its two wings and the skimming pool. She tried to move easily among the rich.

A man with a plumed mohawk, an epitome of the New Conservatism, reached inside her Burberry. She sliced his forehead with a soporific talon. He fell onto a trestle table, between the swan cutlets and cocaine blarncange. He would be able to tell the other Young Rotarians he had won second prize in a duel.

I could put myself through a mangle,
I could drink the water in Spain,
From a home-made noose I could dangle,
It's the end to all my pain...

Dearborn was an easy mark. He was holding a helium balloon with BIRTHDAY BOY on it. He was squiffed, but standing. A plump, dapper man, and an elegant woman with fashionable facial mutilations were propping Dearborn up. Wragge and Gillian? They saw her coming, and confirmed their identities by rapidly moving out of her line.

Abandoned, the mark lurched forward into a personal spotlight. No hole-in-the-head innocent bystanders in the way. Terrific.

If I feel like cracking up,
And locking myself in the fridge,
I get on out,
And take a high jump,
To throw myself off a bridge...

Patricia reached with her bare hand for the roscoe. The burberry slid from her shoulders. There were a few werewolf whistles. She shimmied across the lawn, getting in close to compensate for the possibly dodgy foresight. She did a few elementary leg-digger steps, and adopted the Eastwood position; guns apart, weight evenly distributed, left hand on right wrist, elbows slightly bent to absorb the kickback.

The bandleader, surprised but adaptable, had his instruments segue into "Happy Birthday to You." The sinatra picked it up immediately, and led the less out-of-it-guests in the chorus.

The mark was looking around, gasping. "...Phil? You..." The balloon went up.

She took out his left kneecap. He staggered sideways, tripping on an abandoned urn but not falling. She upped the r.p.s. and sprayed Dearborn's flailing right arm. His hand came off at the wrist. Most of the guests had to laugh. She closed in, and fired a final, free-ranging burst into his torso. She had a glimpse of churning innards. He did an awkward pirouette and, with a satisfying splash, fell into the pool. The purple skum rippled. There were cheers. Patricia took a bow.

By the time she had retrieved her coat, the resurrection men were there. The kildare was passing a vivicorder over the corpse. A nurse Patricia knew ticked off the necessary repairs. Most of the vat-bred organs and ossiplex bones would be in the Firm's ambulance. The front man was assuring Gillian Dearborn that her husband would be on his feet by morning, and preparing the legal and medical waivers for her palm.

"Good job, lassie." Wragge hugged and kissed her.



Even for a regular customer, he was overdoing it. "When Jay sees himself on the playback, he'll die all over again."

She stuffed a thousand note down her cleavage. Not a bad gratuity. He also gave her a hundred in Sainsbury's Redeemable for Chord. She was invited to the resurrection party, but cried off.

Tired, she gave Chord authority to get back to town by the quickest route. As she drove through Shit City, she cleaned the roscoe. She remembered her own deaths, and wondered whether the D.H.S.S. still had a budgetary allocation for resurrecting the under-employed.

She hadn't had the kind of luxury treatment Dearborn was getting. There had been problems with her anglepoise vertebrae throughout her middle teens. She had not had the funds for a proper rebuild until she started working for Killergrams.

That first time, the other children had dragged her out of the house and hanged her from a swan-neck lamp-post. Her party dress was torn, and her legs were badly bitten by midges. Dangling in the late afternoon, the last thing that had crossed her mind was that this was supposed to be funny.

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Kim Newman wrote "Dreamers" (IZ 8). *Nightmare Movies*, his critical history of the horror film since 1968, came out from Proteus in the spring of 1985. He writes a regular film column for *City Limits*, and has had non-fiction published in *Sight and Sound*, *Penthouse* and numerous other magazines. He is working in collaboration with a group of people on several film projects for the cheap end of the market, and will be appearing (as himself) in a TV pilot/documentary produced by the Red Galaxy Collective. He conducted the interview with Clive Barker which is featured in this issue of *Interzone*.

FAREWELL TO THE MASTER

Ian Miller has resigned from his post as Art Editor of *Interzone*. Having been in charge of the artwork from issue 4 to issue 13 inclusive, he feels that it is time he concentrated on his own creative work. We thank him warmly for all that he has done for the magazine—and we hope to publish more of his pictures in coming issues.

Simon Ounsley and David Pringle will be choosing the illustrations from now on. We are open to submissions from artists, but would prefer all unsolicited artwork to come in the form of non-returnable photocopies which we may keep on file. If an acknowledgement is required please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

MUTANT POPCORN

MEDIA REVIEWS BY NICK LOWE

You'll need pencil and paper for this one. First question:

Why is there no *sf* theatre?

Take your time. Write down as many answers as you like, until you feel you've resolved the question to your own satisfaction. Here are a few sample responses to start you going:

(a) Theatre is a moribund artform too inflexible to accommodate the mind-expanding concepts of modern science fiction. (b) Same, reading "science fiction" for "theatre" and vice-versa. (c) Live performed *sf* would find itself competing unfavourably with the technical legerdemain available to recorded media. (d) Science fiction is an essentially popular genre and theatre is an essentially elitist medium; consumers of theatre and consumers of *sf* are minimally overlapping social groups. (e) Historical accident: no science-fictional plays established emulative traditions in the formative years of the genre. (f) Genre *sf* is too crummy, radical *sf* too fringe to be a bankable risk in a subsidized medium. (g) *Sf* habitués are a bit of a bunch of dimmies and wouldn't touch live theatre with any more enthusiasm or appreciation than they'd pick up *Daniel Deronda* or *Travels with my Aunt*.

Yes, there are science-fiction plays. But *Back to Methuselah*, *RUR*, *Devil Girl from Mars*, *Illuminatus*, *Insignificance*, *Einstein on the Beach*, *The Genius*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Thunderbirds F.A.B.* and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* don't add up to a genre of science fiction theatre, any more than Ian Watson, Geoff Ryman and Terry Gilliam add up to a flowering of British *sf*, koff-koff. There's no continuity: no sense of a tradition within the medium that new works can acknowledge, build on, plagiarize. Greybeards may remember Ken Campbell's often-delightful Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool from the seventies, but nearly all its productions were adapted from other media. And you'll note that everything on the above list that originated in the theatre was created and packaged with no intention of identifying with a genre tradition.

Which brings us to question two:

If there was a science-fiction theatre, what would you want it to do?

Well now. Perhaps you'd settle for traditional genre narratives performed with the thrill of expensive live special effects. Perhaps you'd simply enjoy live realizations of your favourite prose/radio/film/comic/verse/tv/visual *sf* works. You might like to see *sf* motifs dressed up in well-tried theatrical forms: kitchen-sink melodramas, time-travel musicals, sex farces set on a generation starship.

Then again, you might conceivably prefer a kind of theatre that shares the ambitions of radical prose *sf*, but exploits the unique richnesses of live performance. Such a theatre would probe speculative perspectives on history, technology, consciousness and change, using fantasy not just to entertain, but to redraw the cognitive limits of experience and imagination. Ideally, it would promote intellectually demanding, technically challenging experiment at the very forefront of its medium, drawing ironically on genre to question stereotyped patterns of ideology and thought. And it would blast your brain eyes-first through the rafters.

Mull it over. Decide your own answers. And while you're mulling, I'm going to tell you about **Impact Theatre Cooperative**.

Impact was founded in 1978 by a group of no-longer students from Leeds, and for three years mounted a series of increasingly ambitious touring shows on a budget of dole money, scrimpings, and the odd grant from the Manpower Services Commission. Early projects included plays by Keefe, Polliakoff and Fugard, but within a couple of years Impact were adapting or devising most of their material themselves. They played schools, campuses, community theatres, mainly in the north of England, with the year's work compiling together in a three-week season on the *Edinburgh Fringe*.

In 1980 Impact put together a weird late-night Fringe show daffily titled **The Undersea World of Erik Satie**, a *dada* nouveau fantasy doodled round the composer's strange lifestyle and amateur ichthyological passions, with

dialogue in grunted cod-French throughout. This being the sort of stuff the Fringe convulses over, *Satie* sold out night after night and eventually transferred to the ICA for Impact's first extended run at a central London theatre. Then as now, the ICA theatre was a pinnacle of the avant-garde performance circuit, and from *Satie* on Impact have been enviably established alongside companies like Lumiere & Son in the front rank of British alternative theatre. In 1981 they won Arts Council subsidy, and to date they've survived some fifteen shows with only minimal changes of personnel.

From the beginning, Impact's work was extraordinary. *Ice* (1979) adapted Anna Kavan's haunting novel of sexual tyranny and frozen apocalypse in a space of suspended perplex, with a live percussion score setting the book's weird glides from obsession into dream against an acoustic landscape of breaking glaciers. Already the group's defining concerns showed through: bold set designs, intense concentration of atmosphere, potent integrated soundtracks, experiments with narrative and time, and the constant ironic interrogation of the mythology of male and female.

Certain Scenes (1981) was the first serious adult show created from scratch by the company, and a landmark production in every respect. In a world beyond the holocaust, the blame for apocalypse has been projected, by a fanatic sleight of reason, by man on to woman; and her phantom guilt is annually atoned in the ancient ritual pattern of Punishing the *Judy*. Each year a selected female victim is lowered into the pit, a grim subterranean landscape of iron and concrete dereliction, for ritual torment both physical and psychological at the hands of the savage male inhabitants of the undercity. In the event, the piece's concentrated sexual violence became too disturbing to continue, and after a year it was dropped from the repertoire. But the coincidences of style and obsession with *Riddley Walker* brought the company into contact with Russell Hoban, and the collaboration that eventually generated *The Carrier Frequency*.

Fantastic plotlines and mythical patterns of symbol and action continued to dominate in subsequent shows. **Useful Vices** (1982) spun a preposterous yarn of East London gangsters making a powerboat getaway down the Thames, drifting into a mysterious fog, and winding up in the Amazon jungle where the native myths gradually overlay and absorbed their own complex tribal rites. **No Weapons**

for Mourning (1983) developed a similar ironic interrogation between Californian Indian myths and the hard-boiled pulp machismo of the detective romance, as a hammy Chandlerian PI gets involved with a mysterious dame and a gloriously convoluted plot involving government nuclear tests on Indian land. Little does the investigator suspect that the cool bombshell beauty is equally investigating him, in a bogging metaphysical metaplot of tangling timelines and lapping realities...

No Weapons tidemarked Impact's public and critical success, with its accessibly intricate plot, witty genre dialogue, and ironic play with well-loved stereotypes. By contrast, their later shows have been far more ambitious and challenging theatre events, and not surprisingly have gathered namby-pamby crits and unfull houses. Most Impact shows have played tricks with time and narrative; recent shows have gone far beyond trickery, setting out to re-examine the way human consciousness constructs time, and how the real-time processes of live performance can recreate the imaginative intensity of subjectively experienced time. An important input has been music, an increasingly organic component of the shows either as wall-to-wall taped soundtrack or integrated live performance. The systematic revolution in new music – composers like Reich, Glass, Nyman creating shifting textural depths of sound by the phasing and overlapping of repeated phrases – has changed the way we perceive music, and Impact have tried to create an analogue to this in the theatrical perception of time.

"There are only ever three things," broods the central figure in **A Place in Europe** (1983): "memory, desire, and place." This radical redefinition of the experience of time brings together Impact's three most constant themes, as axes of a symbolic space in which conventional narrative forms dissolve. Events and meanings connect with the logic of memory, the texture of dream: a kind of "condensed theatre," in fact, rejecting the naivety and redundancy of sequential storytelling for a performance of concentrated, spellbinding intensity. Like Ballard, again, Impact are attracted by the possibilities of arrested time, and recent shows have virtually abandoned language and narrative for uncompromisingly poetic scenarios and systematic patterns of action. In the apocalyptic world of **The Carrier Frequency** (1984), objective time seems to have drowned, leaving only fragmented echoes of the vanished world to crackle over the



Impact Theatre Cooperative: "The Carrier Frequency"

eerie Carrier Frequency, or mutate into magnificent ritual chants. Critics scratch heads and grumble about six people throwing each other about in two foot of water for an hour and a half, and it's true that *The Carrier Frequency* alone of Impact shows has no decodable story. (It began as Orpheus and Eurydice, but with the successive layers of superimposed metaphor the original structure of myth has been buried into invisibility.) **Songs of the Claypeople** (1984-5), a minimal performance of astonishing beauty, took the systemic technique to frightening extremes, and the company now feel this phase of their work is behind.

As I write, a new show, **The Price of Meat in the Last Days of the Mechanical Age**, is in rehearsal, to tour in December and play London in the spring. Surprisingly to an outsider, the set is the first thing to take shape, in this case a breathtaking urban sculpture of epic ambition. Despite their success, budget-stretching is still a constant problem; the sound-system for *The Carrier Frequency* smothered Hoban's powerful texts, and the company's

dream of a large-scale piece with live musicians remains a financial fantasy on the fringe circuit. By the standards of alternative theatre, Impact are big business; by West End standards, they're just rats in the skirting. Unfortunately, you don't get rich on vision, commitment, and probing the limits of physical and emotional possibility against the current of critical taste. For two and a half years, Impact have been climbing upwards from what used to look like the peak. I wish any other performers had half their adrenalin.

When you've answered both questions to your own satisfaction, score your responses any way you feel is appropriate. What do they tell you about your attitudes to theatre, science fiction, yourself? Are you concealing anything? Examine your palms. Could there be a connection between your answers and certain recurring dreams? Study your handwriting for immanent structures of desire. Was that a noise downstairs?

Now draw a tree.

Paul J. McAuley

The King of the Hill

I can see the stepped, tree-circled hill, Cadbury Castle, whenever I look up from my desk. Sunlit yet ringed with darkness, haunted, brooding, singular... It is one of the finest examples of a fortified earthwork in England, and by its association with King Arthur, of the Knights of the Round Table, of Merlin and of the whole Matter of Britain, it is something more, a concretization of legend, a relic of a dream. And to me now, because of David, it is quite another thing altogether. An end, or a beginning...

David, my nephew, came to me after his parents died in a road accident up in war-torn Yorkshire. An American Army truck ran the bus in which they were travelling off the road, killing them and half the passengers besides. I was David's closest relative, and when he was released from hospital (he'd been on the bus too, that evening) the authorities sent him to me. A solemn, quiet, watchful boy of fourteen, scrupulously, unsettlingly polite. His red hair had been shaved around a fresh glistening scar, but he would say nothing about the accident. For a week there was a curious tenseness between us, nephew and crusty famous bachelor uncle, but then I took him on my favourite walk, around the ditched, grassed-over defences of Cadbury Castle.

A narrow lane between tall banked hedges links the village of South Cadbury with the hill. The belt of trees around its base was tangled and bare in that season (it was a wet and blustery March day) yet so dense that the top was hidden. We went up the modern concreted path – I preferred the lesser known tractor-trail at the opposite corner of the hill, but it is always treacherous in wet weather – that climbed amongst the trees and cut through the ditches and ramparts of the old defences to the eighteen-acre field at the summit. Wind snapped in our faces as we stomped over muddy plough ridges.

Thirty years ago archaeologists had excavated a temple and a Neolithic shrine, and the post-holes of

a large hall; I showed David where they were, all covered with earth again, as was the shallow depression where the gate had been. The archaeologists had found a dozen dismembered skeletons there, victims of some Roman massacre. Cadbury Castle has been defended for more than five thousand years, simple Neolithic fortifications hugely enlarged in the Iron Age, when the hill had been sculpted into its final form, added to by the Celts and then partly demolished by the conquering Romans so that the local people could not use it in the event of an uprising (but as if in recompense they had built the temple). And after the Roman withdrawal more ramparts had been built, stones piled atop the older earthworks which may have been the reality of fabled Camelot, a last stand against the invading Saxons, a last gleaming before the dark ages closed over Britain.

David endured my little lecture with a silence that was not quite sullen, simply minimally attentive; the same mood with which he mooned about the house, alone and lonely and out of place. I suggested that we walk to the summit of the ridge, the western end of which is called Arthur's Seat, and he shrugged in his yellow windbreaker as if it made no difference to him, and said nothing when I pointed out the raven which rose at our approach and flapped heavily down the slope into the trees.

At the summit we could see, across the tops of the trees, across the central plain of Somerset, once a sea and now a patchwork of fields streaked and puddled with silver floodwater, clear to the breast of Glastonbury Tor twelve miles away (the thin spike of its tower just where the nipple would begin), Avalon to Cadbury's Camelot, shadowed by mutinous clouds while we stood in windy sunlight.

"You can see everything!"

"Yes, you can."

David balled his fists inside the pockets of his windbreaker, his shoulders hunched. A defiant figure, intuned. "It isn't like Yorkshire, though. Too green

and flat."

What could I say? His parents' deaths were between us. After a moment I suggested that we go back, it was cold and I wasn't as young as I'd like to be, we'd have tea.

"All right."

But at least he'd reacted to something.

As we crossed the ploughed ground we heard coming up towards us the squeal and thump of amplified pop music. David and I exchanged glances, and just as we reached the path three men came out of the line of trees below. All wore green anoraks with holstered pistols just visible at their hips, and one carried on his shoulder the enormous radio from which the music erupted. They watched us as we passed, eyes narrowed in their ruddy well-fed faces, and then one said something to his companions and they all broke into laughter. David stiffened at that but I murmured, "No need to make a scene," and was relieved when he walked on quietly. Behind us the amplified voice of a Radio Liberty announcer clawed across the summit.

As we descended between the trees, David said, "They shouldn't be allowed up there! It isn't right!"

"Ever since the National Trust bought it everyone is allowed up there, David."

"But it isn't for them. It's..." He couldn't explain, spat instead into the grass bordering the path.

"David, I have a friend who may be able to help, but I can't promise anything. Don't let them ruin it for you, though. There will be other days."

David simply shrugged, and I couldn't tell if he had been appeased or not.

My friend was Yeovilton's Cultural Liaison Officer, Bobby Dubois. I told him about the disturbance on Cadbury Castle when he visited me one night later that month, but he could promise nothing.

"What can I say?" he said, and opened his hands as if to show that they were empty. "I'm sorry, but we can't keep a tight rein on the personnel. They're under a lot of pressure, see."

"It's simply that I hold Cadbury Castle quite dear, and my nephew has taken a liking to it as well."

"Your nephew, sure." Dubois had met David, a brief chilly encounter. "I guess he isn't too fond of us."

"I suppose not."

"I'll pass the word, but I don't know what good it'll do."

"Well, thank you for trying." I got up and poured us both another sherry.

Dubois watched me from the deep armchair in the flickering shadows beside the fire and nervously passed a hand over his luxuriant drooping moustache, a grooming gesture that made him look even more like a squirrel than usual. We had met because he was a music fan – by which I mean real music, of course, not the polyphonic cacophony purveyed by Radio Liberty – and when he had found out that I lived in his bailiwick he had sought me out. I knew that he was building up courage to ask his by now inevitable favour, but I said nothing, simply handing him his glass and sitting in the armchair opposite.

"Thanks," Dubois said. "I can't get enough of this stuff."

"Neither can I, these days."

He smiled, then asked, "Listen, I suppose you're not thinking of, I mean you wouldn't..."

He said it so timidly, as timidly as a small wild creature might reach for a hand-held crumb, that I laughed. "I'm afraid I have no plans to break my retirement."

Dubois glanced at the Steinway on the other side of the low-blended sitting room, touched his moustache softly, tentatively. "Gee, you know it's a shame. The times you've played for me..."

I flexed my stiff arthritic fingers. Long as a strangler's: once I could reach two and a half octaves. They were as much use as a bundle of twigs now. "I know the difference. I'm sorry."

He shrugged and said it was always worth a try, and went on to tell me about the orchestra he was trying to bring over from Boston. "They think it's all bandits and firefights though; they don't realize how quiet it is here in the south. I thought maybe if you wrote them..."

I saw his ploy then, and laughed. My weakness is that I have always underestimated people. "All right. I used to know the conductor fairly well – you know I played a season there as soloist?"

Dubois nodded eagerly. "Eighty-nine. I have a tape, Chopin's polonaises. Your Fantasia truly was magical."

"You are developing a cunning streak, Captain Dubois."

"It's kind of forced on you over here. You British never say what you mean."

"That is simply a part of our charm. Besides, look what happened when the last British government actually fulfilled all of its election promises."

"Come on, we couldn't let that go through. The Russians would be here in two weeks without our bases. We had to come here, for your own good."

I wanted to say that we were perfectly capable of making up our own minds, but it had all been said before, and I had broken the rule Dubois and I had made about never discussing politics. For all his easygoing air he was very much of the establishment view; that was why he had his job, after all. And I... I suppose that I was a cynic then, believing neither one side nor the other and not realizing that sitting on the fence was a luxury I could ill afford. So I changed the subject – an old man's prerogative – and we talked about music for an hour, until the lights went out.

Dubois glanced at his fantastically complicated watch. "Eight on the button. I hate to go but. Even I'm not immune to the curfew."

I went to the door to see him off. A crisp frosty night, the moon a fingernail paring crooked above Cadbury Castle. The stars hard and bright and close.

"Take care," I said, and meant it. Occasionally bandits crossed the Welsh border: it was not as quiet in the area as Dubois would have had the Boston Symphony Orchestra believe.

"Don't worry," Dubois said and gunned his motor-cycle and was off.

When I went back inside I heard David moving about in the kitchen. He had lit a candle and was boiling up some milk on the camping stove; he had become used to my casual attitude towards house-keeping and eating.

"In the north we don't talk to them," he said, as

soon as I came in. "How can you?"

"We both like music." But it was not quite the right answer. "I can remember when the Americans were our allies, David. I don't see what harm it does."

"What did he say about those soldiers?"

"He can't do much, you know, but he will have a word with someone, I expect."

"Well I hope they keep off anyway. You're right about it, Uncle Jimmy. It is a sort of magical place." He looked down self-consciously, showing the tiny scar amongst the cropped red hair on the left side of his skull.

"Well...I'm glad you like it." This sudden change of mood surprised and puzzled me. I was out of practice with young people. I liked everything settled, known, definable. As spring wore into summer I would be puzzled again and again by David's moods, nothing unusual for a teenage boy I'm sure, but novel to me. I added then "I think it's magical too," and was relieved to see him smile when he looked up, the thinly compressed smile of my brother, who was dead.

There was, then, one interest we shared, and we often went out to Cadbury Castle together. I bought him books too, on early myth and Arthurian legends, White's *Sword in the Stone* of course, and an abridged Mallory illustrated by Arthur Rackham. And Celtic and Saxon histories, a book on the archaeology of Cadbury Castle itself... For I was pleased to see that David had a deep and genuine interest in the place, an interest which took him out of his brooding, odd perhaps when he was at the age of burning but short-lived enthusiasms, but nonetheless real. He had made few friends at school and showed no interest in either girls or pop music – but perhaps that was because most of the latter was American, and he was constant in his loathing of anything American. I did not draw him out on this, blaming the accident and his father's vague almost romantic conception of socialism; he had been precisely the caricature socialist from whose folly the Americans claimed they had come to save us. But David's outbursts against things American were fortunately few, and he simply kept out of the way whenever Bobby Dubois came to visit me.

When for his birthday I took David to Tintagel Castle he did not even ask where the passes and petrol had come from, and of course they had come from Dubois. He and I had plotted deeply about the trip. So in June David and I drove south and west to Cornwall, taking the country roads where there were fewer checks, and taking our time.

David was all enthusiasm until we reached Tintagel itself. On the ramparts of the castle, overlooking a bay in which the sea lazily lapped amongst huge boulders, he told me quite firmly, "No, it isn't the place. Arthur was never here."

I teased him about his loyalty to Cadbury, but he shrugged this off, stubborn and humourless as he sometimes could be. "I mean the real Arthur," he explained, "not the one with the grail quest and the knights and the magic sword. The real Arthur's followers were kerns, and if he had a sword it would have been an ordinary Roman short sword. The rest is just a story, mostly made up of bits of older stories."

"Some of the old people in South Cadbury, you know, used to talk about the king under the hill. I remember someone told me once that when the archaeologists came his father was worried that they would wake up the king with their digging, so that he would no longer be there to defend Britain in her hour of need."

"Well, wouldn't he be back now, now we have been invaded?" David was looking out to sea, his red hair stirring in the wind.

I didn't want to hear yet another diatribe against the Americans, and I suggested that we should walk down to see Merlin's cave.

"It was nice to be brought here, Uncle Jimmy," David said, "but let's go back. There's nothing for me here."

When summer came and school broke up David spent more time than ever up on Cadbury Castle. One night, in the local pub, the man who farmed the hill came up to me and remarked, "That lad of yours gave me a real fright the other evening."

I asked about it.

"I was coming up through the woods around the hill and he came at me from out of the shadows like. Not running, I mean I didn't see him until I was almost upon him. Fair startled me. He had leaves in his hair and mud on his face like those soldiers."

"Probably just some game."

"Big lad to be playing silly buggers. I almost had a heart-attack on the spot."

It was about this time that David took up with three local boys, all younger than himself. They spent a lot of time amongst the apple trees at the bottom of my garden, making bows and arrows from scratch, and David led them on expeditions that lasted long into the light summer evenings. This kind of behaviour might have worried me if it were not for his school reports: his teachers saw him as an intelligent, stable sort of lad. I supposed that he needed someone who would look up to and follow him. The lonely often need that kind of reassurance more than love. But it didn't last. Perhaps a week after I'd last seen his friends I asked David what had become of them. Why didn't they come around any more?

"They didn't understand. They thought it was all just pretend, just playing..."

After that he was out more than ever, coming back late in the last light, bedraggled, sweaty, and not very communicative. Most of the rest of the time he practiced with his bow, peppering the garden shed until I relented and found him a proper padded straw target; secondhand of course, but it still cost a small fortune.

One day I was sitting on the patio in the sunshine when David put up his bow and came to sit beside my chair. "Uncle Jimmy?"

"Uh-hmm?"

"Did you ever feel, well, that you had to do what you did?"

I put aside the not very good biography of Mahler. "It was something that I wanted to do from an early age, and luckily something I was able to do well."

"No, I didn't mean that exactly." David squinted up at me. His nose was sunburnt. "I mean, do you feel

that you had to do it? That something made you?"

"A little, perhaps. Why, do you feel that way about something? What are you going to become?"

"That's it. I don't know exactly. It's just..."

But then I heard the familiar sound of Bobby Dubois' motorcycle turning into my drive. David's face hardened. "I wish he wouldn't come here."

"He's my friend, David."

But the boy simply got up and walked down the garden to start his archery practice again.

When Dubois had settled his gangling frame into the chair beside mine, he said, "I see you're training a little guerrilla."

"He made it himself, you know."

Dubois grinned. "Well, I promise not to tell Colonel Ames about it."

I had to ask who Colonel Ames was.

"Oh, our new security officer. He was brought down from York supposedly to clear up the little bit of trouble we've been having recently. Word is though he made a bad name for himself up there. Man died in custody." Dubois was silent for a moment, touching his moustache. Then he asked, "You won't spread that around. I guess it's kind of confidential."

"Mum's the word." When he looked blank I explained, "I mean I won't tell anyone. But is there trouble in this area?"

"Bad enough to cancel that tour, after I had set it all up. That's really what I came to tell you. I mean after all those letters you wrote I feel bad about it."

"I'm sorry to hear about that. It would have been quite a feather in your cap."

"Maybe when things are quieter you could write them again."

"Of course. But what has been happening?"

"Just last week for instance, some people cut the perimeter fence, garrotted a guard, set fire to a paint store. It's getting to be like the north, or Wales. Still, maybe Ames can handle it. He's a heck of a bastard, but efficient, I'll give him that. Even has us carrying guns all the time. Want to see mine?"

"Oh, I believe you!"

Dubois stretched out his long legs and put his hands on top of his crewcut head; the wicker chair creaked. "Don't be surprised if you get a lot of patrols around here from now on in, is all. Like I said, Ames is efficient, things are tightening up. Hard to believe it's gotten so bad though."

I agreed. Sitting there in the sunny tranquil garden, with butterflies flocking around the buddleia and the gently lulling knocking of David's arrows into the target, thoughts of guerrillas, of covert action and infiltration, of sabotage and night patrols, were unreal, stuff from another world.

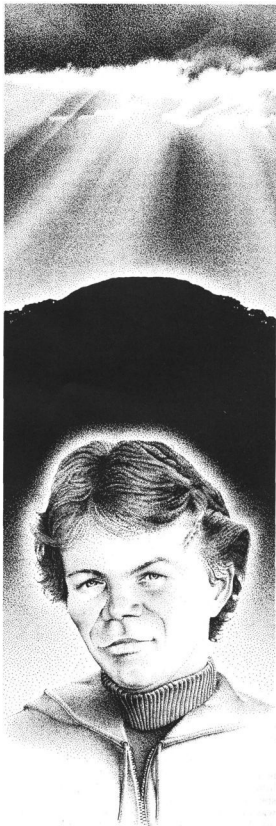
"Well hell," Dubois said. "It probably won't come to anything anyhow."

"But I'm sorry about the concert tour."

Dubois cheerfully shook this off and told me about his forthcoming leave and his plans for the fall, as he quaintly called autumn. Then, as abruptly as always, he decided that he had to be off. "Things to do, places to see. I'll come visit you after my furlough."

"Of course."

But I never saw him again.



Illustrations by Iain Byers

That was not the beginning of it, however. If it had a beginning which I could grasp, it would be when David found the coin.

It was the end of September, in the middle of an Indian summer; the skies a clear hard blue yet the sunlight softer, less vertiginous than before. I asked David if he wanted to go for a walk and he for once agreed. We set off down the lane towards Cadbury Castle, side by side but not speaking. A quiet day, the burr of a tractor miles away clear and small.

At least the troubles meant that we had the hill to ourselves. Five years before, on a day like that, there would have been half a dozen cars blocking the lane and people seemingly everywhere.

We climbed through the dense green woods – Dogs Wood Mercury was everywhere beneath the trees that summer – and mounted to the southern end, skirting the field of corn stubble.

After a while I asked, “Do you remember the first time I brought you here?”

“I remember the soldiers,” David said. Then, “I wish it could be like this always. Peaceful. It isn’t fair...”

I thought that he meant that soon the holidays would be over. “There’ll be other summers.”

“Maybe.” Then David was off, racing down the grassy slope to the first setback of the earthworks and scrambling back up breathless. He flung himself on the grass and I sat beside him.

“Feel better?”

A shrug. “Up here I feel...free. I don’t know.”

He leaned back, looking into the pure sky. A lark was twittering somewhere overhead. Here. There. I was content to look out across the spread of hedged fields to where Glastonbury Tor shimmered in the heat-haze: immemorial England.

“I was thinking,” David said suddenly, “about how Arthur held off the Saxons...until he faltered.”

“And what gave him his powers?”

“Oh, the old gods.” David gave me a shy sideways glance. “It isn’t my idea, a lot of people have written about it, but I know it must be true. I mean the gods before the Greek and Roman gods. What were called the Titans.”

“Cronus and crew,” I said, remembering my classics master. That had been his phrase, but for the life of me I couldn’t remember his name. “Didn’t Blake write something about it?”

“Yes. Well, they were driven westwards by Zeus and so on and they came here. The land at the edge of the world, that’s what the Romans called Britain. They thought there was only chaos beyond. Well, the old gods helped Arthur, you see, because his people worshipped them. The Druids held the oak sacred, and that’s the symbol of Cronus’s wife, Rhea. There’s lots of other examples. And that’s why Arthur didn’t come back to fight against the Normans when they invaded, because he would have been helping the Saxons.”

“It’s an interesting idea.”

“I think it’s real, Uncle Jimmy. Arthur was only a man, you see, and he died, but the power that helped him still sleeps in the land. That’s what makes it special. You said the villagers used to think Arthur was buried under this hill, but everyone knows he was buried at Glastonbury. You see, they confused

the source of Arthur’s power with the man. And perhaps another Arthur will gain those powers, don’t you see? It’s like history all over again, the invaders and the little bands fighting against them all disunited, waiting for a leader. They’re mostly Welsh or Scots, you see: Celts.”

I saw it as wish-fulfillment of course, and smiled and said nothing. Old age always smiles on the excesses of youth, the enthusiasms and the hot emotions, forgetting that those enthusiasms, those emotions, are real. Once I had felt like that about music, and my dream had come true, for a while. But nothing lasts.

A jetplane climbed up from the southern horizon, a glittering point that dragged its hollow roar across the perfect sky as it skimmed the fields and came on towards us. I glimpsed the yellow needle-nose and the rockets slung beneath its swept-forward stubby wings and David was on his feet waving his arms in defiance before throwing himself down as it roared across the top of the hill, trees thrashing in its wake and the hot breath of its exhaust washing over us.

David shouted something and I saw the glitter in the grass just as his hand closed upon it. The jet and its noise had vanished: after a moment the lark resumed its song.

David held out a disc of unstained unworn copper, a coin. On one side a blurred profile with a wreath of ill-aligned letters above it; on the other the curt inscription with which the coiner had signed himself: *GODONCADANBYRIM. Godfrey of Cadbury*. We learned later that it was the twin of a coin which had been found years ago on the hill, and nothing at all to do with King Arthur. It had been stamped in Ethelred’s reign, fifty years before the last battle was lost by Britons on British soil, on the chalk hills of Hastings.

I congratulated David on his find and asked if he was going to put the coin in a museum, but he was quite adamant that he wanted to keep it.

“Other people should have the chance to see it, David. Your name would be put beside it, on a card. Everyone would know who found it.”

“I need it, Uncle Jimmy.”

“I suppose that since you found it, it’s yours to do with as you will. But look after it, David.”

It became his good luck charm, always in his pocket, or beside him when he slept. I don’t think that he showed it to anyone besides myself. It is on my desk now, as I write.

It was soon after that, after David had returned to school, that his fits began. The first took him in the middle of a class, and I remember how out of breath I was when I arrived at the school; my car was up on blocks and I had had to cycle five miles.

David was in the sickroom, lying fully-clothed on a plastic-covered couch, pale but awake and grinning sheepishly. The school nurse took me aside and said, “I’m sure it was just a faint, and then he must have been sleeping.”

“How could you tell?”

“Oh, when they faint they just lie there until they come around, and their eyes are rolled up. David was like that at first, but when we put him on the couch he started to mutter, Welsh it sounded like. And his eyes were moving under the lids like when you dream.

He just needs to rest, he'll be all right."

But it happened again and again as the Indian summer dissolved into rainy October. It would take him suddenly and quietly, in the middle of a meal or a sentence. The upturned eyes, the soft swooning. After a while he would begin to mutter in some throaty dialect and toss and turn as if gripped by a dream, and then, by and by, he would come around. Despite my misgivings he still insisted on his solitary expeditions, and often I would wait up long after dark, picturing him caught by a fit in the cold night; but he always came back cheerful and muddled and composed, and it seemed that exercise kept the fits at bay, for when the weather was too foul even for him they became more frequent.

The local doctor suggested that it might be something to do with the head injury David had sustained in the accident which had killed his parents, and recommended a specialist in Bristol. But at that time there was no way of taking David there. The new security officer, Colonel Ames, had issued orders restricting travel and when I wrote to him, to ask if an exception might be made in David's case, there was no reply.

A week passed, and David suffered fits on two consecutive days. By then Bobby Dubois was due back from his furlough, and I wrote to him in turn. The next day Ames appeared at my house.

It was about nine o'clock, and I was waiting for David to return from one of his expeditions, already dressing-gowned and reading by the light of an oil lantern, when someone knocked at the front door: hard, spaced, and authoritarian. I feared that something had happened to David, but when I opened the door and held up the lantern with my stiff fingers I saw that it was something worse.

The burly man in camouflage jacket and trousers, his head as shaven as any convict's, a pistol at his hip, said, "I was passing by and I thought I'd look in. I hope you don't mind, Sir James. My name is Ames. Colonel Ames."

"I see."

He laughed at my visible disbelief. "Listen, I really was in the area. We were after a couple of guerrillas. Caught one too. Would you like to see him?" He gestured towards the gate at the end of my drive, where two jeeps stood with their headlights burning, their engines ticking over.

"Not really," I said, as calmly as I could.

"Well," said Ames again. And then, "Won't you invite me in?"

He did not sit but paced, almost prowled, about the room, looking at the titles on my bookshelves, running a gloved finger across the gleaming closed wing of the Steinway. A well-built man of about fifty, utterly self-assured.

After a minute I asked, "May I enquire why you have chosen to visit me at such a late hour?" Sometimes there is no other course, in the face of our conquerors' crude brashness, but to put on the stiff-backed stiflepped show of British outrage.

"I was wondering if you'd noticed anything unusual around here. Strangers, vehicles moving around after curfew, that kind of thing."

"No. No. I haven't. Why do you ask? Is it something to do with those guerrillas you were chasing?"

"I think someone may be helping them locally, yes. Their attacks on our patrols in this area have been unusually well coordinated. But you say that you haven't seen anything."

"No."

"How about your nephew? I understand he roams around a lot. Maybe he can tell me something."

But David was out, and it was after the curfew. I said, "He's ill - I wrote to you about it and perhaps you remember that I mentioned that he suffers from fits. He hasn't been roaming around, as you put it, for some time now, and at the moment he is recovering from his latest episode. The doctor has insisted on absolute quiet."

Ames touched the Steinway again, perhaps considering whether it was worth pushing me on that point. But after a moment he nodded and changed the subject, telling me that he owned several of my recordings. His manner was less peremptory now, but I was still uncomfortable beneath his scrutiny.

I murmured my usual excuse that all I had now was a great career behind me, and Ames smiled. "I understand that Captain Dubois was trying to get you to play. I'd like that."

"Not very possible, I'm afraid."

"A pity. Well, it was a pleasure meeting you anyhow."

At the door he could not resist a parting shot; or perhaps it was what he had come to tell me in the first place. "Understand that when I say no, Sir James, that that is exactly what I mean. Without exception. It's no use appealing to your friend Dubois, because he has zero influence."

So Ames had intercepted my second letter. I nodded stiffly and he casually saluted and crunched off down the drive towards the jeeps.

I was working on a glass of my carefully hoarded scotch when I heard David come in. I cornered him in the hall and told him matter-of-factly about Ames' visit, and told him that I considered it too dangerous to be out after curfew from now on. I had expected a blazing argument, but he simply nodded, quite composed. It was as if he had expected it.

"I suppose it's for the best. Things are changing."

I didn't think to ask what he meant by that, but I thought that that was an end of the matter. Of course, it was nothing of the kind.

The next day David suffered a fit just after he returned from school. I laid him out on the sitting-room sofa and soon he passed into the dream-state, sweat standing out on his forehead and his fists clenching and unclenching as he muttered hoarsely.

I sat with him until he came round, watching for an hour or more as he tossed and turned and muttered, the room darkening as the short afternoon wore out. My dead brother's features were coming into David's face, like the image which swims up at you as a photographic print develops: lean-cheeked and high-browed, a long somewhat shapeless Irish nose peppered with wide pores. Then all of a sudden his eyes opened and he smiled up at me.

"It's getting closer."

I asked him what he meant, but he was suddenly wary. "I don't know, just a dream."

I packed him off to bed and was preparing a cup of that universal English panacea, milky sugary tea, when the telephone sounded. It was Dubois, sounding faint and faraway although he said that he was calling from Yeovilton. "I just got back and Ames has had my ass in the can already."

"I'm dreadfully sorry. It was stupid of me not to realize it would cause trouble for you, but I really was desperate about David and I thought you could help."

"Yeah, well that was only the half of it. Ames found out about those travel passes I worked out for you this summer. But listen, he was really only trying to scare me off, I think. There's word around here that something's coming down in your area tonight. Maybe Ames was trying to warn me off telling you."

"What sort of thing?" I was holding the telephone as if it had somehow metamorphosed into a snake. It crackled and hissed in my ear.

"Something bad. Bad. Listen, I'll be over. On my bike it'll take maybe half an hour."

"You needn't—" But the line had gone dead.

I poached an egg for David's supper and took it and the tea up to him. But I was too restless to eat myself, too restless to sit with David for long. Bad, Dubois had said, and I supposed that it was something to do with the guerrillas Ames had told me were operating in the area. But why should it involve me? I paced up and down in the sitting room and twice went out onto the drive to listen for Dubois' motorcycle.

The second time I saw a light flicker at the base of Cadbury Castle's dark mound—it was dusk now, the moon a pearly haze in low fast-moving cloud. I watched the hill but the light did not come again. More than forty minutes had passed and still no sign of Dubois. Sudden irrational fear gripped me and I went to telephone his office. But the instrument was dead; not even a dial tone.

Then I remembered David and went upstairs to see how he was. He was gone.

I walked quickly down the lane towards Cadbury Castle, an electric ball, pure nervousness, spinning in my stomach as I swung my torch from side to side, half-expecting to see David huddled on the ground. My knuckles ached numbly as they always did before rain and I found it difficult to hold the torch. The moon was completely hidden now, the tall hedges on either side a chiaroscuro of shadow. And then the torch-beam yellowed, flickered, faded. Old battery. I stuffed it into my coat pocket and slowly walked on through almost complete darkness.

There is a feeling I sometimes have when I am alone and outside after dusk, a childish irrational feeling of being watched by something inimical, something that is quietly, invisibly stalking me. I had that feeling as I groped my way down the lane; my skin tingled between my shoulderblades as if in anticipation of the predator's spring.

But what came out of the darkness was a shout, a command to halt. And then a harsh blinding beam of light. I squinted into it and saw a burly figure move towards me. It was Colonel Ames.

He ordered the light to be switched off, told me to walk towards him. I was suddenly aware of rain beginning to patter down, infrequent fat drops that made a quiet pocking amongst the leaves of the hedges. When

I reached him, he said silkily, "I hardly expected you to be involved, Sir James. All my reports suggested that you were harmless. Where's your friend Dubois, by the way? Yeah, I had a tap on your phone."

"I am alone, Colonel. I believe that my nephew is somewhere on the hill. He has had an attack and won't know what he is doing, so I ask you to treat him gently if you find him."

"Oh, we'll find him if he's up there, don't worry about that. That's why we're here."

My eyes had readapted to the darkness by then. Parked at the end of the lane, in the lee of the trees which leaned out from the slope of the hill, was a jeep with two soldiers lounging beside it. I faintly heard the staticky spurts of its radio.

Ames told me, "We couldn't figure out how they had been hitting our patrols in this area so accurately until we realized that someone must have been spotting them from the hill here. You can see for miles from the top on a clear night. I guess you know that. It was only on clear nights we were getting hit. Then intelligence told us to expect some action tonight. It was supposed to be a clear night too, until these clouds blew up."

I wondered about Ames' source of intelligence, then remembered the captured guerrilla and what Dubois had told me about Ames' methods of interrogation, the reason why he had been demoted to this area. "My nephew is only a boy. Surely you can't—"

"I surely can." Ames' voice was smooth and hard and cold. "Kids as young fought us in Salvador, in Nam. Younger. Kid up there with night-glasses, a CB outfit, could pin down the whole area. We found those items cached in the woods by the way. So don't—"

He was interrupted by a call from one of the soldiers by the jeep. He caught hold of my arm and roughly bundled me with him, took the handset from the soldier and listened intently to its faint voice. "You're sure," he said, and looked at me, his gaze burning through the gloom. The voice hissed and squawked and Ames said, "Okay," and returned the handset to the soldier, telling him, "I'm going on up there. Pass the word and make sure everyone's alert."

The concrete path up the hill was a barely visible glimmer beneath the trees. As we started up it the rain began to fall more heavily and a strong wind quickened the trees; it was as if the hill were sailing off into the darkness and we were climbing amongst its straining masts.

Ames pitched his voice above the wind and the noise of the trees. "I have both paths sealed and men all around this place. All we have to do is go up and get him."

I understand that this was to be a personal victory for Ames, a way of redemption. There was something in my throat, a constriction it was painful to speak past. "David plays up here, that's all. This is some sort of ghastly coincidence."

"The fuck it is." Ames stopped walking, thrust his face close to mine. "Didn't you wonder why Dubois never showed up? He was just now found on one of those crappy little roads you have around here. They'd stretched a wire from one side to the other and he ran right into it on that hog of his. Just about took his head off. Who else would know he was coming but your



kid?"

"Bobby? Surely, no." I seemed suddenly to be standing on the edge of a black slope pitching steeply down.

"You play your crappy headgames, you English, pretend everything is normal, but there's a fucking civil war going on. You won't face up to reality, that's why we're here. Well listen, your boy is up there as an accomplice to the men who killed Dubois. You want them to get away?"

I was saved from finding a reply. Somewhere above came the shocking rattle of automatic fire and then Ames was running on up the path. I followed without thought, hearing rather than seeing him as he ran, and came puffing up half a minute after he reached a pair of soldiers, heard one say something about this thing hitting a tree right by his head, someone taking off up the hill. There was a flash of torchlight and I saw for an instant the soldier's hand holding an arrow. I knew then, and the pit almost claimed me.

Ames was decisive: the soldiers were to keep their stations, he'd go on. "This storm coming up there isn't going to be any moonlight, so keep your eyes wide."

As if to emphasize his words lightning flared and there was a dull explosion below: a bloom of ragged orange flame licked up beyond the trees.

Then Ames was running again. It was no longer pitch black, but if anything the fugitive light of the fire was worse than darkness. Half-seen trees seemed to leap at me, their branches writhing, as I followed Ames, and once again I felt that I was being stalked. The flickering darkness amongst the trees could have held anything.

When I left the shelter of the trees the rain hit with

a thousand cold needles, soaking me through in a moment. I stopped, absolutely out of breath, my legs quivering. I was used to strolling, not running, up that path.

Ames came back to me, and I shouted that we would never find anyone in this.

"Your boy's friends found the goddamned jeep!"

"That was lightning. They shouldn't have parked near the trees. If we go up there we could be struck ourselves."

"You know that kid. Get him to come quietly and I promise he won't be hurt." He grabbed my arm and more or less hauled me up the path.

As we climbed lightning cracked the dark streaming clouds again and again, as if we were mounting an auditorium lit by flashbulbs. When we reached the top the greatest bolt so far burst directly overhead, and I glimpsed David halfway across the huge field, blurred by drifting rain, an arrow fitted in his half-raised bow. Then the light was gone and Ames' pistol made its own puny thunder and lightning beside my ear.

Sometimes we act despite ourselves. I threw myself at Ames and more by luck than judgment clawed the pistol from his hand. But I couldn't fit my stiff fingers around its trigger and as I flung it away he was on top of me, cursing hard and pounding me with his fists. My heavy coat, made heavier by the rain, protected me from the worst, but one blow caught the side of my head and for a moment I passed out.

And came to as thunder rolled overhead, glimpsed Ames running hard towards David a moment before lightning took him, blue-white fire that instantly

obliterated his shadow, a vast tree of jagged light that raked every corner of the sky. Then it was gone, and thunder smashed down.

I remember little more. Ozone seared my throat and a sensation as of pinpricks covered every inch of my body. I was lying in darkness, quiet rain, no longer the downpour of the storm, only rain, falling on the grass all around. I felt rather than saw David as he stooped over me.

"I have to go now, Uncle Jimmy. I have to. It's what I was born for, don't you see? But look after this for me, I don't need it now."

I may have dreamed it. But later, when the soldiers had finished questioning me and had satisfied themselves that I could tell them nothing coherent, when I had returned home and was alone once more, I found the coin, David's good luck piece, in one of my pockets. The blurred profile: the enigmatic mocking inscription.

I write this four years after the event, in the middle of a time of changes, a time of war. The guerrillas finally arose from their scattered outposts this spring; now it is September, and they have conquered as far west as Bristol, even now lay siege to Oxford. Every day a dozen or so refugees trickle into the camp where I work, bringing rumours that soon the guerrillas will march on London. And rumours too of their leader, conflicting and various to be sure, yet all agree that he is very young, and very sure. And one woman who claimed to have seen him in the ruins of Birmingham told me that he was red-haired.

I am afraid. Not of the troubles – I have had my life – but for what may come when they are over. If David was right, and the old gods have arisen to defend their island, what will they want after their victory? The needs of men and gods so rarely coincide. If David was raised up by them, then surely the accident which killed his parents was a part of their plan. And the arthritis which ended my career and led to my retirement in the shadow of Cadbury Castle, and Bobby Dubois' murder... These are bitter thoughts.

I can only hope that David has wisdom as well as strength of purpose. I can only hope that the gods will again sink far beyond the knowledge of men when they are satisfied that the danger is past, and fade from our history as a troubling dream fades when we awake.

Paul J. McAuley writes: "This story, first drafted in the long summer of the miners' strike, is the confluence of a number of sources. Principal of these is Geoffrey Ashe's *Camelot and the Vision of Albion*, but debts are also owed to Michael Senior's *Myths of Britain* and Robert Graves's *The White Goddess and The Greek Myths* 1. Anyone interested in the archaeology of the real Cadbury Castle (which should not be confused with the fictional one) should read Leslie Alcock's 'By South Cadbury is That Camelot': *Excavations at Cadbury Castle 1966-70*." Paul McAuley's novelette "The Airs of Earth," which is set in the same future as "Little Ilya and Spider and Box" (IZ 12), will appear in the January 1986 issue of the American sf magazine *Amazing*.

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THE NEW SCIENCE FICTION

by Vincent Omniaveritas

The name of Vincent Omniaveritas, editor of the lively US broadsheet *Cheap Truth*, was mentioned in our recent interview with William Gibson (*IZ* 13). We think *Interzone* readers may be interested to hear more from this outspoken observer of the science fiction field. The following article originally appeared in a recent issue of the Puerto Rican fanzine *Warhoon* (edited by Richard Bergeron). It is reproduced here verbatim.

Hugo Gernsback was an entrepreneur, not overly troubled by consistency or scruples. First he designed batteries. Later he marketed a home radio set. In 1908, he published his first radio magazine, *Modern Electrics*.

Soon, however, it was clear that all was not well in the Gernsback attic. Something akin to fiction kept creeping in. In 1911 *Modern Electrics* began running a serial, or, rather, a technical forecasting polemic. This became *Ralph 124C41+*, a spavined "novel" whose naked technical obsession was barely veiled by threadbare literary technique.

An air of rank hybridization hung over Gernsback's early efforts. Chunks of inferior literary DNA were clumsily spliced into a Petri dish of technical speculation, resulting in a chimeric blastoma he called "scientifiction." Somehow the monster grew, and in April 1926 it clambered wetly onto the newstands as *Amazing Stories*, the first true sf magazine in English.

Such were the unholy beginnings of the pop industry that is modern American sf. These were the ethnic roots of true "ghetto sf," a popular art form with a fanatic but strictly limited audience. Literateurs covered their eyes and fled; scientists sneered at its hare-brained inaccuracy.

In the decades that followed the young genre veered from one unwilling parent to another. John Campbell's ascendancy brought a long regime of "scientific" rigour, though his magazine's hard-won rep for technical accuracy was liberally besplattered with psi stories, Dean drives, and Dianetics clearance sales. The New Wave of the 60s was sf's closest approach to the maternal apron-strings of literature.

The Wavicles, to their sorrow, failed to win either mainstream literary acceptance or the orthodox ghetto following.

Sf was left to its own devices and grew up wild and tattered. It lolled in gutters with sleazy movie producers, gashed eyeballs with horror-comic moguls, dropped acid with crack-brained rock stars. It hung around campuses, and even showed up in an ill-fitting tie and tweed jacket for English department seminars.

Sf's followers developed the classical trademarks of a criminal underground. They adopted a cant slang. They met in conspiratorial conventions, which grew ever larger. They carried out long Mafia-like family feuds. Their fanzines became Fagin-like schools for apprentice writers and editors, while simultaneously spreading the criminal ethos.

And over the long term, sf's crass vigour and gaudiness began to seep into the back-brain of culture at large. Young Californians nourished on sf became canny cinema moguls wielding megabudget budgets. Bestseller lists featured sf novels. The American President admitted that the Mars novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs had formed his moral paradigm. A population stunned by future shock found themselves surrounded by sf's cultural icons: robots, computers, rockets.

Now sf finds itself on the brink of truly mass popular acceptance. The ghetto is becoming integrated. Tumble-down Ace duplexes are bulldozed and replaced with faceless shiny high-rise trilogies. Sf tribal elders are dusted off, shaved, and given creative writing posts, spots on TV talk shows, and high-tech research camps in Sri Lanka.

Sf has never faced a more serious and fundamental challenge.

As commercial endeavour, sf dates back to the early years of this century. It is not a high-tech industry. It is more like an old, family-owned firm, where goods are produced through sweatshop labour for a small but stable market.

Now the market has expanded vastly, yet the workforce is old, man-

agement is benighted and crooked, and the clientele has shiny new movies, videos, and computer games to play with. Bloated bookstore chains play havoc with distribution. Unit prices are rising. And the product itself is in dreadful straits: burned-out, floundering, feeding on clichés. A small gerontocracy of top-scale writers build 50s-style Cadillacs, heavy with chrome and fins, while low-scale writers, paid for piece work, produce hundreds of shabby pedal cars held together with chicken-wire and spit.

By and large, the industry's reaction to new opportunity has been to pretend that the outside world doesn't exist. It has left the mass promulgation of sf to movies and rock videos.

The print medium is becoming dangerously obsolescent. Must we wait for the inevitable market crash? Should we barricade the ghetto, hope that sf's core audience will become a modern Amish, quaintly outdated, insular, and ever more incestuous?

It can't work. For sf to stop the clock is a grotesque exercise in self-contradiction. It can only provoke schizophrenia: a schizoid split already abundantly evident in the rise of fantasy. Fantasy is by nature timeless, insular, and traditionalist. It is the *ne plus ultra* of ghetto fiction; its alienation from the outside world is so severe that it approaches autism.

Sf, too, can become introverted, stale, self-absorbed. But then it is no longer a literature. For sf is not simply an industry. Despite everything, it is an art form. No amount of purely commercial reform, within marketing, publishing, or distribution, can redress a lack of artistic sincerity, creativity, and dedication. These matters are the domain of the individual writer. This is where the true power lies, because without the spark there is nothing.

Writers must do the re-thinking, the reforming, the re-tooling for this smoke-stack industry. They are the only ones who can do it. This challenge, this responsibility, belongs to young writers especially – the very people who feel most helpless, most inadequate, most powerless in the face of the Market.

But these feelings are wrong. The Market is a paper tiger. It has no creative powers – it can only reshuffle what is given to it. True power lies with the writers. And especially the young, because the renaissance of sf will be a long-term, painful effort, and today's Golden Age doyens will be strumming celestial banjos long before the Revolution takes Jerusalem. By the time today's newcomers reach a ripe age, everyone will be grinning and shuffling

and saying it was all inevitable.

How, then, do we approach this seemingly quixotic effort at reform? What we need is a strategic vision. An organizing focus. A purpose.

We know the business we are already in: the business of supplying pop fiction to a specialized clique. But what business should we be in? Or, more pragmatically – what business would it be useful to us to think we are in? For the point is not to achieve some static utopia, but to adopt a strategic vision that will encourage steady artistic improvement every step of the way. What long-term Grail will produce the best pragmatic results?

It is this: *We must create the native literature of a post-industrial society.*

Note the two opposites. Literature. And technology. These are our parents, and despite our long history of neglect, our ungainliness, our tastelessness, our numberless errors, financial, social, and artistic, we must unite them or perish in the attempt.

This is the natural birthright of our peculiar genre since the time of Gernsback. The gap between art and science is our natural habitat. We have made it a ghetto, but in reality it is a vast and unexplored territory.

The frightening implications of this gap were pointed out in Lord Snow's analysis of the Two Cultures of Western society, the sciences and the humanities. Between these two powerful coteries there is a very real and cavernous gulf in our society, one fraught with very genuine peril.

The objective world-view of the sciences has no moral component. It will fry you or run your stereo, makes no difference. Yet mainstream literature has failed to come to terms with the modern epoch. The modern world is defined by its technology. And a literature that scorns and ignores technology is running blind. Those who cannot comprehend technology's overwhelming influence are genuinely helpless. Mainstream literature reflects this helplessness, and the anomie that goes with it. Mainstream literature has become powerless.

Is it absurd to think that our feeble and monstrous genre could bridge the gap between these rival camps? Perhaps. But it makes good sense to try.

And perhaps this apparent absurdity is only a relic of sf's parochial thinking. Science fiction writers are, after all, writers. "The unacknowledged legislators of the world." H.G. Wells would approve; he thought social reform was the whole point of the effort. His high moral purpose is as much a part of our legacy as Gernsback's adventurous

scramble for a buck.

Are we to become Fabian socialists, then, and load our work with new expository lumps, this time for political ideology? No. Once again, our goal is the creation of a *native literature* for the society to come, a *natural* expression of 21st century culture, its human hopes, dreams, plans, potentials. A literature of reconciliation, at home in art galleries or genetics labs. A literature of integration and hope.

It will not be called science fiction. We might as well reconcile ourselves to that right now. It will be, simply, literature, and though it may involve sf themes, or future possibilities, or Stapledonian sweeps of high imagination, it will not be a genre product. It will be how things are done.

Whether this goal is attainable cannot yet be known. But let's consider the implications of trying.

First, we remove at one sweep the long sense of inferiority that came from our bastard birth. We remove the sense of cheapness and worthlessness that limits our ambitions and prevents us from doing our best. For the New Science Fiction is not the semi-literate folk epics of a tiny coterie, but a fully legitimate art form, addressing the cultural needs of society at large. We fulfill a real and necessary cultural purpose, one that only we can address, and one that is firmly rooted in our own traditions.

And this is the second point. By opening our ghetto voluntarily, we bring a new strength to our work: the strength that comes from reforming our own weaknesses. The new viewpoint sheds light on that which is cramped, stale, and insular in our genre. Yet we do not disown or belittle our own heritage. We draw strength from it, we extend it, we bring it into the light of day.

Third, it turns our eyes once again to the future: the *real* future, implicit in today's cultural, social, and technological movements. It encourages us to come to grips with genuine issues, to act as explorers, extrapolators, pathfinders for a society in dire need of hope and vision. It liberates us from a narrow and stifling role as purveyors of escapist froth. It brings us face to face with the larger audience outside our genre borders, and gives us the conceptual tools we need to attract and win that audience.

It's now time to shift from long-term goals to strategic planning.

Let's get real. Here you are, reading a fanzine from Puerto Rico. Perhaps you are a young, unsold writer. Or perhaps you are a stone fanzine-fan,

who likes to read the occasional rocket-ship book in between bouts of character assassination and fan politics. In the first case, how can you, a quivering, mewling speck, who has never yet slept with an editor or given a publisher cocaine, hope to create something worthwhile? Or, in the second, how can you, rendered lame and blind by years of absorbing awful trash, hope to purge your liver of literary DDT and get hold of something real?

What, in short, is the New Science Fiction? How do you write it, how do you recognize it?

First, it is not the property of any editor, clique, publisher, or regional or national association. It is not a question of personal influence, creative writing classes, or apprenticeship to genre gurus. It is a question of approach, of technique. And these are its trademarks:

(1) Technological literacy, and a concern with genuine modern science as opposed to the hand-me-down pseudoscience guff of past decades.

(2) Imaginative concentration, in which extrapolations are thoroughly and originally worked out rather than patched together from previous notions.

(3) Visionary intensity, with a bold, no-holds-barred approach to sf's mind-expanding potential.

(4) A global, 21st-century point of view, which is not bound by the assumptions of middle-aged, middle-class white American males.

(5) A fictional technique which takes the advances of the New Wave as already given, using the full range of literary craftsmanship, yet asserting the primacy of content over style and meaning over mannerism.

The New Science Fiction is a process, directed toward a goal. It is an artistic movement in the fullest sense of the word. It is the hard work of dedicated artists, who know their work is worthwhile, who treat it as such, and who push themselves to the limit in pursuit of excellence.

And it is for real.

Vincent Omniaveritas

We wish to thank Mr Omniaveritas and Richard Bergerson for permission to reprint the above essay. Readers' opinions of the piece are welcomed.

David Zindell

Caverns

I am flesh I'm not I am... I am creator of my hell.
I change. I consume the powder.

I sit in a room of the Institute, high above the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Here, where the grey sea meets the rugged and green-shrouded cliffs of the northern Oregon coast, I sit and watch the fog rolling up the beach, misting over the sight of the off-shore rocks, obscuring the glide and sweep of the seagulls and other seabirds. Over the hard, wet sand of the beach it moves, up through the open windows of my room, into my mouth, into my lungs. I smell the salt and ferry reek of the sea. The fog, born when the waters of the Kuroshio current come up against the coast, is wet, unpleasant, sickly stuff. I should shut my window and draw the blinds, but movement of any sort is difficult. I feel my skin contract, puckering with gooseflesh. I shiver. Thank God I still shiver; the reflexes, at least, still remain. I am flesh, Mary, I am, I am, I am...

I am afraid.

“Mary?”

“Mmmm?”

“Look, here – I think the bald spot is getting bigger. Is it? Would you love me if I lost all my hair?”

“They say that’s a sign of virility, don’t they?”

“My goddamn hair.”

“I don’t care about your hair. Just don’t let yourself go to pot.”

“How about when we get old? Someday – if we survive this war – I’ll get old and fall apart like everyone does. Fat and bald – or bald and skinny.”

“I don’t care about all that.”

“What if a fireball burns off my legs or my face? What if I absorb a thousand rads and lose my hair in a week?”

“I love you, Richard. Now, do you still want to go to the beach? Let’s go swimming before it rains.”

“Let’s talk about this for a minute. What am I, really?”

Am I a function of my brain, or something else? What if I took a piece of brick through my cortex and forgot the wave equation? Think about that. What if I forgot how to play the piano and your birthday and all those things? What if I forgot your name?”

You’d still be you, wouldn’t you?”

“Mary?”

“Mmm?”

“What if I forgot everything? What if I forgot how to love?”

I love and loathe this change in my life. There is peace and perhaps a kind of joy somewhere on this desolate coast. But now and here there is only the vastness of the fog bank and the air that comes off the icy sea. My vision is faltering; I see only muted shadows upon the wall, flickers of light and dark, shifting and changing, changing and mutating.

I mutate; I consume the powder.

Lately, there has been difficulty in forgetting. My brain is awash in a sea of information, fathomless strata of data, facts and faces suspended before my mind’s eye in the same way that grains of sand and fragments of shell cloud and dirty the rushing ocean waves. Reading is agony. Pages of print burn deeply into my visual cortex. Paragraphs of cyrillic uncials and Chinese ideograms, stanzas of poetry scroll continuously, turning, turning, and when it stops, there is dizziness and nausea, and I “read” (and count) boldface letters as easily as I once read the headlines of the coffee-stained morning newspaper: The two hundred thirty-second and thirty-third lines of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” are:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide, wide sea!

The word “sea” is the one thousand four hundred and twenty-seventh word of the poem. To forget the endless squiggles of black letters, which often come alive and writhe like sea snakes in a clear tidepool, I must build in my mind an infinitely long, black wall arising

from the sifting white sands of windy beach. I then superimpose words and sentences, whole libraries of equations onto the featureless wall where they vanish from my inner sight, black into blackness, blackness into nothingness.

I have other tricks for other types of memories. Faces must be resolved into primary colours and the blues and greens and reds brightened to such an unbearable intensity that they explode in my head like miniature supernovae, leaving only a small cloud of floating cinders in remembrance of friends I used to know. Sounds are more difficult; sounds haunt me; sounds are nearly impossible to forget. The tinkling of the windchimes outside our weathered wooden house when the gales of winter begin to blow, the soft, easy breathing of Mary as she sleeps, the sound of the early morning sea – these sounds I must take through a Fourier transform, enfolding the hideously complex waves into a hologram which unfolds a single, unforgettable sound, the primal sound, the angry, wet black roar of the universe.

Occasionally, the biologists come for me with needles and measuring devices, but most of the time – on those days when the fog clings to the ocean and leaves the beach free and clean – I am left alone to look out and wonder at the mystery of those few living things that I want to remember. The seagulls, soaring and darting, the dogs that run after them, barking – these things I can still enjoy and, in a way, still love. Even though my brain changes at a pace that is truly frightening, there remains, somewhere in all those billions of shifting synapses and mutating neurons, a love of life and living things that is greater than the seas of the Earth or the oceans of space. I love the seabirds of the beach and fear that, soon, the time will come when I will love them no more.

Still, I consume the powder, even as it consumes me.

“But why – I don’t understand?”
“Because they offered me the job at the Institute, Mary.”

“I thought you were through working for the government.”

“This is different. I’ll be able to do my own research. No more weapons systems, no more computer-guided particle beams. I can work on the neurophage. The goddamn neurophage.”

“You know I don’t want to move. I love Maui. This beach is so pretty.”

“There are beaches in Oregon, too.”

“Cold beaches. I was there once when I was a little girl. It was foggy and it rained all the time. You couldn’t swim in the ocean, it was so cold.”

“Listen, you’ll love Oregon. It’s green, deep green, a different kind of green than Hawaii, and the mountains rise right up from the beach through the morning mists – it’s goddamned beautiful.”

“Isn’t it dangerous? I mean, what about the plague in California? And the people in the camps? You’d take me back to that?”

“Oregon is different. They’ve emptied practically the whole state from the ocean to the Cascades. We’ll be as safe as anywhere. We can have our own house on the beach. No neighbours close enough to complain about the damn windchimes. I’ll get you a dog, a huskie,

like you’ve always wanted. He’ll have lots of room to run, and it will be cool enough so that –”

“Can we get married?”

“Is the ceremony that important?”

“I’m pregnant, Richard! Why do you think I’ve been throwing up in the bathroom every morning?”

“Why didn’t you tell me, for God’s sake?”

“I shouldn’t have had to tell you.”

“I’m sorry. Let’s talk about this, okay? All right?”

“N-no!”

“Please, don’t cry. Every time we talk about something serious, you start crying. Just don’t cry, okay?”

My eyes do not tear. I stare unblinking at the darkness of my room, and the tears do not come. I suppose saline, of which tears are composed, being liquid, dries up in much the same manner as the other liquids of my body. My body, my brain – dry like bone or the stones of the headland that are untouched by the sea.

Looking out towards the winter swell that I can hear thundering against the rocks, I imagine there are pieces of petrified wood lying on the beach, hidden by the fog. How foolish I can be! There isn’t any petrified wood to be found on a beach. I realize that I choose to think of petrified wood solely because that metaphor pleases me: My brain is in the process of petrification. I consume the powder. The tiny neurophages that constitute the powder devour and replace my neurons in much the same way that bits of minerals replace the cellulose and fibre of wood. Petrified wood – how I love this symbolism – it looks organic and, in a way, alive, but it is really cold and smooth and stone. As am I, as I like to think I am. Stone knows no pain, only the perpetual crash of waves that ebb and swell and wear.

Stone does not cry.

“Why are you so unhappy!”
“Not unhappy, Mary, restless.”
“Is it because I lost the baby? If I’d known I had damaged chromosomes, I could have had my tubes tied. We could always adopt, couldn’t we? There are so many homeless children.”

“I don’t want to have children right now.”

“What do you want?”

“I don’t know.”

“I don’t understand you any more. I thought moving here was what you wanted. You’ve got your rain forests and your stupid mists. You would have had a Nobel prize if they still had Nobel prizes. Isn’t that enough?”

“You said you’d always love me, but would it be the same if I were smarter?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about the logical consequences of the neurophage. We can alter our brains in a way that –”

“I don’t want to talk about this, Richard.”

“– will allow us to have time to think, really think. I’m talking about a new way of seeing things. There are energies... Listen, I wrote you a poem. Remember how you used to love Coleridge? Well, this isn’t as good, but it has energy and life, and it’s –”

“I don’t want you to write me any more poems! I want you as you, like you used to be.”

“Listen, Mary, there’s an experiment I’d like us to

try. We'd be the first to lay our brains open to –
"Experiment?"

Muscle wastes. Protein unused, without purpose, is absorbed by the flesh until the limbs grow thin and the skin hugs the bone. Movement becomes difficult. Were it otherwise, I might have the strength to close the window against the fog, although I truly do not care. I no longer shiver.

I should pay more attention to the details of this experiment, but details bore me. Details: They, the biologists, my friends, my colleagues – they make the neurophages from bacteria engineered solely for that purpose. A pseudo-virus, a single association string, is introduced into a bacterium (or cell) where it takes over the programming of the DNA and reproduces itself a thousand times over. The new strings clump together like a ball of worms as they organize themselves, thousands of interconnecting protein strings. And then they grow. The bacterium (or neuron) bursts and dies, and the baby computers are born.

Sometimes, I think my mind is being consumed by details so quickly that there will be nothing left for the neurophage to consume. Therefore, I concentrate on unities; I dabble with visions of subatomic particles and bend my changing brain to the pursuit of the ultimate particle. There are an endless number of particles and possible associations, an infinity of associations. I have developed a mathematics to express these associations, but it is insufficient. A higher mathematics is needed, a mathematics of mathematics, which echoes the music of the universe, which is the universe. There are crescendoing paradoxes among the easy mysticisms: What ever happened to Schrödinger's goddamned cat? The splendour of quantum mechanics. Is my will really free? Can it be that my consciousness, my true "I," really affects the warp and woof, the very fabric of the universe?

Can it be that I can change the universe?

Someday, perhaps, I will fully understand how it is that a new pattern is forming itself inside of me, a pattern that I change and shape even as it shapes and changes me.

If I were to look out over the ocean on a day when the wind keeps the fog off the water, I would see sunlight reflected from the breaking crests and perhaps the spout of some distant sea mammal. I might catch the sight of an albatross far out at sea and think of Coleridge, who, being himself an addict, would have appreciated a powder that goes straight to the brain and – flash! – excruciating truth and beauty.

Coleridge would have understood.

How is it that protein can hold patterns that alter the shape of life? What is there about amino acids that enables them to twist the brain into new and frightening forms? Why do heightened sensibilities make love so mutable?

Answer me that, O Ancient Mariner, and I will tell you the purpose of the ocean at sunset. Tell me how to make love last, and I will tell you the secret of the universe.

"Don't leave me, Mary."
"You don't need me any more."
"I need you now more than ever."

"You need knowledge and information input and

your damn quantum consciousness but you don't need me."

"I love you."

"You love quarks and quiffs and charms and God-only-knows what else – aren't I right?"

"There is light that has taken millions of years just to jangle the nerve cells of our retinas right through to our brains so that we can glory in the radiance of the ancient stars."

"Look at you! You're losing movement in your arms! I have to practically shout so you can hear me. Pretty soon they're going to have to keep you in one of those rooms above the cliffs."

"There is room for us everywhere in the universe. All the forces – the electromagnetic, the strong and weak nuclear forces, and gravity – are one. The unities. There is unity of forces, and there is unity of space-time. Unity of unities. Do you want me to explain the consequences? Can't you imagine, from here to Antares in no time at all!"

"Will you take us back to Hawaii? Will you?"

"The will is free; we are alone and complete among the stars of the night. There are glories from the earth and cruelties from the human heart."

"Oh, Richard, sometimes I think we should never have adopted! Matthew was sick again; he's lost almost all his hair. He misses you – what am I supposed to tell him? That his father is too busy counting electrons to visit him? He hates the doctors, you know."

"If only he were old enough to understand the details."

"I don't understand what has happened to us. Don't you remember when we got him out of the camp, how happy you were just tickling him or throwing him up in the air? Remember how you used to read him Bible stories, how he liked the story of Joseph's robe?"

"All the colours, even then, you see, in the drab and chalky Promised Land, there were all the colours of the spectrum and all the cruelties of the human heart."

"Why are you doing this to me?"

"There is a fire in my brain more brilliant than exploding hydrogen. It's like being brighter than a star."

"I hate it when you talk like that."

"Hate/love; love/hate."

"I have to go to the hospital."

"Mary, don't leave me."

There are no shadows. Starlight cannot pierce fog, but even if it could, it would not suffice to cast a shadow. There is a silence. I seem to have lost the ability to smell. Perhaps if it were spring, the waft of flowers might awaken my nostrils to the touch of violets or jasmine. Perhaps not.

For feeding purposes they have set up some tubes. I suck the powder, dissolved into tepid water, through plastic tubes. Suck, into my mouth, right down my throat, into the blood, into the brain. The brain, the brain, the brain. I must suck because my arms and hands are useless. It has been weeks since I could grasp a glass of water. A rat could have gnawed off my fingers; I couldn't feel if it had. Perhaps my arms hang limply by my sides or are rotting off – I do not know.

At times – when I tire of tubes and the fog hangs

over my eyes like a shroud used to cover the dead – I think of the asteroids and the nourishment contained therein. Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen – the essential elements of protein. Someday we will build robots to render the asteroids into their essential elements. When I feed on quantities of P-tryptophan and other neo-amino acids that I will design and synthesize, I will be forever freed of tubes.

Soon, I suppose, I will lose my sucking function, and they will have to make a different arrangement. Zap, drip, I-V right into the brain, the vein, the brain.

They say that being a schizophrenic is like burning in hell. One is enveloped by curtains of flame through which normal people watch the writhing of a soul afire with unutterable pain. True communication is impossible. No matter the shouts and cries of the damned – whatever words he chooses, there is no way of describing the many shades, the kaleidoscopic brilliance of his torment.

The change inside my crystallizing brain is like an illuminated heaven. There are neither concepts nor words nor mathematic symbols to describe this private ecstasy. There is a clarity as still as the sunset ocean, a pure light, a shimmering connectedness of all things.

The change is coming soon; I can feel it building like the plasma of the primordial explosion.

If only I could make Mary understand.

“Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary.”
“What is happening to you?”
“Mary, your hair, the colours, the beauty.”

“This isn’t necessary.”

“It’s like the sky being born or winter wheat shimmering in the –”

“You’re scaring me, damn it!”

“All energy is mine. You shimmer, oh Mary, if I could only hold it. Beauty like –”

“Stop it!”

“I love the memory of the last you, dancing, dancing, eyes/ever in eternity.”

“You can’t love anybody when you’re like this.”

“Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary....”

I am mutable, like clay or footprints in the sand by the water’s edge.

They had to amputate my arms and legs. I suppose that it is necessary: the cutting off of wasted and useless flesh. I should be glad that the heart and lungs can serve to nourish only the brain.

My ears are dead to the sounds of the ocean. The fog is lifting, slightly. I see only greys and shades of grey. I see grey rocks and dark grey water and light grey sand. I see the fog, that which remains. It is grey.

If I close my eyes, I can see whole multitudes of subatomic particles. The leptons are blue.

Soon, I think, they will detach my head from my all too, too fleshy torso. Hook up a support system, knock away the bone, expose the brain – and there I am.

There are difficulties and questions, a near-infinity of details. The organic brain is chemical in nature. Consciousness is a function of neurotransmitters that sluggishly diffuse across synapses, carrying information through the wet, sticky, pink cells so slowly that I can hardly believe human beings are capable of con-

sciousness at all.

My new brain is electric, or will be as soon as the change is completed. My brain: a latticework of ultra-thin proteins, crystal-like association strings that jump at the touch of an electric current, coiling and uncoiling, twisting information along at a speed and power beyond human understanding.

How do the neurophages “know” the order in which the neurons must be replaced? (How do the uniform cells of a dividing zygote organize themselves; how do they differentiate into proto-liver, kidney, or muscle cells?) How are memory and sense of selfness preserved? (How is the whole fabric of the universe enfolded within any and all of its component fibres? How is the hologram preserved?)

Is love preserved?

When I have feasted upon the asteroids and, if need be, assimilated parts of Jupiter, I will be far from the cruelties of my fellow man and free at last from the shallowness of flesh. I long to rid myself of this inflexible body so that I can grow. They tell me my brain will one day grow to be the size of the moon. The goddamn moon.

“I love you, Mary.”
“Let’s go away from here before it’s too late.”

“More than I love anything.”

“Maybe a warmer climate would be good for Matthew.”

“More than –”

“I won’t be able to visit you soon! You know that, don’t you?”

“Listen, Mary, I can’t visit you in *your* state, misty Oregon, that state of confusion where humans think so slowly – Listen, come with me; you’ll have to consume the powder and cross the deep romantic chasm.”

“I hate what you’re doing!”

“Don’t you want to live forever and be as wise as Jupiter?”

“I want you to love me like you used to; I want to make love on a warm beach beneath a full moon like we did in Hawaii.”

“I am the moon, Mary, and you decide.”

“Don’t make me do this.”

“Not me, you, free will – they’re your electrons, and I can’t control a single synapse in your sweet, sweet, perfect brain.”

“You can stop this experiment.”

“Can I? Can I stop the experimenter? Cause-effect, inside-outside. There’s such a feedback, I *am* the experiment, so how can I stop myself? It’s gone far beyond will, don’t you see?”

“Oh, Jesus!”

“We are creators of our heavens.”

“I can’t help you.”

“The leptons are blue and the quarks dance to the music of the stars. Listen....”

I cannot hear the ocean.

I miss the tang of sea-salt against ruddy flesh. I love the beach and the sand and the waves that I cannot see. I love the cry of the seagulls that I cannot hear.

My brain, which has been afire with joy and love for so many moments of time, and touched often by

the best of women, is as strange and new to me as the morning sun must be to a newborn child.

Someday, perhaps, when I can build and order protons as a child plays with coloured bricks, I will extrude sensors in the shape of an albatross and fly across the beach, accessing sights and sounds heretofore unavailable to me. Perhaps – in all the vast and wonderfully new input – I will one day divine the seagull's cry for what it really is.

The seagull's cry as input: I wonder, could it ever be the same?

But, my God, the leptons are blue and the quarks have colours measurable to no man. There is a singularity, a great black hole, near the centre of our universe. I can feel the pull, greater than oceans of gravity, heavier than my earth. Someday, when I am able at last to make Mary understand, we will migrate to the stars, skimming across galaxies as if they were rocks by the seashore.

I think I am becoming a god or part of something godly.

I cannot feel sorry for not hearing seagulls.

“Yin-Yang, ping-pong, positron-electron,
inside-outside, hogamus-higamus –”
“Matthew died last night.”
– woman is monogamous –”

“I don't want to leave you.”

“– man is polygamous.”

“I have to leave you.”

“Water, water, everywhere –”

“They'll take care of you until it's all over.”

“– Alph, the sacred river ran –”

“Goodbye.”

“Through caverns measureless to man.”

David Zindell won first place in the “Writers of the Future” contest sponsored by L. Ron Hubbard (the judges included Algis Budrys, Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny and the late Theodore Sturgeon). His winning story, “Shanidar,” appeared earlier this year in an anthology of the competition's winners and runners-up. In its review of the volume, *Locus* described Zindell's story as “superb. . . this story should be considered for the big awards. It also justifies the existence of the contest and the book.” David Zindell has since sold another story to *Fantasy Book*, and is working on a novel.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

A brand-new story by 1985's star writer, William Gibson. Plus stories by John Brosnan, Garry Kilworth, Diana Reed and others. An interview with a rising writer; film reviews by Nick Lowe; book reviews by Mary Gentle and others.

ON THE EDGE

Book Reviews by Mary Gentle

Opinion seems divided about whether "the writer" (that mythical beast) should be up on the barricades or down in the mines – by which I mean, when it comes to politics, are writers bold revolutionaries, or do they work on the canary-down-a-coalmine principle: show symptoms, and turn up their toes when the political climate becomes unendurable? To put it another way, what's the relationship of politics to art? Is there a difference between art and politics? This question is sometimes phrased as *What use is fiction?* or, closer to home, how relevant is that escapist literature science fiction?

If all literature is essentially political, then that essence is more visible in some cases than in others. Post-holocaust novels, for example: are they only useful for what they tell us about today, here in the real world? Metaphors of the present, as well as straightforward speculation? After the event, novels won't be important, or even existent. What kind of preparation is a metaphor, and what's the place of propaganda? These are questions touched on obliquely in two novels with after-the-nuclear-strike settings, Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Wild Shore* (Futura, £2.50) and Keith Roberts' *Kiteworld* (Gollancz, £8.95). The other thing that post-holocaust imaginings tend to incorporate, somewhat paradoxically, is the various utopias of destruction. The dream that after 90% of the human race is dead (first, bury them) and the slate's wiped clean (or even sterile), why then the Ideal State can be set up in all its glory. *The Wild Shore* and *Kiteworld* both have something of this in them, a theme of wish-fulfilment that's at odds with the apparent ideology of Dire Warning.

In Robinson's novel the USA is, after a multi-city neutron bomb strike, quarantined from the (weather-wrecked) world by those technologically-advanced nations still in existence. On a few miles of California coastline are fishers and farmers and scavengers, new politicians and tale-telling wanderers; and through it all roams the perennial American male adolescent hero. *The Wild Shore* is trying to do two mutually contradictory things; to set up a back-to-nature life (from which springs the 1776 republic), and to condemn the American Empire – without analyzing why it grew out of that republic. Thus it becomes a threnody for the old America, as well as an appreciation of what it's like to be a small, rational, peaceful community beleaguered by patriotic lunatics with superior firepower.

Ghosts of Shakespeare, Melville, and Twain haunt the novel, as America's

"fallen greatness" haunts the characters: the boy Hank, his teacher Tom, and those who – if they could escape the eye-in-the-sky – would build another phoenix-Empire from the nuclear ashes. What's the relationship between a metaphor and the present? When Tom tells Hank (in the American tall-tale tradition) that Shakespeare was an American, and "England" part of the New York coast, it's funny: a paradigm of what Europeans regard as America stealing history because it has none of its own. But here, now, in this septic (not to say sceptic) isle, it isn't really funny. Tom can admit that the "old" USA chewed up the world and spit it out again in its own image, it's part of *The Wild Shore*'s nationalistic self-punishment. But the novel leaves another of its statements essentially unchallenged, that America was the best country ever.

Kiteworld is less of a metaphor and more existent for its own sake, a species of canary, say, rather than a banner on a barricade. It's set in a sanitized Middle Ages, crossed with an oil-stained Edwardian Era that never quite existed. In the post-holocaust sky there are Kites, great Cody rigs set up to watch and protect, watch for Demons. (If you can name a Demon, traditionally, its power fails; but the name of this one is *Cruise*.) Humanity has an eye on the main chance, setting up power-games and extortion rackets, and churches to oppress minds and souls, all under the gaze of this caste of Kite samurai.

The Wild Shore was obsessed with history, power, and domesticity: *Kiteworld* with religion, sexuality, and corruption – it has an ambience of WW1 bi-planes, zeppelins, and vintage cars; but the main impression is of a faint stink of something rotten in all the sexual relationships in this series of linked stories. The women – Janni, the autistic girl Tan, and Velvet the cockney whore-mistress (15 going on 9½) – are all betrayers, and not even on their own account. All are beaten and injured by their men, something the male characters appear to consider regrettable but inevitable. The men, Raoul and Rand and the Major, are driven by obsessions, and by an austere hatred for the passions that drive them. In

this post-holocaust world, they love the death-ridden high air better than anything on the earth. Is it deliberate metaphor or not? There's the Lady Kerosina (oh dear), archetypal sado-masochistic Dominatrix, who is hated and pitied but never explained. Why do women never fly Cody rigs? Why is Church patriarchy assumed rather than accounted for? *Kiteworld* ends with a literal *deus ex machina*, but then, where else could it go?

Which returns us to the problem, differently stated: is politics in fiction of the nature of the canary's symptoms, an unconscious reaction to pressures? Or is it a manifesto? Or – to bring a new element in – is it an investigation of the nature of politics itself, like David Arcott and David Marl's political allegories *The Frozen City* (Unwin, £2.95) and *A Flight of Bright Birds* (Allen & Unwin, £8.95). The question here is, is it fair to accuse an allegory of being a cliché?

The Frozen City is written in a prose of stunning mediocrity, and for the first third of the book the plot fails to move at anything more than snail's pace; and it ends where it ought really to begin. The hero is yet another adolescent boy – fairly sexless, as 15-year-olds go – on Tom, who enters a winter-beset city on the traditional quest for his father. The previous regime has been overthrown by the repressive Red Blade, an organization prone to political assassination, informing, and chasing revolutionaries across snow-covered roofs. The city's name is never given, but it inhabits the State of Paranoia (and has diplomatic relations with Terror and Expediency). Certain revolutionaries hold the rooftops. There are rumours of an underground city, full of light, truth, and beauty. Tom is the political innocent, trying to learn survival while he pursues his quest – but whatever his value as symbol, he never becomes emotionally complex; he has little identity.

What does the allegory mean? That structure is the key to politics, the dead hand of the past rules; once the mechanism is set up, it keeps turning. Messianic prophecies alone can break the cycle – or can they? This is basic functionalism: Weber, Talcott Parsons. It

can't explain – as Liberal Humanism commonly can't – why some people like belonging to the Red Blades of the real world.

The assassin Marcus and the fighting dog, the cripple with no legs, and the dwarf; these are the characters that stay in the mind, the vicious and hunted outsiders, not the "normals" that are the mainstay of any political system. No one is as unattached to his loyalties as Tom, we bring loyalties with us – but this is a simplified Liberal allegory: people are corrupted by environment and constrained by structure. The City doesn't have either a viable economic structure or a priestly caste, thus leaving out the problems recognized by Marxism and Original Sin...a common problem with any variety of humanism.

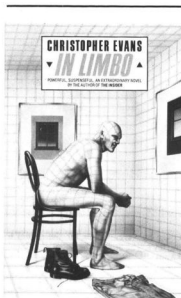
A *Flight of Bright Birds*, though, is a bird of a different plumage: a peacock or a parakeet, maybe, compared to *The Frozen City*'s worthy-but-dull Roman Eagle. It's set in the city of O-, a fantasia-mix of 19th-century Paris, Edwardian London, and pre-revolutionary Moscow. This (if allegory it is) is the private life of politics. Two teenage boy-heroes this time, twins; Jack raised among the bourgeoisie, and Walter in a monastery. Each on his fifteenth birthday is given a fragment of pottery and an address in O-, but Jack runs off to join Tusker's Travelling Theatre, and Walter (finding no address) becomes protector and – this is not made enough of – exploiter of a deaf-and-dumb girl dancer. No less full of clichés than *The Frozen City* (maybe more so), in *Bright Birds* the prose doesn't plod so much, and the invention is beautiful – exotic streets by gas-lamps, looney aristo Counts, struggles of a theatre touring the provinces, mysterious strangers, bomb-throwing anarchists, drunken sculptors and poets...if the magician's scarves are only scarves, at least the illusion presents them with flair.

And about two-thirds of the way through the novel, it becomes apparent that this is a sequel to *The Frozen City*, still bent on an investigation of political systems, and the end of that book is spelled out in this one. *Bright Birds* has added individualism to a functionalist analysis, but still remains basically Liberal humanist. Jack and Walter are identical twins made different by their environments, but ultimately the same: self and shadow-self. Or is it that simple? The central chapter, "Mirror Image," is thought-provoking. If "self" is multi-faceted, fragmentary, self-contradictory – what hope for rational political systems? Are later discussions in the novel about strong leadership corrupting man, and bringing out his sheep-instinct, relevant? Or is it that

the self-appointed leader who can tell his followers "you are this," momentarily labelling the chaos of identity, can persuade people to obey any command, so long as that identity continues to be reinforced? *Bright Birds* has no analysis of class or economics, but at least it asks "what is the self?" Political theory is too often exclusively the theory of groups.

But if you read the books: ask. What use is fiction as politics? As philosophy? What use is fiction as propaganda, as manifesto, as metaphor, as warning signal? Should we be watching the canary or manning the barricades?

What use is fiction?



Cover by Peter Goodfellow for 'In Limbo' by Christopher Evans (Granada, £2.50)

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

Software by Rudy Rucker (Penguin, £1.95)

Aged hippy and retired inventor Cobb Anderson is offered immortality as a piece of robot software. Is this a good deal or is it not? Rucker's third novel (first published three years ago in the USA) is inventive lively entertainment, with a reflection or two on the nature of human consciousness thrown in for good measure. Funny and horrible. Recommended.

Granta 16: Science ed. Bill Buford (Penguin, £3.95)

"For the last thirty or forty years, it has been a commonplace that science and literature don't mix," says the back-cover blurb, dismissing by implication the last few decades of science fiction. But the contents are worth attention. Here is speculative writing on a range of science-related subjects, like the social attitudes of the swallow as a blueprint for humanity's survival; the effect of mental illness on the human identity; and the motivations of the "Star Wars" scientists in their death-rays-and-coca-cola microcosm. Less impressive, disappointingly so in this generally excellent magazine, are three obtuse pieces of fiction about the Bomb.

Cugel's Saga by Jack Vance (Granada, £1.95)

Fantasy sequels abound, but here is a welcome return to the Dying Earth and the antics of Cugel the Clever, who first appeared in *The Eyes of the Overworld* (1966). This is excellent entertainment. Vance writes hilarious inventive fantasy, in no one's tradition but his own.

S.O.

Dreamworks: Strange New Stories ed.

David King (Norstrilia Press, PO Box 91, Carlton 3053, Victoria, Australia) Dedicated to the late Philip K. Dick, this anthology explores one of his favourite themes: the nature of reality. In these stories realities merge, diverge, and rearrange themselves. Magic keeps uneasy company with science. God may be the Divine Artisan. Lord of Engines, with the face of a mad alchemist, or a mild little man in a tweed jacket who lives in the flat next door. The diversity of approaches gives the book the variety that is sometimes lacking in theme anthologies. Three of the writers – George Turner, Damien Broderick and David J. Lake – have had novels published in Britain or America; the others will be unfamiliar as yet to most readers in the northern hemisphere.

P.A.

Circumpolar! by Richard A. Lupoff (Granada, £2.50)

An alternative-world novel, in which intrepid aviators Charles Lindbergh, Howard Hughes and Amelia Earhart set out to fly through the "Symmes holes" at the north and south poles of their doughnut-shaped world. It's a pastiche 1920s adventure tale, packed with Hollywood and pulp-magazine allusions. It sounds like a lot of fun, but I found it too relentlessly jocular to be truly entertaining.

Scientific Romance in Britain

1890-1950 by Brian Stableford
(Fourth Estate Ltd., £19.50)

This is a finely detailed and impressively authoritative study of the proto-science fiction which flourished in Britain from the time of H.G. Wells's earliest stories up until the deaths of George Orwell and Olaf Stapledon. The author shows that these were not isolated writers: they were all part of a tradition, responding to each other's example. A significant piece of scholarship, some 350 pages long, this book has my vote as the best critical work of 1985.

The Last Legionary Quartet by

Douglas Hill (Pan, £2.95)

I gave this book to my nine-year-old son, and he loves it. Four space-adventure novels in one fat volume – about the quest of Keill Randor, interstellar ninja, to find the mysterious Warlord who has destroyed his home planet. Fast-paced, exciting and quite stylish sf for kids.

The Cosmic Puppets by Philip K. Dick

(Granada, £1.95)

This is the first British publication of a short novel which originally appeared as half of an Ace Double in 1957. According to Paul Williams in the latest Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter, it was the first sf novel that PKD wrote, its composition actually preceding that of *Solar Lottery* in the early 50s. Minor stuff, obviously, but very readable – foreshadowing many of its author's classic works.

The Door Into Summer by Robert A.

Heinlein and *Journey Beyond*

Tomorrow by Robert Shekley

(Gollancz, £8.95 each)

Gollancz are doing hardcover reissues of several Heinlein and Shekley titles (next year they commence a paperback reprint line of sf classics). This is no doubt very shrewd of them. I included these two books in my *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels*, so I'm not complaining. . .

Where the Evil Dwells and Enchanted

Pilgrimage by Clifford D. Simak

(Methuen, £2.50 and £1.95)

Two *Cosy Quests*, more reminiscent of *The Wizard of Oz* than of *Lord of the Rings*, from sweet gentle old Cliff Simak. They are soppy books, utterly predictable, but they have an easy-reading charm.

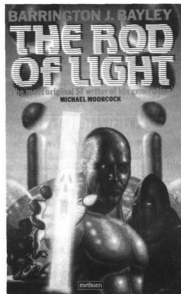
The Last Warrior Queen by Mary

Mackey (Unwin, £2.95)

The popularity of historical fiction is waning while that of fantasy is waxing,

so nowadays historical novels tend to come packaged as fantasy. This is a case in point. Set in ancient Sumeria, circa 3600 BC, it is a serious, if highly speculative, historical novel – a feminist contribution to the 20th-century lament (so ably sung by Robert Graves) for the loss of the Great Goddess. An interesting novel, and rather better than Silverberg's recent *Gilgamesh the King* which was also based on Mesopotamian legend.

D.P.



Cover by Terry Oakes for the sequel to Bayley's 'The Soul of the Robot' (Methuen, £2.50)

ALSO RECEIVED

'D' Train by Terry Wilson (Grapheme Publications, £9.95). A novel which emulates William S. Burroughs – very closely.

Atlas Anthology III ed. Alastair Brotchie and Malcolm Green (Carnet, £4.95) The first of these was reviewed by Colin Greenland in IZ 7.

The Final Encyclopedia by Gordon R. Dickson (Sphere, £3.95). Nearly as long as Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth*, and almost as old-fashioned.

West of Eden by Harry Harrison (Granada, £2.50). Quite a yarn.

The Pliocene Companion by Julian May (Pan, £2.50). "The essential reader's guide to the Saga of the Exiles." Yucks.

Best Science Fiction of the Year 14 ed.

Terry Carr (Gollancz, £9.95 hardcover, £4.95 paperback). Contains Lee Montgomerie's "Green Hearts" from IZ 10!

Free Live Free and Gene Wolfe's Book

of Days by Gene Wolfe (Gollancz, £9.95, and Arrow, £2.25). Two good books which deserve proper reviews.

Castles by Alan Lee, with text by David

Day (Unwin, £7.95). A very pretty picture book.

Salvador Dali's Tarot, with text by

Rachel Pollack (Michael Joseph/Rainbird, £8.95). A very strange, and perhaps profound, picture book.

LETTERS

Dear Editors:

You ask for our general comments. One thing that worried me was that, whatever the results of the survey, you would continue doing what you, the collective, thought best. This is your right, being unpaid idealists, but it would not encourage me (and, I'd guess, others) to carry on subscribing. I am paying to be entertained. I get nothing else from the transaction. You, on the other hand, can profit from your association with the magazine. The civil servant gets his MBE; you, perhaps, get a paid editorial job or a paid position working for a pressure group. My point is that both sides benefit and that there should be some degree of equality. I want entertainment, in the widest possible sense of the word.

I am not judging you too harshly when I suggest your approach is in danger of being seen as paternalistic. The editorial in issue 10 says it all: "'Tissue Ablation and Variant Regeneration' ended up at the bottom of the pile. . . We will always be ready to include such stories." Given the number of negative votes it seems an unsound policy.

Benedict S. Cullum
Rickmansworth

Editorial Response:

Offers of paid jobs may be sent to any of the editorial addresses. As for "Tissue Ablation. . ." it received many positive votes as well as negative ones. We pay close attention to feedback, otherwise we wouldn't ask for it, but we do this to assist our own judgement, not to replace it. More response follows the next correspondent, who takes an opposing viewpoint to Benedict Cullum:

Dear Editors:

Despite its age *Interzone* still lacks an identity. This is not in the gift of its audience, or the audience of any magazine. To go some way towards becoming itself, *Interzone* should free itself from its correspondence column, its apologia (not to say apologies) and its editorial impression of a man trying to smile in several directions at once.

One-day *Interzone* conventions are the last thing necessary. *Interzone* has already entered a relation with its audience as corrupt as that of a reader-participation novel.

The alternative to putting this relationship back into a state of good faith would be to cut the fiction. You might want to consider this seriously. It would allow you to have at length the views of writers who have not yet realized that the condition "ageing historicist" is a textbook aporia; feminists who, pressured by the failure of their rhetoric in any meaningful political arena, feel the need to preach to the converted; and those very decent people who felt happy when they woke up and wrote to tell us how they live in the country, watch the birds but never harm them, and so on. These interest groups might then argue among themselves what sort of fiction *Interzone* would have if it had any.

While I wouldn't much want to read a magazine like that I'm sure it would be very informative.

In the end, a text is not only autotelic, it is a one-way signalling system, like a beacon spotted in a rough sea: "I am here." It is an identity, a personal authenticity which all good fiction and all good publications have. Very little of the fiction in *Interzone* has it. At first it was the magazine that apologized confusedly for itself in a murmur in a corner. Now the stories are doing it too.

As editors, you must prefer something. You can't escape that responsibility. You should have not so much the courage of your convictions, because convictions are twenty a penny and the magazine is already choking on them, as of your taste. Please stop wincing away every time someone raises their hand.

M. John Harrison
Holmfirth, West Yorkshire

Editorial Response:

M. John Harrison needn't worry. His letter doesn't put us in a wincing mood. Although he apparently expects us not to bother, we have to say that we're sorry he has such a low opinion of *Interzone* and its fiction. We can only assure him that we persist in our own very much higher one.

It is the "courage of our own tastes" which led us to believe that a magazine such as this could exist, which led us to launch the magazine and guide it through all manner of financial perils and sceptical taunts to the point at which it is actually starting to make an impact. If we were as faint-hearted as M. John Harrison seems to think, then we wouldn't have committed ourselves to such time, effort, and financial risk.

But *Interzone* is a real magazine, not a work of fiction. It is possible to regard the act of writing as a personal relationship between the author and the manuscript, to which the eventual readership is a dumb, disembodied, and from the writer's point of view perhaps even irrelevant, spectator. Such an attitude can produce the very worst and also the very best of fiction. We the editors cannot adopt the same attitude to *IZ*. In the final analysis, we stand or fall by the fiction we publish;

the most obvious part of our task is merely to do the publishing, to act as an intermediary between writer and readership. But this is not the whole of it. We want to create an atmosphere of lively debate in *IZ*, an atmosphere in which our readers are encouraged to respond to the fiction we publish, to argue – yes – about the sort of fiction we should publish and, perhaps most important of all, to be motivated to produce such fiction themselves. If *IZ* is to produce any lasting effect, it will be due to the new writers we introduce and it is from our own readership that such writers are most likely to emerge. A good example is Sue Thomason, whose letter (in *IZ* 9) appears to be a subject of M. John Harrison's displeasure and who has now produced the startling story "Finn," which we're publishing in the present issue.

We don't see our readership as a dumb spectator. It is, potentially at least, a part of the magazine.

We've always wanted *IZ* to be popular. We solicit feedback to help us make it so. But of course we're not going to compromise the standards of our fiction or alter our own ideas about the magazine to please the whims of every correspondent. Nobody pays us to produce *IZ*. We're not going to spend time and energy producing a magazine we wouldn't want to read ourselves.

And yet *IZ* is more than just our private hobby. Above all else it is a magazine of good fiction, but through its fiction it can become something more. It can be a forum for the exchange of ideas about the world in which we live and the world in which we are likely to live. It exists to provoke response, not to send out one-way signals. It is not an exercise in literary masturbation.

S.O.

SUBMIT YOUR STORIES TO INTERZONE

We welcome submissions from unknown and little-known writers. All manuscripts will be read sympathetically, but it would be helpful if you bear in mind the following points:

1. Read the magazine before you submit anything to us. Judge the standard of the material we are already publishing, and see if you can do as well – or better.
2. All stories should be typed, on one side of the paper only, preferably on white A4 paper, and must be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope of good size.
3. Please type your name and address, and the word-length of the story, on the top sheet of the manuscript.
4. The preferred length is 2,000 to 8,000 words. We rarely publish longer stories, and the few that we do accept have to

by outstandingly good to justify their length.

5. Please submit stories one at a time. We've been surprised at the number of people who send us batches of three or four. Simply select your best story and let us see it.

6. Remember that *Interzone* is edited and published by an unpaid collective. We are doing what we are doing for the love of it. We pay for the fiction we publish, but all payments have to come from the proceeds of the magazine. We hope therefore that all aspiring writers will do what they can to support *Interzone* – by taking out a subscription and by persuading friends to subscribe. If we fail to sell enough copies there is little hope of us buying any of your stories in the future!

Dear Editors:

What shows that the magazine is most alive is, I think, not the fiction but the features – the editorial, the letters, the reviews. Where you can stir up a bit of conflict and produce opposite opinions, then you know what you are doing must fall somewhere in between – and you must be doing something right.

Where is the "next generation" of British writers? When I started writing – 20 years ago, ah! – there were several places where a new sf writer could send material in Britain, and collect the inevitable rejection slips. These magazines didn't do me much good, however – *Impulse* folding soon after "buying" a story from me, for which I would have received the grand total of £12-10/- (and don't go translating that as £12.50 – pre-decimal money is a completely different concept). The first thing I had published was a novel. These days it's far more common for an author to see print like this, both because of the reduced number of magazines and the fact that far more sf books are now published. So: do we need short stories any more as a breeding ground for new authors...?

David S. Garnett

Ferring, West Sussex

Dear Editors:

Obviously Ian Sanderson's photograph (IZ 10) is susceptible to the charges brought against it by Lisa Tuttle and Sarah Lefanu (IZ 12). But each of their letters begs the question: under what circumstances would it be acceptable to portray the naked body of a woman? If such portrayal were in the service of, for example, encouraging condemnation in some way of the exploitation of women by men, i.e. as propaganda? But doesn't propagandist art *ipso facto* exploit its subjects for the sake of advancing some polemic or other? – and it is the idea of exploitation which is being objected to. Propaganda might be defined as "art with work to do," which also happens to be Angela Carter's definition of pornography.

If I may presume, I sympathize with the arguments of your correspondents. But they seem to deny any possible depiction of the nude female form in art. Imagine two possible portrayals: a painting overtly, sensitively and joyously celebratory of the female form. Painted by a woman, would this be acceptable? And painted by a man? Secondly, can we conceive of a portrayal of woman where the woman just happens to be naked? In the political/cultural context of 1980s UK, probably not, and perhaps this is symptomatic of a necessary and laudable new awareness, but the loss seems to me to be regrettable.

Simon Pettifor

London

BACK ISSUES

Back issues from No. 1 (Spring 1982) are still available from 21 The Village Street, Leeds, LS4 2PR, UK. They are £1.75 each, but readers who buy three or more issues may have them at £1.50 each. (£2.00 each overseas, or £1.75 each for three.) Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to *Interzone*. Contents of back issues:

- 1: "The New Rays" by M. John Harrison; "Kitemaster" by Keith Roberts; "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe" by Angela Carter; "Guesting" by John Sladek; "The Brothel in Rosenstrasse" by Michael Moorcock.
- 2: "Memories of the Space Age" by J.G. Ballard; "Seasons Out of Time" by Alex Stewart; "The Third Test" by Andrew Weiner; "Angel Baby" by Rachel Pollack; "Cantata '82" by Tom Disch.
- 3: "The Dissemblers" by Garry Kilworth; "Overture for 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'" by Angela Carter; "No Coward Soul" by Josephine Saxton; "Cheek to Cheek" by Nicholas Allan; "Saving the Universe" by David Garnett.
- 4: "Calling All Gumdrops" by John Sladek; "The Caulder Requiem" by Alex Stewart; "On the Deck of the Flying Bomb" by David Redd; "After-Images" by Malcolm Edwards; "The Quiet King of the Green South-West" by Andy Soutter; "The Ur-Plant" by Barrington J. Bayley.
- 5: "The Flash! Kid" by Scott Bradford; "The Tithonian Factor" by Richard Cowper; "Vitamin Memories of B-12" by Edwin Dorff (art feature); "Novelty" by John Crowley; "What Cindy Saw" by John Shirley; "Strange Great Sins" by M. John Harrison.
- 6: "Something Coming Through" by Cherry Wilder; "The Monroe Doctrine" by Neil Ferguson; "The Views of Mohammed El Hassif" by John Hendry; "Radical Architecture" by Roger Dean (art feature); "Angela's Father" by L. Hluchan Sintetos; "Kitecadet" by Keith Roberts.
- 7: "The Unconquered Country" by Geoff Ryman; "Kept Women" by Margaret Welbank (art feature); "Life in the Mechanist/Shaper Era" by Bruce Sterling; "Tissue Ablation and Variant Regeneration" by Michael Blumlein.
- 8: "Unmistakably the Finest" by Scott Bradford; "The Electric Zoo" by Chris Jones (art feature); "Dreamers" by Kim Newman; "Strange Memories of Death" by Philip K. Dick; "Experiment with Time" by M.J. Fitzgerald; "McGonagall's Lear" by Andy Soutter; "What I Believe" by J.G. Ballard.
- 9: "The Object of the Attack" by J.G. Ballard; "The Gods in Flight" by Brian Aldiss; "Canned Goods" by Thomas M. Disch; "Synaptic Intrigue" by Richard Kadrey (art feature); "The Luck in the Head" by M. John Harrison; "Fragments of a Hologram Rose" by William Gibson; "Spiral Winds" by Garry Kilworth.
- 10: "John's Return to Liverpool" by Christopher Burns; "Green Hearts" by Lee Montgomerie; "Soulmates" by Alex Stewart; Photographs by Ian Sanderson; "Love, Among the Corridors" by Gene Wolfe; "The Malignant One" by Rachel Pollack; "The Dream of the Wolf" by Scott Bradford.
- 11: "War and/or Peace" by Lee Montgomerie; "Cube Root" by David Langford; "Fogged Plates" by Christopher Burns; "Rain, Tunnel and Bombfire" by Pete Lyon (art feature); "The Unfolding" by John Shirley & Bruce Sterling; "Kitemistress" by Keith Roberts.
- 12: "The Bob Dylan Tambourine Software..." by Michael Bishop; "Little Ilya and Spider and Box" by Paul J. McAuley; "The Fire Catcher" by Richard Kadrey; "Laser Smith's Space Academy" by George Parkin (comic strip); "A Young Man's Journey to Viriconium" by M. John Harrison; "Instructions for Exiting This Building..." by Pamela Zoline.
- 13: "The Man Who Walked on the Moon" by J.G. Ballard; "The People on the Precipice" by Ian Watson; Interview with William Gibson; "If the Driver Vanishes..." by Peter T. Garratt; "Escapist Literature" by Barrington J. Bayley; "Rhinesone Manifesto" by Don Webb; "Randy and Alexei Go Jaw Jaw" by Neil Ferguson.

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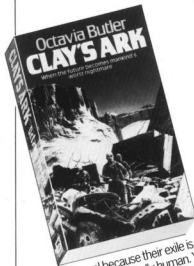
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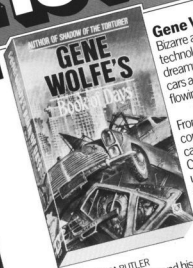
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